

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2010 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

White Lotus said:

thanks, i have a really good teacher, but i have no self, therefore anything that regards attainment is formless, it means nothing to me. i asked this question, because i wanted to be orthodox and if there is any sort of non-attainment, to clarify it. i am told that enlightenment is a certainty with conviction, but i have neither certainty nor doubt. it therefore is logical to say that i am not enlightened.

to be honest i have no conviction, but this could be 'No' Conviction and not convictionless.

Astus wrote:

To have no self is a big issue. Having self and having no self are quite the same, the difference being only in concepts. Until one has something, that is attachment. If one has nothing, that is rejection. Realisation of emptiness lies beyond attachment and rejection. How do you express that?

Ganyo asked Joshu, "What about it when I don't have anything?"

Joshu said, "Throw it away."

Ganyo asked again, "I do not have anything, what is there to throw away?"

Joshu then said, "In that case, take it away with you."

At these words Ganyo was enlightened.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2010 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Notable Zen Masters

Content:

Astus wrote:

Those not yet mentioned: Yongming, Jinul, Bankei and Daehaeng. They're all fun to read.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If there's nothing to attain what's the point of the Buddha's teaching? If it is the realisation that there is nothing to attain, actually it is that realisation to attain. If nobody realises it how could it be called an achievement? If it is ending all sorts of attachments there is still the concept of things one could be attached to.

Nagarjuna says, "If nirvana were nothing, how could nirvana possibly be not dependent? There does not exist any nothing which is not dependent." (MMK 25.8)

There are four extreme views:

- something exists
- something doesn't exist
- something exists and doesn't exist
- something neither exists nor doesn't exist

You seem to be stuck at the idea of non-existence, the second extreme view. How to break through? Just understand that this is actually another false concept, nothing more.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: The Lankavatara Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are two stanzas I've been messing around with. It'd be good if others could contribute here. Also, generally it would be good to discuss Suzuki's translation and how much it reflects different versions of the sutra.

Suzuki's:

In all things there is no self-nature, words too are devoid of reality; as the ignorant understand not what is meant by emptiness, yes, by emptiness, they wander about. In all things there is no self-nature, they are mere words of people; that which is discriminated has no reality; [even] Nirvana is like a dream; nothing is seen to be in transmigration, nor does anything ever enter into Nirvana.

Lankavatara 2.34

sarvabhāvo'svabhāvo hi sadvacanaṃ tathāpyasat |
śūnyatāśūnyatārthaṃ vā bālo'paśyan vidhāvati || 143 ||
sarvabhāvasvabhāvā ca vacanamapi nṛṇām |
kalpanā sāpi nāsti nirvāṇaṃ svapnatulyam |
bhavaṃ parīkṣeta na saṃsāre nāpi nirvāyāt || 144 ||

(approximate trans. by a friend, English tr. by me)

Certainly every being is without essence, the true speech as well as the false
Not seeing the meaning of the emptiness of emptiness the fool's (mind) becomes
confused

And every being's essence is only the words of men, there's not even discrimination
Nirvana is like a dream, doesn't investigate existence in samsara and doesn't get
extinguished

(my unprofessional trans. of two different versions)

諸法無自性，亦復無言說；

不見空空義，愚夫故流轉。
一切法無性，離語言分別；
諸有如夢化，非生死涅槃。

T672p600c21-24

Appearances are without essence; words are without it too
Not seeing the meaning of emptiness; thus fools wander
No appearance has essence; leaving speech and discrimination
Everything is like a dream, an illusion; neither samsara, nor nirvana

諸性無自性，亦復無言說，
甚深空空義，愚夫不能了。
一切性自性，言說法如影，
自覺聖智子，實際我所說。

T670p490c17-20

Appearances are without essence; words are without it too
The very deep meaning of emptiness; fools cannot understand
Every being is essence; talking about law(s) is like a shadow
The self-awakening of the children of wisdom; is called the limit of reality

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The topic of Buddha-nature is a different one. And in many cases the extreme view of existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 6:31 AM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Yeshe said:

I disagree. If we are to discuss attainment, then then we should challenge the concept of progressive attainment or progressive revelation. Hence, the revelation of inherent Buddha Nature is actually at the core, since one needs to accept or refute its revelation as attainment.

Astus wrote:

All right then. The only possible way to enlightenment is gradual as far as it means the time and effort it takes for a deluded being to reach the level of complete and perfect enlightenment of a buddha. What has been a subject of debate is the matter of method. For there are direct (so called sudden) and indirect (gradual) methods. Indirect means

using steps to train a student in morality, meditation and wisdom, like in a school with progressive grades. Obvious example for this approach is the Tibetan lamrim teaching. Direct means introducing the student immediately at the beginning to emptiness. That is what, for instance, they (supposed to) do in Zen. But a common misunderstanding about direct methods is to take the word "sudden" as a term referring to the time it takes to master it. Even those who were enlightened buddhas since their birth (eg. Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava) practised hard for a long time. What to say about ordinary beings then?

The great problem with direct teachings (primarily Zen, Dzogchen and Mahamudra) is that hardly anybody gets it for the first, second, third or hundredth time. And when there are some who actually can use these methods it is simply because of previous lives. Nevertheless, looking at the history of great Zen teachers of the past we find that they were all well educated and trained for decades. Thus even from a down to earth point of view "sudden enlightenment" doesn't happen so suddenly.

"The Dharma is without sudden and gradual; it is people that are clever or dull, therefore the names sudden and gradual." (Platform Sutra, ch. 8)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"i am happier talking about No attainment, which seems to be a state entered when the five skhandas have dissolved."

1. Without skandhas there is not even consciousness to realise anything.
2. Skandhas dissolve every moment anyway.
3. Skandhas are already empty as they are, no point in making them empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 27th, 2010 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Without consciousness it is like a piece of rock: insentient, dead. If there were no skandhas even understanding there are no skandhas would be impossible, not to mention writing about that here.
2. Skandhas are not about recognising or not recognising a self. All the aggregates are originally without any self, nevertheless there is the delusion of conceiving a view of self. But as I said, without skandhas means one cannot even wipe one's arse.
3. Who doesn't feel a self?

I don't mind if you're saying you attained some sort of enlightenment. But first it is best

to understand what the Buddha taught about the nature of life and what nirvana is in Buddhism. You see, there are even grades of enlightenment in the Buddhadharma. When one has realised there is no permanent self it is indeed a good thing, the elimination of self-view (sakkaya-ditthi / sakkaya-ditthi). Then move on, don't say it is enough. The true goal, liberation, is perfect freedom from all forms of insatisfactoriness (dukkha / dukkha) and saving every sentient being.

If you want to understand for yourself what you have enlightened to go and study the teachings of the Buddha and the great masters. For instance, Candrakirti's "Four Illusions" (a commentary on Aryadeva's 400 stanzas) is really good for a start and available in English. And it is not too long either. Or if you're more into Zen like stuff I recommend the Surangama Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2010 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Unknown said:

i am suggesting that even consciousness is extinguished, replaced with emptiness.

Astus wrote:

By this you mean that consciousness and emptiness are two separate things.

Tsongkhapa says,

"So long as the two understandings - of appearance,
Which is undeceiving dependent origination,
And emptiness devoid of all theses - remain separate,
So long you have not realized the intent of the Sage."
(The Three Principal Aspects of the Path, 11.)

Unknown said:

yet pain continues, and colds, toothaches etc.

Astus wrote:

Perception of feelings is the work of skandhas. The very fact of perceiving is what the skandhas are.

Unknown said:

if it were not possible for something to become sunyatman

Astus wrote:

Things don't become empty of self, they're already so. If it were a matter of emptying emptiness itself would be constructed.

Unknown said:

i am questioning whether or not the five skhandas can be dissolved without the

appearance of death.

Astus wrote:

Even the buddhas can see, hear, feel and think. These are the aggregates.

Unknown said:

i dont feel a self of any kind ... i have no feeling of mineness about anything

Astus wrote:

I guess when you're leaving the barbershop you can tell which coat is yours. Seeing that something is in one's possession or not requires a discriminating subject. So what kind of self you yourself don't have? Isn't it a poor self who has no self?

I'm just trying to highlight a contradiction in what you say.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 2nd, 2010 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: where to go to seek confirmation of attainment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

White Lotus,

In brief, my point is that outside of appearances there is no such thing as emptiness. The very fact that all are illusions means that they're dependently originated and without any substance.

Jnanamitra's commentary to the Heart Sutra says (The Heart Sutra Explained, tr. by D.S. Lopez, p. 58),

"Form" is a word that conventionally designates the form that is seen and conceived by those with mistaken minds who have not understood the nature of emptiness. Regarding "emptiness", because emptiness is the nature of form, [form] is without characteristic and unobservable in the past and is without characteristic and unobservable in the present and the future. Therefore, since it does not abide anywhere or in anything, [the sutra*] says "emptiness". "Emptiness is form" conventionally designates with words that even emptiness [has] an unobservable nature [like] form. Because it does not abide apart from that [form], emptiness is form. Regarding "Emptiness is not other than form, form is not other than emptiness," that very thing which is form is the inexpressible emptiness; [when] form is abandoned, emptiness is not to be found. Therefore, it is said that emptiness is not other than form. That very thing which is the inexpressible emptiness does not exist and is not found apart from that which is conventionally designated with the word "form." Therefore, it is said that form is not other than emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 2nd, 2010 at 6:46 AM

Title: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

I found again the blog of the Amida-ji Retreat Temple Romania written by Josho Adrian Cirlea. What surprised me is that he was the first I saw addressing strange tendencies among Shin believers. He made a collection of articles addressing this issue:

<https://amida-ji-retreat-temple-romania.blogspot.com/search/label/DIVERGENCES%20FROM%20THE%20JODO%20SHINSHU%20TEACHING>

Based on my little experience with modern Shin teachings I think he speaks the truth. I've been perplexed before on how Shin Buddhists don't accept a really existing buddha-land of Amita Buddha. Now it seems clear. But, I'm not specifically a Shin follower myself, so I'd like to hear whatever opinion you have.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is a similar case as with rebirth generally. Many cannot move beyond their materialistic ideas and so they want to make Buddhism fit their concepts. In case of Pure Land Buddhism, some like to say that it is only a mental state and there is no such place as an actual buddha-land where beings can be born. And just as without rebirth Buddhism is meaningless, so is the Pure Land path pointless without Amita Buddha escorting beings to his Land of Bliss.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Is there a Mahayana/Vajrayana Equivalent to accesstoinight?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Creating anything similar to ATI in English is quite difficult. First of all there are copyright issues. Mahayana sutras have been translated by a large number of translators and groups. But you can find a lot around the Web if you know where to go. Plus Mahayana is a lot more diverse than Theravada.

On the other hand, you cannot get almost any Abhidhamma material online even though many of them are translated by PTS.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010 at 8:53 PM

Title: Re: Is there a Mahayana/Vajrayana Equivalent to accesstoinight?

Content:

Astus wrote:

By the way, does anyone know a good source of online (modern) Japanese translations for sutras?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 4th, 2010 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Is there a Mahayana/Vajrayana Equivalent to accesstoinsight?

Content:

Huseng said:

I find when I look for them online they tend to be links to all the various book merchants who want to sell paper copies of various texts.

I often wonder myself if there are any actual archives...

Astus wrote:

Exactly my experience. Almost every little Japanese temple have their own homepage but no teachings? Really strange. Do you know any reason behind this?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 10th, 2010 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a Religion?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is missing from other cultures is the separation of philosophy from religion. It was in ancient Greece that men came up with a critical view of reality. Xenophanes (6th c. BCE) even criticised ruling concepts about gods and tradition. Since we have this distinction of philosophy from religion unlike anyone else, it is natural that applying these ideas for other cultures is problematic. If we look at ancient philosophy that had no problem with gods and propagagated a way of life we could say that Buddhism is a philosophy. What makes it not just a "love of wisdom" is that it claims to be "wisdom" itself, thus religion. This brings us to the second fundamental difference between philosophy and religion, in religion there is no space for "free thinking" for one is told what to accept as truth, hence orthodoxy.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 12th, 2010 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Namu Butsu,

After reading both your writing and that critique first I have to say that it is worth studying Buddhism on a wider level. The idea presented by many that Amita Buddha is one's own pure mind is not new at all. Let's say, as it is presented in Zen, Tendai and

Shingon the practice of Amida is like that but in Jodo and Jodo Shin it is different. That is because in Honen's and Shinran's perspective the jodomon (gate of Pure Land is the only available path for deluded guys (bonpu) incapable of any shodomon (gate of wise non-Pure Land) practices. If this point is missed obviously the meaning of the Pure Land teaching of Honen and Shinran are misunderstood. Saving oneself is the path of jiriki (self-power), the Shin path is full tariki (other-power). If Amida is not really a buddha but just my mind there is no way to rely on an other power, and if there is no buddha-land there is only hell to be born in.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 8:06 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Certainly, as it is reported from many sources Japanese Buddhism is in a sad state, not because of an external force oppressing it, but materialism taking over the hearts of people. On the other hand, wasn't that the same before? You read ancient Chinese Buddhist masters complaining about the decline in study and discipline among the monks. The teaching about the Dharma ending age is not new at all. The difference between now and then is while formerly people turned to gods, spirits and magic, now they have science, TV and malls. A change in appearance but not much in attitude. Japan is among the highest developed countries on Earth. And just like in the case of divine beings, people with enough wealth to feed a whole village for a week or more have little interest beyond their own. Since I believe Japan is the closest thing one can get to Western mentality, we better watch and learn how those few who take Buddhadharma seriously live and talk in such a society. When Shinran and other Kamakura reformers lived large Buddhist institutions were at war against each other. Isn't it better now? They could banish Honen, Shinran and Nichiren to dangerous lands only because of their teachings and expel Dogen from Kyoto. Isn't it better now to let everyone preach what they want?

While the idea of Dharma ending age is elemental in the Pure Land schools, historically (a very Western thing) looking at the present there wasn't much change in the past millennia regarding the percentage of people devoting themselves to understanding Buddhism deeply.

"Concerning the difficulty of accepting this Dharma in faith, to transform ordinary people into sages through this Dharma is actually as easy as turning one's palms - so easy that many people with shallow wisdom are skeptical about this. Thus the Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, states, "[The Pure Land] is easy to reach, but very few actually go there." Hence, we know that this Dharma is difficult to accept in faith."
(Yongqin quoted in the Kyogyoshinsho, tr. by H. Inagaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 9:01 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namu Butsu,

"One doesn't have to believe that Amida is like a Christ-like being somewhere off in heaven."

I understand very much that this is the impression of many Western people who hear about the Pure Land path, especially considering that in the Shin school it is "salvation only by faith". It takes some learning to fully understand the purpose and meaning of this teaching within the Buddhist context. And of course it is difficult to absorb even the basics of Shakyamuni's teachings, not to mention the deeper levels of Mahayana. Without comprehending the reasons for the selection of exclusive nenbutsu as it is described in the Senchakushu (see it outlined <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>, also discussed in <http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/kgss-g.htm>) one may confuse the meaning of faith in the Primal Vow.

Ways to see one's true nature "here and now" are abundant in Mahayana, adding teachings on Amita Buddha and the Land of Peace and Bliss to it are quite redundant. On the contrary, it happened that Amita Buddha was already popular when traditions like Tiantai and especially Chan took it up and explained it in their own ways.

Shinran also explained that those who abuse the Dharma are the only persons who cannot attain birth in the Pure Land. Defining the meaning of abusing the Dharma he quotes Vasubandhu: "If one says, "There is no Buddha," "There is no Buddha Dharma," "There is no bodhisattva," or "There is no Dharma for bodhisattvas," such views, held firmly in the mind by one's own reasoning or by listening to others' teachings, are called 'abusing the right Dharma.'" Denying the existence of Amita Buddha clearly cuts away the possibility of birth for then there is neither faith nor aspiration. What's the point of calling it a Pure Land school?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 9:20 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

Although the Pure Land teachings can be slightly different from those in Japan, look at what the late patriarch Yin Kuang said:

"Ordinary people generally think that if the Pure Land is Mind-Only, then it does not exist.

This is the understanding of demons and externalists. Such a deluded view, which appears correct but is in reality wrong, affects more than half of all people and causes practitioners to forfeit true benefits."

(Pure-Land Zen, letter 12, p. 57)

And patriarch Tiantai Zhiyi said:

"The dull and ignorant, on the other hand, are caught up in the concept of birth. Upon hearing the term "Birth", they understand it as actual birth; hearing of "Non-Birth", they (cling to its literal meaning) and think that there is no rebirth anywhere. Little do they realize that "Birth is precisely Non-Birth, and Non-Birth does not hinder Birth."

Because they do not understand this principle, they provoke arguments, slandering and deprecating those who seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. What a great mistake! They are guilty of vilifying the Dharma and belong to the ranks of deluded externalists (non-Buddhists)."

(Ten Doubts about Pure Land)

Finally, here is Shinran's quote of Tanluan's explanation:

"Question: In Mahayana sutras and discourses it is repeatedly explained that sentient beings are, in the final analysis, like space, unborn. Why does Bodhisattva Vasubandhu state that he aspires to be born?

Answer: When it is explained that sentient beings are, like space, unborn, there are two possible meanings. First, sentient beings and their births and deaths conceived as real by ordinary people are, after all, as non-existent as the hair of a tortoise or open space. Second, since all things are produced by causes and conditions, they are as unproduced and as non-existent as open space. The birth that Bodhisattva Vasubandhu desired should be taken in the sense of [produced by] causes and conditions. Because birth takes place depending on causes and conditions, it is only provisionally called 'birth,' not in the sense that there are real sentient beings and real births and deaths as ordinary people imagine.

Question: In what sense do you speak of 'birth'?

Answer: When someone among those who are thus provisionally called 'men' performs the Five Mindful Practices, his thought in the preceding moment becomes the cause of his thought in the following moment. The provisional 'person' in this defiled land and the provisional 'person' in the Pure Land (who he is going to be) are neither exactly the same [593a] nor definitely different. Likewise, the thought of the preceding moment and that of the following moment are neither exactly the same nor definitely different. Why is this so? If they were the same, there would be no causality, and if they were different, there would be no continuity. This principle is explained in detail in the discourses dealing with the problem of 'sameness' and 'difference'."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Mahayana there are uncountable buddhas throughout the infinite worlds. They're as real as this and many other galaxies. Revering many enlightened ones is one of the features of Mahayana. Saying that it is not the teaching of the Buddha is questioning the truth of the Great Vehicle. It is not only the Pure Land sect saying that Amita Buddha and all the others are real but the very sutras themselves accepted in every Mahayana tradition from Tibet to Japan.

Buddhism is not about the present moment but leading sentient beings from suffering to real happiness. Aspiring to be born in any of the buddha-lands is one among the many ways someone could achieve that. And among the myriad buddha-lands the Western Land of Amita Buddha is a special one as far as it is accessible to simple deluded beings and not just enlightened bodhisattvas. The method to be born there is found not only in the so called Pure Land tradition but also in all the other Mahayana schools, including Tibetan ones.

This has nothing whatsoever to do with theistic religions. The Pure Land is not the end but a special environment to attain liberation. Amita Buddha is not a god but a perfectly enlightened being. I recommend you first read this short <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/pureland/inropl.html>. And this is a very succinct introduction to Shin Buddhism: <http://www.nembutsu.info/primshin.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I see, so you're saying that even the churches and abbots don't care about the quality of their teaching. That is sad indeed. Then perhaps you should study hard and become a reformer priest!

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you think Honen thought of himself as a reformer to change the face of Japanese Buddhism for ever? But he did. It is a fascinating biography.

Do you know if they already do online ordinations in Japan like for Christians in the USA?
I'd love to get a black robe.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 15th, 2010 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy eye,

What Ouyi, Hanshan and other masters say are all right and I have no problem with it at all. The issue here is not the validity of other forms of the Pure Land tradition but the interpretation of the Shin thought. Neither Honen nor Shinran advocated the so called Mind Only Pure Land (唯心淨土), although I think they were well aware of its existence. It is because they found the Pure Land path the single option for deluded common men of the Dharma ending age. Understanding the meaning of the teaching of Mind Only not being an easy task it seems natural to me that such a teaching cannot be called a universal means saving people of all capacities from high to low.

Reinterpreting the teaching to fit current needs is very good. But the criterion of transformation is on one hand to stay true to the original intention and on the other to bring good results. Now, saying that Amita Buddha is the true nature of mind without providing the necessary methods is misleading. Simple faith doesn't lead to recognising buddha-mind, neither does the sole repetition of any sets of words. Thus it is not enough to change the presentation of Shin Buddhism, one has to give a complete practical path too. Finally, if one reforms not only the explanation but the technique too it becomes a new lineage and it is not to be called Jodo Shinshu any more.

Unknown said:

If one wishes to see the Buddha then one sees him. If one sees him then one asks questions. If one asks then one is answered, one hears the sutras and rejoices greatly. One reflects thus: 'Where did the Buddha come from? Where did I go to?' and one thinks to oneself: 'The Buddha came from nowhere, and I also went nowhere.' One thinks to oneself: The Three Realms—the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Realm of the Formless—these Three Realms are simply made by thought. Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathagata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha. The mind does not itself know the mind, the mind does not itself see mind. A mind with conceptions is stupidity, a mind without conceptions is nirvana. There is nothing in these dharmas which can be enjoyed; they are all made by thinking. If thinking is nothing but empty, then anything which is thought is also utterly nonexistent.' So it is, Bhadrupala, such is the vision of the bodhisattvas who are established in the meditation."

The Buddha then recited the following verses:

Mind does not know mind;

With mind one cannot see mind.
Mind giving rise to conceptions is stupidity;
Free of conceptions it is nirvana.

There is nothing fixed or firm in these dharmas;
They are forever located in thinking.
When one understands emptiness,
One is altogether free of conceptual thinking.

Astus wrote:

This is what the Buddha said in the Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra (ch. 2, tr. by Paul Harrison), which inspired many to practice in order to reach the Western Land of Amita Buddha in China since it was translated in 179 CE by Lokaksema among the very first Mahayana texts to be found in Chinese. However, in the Pure Land tradition this is not considered to be a central scripture unlike the so called Three Pure Land Sutras.

I think that Pure Land Buddhism as it is found in East Asia is far from being attracting for a modern audience full of materialist concepts. But not everyone is like that even in the so called West. And those who tried hard to follow any of the Sage's Path but had to realise his/her failure the easy path of buddha-remembrance provides an escape even for them from the grip of life and death.

Many cannot even live according to the five lay precepts. Isn't it then a massive delusion to hope for enlightenment in this life when even their human birth is far from being assured? Of course, not taking the teaching of karma seriously and being ignorant of the drawbacks of samsara it is no wonder people are short sighted and look for only the present benefits.

Shinran in chapter 4 of the Kyogyoshinsho describes the activities of enlightened beings who dwell in the Pure Land, that is the returning phase. However, until we're still about to go there his words in the Shoshinge apply (stanza 8):

"The Light of All-embracing Compassion always illumines and protects us;
The darkness of ignorance has already been destroyed by it,
But still the clouds and mists of greed, desire, anger and enmity
Continually cover the sky of True Faith;"

If it were so that people reached the Pure Land here and now they would be like this (stanza 18):

"Upon reaching the World of Lotus-store,
We will realize True Suchness and attain Dharma-body.
Then, playing in the forests of evil passions, we will display supernatural powers;
Entering Samsaric states, we will manifest accommodative and transformed bodies to save beings."

Do you really think common deluded beings can easily realise Amita Buddha as the

self-nature and perform the tasks of an enlightened bodhisattva? If not, it is misleading to tell them so.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 15th, 2010 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Glad to see you here Andreas. You're right, I'm not a Shin follower as stated in my initial post. I'm not on a crusade either, so if you can reply to what I presented here as my unprofessional understanding of Shinran's thought I'd happily change my mind. My problem has been with Shin Buddhism as described by some that if shinjin equalled attaining non-retrogression - the realisation of no-birth of dharmas - in the here and now instead of meaning an assured birth in the Pure Land and consequently attaining enlightenment, it'd be in direct contradiction with not just Honen but generally Mahayana. But if it is simply an assured birth then a real Amita Buddha and a real Pure Land is necessary. Or it might be that my logic here is faulty somewhere. If so, please point at my mistake.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 15th, 2010 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namu Butsu,

What you say I'm all OK with it. That certainly sounds like a faith lived at its full extent. It is wonderful. My argument was only against saying that Amita Buddha is not a real being who reached perfect enlightenment via walking the bodhisattva path for many aeons. To say that Amita Buddha is also a dharmakaya buddha and the true nature of everything is not a contradiction but the application of the three bodies (trikaya) teaching, that is definitely fine with me.

Regarding Dr. Bloom's letter I have a question. How do you get in contact with that ultimate reality? If it is through Amita Buddha's compassion then isn't it the case that actually there is a buddha (sambhogakaya) leading people to it (dharmakaya)? And if that is the case there is no disagreement here as such is the teaching of all Pure Land sects, what he, however, calls a myth (if I get it right).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 15th, 2010 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namu Butsu,

Thanks for the quote. It seems to me more emotional-poetic than logical-descriptive, so I'd rather not analyse its content.

What I'm asking is a clear technical outline of the method of realising ultimate reality in your interpretation of Shin Buddhism. Otherwise it is difficult for me to understand what you exactly say and where our agreements and disagreements lie.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 16th, 2010 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Andreas,

Thank you for your kind reply and correction. I'm not trying to tell who is a real Shin follower and who is not. Sorry if my language wasn't appropriate. To me Shin as presented by Adrian sounded sensible and more in line with common (non-Shin) Pure Land thought. And if that is a minority view what he says I'd still like to understand the other version. By understanding I mean to have it explained in agreement with general Mahayana teachings, like transference of merit, buddha-lands, three bodies, dependent origination, etc. My other idea was once that Shinran turned Pure Land teachings into something very lofty, like as you said, dropping all self-centred effort, leaving mental proliferation (calculation) behind, and so on. In that case it resembles Zen a lot, or even more extreme. But that I find so contrary to the emphasis on unenlightened wicked nature and the concept of nenbutsu being a path for all. If it is such a radical no-effort, no-method teaching, I can only imagine that it is a way of very very few people. And thus it would belong to the Path of Sages and not the easy path of Pure Land. See now what I'm perplexed about?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2010 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: The value of non-Buddhist literature?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"As a Bodhisattva always comes to live in this world in order to save the sentient beings, he/she must be proficient in all kinds of worldly knowledge and skills. Thus, he/she should have a good profession for earning a living and serving the other people. Through all these actions, he/she can gather the other sentient beings and show them how to cultivate the Buddhist Way. A Bodhisattva must have a good knowledge of the Five Sciences."

Five sciences (pancavidya):

Language (Sabda)
Craftsmanship (Silpakarmasthana)
Medicine (Cikitsa)
Logic (Hetu)
Philosophy (Adhyatma)

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach16.htm>

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2010 at 5:22 AM
Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings
Content:
Astus wrote:
Andreas,

Good to read your thoughtful response. What you say appears to me that it is very much connected with the trend of finding "original Buddhism" - well known in Japan. It's similar to Soto people taking up Dogen from the long past and saying he knew it all and that's enough, never mind the past 800 years, or those before him.

Of course, a traditionalist-modernist debate should be avoided. Today's popular thinking raises its own challenges for all schools. Turning back to the "original" and being more socially engaged are well known effects of West meeting East. Maybe something enduring emerges from it, maybe it is just a temporary phase. I cannot tell. What I know is that a comparative study of modern Theravada, Zen and Shin would be really intriguing. I think they show similar changes to fit a modern mindset.

To me, as far as Pure Land soteriology goes - including Shin - the great wonder is giving an option for stupid people to reach liberation. As the Tannisho (§15) says, "This is the effortless practice undertaken by inferior religious practitioners in which the distinction between good and evil is non-existent." To make it anything more complicated than believing that Amita Buddha saves those who trust in his vows is contrary to Amita Buddha's intention as explained in the sutras. Of course, that doesn't mean there can be no difficult to understand explanations and philosophies based on that. And I'm not talking against anyone here.

It seems strange to me to say that Shinran greatly diverged from what Honen and the other patriarchs taught when it is Shinran himself claiming to be a direct follower of their teachings. He not just knew Honen personally but had his magnum opus, the Senchakushu, at hand. In case he didn't agree with that fully he could have said so, don't you think? Nevertheless, that's not to say Shinran didn't have his own perspectives and style of teaching.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2010 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy eye,

Nice you mentioned that book, it was just last weekend I finished reading it. Personally I found it very eclectic and thus confusing for those who have no knowledge of East-Asian Buddhism. Mixing the Pali scriptures with popular Mahayana sutras seems a not so good idea to me. Plus it is not just a collection of quotes but actually a rewritten version. Fairly readable but not the kind of book one should analyse it on a finer level of meaning. For that the original texts are indispensable, like the Pure Land sutras themselves. If you want a taste of the difficulty of Mind Only teaching try the Mahayanasamgraha by Asanga as an introduction.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2010 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Amida Buddha which is the Wisdom and Compassion of the cosmos transmits the Light of insight and we see more deeply."

What do you mean by "compassion of the cosmos"? You imply that stars, rocks and gases have compassion? Or there is a separate natural force besides the four elements, similar to gravity?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2010 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks especially for that interview link. It speaks in clear words that here Amida is the same as dependent origination and not an enlightened being in a buddha-land. Thus it symbolises reality, as Bloom said. Shinjin is realising that we're bad people full of karmic delusion, but this is all dependently originated, so it is not really mine. Am I correct?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 18th, 2010 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not just because the Pali Canon is not part of any East Asian collection of scriptures, but also looking into Hinayana materials is a 20th century phenomenon not done for

more than a millennium. Also it's worth mentioning that one wouldn't find a single reference in it to Amita Buddha, or even buddha-lands.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 18th, 2010 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Deity-yoga is at the heart of Mantrayana. Depending on the level one practises different styles of yidam practice is applied. In case of Atiyoga level we could say that the nature of mind becomes the deity. Consulting with one's teacher is for clarifying your personal needs. For general instructions there are many sources one can go for, from live teachings to tantras. Here's one for you:

Lady Tsogyal asks, Guru Rinpoche answers

("The Vajra Master & the Yidam Deity" in Dzogchen Essentials: The Path That Clarifies Confusion)

Why is it important to practice the yidam deity?

It is essential to practice a yidam deity because through that you will attain siddhis, your obstacles will be removed, and you will obtain powers, receive blessings, and give rise to realization. Since all these qualities result from practicing the yidam deity, then without the yidam deity you will be just an ordinary person. By practicing the yidam deity, you attain the siddhis, so the yidam deity is essential.

...

If one's view is high, is it permissible to dispense with the yidam deity?

If you attain confidence in the correct view, then that itself is the yidam deity. Do not regard the yidam deity as a form body. Once you realize the nature of dharmakaya, you will have accomplished the yidam deity.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 18th, 2010 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land as a meditation practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Pure Land teaching has always had meditation as the central piece of the tradition. What came to be the Jodo and Jodo Shinshu schools in Japan are quite radicals compared to all the others. If you want a more detailed description of the options check <http://www.ymba.org/BWF/bwf0.htm>. As for buddha-remembrance practice, this is a really nice text: <http://www.ymba.org/monkey/monkeyfrm.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 19th, 2010 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana and the Dhyanas/Jhanas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Only non-returners (anagami) and arhats are free from the kamaloka. On the other hand, just by mastering dhyanas and samapattis (eight jhanas) one never becomes an arya of any level. These absorptions can result in heavenly births in the rupa and arupalokas, so they're said to be parts of the teaching of men and gods that is before the level of sravakas. Also don't forget that there is a dhyana-paramita for the bodhisattvas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 20th, 2010 at 2:04 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana and the Dhyanas/Jhanas

Content:

Astus wrote:

BTW, to reply to your question, bodhicitta is fully sufficient for preventing one to get lost in illusory nirvanas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2010 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think Zen specifically requires a teacher compared to other Buddhist schools (except Secret Mantra where they are emphatic about the guru). For instance Dahui came up with the practice of huatou exactly in order to propagate Zen among the laity. In recent times Xuyun also had a fairly large number of lay followers.

While it is true that the majority of "home-stayers" are busy collecting merit by supporting the monks and nuns, that is not the only option. The idea of "Zen in action" is essentially for those who are not in a monastery or a cave. Also it is not a coincidence that one of the most favourite sutras of Zen is about a layman.

What to do to practise Zen? Simple. Abide in the Unborn - as Bankei said, again a popular teacher. Trust in the Empty Doer - aka Juigong as Daehaeng Kunsunim says. It is accessible all the time. What else one would need?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2010 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is no different from questioning whether one meditates on loving-kindness or not. If you're clear about the meaning of the word you can match the experience, just like you can tell if the water is hot or cold.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Historical connection to the Buddha, the myth of unbroken lineage, might be true for monastic ordination, even though specific names and dates are unknown (and not important), but certainly not true for the so called Dharma-transmission of Zen. So that form of connection doesn't exist in a literal sense. However, in an ahistorical form there are different levels of connections ranging from hearing about the teaching up to enlightenment.

A teacher is a vessel of the Dharma, a medium. A teacher can transmit the teaching in many ways, like lectures, interviews, books and videos. To have a personal connection with a teacher is like having a good friend. But can we say that great masters who had literally hundreds of students were intimate with all of them? Unlikely. Also monks, following their initial years of training, have to be able to work on their own.

The guide of every Buddhist is the teaching of the Buddha. I go to my bookshelf (or C:\Users\Astus\My Documents\Sutra) and open the Avatamsaka Sutra I can read the very words of the Awakened One. In the Manifestation of Buddha chapter the knowledge of the essence of buddhas is called "teacherless spontaneous knowledge" (tr. Cleary, chapter 37; T10n0279, vol. 52, p0278a06). A couple of pages back it explains what "teacherless" stands for:

"If great enlightening beings accomplish the techniques of this great concentration of knowledge of adornments of buddhas of all worlds, they are teacherless because they can enter all principles and qualities of buddhas by themselves, without depending on another's instruction." (ch. 27; T10n0279, vol. 41, p0218a17-18)

Of course that doesn't mean there are no teachers. It is more like how the Diamond Sutra says Sakyamuni didn't learn anything from Dipamkara. As in the Avatamsaka Sutra:

"though they know things ultimately have no teacher, yet they always respect all teachers and those of experience; though they know true understanding of things does not come from another, yet they always respect skillful guides" (ch. 27; T10n0279, vol. 43, p0225b22-24)

As far as Zen history is concerned here, we can see that already at the beginning there were different factions with differing views. Now if we consider that there are so many

factors defining what constitutes authentic teaching and to whom, it is virtually impossible to tell from the outside (ie. not joining any of them) who carries the real flame of transmission. Thus arguing for the necessity of a teacher - an enlightened Zen Master - becomes quite problematic.

I don't say teachers are useless, not at all. Without teachers Buddhism is dead. But this mentality of "ask your guru" is what I see as a deviance. In the words of Linji:

you take the words that come out of the mouths of a bunch of old teachers to be a description of the true Way. You think, 'This is a most wonderful teacher and friend. I have only the mind of a common mortal, I would never dare try to fathom such venerableness.' Blind idiots! You go through life with this kind of understanding, betraying your own two eyes, cringing and faltering like a donkey on an icy road, saying, 'I would never dare speak ill of such a good friend, I'd be afraid of making mouth karma!'" (tr. Watson, ch. 17; T47n1985_p0499b20-24)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010 at 6:58 AM

Title: Re: How useful are Chan records?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a great analysis on Chan texts with a focus on Zhaozhou's Wu:

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf%202007%20Chan%20Gongan.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

At another place Linji advises his disciples to go and find a teacher for time is short. Also he talks about his career that he studied the Vinaya, sutras, treatises, then started Chan practice and finally met a capable teacher. So perhaps he wasn't that maverick in the end.

Respect for teachers and fellow practitioners is important of course. Even in the Nikaya scriptures the Buddha told Ananda that good friends are not just the half but the whole of holy life. As I said, I'm not arguing for the dismissal of teachers, only against this concept that without a personal contact with a teacher one cannot progress on the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Personally I have benefitted from "sitting at the foot" of some Zen teachers. It has its own advantages and disadvantages. I am sure, however, that I learnt nothing as far as theory and practice goes that I couldn't from non-personal sources. But that was my case, not everyone's. Nevertheless, as you said, we can access a great amount of information, and if needed talk to teachers and fellows about some problems. On the other hand, if one can join a community IRL, it is very good and so there's one teacher at least (in most cases).

I'm not so sure about the necessity of a Zen teacher in the past. What you say about the limited source of information is true of course. But if we imagine a monk who learnt the basics in a monastery and then goes to the mountains, there were no teachers at hand. He knew what to do, had the training to prepare for solitary practice, then went on and did his best. And when he returned he visited temples, was respected by others for his practice and wisdom and finally established his own temple.

We shouldn't forget either that documents of transmission were used in order to establish one's authority as the abbot of a monastery. It is like joining the prestigious club of elite monks who claimed to be enlightened heirs of Bodhidharma. Certainly it was on one hand a proof of one's expertise but as we can learn from the texts the status of an abbot/Zen teacher was abused as well on a large scale.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Evolution

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think this brings up an apparent contradiction between scientific and Buddhist view. I mean, according to Buddhist cosmology there have been great empires and highly developed civilizations on Earth before. No scientific evidence for that. In Buddhism karma defines birth, so in case there were no humans here it must have been on a different world humans were born.

Or, it is possible to reinterpret religious cosmology as if it were somewhat metaphoric, for instance about the four continents and Mount Meru. I wonder what could be a solution here.

One simple and easy answer could be that there is a scientific and there is a religious world view, no need to match them. But this is hardly acceptable for those who see science as the source of really real truth about life, the world and everything.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 24th, 2010 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Evolution

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Thanks for giving a broader explanation of what I called separating scientific from religious. Your description was what I had in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 24th, 2010 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Evolution

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a known trick to re-interpret ancient passages in a metaphorical way even if it was meant to be literal back then. However, that is accepting the validity of the other's position thus being forced to change one's own. Every religion did the same to other faiths when they conquered a land, just think about making saints, angels and demons from local spirits and gods in case of Christianity, and in Buddhism turning Indian gods to mortal beings and taming the demons of Tibet. When science can force other views to submit themselves to it, that is its victory, spreading scientific ideas (in this sense it is not a bit different from religions). But we can use instead of this "war" metaphor other forms, like the meme theory, to describe how one view infects another view.

Among the many options to choose from about how to look at the relationship between Buddhism and science, to take a Buddhist position we should rather look at the relevance and effectiveness of scientific ideas on the Way. There are many aspects to investigate for sure.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 25th, 2010 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Evolution

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not talking about it being an enemy but careful consideration of taking science and especially scientism-physicalism as something compelling for Buddhism. On one hand it was rarely a problem for Buddhists to adopt to different cultures. However, neither in East-Asia nor in Tibet they gave up basic tenets of their cosmology.

I said Way but that has nothing to do with Taoism, it is for the Way to Enlightenment, ie. Marga/Magga in Sanskrit/Pali and Dao in Chinese.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 25th, 2010 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here I collected the words of Shinran from the Kyogyoshinsho. I believe these express his understanding honestly and clearly, therefore they can be relied on as definite teachings. This I have done in order to show my confusion openly about the way Shin Buddhism is taught by Bloom et al. I sincerely hope that if I missed something in the writings of Shinran, someone can point out to me where he says otherwise in a similar manner I now quote him and adding my interpretation of those paragraphs.

Shinjin is the heartfelt trust in the vows of Amita buddha. Those vows explicitly contain Dharmakara bodhisattva's intention to bring about a buddha-land where people can be born via buddha-remembrance. In Shinran's words:

"When the Larger Sutra says 'hear' [in the phrase 'having heard the Name'], it means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha made and fulfilled the Vow, entertain no doubt. This is what is meant by 'hear.' 'Faith' [in 'rejoice in faith'] refers to Faith endowed by the Primal Vow-Power. 'Rejoice' shows the state of joy in body and mind. 'Even (once)' is the word that comprises both many and few. 'A single thought' means that one's Faith is free of double-mindedness; hence, it is called 'a single thought.' This is what [Vasubandhu] calls 'the One Mind.' The One Mind is the true cause of birth in the Pure Land of Recompense."

(Chapter on Faith)

"When I contemplate 'recompense,' I find that the accomplished land has resulted as the recompense for the Tathagata's ocean-like Vow. Hence, 'recompensed.'"

(Chapter on True Buddha and Land)

He doesn't say it is a metaphor, or an expedient means. Quite the contrary, he writes more than once that Dharmakara bodhisattva's practice was pure and his compassion all-embracing, that's how he could create such a land:

"when the Tathagata awakened compassion for all suffering ocean-like sentient beings and performed the Bodhisattva practices for inconceivable, millions and billions of kalpas, his practices in three modes of action have never been impure or untrue, even for a thought-moment or an instant. With the pure and true mind, the Tathagata perfected the complete, all-merging, unhindered, inconceivable, [604b] indescribable and ineffable supreme virtue. The Tathagata endows his Sincere Mind to the ocean-like multitudes of beings who are full of evil passions, evil karma and perverted wisdom. This is the true mind endowed by him to benefit such beings; hence, it is not mixed with doubt. The basis for the Sincere Mind is the Sacred Name of the supreme virtue."

(Chapter on True Faith)

Shinran also talks about the Pure Land as a real place, compares it with other buddha-lands and makes distinctions, as found in the sutras, about difference in birth in the Pure Land:

"Provisional birth is birth in an embryonic state, and borderland; it is birth beneath the

Twin Shala trees. Immediate birth refers to birth by sudden transformation into the Recompensed Land."

(Chapter on Provisional Buddhas and Lands)

Difference because of mixed and auxiliary practices:

"These are all the karmic cause for birth in the borderland, womb-palace and the realm of sloth and pride. Therefore, even though one is born in the Land of Utmost Bliss, one is unable to see the Three Treasures, for the light of the Buddha's mind does not illumine and embrace practitioners of other miscellaneous acts."

(Chapter on Provisional Buddhas and Lands)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 25th, 2010 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Evolution

Content:

Astus wrote:

Problem is that literal and metaphorical reading should be true at the same time. So, like in the case of absorptions and heavens, it is true that different levels of dhyana correspond to different strata of heavens, and it is also true that there are literally those heavens with many gods. The inner and outer worlds are interrelated, thus all is consciousness only (which is not the same as solipsism or idealism). But in science the basic view is a separate objective world independent of mind. From this disagreement comes contradictions between the two views.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 26th, 2010 at 2:53 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

To say that Mahayana sutras are not from the Buddha is to deny the Great Vehicle. The misunderstanding comes from not understanding what Buddhavacana (Buddha speech) means. I recommend you reading <http://geocities.ws/sutrasbudistas/shastras/gran-vehiculo.html> that also discusses the question of the Bodhisattva-pitaka, i.e. the Mahayana sutras.

I understand very well when people have problems with believing in beings beyond this physical Earth-realm. But in Buddhism there have always been hells, spirits, heavens and gods. There are infinite realms throughout the cosmos, thus infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas. There is not just the land of Amita Buddha but also the lands of Medicine Buddha, Akshobya Buddha, etc. Even in the Nikayas Shakyamuni talked about buddhas of the past.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 26th, 2010 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

I have no idea where he practised, a more educated person might be able to answer that question. But bodhisattvas travel in myriads of buddha-lands, so it may not matter that much.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 26th, 2010 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Andreas,

I've read the O'Neill article and sent a mail to Dr Bloom. What O'Neill said sounded quite like what you talked about here. But as I said, I'd like to see references to Shinran for this, if possible. Actually that's what I asked from Dr Bloom too. For while I accepted already what you've said as one of the interpretation of Shin Buddhism I still don't see it harmonising with Shinran's words. Maybe it is so, maybe not, I don't know yet. Nevertheless, it's OK with me to say that there are different versions of viewing Shin Buddhism.

Please don't take it as a fight. What you and those you refer to say about Shin Buddhism is fine by me on its own. I just want to see how that is connected to what Shinran himself said, and of course to the major picture of Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 26th, 2010 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sure, I'll bring his explanation here.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2010 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: Is there really a "just war"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not exactly about war but the relationship between Buddhism (Mahayana-Vajrayana) and Violence: <http://vajrayana.faithweb.com/DGrayCompassionateViolence.pdf> by David Gray. It is a great article in my opinion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2010 at 7:05 PM

Title: The Silent Master

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know many teachers from Tibetan schools that's why I ask this question.

Is it common, or normal, that a highly educated lama teaches to his Western community some sadhanas, gives the necessary empowerments, but otherwise gives no lectures on general Mahayana nor on Tantra? What could be a reason for this?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 3rd, 2010 at 1:32 AM

Title: Re: The Silent Master

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm talking about a resident teacher and not just someone who came by, gave an empowerment and went on.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 3rd, 2010 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: The Silent Master

Content:

Astus wrote:

He has a small group of dedicated practitioners, about 5-6 people I met there, and I asked them about what teachings were given throughout the years.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 3rd, 2010 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Lam Rim texts

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to make a note that none of the Lam Rim texts could qualify as a "summary of the Pali Canon". For concise presentation of the Theravada (and not all Hinayana) path of similar quality one should look for Abhidhamma summaries like the Abhidhammattha Sangaha. Lam Rim texts are very distant relatives of such Theravada summaries.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 5th, 2010 at 5:28 AM

Title: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to bring up four books as major references:

John McRae: Seeing through Zen - Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism

John McRae: The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism

Morten Schlütter: How Zen Became Zen - The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China

Jiang Wu: Enlightenment in Dispute - The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China

If one were to look into these fine works of modern scholarship covering important eras of Chan history the question of this topic may easily appear. We've been told by Western (and Eastern) Zen teachers how Dharma-transmission is so essential to Zen, and only a teacher with proper credentials can train students. Then it turns out there is no such thing as a proper credential. And it is not just that the 27/28 Indian patriarchs are fake, but the whole Tang "golden age" and the so called "five houses" too. Zen history was not made up only in the Song era but again in the Ming dynasty. And I guess such revival happened again with Xuyun in the 19th-20th century.

What is your reply to the question?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 5th, 2010 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Refuge in the Triple Jewel requires no preceptor, it never did. Who would be the preceptor for taking refuge? If only monks then there are no Buddhists in Japan, nor one could get it from any lay teacher. By the way, don't you think if someone happened to find a sutra in a library and read it is karmic connection?

Transmission wasn't emphasised only when texts were rare but also when one could read the whole canon in the same monastery. And here this is not really about teachers generally but Zen masters defined by their lineage.

David,

I don't know if there are similar studies regarding Korean Buddhism. Nevertheless, looking into its recent history Dharma-transmission doesn't seem to play a central role. Master Seongcheol doesn't seem to have received any transmission (see his bio and prof. Hyewon Kang's essay "A Commentary on Venerable Songchul's Method for Seon Practice"), although he was supreme patriarch of the whole Jogye Order several times. Still, if the origin of such a transmission (India and China) is not reliable, there is no

basis to claim connection to the Buddha in a form of historical lineage.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 5th, 2010 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: The Silent Master

Content:

Astus wrote:

I didn't mean there were no teachings for the empowerment for there were. I meant he gives no teachings generally, you know, Dharma speeches.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 5th, 2010 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"As far as the Chan / Zen model goes, transmission has been deemed necessary."

Yes, that is the idea. But as we can see, it is not the reality. Then what's the point of a transmission that has no value as it's lost its historical validity? Actually Chan was attacked on this part by the rival Tiantai school questioning the historicity of its lineage. Now that we can see clearly it is invalid shouldn't it be wise to respond to this situation instead of clinging to an unstable concept?

"The leadership could presumably decide to change that doctrine however."

What leadership?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The only American Dharma-heir of Ven. Shengyan is Gilbert Gutierrez but he also has four other heirs in Europe (2 in UK, 1 in Switzerland, 1 in Croatia). These are the Western lay heirs, he has others (monks) in Taiwan as far as I know.

I wouldn't call Ven. Shengyan the head of Chinese Chan as a whole. He was the leader of his own community, the DDM, which was in Taiwan. I don't think he had any influence on things going on in the PRC or other Taiwanese groups. Actually it seems to me that Chinese Buddhism doesn't have any single leader (if not the Ministry of Religion, or something like that).

I don't think anyone would suggest to drop the idea of transmission. It has been a central aspect of Chan ever since. Even the term "Patriarchal Chan" bears the

significance of the concept. Personally I see no problem with it if handled properly and in light of historical events. But I think that in the West Dharma-transmission has been very much overemphasised, mystified and "misunderstood".

Zen has been advertised ever since as being an unbroken lineage from Shakyamuni Buddha up to the present. Actually it is severely broken in many parts. People claim reliability of Zen teachers based on their transmission (and not sutras or logical explanations of the Dharma for instance), therefore saying the source of such validity is forged must provoke a different view. Here I'm talking about the Western situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What are your credentials again?"

What credentials are you looking for from me? Please look at the opening post to see what this is about here.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The weight of my opinion is open for scrutiny and argument.

The "current model" did not produce either Huangbo or Shengyan. What the model created is an imagined link (bloodline) connecting those two people to each other and back to Shakyamuni. My argument is exactly that this connection is non-existent in its historical sense of a teacher-disciple lineage. It's also good to note that Shengyan didn't really follow the Hongzhou school (what Huangbo belonged to) rhetoric of sudden enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Being a broken lineage means that: no Zen patriarchal lineage was ever recognised in India and even in China it took some time to create it; the concept of transmission was revised a couple of times in the Tang; lineages and so called Zen houses were made up in the Song era; the Song myth of Tang Chan was revived in the Ming era with another forgery of lineages. These are in brief the subjects of those studies I mentioned in the

opening post, but of course there are other works by different scholars if you are interested.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, I know transmission is present in many forms within Buddhism but here I wanted to discuss the Zen version. If others can bring here enough research on Tantric (EA and Tibetan), Vinaya, Tiantai or other forms I would read it with great interest.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2010 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Soto Zen, dharma-transmission is part of becoming a fully authorised priest called osho (Chinese: heshang; Sanskrit: upadhyaya; i.e. preceptor). Thus it authorises one to be an abbot of a temple (family property). This is of course a result of historical development within Soto Zen as it became an organised church in Japan. I have no objection against that practice at all. What I think is important is to understand transmission not as a "diploma of enlightenment" but as a means to run a church. And that has been the case since the rise of Chan in China since the 11th century. Thus to say that anyone who aspires to be a teacher of Zen must have a paper is not a religious point of view but a bureaucratic one.

Again, that doesn't mean teachers are useless. It's just how we look at people who spread the Dharma. And also it defines our view of Zen. In my opinion Zen is part of Buddhism and has nothing special that could qualify it to be above any other school. It is a form of teaching (actually a large variety of forms) that can be studied and practised just as any other teaching. And some may become great teachers while many others don't regardless of having or not having a transmission from any organisation or lineage.

What the religious meaning of transmission is is the seeing of nature which is identical to the nature of all buddhas. That's how ideally paper transmission is a manifestation of mind-to-mind transmission, i.e. enlightenment. (Here it is also good to note even the meaning of enlightenment is questioned and debated by Zen teachers of the past.) As we can see, however, paper and mind-to-mind is not exactly the same. There are many enlightened people outside the Zen tradition too, so technically they have mind-to-mind transmission. And there are many non-enlightened people within Zen who have paper.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 7th, 2010 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: How Important Is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just bumped into this book:

https://books.google.com/books?id=x2ZxQk2AfYsC&source=gbs_navlinks_s by Alan Cole. Here's a

https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache%3Az_pvDJJV6rsJ%3Awww.equinoxjournals.com%2Ffojs%2Findex.php%2FBFSR%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F7747%2F5133.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 7th, 2010 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land as a meditation practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Keep one eye on what you can do, in the present situation. But keep the other eye on the final goal. If one only looks at the present situation, then one will stagnate, and ultimately never proceed further. If one only looks at the final goal, then one will be intimidated, and never begin. Some teaching focus more on one than the other, and it pays not to confuse the two."

Wow, that was really a good one, Master Huifeng! Sadhu, sadhu!

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 7th, 2010 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Who are your Top 5 Mahayana masters of all time?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Nagarjuna - for Madhyamaka
2. Dushun - for Huayan
3. Mazu Daoyi - for Hongzhou Chan
4. Guifeng Zongmi - for Heze Chan and Huayan
5. Thrangu Rinpoche - especially for his teachings on Mahamudra

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2010 at 2:25 AM

Title: Re: What constitutes the word of the Buddha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Defining what the Buddha's speech is needs a definition of "buddha" and "speech".

Historical: This is the view that there was a buddha very long time ago in Northern India and gave teachings on the way to attain nirvana. It supposes that with archaeological and philological methods it is possible to unearth the Original, the Real.

Religious: This is the view where a buddha is not merely a flesh and blood human but a spiritual entity beyond constraints of physicality. It supposes that with a purified consciousness it is/was (Mahayana/Theravada) possible to see and here such a being.

Transcendental: This is the view where a buddha is the very nature of reality, enlightenment itself. It supposes that actually there is no buddha to meet for it is our true nature.

Indeed, this is simply the teaching of the trikaya. Thus shravakas see the first, (novice) bodhisattvas the first two, and buddhas (and mahasattvas) all three. I think that it doesn't take much effort to see how these there are interdependent and interpenetrating each other. There is no need to doubt either scientific research or traditional teaching. Just remember how in the Avatamsaka Sutra the Buddha was present in infinite universes without moving from his bodhimanda.

To answer the question in an essence-function format: all appearances are the "speech", the nature of such phenomena is the "buddha".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's my correspondence with Dr. Alfred Bloom on the subject raised here.

Me:

I've leafed through the Kyogyoshinsho to find how Shinran talks about the existence of his buddha-land and Amita Buddha but I could find only that he views it just like other Pure Land thinkers before, as a recompensed land and sambhogakaya buddha resulting from the bodhisattva work and vows. On the other hand, my friend tried to explain to me that Shinran is radically different here saying that Amita Buddha is not somebody "10,000 buddha-lands to the West" (as it is generally understood in Mahayana) but rather - and about this I'm uncertain if I get it right - the nature of reality, an impersonal compassionate force of the universe, thus Other Power is not from a tathagata but the dependent existence of everything and shinjin is realising our co-dependency. Could you please enlighten me about the Shin view, possibly with some reference to Shinran's words?

Dr. Bloom:

Thank you for your inquiry. I hope that I can help you. I must say first that what I present is my personal understanding of Shinran. However, I believe that it has basis in Shinran's writings.

With respect to the meaning of the term “reality”, you must be aware that it has a complex meaning. For some, it means an objective, independent or substantial existence apart from human consciousness. For others, it is the content of one’s consciousness as in the “consciousness only” school in Mahayana Buddhism.

In Mahayana Buddhism ultimate reality is inconceivable, beyond our conception, empty. However, it may manifest in our consciousness through visualization practice or as an awareness of trust that one has been embraced by “reality” imaged as Amida Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism holds that all beings have Buddha-nature, the potential to become Buddha. That is also an aspect of “reality.”

Shinran was trained in Tendai teaching which was greatly influenced by the Kegon teaching that we all exist within the Buddha-mind and all have the potentiality to become Buddha. While Shinran did not expect his followers to get into the complex details of Mahayana philosophy, he held that trust in Amida’s Vows manifests in our consciousness as the assurance that we have been embraced by Amida Buddha and are destined for birth in the Pure Land and Buddhahood. This trust is aroused through the working of Amida’s Vow in our life or karmic history.

Given this background we can try to address your question about the reality of Amida or as I would like to put it, Amida as our reality. In Shinran’s teaching we find three concepts of Amida. First there is the popularly understood Amida that was in the background of his teaching as an aspect of Japanese Buddhism where Pure Land teaching was pervasive in every tradition as an upaya-compassionate means to help people who could not participate in monastic practices. Birth into the Pure Land in this general tradition was through recitation of the name for karmic merit.

The second understanding of Amida is based in the story of Dharmakara in the Larger Pure Land Sutra where after aeons of practice, the Bodhisattva established the Pure Land. For Shinran the story was important because the Amida here is a Reward Body, a Buddha with beginning and no end. The Eighteenth Vow is important for Shinran, establishing the way of faith-trust and recitation of the name as expression of gratitude. According to his teaching (Notes on ‘Faith Alone’ (Yuishinshomin’I, and Jinen honi sho) Amida Buddha is the means for speaking about ultimate reality Dharmakaya, The Body of Truth.

The Buddha in this perspective is on a higher spiritual plane, removed from the necessity to perform karmic acts of merit to secure birth in the Pure Land. Also Amida Buddha in this context is the direct manifestation of the Body of truth. All other Buddhas are manifestations of Amida. He is not just one among many Buddhas that people may resort to for salvation.

This leads to Shinran’s own interpretation where Amida Buddha is Reality itself as the Eternal Buddha who has no beginning and no end. Here you can refer on my web page to the essay on the Ultimacy of Amida, Shinran’s Response to Tendai.

In Mahayana Buddhism there are three levels of Buddha corresponding to the

traditional three bodies of the Buddha:

The Level of Manifestation- a Buddha with a beginning and End, as is Sakyamuni and according to some interpreters, Amida who is said in the Sutra to have a lifespan of 42 kalpas before going into Nirvana.

2. The level of Reward Body or in modern terms of myth, the Buddha with a beginning and no End, as when Dharmakara becomes Amida, residing in his Pure Land.

3. The eternal Buddha, Buddha with no beginning and no End. This understanding is rooted in the Lotus sutra, Chapter 16, but Shinran applied it to Amida. Here Amida is the expression or term whereby we can speak of ultimate reality rather than just a discrete Buddha among the host of Buddhas. This was Shinran's contribution to the development of the concept of Amida.

According to Shinran, Ultimate Amida is colorless, formless, inconceivable as the Body of truth. He is the Buddha-nature in all things. Wisdom is in the form of light, the formless form. Consequently as the working of reality, trust is aroused within us, being endowed by Amida. Faith is the realization of Buddha-nature, the goal of all Mahayana practice. All religious action, particularly Nembutsu becomes an expression of gratitude. There is no need for merit.

Thus we do not ask if Amida is real, but rather Amida is the reality of our lives as the motivating force for spiritual activity. As the universal ground of all existence, everything has Buddha-nature and is the manifestation of Amida in its particular form, benefitting our lives and all others.

In essence Amida Buddha is the symbolization of the process of interdependence. He is the reality of all relationships that nurture and promote life. Amida Buddha in the texts and as spoken about provides a focus for understanding the spirituality of all things within our experience and world.

In my personal view, this is the most real of anything real. But it is not literal, objective reality as something apart from my consciousness and life. It is my life. Amida in this view, as I would understand it, is real as an ideal is real. It is a force that influences life. Ideals have a reality though they are not objective, discrete things. They are real in our consciousness as sources of motivation. Similarly there is no such thing as society as a discrete objective reality. Society is the sum total of our relationships as the context for the principles that we live by. Society is the way we relate to others.

I am not sure this will help you in your thinking. As for the discussion on the Internet, it is important to understand that Shinran worked within the context of Mahayana philosophy and his understanding of Amida is shaped by that. I do not believe he was a literalist in the style that many people view the teaching today. Mahayana philosophy teaches the emptiness of all ideas and things, a la Nagarjuna (2nd century). This itself means that things have no reality in themselves but only in relation to other things, again interdependence. Mahayana teaching is not literalist.

The literalist trend among some interpreters of Shin Buddhism is a reflection their American cultural experience where fundamentalist Christianity, a large segment of American religion, is objectivist and literal. They are carrying this over to Buddhism. For those who wish to hold to Amida and the Pure Land as somehow literally real, they should also understand the reality of hells as presented in the tradition. If the Pure Land is a discrete reality so must be the hells also which are the counterpoint or alternative to the Pure Land. If Amida is a discrete reality as they argue, then all the other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Buddhist texts have the same reality. Then the question is raised, if Amida Buddha is on the same level with other Buddhas etc, what is the meaning of Shinran's teaching? Shin Buddhism is distinctive because it elevates Amida beyond popular conceptions and changed the definition and meaning of religion not only in Japan but universally. Religious faith is not about what you get (It is all given through the working of the Vow.) Religious faith is about what you give in the embodiment of compassion and wisdom.

Me:

After reading your mail a couple of times and your essay on Shinran's relationship with Tendai teachings I came up with the following question:

Amida Buddha is principally a dharmakaya buddha, equal to Vairocana in the Avatamsaka and Sakyamuni in the Lotus Sutra. At the same time, as a manifestation of mahakaruna Dharmakara Bodhisattva has manifested, attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi and established Sukhavati for saving all sentient beings. It appears to me that this teaching corresponds to the trikaya format, as you have also mentioned it, with the difference of Amida being the designation of both the ultimate and the relative (forming the unity of two truths in the middle way). And please correct me if I misunderstand something here, but then it comes down to the usual Mahayana setting of a buddha being manifest and unmanifest at the same time. Thus sambhogakaya Amida is as real as "earth, tiles and pebbles". Consequently a literal reading of the sutras on the Pure Land is not wrong but only the manifest level and realisation of the unmanifest happens after birth. This matches the Chinese explanation of first practising with mark to reach no-mark.

Does this meet your understanding? If not, please clarify for me at what point I go wrong.

Dr. Bloom:

I do not see any problem with what you state, except that I have problem with the term literal. I don't think ancient people thought in those terms. Literal, as I observe it from Christian fundamentalist thought, means objectively existing apart from one's consciousness, just as God is objectively real as the creator of the universe etc. Thus they read the Bible literally meaning that what it says exists is existing independently. It is kind of naïve realism.

I don't think Buddhism takes any position like that. In fact it is clear from the Consciousness Only school that nothing exists separate from our consciousness of it.

The Pure Land etc can be real within our consciousness as a means (upaya) to reach a deeper level of understanding, moving from form to formless, that is, as Shinran says in the Jinen honi sho, that Amida with form is a means (Ryo) to know the formless, colorless Dharmakaya. It does not exist by itself or for itself. Consequently, though this is wordy, Amida can be a spiritual reality within our consciousness as a spiritual guide and ideal.

Also in the Middle Path school, all concepts are empty and come out of our delusory mind. It avoids substantialism, similarly to the Consciousness Only. These philosophical perspectives underly all Mahayana schools.

There are other considerations, such as whatever interpretation we apply to Amida, must also apply to other Buddhas and descriptions in the many sutras. When it says that the Buddha's tongue reached out to all the universes in the ten directions, is that to be taken literally. What would it mean? I think symbolic and metaphorical thinking as in the Sutras has spiritual meaning not metaphysical.

Me:

I guess I should clarify what I said first. I didn't propose that things are independent of one's perception (consciousness). But just because all things are mental (vijñapti) it doesn't mean they don't exist as individual causal streams. Thus we can say that there are uncountable sentient beings in the six realms just as there are immeasurable bodhisattvas and buddhas. This is not naive realism, neither idealism, nor solipsism. From this point of view I say that Amida Buddha as a sambhogakaya exists in the Pure Land just as you or me exist on Earth (Saha Land). But I'm not sure what you mean by "spiritual". If it is an equivalent of the realms realised by higher perception (abhijñā) such as heavens and buddha-lands I see your point. If you meant something else, please explain.

If I caused a misunderstanding by using the word "literal" and this above clarifies what I meant I'm glad for then I believe we could see each other face to face.

Dr. Bloom:

Perhaps I was responding to the term literal from own background. I guess what I would say that we can consider anything "real" so far as it accords with the basic parameters of Buddhist teaching on the qualified nature of "existence." Certainly whatever status such "reality" has, it has causal impact.

The important thing in Buddhist teaching as I understand it is how it inspires a person to move beyond the present level of insight to deeper levels and understanding and thereby the reduction in our egoism and attachment to our self-concepts, our world, our ideas and beliefs. Buddhism is about the transformation of the mind. Upaya and perhaps provisional beliefs etc can be helps depending on ones mental or spiritual development. Not every one is at the same point and Buddhism is not "one size fits all." People respond to different forms of presentation. If the mythology of Buddhism in

its concreteness helps a person in spiritual growth, then it is “real.” It is the role of the “Good Teacher” to draw the person on, moving beyond forms, concepts etc. which all excite the ego and become objects of attachment. Beyond that what would be the point?

Shinran expresses himself in several ways. In human situations of grief, he consoled his followers that he would meet them in the Pure Land. In his more scholarly writings, particularly Kyogyoshinsho, birth in the Pure Land is immediate buddhahood. The attainment of faith is one’s rebirth. Since Amida Buddha as the Eternal Buddha is wisdom in the form of light, he is formless and colorless, but the context or frame in which we understand our lives; hence very “real.” The Pure Land must also be ultimately formless and colorless as Nirvana is formless, beyond conception. The Buddha and the Land are One.

In our unrealized, unenlightened state, we can only talk about things in the dimension of form; consequently we do talk about Pure Land etc but not so much as place but of quality of existence, our spiritual ideal. It has the qualities of freedom, bliss, purity, ultimate fulfillment, joy, continual learning etc.

I do not think we disagree perhaps, though we may have different ways of expressing ourselves. Amida is the real of the real; the reality of all our relations and a motive force in our everyday life as the power of compassion and the light that highlights our own shadows. The brighter the light the sharper the shadows.

As for spirituality, it is a much used and abused term today. I guess for me things are spiritual to the extent that they indicate there is always something more than what our minds can encompass. It is vague because it points to the mystery that surrounds our lives and people become spiritual when they become aware that our lives have a deeper context which we may picture to ourselves, depending on what tradition we follow and how it shapes our attitudes and values. I do not see spirituality as a divisive thing, but the more spiritual we are, the more we find our kinship with all being. For me Amida which means Infinite offers the most comprehensive perspective on the mystery that grounds our lives.

Me:

Thank you for your kind attention. My original confusion was raised by thinking that if Amida Buddha is not a real being and the whole story of Dharmakara never happened there is no basis for an effective vow to save beings and bring them to the Western Realm. Naturally there are many ways to interpret sutras, however, certain doctrines are essential for a coherent system and such a teaching is the enlightenment of Amida Buddha and the creation of Pure Land to fulfil his vows. This seemed to be questioned by your (and others) presentation of Shinran's teachings and that's why I turned to you for elucidation of the matter.

It was today morning I realised our personal approaches to the Shin Dharma are quite different, which I believe is fine. As for its doctrinal aspect it appears we may agree. To give it (hopefully) a final test I have a question regarding the teaching's practical aspect.

You've mentioned Cittamantra and Madhyamaka as essential doctrines in Mahayana. On a personal level the six paramitas are the core of the path from delusion to buddhahood. I Chinese Pure Land and Jodoshu it is understood that one perfects the bodhisattva path after being born there. I'd like to know how the practice of the paramitas explained in Shinshu.

Dr. Bloom:

Thank you for your reply. In interpreting religious documents, I do not believe there is one right and wrong. We have to understand texts according to our background and knowledge at the time. I think it is important to discuss issues and try to find areas of consensus.

There are doctrines which result from religious experience and in this case Shinran. Even in his own day there were differences of opinion. It makes for historical development. Some ideas are better than others and over time become the basic viewpoint. With the shift in cultures from Japan-in this case- to the West, new questions are being asked that were not primary in Japan. That is why scholars differ among themselves in trying to respond to the modern situation. I see myself as just one of those responses for whatever it may be worth. It may help some people but not others. In my study course I tried to develop a more or less coherent approach to Shin Buddhism using contemporary (as far as I understand it) considerations about myth and religious imagery. More than the character of the story itself, the implications and meaning for our lives are the most important aspects. What spiritual insight it offers. Shinran reinterpreted the scripture in some areas to reflect his own experience and for myself, I try to follow his lead in that because it helps me understand my own experience. It can be different for different people-even within the same tradition.

I should respond to your question in this letter on the 6 paramitas which are regarded with high importance in Shin Buddhism. However, they are not advocated as the means to enlightenment, but are inspired by the Buddha's compassion when one realizes that Amida's Vows, which symbolize the compassion that surrounds our lives, are the foundation of our spiritual life. The story of Dharmakara, his Vows and fulfillment offer us a guiding vision in living our lives, and summarized in the six paramitas. They are guiding principles for negotiating life.

In earlier Pure Land teaching and as presented in the Sutras, the Pure Land is a staging area for the completion of the process to become a Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism has an environmental theory implicit in it. That is, one cannot really achieve spiritual goals unless there is something in the environment that makes it possible. We are always involved in social relations and so, depending on our relationships, we progress in fulfilling our lives. That is why often religious teachers suggest that people seek out like-minded people in the practice of their faith. We all need reinforcement. In Buddhist view, as presented in Mahayana, we live in the defiled realm in this world and in later teaching it was the age of the demise of the dharma-mappo when there was only teaching, but no practice or realization. It was a spiritually corrupt age. Hence the Pure

Land established by Amida provides the impetus and attraction for people to pursue the ideals of the six paramitas and attain enlightenment and Buddhahood. That is probably held by many people today and is a straightforward reading of the Sutra.

That said, Shinran reinterpreted the tradition and maintained that on reception of true entrusting in this life, we already are reborn in the Pure Land in principle. We are obviously, by our external condition, not there, but in terms of Amida's Vows and compassion, the causes for our birth are set. People are already saved, but not aware of it until faith arises. The moment of death is called birth into the Pure Land but for Shinran, it means the immediate attainment of Buddhahood. There is no process to attainment in the Pure Land. In fact, according to his interpretation of the 22nd vow, rather than remaining in the Pure Land we return to this world as bodhisattvas to work for the salvation of all beings. The ultimate goal is the salvation and Buddhahood of all beings and not simply residence in the Pure Land forever. I think I mentioned to you earlier that just to desire to go to the Pure Land because it is a place of pleasure and bliss, one does not go. That is because egoism is still the motivating factor.

While in our present state in life, we cannot claim to be bodhisattvas, the perception of who is the bodhisattva is the perspective of the other person whose life may be enhanced and assisted through one's efforts—namely aspiring to fulfill the six paramitas in our lives as we are able and inspired by the vision of Amida's unconditional compassion. For Shinran, religion is not about getting-salvation or benefits, but about giving. Dana is the first paramita and highly stressed within the temples—and not only for money for the temple—but as the gift of our lives to help others.

Unfortunately, of course, we are all foolish being-bombu- and so while we aspire to this ideal, we do not always fulfill it. We are filled with contradictions. Shinran's teaching was aimed to reduce as far as he could the egoism that infects religion and all our lives.

This gets back to the paramitas as guides. They are not rules and regulation or requirements for Amida's embrace. They result, to the degree they are realized in our actions, from our awareness of that embrace by life and reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Seeing Your Nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

White Lotus,

You talk about enlightenment as if it were the simplest thing in the world. Do you also think the great Zen teachers of the past were stupid people who learnt and practised for decades in mountains and monasteries before they claimed understanding? Should we tell the monks and nuns of today they can now go home since they're already buddhas?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 6:00 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you can see, I asked explicitly the questions raised here in order to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding. Concluding the results is that (1) Amita Buddha is both a dharmakaya and sambhogakaya, (2) and the Pure Land exists in conformity with the Buddhist definition of reality as a buddha-land. This has been my understanding of Shinshu interpretation before and now and Dr. Bloom had no objection to it as an incorrect view or something contrary to his understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 8:34 PM

Title: Re: Seeing Your Nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not enough to see simplicity, wisdom means seeing simplicity and complexity at the same time. This is the harmony of essence and function.

Unknown said:

Guishan said to the assembly, "People nowadays have great capacity but do not have great function."

Yangshan related this to a temple priest. The temple priest kicked over a stool. Hearing about it, Guishan burst into laughter.

Everywhere, suffering and pain;
everyone, vainly discussing the self.
Though they are buddha,
it's all buried beneath years of conditioning.
(Dogen/Loori: The True Dharma Eye, 279)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is impressive how he cares to reply to questions, I really appreciate it. As I've found out it a couple of years back not every teacher is like that.

Also, as you say, his replies focus on the personal and practical aspect. I think there is more difference in terms of language and perspective than philosophy between Adrian and Bloom. Otherwise I'm sure he would have replied in a different way as we've also touched the subject of literal interpretation. But I've informed him about this topic where I published our correspondence. Perhaps he may join us in this discussion.

A couple of days back I thought about the "four reliances" (Catvāri pratiśaraṇāni / 法四依) which says: "rely on nitārtha and not on neyārtha". Thus if Pure Land sutras are to be further explained (neyārtha) they don't express the final meaning. Such is the case if we interpret it as only metaphorical, unlike teachings on emptiness and such. On the other hand, Shinran says the teaching of Amita Buddha's vows was Shakyamuni's true intention and final Dharma. What do you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

No contradiction, true. Neither do I think a teaching being metaphorical is such a problem. Lot of sutras are like that, either completely or partially, including the Lotus and Avatamsaka sutras.

Regarding the use of such tools they sound great to me. Nice explanation, really.

I understand the general problem of Western perspective influenced by our idea of history (which is not every cultures' view). This creates a new way of looking at tradition and defines how we can absorb other views. About this I refer to Huseng's topic on buddhavadāna.

I don't think it'd be impossible for European men to have a deeply religious view of life. Even as a Buddhist. But maybe this is easy for me to say because I've been attracted to religions since my childhood. Even after turning to Buddhism it took me a couple of years before I could get over the faith in God - not just on a mental but also on an emotional level. Materialism has never been my cup of tea. So the many worlds and beings throughout the multiverses is now OK with me. And one can even go to those places in Buddhism (also one of the functions of buddha-remembrance).

The crucial shift I think is from "matter only" to "consciousness only" (cittamātra - in its Buddhist sense, not Western misinterpretations). This realm of ours is made of concepts and feelings. Other realms are also like that. This is "thinking of buddha is seeing the buddha" - an idea applied in Vajrayāna too, same as in the Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra used by early Amita buddha-remembrance practitioners in China.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 13th, 2010 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Tantra and the Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just as Mahāyāna sutras in general, we can say tantras being the words of the Buddha

except when stated otherwise (just like there are sutras taught by Shakyamuni's immediate disciples, bodhisattvas and other buddhas).

Early tantric scriptures (called sutras in Chinese) begin with the usual form:

Sūtra of the Buddha-Crown Superb Victory Dhāraṇī:

"Thus I have heard: At one time the Bhagavān was staying in the Anāthapiṇḍika Garden of Jetavana Park in the city kingdom of Śrāvastī, together with a group of 8,000 great bhikṣus."

Buddha Pronounces the Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Holy Infinite-Life Resolute Radiance King Tathāgata Dhāraṇī:

"Thus I have heard: At one time the World-Honored One was dwelling in the Anāthapiṇḍika Garden of Jetavana Park in the city kingdom of Śrāvastī, together with a group of 1,250 great bhikṣus."

Then in later texts we see moving from a common setting into a meditative world. See how the Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra (also called a tantra in Tibetan Buddhism) begins:

"Thus have I heard. At one time the Bhagavān (Lord) was residing in the vast adamantine palace of the Dharma realm empowered by Tathāgatas, in which all the vajradharas had all assembled; the great pavilion [comparable to] the king of jewels, born of the Tathāgata's faith-and-understanding, play, and supernatural transformations, was lofty, without a center or perimeter, and variously adorned with great and wondrous jewel-kings, and the body of a bodhisattva formed a lion throne."

The Tattvasamgraha Sutra (tantra) beings:

"Thus have I heard, once, the Bhagavat who is endowed with the thunderbolt empowered pledge and distinguished kinds of knowledge of all the Tathagatas; who has received the Dharma Kingdom initiation of the three worlds and the jeweled crown of all the Tathagatas; who is the Lord of great yoga and the all-knowing knowledge of all the Tathagatas; who has realized the equality of all mudras of all the Tathagatas and by every action has fulfilled all desires in all worlds of living beings without exception; who is the great, compassionate Vairocana, forever existing in the three periods of time and who is every body, speech and mind thunderbolt, the Tathagata, dwelt in the palace of the Lord of the Akanistha heaven bedecked with great gems, hung with variously shaped bells, and adorned with crescent moons, laced silk tassels with precious gems, flower wreaths and colored banners that swayed in the breeze, and which was inhabited, praised and extolled by all Tathagatas."

In the latest tantras we see even more "abstract" settings. The Hevajra Tantra:

"Thus have I heard: At one time Bhagavan dwelt in the wombs of the Vajra Lady which are the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Buddhas."

The Guhyagarbha Tantra:

"Thus at the time of this explanation, the Tathagata, genuinely perfect buddha and transcendent lord, was endowed with great rapture which is the identity of the indestructible body, speech and mind of all the tathagatas of the ten directions and four times. This is the nature in which all of them without exception, none excepted and omitting none at all, are indivisible, without distinction or difference. In the abode of Akanistha, without extremes or centre, on the radiant wheel of pristine cognitions that is the limitless ground, there is his celestial palace, blazing forth with jewels of pristine cognition, completely uninterrupted throughout the ten directions of space, fashioned as a square because it is vast in measureless enlightened attributes, and adorned with projecting bays of precious gems which are the superior pristine cognition."

Commentary explains:

"However, the (commonly cited) words I have heard are not uttered on this occasion because there is no dichotomy between self and others. The words have heard indicate that there is a difference between the teacher and the retinue, whereas during the compilation of this (tantra), the teacher himself appears as the Lord of Secrets (Vairapani) and explains in this world at the present time the very teaching which he previously gave in Akanistha."

The Kulayaraja Tantra:

"At a time this sermon was taught in the realm No-Below (Akanishtha) [where] Reality is [like] the sky, and the dimension of Reality itself (dharmadhatu) [like] the vastness [of the sky]. There is the place where the Mind itself (sems nyid) exists. In the untainted mansion of pristine awareness [the All-Creating Sovereign's] own being (rang bzhin), Her actuating essence (ngo bo), Her compassion and pristine awareness became manifest as [various] retinues in the following way:..."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 13th, 2010 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Seeing Your Nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Jiang Wu's "Enlightenment in Dispute" there are some nice stories about Confucian literati playing the Chan master. It is really amusing. Nevertheless, it shows how much Chan is about style rather than content (in appearance). A couple of years back I could still meet people from the Kwan Um School of Zen who actually talked (wrote on forum) like Seung Sahn, although they were native English people. The question is: What would be left of Chan without "Linji's shout (often mistranslated as KATSU/KATZ) and Deshan's stick"?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 14th, 2010 at 3:52 PM

Title: Re: No Proofs of Successful Rebirths?&Are Pure Land sutras real?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One better not look for scientific truths for religious teachings. Not because they're contradictory or against each other but they work with different axioms and talk about different spheres of the world.

To understand, and consequently gain faith in the Pure Land teaching one better starts with basic teachings (summed up in: four noble truths, dependent origination) then move to Mahayana. Actually, I think if one gets clear on realms, buddhas, merit transference and rebirth from the basics it doesn't take much to comprehend the bodhisattva path and the buddha-lands of Mahayana. From this it is not difficult to see how and why can one be born in the Pure Land of Amita Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 14th, 2010 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Nirguna Brahman and Nirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nirguna Brahman - creator god without attributes (a contradictory statement in itself, for it is absurd to say there is a thing but has no qualities).

Nirvana - the end of suffering, elimination of greed, hatred and ignorance. It is neither a being nor a place but an experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 16th, 2010 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: Posture - Really Good Posture

Content:

Astus wrote:

Carl Bielefeldt's "Dogen's Manual of Zen Meditation" is a very good work on the Chinese origins of Soto meditation manuals like the Fukanzazengi.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 16th, 2010 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism for the lay person?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding lay practice it's also good to note that Vajrayana in India and Tibet was and is still strong on lay people, especially as there are certain meditation techniques not allowed for ordained monastics.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2010 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it would be hard to tell what constitutes a single path. I mean, every tradition bases itself on the canon which contains almost everything. Thus one path means just a way of organising the teachings according to a tradition. Thing is, even if one is familiar with more than one hermeneutic system, if one claims to favour none of them it is a rather extra-traditional position of a philosopher, or more likely a personal interpretation. Eventually this is certainly not a black or white thing. Everyone learns about different Buddhist teachings on different levels plus has his own rendering of them all.

Meditation handbooks belong to this or that tradition but contain a variety of methods. So "one path" is not "one book, one technique". From this also comes it is not "many paths" either. There are infinite teachings and if we take that literally it'd take infinite time to master. But even gaining proficiency in a single tradition takes considerable effort, not to mention two or three.

Nagarjuna says in the Twelve Gate Treatise that he teaches Mahayana briefly in that text, because if one comprehends and realises emptiness the six paramitas and all the teachings will be mastered that way. Similar arguments we find in Zen too (see your nature and become a buddha). Fazang's treatise on different gates is a good example of many ways accessing the same truth, and that the one truth contains all the other paths.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2010 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thing is, I can very much sympathise with Huseng's question. Simply because I like to put my nose into many Buddhist teachings and I really like a couple of them (at least six lineages). My kind of solution is not a Honen style "select the best" but a Chan-Huayan version of ekayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2010 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A sectarian mindset may not be useful in Buddhism. Just see how many Chinese groups say they accept all 8 schools and at the same time they all do similar things and study similar texts. They call Tendai syncretic, but actually even Theravada teaches so many things.

Taking a specific doctrinal position is used in a debate against someone you don't agree with. Think about these terms: sudden-gradual; easy-difficult; final-temporary; direct-indirect; secret-open; great-small; practical-theoretical; etc.

Instead of identifying with this or that one can always say to go on the bodhisattva path. Or just try to find out to which school people like Yunqi Zhuhong, or Ven. Yinshun belonged to.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2010 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.chan1.org/ddp/channews/05-1985.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2010 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's the only one I've ever read from him regarding Mantrayana. It seems to me he wasn't much involved in Tibetan teachings.

Regarding the bodhisattva path I'm not sure how it could have been faster in his interpretation than the Pure Land way, especially because he didn't teach sudden enlightenment in the sense that it is attainment of buddhahood but rather the first step on the bodhisattva path (similar to the Zongmi-Yongming view).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 20th, 2010 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you look at the quoted speech of Ven. Shengyan he mentions mainly Tibetan Buddhism and not Shingon. I think that's because there are more Tibetan groups than Mizong. Also I guess original Chinese mantrayana is viewed in a different way and not necessarily identified with Shingon.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 20th, 2010 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think one should stick to one extreme or the other. It is common that most of the people don't get much of initiations and pointing out instructions, otherwise we'd all be vajramasters already. Thus practice is necessary, and not just one form of it but many. It shouldn't be forgot either that introduction to the nature of mind happens at the 4 HYT initiations too. Dzogchen in its raw and simple form - as in the three statements of Prahevajra - is for those with the highest capacity. Others can use whatever else Buddhism offers to them as a means to enlightenment. Naturally the majority doesn't belong to the best of the best. Even Milarepa couldn't realise Dzogchen at first.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 20th, 2010 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Am I mistaken in saying that realising rigpa is seeing the buddha-nature? If I'm correct, I can only wonder what else is there to attain beyond buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 1:36 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magnus,

That I am OK with. Do you think it is also possible to take resting itself as the practice without other methods?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 3:43 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that such a division of practice would be actually a balance of generation and completion forms. In that case then what is the difference between calling it Dzogchen or Maha- and Anuyoga, ie. deity yoga? Perhaps it'd be possible to make a distinction - similar to Kagyu Mahamudra - between tantric and essential Dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

authentic "deity yoga" (with the intent and view of Dzogchen) is not a mind-based practice.

Astus wrote:

Now I'm curious. Are you saying that there is an unintentional meditation on a deity? Or is it that "all appearances are the play of rigpa"; but in that case it'd be togal, wouldn't it? I'm starting to think it's quite impossible then to draw a line between the view of "emptiness is appearances" and "appearances are awareness". Then difference between Dzogchen and Mahayoga is eliminated.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magnus,

Could you clarify - and I believe this is Sönam's point - how sadhanas and a load of practices relate to the following:

"Mahamudra and Dzogchen training means not fabricating anything, just allowing the continuity of our natural state. This is not our habit. We must train in developing a new habit, but this practice is not meditation, but familiarization. When we finally arrive at the dharmakaya throne of nonmeditation, there is nothing more to cultivate; there is not even an atom to meditate upon, and yet we are not distracted for even an instant. We need to train in this. It is also phrased as mental nondoing. ... In the guidance manuals for meditation, it is often phrased like this: Do not alter your present fresh wakefulness. Do not rearrange even as much as a hair tip. Just leave it exactly as it is."

(Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche: "Familiarization" in Quintessential Dzogchen, p. 199)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magnus,

Nice to hear he's your root master. Once I used a urinal next to him after attending a lecture by him on the different yanas. I feel karmic connection here.

I think I can follow you about integrating Dzogchen view in all the usual practices and also understand the reason behind it. I also see this tendency of simplifying things to a "non-conceptual meditation" not just in Dzogchen but also in Zen and Theravada. Perhaps it is (partially) about how meditation is seen in Western cultures. And then a deity sounds quite supernatural, therefore unreal.

At the same time I think Dzogchen view may go simply with Dzogchen path. Although I agree it may not be good for everyone - just as there's no single teaching good for everyone - but there are people who can use it.

Also I feel that since Dzogchen is advertised as a separate path which deals directly with the nature of mind and does so effortlessly, mixing with tantric methods appears to be contradictory (or counter-intuitive) to the "spirit of Atiyoga".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng, indeed! Dogen liked to talk big.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 21st, 2010 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magnus,

See ChNN's categorisation of Sutra (detachment), Tantra (transformation) and Dzogchen (self-liberation). Plus it is the 9th yana and not the 8th or the 7th. Not to mention that this is the impression one gets from teachings about Dzogchen and of Dzogchen as they emphasise abiding in rigpa and dropping all efforts, while at the same time don't talk about other meditation forms but only as preliminary and techniques of lower vehicles.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 2:18 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

heart said:

Always ChNN, is that all you got? Maybe you can quote from a tantra or any Dzogchen text except his that use this categorization?

Astus wrote:

I think there was a small misunderstanding here. By separate path I simply meant as a set of teachings and practices on its own. I didn't mean it is not Vajrayana or makes other practices useless. In ChNN's Dzogchen Community they do many other practices besides tregcho and togal. The problem is that seeing the interconnectedness of Dzogchen methods with those of the other inner tantras requires a deeper familiarity

with Nyingma teachings and not just those presented as Dzogchen exclusively. But in brief this is summed up in Sam van Schaik's "Approaching the Great Perfection". By talking about Dzogchen as a separate teaching I meant that it seems uncommon to me to have all the nine vehicles touched upon in a single work like in Dudjom Rinpoche's "big red book", which is clearly too much for anyone who is just looking for the meaning of Dzogchen he has heard about somewhere.

See what the Rigpa Wiki says, "Sogyal Rinpoche describes it as "the heart-essence of all spiritual paths and the summit of an individual's spiritual evolution. As a way in which to realize the innermost nature of mind—that which we really are— Dzogchen is the clearest, most effective, and most relevant to the modern world."

What do you make of it that best selling authors on Dzogchen, including HHDL, talks about Atiyoga as an accessible, quite easy and simple method of "resting in the natural state" and there is nothing else to it? And this makes it popular. Even has its own forum.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Stick to "one path"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

And it is not pointless at all to critically examine Dogen's teachings as he has such an influence in Western Buddhism (luckily there are quite a few scholarly work around in English). On one hand he says that it is not really Zen, or Soto Zen he teaches but the Correct Dharma of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, while on the other hand others besides him, Nyojo, Wanshi Shogaku and a select few, everyone else is either completely wrong or below enlightenment. Zazen is the samadhi of samadhis, while nenbutsu is like the croaking of frogs. Finally, Dogen seems quite adamant on exclusive practice of the superior shikantaza. Good example of a "one path" approach.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm talking about available materials on Dzogchen. As in books:

Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche: Natural Great Perfection

Lama Surya Das: Natural Radiance

James Low: Being Right Here

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: Fearless Simplicity

Tenzin Wangyal: Wonders of the Natural Mind

Michael Hookham: Openness, Clarity, Sensitivity

HHDL: Dzogchen - The Heart Essence of the Great Perfection

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nangwa, that's all right. But it's like when some talk about Buddhism as a therapeutic way to inner peace and all people can practice it, then when they get interested it turns out it is a religion like all the others full of moral commands and supernatural realms. Sounds like advertising a menu that makes you lose weight then adding you should also go to the gym twice a day. Thus confusion and misunderstanding is not surprising.

Although it raises the question: if they're all superficial teachings (contrary to their claim to be highest Vajrayana), they intentionally mislead people, or they're mistaken from the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Free Kalavinka Shastra PDFs

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hail to Ven. Dharmamitra and FREE DHARMA!

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: Pirated dharma texts.

Content:

Astus wrote:

As said, copying something is not theft in Buddhist definition. If copying were theft, well, we could as well neither lend nor talk about a book. Copyright is a modern legal term which of course has its use. But what is moral and what is legal may not always be the same. Legally there is no problem with cheating one's spouse, morally there is. Legally it is not an issue to say I'm a buddha/arhat/tulku/..., morally there is. Legally it is a problem to copy texts protected by copyright, or not, depends on local laws, but morally it is not theft. Also see the "Pirate Party" movement.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 4:02 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

So the books are OK. While it would be hard to become a disciple of all those authors, I guess they put their teachings into a written form in order to be known by many, including

those who do not even live in the same country, or same continent, or speak the same language. A common thing in those books is that they present Dzogchen in a pretty accessible form and they also explain methods to practice it. Suppose I read one of them, understand it, then practise it - isn't that Dzogchen practice? If not, then what?

I'm bringing this up only to give an example how it is possible people don't necessarily associate Dzogchen with other tantric practices. And that is not because they don't want to but how Dzogchen is presented. Similar to Vipassana and Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 22nd, 2010 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, a book is not like personal instruction for one cannot ask back. It is more like a lecture, a teaching on something, except that probably it is better composed. And if it is a teaching on Dzogchen one receives a teaching on that, including instructions for meditation. Definitely it has a less wider scope than years of training. But besides monks hardly one has time enough to hang around a teacher all the time, especially if he lives thousands of kilometres away. Therefore it is not negligible to consider materials distributed on Dzogchen - just like in case of any other Dharma teachings. For instance, in my country, there is no resident teacher one could turn to for Dzogchen practice, thus everyone depends on books, Internet and visiting teachers who come occasionally. Not to mention the fact that those few books and texts available are translations from English.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 23rd, 2010 at 1:27 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Don't misunderstand me, I have no problem with Dzogchen in any way as I am not really a follower of it. I was only talking about a situation as I see it.

Sönam, if Dzogchen teachers can act and talk from Dharmakaya, can't they not write?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 23rd, 2010 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature, Emptiness and Anatman

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is called "buddha-nature" because it somehow (depending on interpretation) bears the qualities a buddha has. For an Indo-Tibetan explanation best go for the Ratnagotravibhaga with available modern commentaries on it. For the East-Asian style

you should start with the Mahayana-sraddhotpada shastra (Awakening Mahayana Faith).

Buddha-nature as dependent origination is a possible interpretation, but then where are the buddha-qualities here? If there are none, why call it buddha-nature?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 23rd, 2010 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature, Emptiness and Anatman

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, if I have joy because of others' joy I should also have anger and greed because of others. Or you mean the realisation of interconnectedness is buddha-nature? Because then buddha-nature is not universal but a realisation. I hope you don't my I ask.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 23rd, 2010 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature, Emptiness and Anatman

Content:

Astus wrote:

True. However, just the fact of interconnectedness includes no buddha-qualities, otherwise all would have them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 26th, 2010 at 7:56 PM

Title: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I've read a couple of times, and again in a recent thread initiated by Rev. Nonin's remarks on renunciation, I'd like to bring up for investigation the case of Shinran who left priesthood and got married. Many think this is a good reference for the modern Japanese situation where ordained men can and do live like lay people. Shinran, as is well known, was a Pure Land follower, a disciple of Honen, who said that for himself (and generally for people who live in this Age of Declining Dharma) it is impossible to walk the Path of Sages (everything else than Pure Land) because he is full of defilements and only Amita Buddha can help who brings even the evil to his Land of Peace and Bliss.

This sounds like an acceptable reason for not maintaining the precepts, for they're not just no longer needed but one is actually incapable of fulfilling them. On the other hand, this argument doesn't stand for any other paths where discipline in moral acts is essential.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 26th, 2010 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

A lay priest is an ambiguous term for me. It can mean one who does the rituals, pastoral duties and teaching (like a Christian priest). It may also mean something less varied, like a lay teacher (could also be a scholar, a meditation teacher, or a Dharma teacher). It could also mean missionary work too, preaching to unbelievers.

Another important point is that a lay priest would either cost double, or triple than a monk. First of all, a priest would need proper education, a university degree in Dharma. Where can you obtain one like that? Not so many places, but not impossible. Also, such a priest may need a home that the laity should pay for. Another option is a part-time priest, in that case the quality of service might suffer it.

Last question I can think of is the advantages-disadvantages of a lay priest vis-a-vis a monk. A monk lives in a community, easier to maintain proper lifestyle, more time for studies and practice are available. A priest is more for the laity than for personal advancement, may not be able to carry on with his own education on a necessary level. On the other hand, a priest can be closer to the community than home leavers.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 27th, 2010 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think it is only Pure Land people saying we're in the Age of Decline but even Tibetans (although they use this to say that Vajrayana is the solution to the problem). As for "apparently enlightened beings" I cannot say much. How is it apparent? Regarding the first jhana, if it requires abandonment of sensual craving, only a non-returner can do it, excluding even bodhisattvas. How could then such people as non-Buddhists attain it?

Nevertheless, I didn't say the truth is only with Shinran but wanted to state clearly that while Shinran had good reasons to live a layman's life, other traditions don't. I should also mention that his teacher, Honen remained a monk till the end of his life, and that was the case with every great Pure Land teacher in China too I know of. Fortunately, the Pure Land method works as well for monks as for laymen.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 27th, 2010 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

While I'm not much of a Dharma Decline proponent I find it a traditional and common view throughout Mahayana lands. I've also heard that those who actually have real attainments are bodhisattvas appearing in this world but no common human really attains anything. This I don't necessarily agree with. You know, I'm more of a Chan-style buddha-nature believer, which guarantees the availability of enlightenment for everyone at any time, and, certain conditions provided, it can be actualised. Still, reliable teachers are few and phony (wild fox) people are many. And while Ven. Shengyan didn't claim to be greatly enlightened, people like Living Buddha Lu Shengyan seems to say so.

If sensual desires has to be left behind temporarily or partially, even married lay people can attain absorption on a retreat or on a peaceful morning.

Dodatsu,

Thanks for dropping in.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 27th, 2010 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: How do we know?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Awareness is not ever present. Consciousness depends on what it is conscious of. So the Buddha categorised consciousness into six major forms. And the sixth can be examined according to the four aggregates of the name group. But if you look up what the manifold dharma's are in the Abhidharma texts you find that awareness is very far from being always there, more like momentary. And there are even beings in a heavenly realm without consciousness. See

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html> discussing why it is a great mistake to identify oneself with the mind as if it were permanent while on the contrary it changes rapidly. Therefore it is empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I'm sure I don't have months to spend in retreats. I could do that only if I had either the money for it or if I were a monk/yogi somewhere else. My experience with people's capacity for Buddhism is not so good. It is rare to find anyone in a community with an aptitude for deeper levels beyond general instructions for meditation and vague ideas about Dharma. I've taught at a university (<http://tkbf.hu/ENGLISH/index.html>) for three years introductory classes on Zen, Huayan, Pure Land, Buddha-nature teachings and on

certain Mahayana sutras, also occasionally gave lectures on Madhyamaka as a guest teacher. The audience was of course made of university students who were there in order to study Buddhism. Still, only one or two could really understand what it was about while a majority never got it. However, there was one exception. People who came to my Pure Land lectures could understand it by the end of the semester, most of them even gained faith (to a certain degree).

I don't know if you're familiar with Ven. Yinguang's teachings (contemporary of Xuyun), considered to be the greatest Pure Land master in China in the last century. His letters explain lucidly the reason for buddha-remembrance practice as the fastest and most secure way to buddhahood for everyone. And unlike Chan - which is (originally) the path of sudden enlightenment - Pure Land can provide everyone with an assurance.

This assurance makes actually Shinran capable to make dropping moral precepts not to be against attainment of buddhahood. (Note: this is not true for all Pure Land schools.) In Chan it is also possible to a certain extent not to be bothered by morality, meditation and wisdom - simply because it is buddhahood right now. In theory at least. But in practice that is rarely the case.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirtu,

If enlightenment seems unreachable then the Pure Land path is the optimal choice. That way one can get free from samsara and fulfil the bodhisattva path easily. Otherwise, even if one collected an immense heap of merit throughout a single life, there's no guarantee one won't be born in the lowest hells and stay there for many aeons.

Lazy_eye,

I think that if you can accept the Buddha as the true teacher, the Mahayana as his true teaching and the respected teachers of the Pure Land tradition as valid transmitters of the correct interpretation, it is easy to embrace the Pure Land path. I believe the cardinal point is to trust in the Mahayana sutras, for then one can study even alone what the Buddha taught about the Land of Peace and Bliss and how to get there.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not as proficient in Shin teaching as Dodatsu, but based on Chinese Pure Land

teachings I may have some answers.

I understand Huseng's question and actually agree with his doubts. Claiming there is any compassionate and omnipotent being leads to the problem of theodicy, and such an argument was used by Buddhist masters several times to refute those who thought there is such a divine being.

Why I don't think it applies to the Pure Land teaching is because Amita Buddha is not the cause of being brought to his land but the condition. That is, as a result of his bodhisattva work through many aeons he created a buddha-land without any suffering on it (Sukhavati, Land of Bliss), and had 48 vows to specify how and upon what conditions can beings reach his land. So it is like he made a contract which has to be fulfilled by beings to receive admission. Those are the house rules. Such is perfectly within common Mahayana teaching on buddha-lands and dependent origination.

Minimal requirement from an applicant to the Western Pure Land is faith, vow and practice. Of this three, faith and vow constitutes the essential determinant of birth while practice is on one hand for cultivating faith and vow, on the other defines what level of birth one can get. Faith and vow stands for: there is a way, I want to go that way. Practice is remembering, recalling the existence of the way and the determination.

This three (faith, vow, practice), which can be summed up as nianfo/nenbutsu, builds a connection with Amita Buddha. Such a connection is necessary for receiving merit from him. This is in accord with the teaching on transference of merit as accepted by all schools; ie. by knowing of the dedicated merit and being happy about it one receives that merit. This works in case of humans, bodhisattvas and buddhas alike.

This way we can establish the requirements for the possibility of the general Pure Land idea within the framework of Mahayana. Now we can look at how it can be possible to attain birth only by faith through other-power.

Those who don't hear about the Pure Land path has no chance to aspire for it. Therefore knowledge comes first. Based on knowledge faith has to appear. Such faith is only possible because there is Amita Buddha's vow to escort beings to his land and there they're assured of enlightenment. So we can say that faith is from him. Such faith must be deep trust where insight into one's own situation, into the way of Pure Land and the determination. This is the three minds (sanjin) within deep trust (shinjin). Also, deep trust means that one keeps not forgetting of Amita Buddha, which has the verbal expression in Namo Amita Buddha. Hence shinjin also includes nenbutsu, and nenbutsu includes shinjin.

This is how faith is the sufficient cause for birth in the Pure Land. Once there is faith birth is assured, in that sense it is equal to non-regression. Since on the Pure Land liberation is guaranteed, birth is enlightenment (similar to bodhicitta being samyaksambodhi in the Avatamsaka Sutra).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 8:24 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

The idea of "Pure Land on Earth" is indeed a good one. But it has little to do with the Pure Land school itself. If you accept Tiantai Zhiyi and Yongming Yanshou as valid teachers, you should have no problem with birth in the Pure Land. Which of course doesn't mean you have to choose that way.

Lazy_eye,

It seems to me you take it too much to the extreme. Of course buddhas and bodhisattvas work tirelessly for the welfare of all beings. But they cannot make anyone enlightened. Even if one goes to a buddha-land (any of them), they have to attain realisation on their own. The difference is the environment. Thus the Pure Land is said to be like a monastery, an ideal place for the perfection of paramitas. Shinran may simplify all this to saying that attaining birth is equal to enlightenment, but I doubt he wanted to contradict the tenet of the four noble truths, especially the fourth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

It is of course not enough to just say it. Anyone can say it without even knowing a thing of its meaning. Faith is the essential part here which makes buddha-remembrance a living connection. Through that connection there is birth in the Land of Bliss. "Namo Amita Buddha" is just summing it up, expressing the whole teaching. Similar (but not the same) to the Mani-mantra in Tibetan Buddhism which is explained in so many ways that it includes the whole Vajrayana. Or to say that the six paramitas or the four noble truths contains the entire teaching of the Buddha. The nianfo/nenbutsu is buddha-awareness (not buddha-mind, except if we go into a Zen explanation), and as the Surangama Sutra explains, just as remembering our father - who never forgets us - it is possible to meet, that's how by remembering Amita Buddha we can meet him at the time of death and be escorted to the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is an interesting essay relevant to this thread:

<http://www.buddhistethics.org/10/jones021.html>.

Honen and many of his disciples (including Shinran) put themselves into the category of "lowest of the low" where one may actually commit serious offenses but still be saved. Still we should note that neither of them became a serial killer or anything close that.

As for Ven. Shengyan's arguments, attaining buddhahood through birth in the Pure Land may take longer for those born in the lower levels but not for those in the upper levels. At the same time, failing on the bodhisattva path and losing human birth can easily result in aeons of wandering around (see the parable of the blind turtle in the ocean). In that case it would be essential to reach non-regression in this life, hence buddhahood is not far away at all. Or there's the sudden enlightenment of Chan as another option.

I'd also like to refer to the original issue behind starting this topic. It is to show how Shinran had good reasons to say that precepts for him (and many others) are too high, but fortunately the Pure Land path gives him a chance to attain buddhahood in that condition too. Others with better karma still may be able to realise enlightenment on their own. And those others should uphold moral discipline. If they can.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 28th, 2010 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Yes, generally lot of merits are necessary. However, even the sutra says, that Pure Land is available for those who committed the five heinous crimes and ten wrong deeds. This is neither Honen's nor Shinran's invention who both relied on the scriptures and Chinese masters. It is just that they took it to its logical end.

See what the great Ming master Ouyi says (Mind Seal of the Buddhas): "Whether we achieve rebirth in the Pure Land depends entirely on whether or not we have faith and vows. How high we rank in the Pure Land depends entirely on how deeply we recite the Buddha-name."

It is said the Pure Land path is good for those with high, with middle and with low capacity. Honen and Shinran said they're incapable of anything else but relying solely on Amita Buddha's power. That interpretation is still within the boundaries of traditional understanding of the Pure Land scriptures. Thus there is the possibility of attaining birth without being good at precepts. Nevertheless, no Pure Land teacher ever said people should do bad things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirtu,

Yes, bodhisattvas who are in connection with Amita Buddha. Those who have a connection with him could as well be born in his land. Not to mention that arya bodhisattvas can travel between buddha-lands.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Andreas Ludwig said:

It has no cause or else it wouldn't be the state of freedom, the realization of it happens naturally. Since the liberation from suffering is a shift in perspective and no specific step on a ladder of magical education and practice there's nothing to do to make it happen. The goal is to be free from causes and conditions so you can not reach that state by creating a certain framework with the idea to 'produce' it.

Astus wrote:

This is naturalism, a denial of causality and the validity of the path to enlightenment. Saying that there are no cause nor conducive conditions for enlightenment necessitates that then people attain liberation randomly. Morality, meditation and wisdom are the three necessary components of the fourth noble truth. That's how the issue of keeping the precepts is important. To say that there is a way where upholding the precepts is unnecessary needs good reasons, for it is the basis of the entire Buddhist path. By claiming that in this life no need for the threefold training (sila, samadhi, prajna) and at the time of death there is enlightenment, well, this is contradictory to the whole thing.

Andreas Ludwig said:

Well, it seems you are still closer to Honen than to Shinran, but Dodatsu already gave Shinrans quote regarding this idea.

Astus wrote:

Can be. I can only understand Shinran based on Honen and the whole Chinese Pure Land teachings as a logical result of that lineage and other factors, mainly from Tendai.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirtu,

Honen didn't say one attains enlightenment immediately after birth but there one can engage in the bodhisattva path on full scale. So that agrees with what other traditions say. Also, if you look at these words of Jixing Chenwu (considered the 12th patriarch of Chinese Pure Land) they resemble the way Shinran speaks:

"The very moment of contemplating the buddha (nianfo) is the very moment of seeing the buddha and becoming the buddha. The very moment of seeking rebirth is the very moment of attaining rebirth and the very moment of liberating all beings (du sheng, 渡生). The three margins of time are all a single, identical time; there is no before and after."

However, this is actually a summary of the progress in Pure Land practice, just as the article explains, "Chewu takes this progression so much for granted that he uses it without further elaboration to illustrate another point, knowing that his audience will accept it unquestioningly." (<http://www.buddhistethics.org/10/jones021.html#a31>)

But of course it is up to Shin masters to explain their view of the issue.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 6:13 AM

Title: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

After the couple of threads where I've participated which mainly were about Pure Land I'd like to come up this time with a Zen discussion.

To me Zen is simply the direct way of realising the essence of Buddhism, the nature of mind, ie. buddha-mind. Everything else are empty fists and golden leaves.

For a start let me give here short quotes from two Song dynasty meditation instructions.

"Once you have settled your posture and regulated your breathing, you should relax your abdomen. Do not think of any good or evil whatsoever. Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified. This is the essential art of tso-ch'an. Honestly speaking, tso-ch'an is the dharma gate of ease and joy." (Changlu Zongze, tr. by C. Bielefeldt)

"In quiet concentration, examine clearly with true mindfulness. What is cognizant of sitting is mind, and what introspects is mind. What knows being and nonbeing, center and extremes, inside and outside, is mind. This mind is empty yet perceptive, silent yet aware. Round and bright, perfectly clear, it does not fall into ideas of annihilation or eternity. Spiritual awareness radiantly bright, its discrimination is not false." (Foxin Bencai, tr. by T. Cleary)

Simple and straightforward. This is all there is to seeing nature. By attaining it buddhahood is at hand. So here are two questions to discuss:

1. What hinders one from realising the nature of mind?
2. What stops one who has seen the nature from completing buddhahood?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Interestingly enough, these Song dynasty Chan manuals were meant for the laity (too). Monks had their elder teachers around and the whole tradition, so they didn't really need instructions in written form about how to sit and what to do, unlike lay people who didn't sit with the monks. Plus there were tomes with a lot more detailed and complicated instruction (eg. Mohezhiguan). This simplified, basic Chan was meant for everyone, just like Dahui taught Kanhua Chan mainly to his lay followers.

Defilements are certainly behind all our problems. It means we're attached to feelings and concepts taking them as real and solid. That's why in Chan it is told to turn the attention on mind itself, thus realising the true nature. That is called the direct cut instead of eliminating klesa step by step. On the other hand, the sudden path is not for everyone. For instance, the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra advises repentance practice and long retreats.

As m0rl0ck mentioned, there may not be a difference between realising buddha-mind and buddhahood. But as I see, many Chan teachers differentiate between initial insight and complete liberation, even some from the early Hongzhou school. On the other hand, after Shenhui there were no such stages as you describe it. Such steps belong to the gradual and not the sudden path. In Tathagata Chan - the Supreme Vehicle - one goes directly for tathata.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

What you describe as hindrances are what defilements are. And if that obstructs one from seeing nature, isn't it that different methods should be applied? Huangbo also says that while there are a few who can go the sudden way, many has to walk the

gradual path.

"Some students attain the state of liberated Mind quickly, some slowly. After listening to a Dharma talk, some reach "no mind" directly. In contrast, some must first pass gradually through the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith, the Dasabhumi of Bodhisattva development, and the ten stages before attaining the Perfectly Awakened Mind."

"Out of thousands and thousands of Dharma students in the Dhyana School, only three or five attain the fruit."

It follows that if one is not enlightened immediately, they must apply the usual Mahayana path of sila, samadhi and prajna.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Realising tathata, suchness, is seeing how things actually are (yatha bhuta). This is equivalent to say one has realised emptiness. Emptiness is never separate from form, thinking they're different is not really an enlightenment on emptiness. But of course, there are different meanings of emptiness, that's why Huseng said he used tathata.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: How do we know?

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Without concepts there is nothing conditioned and nothing to condition, so it is called the unconditioned, which is emptiness. An empty mind is no-mind (wunian/munen).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Indeed, there have always been Chan students working with different meditation practices before gaining insight. Huatou is a method devised to expedite seeing nature. As tradition says, it was invented by teachers because the capacity of students became worse than those of the ancients. I don't think this is the case, but that's a historical

issue.

However, it tells a lot about Chan if there is hardly anyone who can do it. Talking about sudden enlightenment and 30 years of mountain retreat at the same time is a bit contradictory. One could as well use other methods, like samatha-vipasyana of Tiantai, or Huayan instructions, since they're more step by step and applicable to different circumstances. Seeing nature is supposed to be the pure Chan path which is not even a path but enlightenment. Or that is just rhetoric.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If sudden enlightenment were purely rhetorical in Chan the whole thing could as well be put aside as a badly set up system and we should get involved in something real. I mean, the whole idea of Chan is about sudden enlightenment, without that it has no raison d'être.

Other methods used are actually usual Mahayana techniques, means of the gradual path. Only exception is the huatou-gongan technique which is an internal development of the Chan tradition, again, based on the sudden enlightenment concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2010 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I simply raised to (hopefully provocative) questions. Different perspectives and ideas are very welcome.

m0rl0ck said:

I guess one has to do something while waiting for the lightning to strike tho

Astus wrote:

Maybe it wasn't intentional on your side, but there is actually a view saying that regardless of one's practice enlightenment will come suddenly (and that's what they call sudden enlightenment). It is a wrong idea that denies the meaning of practice. There are people who think that one should just sit and wait for realisation to happen. That way nothing will happen. So there are also people who believe that if nothing happens that's zazen, that's enlightenment. What is that good for?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 30th, 2010 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

One of the good things in Buddhism that we all share some common basis. Here we share a lot if we say that we accept all Mahayana sutras as valid, accept the teachings of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, etc. And based on that each of us can describe one's position and the arguments for it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 30th, 2010 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

In Buddhist terms, before enlightenment there are pancopadanaskandha (five aggregates with attachment), after enlightenment pancaskandha (five aggregates). Difference is in the attachment (upadana).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 30th, 2010 at 5:26 PM

Title: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

There has been a nice debate about Shinran and Precepts. Here I'd like to raise the stakes and start a peaceful competition and a silent revolution.

The goal is to show which Buddhist path is the easiest, the fastest and the safest to achieve liberation from samsara, and since this is a Mahayana realm, attainment of buddhahood is worth extra points. Also a reverse is possible where a path is proven to be extremely hard.

Don't take this too seriously, or too lightly. The point is to see what paths there are and which one should one choose.

Here are the categories:

Easy - requires little effort (precepts, meditation, study), people with low capacities can practice it, can be practised with little or no help (teacher, community)

Fast - within three aeons, within one aeon, within 16 lives, within 7 lives, within this life, within 30 years, within 3 years, within 7 months, within a week, within a day

Safe - no birth in the lower realms, birth only in good circumstances, birth only in pure lands, birth at will, no more birth

Example:

Stream-entry in Theravada (based on Piya Tan's explanation) - requires correct view regarding Dhamma (dropping false concepts as in the first three fetters), maintaining the five precepts, guaranteed liberation within 7 lives, no more birth in the lower realms

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 30th, 2010 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Science and Siddhis

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is among science's silent rules that it is against all supernatural, and whatever seems supernatural brings it down to natural. Paranormal science is like Christian science - doesn't really make sense.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 1:49 AM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

White Lotus,

You talk a lot about enlightenment and how that is the same as not being enlightened, saying that everyone is enlightened, while at the same time they're deluded by their egos. Actually, what does all this have to do with Buddhism? Or at least, how does that philosophy make anyone a happier person?

In your evasive manner you not just don't state or deny anything exactly but it appears to be irrelevant to the whole issue raised about Zen tenets.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I see most of you have resorted to the idea that it all depends on one's karma. That I can agree with. On the other hand, when it comes down to defining a tradition in Mahayana somewhere on the road there is a statement how that particular method is the best among all the others.

Theravada has no problem here as it simply disregards everything else as correct

Buddhism, their superiority lies only in a separation of Buddhadhamma from other religions. But Mahayana has from the beginning that it is better than the so called Hinayana, bodhisattvas are beyond arhats. Then it comes to how this Madhyamaka is better than that Madhyamaka, how Zen is better than the others, how Vajrayana is better than the others, etc. One could say it is like in Panshan's "Meat Case",

"Panshan one day at the marketplace saw a man buying meat who said, "Chop me half a kilo of your best." The butcher dropped his knife and said, "Sir, these are all the best." Panshan, hearing it, suddenly had great awakening."
(X87n1614_p0058b04-06)

One can choose only the best way, for they all claim to be that. But if we agree to that, how can we match different traditions? Or we shouldn't?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 4:23 PM

Title: Re: Difference between Dzogchen and Mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Semde stresses mind/awareness and Longde stresses emptiness. Dzogchen is the pinnacle in Nyingma and Bön, but not in Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug. Also Mahamudra has different sets of teachings and interpretations, so there's more to keep in mind when comparing them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that comparing the many lineages of Mahayana, the (Chinese) Pure Land path could be the one to fit the diverse requirements in most of the categories one can think of.

Generally, it has an easy practice (buddha-remembrance) that even busy laypeople can do. It assures birth and enlightenment only on the basis of faith and not understanding (wisdom) or morality (merit). It is a fast (horizontal) escape from samsara.

At the same time the Pure Land path is good for any kind of practitioner, for while its minimum requirements are low, the scope of the teaching is deep and wide. Both theory (Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Huayan, Tiantai) and practice (paramitas, Chan, Mantra) can be used of any school of Mahayana. Buddha-remembrance can be seen as encompassing all the practices in a single one.

Compared to the long and arduous practice for many aeons in the six realms, in Amita's Pure Land conditions are perfect for swift progress to buddhahood. Compared to

Chan's sudden enlightenment, this requires no great wisdom to realise immediately nor long retreats. Compared to Secret Mantra it requires no initiation, no complicated rituals, and cannot result in hellish birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I like to bring up the Pure Land teaching especially as it raises lot of questions in people's minds, unlike Chan. So here's my reply.

Pure Land as an unreliable teaching doesn't play if one accepts Mahayana as a valid path. It is present in many different sutras and traditions in the Far Eastern as well as Tibetan Buddhism. Experiential confirmation of its existence in this life is possible through meditation (like in the Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra), what is generally called the buddha-remembrance samadhi.

How long it takes to attain enlightenment in the Pure Land depends on one's karma (see the 9+1 grades). It can be less than a day or many aeons. When one is already there travelling to myriad buddha-lands is possible, nobody is confined to only that place.

By the way, (arya) bodhisattva's compassion doesn't depend on a specific object, thus it is universal compassion. How could then it be influenced by circumstances?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's why I put an "arya" in brackets. So bodhisattvas from the first bhumi on who had insight into emptiness, who can follow what the Diamond Sutra says. If one is even below that it's hard to focus on the path and not be distracted by the pleasures of samsara. Therefore, those without enlightenment are even more advised to aspire for birth in the Pure Land. Such an aspiration is not at all contrary to bodhicitta.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 3rd, 2010 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Certainly, this Saha land has many difficulties. But then I'd say Ksitigarbha's practice gains even more merit for any bodhisattva. Also, since the practice of prajnaparamita, seeing of buddha-nature is an attainment encompassing and above all, as one can receive the teaching from a buddha directly, there's hardly any better way.

My primary aspiration is to attain buddhahood. The path I feel the closest to me is Chan. At the same time, Pure Land is an option I'd rather not miss. It's like an insurance, similarly as the name of Amita Buddha is being recited even at the deathbed of Chan masters. Or as Yongming said: Chan with Pure Land together is like a tiger with horns.

But let's look at it how could Chan be the optimal path. Realising the nature of mind is the starting point of Chan. Those who haven't seen it yet can only aspire for entering the gate but they know nothing of what is inside. Thing is, among the many aspirants only a few can pass the barrier. Then those who actually do may or may not perfect it in a single lifetime and become buddhas.

There are many Chan (Zen/Seon) teachers in the west now. A couple of them have been involved in scandals and many lack proper education in Buddhism. While we can see literally hundreds of Dharma-heirs but there might be only a handful of some worth. This is just to show how many are those still outside the gates but claiming they can enlighten students. I think I feel somewhat similar to Ouyi who perceived that there are many false Chan teachers, so people should rather practise buddha-remembrance.

Right now in the west Madhyamaka could be another option. It has enough texts translated to English to have a good basis for study. (Yogacara, Tiantai and Huayan are far from that level.) Madhyamaka is a great choice because textual study and reasoning can help making a clear difference between true and false. Just like Pure Land practice, Madhyamaka theory is a good appandage for Chan. Also, and this I haven't yet heard about, one could actually take up Madhyamaka as a complete path.

Back to the question of Chan, I think faith is as important in Chan as in Pure Land. But here one has to have faith in buddha-nature, to believe that the very nature of mind is buddha and there's no buddha to realise outside of that. Just this sound is the speech of buddha, this smell is the fragrance of buddha, this thought is the mind of buddha. In short, the six senses are the functioning of buddha-mind. While this is something that can be immediately experienced, one cannot even believe it. That's how Pure Land is easier than Chan, and only a few pass the patriarchs' gate but all goes to Amita's land.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 4th, 2010 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Nagarjuna begins his Twelve Great Treatise with some explanation on what and why he will discuss. There it is said (tr. by Hsueh-li Cheng), "One of the profoundest teachings of Mahayana is called emptiness. If one can understand this doctrine, he can understand Mahayana and possess the six paramitas without hindrance. Therefore, I want only to explain emptiness." That's how it encompasses all there is to it. But this is the reason why the buddha-nature teaching goes better with sudden enlightenment (qv. Daosheng) - you have all the buddha qualities ready to be manifested.

What level of enlightenment means insight into nature is indefinite. I mean, there are different people saying different things, no unity as there is no such thing as "Patriarch of Chan" to tell everyone what to think. If we go by the ancient masters of the Hongzhou school it is indeed buddhahood, anuttarasamyaksambodhi. But if we ask those from the Heze school after Zongmi they say it is only the 1st level of faith in the 52 level system. Shengyan says it is 1st bhumi, Xuanhua says it is 8th bhumi, Xuyun says it is buddhahood. But if we could as people like Huangbo or Linji the answer could be like: gradual stages are not Chan, buddhahood is just a word to bind people.

I believe there are dozens of good teachers in Japan, Korea, China and Vietnam too, it is simply a matter of statistics. For instance, I am a huge fan of Daehaeng Kunsunim, she is like Bodhidharma reborn.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 4th, 2010 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

Reaching the non-retrogression is the same as birth in Pure Land there. Of course, the Pure Land path is about being determined to be born in Amita's land, without that it is not possible. Such determination is one's heartfelt wish to be free from samsara and liberate all beings, for which the Land of Bliss is the stepping stone. However, I doubt there's any requirement to realise the falseness of the self-view. The ordinary Shin Buddhists you had the quote about seems to refer to people who go to the temple only because of tradition/habit and not because they actually believe, that's why there is no assurance. It is true that faith may not come easily, but it is not harder than trusting the Triple Jewel, which is the very basic for any Buddhist.

In Theravada it is as you said, dropping the notion of self-view, belief in rituals and doubt in the Dhamma. In Pure Land there is no need to be free from the view of self to have faith in Amita Buddha's vows. And in Chan it is not enough to believe in the buddha-nature, one must realise it personally.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 4th, 2010 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

I used the word faith in a common, and not Zen specific sense. Probably you've heard about the Zen poem by Sengcan (3rd Chinese Patriarch) called Faith Mind Inscription (信心銘), in Japanese Shinjinmei. The word "shinjin" is same as in Shin Buddhism. But it has a very different meaning.

Its closing stanza says: 信心不二 不二信心 - Faith mind/shinjin is not two/non-duality; Not two/non-duality is faith mind/shinjin

If it was the same in Shin Buddhism it could be rightly called Zen. But that is hardly so. And if Shin followers abandoned self-view they could do very well on the Path of Sages and wouldn't need help from Amida.

Your quote from Jinul is good: "One does not have faith in any contrived causes or effects; it is only necessary to have faith that the intrinsic self is originally Buddha." The teaching that Amida saves beings is a contrived cause and effect, saying that "I am a deluded person" is against faith in buddha-mind.

I don't really see the point of making the Pure Land path harder than it is. Personally I find its simple and easy quality its advantage. I know less about Shin Buddhism than Chinese but if it is actually a more difficult path than other Pure Land methods it looks strange to me then.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 2:07 AM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

If actually Shin teaches the same realisation as Zen it is contradictory to say that Shin is easy but Zen is hard. Either Shin is as hard as Zen, in that case the choice between paths is meaningless, or Zen is as easy as Shin, then again a choice based on capacity is meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 2:13 AM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

You seem to suggest that the majority of existing Mahayana traditions are quite wrong. Pure Land, Chan, Mantra, Nichiren, Tiantai and Huayan all confirm the sudden path, enlightenment in one life, and that's what they aim for in different ways.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

One of the many wonderful qualities of sutras is that they like to talk about the reader and their level of attainment as relevant to the subject discussed. In the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>:

"The Buddha told Śāriputra, "If good men or good women, having heard such profound prajñā-pāramitā, can come to resoluteness in their minds, not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, we should know that they stand on the Ground of No-regress. If those who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, but believe, accept, appreciate, and listen tirelessly, they have in effect fulfilled dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, dhyāna-pāramitā, and prajñā-pāramitā. Moreover, they can reveal and explicate [the teachings] to others and can have them train accordingly."

The Manjusri PP Sutra is a good one that was used by Daoxin for instance to describe Chan practice as the One Act Samadhi. Also in this sutra there is a discussion of merits too.

"If good men or good women aspire to enter the One Action Samādhi, they should sit properly in an open place, facing the direction of a Buddha, abandon distracting thoughts and appearances, focus their minds on that Buddha, and keep saying His name. If they can continue, thought after thought, thinking of one Buddha, they will be able to see, in their thinking, past, future, and present Buddhas. Why? The merit from thinking of one Buddha is immeasurable and boundless, no different from the merit from thinking of innumerable Buddhas or thinking of the inconceivable Buddha Dharma. They all will ride the one suchness and attain the perfect enlightenment, commanding immeasurable merit and eloquence."

"If good men and good women who have heard these words do not become negligent or indolent, we should know that they have already planted their roots of goodness under past Buddhas. Therefore, if bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked or terrified, they have truly renounced family life to follow the Buddha. If upāsakas and upāsikās who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked or terrified, they have truly taken refuge [in the Buddha]."

This is all very much in harmony with the other Chan-favoured text, the http://acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html:

"If you see all characteristics to be non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata."

"Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas."

Regarding merit the sutra repeatedly says how infinite and incalculable it is to read, recite, memorise and teach that sutra, even greater than the sum of Sakyamuni's merit gained by revering billions of buddhas.

Another thing we should remember is that while the teachings say that only a few people can really comprehend all this, out of 6.8 billion people even a million arhats and bodhisattvas would be very few. At the moment this forum has 316 registered members (including bots). As you're in Japan, you can see how many actually take Buddhism seriously. Not so much, right? And even among them not everyone studies (reads, recites, remembers) the Diamond Sutra (which is so popular). So I think it is a privileged situation that we have heard about the Dharma and can actually study it. This itself is a proof of having accumulated good merit in past lives. Then we can try how far we can get in realising the Dharma-realm.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

It actually sounds like a love story. A guy is looking for perfect love in every woman, expects everything to go smoothly from the first moment on but after a month or two it always turns out it is not perfect, so they break up. This is the disappointment in sudden enlightenment. Then the guy thinks he should work on a single relationship, love has to be earned and maintained. He sticks to one lady, they spend decades together until one day the guy realises no matter how hard he works it is never perfect love. This is the disappointment in gradual enlightenment. Then this guy goes to a witch to do some magic and get him perfect love. But perfect love never comes near his door. This is the disappointment in enlightenment by transformation. So our poor fellow is now left with hoping that in the next life things will go better. This is aspiring for a buddha-land.

And this is how I approach this now. The single problem lies in the concept of "perfect love". It is thinking that "when things will be better then I can do it", "when there are no more thoughts about sex I may be a non-returner". That's how seeing the emptiness of self and things, understanding mind only, realising the illusion of concepts is the path of liberation, actually, liberation itself. Not so difficult, not so easy, needs a little training here and there, but understandable, something (theoretically) everyone can do but (actually) only a few does.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I think this lust-dhyana relationship came up before somewhere here. You said it doesn't mean final elimination of lust but temporary. Now, I'm sure there is no person who is always in a lustful state of mind. Lust is rather an emotion that comes up from time to time, and when it happens indeed one is quite busy with looking for satisfaction. However, at other times one could as well sit down and focus his mind. But even in times of strong emotions one can maintain awareness and not be moved. As the Satipatthana Sutta says, "And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns that the mind has passion. When the mind is without passion, he discerns that the mind is without passion." Nothing impossible here.

Your Nagarjuna quote is very similar to Dhammapada 372.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

kirtu said:

This in fact is the point with Pure Land practice (at least from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective). If one doesn't attain the bhumi's in this life or the bardo after death we go to the Pure Lands, attain the bhumis eventually, attain enlightenment and then send out emanations to continue bodhisattic activity. Total win-win.

Astus wrote:

Nice.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Here's an interesting one from Bodhidharma's Bloodstream Sermon:

"But since married laymen don't give up sex, how can they become Buddhas?
I only talk about seeing your nature. I don't talk about sex simply because you don't see your nature. Once you see your nature, sex is basically immaterial. It ends along with

your delight in it. Even if some habits remain', they can't harm you, because your nature is essentially pure. Despite dwelling in a material body of four elements, your nature is basically pure. It can't be corrupted."

(Red Pine translation, X63n1218_p0004c08-12)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Getting laid and enlightened simultaneously is an Anuttarayogatantra speciality, not really my cup of tea. As for Chan, it only says that normal laypeople can do it, that's what Bodhidharma and others said. No wonder they liked to quote the Vimalakirti Sutra so often.

I had a debate with myself on the subject whether Chan can really be a path to enlightenment, within this life, or it is rather Pure Land that is more appropriate. I came to the conclusion that Chan does work, it is a fine path even for a lay man like me. But I'm open for any criticism and advice, especially open for a good debate (just like this here, or more intense). Right now I have no doubts about Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Of course there is no proof that such a text was actually written by Bodhidharma, but it is not a Dunhuang script either (such texts can be found in the "Bodhidharma Anthology" by Jeffrey L. Broughton). Nevertheless, it was preserved in China as a teaching attributed to Bodhidharma, which tells more about its acceptance in the canon rather than its author.

I haven't yet explored this area, but apparently there have always a group of laymen involved in Chan from the early times on. Broughton actually mentions that Huangbo's Wanling record was meant for laymen. And I don't mean such non-monastic people were only interested in theory but enlightenment too.

As in China the literati, so in the west the educated middle-class people are interested in Buddhism the most. And while obviously the Dharma is preserved among the ordained, its practice has never been restricted to them at all, neither its full realisation. An interesting study by Piya Tan based on the Pali Canon:

<http://earlypalisutta.googlepages.com/8.6Laymansaintspiya.pdf>.

Make no mistake, I'm not saying that a lay life would be ideal for the path, nor that ordination is useless. I am only arguing for not excluding lay people. Dahui wrote (Swampland Flowers, p. 33-34): "When has it ever been necessary to leave wife and children, quit one's job, chew on vegetable roots, and cause pain to the body?" He talks exactly about how it is possible to attain enlightenment as a busy layman. As Layman Pang summed up: "Carry water and haul firewood" (運水及搬柴)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see the "virgin birth" part here. That would presume he had at least a mother. But it says he had no parents at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Says he had an illusion body. Nirmanakaya (化身 - 身化). Looked as if it was from father and mother, but wasn't. Half a parent could still be "half real/impure".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd rather vote for the whole conception-birth as an illusion. If only the conception was unreal but birth real, well, tricky causal situation, don't you think? Not to forget that the whole buddha-life story was an illusion. Well, in Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Does Vasubandhu actually affirm that there is a real cause for unreal effects? It is contradictory by the way. No, those are just examples. Vasubandhu doesn't say that

mind is real, that's a misinterpretation of mind only.

Causal efficacy works within illusion and not something real creating the illusion. It's more like in the Srimaladevi Sutra, shadowmen killing each other.

But perhaps you could find some other references on the paragraph you quoted.

Catmoon,

Virgin birth has everything to do with liberation from suffering. It is understanding the nature of things, seeing truth. Yoni śo-manaskāra!

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2010 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

Very good questions. The Vimalakirti Sutra says,

"He had a son, a wife, and female attendants, yet always maintained continence. He appeared to be surrounded by servants, yet lived in solitude. He appeared to be adorned with ornaments, yet always was endowed with the auspicious signs and marks. He seemed to eat and drink, yet always took nourishment from the taste of meditation."

And at another place,

"Reverend Ananda, the Tathagatas have the body of the Dharma - not a body that is sustained by material food. ... Ananda, do not be ashamed, and go and get the milk!"

The Diamond Sutra sums up neatly,

"What the Tathāgata calls a perfectly-formed body is not a perfectly-formed body. Hence it is called a perfectly-formed body."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Catmoon,

Don't you see the Zen in what Vimalakirti says? First he gives a long speech on how the Buddha's body is beyond concepts and is the diamond-hard dharma-body, then at the

end tells Ananda to bring the Buddha the milk he asked for.

There is no illogic in the Diamond Sutra. It is the teaching of emptiness, of prajnaparamita, of the whole deep wisdom of enlightenment. Perhaps you can look around for some explanation on it, or start a topic in the Sutra Studies section, or Mahayana.

Will,

Conception was through the side of Maya but not birth. Such a birth would be really strange!

Here we shouldn't forget the 3 component requirement of a foetus - sperm, egg, mind. So the Bodhisattva "moving in" through the side may not refer to any kind of immaculate conception.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

OK, my bad. I think we can go on with this illusory part and say that even our seemingly ordinary birth is illusory. Vimilakirti looked like a busy layman, but it was all an illusion, for all is illusion. Whether we realise it or not, it is an illusion. But to see it as an illusion, that all is mind made (manomayakaya), is the point of it. Of course, we can still take it on another level how the Buddha had a magical birth unlike ordinary beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: What are your favourite Mahayana Sutras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

At the moment:

- Vimalakirti Sutra
- Perfect Enlightenment Sutra (圓覺經)
- Avatamsaka Sutra

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Are you saying that's what the original sutra talks about?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 8:14 PM

Title: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've been reading the commentaries to an analysis on the Samye debate and its circumstances (<http://earlytibet.com/2010/03/31/tibetan-chan-iv/>). And then I thought how interesting it is that while there are so many books and other sources on Chan, people still have the same misunderstandings about it in Tibetan Buddhism.

Chan is not a single school. There is not a single person who could represent everyone. One teacher is responsible for what he teaches personally and represents only his own lineage and monastery/church. Also Chan teachers can be quite independent. In the 7th-8th century, when Chinese teachers were roaming Tibetan land, there were many different groups in China that could be identified as belonging to the Chan movement. I say this in order to avoid simplification of what Chan is.

A reoccurring critique and usual argument to differentiate Chan view from Dzogchen (nb. I don't say they're the same!) is that Chan knows nothing about the aware nature of mind but only the empty. That is of course not so.

Another misconception is that Chan disregards gradual teachings. First of all, within the Chan tradition different meditation techniques have always been used, both common Mahayana methods and special Chan teachings. On the other hand, it is essentially a sudden path - direct realisation of buddha-mind - but that doesn't mean the denial of the efficacy of gradual methods.

Third misconception is about Chan being only (or mostly) a samatha meditation. First of all, as far as its suddenness goes, Chan is direct seeing of buddha-mind, therefore development in meditation is irrelevant. Second, the techniques used for stage by stage progress cover both samatha and vipasyana, plus many other things Mahayana has. Third, just because it is called Chan (a derivative of Sanskrit dhyana) doesn't mean it's all about sitting in meditation and nothing else.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will,

Thanks for the reference. I still sounds strange that a baby came out of a woman's side. Did it make a hole? Or is it a special siddhi to "walk through" bellies? Just trying to imagine what the writers thought...

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, Chan is Chan, Dzogchen is Vajrayana. They aren't even spelt the same way.

Nevertheless, it is still intriguing to see some common features too. But my aim here is simply to show a clearer picture of Chan - the sudden path to buddha-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2010 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK then, I think it should be renamed from "virgin birth" into "cesarean birth". Or rename cesarean section to buddha section.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's look at the textual part.

The Pratimoksha (monks' rules) forbids alcohol but only certain meats, both are a minor precept.

The five, eight, ten precepts forbid alcohol, say nothing about meat.

The 10 major bodhisattva precepts forbid selling alcohol, the 48 minor precepts forbid both alcohol and meat. (Brahmajala Sutra - Chinese tradition)

Neither the primary (18), nor the secondary (46) bodhisattva vows forbid meat eating, and alcohol only by referring to other precepts (Tibetan tradition)

As for sutras on meat (those I can think of now):

The Lankavatara Sutra forbids eating meat.

The Surangama Sutra forbids eating meat and everything else of animal origin, or contact with animal products.

The Nirvana Sutra forbids eating meat but allows other animal products to be consumed and used.

Conclusion:

Alcohol consumption is against the precepts, however, in itself it is karmically neutral. Meat consumption is against only one version of minor bodhisattva precepts, its karmic negativity is minimum dubious.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Maybe there is some misunderstanding here. I didn't say alcohol is OK for anyone according to any set of precepts mentioned. I've also mentioned how certain kinds of meat are forbidden for monks. I've said nothing about the Brahmajala Sutra itself, only that meat eating is one of the minor precepts in it (the 3rd), just like drinking (the 2nd).

It'd be actually nice of you to outline tantric precepts about meat and alcohol.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

It shows perfectly why being a butcher is listed specifically among wrong livelihoods right there in the noble eightfold path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 7:24 AM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will,

No problem with immaculate birth. Still, as the original quote here says, it was an illusion. Physical, bodily birth happens depending on three components, so we have it in the abhidharma teachings. We could say the Buddha was not a womb-born but a spontaneously-born being. But I'm not sure it'd then count as a human birth. So it gets a bit messy if we analyse it a bit. Still, I'm open for explanations.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 3:52 PM

Title: Re: Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting read:

http://ftp.buddhism.org/Publications/IABTC/Vol12_Munsun%20Kang_-On%20the%20Meaning%20of%20Faith.pdf by Munsun Kang (Ven. Hyewon)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2010 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bummer. It is another myth that there is no Chan but in Japan only. Obviously there is Chan in China, some teachers have even come to the West (Ven. Xuanhua [City of Ten Thousand Buddhas], Ven. Shengyan [Dharma Drum Mountain], Ven. Xingyun [Fo Guang Shan]).

There are certain concepts shared by the different lineages (similar to greater groups like Madhyamaka, Mantrayana), like the teaching of sudden enlightenment and buddha-nature. By Chan here I generally referred to (1) common basics of the "Bodhidharma School", (2) the schools present around the 7-8th centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 3:24 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding transmission in China I had a topic somewhat relevant to the question:
<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=1219>.

There are numerous studies (well, not too much) on Chan history covering the time from Bodhidharma to the 20th century, although I haven't yet met (which doesn't mean there isn't) anything substantial on the Yuan era (1271-1368, Mongolian rule) or the Qing (1644-1911, Manchu rule).

Even though historical records show that the internal (religious) history of Chan is far from being accurate, it doesn't mean there were no Chan followers - ie. at some point it stopped being practised - since its rise around the 11th century. Chan became an integral part of Chinese Buddhism, its end would mean the cease of Buddhism. There were of course periods when Chan wasn't popular, nevertheless, popularity is not a requirement for existence.

As for the survival of lineages, just as Dexing says, both Linji and Caodong exist in China.

The Caodong tradition actually has a stronger claim for historical continuity as it was preserved in the world famous Shaolin monastery and spread out from there in the Ming dynasty Chan revival. Although that doesn't mean it is different from what is practised in the Linji lineage. Also, another source of confusion is that people mainly here about Japanese Zen, which is a separate development with its own 800 years of history. Another noteworthy phenomenon is that Ven. Xuyun (1840-1959) - the most well known Chan master of the last century - is said to be a lineage holder of all five schools of Chan, that's how for instance Ven. Xuanhua (founder of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas) was in the lineage of the Weiyang school (which didn't survive beyond the Song dynasty, so there is a leap/gap in the transmission).

An important thing to understand about East-Asian Buddhism is that there is very little or no sectarianism at all, unlike in Japan (which has its historical reasons of course). Thus you find Chinese teachers passing on many forms of teaching: Chan, Pure Land, Esoteric, Vinaya, Tiantai, Huayan, etc., while at the same time they may be specialist in any of them. If I remember correctly, Hashang Mohoyen is credited not only with teaching Chan in Tibet but also many sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 3:27 AM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dexing,

Funny and wise!

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: Welcome to Astus, Our New Mahayana Administrator

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks guys!

May I receive the merits of past Cakravartins for the welfare of all and offer the merits gained for the peace and smashing discussions on DharmaWheel.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

One shouldn't confuse killing with eating meat. They are not the same. The precept against killing includes asking someone else to do it, includes even telling others that it is OK to kill. But if you don't ask for it, it is not killed for you, there is no harm on one's "precept-body", neither is there intentional act (karma) of killing involved.

If eating meat is a problem because (in most cases) it is a result of someone killing an animal, and by buying meat one indirectly is involved in the meat industry, paying taxes is even more problematical. Or, for instance, I work at an IT company that I know is involved in government and military things too, therefore my work indirectly supports the soldiers on the battlefield.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

"By eating meat, however, you are basically having someone else do something that you yourself are probably not willing to do."

Please, make a difference between intentional act and interconnectedness. There is neither the karma of killing nor the breaking of the precept against taking lives involved in buying a sausage. There is no moral responsibility in what one hasn't done. I may give some money to a homeless person from what he buys liquor, or meat, or a knife to take lives and rob people. I may buy something on a flea market that was stolen. This is being connected with many bad things, being connected with the entire society.

There are many other products which involve killing of animals, like soaps, shoes, jackets, glue, medicine, make ups, etc. And in case one would use synthesised ingredients, such chemicals may very well harm animals (like fish) when they make contact with it through sewage water, etc. What to do about these things? Am I morally responsible for the death of a cow/pig if I wash my hands? And there was no mention of pesticides used in farming, killing thousands of animals and polluting the air and the soil.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 6:45 PM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Hungary is a NATO country, not just money but soldiers too go to the war. To make it worse, I work for an American company.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I don't question at all that not eating meat is related to some lessening in production. All I've argued for that meat eating is not breaking the precept against killing or taking the karma of killing. On the other hand, it is breaking the precept against meat eating of course, if one has taken that vow.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2010 at 2:03 AM

Title: Re: Eating Meat vs. Drinking Alcohol--Which is worse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dexing,

Compare these two:

"Bodhisattvas and bhikshus who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less will they pull it up with their hand. How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill? Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm. ... Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation."
(Surangama Sutra, ch. 5)

"Kasyapa said again to the Buddha: "If the Tathagata means to prohibit the eating of meat, such things as the five kinds of flavours as milk, cream, fresh butter, clarified butter, and sarpirmanda, all kinds of clothing, silk cloth, horse-shoe shell, hide and leather, bowls of gold and silver should not be received." "O good man! Do not muddle things up with what the Nirgranthas [Jains] say. Each of the prohibitions which the Tathagata lays down has a different meaning. By this, three pure meats are permitted standing on different grounds and the ten kinds of meat are prohibited by different standpoints. By different standpoints, all are prohibited, until the time of one's death. O Kasyapa! "I, from now on, tell my disciples to refrain from eating any kind of meat"
(Nirvana Sutra, ch. 7)

Interestingly enough, what the Surangama Sutra prohibits is called the teaching of Jains in the Nirvana Sutra.

Dexing said:

Being a consumer, paying for the meat you are directly linking yourself to the kill.

Astus wrote:

I understand direct link to mean immediately involved and indirect link to be involved via separate steps. That way being a consumer is an indirect link. But again, I didn't say a meat eater cannot be linked to the killing of animals but that there is no killing, or the intention of killing on his part. Therefore using and consuming animal products is not negative karma. And it shouldn't be forgot that karma is personal and not something that could be produced by someone else.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2010 at 2:09 AM

Title: Re: Wu.

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is "wu" from the gongan: 無 - it means "no"

This is "wu" that in Japanese stands for "satori": 悟 - it means "comprehension"

And this is "wu": 五 - which means "5"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2010 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

What do we mean by "school"? In Chinese the word is 宗 (zōng) that can mean a lot of things. I would say it is more like a "school of thought" than an institutional thing. Or, to be truer to the original word, it means "clan" - they are separate separate families (the "five houses" are in fact "five families" 五家) with a common ancestor. Master Huifeng can explain it much better how family relationship terms are used in Chan and Chinese Buddhism. Another interesting term here regarding transmitting the Dharma is that it is called a "blood vessel" (血脈) which passes through generations. But this is not as strict as it appears to be in Tantra - others may disagree. So it is one thing how a group of people wants to look in the eyes of outsiders and history is another thing. It is like with Buddhism and its many traditions. Every tradition likes to look like the original and true teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, and in some sense they all are. Every Chan group says they're the heirs of Bodhidharma, which is true in a religious and historical sense. It's just that things are not always what they appear to be.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2010 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Wu.

Content:
Dexing said:
wú 無, wù 悟, and wǔ 五

Astus wrote:
Try the Japanese reading: mu/bu, go, go. No tones, no problem.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, May 12th, 2010 at 1:10 AM
Title: Re: Abhidharmakosa study group?
Content:
Astus wrote:
Sounds fascinating. But I don't promise any participation except for occasionally looking at what is going on.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, May 12th, 2010 at 7:25 PM
Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle
Content:
Astus wrote:
Looking at the history of Buddhism throughout different lands, great supporters made the Dharma flourish, in most cases the king and local lords. That is hardly possible now as in Western countries the state is secular. But companies (Korea, Japan, Taiwan) can still put lot of money into it.

As for the "enlightened master", I believe that those who is remembered by later generations as great teachers are seen that way thanks for many circumstances. Those who were considered great masters of one era may be forgot in a hundred years. Disciples make teachers great. Disciples can persist because of the tradition being supported. Thus it is an important factor to have enough followers made of people in important and powerful positions.

"History is written by the victors"

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 1:42 AM
Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle
Content:
Astus wrote:
Here's what I meant. Sorry for bringing up a Chinese example but I'm pretty ignorant in Tibetan Buddhism.

The three most famous Zen teachers of all time are Bodhidharma, Huineng (the so called 6th patriarch) and Linji (Rinzai in Japanese). They're considered people who

attained sudden enlightenment and reached buddhahood. What do we actually know about them that can be historically attested? Almost nothing. What we know is that their stories and teachings are mostly the products of later ages. For instance, the fame of Huineng (who was illiterate according to the story) is primarily because of a monk called Shenhui, who claimed to be the Dharma-heir of Huineng, and was a controversial figure of his time. While some of Shenhui's teachings could survive, in the last 1300 years nobody really cared about those, unlike things attributed to Huineng which were not taught by him at all.

Waiting for a "greatly enlightened master with a rainbow body" is like waiting for Maitreya to come. Actually, the single person respected by all Western Buddhists and many non-Buddhists is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Indeed, if we look around in Europe and America, Tibetan Buddhism is thriving. On the other hand, Zen and Theravada is doing quite well too, even if they have no universal celebrity.

It sounds good to name a single person responsible for something awesome like establishing Buddhism in a country. But in fact, even Shakyamuni Buddha couldn't make Buddhism a major religion in India single-handedly, so there were his disciples who he sent out to spread the word, and the disciples of disciples, etc., and there was Ashoka, so on and so forth.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

It was entertaining to hear such a strong, masculine Japanese accent. Doumo arigatou!

But let's look at the content too.

- Zen is not a religion, not Buddhism, so Christians and others can do it too
- Sanbo Kyodan focuses on original Buddhism, which is the enlightenment of Shakyamuni
- The essence is selflessness (anatma), ie. people cannot die (amrta), this is seeing nature (nirvana)
- Science is very much compatible with Zen
- Sanbo Kyodan is the only Zen group in Japan focusing on the essential experience
- People really can experience this essence on retreats

This is so modern, a stripped Zen, fit for those who reject everything religion but embrace science.

I have one question, however. If Zen is separate from Buddhism, not a religion at all, then who tells what true nature is? I'm pretty sure Christians have their own ideas about the nature of man's soul, for instance that it is sinful.

And I put down the "essential" part of the speech, about the meaning of Zen, the universe, and everything.

I say, people don't die. More sharply, people cannot die. Even if you want to, you can't die. Why? Because there is no self who's dying. If there is no self, how you can die? This is the discovery. This is the absolute solution. [?] You cant die. Look into it, nobody there, nothing there. There's no self, then how you can die, when there's nothing there? That is the discovery, that's all. That's all. This is all about Buddhism. [...] but you cannot get this nothing at all, really. You cant see anything at all. You can never die because this nothing at all, nothing-at-all-ness, this is your true self.

(24:38 - 25:46)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

I was talking about the speech itself, not Sanbo Kyodan as a whole. But I guess as he is the leader of the group what he says is a representative introduction of their view.

Focusing only on the experience of emptiness might look like the common theme of every Zen teaching. But actually such teachings were for the meditation hall mainly and not for every situation and every stage of training.

It is true that Sanbo Kyodan was the best in spreading Zen to Americans, thanks for those who went to Japan after WW2. It seems very likely that their openness to foreigners and adaptability to modern views helped achieve that.

Also, it is not so minimalist to focus only on enlightenment. First of all, the idea of transmission is carried on as a validating and governing system. Then there is the koan system, rituals, vows, robes, statues. Although they say it is not Buddhism but their name is Three Treasures, which they take refuge in, they originate their teaching from Shakyamuni and the Zen patriarchs, they teach Buddhist teachings, etc.

I think what Ryouin Roshi said was the PR part. Not that I say there is some secret teaching behind it, but the whole teaching does seem like something not at all far from Japanese Buddhism. This is how the Roshi kept referring again and again to Buddhism. It's like holding up a stick and saying it is not a stick.

True, this view that no matter what you believe in you can do Zen is attracting for those with little or no religious background. At the same time, it creates a very narrow path where only the Zen teacher represents anything valid, because he is the embodiment of enlightenment. Looks very much like the Tantric idea of a guru.

This makes Zen "user friendly" for the masses, which looks like their goal actually. So it

is fine. But it doesn't provide a complete training in Buddhism, for that one would need to look at other groups.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Until that happens, Tibetan dharma for Westerners remains inseparable from Tibetan culture and language, Tibetan ways and mentality."

Maybe he meant only Vajrayana transmission? As I can see, there are only a handful of Mantra teachers who are Westerners, unlike in Theravada and Zen. On the other hand, Tibetans have left their homeland so they're here to teach.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think there are some really good Theravadin teachers around, same goes for Zen teachers. Of course, not everyone is top class - in my opinion - but people like Bhikkhu Bodhi and the late Daido Looi are admirable teachers. Theravada has already a considerable number of monasteries around with Western monks and some nuns. It appears to me Theravada in quality and ordained members are pretty beyond any other Buddhist tradition - in the West.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Indeed, as I said, support is very important. Shakyamuni had wealthy friends, no wonder he could obtain some groves and parks already in his life.

I think Vajrayana is quite appropriate for lay people, especially looking at the mahasiddhas. So there shouldn't be too much need for monastics to have Western teachers. There are some who teach, like James Low, Shenpen Hookham, Keith Dowman, Myrdhin Reynolds, Surya Das, the very famous Ole Nydhal, etc. It may not be the whole curriculum, but some essential practice. However, it could be that such people don't look as authentic as Tibetans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 13th, 2010 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I meant is that not everyone has to be a Geshe or Khenpo level teacher, which means lot of textual and philosophical knowledge. Look at the Zen teachers (in the West), most of them know only a couple of texts but still can teach meditation and the necessary things. Same goes for Tibetan yogis, I believe. You don't have to know everything from Asanga to Zendo (Shandao) to teach hundreds of people how to do bowing and sitting. And if a teachers knows one or two sadhanas, that's OK, that's something people can learn and gain enlightenment with.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

m0rl0ck said:

Having practiced zen/chan over the better part of two decades, this has not been my experience.

Astus wrote:

What other quality control is there? Do people learn to evaluate their progress on the path or it is always the teacher who tells it? Is the study of the Buddha's teachings encouraged at all? Isn't the teacher a person with the seal of enlightenment? Isn't the teacher required to do the koan practice?

m0rl0ck said:

It does emphasize practice and experience however.

Astus wrote:

Which is fine. However, it is not irrelevant to ask what practice consists of. There is this tendency to regard only formal meditation as practice, which is again I think is a narrow view. Practice can and should include all that are the six paramitas, starting with giving and moral conduct.

m0rl0ck said:

Practice that leads to the same kind of experience that the speaker in my original post in this thread is talking about.

Astus wrote:

It'd be a good idea to compare such koan practice with something more organised practice. With a fine samatha basis one engages in systematic vipasyana, that way insight into no-self is pretty much guaranteed. No surprises, no waiting for

enlightenment but gradually progressing on the path. It doesn't sound like sudden enlightenment when one fumbles with a koan for many years to get a sight of emptiness. Make no mistakes, I don't say koan practice is ineffective, it is indeed a very powerful stuff as I see. But I believe systematic progress is more reliable and effective on a large scale, if one is actually clear about the way.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not asking these questions as if I wanted an answer personally for myself but as part of our discussion, questions I raised for you - or whoever is up for a discussion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 3:28 PM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

I didn't find his teaching a nihilist one at all. Just because he says nothingness rather than emptiness is not necessarily annihilationist. To say that you find nothing like a self if you search for it is not contrary to the Buddha's teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Truly ethical governments: Have there ever been any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Perhaps the "United Federation of Planets" could be counted among ethical governments, mainly because it is fictional. Another similar idea is the Wheel-Turning King of the golden era - whose heirs inevitably become corrupt by the time. I suppose there is also ethical government in divine societies like the heaven of the brahmas. As for Planet Earth, the Saha Loka, in the present era I can hardly imagine that. I mean, there could have been wonderful governments in a land of peace and prosperity. Maybe there are some. Until some bigger tribe, bigger nation came and conquered the land, enslaved the population and moved in their own sons and daughters to rule.

By the way, it wasn't clear what ethics should be used to define ethical governments. Plato? Macchiavelli? Confucius? Cicero?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren's interpretation of the Pure Land

Content:
Astus wrote:
Looks very much like that.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 5:40 PM
Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma
Content:
Astus wrote:
Something about the lay path debated here for a little:

"They do not want fame, their hearts are not overcome by anger.
As householders they remain constantly unattached to their entire property.
They do not seek to earn their livelihood in the wrong way,
Through bewitchment-spells, or the spells which are the work of women.

Nor do they [earn a living by] tell[ing] plausible lies to men and women.
Practised in the quite detached wisdom, the best of perfections,
Free from quarrels and disputes, their thoughts firmly friendly,
They want [to see] the all-knowing, their thoughts always inclined towards the religion."

PP8000, ch. 17 said:
When one lives the life of a householder, one has no great love for pleasant things, and one does not want these too much. For, it is realized that it's with fear and disgust one possesses all pleasant things. [fear of the possessed item's loss, and disgust at their decrepitude or lacking being better than what it is]. Situated in a wilderness infested with robbers one would eat one's meals in fear, and with the constant thought [333] of getting away, of getting out of this wilderness, and not with repose.

Just so an irreversible Bodhisattva living the life of a householder, possesses pleasant things simply without caring for too much for them, without eagerness, without attachment. One is not one of these people who care for dear and pleasant forms. These who live the lives of householders and who are involved in the five kinds of sensuous pleasures do not earn their living in an irregular way, but in the right way. Neither do these incur death in a state of sin, nor do these inflict injuries on others. These incite all beings to realize this supreme happiness, -these worthy beings, these great beings, superbeings, excellent beings, splendid beings, powerful of beings, sublime beings, valiant beings, heroes of beings, leaders of beings, waterlilies of beings, lotuses of beings, thoroughbred beings, Nagas of beings, lions of beings, trainers of beings! It is in this spirit which Bodhisattvas live the life of householders, in as much as these are impregnated with the power of perfection of wisdom, and this is another token of their irreversibility.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Truly ethical governments: Have there ever been any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

You're right. The government is there to keep order. In the Aganna Sutta (DN 27) it is outlined how greed resulted in the creation of the position of a judge, from which the position of a king became, and from vices new laws created. So from this point of view, a government is always a way of oppressing disturbing elements of society. But again, we should define what ethics to use. DN 26 gives a nice description of the perfect ruler, a sort of socialist state.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, PrajnaParamita in 8000 lines, but PP8000 sounds better.

The verse is of course from the Ratnagunasamcayagatha's relevant part.

However, the PP8000 is not Conze but Richard Babcock.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 14th, 2010 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Truly ethical governments: Have there ever been any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Luke,

I guess the Vatican fits that three requirements. Perhaps other countries like Luxembourg, San Marino, Monaco too.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 15th, 2010 at 2:35 AM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

catmoon,

I'm not so familiar with HHDL's books but the Gelugpa's Prasangika-Madhyamaka is quite strict to the level of the emptiness of emptiness. Even a relatively real existence of self is denied. There is this concept of self and that's it, nothing beyond that. Just a notion, a false notion. Khedrup Je, the 1st Panchen Lama explains the nature of self in their system,

The fact that if it is searched for in these seven ways (Candrakirti's chariot analysis) no self at all is to be found is what it means for the self to be essenceless. This, however, does not repudiate the fact that, if it is not analyzed, the notion of person is a functional one. It being established by a nominal valid cognition, the person does nominally exist. What is more, when the mind that thinks "I" arises, it does so in dependence on, that is, using as a basis, the five aggregates within one's on continuum [if one is in the form realm or below], and the four, [excluding the form aggregate, if one is a formless being]. Without using [such a basis it would not arise] and that is why it [is said] to be merely labeled in dependence on the aggregates.

(Dose of Emptiness, p. 290)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 15th, 2010 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another, more relevant quote from Nitou's "Song of Mind"

(http://www.shambhalasun.com/sunspace/term/fac/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1307&Itemid=0):

三世無物無心無佛。眾生無心依無心出。

In past, present and future, there is nothing;

No mind, no buddha.

Sentient beings are without mind;

Out of no-mind they manifest.

一切莫顧安心無處。無處安心虛明自露。

Do not concern yourself with anything;

Fix the mind nowhere.

Fixing the mind nowhere,

Limitless brightness shows itself.

From Ven. Shengyan's commentary:

"as a self is present, dharmas cannot be understood." and "We must go beyond one-mind to no-mind. Here the mind truly stops on nothing. Only here can one truly be in accordance with all dharmas."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 16th, 2010 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: This is it - This is what its all about

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sheaps,

"Even a relatively real existence of self is denied." - said me. By that I referred to concepts like a pudgala, or that there is actually a self on a relative, but not absolute level, that is understood by beings as a self. Even modern teachers may talk about a "small self" or an "ego" that one has to destroy.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 2:50 AM

Title: Re: Safe Escape - User Friendly Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

As I said, I haven't tried yet to search on this subject of Chan lay practice. But what immediately popped up in my mind was this teaching from the Platform Sutra (ch. 3):

The master said, "Good friends, if you wish to cultivate this practice, you may do so either as a householder or in a monastery. Householders who are able to practice this are like those persons of the East whose minds [harbor] good. Those in the monastery who do not cultivate it are like those people of the West whose minds [harbor] evil. It is only that the mind should be pure—then it is the Western [Paradise] of the self-nature!"

Lord Wei asked further, "How can householders cultivate this practice? I hope you will teach us this." The master said, "I will recite a formless verse for this great assembly. Just cultivate according to this, doing exactly as if you were always with me. If you do not cultivate according to this, what benefit would it be to take the tonsure and leave home [to become a monk]?"

The verse goes:

With the mind universally [the same], why labor to maintain the precepts?
With practice direct, what use is it to cultivate dhyāna?
Gratitude is to be filial in supporting one's parents
Righteousness is to have sympathy for those above and below.

Self-subordination is to honor the lowly and the familiar.
Forbearance is not to approve of the various evils.
If one is able to rub sticks to create a fire,
The red lotus blossom will certainly grow from the mud.

That which causes the mouth suffering is good medicine.
That which offends the ears is loyal speech.
By reforming transgressions one will necessarily generate wisdom.
To defend shortcomings within one's mind is not wise.

In one's daily actions one must always practice the dissemination of benefit [for others].

Accomplishing enlightenment does not depend on donating money.
Bodhi should only be sought for in the mind.
Why belabor seeking for the mysterious externally?

If you hear this explanation and practice accordingly,
The Western [Paradise] is right in front of you.

The master said further, "Good friends, you should all practice according to this verse.
See your own natures and directly accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood!

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: to read or know or learn before ordaining

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.fjdh.com/wumin/HTML/82325.html> a summary.

"In the Jogye Order, a future member of the community first seeks out a teacher at a temple, has his head shaved or his hair cut very short, and serves as an aspirant apprentice for a period of at least five months. Once the aspirant is accepted, there is a ceremony of the taking of the novice precepts, or training rules. These consist of refining the ethical standards of the individual. After completing four years of basic training in living in the monastery and attending training college where the aspirant learns philosophy and other necessary subjects, candidates then take prescribed examinations and if successful, they then take the full precepts, becoming a monk, bhikkhu, or nun, bhikkhuni.

Once ordained, a new monk will participate in all the daily activities of the temple, including chanting, maintenance, meditation retreats, text study, and so on. Some may be involved in administrative affairs and the teaching of the laity."

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/jokb/content_view.asp?cat_seq=69&content_seq=201&page=1

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chan teachings may give the impression that there is no system in Mahayana but that is far from the truth. Actually in terms of stages on the path it is more complicated than what you see in Theravada. For instance, in East-Asian Mahayana they teach a 52 stages of enlightenment set based on the Avatamsaka Sutra, and I'm sure you have heard about the ten stages of the bodhisattva. But even in Chan you find stages like the five ranks of Dongshan, or in Japan Hakuin's koan curriculum. Meditation manuals are also available, most famous of them is Zhiyi's Mohezhiguan (Maha-Samatha-Vipasyana). You definitely should look around for more.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 2:04 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

"there is no self existent entity to which "merit" can be attached."

Neither is there a self which you can attach a body and clothes on, but I guess you don't run around naked on the streets. Merit is simply "positive karma", and while it may sound too intellectual for you, the work of karma and rebirth works perfectly well in Buddhism exactly because there is no permanent self. Plus there is also "immeasurable merit" of the arya bodhisattvas who practice the prajnaparamita.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 2:06 PM

Title: Re: community/compassion etc

Content:

Astus wrote:

I like to use this translation of the http://acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html.

But there are many others online.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 2:09 PM

Title: Re: to read or know or learn before ordaining

Content:

Astus wrote:

You can study Mahayana sutras in a Theravada monastery on your own, if you have internet for instance, or a good library there.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 2:31 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

No need to take it on faith. It is an understandable, logical teaching that can be personally observed through meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 17th, 2010 at 9:37 PM

Title: Re: 6 Yogas of Naropa Teaching in Mongolia Aug20-Sep1

Content:

Astus wrote:

It appears prices got a lot higher in Mongolia. I mean, if it costs \$2000 there, while in the USA (not exactly the cheapest place on Earth) it is "merely" \$625-775 (<http://www.guhyasamaja.org/SixYogas2009.htm>) there certainly must be some quality difference. Or not. Perhaps it is that Glenn Mullin has a higher price than Gyume Khensur Rinpoche. I don't know.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why should have I found an self or person? There is no need for it. Let me give an example, why a self is unnecessary for karma.

We say that information is carried by electrical signs throughout the globe and it is called the internet. Is information separate from electricity, or it's the same? Of course, there is only the current of electrons, of electric charge moving.

Similarly, there is the mental continuum, the fluctuation of dharmas, arising and falling. That rise and fall is not carried on by a soul, or a container. Dharmas come and go according to causal relations, dependent arising. Karma is one of the governing factors of the mental continuum induced by ignorance.

You can find more detailed explanation of the different processes in abhidharma works, including the process of rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is it tortuous? Just look at the periodic table of elements, isn't that too much to describe a simple thing like matter? Using earth, water, fire and wind sounds simpler, easier. But we know that knowing only the list of elements is far from enough to make one a chemist or a pharmacist. It can take even a decade in higher education to get a PhD, and that's nothing unusual, not a Nobel prize. Should Buddhism be easier?

"To what were you referring? Merit? How have you observed that in your practice?"

There is the form of meditation called vipasyana, observing the mind (觀心), also dharmsmrtyupasthana, foundation of mindfulness on dharmas (法念住). In brief: watching thoughts. Seeing how phenomena come and go, looking at the work of internal causality. You can learn this from both a meditation teacher (禪師) and meditation manuals, in case you want to try it out. You can use either Theravada or Mahayana, this

is a subject they both like to investigate.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: 6 Yogas of Naropa Teaching in Mongolia Aug20-Sep1

Content:

Astus wrote:

"As for doing something more general, it's not my style. My own belief is that tantra is self secret. Only those with the karma will show up."

I like his style.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 3:01 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

I didn't mean to question your path, or practice. But in my view there is more to Buddhism than "drop all concepts" and "see your nature". The Heart Sutra is a brief extract of the prajnaparamita teachings, like a synopsis of a novel, a zip file of thousands of teachings. Not to mention teachings beyond the prajnaparamita cycle. If the Heart Sutra were enough in itself the Buddha could have stopped teaching twenty minutes after his enlightenment.

Of course, I admit I didn't experience sudden realisation after reading my first ever Zen saying, so I'm not with the highest potential. And I also find studying the sutras and treatises a beneficial method to deepen my understanding and practice of Buddhism. May not be so for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some words from Ven. Shengyan:

"The Bodhisattva Path, the realization of wisdom, can be seen as stages of selflessness and nonattachment, as I have just de-scribed. But enlightenment can also be seen as activity. Enlightenment means that you have come to realize what you didn't realize before. Ch'an recognizes four levels of the activity of enlightenment, and these levels unfold, one after another, over and over again.

At each level you attain a different kind of wisdom. The first level of enlightenment is to hear the Buddhadharma, which gives you the wisdom to answer some of the questions in your life. The second level is to think about the Dharma in order to better understand what you have heard. The wisdom from this level helps you answer questions about the Dharma, and about practice. The third level of enlightenment is to practice what you have learned, both formally in meditations, chanting, prostrations, etc., and in daily life. The wisdom gained from practice is deeper and allows you to better understand questions you may have about life, your self, and the Dharma. Through practice you learn more about your body, mind, and behavior. Eventually you will experience directly what you have learned intellectually. This is the fourth level of enlightenment, when you illuminate your mind and see your intrinsic nature. This is sudden enlightenment. Wisdom becomes visible because vexation and self-centeredness disappear. In that moment, all problems and questions are resolved.

Many practitioners like to focus exclusively on the fourth level of enlightenment, and they neglect the first three stages: listening, studying, and practicing in meditation and daily life. They want to bypass the preliminary activities and instantly illuminate their minds and reveal their wisdom. Such people are naive and have a poor understanding of Ch'an practice.

Even if you experience the fourth level of enlightenment, it doesn't mean that you have attained Buddhahood. In fact, the enlightenment experience may last only a moment. You will go through the four levels over and over again. Each time you will begin at a new place and learn new things. Each time you will have different experiences. By repeating this cycle again and again, eventually you can reach complete enlightenment. But we must all start at the beginning. Now you are learning about Buddhadharma. Please practice and cultivate the Dharma as well. Don't seek the fourth level. Just practice. The fourth level will manifest naturally in its own time."

(<http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-09p0109>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Tai Situpa in Tricycle

Content:

kirtu said:

In the article HE Tai Situpa basically said that he thought that something closer to mahasiddha practice would be taking place in the West.

Astus wrote:

Didn't notice that part. But that's good news, I guess.

Like, just something I've heard of, Keith Dowman's idea of the "urban yogi".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 19th, 2010 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

I didn't elevate study above practice. Practice is the application of what one has heard, studied and understood. If one only knows to count his breath, well, then that's all Buddhism is for him - no problem.

Actually, I don't know any other famous Chan teacher who was illiterate besides the legendary Huineng. Probably because those who were appointed abbots of monasteries were expected to be well versed in Dharma and Vinaya.

The sutra mentioning 7 days, 7 weeks, etc. is the Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (in Pali it is the Satipatthana Sutta).

In the early times they didn't read sacred texts but memorised them. And I'm sure it takes longer to memorise at least the basic sutras (like the Mahavagga) then to read them a couple of times and have the book on the shelf.

In case of busy laypeople it is understandable they have neither the time nor the inclination to learn more about the Dharma beyond a few basic concepts, rather do as much practical thing as possible. In the West instead of lighting incense, chanting texts and doing prostrations people go and do some sitting. Quite similar in mentality actually. Simple ways to obtain spiritual goods. That's how Buddhism can be appropriate for both monks and laymen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 20th, 2010 at 2:59 AM

Title: Death of the Arhat

Content:

Astus wrote:

What happens to the arhat after death from the traditional Mahayana perspective(s)?

I know of two options:

- Attains parinirvana.
- Becomes a bodhisattva.

If he attains parinirvana, is that the same as of a buddha, or not? If it is the same, do buddhas remain active saving beings or no? If they do, obviously arhats would do the same. Same if they don't stay. If it is different, what is the difference? Can there be higher and lower freedom from samsara?

If he becomes a bodhisattva, what is the cause? If it is the decision of the arhat, did he make that decision before, or after death? If before, he was already on the bodhisattva path before death and not that of the arhat. If after, then what mental factor could cause

such a decision considering he has released all reliance on the aggregates and the aggregates dispersed at the time of death since there was no reason for them to be born. But if there were some attachments left, how could he be called someone free from samsara, an arhat? Or if the joining of the path of the bodhisattva was caused by somebody else, like a buddha, where could that influence take its effect? If it happened before death, again, it wasn't a death of an arhat. If after, what was influenced?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 20th, 2010 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Death of the Arhat

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

According to my intention this has nothing to do with Theravada but only the Mahayana view(s) on arhats.

The version you told me is I think the most usual nowadays everywhere. However, it raises a few problems, I think.

What is that parinirvana where an arhat goes to? If it is within samsara, that defies the definition of an arhat. If it is liberation, there is no place or state of mind an arhat could be found. Because it is said an arhat still has some obscurations (jneyavarana), it should mean it is within birth and death. Another option - but I've heard about this only in Tiantai - is that there is a special buddha-realm like dimension where arhats stay. But beyond that I know nothing about such an arhat-realm.

Is there anywhere a clarification of what sort of parinirvana an arhat is exactly in?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 20th, 2010 at 2:00 PM

Title: Re: Death of the Arhat

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is this teaching of arhats becoming bodhisattvas after a stay in, well, where exactly? And then buddhas wake them up from, what? So that bodhicitta arises in their, what?

I see a not so small problem with saying that although arhats ended birth they are still born somewhere. Is there somewhere outside samsara? How?

If it is dependent origination they are in, there is no freedom from birth. Independent origination, however, is not possible.

Kirt,

Regarding Tiantai's view, I've just heard about it but don't know any details.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 20th, 2010 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada aspirations

Content:

Astus wrote:

The first time I've heard about the 52 stage system was from Ven. Mingzheng from Bailin temple whom under I've studied for a while. As it is based on the Huayan Sutra, it seems kind of common system in East-Asia. I'm not sure of the system's origin, maybe Sanlun, or not.

faith

1-10 ten faiths

understanding

11-20 ten abidings

practice

21-30 ten practices

31-40 ten returnings

41-50 ten stages (10 bhumis)

51 equal enlightenment

enlightenment

52 marvelous enlightenment

More on the 52 stages: <http://www.simplybuddhist.com/2007/11/detail-of-52-stages-of-bodhisattva.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 20th, 2010 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Death of the Arhat

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Yes, by bringing the eternal mind-continuum ("soulriver") into the equation it can be solved, saying that there is no such thing as end of rebirth, end of dependent origination, end of samsara. Thus whatever nirvana an arhat imagines is false. Thinking about the possibilities this was the only one which sounded plausible to explain an arhat's ongoing quest for buddhahood.

On the other hand, this eternal mind-continuum sounds, well, like a liquidified atman, with the result that one's mind is eternal, this time a changing, moving, feeling mind, not eternal in components but eternal in continuum. So, like a river and its drops, the river is eternally flowing but the drops keep changing. Funny, it is much like the reverse of the view that there are eternal elements (dharmas) making up an impermanent whole. Is

this really an acceptable view?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 21st, 2010 at 1:54 AM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Astus wrote:

For the discussion that was started here see:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=1459>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 21st, 2010 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

"if married, didnt uncompassionately deny sex to their spouses."

Is it uncompassionate to deny drugs from an addicted?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 21st, 2010 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

Among all the quotes you cited didn't say there is "compassionate sex" only in the one by Berzin.

The question is: can lust be realised as empty? Certainly, everything is empty. Emptiness doesn't mean non-existence, just one is not bound by it, one doesn't think it is self-existent. Can we deduce from this that lust may not cause suffering? I don't think so, as there is a causal relationship according to the second noble truth. Can suffering be empty? Of course. Thus lust can be not lust and suffering not suffering. So did Vimalakirti have wife and kids while being alone and celibate. Good stuff, eh? So much for lay people...

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 22nd, 2010 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: Death of the Arhat

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The mind-continuum is in a sense eternal in that one moment of mind conditions the

next moment of mind. Ultimately this is transformed into wisdom and in that sense the mind ends."

Regarding the eternally continuing mind-moments MMK 16:1 has the refutation:

"Suppose compounded phenomena cycle:
If they are permanent, they do not cycle.
Even if they are impermanent, they do not cycle.
The same approach applies to sentient beings."

On the third line of the stanza Tsongkhapa (Ocean of Reasoning, p. 331-333) gives an explanation how the concept of an impermanent, changing mental continuum cannot be the one to go around in samsara.

"As for no end of rebirth - yes there is an end to rebirth. The problem of rebirth for ordinary beings is uncontrolled rebirth driven by karma and obscurations. There is an end to that."

I guess you mean that liberated beings can choose their birth. That would actually suppose a being outside of samsara making a decision about where to be born. And even if it is within samsara, where does the decision originate from? If the decision is caused by former mental factors, it couldn't be called controlled choice. If it is independent of other factors, that is the case of something out of nothing, or a case of an independent self.

"Actually we should look at the Abhidharma teachings on this. Mind is however not a thing or entity but a Dependant arising. Therefore it is not an atman."

What Abhidharma teaching do you think of here? Certainly, mind is dependently arisen. Thus, it can dependently end - with the elimination of ignorance there is no further cause for the arising of consciousness, birth and suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 22nd, 2010 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

It's great you bring some everyday reality here. But, and this is just as normal too, in the Western countries the newly converted people don't choose Buddhism because they're eager to make some merit for better birth, nor do they like much religious rituals. It is meditation that sells Buddhism, and the Dalai Lama. Average middle class people with university degrees have the time and energy to engage in regular practice. It shouldn't be forgot that today those who have a high school level of knowledge would be called panditas a thousand years back. Uneducated, poor laypeople are not the same as

educated and relatively wealthy laymen. Praying for more sons and more food comes naturally for those who depend on those things. That's not the situation of modern Buddhists here. Consequently they want something spiritual instead of material, just as the literati didn't visit Buddhist teachers to learn how to receive more ink and paper in their next life. They wanted enlightenment, Chan, realising the true nature of mind - or at least some good philosophical chit-chat.

I think it is easy among all the teachings to forget it is about decreasing suffering and not about living up to some idea. The problem with lay life is that it involves more problem than a monastic life. But if one has the good background for paying more attention to the Dharma than worldly matters, where is the problem? In medieval Europe the monks had the knowledge and they were the philosophers and wise people of the age, very similar to India and China. Then in the 16th century things began to really change, the clergy gradually lost its position, science, philosophy and theology became the matter of educated citizens. Monastic life never again enjoyed its lost popularity, since it wasn't necessary to live like that in order to know how to read and write.

By the way, to attain any level of dhyana you don't have to be celibate, or live a life of a recluse. True, being occupied by desires prevents the mind to settle down. First of all, no man is constantly full of passion. I have no doubt that one can put aside everyday matters even for an hour, or for a week, sometimes for a month or two. While I don't live a celibate life, it is not hard for me to enjoy inner peace for an hour without thinking about sex, food, sleep, fame or wealth. Even when one is sick and has pains can preserve serenity and rise above concerns.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 22nd, 2010 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

And what percent of the population studied in those schools in Shakespeare's times? Very small. And that's what I meant to point out, that the masses were uneducated peasants and craftsmen. Today, who learn Sanskrit, or any foreign language, has to memorise the grammar. Or you could learn Japanese by watching samurai films?

They memorised texts, true. I, on the other hand, have hundreds of books, plus the internet. In terms of information we're way beyond the capacity of Ananda, the whole canon on a single e-book reader with a search option.

The Chinese literati were no monks, sure. And they still could be involved in high level Buddhism, like Peixiu and Li Tongxuan.

As I said, celibate life and putting aside a noisy, desiring mind for a while are not the same. Otherwise teaching meditation to lay people would be quite pointless, don't you

think? But they did so in the past and they do it now too.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 23rd, 2010 at 7:28 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

If you interpret the quote in a way that one must have eliminated kama, only non-returners and above attain any absorption. Which would then mean wisdom is available without absorption as those on the first two noble stages still have sensual desire. But I believe this has been already mentioned before.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

So, one forsakes lust but hasn't eliminated lust. It should fit the case when one doesn't even want to drink coffee in the evening, although he might drink one in the morning. Also, after lunch one isn't hungry and until dinner there's no need to think of food. By the way, if temporary non-presence of lust is not good enough, how could a permanent non-presence of lust be fine? As far as the non-presence of lust is concerned, both cases are satisfactory.

Master Huifeng's suggestion should be considered too.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Huang Po in context

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Actually, the two records of Huangbo assembled by Peixiu and probably some of Huangbo's direct disciples are mainly from that era, with occasional modifications by later ages.

"From the perspective of contemporary Buddhist studies, its importance derives from the fact that this literature is the best example of the state of the Zen tradition in China during what has traditionally been regarded as the "golden age." What is unique about

the Huang-po literature is that it is precisely dateable, thus providing a crucial historical marker in the Zen tradition."

(Dale S. Wright: The Huang-po Literature, in Zen Canon, p. 107 - same essay as linked in the OP)

This kind of sudden enlightenment teaching of the Hongzhou school as we find it in Huangbo's records is also attested by Zongmi, also there's Jinhua Jia's work on Mazu's teachings collected from sources as early and reliable as possible. And there are still others, like the Guishan Jingce found in Dunhuang and dated 936.

While it is true that many Tang Chan records are overly edited, or fake, or simply untraceable, there are some sources to look into. And it appears to be that Hongzhou Chan is/was quite radical about sudden enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Huang Po in context

Content:

Astus wrote:

A very relevant book on Huangbo and its modern interpretation: Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism by Dale S. Wright

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: Origins of Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've heard this idea a couple of times before. I think it is/was a trend in cultural anthropology to find sources of cultural phenomena in other places, ultimately arriving at the original source (or something like that) - called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-cultural_diffusion.

But maybe we can actually find internal sources. I think of those gods who are "made of light", or shining (appamanabha deva - Devas of Unbounded Radiance). So it is not at all inconceivable how a Buddha of Infinite Light could be found in Buddhism. We just have to establish that the concepts of infinite and light were present as religious ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Origins of Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think as for religious psychology - and mythology, gods, types of beliefs - the different levels of existence from hell to the formless realms are a wonderful source and

description. It's the whole spectrum from top to bottom. Making it more Buddhist with bodhisattvas and buddhas seems then an internalisation (into Buddhism) of an ancient Indian cosmology.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: Origins of Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nice, Master Huifeng, putting together NDE, psychology and philosophy of religion to show that it is all natural that Amitabha Buddha is associated with both infinite light and transference/birth in a buddha-land. At this point we could as well turn to the Vajrayana teachings on the intermediate state which is full of different lights.

On the other hand, this makes the whole "Amitabha Cult" seem less salvational.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist hells: Real places or just mental states?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it was in northern Hinayana groups where the idea appeared that the hell realms are mental projections on a certain level, thus explaining the existence of the beings torturing those born there. Then such a view was later took up by Mahayana thinkers. Nevertheless, the hells are (also) physical places just like any other realms. IIRC, it is located somewhere under Jambudvipa, but not sure.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po in context

Content:

Astus wrote:

I read a bit of Huangbo again, and the Lok To translation didn't seem to be exactly like the Chinese, then I looked up the Blofeld version, which is again a unique form of rendering. I guess a re-translation according to modern norms, following a better terminology and not playing with capital letters is really in order. Maybe Dale Wright should do us this little favour, he seems to be the best Huangbo expert around.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist hells: Real places or just mental states?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jambudvīpa is this continent where we live, where Shakyamuni appeared. So the hells are under us (physically), similarly to Christian hell.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2010 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist hells: Real places or just mental states?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, Buddhist cosmology is a bit outdated with a scientific eye. However, we don't have (yet) the means to dig too deep into the earth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 26th, 2010 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

This prison metaphor is so much like

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave in a modern "

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_Break " format.

I think meditation on the drawbacks of samsara is essential as a basis for the path, and this appears to be usually missing from Western Buddhism.

I like the metaphor of the film. One watches a film because he thinks it is interesting. It could be a love story or a horror, the point is to glue people to the screen. Samsara here is not a grey prison cell but a world full of entertainment. Honey on the blade. And we're told honey is the meaning of life, and a success story is when you can avoid the blade (lived happily ever after). That is the modern myth of love and money we're told again and again. The soap opera of life.

Also, the TV/film metaphor gives the option of both gradual and sudden awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 26th, 2010 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Yes, now that sounds better. Such version then fits Zongmi's vision of combining sudden enlightenment with gradual training. It's just that a new TV series should be made of Sudhana's journey, starting with the cell mate Samantabhadra and ending with the guard tower of infinite connections (like when Neo meets the Architect in Matrix Reloaded).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 26th, 2010 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

What you say resembles very much the message of the Ani Sutta (SN 20.7):

"in the course of the future there will be monks who won't listen when discourses that are words of the Tathagata — deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness — are being recited. They won't lend ear, won't set their hearts on knowing them, won't regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works — the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples — are recited."

Similar warning in SN 16.13 (A Counterfeit of the True Dhamma): "It's worthless people who arise right here [within the Sangha] who make the true Dhamma disappear."

What happens? Even monastic curriculum may contain more "explanation for the commentary of the commentary" than reading the sutra itself. And what they do with the sutras? Bow before them and recite the mantra or the title of it. Magical learning. Could be used in universities too, made things easier.

"As long as the monks neither decree what has been undecreed nor repeal what has been decreed, but practice undertaking the training rules as they have been decreed, their growth can be expected, not their decline." (AN 7.21)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 26th, 2010 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

This little discussion - which I don't mind at all - feels like elderly women chatting about the good old days over the garden fence.

And there are the buddha-nature and dharmadhatu teachings, how everything is already perfect (says so the Dzogchen master).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Essentials of Practice and Enlightenment for Beginners

Content:

Astus wrote:
White Lotus,

I don't know if you've realised it's not m0rl0ck's essay but a writing by Hanshan Deqing, one of the most famous Buddhist teachers of Ming China.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 4:39 AM
Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?
Content:

Astus wrote:
A way to say the Tendai teaching of "three thousand worlds in a single thought", which is a way to state interdependence and interpenetration. Or to be less biased, a usual East Asian way of expressing dependent origination.

Or perhaps Dogen obtained a microscope from visiting aliens.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 3:37 PM
Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?
Content:

Astus wrote:
"I was hoping we could get more at the experiential sense of it"

It is a form of religious writing that Dogen uses, a kind of literature. This is a forum where what we can use are words. So the question is, what is an "experiential sense" style? Is it perhaps expressing the same thing in our own words? Or composing a short poem as they did in China (qv. koan collections)? Maybe come up with a Zen-style reaction? So many options.

Many lines of words
In a world of lies
Few pointless letters
Tell complete stories

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 4:14 PM
Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?
Content:
Astus wrote:
Master Huifeng,

The quoted paragraph is <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php?mode=detail&mode2=1&num1=2582&num2=&vol=82&page=66>

(didn't copy-paste because it contains special characters)

world: 世界

sentient being: 有情

一莖草中二毛有情世界アリ。 - in a single blade of grass there is a world of sentient beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Huifeng said:

Huayan = Kegon. Sums it up.

Astus wrote:

Shortest answer so far. Maybe it's a bit cheating... 華嚴是華嚴

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

Gotta use Japanese kanji for "Kegon".

Astus wrote:

Bummer.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

The paragraph is from the

<http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp/translations/shobogenzo/translations/sansuikyo/sansuikyo.translation.html> (Sansuikyo, SBGZ 29). If you look into it for yourself you can see Dogen is not at all interested in miniature beings. A bit long but it's worth the time. Also then you can see Dogen's language in the Shobogenzo is not a normal one but what somebody called "koan language" (just searched on it, it's <https://books.google.com/books?id=qFrhlx2vqOgC&pg=PA54&lpg=PA54&dq=dogen+%22koan+language%22&source=bl&ots=jACMLBuQfd&sig=vxC8TN8Pa6tCsX0OAZR9riG ez4U&hl=en&ei=tYr->

S72WJ4Kclgfnk_zmCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBIQ6AEwA
A#v=onepage&q=dogen%20%22koan%20language%22&f=false).

And as Master Huifeng pointed at it succinctly, this kind of interpretation and speaking is not uniquely Dogen but something peculiarly East Asian Buddhist. The Avatamsaka Sutra bred different views in China than in Tibet.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2010 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Dexing said:

众生 is living beings and 界 is world, also used together in eye-world, ear-world, etc., aka the "18 Realms/Worlds" 十八界.

Astus wrote:

I think then we better look at what Dogen wrote:

realms: 世界 (world), 法界 (dharma-realm), 一莖草 (a blade of grass), 一杖 (a staff)

elements: 水 (water), 雲 (cloud), 風 (wind), 火 (fire), 地 (earth)

beings: 有情 (sentient being), 佛 (buddha), 祖 (ancestor)

Not that this would change the meaning already obtained from the translation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2010 at 9:01 PM

Title: Re: your choice of Mahyana & Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

When I found Buddhism and started learning about it, it seemed to be a clear, logical religion that can bring one to the depths of reality. In the beginning I fancied Zen koans and teachings but liked studying about Theravada and the Pali Canon too. Vajrayana has always been the one I felt the furthest from me, however, after many years I could amass enough curiosity to learn some basics about it. And while until today my primary affiliation is with Chinese Buddhism, I take the Buddhadharma as my refuge, regardless of lineage, school or tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2010 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are three other translations of the same paragraph:

Carl Bielefeldt said:

It is not the case simply that there is water in the world; within the world of water there is a world. And this is true not only within water: within clouds as well there is world of sentient beings; within wind there is world of sentient beings; within fire there is world of sentient beings; within earth there is world of sentient beings. Within the dharma realm there is a world of sentient beings; within a single blade of grass there is world of sentient beings; within a single staff there is a world of sentient beings. And wherever there is a world of sentient beings, there, inevitably, is the world of buddhas and ancestors. The reason this so, we should study very carefully.

Shasta Abbey said:

Not only is there water in the world, there is a world within the world of water. Not only is it like this in water, there is also a sentient world in clouds, and a sentient world in wind, and a sentient world in fire, and a sentient world in earth, and a sentient world in the realm of thoughts and things, and a sentient world in a blade of grass, and a sentient world in a monk's traveling staff. Wherever there is a sentient world, there is, of necessity, a world of Buddhas and Ancestors in that place. Such a principle should be well explored indeed!

T. Cleary said:

It is not just that there is water in the world; there are worlds in the realm of water. And this is so not only in water - there are also worlds of sentient beings in clouds, there are worlds of sentient beings in wind, there are worlds of sentient beings in fire, there are worlds of sentient beings in earth, there are worlds of sentient beings in phenomena, there are worlds of sentient beings in a single blade of grass, there are worlds of sentient beings in a single staff. Where there are worlds of sentient beings, there must be the world of Buddhas and Zen adepts - you should meditate on this principle very thoroughly.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2010 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: What does this Dogen passage mean to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Now consider the case when from English it is translated to still another language. That's because English is the primary Western language and the source of Buddhist texts in many countries. But, I don't know of a case when a text is translated from a translation made from English. Nevertheless, this is very much into the realm of language and the mysteries of translating.

By the way, now that you see the Chinese characters, would you add something to your analysis of the text?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2010 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: your choice of Mahyana & Vajrayana

Content:

Huseng said:

Yeah I also fancied those weird Zen stories where legs were being broken and skulls were being beaten with canes, but then I learned about Nagarjuna.

Astus wrote:

Oh yes, Nagarjuna breaks your mind.

Huseng said:

One day [...] Ko Bong visited Tong Do Sah Temple. He stood at the gate and shouted, "Somebody come here and cut my hair, please. I want to become a monk." Many monks were angered by his arrogant behavior. They grabbed some sticks and went out to beat him. Ko Bong only said, "You can hit my body but you cannot hit my mind. If you can hit my mind, I will become your disciple." But none of the monks could hit his mind. Another time, outside Nam Ja Sah Temple, he shouted the same kinds of things, and again all of the monks were very angry and wanted to beat him. Ko Bong again asked if anyone could hit his mind. At that time, Zen Master Hae Bong heard this and came to see Ko Bong. He asked, "How many pounds does your mind weigh?" Ko Bong could not answer, so he cut off all his hair and became a monk.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 29th, 2010 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: your choice of Mahyana & Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Gaiamori,

Are you sure you have the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pali_Canon? That's a lot of books.

I'd recommend you Paul Williams' <https://www.amazon.com/Mahayana-Buddhism-Doctrinal-Foundations-Religious/dp/0415356539/> as a good summary, Ven. Sheng-yen's <https://www.amazon.com/Orthodox-Chinese-Buddhism-Contemporary-Questions/dp/1556436572/> as an introduction, Ven. Dharmamitra's translation of Zhiyi's <https://www.amazon.com/Essentials-Buddhist-Meditation-Shramana-Zhiyi/dp/1935413007/> for practice and Hakeda's translation of Asvaghosa's <https://www.amazon.com/Awakening-Faith-Translations-Asian-Classics/dp/0231131577/> for something to contemplate. These four books will give you a solid understanding of East Asian Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2010 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: The Buddha Speaking of Huatou Practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see how much this has to do with huatou. The essential aspect what makes a huatou is the great mass of doubt. On the other hand, meditation on the signless element (animittadhatu) is a gateway to liberation that requires contemplation of impermanence. It is one of the three possible ways to escape samsara, this one being described as:

"to the seeing of all formations as limited and circumscribed and to the entering of consciousness into the signless element ... Herein, as limited and circumscribed [means] both as limited by rise and fall and as circumscribed by them; for contemplation of impermanence limits them thus, 'Formations do not exist previous to their rise', and in seeking their destiny, sees them as circumscribed thus, 'They do not go beyond fall, they vanish there'. ... And here the signless liberation should be understood as the noble path that has occurred by making nibbana its object through the signless aspect. For that path is signless owing to the signless element having arisen, and it is a liberation owing to deliverance from defilements." (Vsm 21.67-71)

In Mahayana both signlessness and wishlessness became summed up in the third: emptiness. Not to mention the meaning got changed too.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2010 at 12:58 AM

Title: Re: The Life of the Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is this the same BBC film?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WiswuYO1cE> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2010 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: The Buddha Speaking of Huatou Practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huatou practice is not signless. While it means "before thoughts" it is not even the same as Caodong's before thoughts (Dogen: non-thinking). It is not signless for in that case no question and no doubt could be used. It is not mere "resting in the natural state" or "non-abiding". Huatou practice is maintaining the feeling of doubt until a breakthrough is achieved, such a result then is realising signlessness. That's why I said they're not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2010 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the "witness experience" is quite common among meditation practitioners. In certain Hindu teachings (advaita vedanta, sankhya, yoga) this is the true self beyond everything else. In Buddhism this should be understood as one of the basic concepts of self (the experiencer; the other one is the doer). The independent witness, well, that is a concept of the atman.

In terms of practice, it is possible to separate objects from the subject. "I'm watching the thoughts." Then should come the turning of attention from thoughts to the watcher. Is there really something/someone watching? No. There is no witness, no self, anatma. Are there thoughts? Yes. Is there a thinker? No.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2010 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: Knowing Buddhism through non-Buddhist sources?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

If one is a scholar who specialises in one part of Buddhism it is of course expected that such a person is familiar with the everything relevant to a higher degree. So if you were a Fazang expert you'd have to be knowledgeable about practically everything Fazang knew and even beyond that to be able to see the bigger socio-historical picture. On the other hand, if I want to learn and use the Huayan teachings, for me it's enough to read some of his works and that's it, even an acceptable translation may suffice, or a teacher who read Fazang.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 31st, 2010 at 7:03 AM

Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I wasn't making a philosophical but a practical observation. Nevertheless, if you think it's appropriate here to bring that up, there it is:

in the ultimate sense all the truths should be understood as void because of the absence of (i) any experiencer, (ii) any doer, (iii) anyone who is extinguished, and (iv) any goer. Hence this is said:

'For there is suffering, but none who suffers;
Doing exists although there is no doer;
Extinction is but no extinguished person;
Although there is a path, there is no goer'.
(Vsm. XVI. 90.)

Also:

That which is an agent
Does not perform an existent action.
Nor does that which is not an agent
Perform some nonexistent action.
(MMK 8.1)

But the next chapter of the MMK deals better with the "Witness" idea, examining the concept of a perceiver behind things perceived.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 31st, 2010 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"There may not be an absolute self, but there is a person or agent that is neither apart from the aggregates nor is any or all of the aggregates."

Through understanding the work of the aggregates it is easy to see why there is no agent but only the causally determined work of the aggregates. The concepts of being, person, agent is from not understanding the aggregates. The dependent functioning of the dharmas is very much like a machine. Agent and action is nothing but a causal situation, like clouds blown by the wind. The wind has no will of its own but also determined by other factors. Mental dharmas are determined by other dharmas. Thus there is no thinker behind mental dharmas. Then, if we care to go on with the analysis - which is a bit superfluous - even dharmas are conceptually made up things.

Determinism is the idea that there is a person being controlled by other factors. Since there is no such thing as a person, how could it be determined by others? Same mistake when someone thinks there is a self disappearing in nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2010 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

OK, I think I see the point of misunderstanding. On an illusory level there is a person deciding things, I didn't mean to question that. Same chapter in the MMK (8.12) says, describing how agent and action exists:

"Agent depends upon action.
Action depends on the agent as well.
Apart from dependent arising
One cannot see any cause for their existence."

This conception of a self serves as the doer of a deed, so there is karma and samsara and its source is ignorance. What happens on the level of dharmas, however, is pure causality, or in other words, dependent origination. This is the difference between parikalpita and paratantra. Sounds like determinism from the view of self but not from no-self.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2010 at 4:09 PM
Title: Re: The Life of the Buddha
Content:
Astus wrote:
Could check it from work where I also have a US proxy, it is the same film.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2010 at 5:50 PM
Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?
Content:
Astus wrote:
Regarding the Chan view I'd like to mention that the "witness" is a passive, detached, dualistic position (sounds like that to me), while the nature of mind is void and active besides being aware.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2010 at 8:09 PM
Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?
Content:
Astus wrote:
It depends on what You mean by "witness". As for me, it is as I said.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2010 at 10:15 PM
Title: Re: What is the relationship of "The Witness" to Enlightenment?
Content:
Astus wrote:

The idea of a "witness" is not Chan, if anything at all, a mistake of Chan. As Foyan Qingyuan said,

People nowadays mostly take the immediate mirroring awareness to be the ultimate principle. This is why Xuansha said to people, "Tell me, does it still exist in remote uninhabited places deep in the mountains?" (Instant Zen, p. 107)

I should have put a hyphen or a comma there to make it clearer.

And to answer your question: it is both something I tried to use as a practice and also something I have an opinion about.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010 at 2:01 AM

Title: Re: A new low in religious scholarship

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see that much problem here. Just compare it to a Kalachakra initiation:

"The three exalted initiations are as follows: the vase initiation is the gnosis of bliss and emptiness that arises from the disciple touching the consort's breasts. The secret initiation is the gnosis of bliss and emptiness that arises from the disciple savouring the bodhichitta (sperm), the wisdom-gnosis initiation is the experience of connate joy that arises from the disciple and consort themselves engaging in union."
(<http://www.dalailama.com/teachings/kalachakra-initiations>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm all in for rebirth. But actually it is not necessarily true that without an afterlife there is no morality. It is called (secular) humanism. Socialism and communism are further improvements of materialist philosophy working on the welfare of the society.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010 at 8:52 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

What stops people from understanding that there is rebirth is that they believe there is only this body made of the four elements and don't look at their mind. When it becomes clear that mind is non-material it comes logically from causality that it doesn't die with the body but takes another birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Buddhism makes no sense without rebirth as far as its soteriology goes. Without samsara to be free from there is no point in working on liberation. Actually, if there is only this body without a mind bound to be born again and again enlightenment is a religious superstition and nothing more, delusion of the mentally unstable. If there were no rebirth I'd vote for some Nietzschean or Sartrean philosophy for Buddhism - and every other religion - then is just for those without a firm grasp on reality.

It is true that in Buddhism mind is not without a body in this realm (in the formless realm it is). It is like the relationship between meaning and words. The meaning can be expressed with different words, different metaphors, or in different languages, or in a music, a painting, a statue. Is meaning then the same as the word? No. Is it separate? No. A meaning to be communicated depends on a form. So does the mind depend on the body. However, without mind there is no living being, just as there is no word without a meaning (that's the difference between a group of letters and a word).

At the time of the Buddha there were other teachers who had different positions on rebirth:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajita_Kesakambali said that with death everything is over, no rebirth at all. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanjaya_Belatthaputta took the position of the agnostic. And https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purana_Kassapa simply denied the existence of morality and the consequences of one's deeds.

These are not the Buddha's teaching, who taught rebirth and the consequences of one's own deeds that affect one personally. It was because of Shakyamuni's training for many aeons that he attained buddhahood and not something that just happened.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Communism was never the state form anywhere on this planet. Communism means a country without money, social classes and government, where people share everything with each other. It is mainly like heaven on earth, a utopia. Should not be confused with

dictatorships using only the name.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 3rd, 2010 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

catmoon,

It depends on what view one takes. From a materialist view there can be no rebirth. From a Christian view there is no need for rebirth. From a Buddhist view there is rebirth. So the first member of the noble eightfold path is correct view.

Proving something depends on view because that defines what one takes as proof. From a Buddhist view there is rebirth based on the nature of the world which is made of both material (body) and immaterial (mind) and it's all governed by causality. So from a Buddhist view there is dependent origination but no creator god, while many other views take the existence of a creator granted.

Since Buddhism is not that easy to understand it is all right if someone has doubts about different parts of the teaching. It has to be worked on and that way it is possible to comprehend the relevance of what the Buddha said in different sutras. But to neglect study is to stop progressing on the path. To deny the importance of obtaining a correct view is to abandon the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 3rd, 2010 at 4:06 PM

Title: Re: Buddhaguptanatha and the Late Survival of the Siddha Traditi

Content:

Astus wrote:

Amazing!

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 3rd, 2010 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Heart Sutra is hardly a good reference for different Buddhist teachings. It's like saying that the Mani Mantra says nothing about the seven factors of enlightenment. The Lankavatara Sutra, on the other hand, is all about there being only mind and no external things. So it is not just that there is an immaterial mind but actually there is nothing like a physical body.

For this basic teaching of nama-rupa better look at some introductory material, like the

book "What Buddhists Believe?". See here the relevant part:
<http://www.buddhanet.net/budsas/ebud/whatbudbeliev/73.htm>

For further study of the subject there are the abhidharma teachings. Here's some intro starting with discussing nama and rupa a bit: <http://www.vipassana.info/nina-abhi-01.htm#chapter1>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 3rd, 2010 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Let me add here a quote from Jinul whom you're probably familiar with:

"The physical body is the temporary collation of four elements; soil, water, fire and wind. The essence is rigid and insensible. How can each of them in themselves possibly see, hear, feel, or be conscious?" (Golden Teaching of the Mind Cultivation, ch. 4)

Also:

"You should know that what is capable of seeing, hearing, moving, and acting has to be your original mind; it is not your physical body. Furthermore, the four elements which make up the physical body are by nature void; they are like images in a mirror or the moon's reflection in water. How can they be clear and constantly aware, always bright and never obscured— and, upon activation, be able to put into operation sublime functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges?" (Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, ch. 6)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 4th, 2010 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

m0rl0ck said:

Emptiness is pretty much the core of the mahayana. Where you been dude?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is dependent origination. Dependent origination also affirms rebirth. Chapter 17 of the Mulamadhyamakakarika is specifically about deeds (karma) and fruits (phala) to show how individual rebirth exists and consequences are experienced by the one who caused it.

Also, the Heart Sutra talks about the five skandhas, the eighteen dhatus, the twelve links of dependent origination and the four noble truths. The five skandhas are divided

up to nama and rupa, also the fourth link is nama and rupa. The 18 dhatus lists both objects of consciousness and consciousness separately, where the first five consciousnesses (eye-touch) have the four great elements as their objects but the sixth has dharmas, which are not made of the elements.

Nevertheless, you made no reply about what I referred to you as clear teachings on the existence of mind not being the same as body.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 4th, 2010 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems a fundamental part of the basic teachings of Buddhism is missing, ie. about the skandhas, dhatus and dharmas. So here are some introductory materials:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha>

<http://viewonbuddhism.org/mind.html>

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level4_deepening_understanding_path/types_phenomena/5_factors_12_stimulators_18_sources.html

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level4_deepening_understanding_path/types_phenomena/aggregate_forms_physical_phenomena.html

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level1_getting_started/general_introductions/basic_question_karma_rebirth.html

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/audio/fundamentals_tibetan_buddhism/level_graded_path_material/intermediate_scope/overview_12_links_dependent_arising/transcript_3.html

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/x/nav/group.html_50360014.html

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's why it happens that in the west Theravada and Vajrayana can produce religious Buddhists while Zen in most of the cases is a weekend therapy session.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Origins of Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

But was there any similar description of the antarabhava as in Vajrayana? I've never seen it so far.

It makes the transference to the Pure Land less salvational because it turns the experience and the teaching into a neural phenomenon if it is originated from NDE.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could be. But from the East Asian section it is thanks for the Japanese that Buddhism came west. Even Seung Sahn and Shengyan was told by the Japanese to go to America. It is a double-edged sword, so to say. It is interesting to note that Shengyan was in contact with the Harada lineage in Japan where <http://sweepingzen.com/2009/12/22/ban-tetsugyu-bio/> told him to go to America.

What could balance the situation is a movement of Dharma teachers who lecture on texts already available in English. While there are dozens of Lotus Sutra and Diamond Sutra translations a good commentary is hard to find. Only Xuanhua produced explanations for those texts but those are more for a Chinese audience than westerners. Or is it just me who find them too long, too boring and superficial?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Yes, I'm sure it is the oral nature that makes the difference. I guess bringing up stories at the time of a speech is a good thing but in writing not necessarily.

By the way, I'm not good in translating things. I may be able to use Chinese texts but very slowly (simply because I've never really studied it systematically neither do I practice). And the main reason is I'm not fond of translating. Plus, I only do it to Hungarian and not English (but rather from it).

Huseng,

I'm fine with traditional commentaries, useful stuff, even those parts that seem unnecessary.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

I have a vision of "Western Buddhism" where the three now separate groups (Theravada, EA Mahayana, Tibetan Vajrayana) merge into one single system and then eventually new schools appear from that amalgamation. For instance a Vipassana group doing Hevajra sadhanas and the teacher lecturing on a koan.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 6th, 2010 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Those who say that Christians (or from any other religion outside Buddhism) can authentically practice Zen are teaching a therapy, a mental fitness training and not Buddhadharma. And Sanbo Kyodan (the majority of western Zen teachers belong to it) is like that, while Kwan Um Zen is close to it because they accept the idea but they don't have Christian Zen teachers as far as I know. And there are others who believe Zen is something universal rather than something specifically Buddhist.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 7th, 2010 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

m0rl0ck,

Sr. Elaine MacInnes, a Catholic nun and Dharma-heir of Yamada Koun, says the same about the goal of Zen as you do (see: Teaching Zen to Christians, p. 71-80). Robert Kennedy, Jesuit monk and Dharma-heir of Bernie Glassman, confirms the same ideal: "Zen practice helps us to realize our true nature and to liberate our mind from concepts and images." (Zen Spirit, Chirstian Spirit, p. 28).

I didn't mean it is a self-help therapy develop a better personality - although it is a good thing too. But such stripped Zen contains the idea that this true nature to be realised is available without correct view. It is a misunderstanding of the Zen definition that it is outside of teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 7th, 2010 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Yes, Daido Looi is an exceptional Zen teacher not just within Sanbo Kyodan but the whole west. But, sadly, he's the exception. Others like Glassman, Merzel or Aitken are not like that. This has relevance to the present discussion as it shows how people can believe there is Buddhism without rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 7th, 2010 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shel,

Buddhism, including all the Buddhist traditions, is a path, a system of teachings meant to be used for attaining liberation from suffering. To make a statement requires taking a viewpoint. From the Buddhist point it is of course a universal teaching. From a materialist point Buddhism is a superstition. From a Nietzschean point it is nihilism. And depending on whom you ask, from a Christian point it can be anything between idolatry to ignorant people with good intention.

It is easy to make the mistake of taking an "outsider point", a third party which belongs to none. Objective observation. This is what doesn't exist. It doesn't exist in a sense of independent view, although it exists as a dependent view itself. Of course, this is again a view among other views.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 8th, 2010 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Why would it be superstitious from a materialist point of view? Are you saying that the NEP is not experiential?"

Karma, rebirth, realms, ghosts, gods, transference of merit, protective spells, magical abilities - what about these?

"From a Nietzschean point of view any belief system is exactly NOT nihilism. Nihilism is

a loss of meaning. Obviously Buddhism is meaningful to many people."

"Both [Christianity and Buddhism] are to be reckoned among the nihilistic religions—they are both *décadence* religions—but they are separated from each other in a very remarkable way." (The Antichrist, §20)

"Christian views of Buddhism have a much fuller spectrum than you suggest."

Yes, there are some who associate themselves with Zen, I've even mentioned two of them in a post here not long ago. I better correct myself to refer to mainstream Christian churches' (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.) official statements. Then we can see while there are certain monks of the Roman Catholic Church who sympathise with Buddhism, the Vatican has never did so.

"I don't see how this part is relevant."

I was only referring to making Buddhism a universal teaching. Universal to whom?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 8th, 2010 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

Just because something is experienced doesn't make it either scientific or objective. In the morning I dreamt of a big storm and there was a Tibetan monk who could transform himself. Should we then state there are such monks? There are people, quite a lot, who claim they saw Jesus, Virgin Mary, angels or God himself. Isn't that experience?

Nihilism in Nietzsche's philosophy has its own meaning(s), should not be confused with other views. But it was just an example.

Buddhism is not true for everyone otherwise it'd be the only religion in the world. Thing is, even in Buddhist countries the majority of the followers know little about the Dharma and don't really care (see http://www.thaibuddhism.net/path2_1.htm as an example).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 8th, 2010 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Speech by Nepalese on his "conversion" to Shin Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is fascinating to see how someone who spent many years as a Himalayan monk finds the Primal Vow to be the way to enlightenment. Although I've heard somewhere before that the Japanese have great interest in Tibet.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

catmoon,

There are many things about Nietzsche and his philosophy to think about, even in relationship to Buddhism. I am not his follower, since I follow the Buddha, but among the many European philosophers he is a really special one in my understanding. Also it should be noted that he lived in the 19th century and didn't have much knowledge about Buddhism. More passages from *The Antichrist*:

"The things necessary to Buddhism are a very mild climate, customs of great gentleness and liberality, and no militarism; moreover, it must get its start among the higher and better educated classes. Cheerfulness, quiet and the absence of desire are the chief desiderata, and they are attained. Buddhism is not a religion in which perfection is merely an object of aspiration: perfection is actually normal. ... Buddhism is a religion for peoples in a further state of development, for races that have become kind, gentle and over-spiritualized (—Europe is not yet ripe for it—): it is a summons that takes them back to peace and cheerfulness, to a careful rationing of the spirit, to a certain hardening of the body. ... Buddhism is a religion for the closing, over-wearied stages of civilization."

Actually, as we can see, these came true. Buddhism spread in Europe and America in a post-modern age of peace and prosperity among the educated people.

Nietzsche's nihilism, as far as I know (which is really not much), is losing to see the values of this life and instead looking for it somewhere else. That's why Christianity eventually made people nihilist after they lost their faith in God, for there's nothing left to believe in, nothing left to live for. Bringing Buddhism into this situation it is understandable that people like the idea of finding the meaning of life "in this present moment" - which is not much a Buddhist idea actually. The down to earth style Zen is what could inspire many, and this is where my criticism lies. That's why it is important to highlight that Zen is part of Buddhism, of a complex religion, full of "supernatural" and "other-worldly" things like rebirth and fox spirits. Steven Heine wrote two books about the presence of magic and mythology in Zen koans: *Shifting Shape*, *Shaping Text* and *Opening a Mountain*.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

There is Buddhism, within Buddhism there is Mahayana, within Mahayana there is East Asian Mahayana, within East Asian Mahayana there is Zen, within Zen there are four main regions, within each of those regions there are major schools, within those schools there are sects, within each sect there are lineages and teachers. Thus we go through eight levels to reach a living representative of all of that. Such a person is only within this system. Perhaps a fifth region could be added to count in Western Zen but that would be a bit problematical to see it within East Asian Mahayana. Also, there is no substantial monastic community to serve the basis of any Western Buddhism, perhaps Theravada is the closest to that.

Zen is definitely not effective for everyone. It is one of the myriad expedients. The reason I set up the above categorisation of Zen is because I wanted to show how on one hand Zen is not at all outside of Buddhism, and on the other to point to the fact that even Zen is just a larger category for many different styles and methods.

Then the important task is to define the essentials that make a teaching Buddhism, Mahayana and Zen. Rebirth is an essential part of Buddhism, thus every teaching that claims to be Buddhist must have it. To say that there is Zen without rebirth is to say that there is Zen without Buddhism. Not possible. Therefore those who claim to teach Zen but are not followers of Shakyamuni Buddha are fake. In Zen terms: they didn't receive the transmission, they're not in the family of the ancestors. Without a mind-to-mind transmission how could they have anything to do with Zen? They may have a paper about transmission but that is as good as a painted cake.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to bring some attention to the teaching that only stream-entrants and bodhisattvas at least on the stages of faith are without doubts about the Buddhadharma. And while such people form the Sangha we all take refuge in, the actual community of Buddhists (the eightfold sangha) at any given place has those still aspiring for eliminating their doubts. However, instead of overcoming those doubts to take up a wrong view and be satisfied with it is simply giving up progressing on the path. Which on one hand we can look at as a good karma that he made contact with the Dharma, on the other hand a bad karma that he made only so far. So it is both a joyful and a sad thing. Because it is sad, it is a wrong idea to treat such a person badly. Because it is joyful, it is a good idea to point out that there is more, even better things to find.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

There are people who never hear about Zen. There are people who meet Zen but don't care about it. There are people who try to do some Zen and shortly after quit. There are people who do Zen for years, even decades, then quit. And there are those who practice Zen throughout their lives but never realise enlightenment. Zen is not for any of them in a sense that it brought no liberation - even a little liberation - into their lives. And there are others who not just cannot use Zen for good but use it for bad things.

Accepting the essential Buddhist teachings is important, this is called faith, this is called taking refuge. Rebirth is not experiential in an objective, scientific sense, it is not evident for everyone; but it can be confirmed first hand through meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

I talked about liberation, enlightenment. There are innumerable benefits one can reap even from hearing the word "buddha". It's just that Zen is about sudden enlightenment, seeing the nature. If one cannot see the nature it's only aspiring to reach Zen but not actually obtaining it. The true nature is dependent origination. Confirming dependent origination is perceiving the mechanism of birth and death.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 2:59 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

Your question was whether Zen is universal or not. I said it is not as far as its effectiveness in liberation goes. It may still be good for helping people in other ways. Let me explain it in a different way.

The bodhisattva path can be divided up to three stages. Before awakening bodhicitta one accumulates merit which results in the optimal circumstances for bringing about the rise of aspiration for enlightenment. After that one works on both merit and wisdom to familiarise with the Dharma and eventually realise emptiness. Then one can practice the prajnaparamita and all the merits will be innumerable. Before being able to use

prajnaparamita all the merits and wisdom are worldly things, after that they're causes of buddhahood.

When talking about the sudden path of Zen it is at least about realising emptiness and working with prajnaparamita, at best it is becoming buddha. It is not concerned with anything below that for that would be the gradual approach. That's why I emphasised enlightenment as the criterion for being able to profit from Zen. Also that is the reason it seems as if in Zen people wouldn't need the common Mahayana methods - this is the source of confusion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 9th, 2010 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Repeating the name of Lotus sutra ?

Content:

Perceive Universal Sound said:

AT: In the Heart Sutra it says that the prajna paramita mantra (mantra of transcendental wisdom) is the great mantra. Would you explain this?

ZMSS: Yes. They call it "the transcendental mantra, the great bright mantra, the utmost mantra" and so forth. This means that if one simply tries this mantra, gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha, with one's whole energy, then it will be the greatest mantra. Actually, of course, any mantra which you try in this way will be "the greatest mantra" for you! That particular mantra is not special, not different from any other. But all sutras which refer to any kind of mantra will say that it is special.

AT: Which means it is special if one believes that it is.

ZMSS: Correct. A student once asked me, "if this is true then even the words 'Coca Cola' can be a mantra?" Yes, if you really believe that "Coca Cola" is the greatest mantra and practice it diligently, it will work for you.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

I talked about attaining Enlightenment in this life, in this body. Not other benefits nor future benefits. Plus I think that Zen is not at all the best in working for other and future benefits.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: The Masters' "Words" and the "Right Speech"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Cleary's translation (Buddhist Yoga - A Comprehensive Course, p. 7-8) of the Xuanzang translation (T676, 解深密經) of the Samdhinirmocana Sutra, in chapter 2, says:

"If people are not ignorant, and have seen the holy truths, and have attained the wisdom of sages, and know the true nature of all things beyond words as it really is, when they see or hear of the created and the uncreated they think that there really is no such thing as the created or the uncreated, but there are active forms created by discrimination, which are like magical effects deceiving the intellect into producing notions of created and uncreated, or notions of difference between created and uncreated. They do not cling to what they have seen or heard, or claim it is the only truth. In order to convey this point, they too make verbal explanations. They do not need to examine further.

"In this way, in the midst of these things, sages detach from names and words by knowledge and insight, and therefore realize enlightenment. Then, because they want to make others aware of this real nature which is beyond words, they provisionally set up names and characteristics and call things created or uncreated."

Then, to restate this point, Unlocking the Implicit Intent of the Profound Doctrine said in verse:

Buddha explains the meaning of nonduality beyond words;
It is most profound, beyond the scope of the ignorant.
The ignorant, confused by delusion about this,
Cling to duality and make false descriptions;
They are either unsettled or fixed in error
And revolve forever in the pains of birth and death.
Still repudiating discourse on true knowledge like this,
They will be reborn as goats and sheep.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

It is specifically Zen, the school of sudden enlightenment, I said and not other teachings or schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

The NEP goes for the entire Buddhadharma. Zen is just one segment, an approach, a style among many as I've already written

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=10905#p10905>. Is there anything particularly that you find incomprehensible about what I've already said in this topic?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 2:47 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

shel,

Even the NEP is not for everyone as far as not all can attain liberation with it in one life. Also it is good to note that the NEP as it is is not often used as a teaching in Mahayana, instead there are the paramitas, although "in spirit" the NEP is there too. But I brought up Zen specifically because it emphasises sudden enlightenment, awakening in this body. Buddhism and Zen not usable for everybody only means that they don't have the good karma for that. There's also a difference between Buddhism and Zen, which is that even if one is fine with Buddhism it may not be that such a person is OK with Zen but can use Theravada, or Vajrayana, or Tendai, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Certainly, enlightenment in this life may not be so important for many. Still, and not to contradict you but to show what I call the Zen POV, here are two quotes.

Linji said,

"As I see it, there's no Buddha, no living beings, no long ago, no now. If you want to get it, you've already got it - it's not something that requires time. There's no religious practice, no enlightenment, no getting anything, no missing out on anything. At no time is there any other Dharma than this. If anyone claims there is a Dharma superior to this, I say it must be a dream, a phantom. All I have to say to you is simply this."

(tr. B. Watson, p. 33)

Mazu said,

"If you understand the mind and the phenomenal appearance, deluded thought will not originate. If deluded thought does not originate, this is the acceptance of the nonproduction of dharmas. [It] originally existed and exists at present. It does not

depend on the cultivation of the Way and seated meditation. Neither cultivation nor seated meditation - this is the pure Chan (dhyana) of Tathagata. If you now understand this reality, you will truly not create any karma. Following your destiny, passing your life, with one cloak or one robe, wherever sitting or standing, it is always with you. Observing the precepts (sila), you accumulate pure karma. If you can be like this, why are you concerned about not understanding?"

(tr. Jinhua Jia, p. 125)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 10th, 2010 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3025&Itemid=244

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 11th, 2010 at 12:20 AM

Title: Re: Repeating the name of Lotus sutra ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

The above is Seung Sahn's view of mantras which I partially agree with, but you don't have to.

I say partially because while it is true that "power words" are made by imagination, imagination is governed by many factors. So there is a difference between repeating Coca-Cola, repeating a title of a sutra, and repeating a mantra that you received special teachings and empowerments for. The difference is in that you know Coca-Cola is nothing even related to Buddhism, while a secret mantra is very special so you have lot of faith in it. But, and this is what Seung Sahn says, if you can have the same faith in Coca-Cola it works the same way as the mantra.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 11th, 2010 at 2:47 PM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic_Points_Unifying_the_Therav%C4%81da_and_the_Mah%C4%81y%C4%81na

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, June 12th, 2010 at 12:44 AM
Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"
Content:
Huseng said:
You ever actually sit down and read Dogen?

Astus wrote:
Don't you know the popular Zen book's title: "Sit Down and Shut Up" - not "Sit Down and Think" or "Sit Down and Read" or "Sit Down and Study". Just shut up and sit Properly. And this kind of utilitarian/practical attitude makes belief unnecessary, thus people can think whatever they want, until they can sit in the Correct Zazen Posture it is Zen, it is Buddhahood.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, June 12th, 2010 at 3:32 AM
Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"
Content:
Astus wrote:
Huseng,

I think that there are already so many books in English to study, starting with the Pali Canon through Madhyamaka and Yogacara, up to Zen and Vajrayana, that if one cares to study them, a thorough understanding of Buddhism is available without learning a second language. Plus translations are coming in a better quality and higher speed. So I don't find language barrier a valid excuse.

At the same time, it is unrealistic to expect the majority of Buddhists and to be Buddhists to go deep into complicated teachings. But those who want to be Dharma teachers should definitely do that. Then those Dharma teachers can come up with a teaching acceptable to a larger audience. This is something already in progress, western teachers educating western students. But education is not so highly valued in Buddhism as in other parts of western society. Silent retreats, empowerments and koan interviews sell a lot better than a Sunday school on the Awakening of Mahayana Faith.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, June 12th, 2010 at 3:39 AM
Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"
Content:
Astus wrote:
Yogicfire,

When I first read that by Rev. Shohaku Okumura I was pretty much amazed how can one be a Dharma teacher and in the Zen tradition without being clear about elementary teachings like rebirth and dependent origination. If that is not comprehended how could

one ever think of understanding such a highly sophisticated text as the Shobogenzo?
Perhaps I should reconsider my views about the Dharma Ending Age.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 12th, 2010 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

That is a good and timely question. I don't think we should reinvent the wheel. The Buddha taught a gradual path and at that time rebirth was not accepted by everyone in India. Here's a little intro to his <http://www.accesstinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/index.html>. So it has (1) generosity, (2) virtue, (3) heaven, (4) drawbacks, (5) renunciation and (6) the four noble truths. In the Tibetan traditions this approach manifests as the <http://www.kagyu.org/kagyulineage/buddhism/dha/dha00.php>: (1) precious human birth, (2) death and impermanence, (3) causality and karma, (4) drawbacks of samsara; after this may come the four noble truths and awakening the bodhicitta.

I say that the above methods are very well usable today too. But to answer your question specifically, I say it is best to learn vipassana meditation. Because through that one can learn to actually observe the meaning of the above teachings, and of course a lot more. By seeing for himself that the Buddha's teaching is true it is easy to accept even so called supernatural things too.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 15th, 2010 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: What Makes A Real Man?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Actually that post by Ven. Dhammika is a really interesting recension of John Powers' book "A Bull of a Man". Go and read it!

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 22nd, 2010 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Sun

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anyone can cover the Sun with just one finger. Is it a miracle? No. Science has its own cosmology which is not the same as Buddhist cosmology. Yogis can snatch away the Sun and turn around the Moon. Scientists can explain to you the Solar wind and build rockets to land on the Moon.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 23rd, 2010 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: Sun

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm saying that there are different views. The question, in my view, is not their truth but their effect, their function.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 23rd, 2010 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Precepts and Shinran

Content:

Huseng said:

There are plenty of living examples of bhiksu and bhiksuni who are celibate and mentally stable.

Medical literature can say one thing, but the masses of healthy and perky monks and nuns in the Buddhist world prove that people can be celibate and live fine.

Astus wrote:

And celibacy is nothing new in the Western countries either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 25th, 2010 at 1:37 AM

Title: Re: Sun

Content:

Astus wrote:

Actually, this kind of doubting normally accepted events is a good example of how even apparently real things are questioned by some. And then people can start arguing about it. But where does that lead to? Nowhere, besides some bad feelings. Believing in the moon landing or not has no effect on one's progress to enlightenment, nor on being a better person. But indulging in rows and generating an angry mind certainly has a negative effect.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 25th, 2010 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've been reading some Bardo Thodol texts lately and it has a Padmasambhava treasure text about introducing the true nature of mind. It is quite positive about stating that such a realisation is the highest, all inclusive method, so no need for anything else. But that's just something I wanted to mention.

The other thing is that it was brought up how the nature of mind is introduced even before the development stage beings. In the Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra (in Tibetan tradition: a text of the outer carya tantras) in the first chapter the nature of mind is introduced and then all the mantra-mandala-ritual stuff begins from chapter two. So if Mahamudra/Atiyoga is a special practice on its own right, I guess it can be practised without other practices.

The Buddha said, “Lord of Mysteries, it is in one’s own mind that one seeks bodhi and omniscience. Why? Because its original nature is pure. The mind is neither within nor without, nor can the mind be apprehended between the two. Lord of Mysteries, the Tathāgata, worthy [of worship] and perfectly and fully awakened, is neither blue nor yellow nor red nor white nor crimson nor the color of crystal, neither long nor short nor round nor square, neither bright nor dark, and neither male nor female nor neuter. Lord of Mysteries, the mind is not of the same nature as the realm of desire, nor is it of the same nature as the realm of form, nor is it of the same nature as the realm of non-form, nor is it of the same nature as the destinies of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, humans, or non-humans. Lord of Mysteries, the mind does not reside in the realm of the eyes, nor does it reside in the realms of the ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind, and neither is it visible, nor does it manifest itself.

“Why? [Because] the mind, which has the characteristic of empty space, is free from all differentiation and nondifferentiation. Why is that? That whose nature is the same as empty space is identical to the mind, and that whose nature is the same as the mind is identical to bodhi. In this manner, Lord of Mysteries, the three entities of mind, the realm of empty space, and bodhi are without duality. They have compassion as their root and are fulfilled by the pāramitā of expedient means. For this reason, Lord of Mysteries, I teach the dharmas in this manner so as to make the multitudes of bodhisattvas purify the bodhi-mind and know their mind.

“Lord of Mysteries, if a man of [good] family or a woman of [good] family wishes to know bodhi, they should know their own mind in this manner. Lord of Mysteries, how is one to know one’s own mind? It cannot, namely, be apprehended by seeking it in distinctions, or colors, or shapes, or external objects; or in form or sensation, ideation, volition, or consciousness; or in ‘I’ or ‘mine’; or in the grasper (i.e., subject) or the grasped (i.e., object); or in the pure; or in the [eighteen] elements [of existence] or [the twelve] sense fields; or in any other distinctions.

(Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra, ch. 1, tr. RW Giebel)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 25th, 2010 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Magnus, you're very informative.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 28th, 2010 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Being a Buddhist in a Christian society

Content:

Astus wrote:

I live in a European country which naturally has a Christian majority and strong historical ties with the Christian religion. (Our anthem's very first word is "God".) But so far nobody cared whether I'm a Christian, a Jew or a Buddhist - mainly because people around me are mostly not religious at all. Even if I lived in a small village where people are naturally more traditional in case I wouldn't go to the church on Sundays it wouldn't really be a social downfall although there might be exceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 30th, 2010 at 9:37 PM

Title: Re: Celibacy and Health

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

I'm no historian, but afaik such Victorian morals were created in the 19th century and not before. There is a considerable difference between common people having the idea that sex is sinful and renunciates, who willingly joined a monastic order, not getting involved in sensual passions. Also, I haven't heard of Freud et al analysing monks and nuns. Celibacy is a problem if you don't want to refrain from sex, also the feeling of guilt exists only when one does something he considers sinful. The monastic life was actually quite popular in Europe, also in Buddhist countries. And they were a group of intellectual and religious elite. I don't see how their health could have been affected.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 1st, 2010 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: Dedication to truth

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a wonder that no one has mentioned prajnaparamita yet. Also truth could be understood as satya, thus we have catvari arya satyani (4NT) and satyadvaya (two truths). But I'd say, unlike in the European tradition, Buddhism works with the personal, rather than the objective aspect, so wisdom instead of truth. ("And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.", "I am the way, the truth, and the life")

The Buddhist concept of truth is not an objective, independent thing or knowledge but something to be realised and has relevance only as far as its realisation happens. On the other hand, the truth in the European view is something outside of us, therefore knowable by all and doesn't require any inner achievement. Or, from a Christian perspective, truth is by grace and something people has to believe in.

Another perspective is truth as correct view. It is the beginning of the path in Buddhism to obtain a correct understanding of the teaching and then eventually realise it. In the

European tradition truth is something one attains in the end and completes one's journey (holy grail, scientific truth). Also note that Socrates was a philosopher and not a sage.

A similar phenomenon in Buddhism like the European understanding of truth is the teaching of buddha-nature. Because the full knowledge of buddha-nature is buddhahood, also everyone has it and can realise it. But again, buddha-nature is a personal thing and not an independent one.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 1st, 2010 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Do you really think rebirth is realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I've said before on this subject, until people don't realise that there is a mind besides the flesh and blood body it is impossible to comprehend rebirth. While people may go to meditate in different groups it seems to take little effect on actually changing their worldview which would more important than achieving a blissful absorption for a few minutes. Personally I've no doubts about the existence of rebirth.

Here's a little quote:

From the Tsung Ching Record of Hui Hai:

A monk asked, 'since all the myriad phenomena (dharma)s are nonexistent, the nature of mind should also be nonexistent. just as a bubble having burst can never re-form, so can a person once dead never be reborn, for nothing remains of that person. Where will the nature of that person's mind be then?'

M 'Bubbles are composed of water. When a bubble bursts, does the water composing it cease to be? Our bodies proceed from our real nature. When we die, why should you say that our nature is no more?'

A: 'If you maintain there is such a nature, bring it forth and show it to me!'

M: 'Do you believe there will be a morrow?'

A: 'Yes, certainly.'

M: 'Bring it forth and show it to me!'

A: 'There will surely be a morrow, but not just now.' M: 'Yes, but its not being just now does not mean that there will be no morrow. You personally do not perceive your own nature, but this does not mean that your nature does not exist. just now, there is before you that which wears a robe, takes food and walks, stands, sits, or reclines, but you do not recognize it (for what it is). You may well be called a stupid and deluded person. If you discriminate between today and tomorrow that is like using your own nature to

search for your own nature; you will not perceive it even after myriads of aeons. Yours is a case of not seeing the sun, not of there being no sun.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 1st, 2010 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Collected talks of various Chinese Buddhist Masters

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.yogichen.org/index.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 1st, 2010 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Lioncity forum

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find it a bit disrespectful to view E-Sangha as a financial asset, an investment. As Anders said, those few ads on the page hardly covered the cost of maintenance. Leo's vision of E-S was really an honest and beautiful one and it could grow big because of his efforts.

Moderation was criticised there by some, mostly those who cared more about the frame than the content. No doubt, I think there were occasionally some justifiable complaints about threads being closed/deleted. But as a long time member there (since 1 Apr 2004) I've found moderation was going OK. And as a moderator there for years (in the General and East Asian areas) I've found that 90% of the job was removing spam and relocating threads opened at a wrong place. The other 10% was people complaining about other people how what others say to them is not OK.

Some may have not realised it but there were many knowledgeable people who stayed because it was a fairly organised place conducive to peaceful discussions. And if there were some - because there were - who didn't want to play by the rules, they were regularly moderated then. Banning was quite rare, and even that was not for ever in some cases.

Anyway, it's better not to get lost in memories and look forward, working on making Dharma Wheel a lively place with enjoyable threads.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 2nd, 2010 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Do you really think rebirth is realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

While I have no religious background (family&environment) I've been interested in religions since I was 10 and belief in things beyond came naturally. Science and the physicalist view never really touched me although I was certainly influenced through education and culture. Belief in rebirth came to me before I've met Buddhism, so accepting that was no problem.

Another interesting quote from Dazhu Huihai:

有韞光大德問。禪師自知生處否。師曰。未曾死。何用論生。知生即是無生法。無離生法說有無生。祖師云。當生即不生。(X63n1224_p0025b13-15)

Yunguang Dade asked, "Does the Chan master know where he will be born, or not?" The teacher said, "I'm not dead yet. Why discuss birth? Know that birth is in fact the dharma of no birth. Without departing from the birth dharma we state there is no birth. An ancestor teacher said, "Undergoing birth is no birth.""

Ultimately, it's all just words.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 2nd, 2010 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Do you really think rebirth is realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Science is about analysing what the five senses may perceive (theoretically). If anyone called karma, God, miracles or psychic powers scientific, well, that's a misuse of the term, just like people calling things Zen which are definitely not. The problem is to think that science is the only form of truth and take unscientific as a synonym for false (positivism).

BTW, if they just agreed that Maitreya bodhisattva inspired Asanga to write it they would have relinquished all attempts to inquire further. Then it wouldn't be science, not even philosophy but religious/superficial acceptance.

Buddhism has its own way of validating things, even has a system for epistemology and yogic analysis. This is something that is a privilege of certain individuals, just like science. If Buddhism wants to be accepted in this secular world it has to prove itself useful for the people in the right position (celebrities, politicians, scientists, etc.). But if that is only meditation, well, it is not connected enough with Buddhism to create a real boom in believers. Dainin Katagiri says in his book (Returning to Silence) that Zen has to become a religion in the eyes of Westerners for temporary fads like therapeutic, stress relief meditation just come and go.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 5th, 2010 at 3:24 AM

Title: Re: Seeing All Beings as Buddhas.

Content:

Astus wrote:

catmoon,

I can tell you before Master Huifeng appears that throughout the history of Chan there were different interpretations of what buddha-nature stands for. These views and debates were very much interwoven with the general situation in Chinese Buddhism and should not be taken as a strictly and exclusively Chan thing. In Chinese Buddhism from early on the teaching of buddha-nature was taken granted and except for Xuanzang's short-lived attempt to reform that it was accepted in every school. However, that doesn't mean they understood the buddha-nature in the same way, see for instance the debate on whether insentient things are included within buddha-nature or not. Thus I think we can talk about interpretations from "nominal buddha-nature" (as a different expression of emptiness) up to "original enlightenment" (everyone is de facto enlightened). For example, Dogen's problem (Why practice if I'm a buddha?) comes from the original enlightenment view he inherited from the Japanese Tendai school.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 5th, 2010 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Vinaya

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think you can find a bit more info on the Tibetan Vinaya than the Chinese.

The Tibetan Vinaya: Guide to Buddhist Conduct by Thrangu Rinpoche

Buddhist Monastic Discipline: the Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins by Charles S. Prebish

The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk by Georges B. J. Dreyfus

A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes by Sakya Pandita

Also FPMT has extra sources for those wishing to ordain with them:

<http://www.fpmt.org/IMI/firstletter.asp>

May be of interest:

A Survey of Vinaya Literature by Charles S. Prebish

A brief survey of the Vinaya: Its origin, transmission, and arrangement from the Tibetan point of view with comparisons to the Theravada and Dharmagupta traditions by Bhiksuni Jampa Tsedroen

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 6th, 2010 at 5:51 AM

Title: Re: Do you really think rebirth is realistic?

Content:

shel said:

It's not clear what you mean when you say that there is a mind "besides" the body. Are you saying that mind and body are not interdependent?

Astus wrote:

There are the five sensory perceptions based on the five kinds of physical phenomena. Thus it can be said that the eye-, etc. consciousnesses are dependent on forms, etc. But I can also imagine a form, etc. Isn't that eye-, etc. consciousness?

Nama (mind) and rupa (body) dharmas are interrelated in many cases but not always. From arupa-dhyanas to phowa practices we can see in this life for ourselves how there can be mind without body. And a body without mind, well, that is a corpse.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 8th, 2010 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Lillian Too's Mahashri Sutra Atrocities

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides this legal argument about copyright how can the money be any problem? This Mahashri Sutra says, "If anyone should recite this three times, they will be victorious over all disharmonious circumstances. They will become endowed with excellent fortune. They will become endowed with not knowing the exhaustion of wealth." So I guess the translator must have gained a lot more than that. Never exhausting wealth, that could certainly compensate for this trouble with a "stolen" translation.

So, since I'd happily donate millions of dollars to thousands of monasteries, translator groups and charity services, I repeat the mantra three times, just as the Buddha said in the Mahashri Sutra.

SYADYATHEDANA JINIGRINI SARVA ARTHA SADHANI SHASHINA ALAGA SHIMANA
NASHAYA SIDDHANATU MANTRA PADEY SVAHA / OM BIGUNI BARAMASU BHAGE
SVAHA

SYADYATHEDANA JINIGRINI SARVA ARTHA SADHANI SHASHINA ALAGA SHIMANA
NASHAYA SIDDHANATU MANTRA PADEY SVAHA / OM BIGUNI BARAMASU BHAGE
SVAHA

SYADYATHEDANA JINIGRINI SARVA ARTHA SADHANI SHASHINA ALAGA SHIMANA
NASHAYA SIDDHANATU MANTRA PADEY SVAHA / OM BIGUNI BARAMASU BHAGE
SVAHA

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 9th, 2010 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Inherently immoral actions.

Content:

Astus wrote:

This looks like a kind of return to Hinayana thinking about inherent qualities, which may be fitting for the Vinaya nevertheless, or not. In Theravada there are 12 akusala cittas and 14 akusala cetasikas, although those are mental things and not acts, but dharmas that are definitely wrong. For as it has always been with karma, only intentional acts count, so unintentional killing and stealing cannot be akusala. And from this it is not that difficult to conceive compassion as a driving intention behind any act which brings us to a new bodhisattva ethics. As a further (and final in terms of Indian Buddhism) development there is the Tantric ethics which can include even murder among its practices. And as a criticism of inherently wrong actions the Jains can be mentioned who try to avoid killing all forms of lives taking the act itself as sinful.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 9th, 2010 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Lillian Too's Mahashri Sutra Atrocities

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Eric,

I wish you know further disturbing events and may you have peace in mind and be a prosperous translator for the benefit of us all.

My take on translations and publication of Dharma texts is the following. People working with a translation, including correctors, editors, sellers, etc. put their time and energy into it, therefore if it is viewed as work there should be a due wage. But I doubt that there are many who learn dead languages and an alien religion to produce translations that will never make it even to the top thousand list of best sellers, consequently there is not much money in it. It seems to me that those who make translations are either monks or scholars or they do it as non-professionals, like a hobby. Still, if I want to get a book I don't expect it to be for free. On the other hand I don't expect it to be

https://www.amazon.com/Aryadevas-Lamp-Integrates-Practices-Caryamelapakapradipa/dp/0975373455/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1278624174&sr=1-2, https://www.amazon.com/Flower-Ornament-Scripture-Translation-Avatamsaka/dp/0877739404/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1278624241&sr=1-1, <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/An-English-Translation-of-Fa-Tsang's-Commentary-on-the-Awakening-of-Faith/Dirck-Vorenkamp/e/9780773463738/?itm=1> or even more USD.

Lewis Lancaster in his speech on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX2f6QHkU-I> said the reason why he gives his works available online and why others should follow (because they're already paid by the university and through that the state).

Personally, I don't think there are many who could even make a living by translating Buddhist texts. Then why not make it also available freely online? And if people copy it,

all the better. While I understand the concern of big companies losing money because people do copy their products copying sutras is actually something advised by the sutras themselves as a meritorious act. And the sutras said that before people came up with the idea of copyright. Everybody has the right to copy the words of the Buddha! And it is not just a right but a practice, even a duty.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 9th, 2010 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: Inherently immoral actions.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Reading Huseng's response to my objections and Master Huifeng's added comments I have to ask: then what's so new about what Daoxuan says? Inherent evil is not that inherent any more, distinction of inherent and hidden is something that has always been there. So, what can we learn here?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 14th, 2010 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Maybe I'm missing the correct sources and commentaries (Zhiyi's writings?) but the Lotus Sutra has always been a big question to me. I mean, what is actually so wonderful about it? The text is overloaded with metaphors explaining the same ideas again and again. It is devoid of theoretical and practical explanations and even those few topics it touches are not really the difficult ones or anything unique to this sutra. My knowledge is superficial so I'd love to here people enlightening this subject for me.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 14th, 2010 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Are you able to look through traditions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think in the following way: the Buddha's teaching can be categorised in three parts: ethics, meditation, insight. Things like dances, rituals, songs, ornaments, etc. fall under the category of ethics. Some of them can be considered bad behaviour and some good behaviour, partially dependent upon precepts and mostly on social norms. This way there is virtually no need to think in terms of culture but rather the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 14th, 2010 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Will said:

Astus,

About half of the commentary of Triptaka Master Hsuan Hua on the Lotus is online, maybe perusing it will give you more appreciation of the Lotus Sutra. In book form all of the commentary is available.

http://cttbusa.org/dfs/dfs_contents.asp " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

I'm sorry but I haven't met any commentary by Ven. Hsuan Hua that was meaningful to me. Nevertheless, I've just read his commentary for chapter 6 to make sure the situation is the same and it is.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 14th, 2010 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Wives of Siddhartha Gautama II

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think this monogamous Buddha concept is because of Christian background as we get that story from Theravada. Also, what do you mean by "ethnic buddhists" in this context?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 15th, 2010 at 1:56 AM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Will said:

Here is an old commentary by Tao Sheng, which I have not read, but I just may do so.

Astus wrote:

Thanks, I have the book next to my copy of the Lotus Sutra. I also have a shortish commentary by a Tendai nun and I've looked into Nikkyo Niwano's guide too. Still, while I understand its popularity as it's full of big colourful scenes, the "deeper meaning" eludes me.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 15th, 2010 at 3:57 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Ordination happens in Korea.

Unknown said:

Several times a year a new group of graduates travel to South Korea for a temple training program and full Taego ordination with their Korean counterparts. People are now taking the course from the comfort of their homes in countries throughout Europe and North America. Ordained 'Western' Taego monks travel regularly to stay and train with their brother and sister Taego monks in Korea. They are warmly welcomed as family and as 'the official representatives of the Taego order outside of Korea.'

http://www.taegozen.net/About_the_Taego_Order_21YW.html

Astus wrote:

But the Taego Order ordains only with the bodhisattva precepts and not the pratimoksa, so it's much like Japanese schools, except that they call them "married monks" to show the difference between "celibate monks" of the Jogye Order who take the full monastic precepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 15th, 2010 at 4:23 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think this online seminary they provide covers the basics a Western Buddhist should be familiar with. I don't know their level of student support and the options there are for consultation as these where the only extras as the subjects are very much the basics.

Compare it to the official basic training required for ordination in the Jogye Order (Haeinsa Temple Sangha College's curriculum for the 2009 (BE 2553) year, <http://www.fjdh.com/wumin/HTML/82325.html>):

1st Year: The Buddhist Person I, the Buddhist Person II, Vinaya, Hinayana Buddhism, Abhidharma, History of Indian Buddhism, Understanding Western Philosophy II, Literature I, Literature II, English, Japanese

2nd Year: Understanding the Prajnaparamita Sutra (Diamond Sutra, Heart Sutra, Vimalkirtinirdesa Sutra, 8000 Poems of the Prajnaparamita Sutra, Understanding Avatamska Sutra, Introduction to the Avatamska school, History of Chinese Buddhism, Understanding Western Philosophy II, Literature III, Literature IV

3rd Year: "Awakening faith in the Mahayana," Shurangama Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, History of Korean Buddhism, Buddhism Overview I, Buddhism Overview II, Literature V, Buddhist Culture, Buddhist Ceremony

4th Year: Seon Texts (Platform Sutra, Entrance to Sudden Enlightenment, Selected Letters of Master Dahui, Essence of Seon), History of Seon ideology, Buddhism Overview I, Buddhism Overview II, Graduation Thesis

By removing some subjects non-Buddhist subjects it could be a fine training for Westerners interested in Zen as most of the texts used are available in English. It is just a matter of teachers.

An interesting data from BuddhaPia: "As of February 2002, there are thirteen seminaries for bhiksus and five for bhiksunis in which about 350 bhiksus and 631 bhiksunis study, respectively." More

http://eng.buddhapia.com/_Service/_ContentView/ETC_CONTENT_2.ASP?pk=0001388149&sub_pk=&clss_cd=0002204375&top_menu_cd=0000000287

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 15th, 2010 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Will said:

What would you consider a "deeper meaning"? What existing meaning do you glean from the sutra so far?

What did you think of Tao Sheng's commentary?

Astus wrote:

By deeper meaning I meant for instance an explanation of its scenes if they give any extra information besides the obvious meaning of "the Buddha compassionately teaches according to faculties", "in the end everyone becomes a buddha" and "Buddha's life is immeasurable".

Daosheng's commentary is interesting on its own but it's very short and doesn't write much about most of the chapters.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 15th, 2010 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Aemilius said:

The deeper meaning is that it has magical properties. You have to approach it differently. Make a wish, perhaps write it on a paper, with a date, and then bow to the Scripture every morning (or every evening if that suits better) and offer flowers to the Sutra when you feel like it. You can also copy the sutra, or a chapter from it, with your own hand, and so on...

Astus wrote:

Look into the final chapter of the Vimalakirti Sutra.

Vimalakirti Sutra said:

This King Ratnacchattra honored the Tathagata Bhaisajjaraja and his retinue with many excellent offerings during five short aeons. At the end of this time, the King Ratnacchattra said to his sons, 'Recognizing that during my reign I have worshiped the Tathagata, in your turn you also should worship him.'

"The thousand princes gave their consent, obeying their father the king, and all together, during another five short aeons, they honored the Tathagata Bhaisajjaraja with all sorts of excellent offerings.

"Among them, there was a prince by the name of Candracchattrā, who retired into solitude and thought to himself, 'Is there not another mode of worship, even better and more noble than this?'

"Then, by the supernatural power of the Buddha Bhaisajjaraja, the gods spoke to him from the heavens: 'Good man, the supreme worship is the Dharma-worship.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 16th, 2010 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

They really pay for your trip to Korea? Their seminary costs \$1200 for 2 years, so it is not free at all. But if they pay for my trip just to become a Taego priest I'm in. I've always preferred their red kasa (袈裟) instead of Jogye's brown. Do you have some contacts?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 16th, 2010 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan, thanks anyway. I guess they'd require some dedication to their teaching which I'm not particularly familiar with (if there's any specifically Taego style). But if they give me a trip to Korea and then give their name so that I start a Buddhist mission in their name. I wouldn't mind doing that.

Kirtu, it is an online seminary so I don't have to by a train ticket, not to mention travelling for 3 hours (which I don't call a short ride) in this hot summer doesn't sound good to me. And I don't really see what new that seminary could teach me.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 16th, 2010 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

While the situation in Japan may be bad, lay teachers (priests?) are not necessarily a bad thing. In Eastern Orthodox churches it is OK for priests to be married but not the bishops. If Japanese priests are lazy in the spirit it isn't the fault of the system, and I think there are some who are active in teaching Dharma. This Taego system looks good for creating Western teachers who then can gather followers.

Kirtu,

Well, credentials are OK, even better if you get some extra support like a Dharma centre with shiny statues and paintings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 16th, 2010 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Wives of Siddhartha Gautama II

Content:

Astus wrote:

Asian Buddhists aiming to destroy Western Buddhism? Are you serious? And all this based on how many wives Siddhartha had?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 16th, 2010 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

I don't know how much this seminary is at the start but I've known about it for years now.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 19th, 2010 at 1:42 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see online seminars, or even university courses as a problem. Besides a monastic education other, common forms of tuition are mastered by the student alone and the presence of teachers are only for convenience's sake. Living as a monk is a change of life form, similar to joining the army or other specific groups who create their own society within a society. But if it is about learning, online materials are as good as books and lectures.

The quality of teachers are not guaranteed by attending a seminary or a university. Moral integrity is not assured by a teacher-student relationship. This culture likes certificates, diplomas and qualifications. Papers to measure one's competence in a field of knowledge. But as we know, test results reflect only a temporary knowledge of answers.

Religious certificates are not beyond this paradigm of competence. Jorn Borup's "Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism - Myoshinji, a living religion" gives a good look of an elaborate church hierarchy codified in a "big book of rules". Just to give an example, to become a "second grade teacher" (held by 44.9% of priests) requires: 1) have graduated from the Buddhist studies department at Hanazono University and spent two years in the sōdō, or 2) hold a Ph.D. degree (from any university) and have spent two years in the sōdō, or 3) have graduated from high school and spent seven years in the sōdō, or 4) have graduated from junior high school and spent ten years in the sōdō etc.

We may think that hierarchy is really a "holy order" but that's pretty naive. If it is knowledge and practice that counts, an online course can be as good as attending a seminary. There isn't much control over who can become a school teacher even though they are responsible for educating future generations - not to mention the total lack of criteria for becoming a parent. A Buddhist teacher in the West deals with grown ups most of the time who are supposed to be capable of making their own choices and they have to decide what kind of teacher they want to listen to. Of course, such view of adult men and women are just as idealistic as that of the enlightened masters.

This online seminary gives the basics of Buddhism and looks kosher. I think it produces more people who actively spread the Dharma and that is already wonderful.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 19th, 2010 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Unknown said:

to what extent have you lived in a monastery?

Astus wrote:

None, as you know. And I've excluded monastic training from what I said because its of a different nature.

Unknown said:

That's just typical pedantic ways of thinking in Japan where seniority and certificates neatly configure the hierarchy.

Astus wrote:

You know the Vinaya rule about hierarchy in the monastic community, it's based on seniority and moral integrity.

Unknown said:

If someone told me they had a MA Degree in Vajrayana from an online tantra course I'd assume they'd been had by a scam.

Astus wrote:

Hm, so you don't believe in the internet but it's OK if somebody had the teachings (or

terma) from Vajrapani/Manjusri/Avalokita/etc.?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 20th, 2010 at 3:05 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I've raised no question about the validity or importance of monastic training. Being a renunciate is different from being a lay person in certain aspects that's why I made no comparison between them. The Taego Order provides a way for interested people to learn some Dharma and be certified by that organisation as a teacher. Suppose the Nalanda University is finished and one gets a certificate from there it will be another kind of authentication by another organisation. Most probably a Nalanda degree will be more prestigious than one from IBS-Austria.

Still, I think that online education should not be looked down. It has its purpose and function. Definitely it is not a monastic training, not even a retreat. But if the materials taught are well organised it can be pretty high class which results in educated teachers.

First there was the oral tradition, then came writing and printing, now we have the internet. Gradually the spreading of information became easier and easier. This results in open source and zero control. Quite similar to freedom of religion. Everyone has the legal right to start a Buddhist church and do it in whatever way they like it. No king, no emperor to control it. There are already so many Buddhist organisations from very old to very new. We may take any side, join any group. The so called Chan Sect was a marginal group of different people that could eventually rise to prominence through lot of scheming and political connections so that today we say Chan is traditional and orthodox. A virtual academy today, a world religion tomorrow.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 21st, 2010 at 2:25 AM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Ven. Shengyan did the same.

Getting the Buddha Mind said:

The first half year of my retreat, I emphasized repentance prostration to undo my heavy karma. First I prostrated through the Lotus Sutra; later, the Avatamsaka Sutra. After reading a character, I would recite a mantra and then prostrate. The mantras were "Na mo fa-hua hui-shang fo p'u-'sa" for the Lotus Sutra, ("Homage to the Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas of the Lotus Assembly") and "Na mo hua-yen hai-hui fo p'u-sa" for the Avatamsaka Sutra. ("Homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ocean of wisdom of the Avatamsaka Sutra.") This I did through the whole sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 21st, 2010 at 6:02 AM

Title: Re: Silk in Vajrayana, and the bodhisattva practice.

Content:

heart said:

So please offer synthetic katas, dress in synthetic cloths and eat food that cause as little misery to other sentient beings as possible. Tell others why you do it but keep your mind free from judgment.

Astus wrote:

Synthetic textiles are usually made of polyester which is made of PET. So if we say that silk is not OK because worms died for it, what about environmental impact? Just to show how hard - practically impossible - to remove the disadvantages without producing other side effects. But if we keep thinking like this we eventually realise that through breathing we kill tiny animals and then end up like the Jains.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 21st, 2010 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Nobody forced monks to get married. They did it themselves. There are still some in Japan who are not married and keep at least the bodhisattva precepts as in the Brahmajala Sutra.

And about discussing another's failure to maintain the precepts, the 5th minor bodhisattva precept says:

5. On Not Teaching Repentance

If a disciple of the Buddha should see any being violate the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts, the Ten Precepts, other prohibitions, or commit any of the Seven Cardinal Sins or any offense which leads to the Eight Adversities -- any violations of the precepts whatever -- he should counsel the offender to repent and reform.

Hence, if a Bodhisattva does not do so and furthermore continues to live together in the assembly with the offender, share in the offerings of the laity, participate in the same Uposatha ceremony and recite the precepts -- while failing to bring up that person's offense, enjoining him to repent -- the disciple commits a secondary offense.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 2nd, 2010 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are many buddha-lands around but I guess this is about Sukhavati as it is the most popular. So why go to there instead of, well, what? If you are enlightened on the level of a non-regressing bodhisattva and above it is of course not an issue where you are going to be born. Otherwise this life can be the last in the next 100 asankhyeya kalpas that you spend above the three lower realms. And this is just one reason. Another is to ponder for a bit on the fact that you've spent uncountable lives in samsara already and couldn't get free.

The Pure Land teachings don't deny the validity of other teachings. What they say is that while other methods are difficult this is easy. Other teachings need people of high abilities while the Pure Land path works for everyone. The Pure Land teaching is a skilful means of the compassionate buddhas because there is nobody excluded while other ways usually are for monks. Also with the Pure Land method one is assured of perfect enlightenment while on other paths it is easy to go astray. In Sukhavati it is easy to practice, one has buddhas and bodhisattvas as his teacher and there is no suffering at all. Compare that to this place where it is hard to find a teacher and almost impossible to tell who is enlightened and who is not.

These are some of the reasons that so many aspire for birth in the Pure Land of Amita Buddha in many Mahayana schools from Tibet to Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 3rd, 2010 at 2:08 AM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ron,

Consider the followings:

1. After birth in Sukhavati enlightenment is 100% sure.
2. Birth there depends only on buddha-remembrance, with that as a condition birth is assured.
3. This human world is full of distractions and false teachings, in Sukhavati there's none of that.
4. In this world it is very difficult to find even a good teacher, in Sukhavati there is a living buddha and access to innumerable others.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 3rd, 2010 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ron,

I haven't studied what Tibetan teachers say of the Pure Land path but I did some learning on the East Asian part where this is a central form of practice and masters throughout more than a thousand years have engaged in interpreting the relevant sutras and treatises. What I told you about it reflects the Pure Land School's teaching of East Asia and all can be backed up by the appropriate sutras and commentaries. But if you doubt the words of the Buddha it's your own business.

"Again, Shariputra, all sentient beings born in the Land of Utmost Bliss dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Many of them are in the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life. Their number is so great that it is beyond reckoning; it can only be described as innumerable, unlimited and incalculable.

"Shariputra, those sentient beings who hear of that land should aspire to be born there. Why? Because they will be able to meet such sages of supreme virtue. Shariputra, one cannot attain birth in that land with few roots of goodness or a small stock of merit. Shariputra, if a good man or woman who hears of Amida Buddha holds fast to his Name even for one day, two days, three, four, five, six or seven days with a concentrated and undistracted mind, then, at the hour of death, Amida Buddha will appear before them with a host of holy ones. Consequently, when their life comes to an end, the aspirants' minds will not fall into confusion and so they will be born immediately in the Land of Utmost Bliss of Amida Buddha. Shariputra, perceiving these benefits, I say: All sentient beings who hear this teaching should aspire to birth in that land."

(<http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/amida-sutra.htm>

"You say that the Stage of Non-retrogression is extremely difficult to enter, requiring a long period of practice, and ask me if there is a path of easy practice whereby you can attain this stage quickly. These are words of a cowardly and contemptible man, and not those of a brave man with a strong aspiration. If, however, you insist on hearing from me about this method of practice, I will explain it to you.

There are innumerable modes of entry into the Buddha's teaching. Just as there are in the world difficult and easy paths - travelling on foot by land is full of hardship and travelling in a boat by sea is pleasant - so it is among the paths of the bodhisattvas. Some exert themselves diligently, while others quickly enter Non-retrogression by the easy practice based on faith." (<http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/igyohon.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 3rd, 2010 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ron,

Yes, that sutra says one day, the Larger Amita Sutra says 10 times reciting the name is enough, and the Contemplation Sutra says that even if one has committed the five grave sins but recites only 10 times that person will be born in Sukhavati.

Your question is about the reason for choosing the Pure Land path above all. The reasons for that are what I've given already. Here are some quotes for you from two important masters.

http://www.jodo.org/about_hs/ho_life.html, founder of the Japanese Pure Land School wrote,

"Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning. There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself. Reciting the nembutsu and believing in birth in the Pure Land naturally gives rise to the three minds (sanjin) and the four modes of practice (shishu). If I am withholding any deeper knowledge beyond simple recitation of the nembutsu, then may I lose sight of the compassion of Shakyamuni and Amida Buddha and slip through the embrace of Amida's original vow. Even if those who believe in the nembutsu study the teaching which Shakyamuni taught his whole life, they should not put on any airs and should sincerely practice the nembutsu, just as an illiterate fool, a nun or one who is ignorant of Buddhism."

(<http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>)

<http://www.answers.com/topic/yin-kuang>, considered to be the 13th Chinese patriarch of the Pure Land School wrote,

"Rebirth in the Western Land thus requires, first of all, deep Faith and fervent Vows. Without these conditions, even if you were to cultivate, you could not obtain a response from Amitabha Buddha. You would merely reap the blessings of the human and celestial realms and sow the seeds of liberation in the future. Anyone who fulfills the conditions of Faith and Vows is assured of rebirth in the Pure Land. When Elder Master Yung Ming stated that "out of ten thousand who cultivate Pure Land, ten thousand will achieve rebirth," he was referring to those with full Faith and Vows." (Pure Land Zen, p. 37)

"It does not matter that you have not read the sutras widely. Without fully understanding Pure Land teachings, even if you deeply understand the entire Buddhist canon and have awakened completely to Self-Mind, it will take you untold eons to fulfill your original Vow to escape the cycle of Birth and Death. Buddha Recitation is the panacea for all diseases." (Pure Land Zen, p. 43)

"You should know that even the Dharma Body Bodhisattvas [i.e., the higher level Bodhisattvas] must rely on the power of the Buddhas – not to mention ordinary beings such as ourselves, who are full of karmic obstructions. Who are we to keep weighing the pros and cons of our own strength, while failing to seek the Buddhas' help? Our words may be lofty, but upon reflection, the accompanying actions are low and wanting! The difference between other-power and self-power is as great as the heavens and the

abyss!" (Pure Land Zen, p. 61)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 4th, 2010 at 2:09 AM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see how it is possible to investigate something when there's already a prejudice against it. The attractiveness of the Pure Land path has always been in its easiness compared to other methods. Notable teachers in China, like Huiyuan (6th c.) and Shandao (7th c.), argued that even a prthagjana can attain birth in the Pure Land. It is understandable that Westerners confuse this long standing and orthodox Buddhist tradition with theism, but actually it tells more about their cultural background rather than the understanding of this teaching. No wonder that while it is the most popular in East Asia those of the Western cultures show little interest in it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 4th, 2010 at 3:17 AM

Title: Bankei vs Hakuin

Content:

Astus wrote:

To this day all of Rinzai Zen is an heir of Hakuin's understanding of the path to liberation, while the Zen of Bankei has ended with the master's death who left no descendants. In the West the image of Zen is substantially formed by Hakuin's teachings thanks to DT Suzuki, the Sanbo Kyodan teachers, and others. Even in the Kwan Um School of Zen, nominally a Korean lineage, they use a koan curriculum.

The teachings of Bankei and Hakuin look very much the opposite of each other. Bankei focused only on the Unborn Buddha Mind and regarded everything else secondary, including precepts and meditation. Hakuin set up a rigorous training program with many levels that requires extreme discipline and endurance. According to Bankei it is quite easy to realise the true nature and apply it to everyday life. Hakuin set up high standards where students are pushed deeper and deeper into investigating the stories of former masters. Bankei talks in an open way about the buddha-mind and its use while Hakuin practically avoids spelling it out and he uses "koan language".

While both Zen teachers experienced hardships in strenuous zazen they came up with contradictory solutions. In brief, for Bankei it is about remaining buddha, for Hakuin it is about becoming buddha again and again.

What do you think:

Is Bankei's "Fushou Zen" (不生禪 - Unborn Zen) too easy to be true?

Is Hakuin's "Koan Zen" too systematic to be called Zen?

Which one would you call traditional?

What could be the reason for Bankei's demise and Hakuin's success in terms of their

teachings' spread?

Can these be viewed as complementary forms of Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 5th, 2010 at 3:20 PM

Title: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I hear in arguments for the superiority of Dzogchen that it includes the possibility of attaining the rainbow body. Frankly, besides that it sounds cool, I don't see the point of it at all. It might be a great miracle to see someone's body vaporise with colourful lights, but beyond that what? Realisation of the 3/4 bodies are inherent in awareness so it is not the case that buddhahood is at stake. Then why the fuss?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 5th, 2010 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kalden,

As Heart said, it's something else I've raised here as a question.

Narraboth,

You say with a rainbow body it's easier to help many beings. But if one dies the flesh and bones are left behind and there is not limit for emanation bodies whether one has a human body here or not. That's why I ask what extra rainbow body has.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 6th, 2010 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Maybe I've missed something here in Narraboth's answer but I still don't see the use of dissolving the physical body into rainbow lights besides its obvious miraculous nature that can inspire faith. Also, if we go into the land of wonders, bodhisattvas are capable of all kinds of magic transforming themselves into virtually anything, including buddhas. And that ability is available to a large number of gods, demons and yogis too. So, again, what is so special about the rainbow body that it can be an argument for the superiority of dzogchen?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 6th, 2010 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirtu,

Thanks, liked your reply.

"The realized dzogchen practitioner, no longer deluded by apparent substantiality or dualisms such as mind and matter, releases the energy of the elements that compose the physical body at the time of death."

To me from this it would follow that all who are enlightened, realised emptiness, attains a rainbow body. Thus either nobody else is enlightened or the manifestation of rainbow body depends on something else. Maybe tögal practice creates this habit to in the end dissolve the body - just guessing.

Pema Rigdzin,

"tögal which explain how wisdom and the 5 elements have yet to be totally liberated in clear light before the fruition of that level of practice"

If it is necessary to dissolve the physical body (except hair and nails, for whatever reason) to attain maximum buddhahood it looks like to me that then being bound by the body can be overcome only through the elimination of the body (arupaloka is a strange thing then to mention).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 6th, 2010 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pema Rigdzin,

Oh, so the rainbow body at death and in life are different. Or is it the case that jalu phowa chenpo is a name for the 4th vision's result?

Found this (Longchen Nyingthig of the Ancient Ones Tradition by Ven. Khenpo Namdrol Rinpoche):

"There are two kinds of rainbow body: the general rainbow body, where the body dissolves completely into light, and the 'Rainbow Body of the Great Transference', Jalu Phowa Chenpo, where the ordinary body is transformed into a rainbow-like body and the individual lives for centuries for as long as they can benefit beings, appearing to them from time to time. Such was the case with both Vimalamitra and Guru Rinpoche."

So it is a change of body then from physical to light in order that they can stay here longer. An interesting note here is for instance what we find in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that the Buddha could have stayed for more than a kalpa if asked so. Again, this phenomenon that one could stay as a quasi-immortal by changing the nature of the body is a bit strange to me for the reasons that a buddha has no limit of emanation bodies and transforming a body to something else sounds pointless then. I'm just trying to make some sense of its importance...

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 8th, 2010 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Movie - Zen - The Life of Dogen Zenji

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a great film, I recommend it to everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 9th, 2010 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Kalden,

I've been reading through this discussion and while the double meaning of rainbow body was pointed to by Pema Rigdzin the reason behind the importance of attaining jalu phowa chenpo was not clarified to me. Like, one can tell the difference between the attributes and abilities of an arhat and a buddha according to different traditions, or the different results of practices like the four immeasurables and breath awareness.

So, it is an option that one just admits not knowing the answer which has been stated here a few times worded as "we're small, this is difficult". But I assume those who care to argue against other methods know a lot more than that about rainbow body and how actually it is an unsurpassed attainment.

I'm not a Dzogchen follower, it is simply my interest in Dzogchen teachings that made me bring up this question here. Also, I think, it is good to know what actually is meant by the different schools when they claim to have the best of the best method, for sure I want to know the best method too.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2010 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Narraboth,

"If you don't think rainbow body is better, it doesn't matter; but you can't deny it's a special thing which other methods can't do, can you?"

If it is about dissolving the body into rainbow light, well, I suppose it is covered by the magical techniques yogis, spirits and gods have. If it is realising the emptiness of the form aggregate that is found in the fundamental teachings. But as it is a combination of the two certainly it is a unique Dzogchen thing.

"Now you are saying it's special, but what's the good of it? What kind of answer do you expect from people who are obviously not rainbow bodies? At best we can only tell you things from tantra, from commentaries, from great masters' words, right? If you are not satisfied about that, what else can we offer??"

Maybe I've missed it but saw only a couple of quotes from teachers and nothing from tantras or commentaries. Also, it is not irrelevant what one quotes. If I cited the Cakrasamvara or the Vairocanabhisambodhi Tantra how would that help? Even the Kulayaraja Tantra would be useless here as it doesn't discuss the rainbow body, iirc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2010 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

"Dzogchen explains that the nature of reality is beyond the physical and the mental and how the physical and mental phenomena appear from ignorance. The practice of Dzogchen is the reversal of that process. Other systems of Buddhist practice are based on a different take on the appearing of the physical and mental phenomena and that is reflected in their system of practice. Since the bases of practice are different, the results will be different."

I recognise the difference between Vajrayana's subtle body teaching and the common Mahayana lacking that. But to say that according to Dzogchen everything appears from ignorance while others say differently, well, what about dependent origination then? If Dzogchen were so radically different from general Buddhism that it had a different basis with different result it'd mean it is not even Buddhism. But to me it seems that all the Buddhist schools say that "from ignorance appears formations". But this has little to do with the rainbow body's actual relevance, I think. It's enough to compare Dzogchen with the other Vajrayana systems where they don't take the rainbow body as the ultimate achievement.

"Hence, I don't see why there could not be subtle differences within the supreme enlightenment of a Buddha as explained in Dzogchen."

It's not a question about the superiority of Dzogchen itself that I've asked but the reason for rainbow body being more special than perfect enlightenment understood by any other tradition, like Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2010 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

I didn't equate subtle body with rainbow body. Regarding ignorance what you said was what we have everywhere in Buddhism, so why say Dzogchen is any different on this point? And while there are many traditions they share the view of what to be free from and to attain liberation. I brought up other Vajrayana schools only as a convenient reference point for comparison. And again, it is quite a specific and not a general question I'd like to investigate here, ie. the rainbow body's significance and its uniqueness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2010 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

It was clear you had replied to that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2010 at 6:17 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ron,

"Can we reach enlightenment solely through that means without as is mentioned earlier in sutra quoted..without concentration focus and certain qualities developed, just by saying some words, being faithful and devoted and expecting to become enlightened."

It is true, one doesn't become enlightened simply by repeating Amita Buddha's name and having faith in his vows. And it is not enlightenment that is the immediate consequence of that but birth in Sukhavati. Then it is in Sukhavati that one practices the paramitas etc. and attains enlightenment. This compared to going to the monastery.

Before being within the monastery one wishes to go there and so requests his admission. After obtaining access one can practice in better circumstances than in a lay life. Is this so difficult to comprehend?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 12th, 2010 at 3:32 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body - Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

Yes, good point. And explains why I ask the importance of doing that with the body made of the four elements. It rots away after death anyway if not cremated or eaten by animals.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 17th, 2010 at 2:46 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nenbutsu itself is not the cause of enlightenment per se but the cause of birth. These are two different things. It's like bodhicitta is not the cause of buddhahood but the cause to enter the path to buddhahood. Although in some sense, as you can find in the Avatamsaka Sutra, bodhicitta can be called even equal to enlightenment. Also, you may not accept that there is a Pure Land which is in fact a perfect place, a perfect environment conducive to enlightenment, but that is not so in the sutras.

Here you can find Honen's outline of the Pure Land path, where first one has to get a firm establishment in the nenbutsu and after that may take up auxiliary practices:

<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 17th, 2010 at 8:13 PM

Title: Re: Is there any rule to prostrations?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here you can learn the Chinese form:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asjdzpCARXk> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYaxJj_opt4 "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 17th, 2010 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hi Huseng,

1. It is not just the scriptures themselves but also the Pure Land tradition's many outstanding teachers that should be noted here. And while I may be inclined to agree that Shinran's is an extreme position (but not unorthodox), others (from Zhiyi to Honen) are unequivocal in viewing the Pure Land as a place where people can attain enlightenment certainly. The sutras discussing Sukhavati can be considered neyartha, which makes little difference nevertheless, as it is obviously another of the skilful means. Some call even the prajnaparamita sutras neyartha anyway.

2. It is not the person's karma that is important, that's what other-power is about, being escorted to the Pure Land by Amita Buddha, saved by the vow, even if one has hellish karma. It is self-power where the karma matters in getting to a buddha-land.

3. Guanyin resides in Sukhavati, isn't her the best master in compassion? Also, one can move freely to millions of other lands. Two other reasons can be how wisdom is inseparable from compassion and the way practices like the immeasurables and lojong work.

4. Power is ascribed only to Amita Buddha himself and his vows, and as far as I know, buddhas having powers is not against the law of causality. Also, the whole concept of being born through buddha-remembrance is affirming causality and not denying or contradicting it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 18th, 2010 at 4:32 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"There is a kind of theodicy in what you propose: if a Buddha has the ability to pluck someone out of our shitty world and transport them to a Pure Land, why wait until the death of the individual? Why does it not happen now?"

That problem would occur if (1) buddhas could save anyone only on their own and if (2) there were no conditions for attaining birth. But none of that is found here. Angulimala could attain enlightenment even though he was a serial killer - you have no objections here I guess. It could happen because of the Buddha's work and that Angulimala changed his mind. Attaining birth in the Pure Land is possible because of Amita Buddha's work and because one changes his mind. This turning from samsara toward

the Pure Land is the essential component called faith. In concept it is no different from the story of the dog ascetic. It is not about being taken out of samsara, it is not a theistic salvation like what many mistakes it for, but it is about harmonising the mind with the conditions brought to reality by Amita Buddha. So the metaphor of meeting one's parent after many years.

"It also potentially eradicates the basis of morality because even if you're a horrible wretched person who has murdered and raped thousands you still get away from your karma by virtue of Amitabha's vow. I think it was Shinran who proposed that even evil wicked people get saved just by uttering Namu Amida Butsu."

It's never been the idea that Pure Land is for the morally wicked people - this is again mistaking it for Christian salvation. The big thing here is that it is available for prthagjanas, non-enlightened beings. The morality part comes in only as a secondary aspect, saying that non-enlightened beings don't have the perfect moral conduct as aryas do. Therefore some Pure Land teachers said it's not a big problem if one cannot abide by the precepts in every situation. Like what Honen says here:

Q: Is it a sin to drink sake (Japanese rice wine)?

A: Definitely you shouldn't drink, but, you know, it's the way of the world.

Morally base people usually don't care at all about religion so it's not a common thing if somebody truly considers enlightenment. Because it shouldn't be forgot that the Pure Land is a way to enlightenment, to buddhahood, and nothing else. So yes, whatever person one might be, it is possible to attain birth, just as it is possible to attain sudden enlightenment. This doesn't undermine the meaning of morality but rather it is a skilful means that can be used by those in unfortunate circumstances.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 18th, 2010 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: International Order of Buddhist Ministers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, as Yonten says, there is this hindrance that those who are somewhat familiar with Tibetan or Zen teachings think that teachers must be from a lineage of (enlightened) masters and that Buddhism is not something one can simply study and practice but that meditation is the essential way and to teach it there's a need for authorisation by a guru. This is a strong preconception indeed.

I, personally, like the idea of training Dharma teachers. There is a need for people who actually know what the sutras and shastras contain and share it with those who find it difficult to spend time studying. Also it is a good way to make Buddhism more accessible to a larger audience. My question is only of the quality of the training.

A good book with a trans-traditional view is Joseph Goldstein's "One Dharma", even if it is a rather introductory level.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 18th, 2010 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Aemilius said:

"Getting away from your karma", is not so at all. As has been said earlier depending on your mass of virtue or your mass of evil you may have to spend 500 years or 3000 years in isolation in Sukhavati. All this time you will hear only the Dharma. Only after this period of solitary meditation will you be granted the full citizenship in the Land of Bliss. What prison on earth can equal with that ???!

Astus wrote:

Actually, the Contemplation Sutra says that on the middle lowest birth one spends six kalpas in the lotus, on the lowest lowest it is twelve great kalpas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 20th, 2010 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Pure lands....why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Sure, but he was a disciple of Shakyamuni and did not wait to be reborn in a Pure Land post-mortem. He received teachings directly from the Buddha and did not put his faith in being reborn in somewhere else where conditions would be more pleasant (such as somewhere where people would not treat him as the murderer that he was).

The story of Angulimala was only for giving an example for the event of changing mind and its effects. As for faith in being born somewhere, well, that is another common thing, starting from birth in the upper levels of samsara up to the ways of going to different buddha-lands. I think you're well aware of sutras giving instructions on how to gain birth in the lands of Akshobhya and Bhaishajyaguru. It's just that Amita Buddha became the favourite among all the others.

If I'm not mistaken, the Pure Land is still samsara, no?

It is not, the Tiantai 10 realms is an explanation for it. But of course one could argue for saying that the world is always some buddha's land, and there are different views about buddha-lands.

I don't trust the scriptures enough to put my money so to speak on such a gamble. If I can't verify it or find it reasonable (for example I find Shakyamuni's teachings verifiable in many instances and reasonable, or for that matter Nagarjuna or Asanga), then I'm reluctant to pursue something purely on faith.

Well, to argue for Amita Buddha's vows and land without relying on scripture looks quite impossible, just like taking refuge in the Triple Gem without ever knowing about it. But if you consider that the teaching on the easy access to Sukhavati is known and accepted in every Mahayana regions and most of the schools it can be considered as orthodox as consciousness-only, except that unlike Yogacara the Pure Land teaching is still alive everywhere.

Tell that to Shinran who probably never heard of Christianity.

Was Shinran a criminal? Or his followers? He talked about realising that one is a prthagjana, a common person, nothing special. Yes, on one hand it is questionable to tell morally unstable people can gain a definitely high birth and be assured of enlightenment. But on the other side, from the point of saving sentient beings unlimitedly, the system of buddha-lands allows the possibility of Amita's land and vows, therefore it is natural to exist for everyone.

There are three trainings: ethics (in Chinese literally precepts), samadhi and wisdom. They form a tripod. There is no wisdom without samadhi and no samadhi without ethics/precepts. Anyone who tells you otherwise is suspect.

This is not questioned at all in the Pure Land teachings. And just like in the case of seeing how Zen is related to the Agamas, so one has to study the development of Pure Land thought from visualisation practices to recitation. Also note that it is on in Japan, because of Honen, that they stick to recitation. In other lineages there's no exclusiveness.

I still stand by my original assertion that our shitty Saha world here is the optimal place to attain enlightenment as the Vimalakirti-sutra outlines.

The Vimalakirti Sutra also says that monks with parajika offenses are OK to stay in the sangha, that doing meditation is not sitting at the root of a tree, that a buddha needs no food, etc. And I'm not questioning the Vimalakirti Sutra here, it has been quoted regularly by those who think there is only a mental buddha-land to be realised and no such thing as outer buddha-land, so it is actually a usual source of dispute.

On the other hand, the later Chan thinkers who spoke of cultivating the Pure Land within make some sense to me. I just don't like this idea of putting your liberation on the line and waiting until you drop dead in the hopes of having someone else save you from suffering.

No need to wait, Chan goes fine with Pure Land, so you can attain buddhahood even today, if you want, but the thing is, people usually don't just become buddhas immediately. So if you can't actually do Chan, why not go to the Pure Land to finish the path in an easier and safer way? The Pure Land school itself has many different practices one can use and attain different levels of samadhis, etc. But at the same time it is a path for those too who have trouble spending three months on a retreat, or

avoiding breaking certain precepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 20th, 2010 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: International Order of Buddhist Ministers

Content:

Astus wrote:

That kind of lineage as seen in Zen for instance is not a universal part of Buddhism. Actually, the whole transmission lineage concept is restricted to a few traditions and others don't use it. And in the case of Zen lineage served mainly a political purpose rather than a spiritual/religious one. Transmission is a means of marginal groups to show how special they are. The major Indian schools had no use of that kind of authorisation because they were already authentic on their own. Lineage is not a proof of realisation or even correct view. The proof of realisation is one's life, and one's mind that can hardly be scrutinised by anyone else. The proof of correct view is being able to prove it through the use of scriptures and reasoning. What kind of proof is it if a person claims authority on secret transmission? Yes, it is a level of security if people are authorised by an accepted teacher, but even that is not 100%, just check out Shunryu Suzuki and his descendants.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 21st, 2010 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: International Order of Buddhist Ministers

Content:

Astus wrote:

"With consideration to Jodo shu and Nichiren, every other lineage in Buddhism which exists has a lineage of qualified instructors which is in place to assure the quality of the teaching."

The only lineage that actually traces itself back to Shakyamuni Buddha (and beyond) is Zen - and that lineage is not at all a historical fact. Vajrayana lineages go back as far as teachers like Tilopa and Padmasambhava, who all lived long after Shakyamuni. The Tiantai school also had a lineage where Zhiyi, de facto founder, was claimed to be the third patriarch, but transmission of any secret doctrine was not a requirement for every practitioner, it was rather the ruling patriarch that they traced a lineage for. No other Buddhist school had this kind of lineage based on direct transmission from teacher to student, and that means everyone else from all the early Indian schools up to Yogacara and Huayan.

So if you want to claim that true Buddhism exists only within Zen and possibly Vajrayana, OK. On the other hand, if you think that such masters like Nagarjuna, Asanga, Candrakirti, Dignaga and many others deserve some credit in making Mahayana what it is, you may also accept that lineage is not a requirement for authentic Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 23rd, 2010 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: Suggestions please

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think this answers your question:

All causes and effects
Are consciousness alone.
And all that this establishes
Abides in consciousness.

On the basis of the Mind Alone,
We should know that outer things do not exist.
On the basis of the method set forth here,
We should know that mind is utterly devoid of self.

Those who ride the chariot of the two approaches,
Who grasp the reins of reasoned thought,
Will thus be adepts of the Mahayana
According to the sense and meaning of the word.

Vishnu, Ishvara, and others do not taste
The cause of the abiding in the measureless.
And also those who are the crowns of all the world
Are thoroughly without a taste of it.

This perfect state, this pure ambrosia,
Alone enjoyed by Buddhas, those Thus Gone,
Who are themselves results of pure compassion,
None but they can taste of it.

Those who have the mind to follow this tradition
Will strongly feel intense compassion
For those who have the mind to trust
To tenets of mistaken teachings.

Those rich in wisdom, who perceive
To what extent all other doctrines lack essential pith,
To that extent will feel intense devotion
For the Buddha, who is their Protector.

(Madhyamakalankara, verses 91-97)

This is from the text called "Adornment of the Middle Way" by Shantarakshita, which addresses how all appearances are only mental in nature, and how consciousness is actually empty. It is available with a commentary by Jamgon Mipham, a 19th century

Tibetan master of great renown.

As for some instant practical advice, you may take a look at this Dzogchen teaching:
<http://www.purifymind.com/DiscoverNatureMind.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 23rd, 2010 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: Natural disasters and collective morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, it's this ancient belief that if one lives according to whatever rules (morals) the god(s) came up with the nation will be in peace and prosper. Although in many cases this "morality" included certain rituals from grain to human sacrifice. The very concept that rules and rituals have soteriological relevance is a wrong view - unlike in Brahmanism and others. To say that what I do can in fact change the weather, well, I'd love to see this explained either from the physical-scientific, or the Abhidharmic side. Which mental factor is the condition for water particles in the sky? And how do millions of minds (not counting the animals, but we could) living in a single city define the wind currents? Isn't it the case that we cannot even control our own bodies even if we like to believe that it is "me, mine, my self"?

So, I see no reason why it should be that there is such a group karma causing disasters.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 24th, 2010 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Hoshin Tendai Mikkyo? No.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there already a Tendai group called Hoshin Tendai Mikkyo? Just because then it can indeed be confusing. Otherwise, it is not a trademark or something like that. And if one feels like it, why not create a martial arts group with some extras called Tendai Mikkyo? In China there was not just one Tiantai group but at least two that I know of, and they didn't like each other for sure. People can call so many things Zen, Tantra and what not. Why Tendai is an exception? And Mikkyo, well, that is just "secret teaching", not even something restricted to a sect.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 26th, 2010 at 12:50 AM

Title: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the major Mahayana traditions that we have today all teach, except one, that Buddhahood is possible in a single lifetime. There are different names given to this concept but what seems to cover all is "this body becomes buddha" (即身成佛), i.e.

becoming buddha in this body, which has been singled out by Kukai as the term summing up the essence of Shingon (see: <http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/sokushingi.htm>), but actually can be traced back to the case with the dragon princess in the http://www2.fodian.net/world/0262_12.html who turned into a buddha in no time.

This idea of sudden enlightenment (頓悟) - first advocated by Daosheng (355-434), a disciple of Kumarajiva - is taken to be an improvement, a higher teaching compared to the gradual path of the bodhisattva going through kalpas of training. But it is possible to see it not as an improvement but actually a return to being an arhat.

What I mean is that there's hardly any difference between the attainment taught in these sudden methods from one we can find in Theravada and other Mahayana teachings. The basic concept is, as always has been, to eliminate attachment to the six kinds of experiences. That is what an arhat achieves. Then compared to an arhat a buddha is supposed to have some extras starting with the bodily signs, so comes in the accumulation of merits through aeons. Finally, with the appearance of the tathagatagarbha teachings the possibility of a short cut came up, since buddha-nature contains all the buddha qualities. That's how sudden enlightenment became possible, that's what the Zen axiom of "this mind is buddha" (即心是佛) stands for.

Then if there is this inherent enlightenment (本覺), which is not different from the mind free from attachments, how could it be different from an arhat but in name only?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 26th, 2010 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Maybe I should have put up a note that I'm going here cross-traditional using references to Southern, Northern and Eastern traditions. So it is not a question how one school, one lineage or one teacher defines these terms for in that case it'd be quite straightforward. I'm trying to explore the "One Dharma" perspective, to use Goldstein's terminology, or a Western Ekayana.

"I don't think all but a very small minority of people realistically think they'll achieve attainment of the dharmakāya within their lifetime."

Well, it depends on what you take to be dharmakaya. Either I take a Zen or a Vajrayana approach, it is nothing but the nature of mind one realises at the very beginning. Not that difficult.

"I wouldn't take symbolism in religious literature as absolutely literal."

While that case in the Lotus Sutra has been actually used in Zen texts for reference, I mentioned it actually because the Fo Guang Shan dictionary uses it in the definition of "this body becoming buddha". By the way, what else would it symbolise than what it apparently looks like?

"You can be enlightened and not be a Buddha."

Intended no confusion here. I took the easier path where sudden enlightenment equals attaining buddhahood, so it doesn't matter whether it's 悟, or 覺, or 成佛, or anything else.

"In some Mahayana thought the idea is that the Arhat only achieves nirvana with remainder"

Yes, there are many versions of interpreting arhathood in Mahayana. Here I refer to only Theravada interpretations, where actually a living arhat attains nirvana with remainder. But that simply stands for the presence of aggregates without attachment.

"Tathāgatagarbha is not single unified system."

Certainly. But I rather take the Awakening Mahayana Faith Treatise as it has been a lot more popular than the Buddha-Nature Treatise and had influence on Zen and other schools. On the Tibetan side it's the Shentong form of interpretation that could be the matching one here.

"a product of East Asian thought and has no direct ancestor in Indic thought"

Being Indic or non-Indic has little relevance in today's Buddhism. And perhaps if we looked into the latest forms of Indic Buddhism we could find the teachings like Anuttarayogatantra and the Sahajiyas talking about inherent purity and original buddha-mandala.

So, just to make it really clear, I'm not looking for definitions within a single tradition or how an ancient master argued against even older masters. This whole thing I bring up from today's perspective, or at least I'm trying, with having three major Buddhist traditions in one place. That's the point of the "One Dharma Project".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 27th, 2010 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

There can't be a unifying vision. It is possible to synthesise, a classic method, but that necessarily results in something new. In China they created different schools based on

structuring available Buddhist materials, so they did in India and Tibet. Now we have a growing corpus of English Buddhist teachings which is already quite big, especially if put together. It is possible that one simply delves into a single tradition, a single practice. But then actually a single tradition means that some have already sorted out, interpreted and structured the Buddhist teaching so they can present it as one, whole and complete. It is all fine, we have Theravada, we have Tiantai, we have Nyingma. However, what they summed up in those traditions are from different sources that we have now. Zhiyi could use the MPPU while Yinshun could use the Lamrim Chenmo for instance. If I had to single out one sutra, or one shastra as the best, I couldn't do so. Sure, I have some favourites, but that doesn't mean to me that the others are inferior in any sense. It is true that there were hardly any Mahayana teacher in China or Tibet who cared to use the Agamas but today many quote the Pali Canon, while Theravada teachers cite some Zen stories. In sum, there is a merging going on on some levels. Fine examples are Yogi Chen, Yinshun and Ajahn Amaro. This, in my opinion, doesn't make Buddhism less or worse but rather fresh and alive, capable of transformation.

"No, there is much more to the dharmakāya than that. It includes omniscience and complete eradication of all defilements without exception among other features."

Well, the nature of mind is naturally without any obstruction to comprehension and there's no defilement to be found in it. The whole point of the buddha-mind is that it is not different from the mind of the buddhas. But of course this is not everyone's view of the buddha-mind. Also, an interesting extra from Huangbo: "Buddha-nature is emptiness. Even if adorned by immeasurable wisdom and merit, in the end those cannot remain." (T51n2076_p0272a11-12)

"I'm hesitant about any claims that one can completely bypass the Bodhisattva stages. Whether you interpret such statements in sutra as meaning that or not is up to you and the commentaries you favour."

And this is actually a key thing in what I've brought up originally about sudden/direct paths since they say they in fact by pass the bodhisattva stages. So the promise of becoming a buddha in this life is about avoiding the long bodhisattva path. Therefore it may be - at least this sounds like a fine argument against those ideas - that they actually teach a sravakayana.

"I'll believe it when I see it or meet a reliable authority who can demonstrate the validity of such claims."

I can quote a dozen famous Zen masters if that's good enough for you. But actually everyone else who teach sudden enlightenment talk about becoming buddha and not something below that.

"Sure, but then you have to explain why if the enlightenment of an Arhat and a Buddha is the same why does the former completely remove themselves from the conditioned world at death, thus being unable to help others while the latter does indeed remain."

I hope that by now you see what kind of buddhahood I talk about here, that kind of buddha one can become in this body.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 27th, 2010 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

"Unfortunately not all of it is from reliable authorities."

One has to be able to sort it out and don't put the books by Rajneesh on the same shelf as those by Jamgon Kongtrul.

"Buddhism is still in its infancy."

I thought it was the oldest world religion. Buddhism has been known longer in the west than linguistics or psychology were invented. It may be that today we count Buddhism's presence in the West from the 50s, but actually it's been here on some level centuries before, the 20th century brought the rapid spread of the religion, but not its appearance. What makes it an infant actually? A man has only 60-70 years maximum to study it, many renown masters had only 20-30. Dogen was 28 when he returned to Japan and started to teach Zen, then died 25 years later. Could we say that was OK he established a new school because there was Buddhism in Japan for a few centuries by then? Or because Zen in China was well established? Or Zhiyi could form his novel ideas because he was a monk and there was already a corpus he could work from?

"attempting to combine the doctrines of Pure Land in Japan with Theravada in Sri Lanka is not going to work."

Doesn't sound impossible. For instance, one could use their Abhidhamma to outline the work of Amita Buddha, or use satipatthana to meditate on the Pure Land.

"I have problems with statements that the mind is naturally without any obstruction."

It's fine with me if you don't like buddha-mind teachings. That doesn't mean it is not an important part of a couple of Mahayana traditions.

"Or they're talking about having achieved Arhatship or Pratyekabuddhahood, neither of which is attainment of the dharmakaya. Or maybe they were speaking figuratively when they used the two characters 成佛 (becoming Buddha)."

I think both are unlikely, especially the first one.

"As I said above in the case of Master Shengyan he wrote that one has a brief vision of

the realm of the Buddhas which would be a life changing event, but would not actually be permanent Buddhahood."

That is Ven. Shengyan's view of it, which is fine in itself, but there are other interpretations. For instance, in Vajrayana it is "working with the result", ie. buddha-mind. Same applies for Zen, training with the buddha-mind.

"The problem with famous Zen masters is that they like to talk in riddles and use figurative language. If you sit down and read those Chan stories in particular they're interesting fiction and not to be taken literally. They employ many many metaphors to convey ideas not apparent on the surface."

I understand Zen stories are like that but those are only one form of teachings, actually a literary style created in the 10th century, after the Tang era, and became popular in the Song. Still, what they gave as teachings either in Tang or after were all in usual Buddhist parlance and nothing incomprehensible. These you can read in the "recorded sayings" of different masters. However, there are some exceptions here, especially the records of Linji and Yunmen as those were seriously reworked in later times, so a large portion of them are like koans. But try the works of Dazhu Huihai or Huangbo Xiyun, both early masters in the Hongzhou school, and they're not mystical at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 30th, 2010 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

It was a good point Anders that the Awakening Mahayana Faith Treatise says explicitly that bodhisattvas have to go through three aeons. What to do with that then if actually Tiantai, Huayan, Chan and Zhenyan talks about sudden enlightenment, ie. not going through the ten stages? In the "Netbreaking Commentary to the Awakening Mahayana Faith Treatise" (T44n1850, vol. 5) Ouyi Zhixu first explains that passage with "Time is not real dharma. It depends only on false thinking." (455c12) and then gives usual examples for that (what feels long for one is short for others). In the second part then he speculates about the actual meaning of this arduous task of a bodhisattva and what the Buddha meant by it. It seems to me he takes no definitive position but goes by the line of the Platform Sutra saying that sudden and gradual is dependent on one's faculties.

Huangbo Xiyun says (T48n2012A, p380b), "Some hearing the Dharma easily attain no mind in one moment. Some reach the ten faiths, ten abodes, ten practices, ten dedications, then attain no mind. Long or short, when no mind is obtained it remains. There can be nothing more to cultivate or realise. ... Since there's nothing more beyond buddhahood, they (long and short path practitioners) attain the same. When [the one who went through long practice] looks back on kalpas of practices, it's all as if he was acting deluded in a dream."

This whole problem can be enlightened by this simple dialogue (X63n1224, p27a8-9):

Yuan precept master said, "Must go through three great asankhyeya-kalpas, only then attains it."

Huihai said, "Asankhyeya-kalpas can be counted, or not?"

Dazhu Huihai himself says (X63n1224, p26c6) of this issue: "Deluded people hope to realise it in a distant kalpa. Enlightened people suddenly see it." This rhymes well with what Huseng heard from that teacher. But I think Huihai's point was rather that only those without knowledge think there is an immeasurably long path ahead, but those who know better understand that "this mind is buddha" and there's nowhere else to go for it. So he defined (X63n1223, p22c5) the essential Chan teaching this way: "Sudden enlightenment is attaining liberation without leaving this life."

It should not be forgot here that these sudden teachings redefine the three buddha bodies from majestic external phenomena to attributes of buddha-mind. And as the buddha-mind becomes the cardinal tenet of these systems, there are quite a big number of sutras discussing the tathagatagarbha they can rely on. And if we add the tantras there's no way to call it simply a fiction of some Chinese monks. But contrary to what Mantrayana people claim, buddhahood in this life is not just a tantric teaching.

So I think first it would be good to settle this sudden path first, if it is what it claims to be, then go on with investigating whether it has anything to do with sravakayana or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 30th, 2010 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Good quote. See, what it says, actually goes perfectly fine with the sudden teachings: "The realization that Mind is eternal is called the final enlightenment." So if one, instead of gradually working on myriad defilements, just "see nature", then the whole thing is immediately solved. And this direct insight is what Zen and others teach. Although they also say it is for people with high capacity. So karma is definitely a factor. The Perfect Enlightenment Sutra is a good example for this as it goes from sudden to gradual, from simple to complicated, from higher to lower methods, starting with "there's nothing to do" and finishing with repentance practice. Then another issue, that makes sudden enlightenment (theoretically) accessible to everyone is the teaching of universal buddha-nature. So if we all have it right here, this mind, then if it is actually pointed out, what could stop one to realise it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

"This assumes one is actually capable of such an insight before having mastered the previous insights."

Indeed. But that is not necessarily the case in my view. It is how we see those stages and their realisation. The essence of Zen meditation is seeing thoughts arise and leave without getting involved. That is one common definition summing up all the Buddhist meditation techniques. There is more to it before and after. Before it is what Shenhui criticised as gradual teaching, the usual contemplation on the skandhas and six sensory area, etc. After it is the direct pointing to mind being the buddha. In real life practice there are no limits of varieties how a practitioner may progress.

The essence will always be to "see beyond thoughts" (觀無念), whether one is meditating on the body, on emotions, on appearances, or on thoughts, it's always realising its emptiness, relinquishing it, and going on without attachment to it. It is called the sudden path because it goes immediately to the root of all the problems: mind. To see that the mind is empty - which cannot be any more difficult than seeing a piece of paper empty, but actually even easier as we have the mind right here and there's no need for any special explanation and understanding to investigate it directly - is to see the emptiness of everything. When that is realised, what else could be left? That's why it is "seeing nature, becoming buddha".

So, I now look at my mind. Sure, it is empty, clear, aware, unborn, undying. What else could it be but buddha? Anyone can see it for himself. But am I now perfectly enlightened, free from all defilements, never to arise any more? No. It is the nature of the mind that is buddha. It's always been like that. The sole difference a single insight makes is that I can attest it is true, I have a solid faith in it. Dongshan says (T47n1986B, p526a1-2) in his famous poem: "It's like before a jewelled mirror, form and reflection see each other; you are not it, but it is you." This is the same what he says in his enlightenment verse (520a22). Yangshan Huiji once helped a monk by first making him think of his home town then asking if those things in his home town exist in his mind, pointing out that "What is thinking is the mind, what is thought of is the environment (from Schloegl's translation of 境)." (T47n1990, p587b5) This teaching resembles Yangshan's enlightenment story (582b8-11):

Yangshan asked, "What is the abode of the real buddha?" Guishan said, "Without thinking think of the mysterious. Return your thinking to the boundlessness of the spiritual flame, until thinking exhausts in the source, where nature and characteristics always dwell and phenomena and principle are not two. The real buddha is like that." Upon these words Yangshan suddenly enlightened.

Guishan once explained (T47n1989, p577c4-7) that there might be people who, though enlightened suddenly, still have karma from the beginningless past, so that has to be purified, but now from the view of realisation. This actually happens to match what Zongmi and his followers taught about sudden enlightenment followed by gradual

cultivation, which was used as a way to bring together Chan and Huayan views. The same approach is found in Mahamudra and Dzogchen too. Nevertheless, there's no negation of buddhahood in this life.

"The problem is mental fitness. This is where having an intellectual understanding and actually having penetrating insight and their difference must be stressed."

Of course, as you may well know, it is stressed heavily in Zen, so far as it's done even excessively by abandoning the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 4:23 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Maybe I've used the wrong word. Only those who misunderstand Zen abandon the teachings. In my understanding "Zen and Kyo" is a false separation.

I don't see how it's a futile attempt to practise non-attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in This Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

It seems I've presented my position here poorly that this kind of interpretation could have occurred. Not being attached is not the same as becoming nothing, or eliminating everything, and I didn't mean so. Attachment (upadana) is defined as fourfold: attachment to sensuality, to false views, to rules and rituals, and to self-view. But getting into this level of defining basic concepts feels a bit of a sidetrack. Also, the term "beyond thoughts", or "no thoughts" (無念) is not about not having thoughts and becoming a piece of stone. Rather it is a central teaching of Zen.

Here's what the Platform Sutra says:

McRae translation, p. 33 / 351b said:

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous

emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.

"If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view.

"Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

But I believe the true champion of the no thought teaching is Wuzhu of the Baotang school:

Adamek translation, p. 364-365 / T51n2075, p0189c8-17 said:

"All beings are fundamentally pure and fundamentally complete. From the Buddhas at the upper end down to sentient beings, all are of the same pure nature. However, with a single thought [produced by] the deluded mind of beings, the Three Worlds are dyed. It is because beings have thought that one provisionally teaches no-thought, but if there is no presence of thought, then no-thought itself is not. No thought is thus no-birth, no-thought is thus no-extinction. No-thought is thus no-love, no-thought is thus no-hate. No-thought is thus no-grasping, no-thought is thus no-abandoning. No-thought is thus no-high, no thought is thus no-low. No-thought is thus no-male, no-thought is thus no-female. No-thought is thus no-true, no-thought is thus no-false. At the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not. 'When the mind is produced then the various dharmas are produced, when the mind is extinguished then the various dharmas are extinguished.' 'As one's mind is, so also are the stains of wrongdoing, so also are all dharmas.' At the time of true no-thought, 'all dharmas are the Buddha-Dharma,' there is not a single dharma separate from bodhi."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 6:37 PM

Title: Re: Question about arguments against Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

When one has to prove his orthodoxy, his authenticity, it is the case that such position is not an evidence. Theravada, or for that matter, other early schools, had no such problem - except for certain doctrines they argued about with each other - as they and their canon was accepted as Buddhism. So all the Mahayana works, like sutras, shastras, and other teachings had to argue for their authenticity and supremacy while calling everyone else inferiors. Then the same happened with Vajrayana and Zen, both had to fight its way to become accepted and eventually the ruling teaching. They were all building up from a disorganised movement, like Christianity in the Roman times.

However, times have changed. Mahayana is very well established with hundreds of millions of followers and a long history throughout Asia. It was only because of fortunate events that Theravada could survive at all in countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand. One monk arguing on YouTube about how Theravada is the only real

Buddhism makes no difference, especially that it is not the opinion of every Theravada monk. So I don't see the need for defending Mahayana (which is actually quite a vague word) against any Theravada attacks. That is because it is now evident that Chinese, Tibetan and other forms of Buddhism are Buddhism. If the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are not Buddhists then what are they?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: Question about arguments against Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

We can look at it from another perspective. Theravada's point of argument is that it is the original teaching. As Huseng has pointed to it briefly, that is not the case as far as modern historical research is concerned. Theravada is one of the end results of the developments going on in India after the death of the Buddha and actually Theravada, as a living tradition, is still subject to change, including their canon. Mahayana, if we don't mind summing it up under this one title, is another natural development of Buddhism in India. Many of the Mahayana teachings are actually from established schools like Vaibhasika, Sautrantika and Dharmagupta. Even the Bodhisattva-pitaka was not a new Mahayana idea. So either looking from the past or from the present, Mahayana is not a bit less Buddhist than Theravada. And as far as the doctrines of these two traditions are concerned, what we can find in the Nikayas are mostly common teachings, including the teaching of the intermediate state, of which Bhikkhu Bodhi says, "Though the Theravada Abhidhamma and the commentaries argue against the existence of an antarabhava, a number of canonical texts seem to support this notion." (footnote 53 of SN 35.87 in Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Wisdom Pub., 2000. p. 1406).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 1st, 2010 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Huayen Globalization Forum to be held in Taipei

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find it sort of unfortunate when a group of Buddhists gather to discuss something outside of their field of expertise, like ecology in this case, or the <http://www.icundv.com/vesak2010/node/42>, or they just talk about <http://www.dharmawomen.org/2010/schedule.aspx>, like "Hawaiian Sacred Dance of Hula", "Zen of Knitting" and "Tai Chi". Why is it that almost exclusively <http://www.international.ucla.edu/buddhist/article.asp?parentid=87398> something relevant to Buddhism? Is it that Buddhists want to impress people how they can touch on newspaper topics, or <http://www.wbc.my/prog.php>, while academics don't mind talking about whatever they prefer to research, even if nobody else comes to listen outside of that area of knowledge?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 1st, 2010 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan madhyamaka

Content:

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is the understanding that emptiness is dependent origination. This was sufficiently established by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, but even their works are only elaboration on this one thing. Beyond them are only skilful means to understand it. Either one prefers one argument or the other doesn't make much difference. The point is to actually understand it. So to me Chandrakirti is as good as Shantarakshita or Taranatha.

Sorry for being so simple.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 1st, 2010 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan madhyamaka

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mariusz,

Would that make any actual difference if you use common Madhyamaka terminology or bring in Dzogchen terms? I mean, it may help in connecting different teachings, or explaining this one, but otherwise you arrive at the same understanding that there is dependence between phenomena and thus there's nothing to be furious about.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 3rd, 2010 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: What group is this?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Xuyun is regarded a major teacher in modern Chinese Buddhism so it is simply natural that a large number of teachers claim to be descendants of him. Master Xuanhua was just one of the many. I don't know if Jy Din Shakya's (or the ZBOHY's) claims are true or not. Actually, how could I affirm or deny anyone's claim without having direct access to Xuyun's notes (if there are any), or using other reliable methods for historical investigation? But this part is not really a problem I think, people and groups like to establish their authority and orthodoxy in whatever ways they see appropriate.

As for the nature of that community, it looks like a group of Western people who practice a form of Buddhism, but in a not so traditional way. Their idea of being a "married monk" or "lay monk" is very much like in Japanese Buddhism, probably there's a relationship between them, at least in concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 4th, 2010 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: What group is this?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Remm,

No need to scan anything, on <http://longbeachmonastery.org/NEWSanghaJewel.htm> everyone can see the whole thing. But then, would you say that Ven. Xuyun's transmission of the Linji lineage that have been received eventually through two masters by Ven. Shengyan is fake? Also, an interesting thing about Ven. Xuanhua's lineage of the Guiyang school is that it is a broken lineage, simply because the Guiyang transmission has died out about a thousand years ago. The transmission paper featured on that site shows it very well too. On the other hand, Ven. Shengyan's Linji lineage (<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/lineage-chart.html>) looks unbroken - even if it is historically very much questionable at a couple of points, just as every Chan lineage. By the way, just because Ven. Xuanhua's transmission line is broken doesn't mean it's fake or anything like that, I don't mean to question any of the involved teachers' integrity. But then, weren't you trying to find out the nature of the ZBOHY group? Sorry if I've caused any distraction with my chit-chat about lineages and stuff. Although the whole concept of transmission might be relevant in evaluating groups and claims of orthodoxy.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 5th, 2010 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: Yidam and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Perhaps a change of focus from what the tradition says to why it says that could help. Here's what I mean. Dzogchen essentially is simply awareness itself. Everybody who wants to use the Dzogchen teachings have to know that and be familiar with awareness. But with only that how many can actually complete the path to buddhahood? Not so many. Since the teachers of Dzogchen want to help people there are different methods used to let people walk the path of Dzogchen and not just know about it. That's where all the practices come in. And even that is nothing complicated, nothing difficult to make it easy for everyone.

Let me give an example. When a teacher has to teach a class the alphabet he may simply recite it from A to Z and tell them to start reading and writing. Or he may also write the alphabet on the board and show the children the letters one by one. Is that enough for kids to know how to read and write? Unlikely. So they practice reading and writing, starting with the letters themselves. And then they will learn in years to follow the correct spelling, punctuation, composition, styles of literature, etc. What every English poet needs are only the 26 letters. But just knowing the alphabet is not enough.

So, while every Dzogchenpa knows rigpa, it has never been enough to make them even a simple Buddhist yogi, not to mention a guru - which is still not the attainment of buddhahood. Yes, no doubt awareness is the single essence of the whole Buddhist teaching. But just think about yourself. Have you attained buddhahood already to be content with your understanding and realisation?

No one can be forced to practise anything. It is a personal choice. And if somebody feels that focusing only on awareness and not tiring oneself with other techniques, how could that person be pursued to try something else?

On the other hand, arguing about what actually a teaching is about is a theoretical question. Arguments like that has its rules, like basing one's statements on valid sources, which are direct experience, logic and authentic sources. Interestingly enough, there are actually whole books about Dzogchen ngöndro like "Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries" by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche. So I suppose these teachings are meant to be used if those outstanding teachers of this tradition of Great Perfection cared to commit it to writing. Even if they're all just the letters of the alphabet put after each other.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 6th, 2010 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: Everything we experience

Content:

Astus wrote:

Experience, Zen, birds, there you go:

One day Baizhang accompanied Mazu on a walk. A flock of wild ducks flew by them.

Mazu said, "What's that?"

Baizhang said, "Wild ducks."

Mazu said, "Where'd they go?"

Baizhang said, "They flew away."

Mazu then twisted Baizhang's nose so hard that he cried out.

Mazu said, "So you say they've flown away!"

Upon hearing these words Baizhang attained enlightenment.

(from: Zen's Chinese Heritage by A.E. Ferguson, p. 77)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 7th, 2010 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: awakening myth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

How could it be a myth? It is an essential part of Buddhism, the Third Noble Truth.

Without enlightenment Buddhism is meaningless. Having faith in the attainability of liberation is part of taking refuge in the Triple Jewel. So, I don't know where you got those ideas, but they're mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Natural disasters and collective morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, so let's work within Yogacara premises. It accepts the existence of rupadharma, so there is a causal reality of them. We can agree that whatever we could name as existent must be a mental existence. So if there's a volcano that erupted 2000 years ago and today we learn about it what we see are the effects. Then through reasoning we are able to state that there must have been an eruption. But we could bring here any geological research going back to tens of thousands of years.

If we say all those phenomena were a result of collective karma, well, whose collective karma? Dinosaurs'? Also, should we count all sentient beings or only humans?

So there are big problems here if one insists that it is only karma that causes everything.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Natural disasters and collective morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sure, that is a valid point and a view found everywhere, starting with the Buddha saying in the Nikayas that the whole world is the six sensory fields. But then, it doesn't mean everything can be reduced to karma since not even our own deeds are karmic all the time. And to say all our experiences are directly the results of our karma is another major simplification. It is another problem to connect different karmas and minds and say that they produce a common experience to all involved.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Rev. Jason Carter

Content:

Astus wrote:

The whole thing looks too bad to be true.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Rev. Jason Carter

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, as for the Buddhist side, no harm is a principle and there are teachings against

even possessing weapons, not to mention teaching people how to use them. All this energy put in punching and kicking could be used to perhaps print some Dharma materials, or translating sutras (if he knows any relevant languages), or perhaps just organising a zendo instead of a dojo.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Natural disasters and collective morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's no disagreement here then at all. Still, the original question was if natural disasters are the results of people's bad deeds or not. How do you relate to that?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 10th, 2010 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism view on talking with dead people

Content:

Astus wrote:

People can be reborn as spirits, it's called the realm of hungry ghosts. Not a good birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 11th, 2010 at 1:29 AM

Title: Re: Natural disasters and collective morality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Karma is not a universal creating force but a modifier of one's perception. And here we can apply the reasoning used to establish a mental continuum separate from matter, only in a reverse fashion. If material dharmas cannot cause mental dharmas, how can mental dharmas cause material dharmas? However, it is not entirely true that material dharmas don't cause mental dharmas, since a single perception of an object can trigger lot of different mental dharmas. Still, this whole field of Buddhism seems entirely unresearched. As far as I know, there is no clear description of the dharmic process of a consciousness defining the body and environment of a new birth. And if it were really the karma forming the environment, isn't it strange that nobody ever experienced that throughout the process of delivering a baby not much changes in the surroundings? Should we then say that it is about the outer conditions matching the inner causes, without there being a karma modifying the place? Also, it doesn't seem likely that a consciousness could foresee the events that will happen in one's life, therefore if it happens that a tornado blows away one's house later it's hardly one's karma causing it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 11th, 2010 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Panpsychism and the Dharmakaya.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not difficult to show how matter is aware. Whatever matter there is there is an awareness perceiving it - in terms of common language. In other words all there are are nothing but perceptions without anything being beyond (independent matter) or before (independent mind) perceptions. This is actually saying that matter is aware since there's nothing that could be without awareness. But panpsychism is not like this as it conceives the world in dualistic ways which is contrary to the Buddhist understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 13th, 2010 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Panpsychism and the Dharmakaya.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is quite difficult to demonstrate that matter is aware.

Only if we conceive a matter, as in science, as something independent. If matter is simply the rupaskandha, as in the Buddhist view, there's an easy way to establish aware matter. See Robert Sharf's essay: http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert_Sharf-e.htm

"It assumes that matter and mind are of the same quality."

True, monism fits it better as a designation and we can put it next to advaita and other such views.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 13th, 2010 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find it a mistaken route to argue for Buddhism's agreement with physicalism, as it is obviously not. Natural science itself is a set of axioms and rules to observe and analyse matter. Analysing Buddhism can be done on many levels, starting with archaeology and philology, up to sociology and philosophy of religion. Mostly these are not natural sciences, simply because Buddhism is a human mental construct and not a natural phenomenon.

It is a biased view to claim that the West and Western people are totally materialists. It is a view similar to Christians saying that that is the traditional religion and the fundamental source of spirituality. True, materialism and science has been the government sponsored orthodoxy in the West for more than a hundred years now, simply because it could provide the usual magical requirements of healing and

weaponry. But as we can see in many "religious" countries, the use of products of scientific achievements does not necessitate a materialist view. And looking at Europe, Christianity still has a strong base while the so called New Age movement - without a better name to cover all the diverse views - is growing in its number of followers.

Physicalism demonises non-materialist views just like Christianity does so with other religions. There's no point in trying to prove that Buddhism is OK with any matter based view. Rather, teachers should state clearly that physicalism is a very low level view as it is restricted to the four elements and can't see beyond that, even Christianity beats that, while both of them are outer paths (外道), tirthikas, just like Carvaka and Vedanta.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 13th, 2010 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The really interesting issue is the nature of consciousness. If consciousness is non-material, or has a non-material aspect, then rebirth is not at all implausible -- it's actually the more likely possibility. So the root argument is over whether, in fact, "mind" is distinct from "brain"."

The idealist-materialist argument doesn't fit here. The Buddha did address the question of the difference or sameness of the body and soul, see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.035.than.html>. That's how Buddhism is a Middle Way position.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 13th, 2010 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is important to clarify the actual Buddhist view and don't just let it be watered down to an easier interpretation. It is not specifically difficult to understand the middle way view, it's just unfamiliar.

The mind-matter dichotomy doesn't exist in Buddhism simply because it is not a view based on independent elements but rather on conditioned phenomena. And it is possible to say that in Buddhism there is a consciousness separate from matter but that is a highly superficial statement only good for letting people comprehend some basics about rebirth. But if it is about debating on a deeper level such a position has to be dropped and the correct, explicit teaching has to be taken up.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 14th, 2010 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is a religion. I understand that religion sounds anti-scientific for many but actually that is not necessarily so. All the older European universities were established by the Church herself and even today there are Christian schools with a high standard of education. Of course, I'm talking about the European situation where the American style evangelical Christianity is a minority and doesn't have much impact beyond the level of the plebs. Just an example, the current governing party in Germany is the "Christian Democratic Union", they have a female president, and it is still a normal Western-European liberal democratic country, where prostitution and gambling is legal, personal drug use is not a criminal act, and symbols and compulsory practices of religion (cross, prayer, etc.) are banned from state schools. This is just to show that religion and Christianity is not necessarily anti-scientific and anti-modern. At the same time, it seems to me that a large portion of traditional western Christians (mainly Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists) are quite secular and materialist in thinking, as Huseng said, they take "religious beliefs" separately from "scientific facts".

I personally have never really been fond of the idea that science is the source of true knowledge. Yes, science is good for certain things, just like the skills needed for shoemaking and housebuilding. But that's all, it is a craftsmanship, a technique, but neither philosophy, nor spirituality. But what happened is that there were people, philosophers (like the positivists), who tried to prove that true, factual and real knowledge comes only through science, anything beyond that is superstition. And this is where the fight between science and religion starts. A simple engineer who knows how to build bridges has little to argue with theological concepts, they're two different areas. But if you say that true knowledge comes only from the knowledge of building bridges, therefore theology is nonsense, the problem is born.

The very idea that there's anything to be proved scientifically in a religion is nonsense. It's like using chemistry to analyse a poem. And just as literature is not for or against science, why should the situation with Buddhism be different?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 15th, 2010 at 11:15 PM

Title: Origin and Development of Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm looking for sources on the history of Vajrayana, including its origins and development in India and Tibet. I'm not familiar with the area, so anything may come. I already know of Sam van Schaik's EarlyTibet blog and I have Ronald M. Davidson's book "Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement", but basically that's all. I'd especially appreciate good summaries and enlightening essays, but as I've said, any good text is OK.

Note: it is not the religious history I'm interested in but the latest academic research.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Is Tibetan Buddhism more logical?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a really good argument in this era to say that one's tradition is more logical than the others. But if we actually look at them I don't think we could definitely claim logic more to one than the other. Actually, the whole tantric system is not too logical, except if there's such thing as "sympathetic logic" as used in magical thinking. One positive argument on the side of the Tibetan tradition is that they've kept alive the epistemology of Dignaga and Dharmakirti unlike in East-Asia. On the other hand, there's Tiantai and Huayan developed in China while the Tibetans worked on madhyamaka a bit further and that's all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is not exactly correct to confuse scientific development with economic situation. Europe became rich because of looting and colonising a large percent of Earth, not because they invented the steam engine. And so there are poor countries, even a poor continent, Africa (which otherwise is very rich in natural resources), and rich countries. It is convenient to think that technological development can solve things like hunger, but partially it was technological development that helped the Western countries rob and enslave everyone else (to a certain level). But I think this has little to do with Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Origin and Development of Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

It indeed has a good summary, thanks for the tip, but only a really short one.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Is Tibetan Buddhism more logical?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mudra,

The gradual path is present in every Buddhist tradition, not a Tibetan speciality at all. BTW, I wouldn't say that karma is a faith thing, except for those who lack understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

"people should be taught philosophy as well as science"

Very unlikely to happen. Real study of philosophy requires intelligent, thinking people, without being restricted to thinking in a small box - this is not something many could study or teach. Also, education seems to be more and more under the attack from the god of money, and all subjected to the concept of productivity. A philosophy class is clearly useless for that.

"liberation from suffering ... science cannot achieve"

It needs the Buddhist definition of suffering to say that. There are other ways to look at what men need, like fast food, healthcare and plasma TV.

"Buddha did not teach a "belief system" but a path of practice."

This utilitarian approach is the common excuse of those who're looking only for stress relief but nothing more. It is not Buddhism, as they take no refuge.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

I meant was that the basis for the path is right view. Wrong view makes the path impossible and it is also a fundamental source of bad karma. What is right and what is wrong is hardly negotiable, at least in Buddhism. To sacrifice that for relativism and pragmatism is an unfortunate way to think, simply because it presupposes that the Buddha is wrong and the teaching is faulty. Who would want to learn Russian from a teacher one thinks has bad grammar?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

It is so. And the first things the Buddha taught were: giving, virtue and heaven. So the be good, do good parts. Then came the drawbacks of sensual passions and samsara and the rewards of renunciation. Finally the four noble truths.

If we want to use that example for the Western spreading of Buddhism it should be first establishing that good karma leads to good birth, and that people should give abundantly and live a virtuous and moral life. So this is the basics of ethics. Only after that we can talk about how samsara is full of suffering, even heavens are painful and they should give up their greedy and sensuous lifestyle. Finally we can get into details about the four noble truths, like dependent origination, nirvana, meditation, selflessness, etc.

What currently happens is that some become interested in meditation and fancy foreign mystical masters, then do some sitting and don't really care about other things. A couple of them becomes more interested and eventually learn something about Buddhism.

To me it seems that the so far successfully used teachings are simple meditation techniques and methods that promise fast attainments. Moral lessons are not what people come to Buddhism for. But I may be wrong.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 16th, 2010 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

catmoon said:

Hooooold da bus. Your target audience is composed of people who believe ... that Buddha taught them as such

Astus wrote:

This is what I've made my reply on: "Pragmatism is often mentioned as a distinctive characteristic of the Buddha's teaching."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 17th, 2010 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Human Need.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the reply could be the five desires: drink-food, sleep, sex, fame, wealth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 21st, 2010 at 3:11 PM

Title: Re: Adaptation: 'Buddhism' in the West

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a nice summary on this subject from Ven. Jian Hu:

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=132&Itemid=59

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 24th, 2010 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Are there esoteric schools of Mahayana in Chinese tradition?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I like to focus on the internal a lot."

I don't see exactly how Buddhist tantra is related to that, as it has a lot of rituals and visual practices, not that it doesn't have its depths. In China certain tantric elements have remained, like dharanis and ceremonies, but it is not a separate school. In fact, it's hard to talk about separate schools in Chinese Buddhism, unlike in Japan. Currently there are some tantric groups, of which there are three versions: 1, imported from Shingon 2, imported from Tibet/Mongolia 3, Chinese concoction, mainly from the other two. If you're looking for magic in China you better look around Taoist traditions, actually they've incorporated a lot from Buddhist tantra.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 24th, 2010 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Are there esoteric schools of Mahayana in Chinese tradition?

Content:

plwk said:

http://www.tangmi.com/asd/English_TDES.htm

Astus wrote:

That is a good example of Shingon imported back to China.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 25th, 2010 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Tripitaka Container, or Sutra Container

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interesting, although I don't quite understand how one can "experience" something that happened more than two thousand years ago. I'd be interested in some evidence too.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 26th, 2010 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Khyentse Rinpoche quote and Soto view

Content:

Astus wrote:

The concept of "practice is enlightenment" is not specifically Soto. The idea that the original nature is enlightened and all deeds are the manifestation of that is generally Zen. The important point is the view of "buddha-nature" which is shared by both Dzogchen and Zen. But if we compare Dilgo Khyentse's description with a modern Zen intro to practice we can find how many of those guides include regular formal practice and other things. But it can be very similar too - a lot depends on who you ask.

Let's look at what http://wwzc.org/?operation=about_zen, "Zen is entering into things as they are, beyond concept and cosmology, beyond separation and duality, beyond personality, and into the intimacy and richness of this whole moment. It is a radical questioning into whatever arises as our experiences and true entry into the nature of experiencing. Zen is the day to day and moment to moment practice of this moment."

But if you actually ask how to do that we find something

<http://www.wwzc.org/teisho/beginners.htm>: "As well as sitting, we have walking practices called kinhin; we have movement practices called kata; for eating we have something called oryoki practice. There are also sleeping practices, dreaming practices, because in Zen we want to work with each aspect of our experience, completely. So then, none of these things are themselves Zen. Sitting is not Zen, kinhin is not Zen, oryoki is not Zen. The entire continuum of the training is Zen. ... You are not going to learn Zen in a week or a year or fifteen years."

Zen - in its rhetoric - is rarely so carefree as they like to present Dzogchen. On the other hand, Dzogchen doesn't stand alone but rather as a part of the nine vehicle training of the Nyingma school. Comparison then is very difficult. Especially because when it comes to the practical matters Zen doesn't say you're enlightened just like that, so simply be open and rest. Although "just sitting" sounds like that, but then, why only sit, or why sit at all?

Another important difference is how actual explanation and pointing out of the nature of mind is so hard to find in the Zen teachings while in Dzogchen it's right there. In Zen they like to say you have to do this and that and then you may find the nature of mind. In Dzogchen they try to show it right at the very beginning and then keep working with that. The way Dogen teaches is quite far from how Longchenpa elucidates the meaning. To read Dogen one needs to be able to decode the whole thing, and even then it's hard to gain much from it. Longchenpa is a lot more "user friendly".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 29th, 2010 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Are there esoteric schools of Mahayana in Chinese tradition?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Robert Sharf, summing up his ideas outlined in "Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism" (p. 263-278), says in his essay "On Pure Land Buddhism and Ch'an/Pure Land Syncretism in Medieval China":

"The historiography of Chinese Pure Land turns out to run parallel in many respects to the historiography of Chinese Tantra or Esoterism (mi-chiao 密教). As I have argued elsewhere, there is little evidence that the Chinese conceived of an independent Tantric "school" during the T'ang when Esoterism was supposedly at its height. Moreover, there is simply no evidence that the so-called patriarchs of Chinese Tantric Buddhism—Subhakarasiṃha (Shan-wu-wei 善無畏, 637- 735), Vajrabodhi (Chin-kang-chih 金剛智, 671-741), Amoghavajra (Pu-k'ung 不空, 705-774), and so on—conceived of themselves as such. The category "Esoteric Buddhism" arose in the tenth and eleventh centuries, long after these masters had passed from the scene, and even then the Sung understanding of the term bears little resemblance to how the term is used by religious historians today. As in the case of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, our contemporary understanding of Chinese Tantric Buddhism is inordinately influenced by developments in Japan. In both instances, scholars have come to view the Chinese materials through the long lens of Japanese Buddhist sectarian history."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 29th, 2010 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: The difference between Humanistic and Orthodox Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Are you changing an attack against an imaginary Humanistic Buddhism into a criticism of a watered down Chinese/Pure Land Buddhism?

The majority of the laity is naturally not interested in abstract ideas like the four noble truths. There are exceptions of course and they're called the literati, the intelligentsia, but they're still the minority. There has never been and never will be a large group of householders being serious about enlightenment and liberation from samsara. Even in Pure Land teaching it is a basic part that one really wants to be free from the world of suffering and attain buddhahood, for which there's bodhicitta developed.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 29th, 2010 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: The difference between Humanistic and Orthodox Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

No, I don't give much credit to the majority even if they can read and write. They weren't

less clever in older times just because there was no education. Still, people who go to university and study economics or science are not interested in going deeper into any religious teaching any more than those who could never finish secondary school. And it's not the potential but the willingness I doubt.

People are serious about liberation but not in this life? Well, it is this life, this world one tries to escape and never repeat again. If I say it's OK to go on with this once more then start working on getting out it's almost the same as never stopping.

In the gradual teachings the Buddha taught about virtues and heaven first. Pure Land is the Buddhist paradise where you can get enlightened. So it comes as a good teaching for everyone.

But as you can see for yourself in the West, where such "high teachings" as Zen, Vipassana and Dzogchen are widespread, people don't necessarily take them seriously. And even those interested in it are mostly middle class, well to do, well educated people.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 30th, 2010 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Gays and East Asian Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"male-female polarity is screwed up by homosexual acts"

What does this mean? I know there are two specific dharmas within rupa-dharmas in the Theravada abhidharma for masculinity and femininity but such is not found in Vasubandhu's Hundred Dharmas Treatise. I don't see what kind of polarity can there be established in Buddhism for males and females, so it'd be good if you could point it out.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 30th, 2010 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Gays and East Asian Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Does not one wonder why all the Tibetan tankas & statues show only male & female in sexual union?"

Is this a gay thing then, all three man, two with long hairs?

But I'm unsure how much it is appropriate to bring in tantric concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 2nd, 2010 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: Authorized Buddhist Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Only monks are allowed to teach the official positions of Buddhism."

I wonder what would Vimalakirti say about that. Or Sakya Trizin.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 2nd, 2010 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Authorized Buddhist Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Only monks are allowed to teach the official positions of Buddhism."

I wonder what would Vimalakirti say about that. Or Sakya Trizin.

Huseng said:

What would Astus say about it who teaches Buddhist courses IRL?

Astus wrote:

I think it was Ajahn Brahm who https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owq_ougaikU that fortunately Buddhism is not owned by anyone. There is no such thing as "orthodox Buddhism" as there is no single person or a group to tell what is official and what is heretic. That's why there are different schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 3rd, 2010 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: Authorized Buddhist Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ron,

You argue that instead of higher ordination (that of a bhiksu/ni) it is lineage that qualifies somebody to be an authority on anything Buddhist. But what lineage would that be? Certainly no sutra claims the existence of any lineage. Since the Buddha's time the only lineage has been is the lineage of higher ordination, which is a matter of precepts and not doctrine. Beyond that in China they created the idea of the Zen lineage and later in India there was the Tantric lineage. But certainly Zen and Mantrayana are just two later schools within Buddhism. What about everyone else from Theravada to Huayan?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 3rd, 2010 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Authorized Buddhist Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

"We should note that in modern times, the eight Chinese Mahayana Buddhist schools have been reclassified into three schools, and that the boundaries among these schools should no longer be maintained. Even the boundary between Mahayana and Nikaya Buddhism should be eradicated to restore Buddhism to a whole. If someone still wants to fight against the times and call himself the nth patriarch of this school or that sect, he is advised to forget it. As a matter of fact, the eminent monks throughout history were not necessarily patriarchs of any school. Conversely, the official "Dharma heirs" of a school, who held a certificate of succession, were not always enlightened, eminent monks."

(Ven. Shengyan: Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p. 138)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 3rd, 2010 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nirvana being the original nature doesn't mean that in the beginning everything was nirvana which then turned into samsara. It means that without attachment there is nirvana and nirvana is not something created by practice, rather practice is removing hindrances. It's like saying that the original nature of the floor is clean, so if you clear up you get it in its original nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 4th, 2010 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

Astus wrote:

Depends on what you're looking for. Is it buddha-nature you're interested in? If so, there are translations with commentaries of the Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra, aka Ratnagotravibhaga which is a long treatise in verse form on buddha-nature. You can find sutras on it, like the Nirvana Sutra and the Srimaladevi Sutra. There are teachings on it from specific traditions like Mahamudra and Zen. The topic is really vast. If it is totally new to you I recommend Paul Williams' book "Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations" and it has a whole chapter on Tathagatagarbha, among other things. Perhaps you better go through the whole book.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 4th, 2010 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

Astus wrote:
SonamZangpo,

The buddha-nature teaching is one of the many teachings in Mahayana but not a teaching universally accepted by all Mahayana traditions. Also, we all start as deluded beings on the path. If that were not the case there would be no need for a path.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2010 at 5:04 AM
Title: Re: Sexual energy
Content:

Astus wrote:
Sensual lust is not in the body but the mind. It is your mind you should train if you want to gain some control over your passion. Starting meditation practice itself is good for calming the mind which in itself is efficient in decreasing disturbing impulses. Also, through meditation you can eventually gain insight into the nature of sensual craving. So the best thing you can do is to look around in your area and join a Buddhist group where you can learn the basics of meditation practice.

Specifically for sensual lust the antidote used is meditation on impurity (asubha bhavana). Note that it is better if you already know the basics of how to calm your mind, which is the fundamental for any meditation practice in Buddhism. Here you can find a comprehensive introduction to meditation on impurity:
<https://sites.google.com/site/dhammagroupweb/pubs/asubhaparts>. Here you can find it with pictures: <http://www.wakeupsmart.com/Asubha.html>.

And for some food for thought, here's the relevant chapter from Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas:

Regardless of the amount of time,
Concerning objects there is no limit.
Your exertion for the body's sake
Is, like a bad physician's, useless.

Just as the craving for earth
Does not stop in those that subsist on it,
Similarly, longing for sensual pleasure
Grows in people as they indulge.

Among all women there is not the least
Difference in sexual intercourse.
When others, too, enjoy her appearance,
What use is this perfect woman to you?

Whoever sees her as appealing
Thinks himself satisfied with her.

Since even dogs and the like share this,
Why, fool, are you attracted?

This woman, every part of whom is
Lovely to you, was common to all before.
Finding her is not as
Astonishing as it is for you.

If those with good qualities seem attractive
And their opposite the reverse,
Which is true, former or latter?
For neither alone persists.

A fool's desire does not arise
Only for those with good qualities.
How can reason prevent
Those involved in it without reason?

As long as she knows no other
She will remain with you.
As with disease, woman should always be
Kept from opportunity.

In old age one dislikes
What one did during youth.
Why would the liberated not
Be extremely saddened by it?

Those without desire have no pleasure,
Nor do those not foolish have it.
How can there be pleasure for one
Whose mind constantly strays?

You cannot have intercourse constantly
With a woman to match your attentiveness to her.
Why keep her possessively with the thought,
"She is mine and no one else's."

If desire were pleasurable
There would be no need for women.
Pleasure is not regarded as
Something to get rid of.

Even in intercourse with a woman
Pleasure arises from other [factors].
What sensible person would say
It is caused just by his lover?

Blinded by desire they do not see
Sensuality's fault, like a leper scratching.
Those free from desire see the infatuated
As suffering like the leper.

During a famine the destitute,
Tormented by hunger, [bear] what occurs.
This is how all the infatuated
Behave when they are with women.

Through arrogance one may be
Attached even to one's privy.
Anyone infatuated with
A woman will be jealous of others.

It is reasonable for confusion
And anger about the unclean to occur;
It is not at all reasonable
For desire to occur.

If, except to some people,
A pot of filth is objectionable,
Why would one not think objectionable
That from which the filth comes?

Clean things are looked upon
As the most worthless of all.
What intelligent person
Would say that it is clean?

Whoever has lived in a privy
And without it would not have survived,
In such a dung-worm, arrogance
Arises only through stupidity.

No means whatsoever will purify
The inside of the body.
The efforts you make toward the outside
Do not match those toward the inside.

If, like leprosy, being full of
Urine were not common to all,
Those full of urine, just like lepers,
Would be shunned by everyone.

Just as someone lacking a part

Is delighted with a substitute nose,
Desire holds that impurity is
Remedied by flowers and so forth.

It is inappropriate to call clean that
Toward which freedom from desire arises.
Nor is there anything which is
A definitive cause of desire.

In summary, all four, that is
Impermanence, uncleanness, suffering
And selflessness are possible
With regard to a single [thing].

Understanding that sentient beings are also bound
Like oneself in this unclean prison,
With energy generate compassion observing transmigrators,
And make effort to accomplish highest enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2010 at 7:29 AM

Title: Re: My Spiritual history and a plea to young Buddhists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wow, it was a good read! I hope the best for you and with this enthusiasm and literary skills you should make a fine monk.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2010 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nosta,

The teaching of original nature (benxing 本性) is not the same as the teaching of nirvana. First, nirvana is one of the core teachings of Buddhism while original nature is itself a Chinese term we can connect to the teaching of tathagatagarbha, and tathagatagarbha is something we find only in specific Mahayana sutras. Understandably, non-Mahayana schools never even had the concept of original nature and even in Mahayana it was something only a few traditions took up. And here is the second reason, that original nature doesn't necessarily fit into the teachings of a tradition. For instance, both Madhyamaka and Yogacara - the two main systems of Mahayana - has teachings contradicting the idea of an original nature. Or, even when in some cases teachers of those schools accepted tathagatagarbha, they came up with their own interpretation of it. It was in Chinese Buddhism that because of these reasons they actually said that

besides Madhyamaka and Yogacara there is a third major Mahayana thought, Tathagatagarbhavada, i.e. those who take original nature as a fundamental teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2010 at 4:15 PM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

SonamZangpo said:

What I meant is that the Buddha consciousness is universal, primordial. Our consciousness is made of the stuffs of that, but then deluded by karmic perception. In this way I mean we are already Enlightened, but made ignorant by our perceptions and must realize it.

Astus wrote:

Let's say I have a load of money in the bank. But first I have to work for years in order to earn the money and be able to use it. Isn't that the same as if I had no money but got a regular salary from someone else? That's how the idea that there is a buddha-nature hidden somewhere is redundant and good only for giving hope to those full of fears. This is called expedient means in Buddhism. You can find a similar explanation in the Lankavatara Sutra, how buddha-nature teaching is for those who fear losing their selves. I'm not saying that there is no other use of the buddha-nature teaching, but on the level that "it is there, you just have to polish it" is nothing but a good sounding promise without any practical relevance.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2010 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Contradiction on Original Nature - Question

Content:

Nosta said:

Astus, it seems that you don't see such teaching (O.Nature) as very useful.

Also, I would say that's a shame that some teachings may not be real Buddha teachings (like that one from O.Nature and maybe Amithabha existence) because they just appeared after Buddha death.

Astus wrote:

The teaching of original nature has many uses and an important part of Mahayana. But it is important to understand it according to its different meanings in different traditions. Saying generally that there is some essential enlightenment in all of us can be very misleading. Personally, as someone who takes Chan as his primary school, I regard buddha-nature as the crucial doctrine of Buddhism. Nevertheless, one should be first clear about the elementary teachings before making hasty interpretations of what original nature means. By the way, history and religious doctrine are two separate areas of study. If you want to take Mahayana as your path you will see how Amita Buddha is absolutely real.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 7th, 2010 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Not to mention the fact that religion has probably been the number one cause of war since the Dinosaurs went bye-bye."

What an enlightened article. I'd rather ponder whether religion has been ever the cause of any war. But OK, this is just another stereotypical concept about religion and why people don't even want to know about it. Also, ignorance about religion simply means that it is irrelevant in people's lives. How would it ever matter for a bloke in Minnesota what unknown people in a never heard of country believe in? It is false premise that reflective and critical thinking is every human being's domain. Who would expect that at least the majority of citizens can paint, sing and dance on a fairly enjoyable level? Higher intelligence is just like artistic skills: not everybody has it, and they don't need it either.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 10th, 2010 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Are you saying that the Crusades were not a result of any religious motivations?"

It is easy to simplify historic events to single causes. It is also easy to understand how such a thinking is naive and mistaken. Religion - if defined as a set of doctrines accepted by a group of people - is hardly ever the direct cause of violence except if it is explicitly about killing, like in the case of human sacrifices. War is a big enterprise for any country and it takes lot of planning and organising to measure what a nation can profit from such a costly event. Religion in many cases can be a good ideology to justify violent acts. But to say that religion is the cause is confusing things. We'd be a bit closer to the truth to say that it is politics causing violence, since it is politics that actually govern a country and its army. However, politics is a product of many people with different agendas, so blaming "politics" is still quite a deluded opinion.

As for the Crusades, on <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusades> you can read a summary. It says, the initiating cause was the Byzantine Empire's request to the Pope to send soldiers against threatening Turks. And as the circumstances were appropriate the Pope agreed, just like many rulers of European countries.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 10th, 2010 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I argue against is the concept that religion is behind most of the wars ever happened as the article claimed. But I'm OK with reducing that to a position that religion doesn't cause war except when it is a religion about causing war. I don't see Christianity generally (Roman Catholicism included) as a warring religion. By this I don't deny that just as Christianity has played an important role in European history it was used on several occasions to justify wars. But justifying a war and inducing a war is not the same. And even if I was proved wrong in the case of Christianity - which would require proving that Christianity is essentially a doctrine making people kill each other in wars - there are still hundreds of other religions both extinct and living.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 10th, 2010 at 6:33 AM

Title: Re: The benefits of studying Theravada for Mahayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Tibetan tradition uses primarily the study of abhidharma texts as providing the basis in fundamental teachings, which for them they are the Sarvastivada and Sautrantika teachings. Also, the Nikayas found in the Pali Canon have no exact correspondents in the Tibetan Canon - unlike in the Chinese Canon -, although some parts of it can be found here and there in Tibetan.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 10th, 2010 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

Luke,

The use of Romanus Pontifex to justify slavery is a good example of people using religion to justify their acts. If you read this essay by Fr. Joel S. Panzer, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/POPSLAVE.htm>, you find that even before the said decree slavery has been condemned, just as not long after the colonisation of America, in 1537 Pope Paul III issued an encyclical against the injustice done to the natives in America. It should also be noted that the United States has never been under the rule of the Pope.

Seeing others as non/sub-humans is not a specifically religious but a general human attitude. In fact it is a basic Christian idea that all humans are capable of being saved, thus it was naturally the position of the Roman Catholic Church that the people of foreign lands are humans and can be converted. Nevertheless, this is not even the case of a religion causing war.

From a Buddhist perspective, violence is from greed, hatred and ignorance. Greed for others' possessions, hatred against those we don't know and ignorance about the law of karma. Christianity, as a religion, teaches contentment, love and divine punishment. Same can be said about Islam. So to me it seems to be a more complex issue here than just saying religion causes war.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 10th, 2010 at 9:32 PM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

Luke,

I'm simply against demonising the concept of religion. Naturally every religion that has grown influential enough for a larger group of people, which is true especially in the case of the three largest religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam), wars and other forms of bad things have been part of its history. But it's a different thing to say that religion is the reason for a war or that a religion has been involved in some ways in military conflicts. To blame the conquer of North American natives on Christianity is quite absurd. Isn't it that certain European kingdoms wanted to rule the whole place? Priests were neither military leaders nor government officials to eliminate the local population.

And let me repeat, I'm putting forth here an argument against the preconception that religion is something that creates wars. This is a view, a philosophical idea, and not a historical event. Religion includes all the religions, even the religions of Native Americans. It is not the same as saying there are religious militant groups and terrorists who use a religion as their ideology. Should we conclude that Buddhism causes wars because there were Buddhists warring? Is Buddhism as a religion faulty at slavery because there were Buddhists keeping slaves?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 11th, 2010 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: Lack of knowledge about world religions in the US

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I guess what I should have said earlier is that the misuse of religion has been one of the most negative forces in history."

That's what I was talking about. Also, it should be reduced mainly to the people involved with Christianity and Islam. And that is not because those religions are specifically more evil than the others. It's just that they have been integrated into the government of nations to the level that no other religion has been so they could become state ideology. Buddhism could reach that level of penetration of a society only in a few countries and not always for a long time. So actually it is a sign of success for those religions that they could become the leading force. And while there are certain bad results from such a

high level of acceptance of a doctrine, there are also good things that could be attributed to their influence.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 12th, 2010 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

University with educated monks first of all requires monasteries with monks. But since there are only a handful of operational monasteries in the West it is unlikely that any time in the near future such a university will be established. The original idea of the bhikshu lifestyle is that they should be self-sufficient mendicants. Monasteries receive their funding from the local laity. So the starting point is to have lay Buddhists. Obviously, if there are no Buddhists there can't be monasteries nor monastic universities. The question is then how to spread Buddhism in the West. And I mean active spreading, not just waiting for people to decide that they're Buddhist just because they find HHDL, or TNH charming. And by Buddhist I mean religious people and not those who are simply fond of meditation as a hobby. Then there's a good chance for a real growth in the number of monasteries since people will realise the importance of accumulating merit, etc.

If there are some who want to be educated beyond a basic level there are a couple of options. First one is to go east, become a monk and study. Second is to go to a university, study religion/eastern languages and focus on Buddhist materials. Third is to just start studying.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 13th, 2010 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Interviews with Bhikkhu Nanananda

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nice. It's always been the view of Candrakirti and Tsongkhapa that sravakas realise the same emptiness as bodhisattvas. If they'd add some bodhicitta to it we could actually call it Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 13th, 2010 at 11:18 PM

Title: The Origin of "Not Finding"

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Zhiyi's Little Samatha-Vipasyana we find "即當反觀行心，不見相貌。當知行者及行中一切法，畢竟空寂，是名修觀。" which in Ven. Dharmamitra's translation is "One should then immediately turn back the attention and contemplate the mind which is engaged in walking. One then fails to perceive any characteristic appearance

associated with it. One should then realize that the one who walks as well as all dharmas involved in walking are both ultimately empty and still. It is this which constitutes the cultivation of [insight] contemplation."

In Tibetan meditation instructions it is a regular theme that one should look for the self/mind and find nothing, and this finding nothing is emptiness. What I'd like to know is the precedents of this kind of instruction. I haven't yet looked up in Nagarjuna's upadesa, perhaps there's something. But any other early quote is appreciated too.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 14th, 2010 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: The Origin of "Not Finding"

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm looking specifically for meditation instructions applying the mentioned method and pointing out that not finding anything as the essence of mind, or mind itself is the whole point.

Something similar can be found in this classic Zen story, but even this is not exactly it:

Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. The Second Patriarch stood in the snow. He cut off his arm and presented it to Bodhidharma, crying, "My mind has no peace as yet! I beg you, master, please pacify my mind!" "Bring your mind here and I will pacify it for you," replied Bodhidharma. "I have searched for my mind, and I cannot take hold of it," said the Second Patriarch. "Now your mind is pacified," said Bodhidharma. (Gateless Gate, case 41, tr. by Katsuki Sekida)

Also a passage that comes close to it from the MPPU (chapter on the Mahayana form of smṛtyupasthāna, mindfulness of mind):

智者雖觀是心生滅相，亦不得實生滅法，不分別垢淨而得心清淨。以是心清淨故，不為客煩惱所染。(T25n1509_p0204a07-09)

"And although the wise person considers the characteristics of birth (utpāda) and cessation (nirodha) of this mind, he will find no true birth, no true cessation. Not finding any defilement (saṃkleśa) or purification (vyāvaḍāna) in it, he discovers this luminosity of the mind (cittasya prabhāsvara), a luminosity by virtue of which the mind is not defiled by the adventitious passions (na khale āgantukair upakleśair upakliṣyate)." (tr. by Gelongma Karma Migme Chodron of Lamotte's translation, vol. 3, p. 979 / PDF p. 118)

What I'm looking for actually fits the "emptiness of non-perception":

何以故名不可得空？為智力少故不可得？為實無故不可得？ 答曰： 諸法實無故不可得，非智力少也。(T25n1509_p0295c13)

"Why do you assert this emptiness of non-perception? If dharmas are not perceived, is this due to weakness of knowledge (jñānadaurbalya) or because they do not truly exist? Answer. – It is because dharmas really do not exist that they are not perceived, and not

due to weakness of knowledge." (vol. 4, p. 1762 / PDF p. 358)

However, the 18 emptinesses are used more as theoretical teachings rather than practical ones.

"What is unascertainable emptiness? Those dharmas which are past, future, and present, are not got at. And why? In a past (dharma) the future (dharmas) cannot be got at: nor in a future the past; nor in a present (dharma) can the past and future (dharmas) be got at: nor in the past and future (dharmas) the present ones. The unascertainable emptiness is the non-apprehension of these, because they are pure from the very beginning, on account of their being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is their essential nature." (Large PP Sutra, I. 9, 12, §15. PDF p. 184)

"As soon as this present moment appears, at that very moment it will exhaust or cease to exist. The past is gone; the future has not yet come, so they are not entities. This is what we call 'not apprehended'. But there is no such phenomenon about which you can conclude that it is an unapprehended phenomenon, because 'unapprehended' itself is empty. This is 'emptiness of unapprehended'." (Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's commentary to Madhyamakavatara 6:216-217 in "Introduction to the Middle Way", PDF p. 334)

It is not exactly like how Thrangu Rinpoche puts it:

"it has been resolved that objects of mind and mind itself are not to be found, and that the not-finding-anything when you look for the mind is not because you have failed to find it; nor is it because the mind exists but is somehow too subtle to be found in that way; nor is it because it is too far away from you, too distant to be seen after all it is your mind. The reason that you do not find anything is that in not finding anything you are finding what the mind is, which is emptiness, and this is a matter of direct experience." (Ocean of Definitive Meaning, p. 75)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 14th, 2010 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: The Origin of "Not Finding"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng, thanks for that. Very resourceful. So you just looked up 不可得? Would that be correct for "not finding"? Maybe the Tibetan term could be helpful too. Well, it seems that is the original idea behind the meditation instruction. But is there any meditation advice connected to it, or I should be content with the fact that different sutras describe that there is nothing to be found which is emptiness itself?

For the English translations, here are two.

For the first quote (SA 262, corresponds to <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.090.than.html>) there is a

translation http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/SA_262:

Respectfully saluting by joining palms, he said to the venerable Ānanda:

"It is just so! As it is the noble life of wisdom, a good friend teaches the discipline and the dharma.

"Now, I have heard the dharma from the venerable Ānanda thus: All activities are empty, tranquil, not to be grasped at; and the destruction of craving, the fading away of desire, cessation, is nirvāṇa.

"The mind is joyful, one dwells rightly in liberation, and there is no returning, no more seeing self; one sees only the true dharma."

The quote from the Sutra of the Collection of the Original Acts of the Buddha (佛本行集經 - second poem) in my crappy translation:

"Look for it in all directions
But you don't find any dharma.
Because of conditions
The saṃskāras are born.
Examining yourself
Empty observation meets suchness.
Skandhas enter all the objects
Within and without all is peaceful."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 15th, 2010 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: The Origin of "Not Finding"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

Thanks, I'm trying. How do you search like that? Is that Google search for CBETA? Don't you think suttacentral is fine? That's what I use, plus it's online.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 18th, 2010 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: The Ten Bhūmis

Content:

Astus wrote:

Locked as Requested by OP.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 18th, 2010 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

To gather all the different traditions and make the university "non-denominational" seems like a huge challenge. Modernisation of Buddhism would require a view beyond sects, and not just small sects but the whole "hinayana-mahayana-vajrayana" concept. Because if that remains it just results in different groups at the university all saying they're the "true and original Buddhism" - not a good environment for anyone who actually wants to study there. Or it can be led by lay scholars, making the academic view the standard and not allowing any sectarian position on the part of the governing body.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 18th, 2010 at 10:37 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see how adding natural science to Buddhism could modernise it. It simply complicates things by irrelevant data. Natural science is restricted to the study of the four elements. What use is there of a huge load of information on how the elements work? Other fields, like philosophy, comparative religious studies, history, philology, linguistics and psychology can be used as secondary studies. Still, that is not exactly what would mean modernisation. It should be actually making changes in the Buddhist teachings themselves, creating new forms, new ways of transmitting the Dharma. Just like it's happened throughout history with the introduction of the different Abhidharma texts, Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Pramana, and all the others up to Tiantai, Chan, Vajrayana, Burmese Vipassana, Thai Forest Sangha, etc. And not even a university is needed for that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 19th, 2010 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"But still, I think the ongoing dialogue between scientists and Buddhists which the Dalai Lama and others have promoted is an important one and is something which should be continued at a world-class Buddhist university. By discontinuing it, I think modern Buddhists would lose more than they would gain."

It's fine to do and continue the dialogue. It's like the dialogue between religions. It's not with the purpose of "integrating Jesus into the Noble Eightfold Path" but just sharing ideas. My main point is that simply using natural science to analyse certain Buddhist phenomena doesn't make Buddhism modern but only the subject of some researchers.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 19th, 2010 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: The real truth behind Zen masters' self-mutilation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Those are just stories without historical reliability, just like most of the stories about the early Zen masters.

On the other hand, self-mutilation on some level has been part of Chinese Buddhism for a long time. There's a larger study related to this, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism* by James A. Benn. Also, Paul Williams in his *"Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations"* gives a little insight into this Chinese tradition in the chapter on the Lotus Sutra and its influences, with extra info in the notes. He quotes Benn, "self-immolation was a practice that cut across the whole of the samgha in China. From Chan monks, to scholars, to Pure Land believers, all kinds of monks and nuns found valid reasons for offering their bodies".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 19th, 2010 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Science proves things which are empirically verifiable"

A very questionable statement, both from a Western philosophical and a Buddhist point of view. But this is not the main issue. Rather it is that science includes no morality, it's rather a technology, a skill, like architecture and shoemaking.

"we hold Buddhist teachings in a higher regard than the teachings of other religions"

Just as it should be done with every other philosophies too, including science.

"If science has clearly proven something, such as gravity, then a modern Buddhist has to accept that."

It is a

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_science#Grounds_of_validity_of_scientific_reasoning what constitutes "clear proof". The closest to that kind of investigation is Buddhist epistemology started by Dignaga and Dharmakirti and studied mainly within Tibetan Buddhism. However, when teachings talk about a mind (karma) created world, the basis for objective observation becomes quite unstable.

"Science has a special status because it is as close as a person who is a materialist can ever get to absolute truth."

Science is not the only way to be materialist. Why is it the best then?

More importantly, why should science be the main/sole representative of modernity? It

was not just science that made its impact, or rather, not just the scientific way of investigation, since science itself is quite diverse and in constant change. Modernity includes many other things, like social changes and art movements. And by modernity I simply mean the time after WW2, or perhaps we should count it from the invention of the Internet.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 20th, 2010 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Luke said:

Sure, people can study other aspects of modernity if they wish, but I would argue that science is one of the most powerful forces of modernity. For example, I would say that quantum physics has had a greater impact on people's lives than Cubism or atonal music.

Astus wrote:

Definitely, through science we have now clear tap water (polluted rivers), internet (power plants) and plastic bags. Life has become a lot more convenient, at least for those living in the richer areas of the planet. For others, science gave them job at a factory, machine guns and trucks.

But that is just outer change, change in things we use. In case of Buddhism, I think we better look at the inner parts, the ruling mentality, like consumerism, idolisation of the body, feminism, relationship and family models, physicalism and scientism, new age and neopagan beliefs, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 20th, 2010 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think TMingyur's argument is to the point. If somebody wants to study there are different options present. Even if someone is not rich enough to spend even three months in the mountains doing a retreat, there are teachers in the West and quite a lot of translations both online and offline, plus the teachings given by modern teachers. Also, one can choose to become a monk, and there are no application fees.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2010 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good post Huseng!

I think there are things to learn from our Christian brethren we live among. They actually know how to spread a religion and do it quite effectively in countries where Jesus is as foreign as Buddha in the West. And even in a mainly Buddhist country like Thailand (0.8% Christian according to the latest (2000) census) there are four Christian universities of different churches. But unlike with the Christian teaching, Buddhism's core teachings are not propagated, or even described by many teachers. I find that mainly Theravada teachers, like Walpola Rahula and K. Sri Dhammananda, published books with the attempt to sum the teachings up in an easily accessible form for a Western audience. I think that is because when teaching Mahayana (Chinese or Tibetan) it is either simplified into a specific teaching and practice (eg. Zen, Dzogchen, Pure Land, Chod) or it gets very complicated, trying to present the whole thing from Abhidharma to Prasangika Madhyamaka. And even if "general Mahayana" is explained - mainly from the Tibetan tradition - it is taught as something actually inferior to Vajrayana which they don't talk about there. So a primary issue - to actually make Buddhism something consumable by a larger audience - is to develop the appropriate presentation of it accepted by the majority of Western Buddhists and not get lost in the differences and varieties of lineages. Again, such thing was attempted only by Theravadin teachers, like Joseph Goldstein, Ajahn Sujato and Ajahn Amaro.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2010 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's assuming that the descendants of immigrants will keep the religion and not decide to be assimilated into the non-religious or Christian local community.

One of my Zen teachers (non-Asian) said that what he regretted about retreats was that there was no opportunity to get to know the others he spent the time with there. So on his retreats there are quite a lot of community programs, discussions, in a not so organised format. It is not a formal retreat at all and hardly about doing a lot of meditation. However, it is not advertised for outsiders, but everyone is welcome.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2010 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's unlikely that monks and teachers will take the initiative. I'm saying that because from Buddhist history it seems to me that usually it was the laity that started things and the monastic sangha eventually reacted on it. That is understandable as far as it is the monks duty to maintain the tradition, so they're supposed to be the conservative force. There are exceptions of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2010 at 3:21 PM

Title: Re: Zen Centre's in Japan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shodo Harada's monastery, Sogenji is also a host of international students from all over the world.

<http://www.onedropzendo.org/onedrops.php>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2010 at 3:32 PM

Title: Re: What needs to be done to create new Nalandas in the west?

Content:

Huifeng said:

Maybe just learn that dana comes before sila, samadhi and prajna on the path?

Astus wrote:

Are you suggesting that the "Buddhist Law of Attraction" is that "the more you give the more you get"? So, Buddhists should give more money/effort and more teaching which results in more followers who're willing to pay for monasteries. Logical.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 25th, 2010 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's good to have faith in one's inherent buddha-nature. But that should be for supporting one's motivation on the path and not as an excuse for avoiding the path. Also, there are vague, undefined terms in the OP, which even suggest certain misunderstandings about buddha-nature and other things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2010 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Tiantai/Tendai system you find the six identities, which is the beings relation to buddha-nature. See, Sheng-yen: Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p. 100-103.

1. Identity to Buddhahood in Principle
2. Identity to Buddhahood in Name

3. Identity to Buddhahood in Contemplative Practice
4. Identity to Buddhahood in Semblance
5. Identity to Buddhahood in Partial Realization
6. Absolute Identity to Buddhahood

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 29th, 2010 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

Individual,

You can read Shengyan's book online:

<http://www.shengyen.org.tw/big5/book/orthodox.pdf> (PDF)

Go to the given chapter and read what the six identities stand for.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 30th, 2010 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What troubles me is that, living in such a utopia, what motive would anyone have for attaining enlightenment?"

You find it in the sutras, the Pure Land is all about the Dharma, teaching is happening all the time everywhere. Even the wind, blowing through the leaves of the Bodhi-tree, when heard by beings everywhere, gives them insight into the dharmas and they attain the stage of non-regression. Also, even before being born there, the initial motive, shinjin, is for the attainment of buddhahood and not about being born into a heavenly realm.

"Another thing that just doesn't tally is the claim that life in Amida's Pure Land is eternal."

You agree that nirvana is eternal. Buddhas are always "in nirvana" and there's no time limit in buddhahood. A buddha-land is a creation, an extension of a buddha. How couldn't it be eternal? Still, it is not eternal in the sense of constant but that its continuity has no end.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 3rd, 2010 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Was Shakyamuni Chinese?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What about <https://sites.google.com/site/nyugatibuddhismus/home/bevezets/modern-buddha-brzolsok>? Nevertheless, the way we picture buddha is a romantic form and have little to do with "real", though we might call it the real buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 3rd, 2010 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: What is the role of Shakyamuni Buddha in Pure Land?

Content:

Huseng said:

Is there any way to empirically verify such a claim besides dying and seeing if you end up in the Pure Land?

Astus wrote:

Once you reach a higher bodhisattva level you'll have no problem seeing buddha-lands far far away. Or perhaps even on the 1st bhumi you can converse with buddhas. Also, the Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra gives you a technique to meet Amita Buddha face to face. And maybe you can try phowa too. There's also an attainment called nenbutsu-sanmei which for instance Honen could achieve. So many ways, you just have to choose the one you like.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 3rd, 2010 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you talk about as desire is put under "kama-trsna/tanha", ie. sensual desire. There's a study discovering desire in the Pali Canon: The Philosophy of Desire in the Buddhist Pali Canon by David Webster. You might want to take a look at it. There's also a short summary of this topic: <http://www.buddhanet.net/4noble12.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 3rd, 2010 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shinchan,

Your question was raised long before by a certain brahmana:

"If that's so, Master Ananda, then it's an endless path, and not one with an end, for it's impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire."

Read the whole story:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn51/sn51.015.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 2010 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Heavy Metal goes tantric

Content:

Astus wrote:

Very nice, I've been looking for a Buddhist metal band for a while now. Are there others like The Firstborn who actually play Buddhist metal?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 2010 at 6:51 AM

Title: Re: The Eastern Music Thread!

Content:

Astus wrote:

The essence of Japanese music:

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if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Vietnamese pop:

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if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
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Vietnamese rock:

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if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
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Vietnamese hip hop:

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if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
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Burmese hip hop:

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if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Indian pop:

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Indian metal:

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Did you know that the second song on this list (Vietnamese pop) is originally a
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragostea_din_tei?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 14th, 2010 at 1:39 AM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

from Dahui Zonggao's letter to Hsu Tun-chi, Swampland Flowers p. 33-35 said:
When has it ever been necessary to leave wife and children, quit one's job, chew on vegetable roots, and cause pain to the body? Those of inferior aspiration shun clamor and seek quietude: thense they enter the ghost cave of "dead tree Ch'an" entertaining false ideas that only thus can they awaken to the Path. ... If you can manage not to forget the matter of birth and death while in the midst of the passions of the world, then even though you do not immediately smash the lacquer bucket (of ignorance), nevertheless you will have planted deep the seed-wisdom of transcendental knowledge (prajna). In another lifetime you will appear and save your mental power. You won't fall into evil dispositions: you'll overcome that sinking down into the defilement of passion. As a gentleman of affairs, your study of the Path differs greatly from mine as a homeleaver. Leavers of home do not serve their parents, and abandon all their relatives for good. With one jug and one bowl, in daily activities according to circumstances, there are not so many enemies to obstruct the Path. With one mind and one intent

(homeleavers) just investigate this affair thoroughly. But when a gentleman of affairs opens his eyes and is mindful of what he sees, there is nothing that is not an enemy spirit blocking the Path. If he has wisdom, he makes his meditational effort right there. As Vimalakirti said, "The companions of passion are the progenitors of the Tathagatas: I fear that people will destroy the worldly aspect to seek the real aspect." He also made a comparison: "It's like the high plateau not producing lotus flowers: it is the mud of the low-lying marshlands that produces these flowers."

If you can penetrate through right there ... your power will surpass that of us leavers of home by twentyfold. What's the reason? We leavers of home are on the outside breaking in; gentlemen of affairs are on the inside breaking out. The power of one on the outside breaking in is weak; the power of one on the inside breaking out is strong.

"Strong" means that what is opposed is heavy, so in overturning it there is power.

"Weak" means what is opposed is light, so in overturning it there is little power. Though there is strong and weak in terms of power, what is opposed is the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 15th, 2010 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ven. Seung Sahn in his "The Compass of Zen" talks about sex as "not good, not bad" (p. 72). He refers to the 36th teacher of Sudhana in the Avatamsaka Sutra who was a prostitute liberating people through sex. However, I've looked it up in the text but found nothing like that except for general "skilful means" teaching. Any idea what he could be referring to?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 16th, 2010 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could finally identify the bodhisattva Ven. Seung Sahn might have been talking about. It's teacher 25, called Vasumitra and she liberates people from passion through passion. It is also a recurring teaching there to be in the world without being affected by the world, which is the concept of non-attachment to anything while acting for the welfare of all. Also noteworthy is the large amount of lay and female teachers present in Sudhana's journey.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 17th, 2010 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: Kaliyuga

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's an important note at the end of the Wikipedia article on life expectancy:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_expectancy#Life_expectancy_vs._life_span. Same article says that life expectancy in the early 20th century was 30-45 which means that our grandparents and greatgrandparents should have never known us.

There's an interesting argument in Tai Situpa's <http://www.ncf.net/mahamudra.htm>: But there is another side: if you have faith in the Buddha, if you have faith in the Buddha's teaching, and if you have faith in the practice of dharma then you don't have to know anything. If you practice with faith then everything works. You don't have to know ground, path and fruition. Whether you know it or not, it is there. When you know, nothing new appears, and when you don't know, nothing is disappearing. So you really don't have to know, but these days it is important to know. Why? Because this is a degenerating time.

I am not a negative person. I don't consider myself a pessimistic person. Actually I consider myself having some weakness of optimism [laughter], you know? So maybe my problem is optimism, not pessimism. But the fact of the matter is that this is a degenerating time; so, many things are getting worse, and many things are getting better. But it is those things that make us worse that are getting better, and those things that make us better that are getting worse. In that way, it's getting better for worse. That's true, I think. I could be wrong; I have the right to be wrong (right?), but I think that's true.

One thing that really proves this to me is that, these days, anything that is sacred and divine needs a lot of explanation, and people don't believe it, but anything that is not sacred and not divine doesn't need any explanation, and everybody believes it. For example, many wars are being fought right now, all over the world, and most of the people that are fighting there don't know why. Only the ones who instigated the wars know, but the other people don't know. They just believe; so they follow and get themselves killed, or they kill other people and destroy so many things. Then think about making money: it's good that people make money, but lots of the ways that people make money are really other people's plans, and other people's ideas that they just follow. Many people just follow, and sometimes they get lucky, and they make some money, but many people are actually just donating a lot of money to those people who plan those things. They lose money, but they just go on, one loss after another. So in that way, they really don't need a lot of explanation. Also, with taking drugs, and all these kind of things: even if somebody explains so hard they still don't believe that person. They can see themselves getting crazy. They see themselves dying, and they see their brain becoming like a scrambled egg: it's not working anymore, not connected anymore, all separate, you know? One part of the brain doesn't function with another part; so two and two doesn't make four anymore Two and two is maybe five or three or six. They see that they are confused, but still they go for it. They don't need explanation, and they don't need clarification. Then also with politics: many of the politicians, I think, don't even know what they are doing. They just believe, and they go for it. Of course all politicians are not bad; many of them are very good. If there was no policy, then of course, the world would be in chaos, but what I am saying is that nothing requires more explanation than dharma. So when it comes to dharma, everybody wants all the detailed explanations. Not only once, but two, three or four times, you know? But everything else doesn't need explanation, and people just follow. For example, with

fashion: today you see a funny hat, which I think is a terrible hat, but tomorrow so many people are buying it and going crazy for it. So that way, everybody believes in things without having to know, except when it comes to something that is sacred and divine. This proves that this is a degenerating time. If it was not a degenerating time it would be the other way around, so that the things that are less meaningful, and even harmful, such as war, should need more explanation. People would find it very difficult to accept and very hard to participate. Something that is divine and profound, like dharma, would be easy for people to follow and easy to believe. If that happens then it shows that it is not a degenerating time but a generating time or a good time. So in this degenerating time, the clear understanding of ground, path and fruition will help us all, and will also equip us to help others. Because, after all, the basis of the mahamudra is Mahayana, and the purpose of mahayana is to help sentient beings. This is the foundation of all the highest teaching of Lord Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 18th, 2010 at 7:44 AM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Huifeng said:

They state pretty much that found in all Buddhist literature of the first 1000 yrs or so: Sexual activity is an obstruction to rebirth even in the heavens, how much more so is it an obstruction to liberation and / or full awakening.

Astus wrote:

How do you compare that to what the Kosa (vol 2, p. 465) says? Just happened to read this section and thought about your comment.

Huifeng said:

69b-d. There are six gods who taste pleasure; they unite through coupling, an embrace, the touch of hands, a smile, and a look.

The Caturmaharajakayikas, Trayastrimsas, Yamas, Tusitas, Nirmanaratis and Paranirmitavasavartins are the gods of Kamadhatu. The higher gods are not in Kamadhatu.

The Caturmaharajakayikas and the TrayastrimSas live on the ground; thus they unite by coupling, like humans; but they appease the fire of their desire through the emission of wind, since they do not have any semea The Yamas appease the fire of their desire by embracing, the Tusitas by the touch of hands, the Nirmanaratis by smiling, and the Paranirmitavasavartins by looking at each other. Such is the doctrine of the Prajñāpti. According to the Vaibhasikas (Vibhasd, TD 27, p. 585b27), these expressions of the Prajñāpti, "embracing," "touching of the hands," etc., do not indicate the mode of union—for all the gods couple—but the duration of the act. The more ardent the desire by reason of the more pleasurable object, so much shorter is the duration of the union.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 18th, 2010 at 5:18 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Ogyen said:

Do you have a sutra or reference material handy? This has sparked my curiosity.

Astus wrote:

Avatamsaka Sutra - Flower Ornament Scripture in Cleary's translation - last chapter, also exists stand alone as the Gandavyuha Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 21st, 2010 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Guy disturbs Zen monk's meditation (video)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it's funny. No harm done. By the way, there's a Zen story similar to this (<http://www.kwanumzen.com/pzc/newsletter/v08n02-1995-nov.html>).

Chin Ming-Hu was a powerful Chinese defense minister who lived toward the end of the Ming Dynasty. Although much of his life was devoted to military matters he also had a strong interest in Ch'an Buddhism. He would regularly invite Zen Master Hsin-Hueh Ta-Hsing to his place for dharma talks. One day when the Master was about to drink the usual cup of tea at the end of the talk there was suddenly a loud explosion. At the order of Chin a cannon had been fired at his signal to scare the Master. Many people were indeed frightened, but the Master continued to calmly drink his tea as if nothing had happened.

When he had finished his tea, the Master asked Chin, "That sounded like a cannon. Is there something wrong?" "I beg your pardon. I'm sure there is no problem." replied Chin evasively. "Cannon fire is such a routine occurrence in a military encampment that....."

After a while, a second round of tea was served. Just as Chin raised his cup to drink the Master gave a loud shout, creating quite a mess. Chin protested, "Master! Why did you do that?" Master Hsin-Hueh just laughed and said, "What's the matter? Don't you know that shouting is a routine occurrence in a Zen community?" Struck by the Master's calm and dignified manner, Chin offered his apology.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 22nd, 2010 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: Online Sutras & Shastras

Content:

Astus wrote:

I collect links on this page: <http://mahajana.lap.hu>. Under "Mahayana Resources" you find many different collections of sutras and such.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 23rd, 2010 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

In Buddhist cosmology at the beginning of an aeon it is not from cells to humans and definitely not from insentient to sentient but from gods to hell beings and only from sentient to sentient. Beings are born, live and die because of karma and not natural selection. So it is quite opposite to the scientific evolution.

If you want to discuss this further I recommend to open a thread for it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 24th, 2010 at 1:08 AM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination is on one hand a principle, on the other a description of psycho-physical processes, while Buddhist cosmology applies dependent origination on a macrocosmic level. Evolution is a scientific concept based on different principles and established on different methods. Putting them into a single system is minimum unscientific and irrelevant to Buddhism. Just as there is no need to synthesise Buddhism and Hegelianism, so it's meaningless to bring together evolution and Buddhist cosmology.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 24th, 2010 at 3:19 AM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Individual said:

- 1) As psycho-physical processes; the subjective, phenomenological world.
- 2) Buddhist cosmology; the "macrocosmic level".

I'd relate the above to

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html>.

For now, my question is: Why is the second doctrine put forth when understanding the first doctrine is sufficient to attain liberation?

Astus wrote:

What I said was that dependent origination is:

1. a universal principle
2. a description of psycho-physical processes

No word about either being subjective or a cosmology in itself.

The cosmological part is an extension of the teaching of dependent origination where other teachings are also involved, especially karma, rebirth and the different realms. Buddhist spatial cosmology means the three worlds and the many realms from the lowest hells up to the immaterial heavens. Temporal cosmology describes the lifespan of beings in the realms and also the time a realm may come to existence, remain and dissolve. This whole cosmology is used both to describe how rebirth works and also applied to the career of noble beings. That's how it is an integral part of Buddhism.

If evolution was used in Buddhism one would have to explain its relation to karma, to the realms and how one can attain liberation in that system. That is, it'd involve a major reorganisation and rewriting of Buddhism, simply because the teachings are co-dependent on each other. There are, of course, parts of cosmology that can be changed without messing up the whole system - here I mean basically how the world is described with its four continents and Meru in the middle. But even that can be left as it is. I say that because the Buddhist cosmology is a religious one, something spiritual, from a different perspective than science uses.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 24th, 2010 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, if you can come up with a consistent application of evolution without contradicting the Buddha's words I might reconsider my views about this subject. But you should note that Mahayana is not based on implementing other philosophies into Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 24th, 2010 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism's goal is to liberate beings from suffering. Science's goal is to understand natural phenomena in a systematic way. This difference in attitude separates them and gives distinct meanings to these creations of the mind. Consequently Buddhist cosmology is not the same as scientific cosmology, and there are many other cosmologies. Then if we want to evaluate these cosmologies there's a need for a measurement. From a Buddhist point of view scientific cosmology doesn't help liberating beings, therefore it has little or no value. From a scientific perspective the Buddhist cosmology is a religious fiction and can be used only within certain social

sciences but tells little about our physical environment. But suppose we view them from a Christian or a Neoplatonic system they're both incorrect. However, if we're looking for The Real Cosmology, well, I call that naivety.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 25th, 2010 at 11:47 PM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Urgyen Chodron,

What I meant was that in Buddhist cosmology at the beginning of an era first gods are born and last hell beings. Also, only from a sentient being can become a new sentient being, ie. rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 26th, 2010 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: How evolution relates to dependent origination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Urgyen,

Here's a summary for you on Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_cosmology

As for the order of the reemerging of life in the different realms see the temporal part https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_cosmology#Vivartakalpa.

Sentient being means a being with a mind-stream. Insentient things have no mind-stream.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 27th, 2010 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Differences in Jodo practices

Content:

Jikan said:

I think you have it right there, Tatsuo.

It's a bit dated, but the volume *_Traditions in Chinese Meditation_* (ed Gregory) collects some interesting scholarship on this question, particularly on the tension between Ch'an and Pure Land practices early on and how Chih-i resolved that tension doctrinally. If this is of interest to you.

Astus wrote:

I assume you're referring to David W. Chappell's "From Dispute to Dual Cultivation: Pure Land Responses to Ch'an Critics" in that anthology. Note that the book itself is dated 1986 and probably that essay is even earlier. The whole concept that in the Tang Dynasty there were "Chan" and "Pure Land" sects is left behind by now and there's no reason to think such non-existent entities were fighting each other. See more on this: <http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf2003.%20TP%20Chan%20and%20Pure%20Land.pdf> by Robert Sharf. By the way, Zhiyi lived before the emergence of Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 27th, 2010 at 3:21 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Yeshe said:

I also have difficulty with the concept of 'Western Buddhism' - we Europeans have spent most of our history fighting each other and, much as they try to arrange one, I see no prospect of a shared European culture, much less one shared with those across the pond.

Astus wrote:

Indeed a good point. When the concept of "Western" is raised people from America first of all think of the U.S. of A. and maybe the UK, France and Germany, or simply "Europe". But who thought about Estonian, Italian or Polish Buddhism where people speak quite different languages and have distinct cultures? Nevertheless, there are a lot on common about how "Westerners" view things so it is not pointless to talk about a Western Buddhism just as we do about Indian and East-Asian Buddhism.

Another note here is that there are different world views in any Western country and it is not irrelevant to consider if one is from a Roman Catholic or a Protestant country, and other facets of one's personal background about Christianity, Judaism, New Age and Materialism, etc. The whole "Western Buddhism" seems to be restricted to a "typical" modern materialist middle class person with Protestant influence, that is: American or maybe British.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 28th, 2010 at 4:53 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yeshe,

The problem with the question is that just because a country is mainly Catholic doesn't mean that those who get involved with Buddhism were Catholics themselves. It can very well be that they see Catholicism as something they don't want at all so they have a very secular and materialistic approach which goes better with modern Zen and

Theravada. Statistics are unreliable in case of religion and Buddhism in the West. I'd rather measure the presence of a religion in terms of official data, like the number of temples, clergy, annual income, social activities, media presence, etc. However, these kinds of information are not always available and can be hard to obtain.

Another thing is that one should make a difference between a country being historically Catholic or Protestant and the current situation. All EU countries are secular by nature and while for instance according to the Eurobarometer Poll 2005 81% in Portugal believes in God (one of the largest percentage in the EU) same-sex marriage is legal. In Poland the percentage was 80% and in 2007 88.4% were member of the Catholic Church, however, only 41% of the population attended regularly to churches in 2009. (stats from Wiki) Counting Buddhists is a lot more difficult as there are quite a lot of ignorance and misunderstandings about who is a Buddhist. Like, those who go to mass every Sunday are considered Christians but those who do meditation in a centre do not always (quite rarely) think of themselves as Buddhists.

We can discuss the Western phenomena related to Buddhism and we can also ponder on its future. To me personally what is actually interesting are doctrinal matters and their presentation. That's something more concrete and more important than clothes and rituals.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 28th, 2010 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Tilopa said:

Mahasiddhas like Guru Rinpoche are very special beings who have already achieved a high level of realization before taking a consort and we shouldn't mistakenly think their practice is in any way ordinary sexual intercourse. But we should ask 'how did they become such great yogis' and more importantly 'how can we become like them' and it's not by being sexually active that's for sure. We might not need monastic vows but to develop the levels of meditative concentration and subsequent attainment that will qualify us for higher tantric practice then at some point celibacy will definitely be necessary.

Astus wrote:

It appears to me from the mahasiddha stories that lot of them were ordinary people and not as special as Padmasambhava. In the book "Masters of Mahamudra" we find people from all ways of life, including kings, artists, peasants, craftsmen and renunciates. They all had their own obsessions. On the other hand, these too are about being free from desire. What these stories point out is that emptiness and the realisation of emptiness are all pervasive and not restricted to outer forms, so it is not a necessity to take up a certain way of life. I'd say this is a colourful way of expressing the saying "defilements are bodhi". Also this partially answers the original question about dealing with celibacy and leaving behind sexual desire.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 1st, 2010 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it should be pointed out here that although people attain different levels of samadhi it doesn't mean they're free from desire. A good meditation retreat (Buddhist or not) can be like a week on holiday but then back to everyday life. Even on the initial levels of realisation one is not free from lust. Then there's the sravaka style view that one have to get rid of all to be liberated, then there's no more desire. And there's the mahayana path where one has to attain no-birth and then desire is not a hindrance any more, one doesn't take it up or put it down.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 2nd, 2010 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just to add a bit to the discussion on lay style, I've been browsing through the PP8K and stumbled upon a section about the signs of an irreversible bodhisattva living a household life (XVII.3). As it is not surprising, the PP25K has a similar section which the Abhisamayalankara summarises in three points (IV 8, 2, 6-8.) (Chinese from Ven. Fazun's 法尊法師 translation):

巧便行諸欲 - skilful use of all desirables (Conze: circumspect in the use of pleasant things (which he possesses and enjoys without caring for them, without eagerness or attachment).)

常修淨梵行 - always cultivating pure chastity (Conze: at all times (in all his lives) he leads a chaste life,)

善清淨正命 - good and pure in correct livelihood (Conze: he is pure in the manner of earning his livelihood, (and provides for it in the right way).)

The relevant line is the second one about brahmacarya, i.e. celibacy. However, it's interesting to note that PP8K doesn't mention this part only that "an irreversible Bodhisattva who lives the life of a householder, possesses any pleasant things he may have simply without caring for them, without eagerness, without attachment. He is not one of those people who care for dear and pleasant forms." (tr. Conze)

Another thing to note is that in the Abhisamayalankara's divisions this is about the 1st bhumi while the Avatamsaka Sutra says about 2nd bhumi bodhisattvas: "They are satisfied with their own spouses and do not desire the spouses of others." (tr. Cleary) Nevertheless, the Avatamsaka Sutra has ample paragraphs talking about relinquishing the householder life and leaving behind all forms of desire. So the sutra says,

"They have no attachment to anything, but just firmly uphold pure conduct, thinking, 'As I maintain pure discipline, I shall surely get rid of all bondage, the torment of craving, oppression, slander, and disturbance, and will attain the impartial truth praised by the Buddhas.' ... Therefore they do not conceive even a single thought of lust; their minds are as pure as Buddha. The only exception is in terms of expedient means to teach and transform sentient beings — yet they still do not relinquish the determination for omniscience. ... After enlightening beings have gotten to see the Buddha, they never arouse a single thought of desire, much less act upon desire."

This single exception explains my former reference to another part in this sutra about a teacher who uses different forms of desires to help beings become free from desire.

Then it is clear from all of this that renunciation is a prerequisite of getting to higher levels of practice meaning that the only safe and sure way for a householder is aspiring for birth in the Pure Land. In the PP8K (X.9, tr. Conze) the Buddha says,

"And when I had surveyed their thought with my thought, I rejoiced in those sons and daughters of good family who belong to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas and who had made this vow. In consequence they will become so much confirmed in their faith that they will seek rebirth in other Buddha-fields, and also they will come face to face with the Tathagatas there, who demonstrate dharma, and from whom they will hear in detail just this deep perfection of wisdom. In those Buddha-fields also they will set countless living beings going on their way to the supreme enlightenment, and will help them in their quest for full enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 2nd, 2010 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

kirtu said:

Right but strong samadhi suppresses desire at least for a time.

Astus wrote:

This could also be said about satisfying a desire, after eating one is not hungry for a while. On the other hand, one could as well be attached to different meditative states, so there's birth in the form and formless realms attained by Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists.

And as I've said in my last post, if the case is as many of you have agreed upon, there's no point in lay people engaging in so many complicated and difficult practices unless they become like hermits. So either one is fine with working on accumulating good karma for a better birth or becomes a renunciate. Third option being only aspiring for birth in the Pure Land. This view makes most of current Western Buddhism pointless and mistaken and also cries for establishing a widespread monastic order.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 3rd, 2010 at 8:16 AM

Title: Re: How do monks put up with celibacy?

Content:

TMingyur said:

Meditation is not necessarily a "complicated and difficult practice". However what is complicated in the context of housholders is Vajrayana.

Astus wrote:

But why bother if one can simply stick to buddha-remembrance and thus be assured of liberation in the next life?

By the way, Zen is neither complicated nor difficult whatever life one may live.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 6th, 2010 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Dharma Transmission Verses of the 42 Hands and Eyes

Content:

Astus wrote:

This page gives the pictures of the different mudras plus the relevant info:

http://www.vuonlam.us/01_NAM2009/03_PhatGiao/A2_TaiLieu/3A2a_KinhLuotLuan/01_KINH/QuanAm42ThuNhan_01/PhapMonQuanAm_42ThuNhan.htm "

onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Ben,

There's a whole Esoteric Teachings Section (密教部) in the Taisho canon (volumes 18-21, texts 848-1420). Outside of the Japanese Shingon school there's no separate lineage for tantra but it's simply a part of general Buddhism. No initiations or anything like that.

Here's a list of Guanyin related mantras with some audio files:

http://www.siddham.org/yuan1/main_guanyin.html "

onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 7th, 2010 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Dharma Transmission Verses of the 42 Hands and Eyes

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ben,

I'm no expert on this so don't expect much from me.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrabodhi> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amoghavajra> are the two famous masters who propagated mantrayana in China, both in the 8th

century, and they've translated lot of works. One of the texts associated with the 42 hands and eyes practice (T1064) are by Amoghavarja for instance. The <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AF%86%E6%95%99#.E4.B8.AD.E5.9B.BD.E3.81.AE.E5.AF.86.E6.95.99> says, if that's reliable, that as early as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589) there were translations of esoteric texts and later masters like <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subhakarasiṃha> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yi_Xing were well known teachers (and performers) of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2010 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Kaliyuga

Content:

Astus wrote:

As a side note, the age of Dharma decline should not be confused with the social and samsaric periods. Buddhas may appear in different periods of social ups and downs and the Dharma may be absent even in golden ages.

Also, here's a fascinating TED talk about our dark age:

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven_pinker_on_the_myth_of_violence.html

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2010 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and pain

Content:

Astus wrote:

These kinds of news are good only for advertising Zen a bit but nothing else. 13 unknown people compared to 13 other unknown people and it happens that some of one group manage pain better than others. Very informative. We don't even know which Zen they were practising and how.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 11th, 2010 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Sakya Trizin talking about the unity of Buddhist views

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, as Pero pointed it out, it seems he meant the unity of Tibetan Buddhist Schools, especially the oneness of Madhyamaka, Dzogchen and Mahamudra, which has been stated long before by former Tibetan masters, like the 3rd Karmapa in his Aspiration Prayer:

"Free from mental fabrication, it is the great seal, mahamudra.

Free from extremes, it is the great middle way, madhyamika.

The consummation of everything, it is also called the great perfection, dzogchen.

May there be confidence that by understanding one,

the essential meaning of all is realised."

Interestingly, it was Sakya Pandita who criticised Dzogchen and (Gampopa's) Mahamudra, also separating Madhyamaka meditation from Mantrayana. Like here:

Even if they meditate the Great Seal,
they cultivate in meditation only a restriction of conceptual thought,
while they do not understand the Great Seal to be Gnosis
derived from the two processes.

The Great Seal meditation of the ignorant, it is taught,
usually becomes a cause of animal birth.
If not that, then they are born in the realm lacking even fine matter (arupadhatu),
or else they fall into the Disciples' cessation.

Even if that meditation may be excellent,
it is no more than a Madhyamaka meditation.
The latter meditation, while very good in itself,
is nevertheless extremely difficult to accomplish.

As long as the two accumulations
have not been brought to completion,
that meditation will not be perfected.
To complete the two accomplishments for this,
it is taught that "innumerable aeons" are needed.

Our own Great Seal
consists of Gnosis risen from initiation
and the self-sprung Gnosis that ensues
from the meditations of the two processes.

Its realization will be attained in this very life
if one is skilled in the techniques of Mantra.
Besides this, the Buddha did not teach
the realization of the Great Seal otherwise.

Thus if one is interested in the Great Seal,
one should practice in accord with Mantra Vehicle texts. No substantial difference
exists between
the present-day Great Seal and the Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen)
of the Chinese tradition, other than a change
in names from "descent from above"
and "ascent from below" to "Simultaneist" and "Gradualist." The appearance of this kind
of religious tradition
came about just as the Bodhisattva Santaraksita
foretold to King Trisong Detsan.

Listen, as I shall explain that prophecy. He said,
"O king, no Indian non-Buddhist doctrine will appear here
in your kingdom of Tibet because
master Padmasambhava has entrusted it
into the protection of the twelve protecting goddesses.

Nevertheless, a schism into two systems of doctrine
will occur because of certain interrelated circumstances and omens.

At first, after I myself have passed away,
a Chinese monk will appear and teach a path
of simultaneous enlightenment
called the White Self-Sufficient Remedy.

At that time, invite my disciple,
the great scholar Kamalasila, from India.
He will refute that.

Then let all the faithful
practice according to this system of doctrine."
Later, everything came to pass just as he had predicted.

After the Chinese tradition was suppressed,
that of the gradualists was made to flourish.
Still later, the royal rule itself vanished,
and some, who based themselves solely
on texts of the Chinese master's tradition,
changed the name of his system secretly
to Great Seal (mahamudra). The present-day Great Seal
is virtually [the same as] the Chinese religious system.

The Great Seal that Naro and Maitripa espoused
is held to consist precisely
of the seals of Action, Dharma, and Pledge,
and of the Great Seal as expounded
in tantras of the Mantra system.

In his Caturmudra, Exalted Nagarjuna himself also asserts this:
"If, through not having known the Action seal,
one is also ignorant of the seal of Dharma,
it is impossible that one might understand
even the name of the Great Seal."

King-of-tantra texts and major commentarial treatises also prohibit
the Great Seal to one who is unconnected with initiation.

If one realizes the Great Seal that is Gnosis

risen from initiation, only then does
one no longer depend on all signful efforts.

A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes, p. 117-119

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 11th, 2010 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Excuse me, but where do you get these ideas from?

What connection do you see between Afghanistan and Europe? Yes, Alexander the Great conquered the land and left some Greek settlements around, then many others came and conquered it too. It doesn't mean that there was great cultural exchange between that land and Europe, especially considering that the Roman Empire was cut off from it by the Parthian Empire, then the Sassanid Empire after which the whole place turned to Islamic land with what the Christian Europe hadn't had much friendly relations.

It is not exactly true that everyone uses the Roman calendar, by which you could at best mean the Julian calendar what was changed in the Western part of Europe to the Gregorian calendar from 1582 on. The Roman Empire was not at all a secular society as you've perhaps heard of the Imperial Cult. They had not unified any castes but built an empire on slave labour and there were different classes of society. Finding connection between Jupiter and Pasupati is not really proper as one is a sky and weather god like Indra while the other one an animal god like Faunus, Jupiter is related to Dyaus Pita etymologically and functionally in the Vedic religion just as it is to Zeus. What you define as a modern city is not really clear, but on one hand the Romans used knowledge from other cultures like the Greek, also there were other quite developed lands throughout the world, like in Han Dynasty China; and in the same era the Gupta Empire is another example of a great civilization.

This conspiracy against Buddhism, well, can't say much of that. You know, even Freemasons and Jehova's Witnesses had to wear different badges in concentrations camps, but no badge for Buddhists (could have been of orange colour). Guess what, Nazis and Fascists were quite interested in Buddhist things. Would you say then that other evil Western forces worked against the poor Buddha followers?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 12th, 2010 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

We know of Jews and Christians in ancient India and China and these are not some hidden obscure ideas but open facts. Yes, it is known that there were trade routes between India and the Roman Empire. But can you show any Buddhist monastery or at least a community in Europe before the 19th century? Although Europeans heard about Buddhism through Christian missionaries and travellers as early as the 16th century, it doesn't mean they turned to that religion. Until you can come up with some ancient Latin sutra translation or the ruins of a stupa I see no reason to assume Buddhism was any way present as a religion practised in Europe.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 12th, 2010 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhist art needed to spread Dharma in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Luke, have you missed the last 6 decades in Western art? From the Beat generation on Buddhism spread quite well. Sure, it's not mainstream but it's there.

Did you know that Richard Wagner planned an opera in 1856 with the title <http://www.myspace.com/wagneroperas/blog/249165398> based on Buddhist stories? And that Hermann Hesse published his novel https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhartha_%28novel%29 in 1922?

And there's also Lisa in The Simpsons as a Buddhist for all to see.

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 12th, 2010 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhist art needed to spread Dharma in the west?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some examples for Western Buddhist art:

<http://www.boeddhistischeomroep.nl/generalinfo.aspx?lntEntityId=136>

<http://gonkargyatso.com/>

<http://www.tashinorbu.be/index.htm>

<http://sutozsolt.egologo.transindex.ro/>

<http://www.johndaidoolori.org/>

<http://www.narthaki.com/info/intervw/intrvw40.html>

<http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/lieberman/zen.html#Zen%20Contemporary>

<http://www.france24.com/en/20100318-buddhist-founder-siddhartha-inspires-paris-opera-ballet>

<https://fwbo-news.blogspot.com/2008/06/major-exhibition-of-western-buddhist.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 16th, 2010 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Dharma Transmission Verses of the 42 Hands and Eyes

Content:

Astus wrote:

How fascinating. I wonder on what basis does the CTTB claim this to be restricted to them. Or is it just the translation they worry about but not the Chinese and other translations?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 17th, 2010 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Dharma Transmission Verses of the 42 Hands and Eyes

Content:

Astus wrote:

Remm,

I see. So Ven. Xuanhua created an extended version of it. Still, I don't understand why it's kept hidden when many other teachings are available for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 23rd, 2010 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: What's the definition of a Buddhist?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting point from

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3025&Itemid=0 by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse:

"So, what makes you a Buddhist? You may not have been born in a Buddhist country or to a Buddhist family, you may not wear robes or shave your head, you may eat meat and idolize Eminem and Paris Hilton. That doesn't mean you cannot be a Buddhist. In order

to be a Buddhist, you must accept that all compounded phenomena are impermanent, all emotions are pain, all things have no inherent existence, and enlightenment is beyond concepts.

It's not necessary to be constantly and endlessly mindful of these four truths. But they must reside in your mind. You don't walk around persistently remembering your own name, but when someone asks your name, you remember it instantly. There is no doubt. Anyone who accepts these four seals, even independently of Buddha's teachings, even never having heard the name Shakyamuni Buddha, can be considered to be on the same path as he."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 23rd, 2010 at 9:07 PM

Title: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting teaching on how a bodhisattva should be trained:

"One should speak like this – do not give up your passion, do not fight your aversion, do not clear away your bewilderment, do not liberate yourself from your body, practise the bad things, do not hold back your views, do not be conscious of the bonds [to the worldly things], grasp for the parts of the personality (skandha), amass the spheres of sense-perception, move about among the fields of sense-perception (āyatana), do not leave the stage of fools, frequent the bad (akuśala), give up the good (kuśala), do not think of the Buddha, do not reflect on religious teachings (dharma), do not give offerings to the congregation of monks, do not take the training (śikṣā) upon yourself, do not seek the peacefulness of existence, do not cross over the river [of existence]. This kind of instructions one should teach and give to the bodhisattva in the beginning of his development. Why? Because this state of the moments of existence (dharma) and nothing else is their [true] state. Foolish people explain things in accordance with moments of existence of arising (utpādadharma) and moments of existence of disappearance (nirodhadharma). But this sphere of all moments of existence (dharmadhātu) distinguishes itself by being beyond thought-constructions, and understanding the essential character of all these moments of existence in this way is awakening. If he is taught in this way and does not become afraid, scared or terrified, then he is a bodhisattva not turning back in his development, one who has a part in the stage of never turning back. By means of this instruction one should carry on a pleasant conversation at length."

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&bid=2&vid=30&entity=30&kid=30&cid=47385>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 23rd, 2010 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:
Astus wrote:
It is a canonical sutra indeed!

Full text view can be selected at the top. Here's the <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&view=fulltext&vid=30>. The teacher in the sutra, who also says the quoted text to Manjusri, is a three-year old boy called Ratnadatta. Quite amusing as he lectures both Maudgalyayana, Sariputra and Manjusri too. Almost like an extra chapter from the Vimalakirti Sutra.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, December 23rd, 2010 at 11:47 PM
Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas
Content:

Astus wrote:
Individual, after the quoted speech 8 monks died as they were leaving because of disbelief and they were born in hell. The following discourse happened:

"Then Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta addressed the Lord: Lord, did you see the great harm that appeared when these monks had heard this exposition of religion? The Lord said: Do not say that, Mañjuśrī. If these monks had not heard this exposition of religion, they would never have been born in the good places of the universe in a million kalpas, and so, how could they meet and please a Buddha? Now they will, even though they heard this exposition of religion with doubt, be born in the Tuṣita heaven after they have died in the great hell Raurava. Then, in sixty-eight kalpas, they will please ten times hundred thousand millions of Tathāgatas, and they will by miraculous birth be born as universal kings. And during one kalpa, they will be born as Tathāgatas, Arhats, Perfect Buddhas with the name Vimalaprabha."

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, December 24th, 2010 at 12:39 AM
Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas
Content:

Astus wrote:
Kirt,

I've just tried a quick search on CBETA with the sutra title but found only a summary of the contents of it, no commentary. If you find one, let us know.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, December 24th, 2010 at 5:25 AM
Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas
Content:
Individual said:

Sounds like a bad discourse.

I rather like the Lotus Sutra -- that anyone who just reads it once is guaranteed rebirth in a Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

"When he said this, five thousand monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen in the assembly immediately got up from their seats, bowed to the Buddha, and left. What was the reason for this? Because the roots of error among this group had been deeply planted and they were arrogant, thinking they had attained what they had not attained and had realized what they had not realized. Because of such defects they did not stay. And the Bhagavat remained silent and did not stop them."

(Lotus Sutra, ch. 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 24th, 2010 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

The section quoted is the answer to this question:

妙吉祥言。爲初地菩薩。當何所說令云何學。

"Mañjuśrī said: But what kind of instruction will you teach, how will you instruct the bodhisattva in the beginning of his development."

That's why I gave the title that it is for beginner bodhisattvas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 25th, 2010 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Is it any help that the Polyglotta site has the Tibetan version too of this sutra?

In the question it mentions a beginner level, which means the 1st bhumi. In the 52 levels classification the bhumis are from 41 to 50. The mentioned non-returner level is the 8th bhumi. Or, if we don't insist on using that system, the sutra simply says that one teaches this at the start which results in establishing one firmly in enlightenment never to fall back again.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 25th, 2010 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Vimalakīrti Sutra (ch. 8: Path to Buddhahood) we read:

"Mañjuśrī then asked Vimalakīrti, "How should the bodhisattva penetrate the path of buddhahood?" Vimalakīrti said, "If a bodhisattva traverses the unacceptable paths, this is to penetrate the path of buddhahood." [Mañjuśrī] also asked, "How does the bodhisattva traverse the unacceptable paths?" [Vimalakīrti] answered, "The bodhisattva practices the five [deeds of] interminable [retribution] without becoming distraught. ... He manifests acting out of lust ... He manifests the practicing of flattery and deception ... He manifests acting out of the afflictions ... He manifests becoming old and sick ... if a bodhisattva can traverse the unacceptable paths in this way, this is to penetrate the path of buddhahood ... Therefore, you should understand that all the afflictions constitute the seed of the Tathāgata. It is like not being able to attain the priceless jewelpearl without entering the ocean. Therefore, if one does not enter the great sea of the afflictions, one will not be able to attain the jewel of omniscience."

There's also Linji's saying (ch. 21, reference to Lankavatara Sutra 3.58), "Virtuous monks, by creating the karma of the five heinous crimes, you attain emancipation." And this (ch. 22), "Followers of the Way, don't take the Buddha to be the ultimate. As I see it, he is just like a privy hole. Both bodhisattvahood and arhatship are cages and chains that bind one. This is why Mañjuśrī tried to kill Gautama with his sword, and why Aṅgulimāla attempted to slay Śākyamuni with his dagger."

As I see it, these Mahayana teachings take the prajnaparamita as the essential realisation of a bodhisattva. Unlike those teachings where they focus on taming the minds of uneducated people (prthagjana), these are meant for those on the bodhisattva vehicle. I find this aspect of the Dharma to be neglected, so many think that Mahayana is without deeper teachings and put aside the studying of the sutras only to read the systematised and summarising treatises. That I take as a natural progress just as it's happened with the agamas put aside for abhidharma, and it gives the proper reason for eventually making direct meditation instructions (Vipassana, Pure Land, Zen, Tantra) the living core of the path, while the sutras, in their times, were such instructions too.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 26th, 2010 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Huifeng said:

There is also the very cool story of Manjusri's past life in the Prajnaparamita Upadesa, which not only gives the same teaching, but also some interesting results of attitudes towards it.

Astus wrote:

Could you paste it here? Or is it only in Chinese?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 27th, 2010 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Should individuals be married and be monk?

Content:

Hae Min said:

Clarification: None of the orders in Japan carry the pratimoksha vows anymore. All priests receive ordination via the bodhisattva precepts, thus no vows of celibacy are taken.

Astus wrote:

They have been taking the bodhisattva precepts only since the 9th century (custom spreading gradually to all schools from Tendai) but marriage was not allowed until the 19th century Meiji reform. Just saying that it wasn't the bodhisattva precepts that made Japanese monks non-celibate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 27th, 2010 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thank you Master Huifeng for posting it. These kinds of instructions are good examples for the presence of seemingly newer styles of teachings, like Zen, within fundamental Mahayana texts. As for the question of "beginnerhood", these teachings fit into the category of meditation practice, so there's a direct connection with the method of observing the three states of dharmas and insight into the three gates of liberation. It also rhymes with the Tibetan teaching on having the view of a buddha (emptiness), practice of a bodhisattva (compassion) and conduct of a sravaka (morality).

Here's one from a contemporary Zen master (mistress?),

<http://wakeupandlaugh.wordpress.com/daehaeng-kun-sunim/>:

"As the sea and the waves are not separate, enlightenment and deluded thoughts are not two. So don't spend your time trying to figure out which thoughts are deluded and which are not - just let go of everything. When you do this, thoughts of "I," discriminations, and deluded thoughts will naturally disappear. ... Because even deluded thoughts arise from Juigong, entrust everything to Juigong, completely let go of it. When you return defilements and delusions inside, to your fundamental mind, its evolutionary power can shine forth. Lotus flowers bloom in mud, and the Buddha-Dharma blooms in the midst of defilements. I've never said that you shouldn't possess money, fall in love, or be upset when angry. Do all of this as you need to. But it is important to know that all of this is being done by your foundation. Watch and see if you are doing things from attachments to "I" or "mine." If you live harmoniously, knowing that there is nothing that is not yourself, you will be able to take everything in the world as material for your spiritual practice."

(No River to Cross, p. 45-46.)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 1:53 AM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

catmoon said:

This teaching is causing me considerable difficulty. Perhaps I should just ignore it completely?

Astus wrote:

There are different teachings exactly because some are easy for one but difficult for the other. If it is confusing there are two options. Either you try to figure it out on your own or asking people, or you just put it aside. It's really up to you.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: The real truth behind Zen masters' self-mutilation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I really recommend the book I've already mentioned on this subject: Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism by James A. Benn. It gets into the details very well. By the way, self-mutilation is in authentic Mahayana sutras, not to mention well known Jataka stories.

The Lotus Sutra (ch. 23) says, "If there is anyone who sets forth and wishes to attain highest, complete enlightenment, he should pay homage to the stupas of the Buddha by burning either a finger or a toe. He is superior to those who pay homage by giving their countries and cities, their wives and children, or the mountains, forests, rivers, ponds, and many other rare treasures."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Sepultura means burial in Latin, it is "sepulcrum" that means grave, related to the English sepulchre, all from the root "sepelire", i.e. to bury. Clocher-tour simply means a stand alone bell-tower (The page itself defines it as: "un clocher en forme de tour qui n'est pas rattaché au corps principal d'une église" - a bell-tower in the form of a tower that is not attached to the main body of a church) and I don't see how that could be related any way to stupas.

As for Shakyamuni teaching a king to establish a republic, well, sounds strange in itself, as far as republics are not kingdoms. There was a Roman Kingdom until 503 b.c.e. that was then changed into a republic. Even if Gautama lived around that time - which by the latest researches is at least questionable - I don't see how he ended up on the Apennine Peninsula and where that is recorded.

Finally, on the word pagan please read this easily accessible and always useful <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pagan>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Kalmyks are Mongols (in a broader sense), so it is not the case that Buddhism spread to the West but Asians moved and brought their religion with themselves. On the other hand, when Mongols and Tatars, aka the Golden Horde ruled over a large part of Eastern Europe for about 250 years they haven't converted them to Buddhism but Christianity just lived on.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 9:20 PM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Just because a bell-tower, or any other building for that matter, resembles a stupa it doesn't make it related to a stupa. As you may well know, there are different styles of stupa throughout Asia, but it is their function that makes them a Buddhist building. A bell-tower has just a bell in it to warn people, no relics, no religious rites, no concept of enlightenment at all.

Saying "somewhere" and "some older books" are not references. It takes historical and archeological records to establish a theory. Does the Kalachakra tradition say anything about the Roman empire? If so, where?

You may think as you please, just don't expect me to take it seriously when it lacks proper foundation in reliable sources.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 28th, 2010 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Putting aside the historical issues, what does Buddhism have that can attract people to it compared to Christianity and Islam?

I think the approach presented on <http://www.justbegood.net/> is noteworthy because it addresses common issues raised about religions. Unlike the majority of Buddhist books published in the West, the teachings of the "vehicle of men and gods" are rarely addressed properly although it is clearly the faith of the majority of Buddhist laity throughout Asia. It sounds very base compared to lofty ideas about "sudden enlightenment" and "rainbow body" but that's why it is the teaching that can make a real difference in the number of people who can feel connected to the Buddhadharma.

Whether it is Christianity, Islam or New Age, they all propagete some sort of heaven that the faithful can obtain. Buddhism can show how those heavens are obtainable for anyone with a more sensible teaching.

What do you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 29th, 2010 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Four siddhantas (catuh-siddhanta, 四悉檀):

(1 loka-siddhanta) shijiexitan 世界悉檀 Worldly siddhānta. Preaching which accords to the conventional understanding of the world.

(2 prthagjana-siddhanta) gegeweirenxitan 各各為人悉檀 Siddhānta for each individual. Preaching according to the abilities and levels of understanding of the people listening.

(3 pratipaksa-siddhanta) duizhixitan 對治悉檀 Special application siddhānta. Preaching aimed at destroying strong defilement or evil karma of certain beings.

(4 paramartha-siddhanta) diyiixitan 第一義悉檀 Siddhānta of supreme truth. Preaching of reality as understood by the Buddha himself.

also here (Tiantai): <http://www.tiantai.net/glossary/4siddhanta.htm>

Nagarjuna on the four siddhantas:

<http://www.drbackinese.org/vbs/publish/319/vbs319p022.htm>

<http://www.drbackinese.org/vbs/publish/320/vbs320p031.htm>

<http://www.drbackinese.org/vbs/publish/321/vbs321p024.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 29th, 2010 at 6:45 PM

Title: Re: So, how about "Western" Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

[quote="Huifeng"]It has been stated by several knowledgeable western Buddhist leaders, however, that while the high end practices bring types of insight, they feel that Buddhism needs to be supplemented. Usually the supplement is something along the lines of psychotherapy, or maybe integral theory, or whatever.[/quote]

It is the phenomenon that when a teaching shows gaps - i.e. lacks relevant answers to questions of its followers - those empty places will be inevitably filled up in one way or the other. That's how local spirits and gods could become part of Buddhism, while with the many bodhisattvas, dharmapalas, etc. the role of gods could have been taken over by Buddhist (or "Buddhicised") deities. For long there wasn't really any Buddhist form of magic (pre-modern science) but then with tantra it was resolved. Sanitised Buddhism sounds good for those think only of its immediate acceptibility into a view full of preconceptions, while in fact Buddhism should be able to answer not only the needs of educated people with stress problems but also those spiritual seekers who are looking for the meaning of life. Until that happens there's little chance for Buddhism to have a large number of followers from all walks of life and traditional/local beliefs (Christianity, New Age, Scientism) will fill those seekers' minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 29th, 2010 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Huifeng,

You talk about a complete course in the MPPU but that may not be necessary. A single introductory book (eg. Yinshun's Way to Buddhahood, Shengyan's Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation) should suffice to provide enough basis for approaching more complicated teachings. But so far Buddhist communities rarely provide the necessary fundamentals, like in the form of Sunday schools. However, this is a discussion rather for the Western Buddhism part than sutra analysis.

What could be looked into here is catmoon's question about what to do with teachings one can't put anywhere. That's one thing. Another thing is the nature of reactions and what difference it makes if this text is from a sutra, from a Zen teacher, from a tantra or somewhere else. Many have read the Vimalakirti sutra and the relevant part hasn't been raised as far as I can recall as a controversial teaching here or on other forums (where I've been). Calling it a teaching for beginner bodhisattvas might have added to the edge of it. But then, no problems with Zen teachings about directly getting at buddha-mind. How strange!

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 29th, 2010 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Training of Beginner Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Geoff,

Can you think of a treatise that is easily obtainable - afaik Siksasamuccaya wasn't reprinted and is impossible to buy - and readable? I mean, the Bodhicaryavatara is good but too terse, not really explaining things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 30th, 2010 at 7:27 AM

Title: Re: The mind without objects

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mind in Buddhism is defined by its object, so there are six consciousnesses: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind-consciousness. Yogacara added to this two, and in some versions three other consciousnesses but these I'd rather call possible extras and this categorisation is not in all Buddhist schools. Nevertheless, all kinds of consciousnesses are empty, without inherent existence and dependently arisen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 30th, 2010 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: The mind without objects

Content:

Astus wrote:

Talking of mind as a thing in itself is what reification means, conceiving it as independent. For conventional speech that is fine, that's what being not analysed means. But if we want to know what mind is we find that there are simply instances of mental perception, thus on the first level we arrive at the teaching of mental dharmas. Analysing further even dharmas are found to be without inherent essence, without arising and disappearing, i.e. empty. To say there's a continuum of mental events is good as far as it is clear that calling it a "continuum" is simply a concept and that there's nothing actually eternal, just like in the case of matter, etc.

The <http://www.stephenbatchelor.org/verses2.htm> deals with perception and forms of consciousnesses in chapter 3. The concept of prior existence is discussed in chapter 9.

"It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what's

called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 2nd, 2011 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Modern Day Pure Land Masters

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Old Venerable Guangqin (Guang Qin Lao He Shang - 廣欽老和尚, 1892-1986) was an illiterate monk who spent many years in retreat and taught in the fashion of "Chan - Pure Land" as common in China.

A selection of his teachings are available in English:

<https://vajrasword.blogspot.com/p/analects-of-master-kuang-chin.html>

Here's the famous photo of his funeral, the light generally understood to be a special sign:

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 3rd, 2011 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Modern Day Pure Land Masters

Content:

mr. gordo said:

Hi Astus,

I think I used a different spelling in my first post, but yes, I have that book and liked it. He was definitely an amazing teacher and practitioner.

Astus wrote:

Yinguang (印光) and Guangqin (廣欽) are two different teachers, not the same age and not exactly the same type of background and teaching. The teachings of Yinguang in English are in the book "Pure-Land Zen, Zen Pure-Land: Letters from patriarch Yin Kuang". Yinguang is more of the faith and other-power approach, Guangqin is more of meditation and self-power.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2011 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood and Sexy Women

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think Individual has a valid point with quoting the Alagaddupama Sutta.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_hindrances are not restricted to vows but they're valid

for every being, so sensual desire is an obstruction no matter whether it's a lay or a monastic practitioner. Well, that is the "sravaka view" at least. Padmasambhava adds (in <http://www.tibetanclassics.org/pdfs/GarlandofViews.pdf> PDF) for the bodhisattva vehicle: "So if it is sustained by great compassion, regardless of whatever acts one might engage in, be it virtuous or non-virtuous, one's vows will not degenerate. For the bodhisattva vow is, in brief, to act with taking great compassion as its ground." Finally, on the ultimate Buddha vehicle (identified with Dzogchen in the Padmasambhava text) even engaging in the five sensual desires causes no problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2011 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood and Sexy Women

Content:

Astus wrote:

"It depends on the context."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2011 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Are plants sentient?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Plants are non-sentient from a Buddhist point of view as they have no mind-stream, unlike animals, humans, spirits, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2011 at 6:48 AM

Title: Re: Are plants sentient?

Content:

JeffC said:

How do you know?

What is the difference between a Jellyfish and a Venus Fly Trap? Neither have brains. Both have survival instinct.

Astus wrote:

I've referred simply to the Buddhist point of view. Others may have different concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2011 at 11:47 PM

Title: Re: There is a problem with Buddhism after all

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good point. This is what the great master Honen (法然), founder of the first independent

Pure Land school (jodoshu 浄土宗), realised after he had gone through decades of monastic training. There is the path of the saints (shodomon 聖道門) and there is the Pure Land way (jodomon 浄土門). The saints' teachings include the whole of Buddhism working with self-power (jiriki 自力), i.e. one's own efforts, except the Pure Land teaching that works with other-power (tariki 他力), which is through the power of Amita Buddha's past vows (hongan 本願). The Pure Land path is the accessible way of enlightenment for ordinary beings (bonpu 凡夫) through which one can gain birth (ojo 往生) into the land of peace and bliss (anraku 安樂), a.k.a. Sukhavati. And as for the way itself, it's simply using buddha-remembrance, in the form of reciting the name (shomyonenbutsu 称名念仏) as Namo Amita Buddha (namuamidabutsu 南無阿弥陀仏), and nothing else (senjunenbutsu 専修念仏).

That is a summary of the basic idea of Honen which was used by Shinran to say that the Pure Land path is the final teaching that Shakyamuni wanted to teach. That's because it is the easy path for everyone to liberation, even those whose view are veiled by heavy karma.

Nevertheless, there might be another option. Looking at teachings from the Zen, Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions we find instructions given to ordinary people who could attain liberation. In fact, it is quite a central legend of Zen as we find it in the story of the 6th ancestor Caoxi Huineng. Gampopa taught without restriction his one sufficient path and Padmasambhava liberated many from all walks of life with a single pointing out instruction. Sure, it is true that in all three schools there were masters who spent decades in retreat and such, but they all supposed to have the means for common people. In the book Treasures from Juniper Ridge there is a very fitting terma on this, translated as Instruction for Women on Attaining Enlightenment Without Abandoning Daily Activities. But as it's happened with every teaching, religious history makes the ordinary in the present holy in the past. Once the bodhisattva was contrasted to the arhat in terms of not being worried about the outer discipline but the inner realisation, so it has happened with Zen and Vajrayana contrasted to the general Mahayana. Obviously, after a thousand years Zen and Tantra are the mainstream, like once "hinayana" was, while the alternatives, a new wave, might be hidden now. Or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2011 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Jikan said:

Some of the questions that came up for me while reading this:

Are "the once-human Buddhas and Bodhisattvas" usually presented as "the decisive agents of salvation" in Zen generally and the Taego school in particular?

If so, and also assuming that Batchelor's position is as the author describes it, does an atheistic attitude on the part of a student negate or preclude or make impossible the

beneficent activities of the bodhisattvas in their lives? That is: do you need to believe in the Vows of the Cry Regarder in order to be helped in any way by her, or do bodhisattvas just meet beings where they are and help where they can regardless of their adherence or doctrine?

Astus wrote:

Buddhas and bodhisattvas are not decisive agents in so far as their relevance for Zen stands only in the form of teachers, guides, examples, etc.

Ear Bodhisattva (Avalokita) is there for those who call her/him - so there is a prerequisite for knowledge and faith. As for the nature of help she/he can provide is limited to the capacity of the person being helped.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2011 at 12:53 AM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

mr. gordo said:

I mean, "the Buddha" has a religion named and after him called "Buddhism" where we have statements of his defining what his positions are. But hey, forget that, let's just take what we like, and discard what we don't, but still have the arrogance to call it Buddhism.

Yeshe D. said:

Interesting in that this is precisely what the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna have done.

All the best,

Geoff

Astus wrote:

Wow.

Jikan, if we take the Mahayana arguments for the authenticity of its teachings, well, that already shows how even in India they were very well aware of the fact that the Mahayana texts were not part of the canon then.

History was not invented by Europeans. Both in China and Tibet scholars tried to get the original texts, the correct translations and the real teachings while at the same time attacked texts that seemed dubious and forged. It is not "Buddhist Protestantism" to say that in any Buddhist canon there are layers of texts from different eras but an easily understandable fact. All the attempts in Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings to prove their authenticity superiority above the other shows very well how they came later and fought for becoming accepted. But you don't find in the agamas/nikayas a debate whether the seven factors of enlightenment or the four arhats are better as it would have been quite ridiculous if the Buddha had argued with his own teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2011 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not talking about returning to any original Buddhism but only the perceptible historical evolution of texts and traditions within Buddhism. What is tradition today was heresy a thousand years ago. So in a sense it is possible to approximately outline the teachings that are most probably taught by the Buddha and the early community.

As for the returning to the original teachings of Buddha, that's been used a couple of times as an argument, just think of the Sautrantikas, or when Mahayana followers say that Nagarjuna showed the truth against the false ideas of "abhidharmikas".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2011 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Zen (no matter which version) they teach that there is a transmission lineage coming from Shakyamuni and even beyond that from the previous buddhas up to the current generation of so called Zen patriarchs. This concept of transmission is especially cherished in the West as something central to Zen. Its importance is clearer if we understand that what is transmitted is the buddha-mind, the enlightenment of the buddha, consequently those receiving this transmission are equals of a buddha.

But if we put aside the religious idea and look at it historically it turns out the whole transmission is made up and has no factual basis. While the notion of this special transmission has a meaning in the context of Zen it is at the same time a device used by monks of the past to gain authority and prestige. Those who firmly believe in the importance of a "Zen Master" (with capitals) might find these scholarly things insulting and offensive towards Zen (although it seems to me that those scholars who research Zen's history do that not because it is such a good business but because they are interested in it, might as well be followers of the religion).

The situation with other schools is similar. There is an internal, mythological legend of the history of Buddhism and there is an external, scientific version. It is noteworthy that neither the internal nor the external view are finished or stable. An important difference in the two versions is in their purpose as one takes religious preferences while the other takes scientific ones. Thus one should see things for what they are and understand the different categories of views and statements. This is not a bad practice for being free from attachments to concepts that - as we can see from this very thread too - can cause emotional disturbances.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2011 at 1:17 AM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just because Mahayana and Vajrayana were not taught by Gautama doesn't mean they're wrong or anything like that. A very good example is Bön which has many teachings from the Prajnaparamita up to Dzogchen, still, it accepts no connection to Gautama. Does that mean that the Bön Prajnaparamita is incorrect while the Kagyu Prajnaparamita is correct? And I'm not talking about the quality of the translations.

I take the position similar to Huseng's: it is possible to see the basic ideas in the agamas/nikayas of what has become Mahayana. But that doesn't mean Gautama himself literally taught Mahayana. Which again doesn't mean it is not correct Buddhism, in the meaning and content.

Let me copy this text from Sthiramati that once existed on Anders' website (Leaves from the Buddha's Grove) but now it's hard to obtain (found

<http://sutras.iespana.es/shastras/gran-vehiculo.html>:

Sthiramati Bodhisattva

Entering the Great Vehicle [Mahayana]

[Q] Now we may desire to penetrate the meaning of 'Entering the Great Vehicle [Great Vehicle]'. What is the meaning of 'Entering the Great Vehicle'?

[A] I wrote this text for those who want to get rid of the cause of suffering. But you must also know that there might be those who approach a lax spiritual friend and take up a wrong and partial opinion as the Dharma. Then the newcomer might formulate a heretical view and, because of wrong mental application, be unable to penetrate to the True Meaning, unable to know the Enlightenment of the Buddha, and have doubt about his sayings. One who disparages the (Buddha's) holy sayings will then destroy the True Dharma, and have a great deal of evil retribution. As the Blessed One said, "the result of disparaging the Dharma is more heavy than the five grievous transgressions (killing mother, father, arhat, causing dissension in the Sangha or making Buddha bleed), and will bring immediate retribution. Because life in the downward paths is a long duration, the ripening of suffering will be experienced for a long while." And as the Sutra verses say:

"One who slanders the Dharma of the Great Vehicle goes to the lower states of being. This person experiences the ripening of his action and its true nature should be told. He's born deep in hell, and his body burns in great flames; the great torture of his incineration is always the result of sinful action. A blazing iron plow - for five hundred lives - rolls on the top of his tongue while the remainder of his body is struck with pain. If he manages to escape hell, he will still experience other forms of evil retribution and all his senses will be continually non-functioning and polluted; he'll never hear the sound

of Dharma. In the exceptional case of one who happens to hear the Dharma, it will again be that he will slander the Holy Dharma, and because of this he will go back to hell."

So all those defaming the Dharma should listen here. You should maintain an attitude of doubt toward the Great Vehicle. Just like Aryadeva says in verse:

"One who has little merit will not even feel doubt about the Dharma. But existence is shredded by the mere presence of doubt." - Catusataka 8.5

If one has doubt having heard all the fundamental teachings of the Great Vehicle, one's intellect will penetrate the subjects and be open to Enlightenment. One who has become open to Enlightenment will [then] simply bring about trust in the teaching, which will lead to further joy and happiness. One who brings about this joy and happiness will obtain the insight brought about by listening, pondering and meditating on the Dharma. One will then progress all the way to total understanding of the Awareness of all States [of being], just like the Buddha.

Thus, we have those who denigrate the Great Vehicle and will fall into the lower realms of being, and those who generate all good actions because of the Great Vehicle. One will thus decay or grow depending on their association [with Great Vehicle]. If one's desire is for Insight, one will travel the path to Enlightenment. It is the same with all beings, since they all have this ability equally. If Enlightenment were separate from the capacity of sentient beings, then the path to Enlightenment would be unobtainable. But, from the realm of all beings comes the Enlightenment of All Buddhas. The Ven. Nagarjuna, in verse, says:

"It doesn't descend from space, nor does it arise from the ground. Rather, the direct perception of Total Enlightenment only happens in those having [first] encountered unskillful emotional states." - Suhrillekha 116

Now this treatise is about entering the Great Vehicle. But what sort of entity is this thing called the Great Vehicle? The collection of scripture known as the "bodhisattva basket" is the Great Vehicle.

One may object that the Buddha spoke of neither the three vehicles nor of the Great Vehicle. However, both of these were identified by the Buddha with the term "three baskets of the doctrine" (tripitaka). As it is said in the Bodhisattva-pitaka-sutra:

"The Buddha addressed Ajaatasatru, 'Son of good family. There are three kinds of baskets. Which are these? There is the disciple's basket, the private buddha's basket, and the bodhisattvas' basket. Son of good family, we identify the term "three baskets" only by means of the Great Vehicle to be studied by all the bodhisattvas, not by means of the vehicles of the disciples or of the private Buddhas. Thus we call it the "three baskets". Why? The expression of the dharma concerns all of the three vehicles, and this is why it is called the "three baskets", yet only the dharma spoken to the bodhisattvas reflects the capacity to the practice of the three vehicles, so it is terms the "three baskets."'

“Son of good family, there are individuals who have the capability to train in one of three ways: those undertaking the disciples’ training, the private buddhas’ training, or the bodhisattvas’ training. Disciples do not study in the vehicle of the private buddhas since they are unable to penetrate its meaning. Likewise, private buddhas cannot penetrate the bodhisattva vehicle. Only the bodhisattvas are capable of studying others’ vehicles, yet they do not obtain realization in these paths but by means of the bodhisattva vehicle. Thus, theirs is the profound enlightenment of the Dharma to be practiced by the bodhisattvas. Because it has this significance, the bodhisattva vehicle is termed the “three baskets” and not the other’s vehicles.”

Other scriptures also elaborate the following exhaustive distinctions, which I am now going to summarize, so please listen. You may think that the Great Vehicle is not part of the three baskets. Then, the three baskets consist of: the Enumerated Discourses, the Middle-length Discourses, the Long Discourses, and the Scattered Discourses, constituting the one hundred thousand plus verses of the first basket; the discipline and the higher dharma, composing the two hundred thousand verses of the second basket; and the complete cultivations composing the third basket. This, in fact, is not to be identified with the three baskets. Why? Because many other scriptures would not be considered the word of the Buddha. Yet there are still other scriptures than those included in the discourses, the discipline, and the higher dharma. There are the works of the “scattered basket”, the Tiger Scripture, the Womb Scripture, the Advice to Kings, Prior Births of the Buddha, the Dependent Origination for Private Buddhas -- altogether eighty-four thousand baskets of doctrine. If only the three baskets are the word of the Buddha, then we would have the problem that not everything collected by the venerable Ananda would be considered the word of the Buddha. Thus, we should identify all of them with the term “basket”, and conclude that there are over one hundred thousand baskets of the dharma.

One may object that the Blessed One has previously said, “After my Nirvana, in the future there will come many who will sit around and argue, ‘This is the word of the Buddha, this is not the word of the Buddha.’” In response to this anticipated circumstance, the Tathagata has sealed his doctrine with the seal of the dharma. “If the meaning of a scripture is in harmony with the discourses, if it is in accord with the discipline, and if it does not contradict the nature of reality [dependent origination], then that scripture may be termed the word of the Buddha.”

Our response to this objection is that the Buddha certainly did not apply these criteria to the bodhisattva vehicle while exempting the disciple’s vehicle. The Buddha’s word is not dissimilar in either case but indicates a single nature to be sealed by the seal of the dharma. Now, as to your means of comparison between a scripture proposed as the word of the Buddha and the three baskets, is it done by means of the letter of the texts or by the significance? If it is by the letter, then it is impossible that any of the twelve sections of scripture should be the word of the Buddha, since they all have different verses, sections, and sentences. But if the comparison is performed by examining the meaning through reason which does not contradict the nature of reality, then a meaning which harmonizes with the significance of discourses and is characterized by reality

accordingly demonstrates its own significance. So those discourses which demonstrate the significance of the disciple's dharma belong to the disciples' vehicle. Those discourses which demonstrate the significance of the private buddhas' dharma belong to the private buddhas vehicle, and those discourses which demonstrate the significance of the bodhisattvas' dharma belong to the bodhisattvas' vehicle. . . Now the inquiry into the perspective equal for all the buddhas in the universe (as many as are particles of dust) is also the dharma to be received from an excellent spiritual friend. It is thus the complete Great Vehicle and termed the expanded discourses - immeasurable, unlimited, and not part of the disciples' dharma. Its meaning is very profound, and accordingly all the dharma to be cultivated by the disciples is found minutely included into the path of the Great Vehicle. It is great blessedness and this is what is meant by "in harmony with the discourses."

Now we should discuss the phrase, "in accord with the discipline." The holy path of all the three vehicles equally destroys desire, anger and hatred, which is the reason it is identified as discipline. Now the discourses discriminate cause and results, whereas the higher dharma discriminates the characteristics of real events, yet they both destroy the mental and emotional defilements. The Great Vehicle also speaks of the elimination of all evil events, the defilements of desire, anger, and ignorance. The Buddha taught the disciples to purify their own three varieties of action - body, speech, and mind - and called that the discipline. To the bodhisattvas, he taught them to purify their own three varieties of action - even going as far as the accomplishments of Buddha - by grasping and completing the perfection of virtue. Morality itself is to be grasped by the bodhisattvas. By generating the thought of awakening for all beings they are able to obtain the fruit called absolute truth. Thus the Great Vehicle is in accord with the discipline.

Finally, it does not contradict reality. As none of the three vehicles speaks of the contradiction of the twelve parts of dependent origination, neither does the Great Vehicle.

So, one who investigates well this issue realizes that the Great Vehicle is completely in accord with the threefold seal of the dharma. Of course, if one does not well investigate it, then neither the Great Vehicle nor any of the three vehicles is accepted. And one deprecating the Great Vehicle then commits the gravest of faults.

If you now maintain the Great Vehicle to be the word of Mara, and not that of the Buddha, then we must reply that in none of the discourses do we truly find the pronouncement that the Great Vehicle is Mara's word. So, this objection cannot be trusted. If you believe that to call the Great Vehicle the word of the Buddha is like a worm in the body of the Teacher that still feeds on his corpse, then all of the vehicles feed off the dharma body of the Buddha, not just the Great Vehicle. By just this token, it cannot be the word of Mara since only the Buddha is able to express it.

Bodhisattvas have immeasurable, unlimited, incalculable qualities that reach as far as the very hells. Facing Nirvana directly, they still return to the cycle of birth and death through their sympathy for living beings. Here they remain for an incalculable eon and

experience for a very long time heroic suffering. You see, the vehicle of the bodhisattvas, the great beings (mahasattvas), is actually the Great Suffering Vehicle. Their search for the highest fruit is inconceivable. They have left behind all the disciples and private buddhas, surpassing their efforts. Fulfilling all the qualities of enlightenment, they transcend the stage of the facile “knowable.”

How is the bodhisattvas’ vehicle the Great Suffering Vehicle? Suppose that a person might take a ship across the ocean. On the high seas, an evil wind arises, making the waves appear like mountains. Other countless calamities like this occur at the same time. All of his companions are anxious and develop an overwhelming fear, but the captain has long experience in handling the sails and has the merit of the ability to overcome difficulties. Transcending his troubles, he seizes the great precious gem in the ocean.

The bodhisattva, the great being, is at rest in the sea of birth and death. He does not trust the troubles that are entertained by going down the evil path on account of listening to a poor spiritual friend. During the first incalculable eon, the bodhisattva cultivates the practices associated with the stage of purity and seeks pure liberation. During the second incalculable eon, the bodhisattva cultivates the practices of pure contemplation. During the third incalculable eon, the bodhisattva cultivates the practices of pure gnosis and overcomes the obscurities of the stage of the facile knowable. Therefore, the bodhisattvas’ vehicle is termed the Suffering Vehicle. Completing all the ten stages, he obtains them certainly and clearly. Because of the completion of all practices, he obtains the highest, complete, perfect awakening. Through his cognition of final gnosis, he accomplishes the great accomplishment.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2011 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Huseng said:

Likewise, some might have seen Shakyamuni as a wise man and others something transcendental. The texts that later generations relied on allow for either interpretation. For example how do you interpret Shakyamuni complaining about a sore back? Was it skilful means? Or did he really have a sore back? Did the Buddha not eradicate all his negative karma -- why would he still suffer from a sore back if he had?

Astus wrote:

There's the funny story in the Vimalakirti Sutra about the Buddha asking for milk because he's sick, Ananada goes to get milk, Vimalakirti rebukes him harshly saying that the Buddha's body is the dharmakaya which can't be sick and finally a heavenly voice tells the poor fellow he should nevertheless take the milk to the Tathagata. So, the buddha is perfect but still gets sick and needs some milk.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2011 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: 信心 and how to develop it

Content:

Astus wrote:

"When I carefully consider the matter, my birth in the Pure land is settled without doubt for the very reason that I do not rejoice about that which I should be bursting with joy. ... If our hearts were filled with joyful happiness and we desired to go swiftly to the Pure Land, we might be misled to think that perhaps we are free of blind passion." (Tannisho, IX.)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 8th, 2011 at 9:20 AM

Title: Re: Dr. Reginald Ray

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is fascinating how nobody actually tried to look up in Dr. Ray's many publications what he says about rebirth. He had a two part article on it in Shambhala Sun (not bad ones either):

"Karma's central place in the tradition is shown by the Buddha's own enlightenment, which consisted of nothing but seeing the full range and extent of karma-that nothing in the universe stands outside karma's domain."

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2232

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2236&Itemid=0

One extra:

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2377&Itemid=243

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 11th, 2011 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: 信心 and how to develop it

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nosta,

They're not opposing views but different approaches. As you may well know, in PL there's made a separation of self-power and other-power. They basically mean attitudes. Self-power PL practices include visualisation and recitation when they're done with the intent of attaining birth through the taming of the mind. Other-power practice means that you rely on Amita Buddha's vow-power to attain birth. In practice it comes down to the recitation of the name with the intent of being mindful of the Buddha (nianfo -

buddha-mindfulness) not necessarily to attain any special mind-state but to nurture faith. Thus recitation and faith are not really two but a single path. Honen affirms this in his <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/ichimai.html>: "Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning. There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself. Reciting the nembutsu and believing in birth in the Pure Land naturally gives rise to the three minds and the four modes of practice."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

All quotes from the text in the OP:

"In Krishnamurti's view enlightenment comes by its own accord where and when it chooses, and there is little that we can do about it."

The clearly denies the whole point of the fourth noble truth, without which there is no Buddhism. It is a form of view of no causality.

"Enlightenment is a state that is timeless which means that its chief attribute is one of no-time, meaning no involvement with ego or ego-created time."

Enlightenment being timeless against thoughts being of time is pretty much a dualistic concept unlike those of Mahayana teachers.

The only thing remaining sacred in Krishnamurti's view is that which thought is incapable of capturing or the unknowable. All thoughts are mere human creations of the human brain stem and are forever incapable of capturing that which is infinite and unknowable.

First, this is disregarding the function of methods. Second, it doesn't show any knowledge of wisdom.

I don't know JK's teachings, haven't read a single book from him. But if these represent his views I fail to see how it resembles the teachings of the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 8:43 AM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dexing's question moved to new topic:

<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=3037>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 8:47 AM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there any summary of JK's teachings? To have something definitive to compare.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a list of works, just to show how the "legend of Chan" is not really the "history of Chan":

John R. McRae

The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism

Seeing through Zen: encounter, transformation, and genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism

Wendi Leigh Adamek

The mystique of transmission: on an early Chan history and its contexts

Jinhua Jia

The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- Through Tenth-Century China

Mario Poceski

Ordinary mind as the way: the Hongzhou school and the growth of Chan Buddhism

Albert Welter

The Linji lu and the creation of Chan orthodoxy: the development of Chan's records of sayings literature

Morten Schlutter

How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China

Jiang Wu

Enlightenment in dispute: the reinvention of Chan Buddhism in seventeenth-century China

There are other books, like the series edited by Steven Heine and Dale Stuart Wright, also a couple of works by Bernard Faure. But I think just reading McRae's "Seeing through Zen" is a very good introduction.

The point is, there is not just any pre-Buddhist Chan but there isn't even a clear cut Chan as represented by the tradition. Frankly, there isn't such Chan even now.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Dharmakara said:

I recall coming across a critical examination of JK that seemed to cover such, though I'm going to have to look around and see if I can find it again.

Sorry, my mistake... it's actually the official repository of Krishnatrui's teachings, which includes search text feature:

<http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/krishnamurti-teachings/index.php> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

I was hoping you've got something of 1-5 pages size.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Sherab said:

Huseng's argument is valid if we confined ourselves to just to the realm of experience of the five senses.

But Norman has a point too because in my view, an argument of infinite regress means that there cannot be a complete explanation. There will always be something missing.

In reading the so-called "Mind Only" sutras, I get the sense that there is an implicate order from which explicate orders of sentience and matter arises. Within that implicate order, past, present and future are not distinct.

Dzogchen seemed to me to be a little more explicit about this implicate order, which it termed as rigpa. From rigpa, our world of phenomena, including both sentience and non-sentience things, arises. Within the sentience that arose is an innate ignorance which the source of all our deluded actions (karma) and which resulted in our endless cycling in existence.

In rigpa (implicate order), the phenomenon of the flow of time is not there. When our world of phenomena (explicate order) arose, past, present and future all arose together.

Astus wrote:

Huseng's argument applies to the mind-stream too, as the pinpointing of a beginning raises the mentioned problems. Also, if you affirm that defiled beings arose from a pure mind (rigpa) means that either defilement came from nowhere or that the mind wasn't pure. On the other hand, supposing an eternal mind is also problematical, that's why

eventually people came up with the concept of the mind-stream, which is an application of the teaching of dependent origination.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakara,

First of all, it'd be good to identify what kind of Chan one means as it has never been a single set of doctrines but rather diverse, especially in the early period (7-10th century). Saying that Chan is "without words and from mind to mind" sounds inappropriate for the me, the reasons being: (1) "wordlessness" is a concept found often in the Prajnaparamita teachings and thus in every Mahayana school; (2) the concept of a transmission lineage of patriarchs was gradually developed throughout the centuries starting with the disciples of Shenxiu and the so called Lankavatara school, their text found in Dunhuang and translated by JC Cleary in Zen Dawn as "Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka". The whole idea of Huineng and that he was the real 6th patriarch came a bit later, just like the many stories of Bodhidharma. The complete transmission lineage solidified in the 11th century with the publication of the first collection of such a record, the Jingde(-era 1004-8) Lamp Transmission Record (Jingde Chuandeng Lu 景德傳燈錄) in 1004 after which only minor changes occurred.

In my opinion there is hard to find any doctrine within Chan that is not from Buddhist teachings but other sources. Also, Chan teachers of the early period were keen on establishing their teachings on the different sutras to make clear it to others their authenticity.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakara,

Besides there being <http://www.purifymind.com/BuildingBlocks.htm> with the text you quoted, it shows no author or source. Also, it displays a few misunderstandings, like there being any kind of "Universal Mind" to return to, or that of a "philosophical Daoism" (which is itself non-existent but a creation of orientalist) confused with Buddhist teachings. So I doubt it has any relevance to this discussion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2011 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Dharmakara said:

Came across a PDF entitled "An Instance of Dependent Origination"... it's described as a terse summary of Krishnamurti's teachings, though not sure how many pages as I don't have a PDF reader on this computer:

<http://www.shin-ibs.edu/documents/pwj3-9/06Rodrigues39.pdf> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Astus wrote:

Perhaps it'd be the best if you could sum up in a few points what JK says.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 13th, 2011 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you say, that Chan developed from the mixture of Chinese culture and Buddhism, presupposes that it was more of an unconscious, natural progress rather than the work of highly educated elite Buddhist monks. But as we can see from the historical sources - both internal and external to the tradition - Chan was the domain of high ranking monks, i.e. they were the primary authorities and transmitters of the teaching. Being a Chan master who is a member of the lineage (n.b. this is from the Song dynasty on when an actual Chan school was conceived) was a matter of prestige rather than a purely religious thing (meaning that it wasn't about "if you're enlightened you're a master"). By all this I want to say that Chan is not some inconceivable, mystical tradition but a product of outstanding Buddhist monks who were trained in both worldly and religious teachings who could tell very well the difference between Buddhism and other views. A good example is Guifeng Zongmi's Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity (translated by Peter N. Gregory) where he explains how Confucianism and Taoism are on one part equals of Buddhist moral teachings while on the other they are only provisional and mistaken doctrines that don't lead to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 13th, 2011 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Krishnamurti and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakara,

I've seen that discussion with Walpola Rahula before. That is obviously Rahula's take of JK's views, so it'd be difficult to discuss how JK actually relates to Buddhism when there's hardly anything from Krishnamurti himself. What is apparent is JK's refutation of all forms of organised doctrine and practice, quite opposing perspective to the

Buddha's Dharma and Vinaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 13th, 2011 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that 1000 years of Chinese Buddhism was struggling? Not to mention that Chan did not bring about any new institution in the monastic system except for the spread of "house rules" as an extra for the Pratimoksha and bodhisattva precepts and the "patriarchal lineage" as a metaphoric family organisation tool.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 13th, 2011 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

norman said:

A conceptual, abstract "beginning" is always implied whenever we consider rebirth. It provides the contextual background of our present assumed birth. That is, thinking of ourselves as having been reborn into this period of time is inconceivable unless it is put into relation to what is past – and if you perceive the past as being endless you'd find it hard to motivate the (assumed) karma that we're supposed to suffer from. I say supposed, because when should we begin to measure it (karma) in time, if there is no limit to it? It's like trying to measure the quantity of water in a bottomless well. I'd appreciate it's about 5 litres.

Astus wrote:

Problem 1: if every effect have to have a cause, as cause is an effect too, there can't be a causeless cause, thus a first cause is not possible.

Problem 2: understanding birth as a becoming of an entity supposes that such an entity was non-existent but now exists, which is saying that from nothing comes something, or that something becomes without cause.

Problem 1 is to show how a beginning point is fallacious from a causal point of view.

Problem 2 points to the mistake of conceiving fixed beings (atman) instead of mind-streams.

Nagarjuna says

(<http://www.stephenbatchelor.org/verses2.htm#Investigation%20of%20Extremes%20of%20Before%20and%20After>):

"When asked, "is a before-extreme evident?" the great Muni said, "it is not." Samsara has no beginning, no end; it has no before, no after. For that without beginning [and] end, where can a middle be in that? Therefore, it is not possible for it to have before, after,

and simultaneous phases."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 13th, 2011 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

As elements distinguishing Chan, a good comparison could be with Tiantai as it was its rival school for a couple of centuries. Tiantai has methods of both gradual and sudden type and has a patriarchal lineage - both from the time before the emergence of Chan. In fact, Chan has profited from teachings found in Tiantai, including its meditation techniques.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 15th, 2011 at 9:11 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

Norman,

The analysis of time in the MMK is in the 19th chapter. This chapter (11) is mainly about samsara, and generally about the concepts of beginning, middle and end. As none of the three can be established as truly existent samsara is not truly existent. Not being truly existent is its inconceivability. Saying that samsara is eternal is of course equally wrong as it'd mean it is truly existent but this time from an eternalist point of view.

Here's Tsongkhapa's commentary to verse 1:

Ocean of Reasoning p. 266-268 said:

If cyclic existence existed inherently, then like such things as a pot, it would also have a beginning and an end. But it is said that cyclic existence does not have a beginning or end, in that the cycle of birth, aging, and death does not have an origin or a terminus. Various non-Buddhist teachers, including Purana a, held a discussion and decided to ask the Buddha whether he knew that this cyclic existence has a beginning or end. They said that if he says that he does, this would contradict the many statements that there is no creator and that nothing arises without a cause, but if he says that he does not, he would contradict his statement that he is omniscient. Then they asked him "Hey, Gautama! Do you know that this cyclic existence has a beginning?" The great sage replied, "There is no knowledge of a beginning." Thus, having said that cyclic existence has no beginning or end, he said clearly that it does not exist essentially. Therefore, since the origin and terminus are not seen, cyclic existence does not exist essentially; cyclic existence is like the circle made by swinging a glowing ember.

Someone might say, "The statement that cyclic existence has no origin demonstrates that there is no specific point from which it arises, nor any point after which it does not continue. How could it be tenable that to say that neither of these exists is to say

explicitly that cyclic existence does not exist essentially?” But here we reply that the statement, “Cyclic existence has neither origin nor terminus,” does not mean what you say it does, but instead means that he has also said that there is neither a beginning nor an end. This means that they do not exist ultimately. Buddhapalita also says in the same vein,

In accordance with the presentation of the ultimate, the Buddha has said “there is neither beginning nor end.”

Thus, this does not contradict Prasannapada’s earlier explanation. Suppose someone thought as follows: Responding “I don’t know” to the question, “Do you know that there is a beginning?” is a conventional statement. How could this be a premise for the assertion that cyclic existence is essenceless?

Here, consider the similar argument in *Yuktisastika*:

If through the elimination of afflictions
monks depart from cyclic existence,
Why have the buddhas not
Explained the beginning?

If there were an end of cyclic existence—and of aggregates that exist through their own characteristics—then there would be no reason for saying that there is no initial beginning.

Suppose someone argued as follows: If the teacher had denied that there is a beginning and end of cyclic existence, then this would contradict the following statement in sutra that there is elimination at the end:

Therefore, oh monks, one should make strenuous effort to eliminate cyclic existence. Thinking that, you should begin training immediately. [*Samyuttanikaya* XV *Anamataggasamyuttam*, IX *Dandasuttam*, Vol. II, 616]

There is no contradiction here, because this quotation from sutra presents only the cyclic existence of those “sentient beings who are ignorant” as having no end, but for those who have completely eliminated the afflictions, there is an end.

Suppose one thought, would it not be contradictory for that which lacks an origin to have a terminus? There is no contradiction, because, as *Catuhṣataka* says,

Just as the terminus of the seed is seen,
But the origin is not seen,
Without completing all of the causes,
Nor does birth occur. [VIII: 25]

Just as even though the seed does not have an origin, there is a terminus when it is burned by fire, although birth does not have a beginning for those who have not completed the causes through the exhaustion of the afflictions, it is said that there is a terminus—the exhaustion of that birth which occurs due the afflictions. Here, although the origin and terminus are equally nonexistent with respect to the way things really are,

conventionally, the origin and terminus are not similar with respect to their existence and nonexistence.

Suppose someone says that although it has neither origin nor terminus essentially it must have a middle essentially, since that has not been refuted.

Astus wrote:

And another explanation by

http://www.ktgrinpoche.org/Q8_samsara_does_not_truly_exist.pdf:

If samsara actually existed, it would have to have a beginning, an end, and some span of time in the middle. Analysis, however, cannot find any beginning to samsara. Whatever our current situation in samsara, it had to have its own causes, and those causes had to have their own causes, and so on—nothing in the cycle of existence occurs without causes to bring it into being. We can therefore never find an “original cause” that would constitute the beginning of cyclic existence, because if there were one, it would have arisen without a cause itself, which is impossible. Thus, there was no point when samsara began, and how could something that never began ever end? Without a beginning or an end, how could there be any period of time in the middle? Since it has neither beginning, middle, nor end, samsara does not truly exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 16th, 2011 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Amitabha Sutra commentary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ouyi Zhixu's (1599-1655) commentary to the Amitabha Sutra:

http://www.ymba.org/freebooks_main.html

Xingyun: <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/D%20-%20Chinese%20Mahayana%20Buddhism/Authors/Hsing%20Yun/The%20Amitabha%20Sutra/14%20Amitabha%20Sutra.htm>

Reading the Amitabha Sutra in Sanskrit line by line with vocabulary and commentary

http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/en/lesson/fan/lesson_fan2.htm#1.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Lure of Bhutanese happiness index

Content:

Astus wrote:

It certainly sounds more challenging to make people happy than to get them a proper salary. Not that any of that are generally achieved by most countries.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

Norman,

Yes, that goes for the empty part of samsara and time and all concepts. But as for the conventional side, we can very well say that there was never a starting point of samsara, there was never a first cause (i.e. God). Buddhist cosmology talks about the periods of arising and destruction, a never stopping cycle of events.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 7:11 AM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Guifeng Zongmi - an influential Chan and Huayan master whose teachings are still taught in Korea where Batchelor learned his Zen things - categorised the teachings into five levels of which the first is the path of humans and gods. Generally the path of humans and gods covers the teachings that are good for gaining one a rebirth as a human or a god, i.e. the ethical and certain meditative practices. Removing the doctrine of karma and rebirth from a teaching makes it obviously outside of any teaching that is considered Buddhist in any sense. So from this perspective Buddhism without belief in rebirth means not Buddhism but an outer path that doesn't lead to any kind of liberation but at best to a higher birth if ethical teachings are kept.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Chaz said:

It's been my understanding that "Right View" involves a correct perspective on the 4 Noble truths. Rebirth, for one thing, isn't present in that understanding.

Unless I'm missing something really important, your statement sounds more like trying to maintain a doctrinal status quo than trying to promote or preserve "right view".

Seems to be a common thread Buddhist boards these day.

Astus wrote:

In the list of ten unwholesome actions the last one is "wrong views". It is defined in the Saleyyaka Sutta (MN 41) in the following way:

Or he has wrong view, distorted vision, thus: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed, no fruit and ripening of good and bad karmas, no this world, no other world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously (born) beings, no good and virtuous

monks and brahmans that have themselves realized by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.'

Also see this teaching by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw: <http://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh245-p.html> where under right view he gives a detailed explanation of what it actually consists of.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

TMingyur said:

Considering that the "don't know mind" is a practice approach agnosticism appears to comply.

There is however a subtle bolderline between agnosticism and rejection. What is what in a given case may only be decided based on textual analysis.

Astus wrote:

It is a great mistake to confuse Seung Sahn's "don't know mind" with agnosticism. In

<http://www.kwanumzen.org/zen.html> it is a term equal to

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=77&t=3057>. Agnosticism is being hindered by doubt, the fifth of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_hindrances.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

We are then back to the problem of beginningless causality-chain.

Why would a beginningless causality be a problem? There is samsara without a beginning, consciousness without beginning, ignorance without beginning. That is, there has never been a first moment of delusion, a creation, a start of existence, a source.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 17th, 2011 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

Norman,

What do you mean dharmas are not in time? What about their basic description of them being momentary and in that momentariness they have the phases of arising and disappearing?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2011 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Chaz said:

In light of this thread becoming an exercise in stating who is qualified to teach the Dharma and who isn't, please tell me what qualifies Ven Ledi to teach on the subject?

I imagine you find Venerable's teaching most acceptable seeing as you're recommending him, but to be fair, simply agreeing with a teacher isn't sufficient credential (although disagreement seems to be in other ways).

Astus wrote:

I have not addressed the issue whether anyone is qualified or not qualified to teach. In my view it is the teaching that matters and not the teacher. To tell if a person is really a great teacher takes first of all personal contact and long term relationship. Sure this is a bit extreme but a measure I like to keep in mind.

For instance, when Batchelor was in Budapest my friend met him and I've heard many good things about him. I've also found certain positive things about Batchelor and what he does. But that is not the same as agreeing with him in all things. And just because I can't agree with the concept that Buddhism can be fully comprehended and practised without rebirth doesn't mean I have to have bad feelings about anyone who teaches just that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2011 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Little extra on karma, rebirth and speech.

"Harsh speech — when indulged in, developed, & pursued — is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from harsh speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.040.than.html>)

"Those who with body and mouth curse at people, after death fall into the Tongue Ripping Hell." (Karma of Good and Evil Sutra T85n2881_p1381c19) More:
<http://www.cttbusa.org/esscommentary/earthstore5.htm>.

For further contemplation:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.3.03.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2011 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: "Free Belief Buddhism"

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you're discussing some Tibetan teachers, here's one I read yesterday,

"Some people find comfort in thinking that death is just like a fire that was put out or water that dried up. But death isn't at all like that. According to the words of the fully enlightened Buddha and the many texts of the bodhisattvas, the mind doesn't die. When the body dies, the mind remains under the power of habitual patterns and karma. Thus, those who trust the Buddha and the tradition he inspired will believe in birth, death, and the cause and effect of karmic actions."

(Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche - Repeating the Words of the Buddha, Rangjung Yeshe Pub., 1992. p. 95)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2011 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Such explanations by its very nature, can never be a complete explanation."

Sorry, but this is just repeating that it is a problem and not answering why it is a problem.

"If you agree with Nagarjuna's argument, then there can be no real moments and no real momentariness, since the same argument about the impossibility of a before, after and simultaneous phase is applicable to moments as well."

Ultimately not even dharmas exist, so they can't be outside of time. Conventionally, however, the Abhidharma system is not at fault. An important difference between Madhyamaka and Abhidharma teachings is how the two truths are defined. In Abhidharma the dharmas are ultimate, in Madhyamaka dharmas are conventional only. However, being conventional doesn't mean it is non-existent or not true at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 19th, 2011 at 12:42 AM

Title: Re: Share Your Favorite Buddhist Blogs

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://wakeupandlaugh.wordpress.com/> - group blog of followers and admirers of Daehaeng Kunsunim.

<http://sujato.wordpress.com/> - the title says it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 19th, 2011 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: The so-called emptiness of objects

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Mahāyāna doctrines stop before asserting any sort of external phenomena."

Prasangika Madhyamaka specifically affirms external phenomena, it's even listed among their "unique tenets".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 19th, 2011 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Rebirth and endless time

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

This is not a series of questions about what was before or after but a system of dependent origination which is simply a universal law stating that things arise dependently and not without a cause, from which comes there is no first cause existing without a cause of its own, consequently mind-streams are eternal.

Ultimately dharmas don't exist, just like anything else, but then, there is the conventional existence of the dharmas. It is exactly because of being conventional that ultimately they're not established and empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 21st, 2011 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just to re-emphasise what Swampflower said, the paths (sravaka, pratyeka, bodhisattva) are primarily about motivation and not doctrine. Compared to the sravaka way the extra what a bodhisattva does is the accumulation of merits. In terms of wisdom sravaka and bodhisattva are equal. Also, the whole concept of a bodhisattvayana is not a "Mahayana" product but has existed in schools like the Sarvastivada and Dharmagupta - and many of their interpretations became mainstream in Mahayana - just as it does in Theravada now.

I find it a mistaken concept to believe that there is a clear border between "Hinayana" and "Mahayana" teachings. Keep in mind that there has never been a school or group of schools called Hinayana, it's just a convenient term to call most of Indian Buddhist schools. Thus what one may consider Mahayana teachings are in many cases found word by word in earlier "Hinayana" texts and schools, including the idea that a bodhisattva has to practise through many aeons and go through the five paths (accumulation, preparation, insight, meditation, no more learning). So a "Mahayana follower" is the one who focuses on walking to bodhisattva path instead of the sravaka way but it is no way a rejection of any of the teachings of Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 21st, 2011 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: The so-called emptiness of objects

Content:

Astus wrote:

"How can there be an origin to anything which is empty?"

Emptiness means impermanence, impermanence is arising, remaining and disappearing. Only empty things can have an origin and an end. But exactly because there is an origin there is no real (eternal and independent) origin, because there is cause there is no real cause.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 21st, 2011 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hanzze,

None of the four defeats in your quote may come from studying the Pali Canon but rather the opposites of them. Also, on of the essential practices of bodhisattvas, the four immeasurables, are articulated in quite a few suttas of the Pali Canon.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 22nd, 2011 at 3:27 AM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hanzze,

Teachings to reach human and heavenly birth are very much present in Mahayana, not to mention methods to attain earthly welfare (e.g. mantras and rituals). An important point is that whatever Mahayana teaching you may find, they're all built upon the earlier teachings, in this case represented by the Pali Canon (although Mahayana has used the

Sanskrit texts and not the Pali). Thus we could say that Mahayana includes the teachings found in the Nikayas and accepts them as valid Buddha-speech.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 22nd, 2011 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no danger in losing bodhicitta because one studies the very teachings of the Buddha. In fact, bodhicitta is not a thing one can lose, but an attitude and view one has to develop and maintain. Shakyamuni was a perfect teacher and he had no problem at all with teaching so many things. How on earth could it be in any way dangerous to study them?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2011 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hanzze,

How does this not answer your original question?

Unknown said:

There is no danger in losing bodhicitta because one studies the very teachings of the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2011 at 5:46 AM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"However there are teachings about bodhicitta in the sutras and commentaries of the Mahayana."

There are also a couple of Mahayana sutras and other texts not dealing with bodhicitta. There are also other texts within Mahayana teaching about an even higher path than the bodhisattvayana.

The Abhidharmakosabhasyam (vol. 2, chapter 4., section VI., verses 108-112, p. 690-694), containing both Vaibhasika and Sautrantika teachings, elaborates on what a bodhisattva is and what such a being practices to achieve buddhahood. Naturally it mentions both bodhicitta and the paramitas.

Here's an analysis of the paramitas and the bodhisattva path within Theravada by Acariya Dhammaphala:
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/wheel409.html>

See this very fine essay by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi that clarifies certain points about common misunderstandings:
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/arahantsbodhisattvas.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2011 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think you are mixing up "bodhisattvayana" and "sutrayana".

Not exactly. Vajrayana does have the attitude of putting itself higher than what was generally understood as the bodhisattva path, but that is a debate or discussion for a different thread. But I can point to East-Asian Mahayana teachings about the Ultimate Path, the Tathagata Vehicle, the sudden and perfect teaching found within Tiantai, Huayan and Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 24th, 2011 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) : Will it stick ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"After observing this movement for 30 years, my conclusion is that Vajrayana is not really suitable for most people in both the West and in Asia, including Tibet. You cannot generalize, of course. There are certainly exceptions, but in most cases it is not suitable."

Shamar Rinpoche in "An Answer to a Question Raised about Bodhi Path - Why the Bodhi Path Centers I organized are not Vajrayana?", 06.07.10 - <http://www.shamarpa.org> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

It is a valid point to make a distinction between Tibetan Buddhism and Vajrayana. I think there are lot of publications on Tibetan Buddhism, and it is still developing and growing, that generally speaking Tibetan Buddhism is now an important and significant part of Western Buddhism. How much of that is Vajrayana is a good question. For instance, I don't see tantras getting translated, only a few are available (not counting short 1-10 pages texts used internally by communities). And even those major ones translated (can think of only 3 now - Hevajra, Guhyagarbha, Cakrasamvara) they're done mainly with scholarly purposes (which is not a problem in itself, imo). So, while teachers are happy to share Dharma with the people, who spreads Vajrayana on all levels? Are there Western Vajra-masters?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 24th, 2011 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: Why danger of Elder teachings for Mahayana follower?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I believe there's enough said about the Pali Canon and bodhicitta, plus that discussion has stopped. Now the thread is locked.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 25th, 2011 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) : Will it stick ?

Content:

Pero said:

Probably because it's not so easy to translate tantras.

Astus wrote:

I don't know anything about that. But since some have managed to translate them, it can't be impossible. Also, there is a growing number of tantric texts, like those made by the http://www.tibetanclassics.org/list_of_volumes.html or the <http://www.aibs.columbia.edu/?q=node/8>. Personally I find it strange that while many Tibetan teachers have given mass Kalacakra initiations, the text itself is only in Tibetan (and perhaps some other Asian languages).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 25th, 2011 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) : Will it stick ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Many lineages have a quite large body of texts, which in practical terms are much more necessary for practice than the Indian root tantras."

That is a practical perspective and sure most of the practitioners would not ever study those root texts. But if we consider having monks with higher studies it'd be important to provide the more complicated parts beyond the minimal requirements.

"A more important problem is funding monastics and lay practitioners who are ready for advanced, long term retreat."

It is then the same as in every other Buddhist group, proper monetary support and large enough lay base for that. To reach that there's a great demand for marketing and preaching, not just to the small community. And this points to the same thing, the need for monasteries. No matter how easy or hard it is for laymen to follow the path, only monastics (or paid clergy) are qualified to maintain the tradition. Thus to have

Vajrayana / Tibetan Buddhism stay around, it needs people willing to pay for it and take the concept of giving and merit to heart.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 26th, 2011 at 2:08 AM

Title: Re: Erik Pema Kunzang offically a Dharma teacher now.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sadhu! Sadhu!

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 26th, 2011 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Levels of enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, first of all, there are the 52 levels of enlightenment

(<https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh/%E4%BA%94%E5%8D%81%E4%BA%8C%E4%BD%8D>:

ten faiths 十信, ten abodes 十住, ten practices 十行, ten transferences 十迴向, ten

grounds 十地, ultimate enlightenment 等覺, wonderful enlightenment 妙覺). There are

also other divisions, like the

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=57 (六即佛), and other common levels used in Mahayana

(http://www.lotsawahouse.org/patru/stages_and_paths.html).

Specifically Zen levels are the so called "five ranks" (五位), and the "four (positions) of host and guest" (四主賓), and there can be a few others, depending on how we take it.

But there are two important things to be clear about. First, that the doctrines you find generally in Mahayana are accepted by Zen too, and in most of the cases there is no need for any "Zen teaching" on them. Second, Zen is a quite diverse school for a couple of reasons, therefore different teachers and lineages use different doctrines. What I find a common pattern that goes back to the early masters like Baizhang Huaihai is a three-level setting that corresponds quite well to certain Sanlun and Tiantai doctrines and can be seen in this teaching by Ven. Shengyan:

http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/chan_garden/chan_garden3.aspx?sn=48.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 26th, 2011 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Depending on what we take as the Yogacara position, either it is hardly used by anyone or it's mostly accepted. If Yogacara means their sophisticated teachings with that Abhidharmic style, not many. If it's just accepting the teachings of consciousness-only, 8 consciousnesses and three svabhavas, it's accepted in most of East-Asian doctrines

and in the Kagyu, Nyingma and Jonang schools. But this second kind is rather called the Tathagatagarbhavada, imo.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2011 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Kyerim and Dzogrim by HE Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've found it a very neat summary of different aspects of Vajrayana. Thanks for the link.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2011 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

TMingyur said:

The OP stated "consciousness only" in context of "Yogacara". And this is what I am referring to.

Astus wrote:

I don't follow you. Cittamatra and Yogacara are almost the same words.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2011 at 4:47 PM

Title: Questioning Height

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Agama/Nikaya teachings can be taken under two categories: early teachings (historically) and fundamental/basic teachings (doctrinally). On them were built the Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Tathagatagarbha and Vajrayana teachings. What the many developments brought about for Buddhism were a large number of skilful means and a more sophisticated view. Now, my question is if there's any validity for stating that one teaching is higher than the other. There are two perspectives: the teaching and the practitioner. From the point of the teaching, the more forms and methods it has the better. From the point of the practitioner, the stronger one's obstructions are more skilful means are needed to be applied. Thus the most varied teaching fits the largest number of people, while the simplest teaching is for the smallest number. This makes the later teachings lower doctrinally and higher applicably. What do you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2011 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Height

Content:

Astus wrote:

They're doctrinally lower in the sense that there are more skilful means applied, more "smoke and mirrors" to help beings. It's like the Buddha showing Nanda the heavenly maidens who eventually achieves Nirvana.

Well, calling teachings higher and lower is very much part of Mahayana, so I find it important to address it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2011 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Height

Content:

Rael said:

If a teaching is all about Love and compassion then it is a product of the turning of the Dharma Wheel.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism only love and compassion doesn't lead to liberation but rather to the brahma-heavens.

TMingyur said:

The sravaka teachings cannot be compared to the Mahayana teachings because their intended audience is different.

Astus wrote:

What teaching is it meant only for sravakas but not for others? Even the five dhyani buddhas are equated to the different skandhas and the threefold training is used by everyone within Buddhism. Mahayana teachings are based upon the basics without what it couldn't stand at all. What I'm saying is that what came after the core speeches are further elaborations and embellishments on those basic tenets for the sake of helping beings.

Pero said:

Why do you think varied != simple?

Astus wrote:

By simply I didn't mean easy but less complicated. Like the difference between a piece of clay and a thousand-armed Avalokita statue.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2011 at 8:07 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Height

Content:

Pero said:

To what are you referring too with "later" here?

Astus wrote:

Teachings that followed those before them. That is, Madhyamaka is later than Abhidharma but earlier than Yogacara, while Yogacara is earlier than Vajrayana. Historically earlier and later, which also reflects how one teaching is built upon another.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2011 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Height

Content:

tobes said:

singular in its assertion of truth and meaning?

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that to accord with different inclinations you transform the teaching to look more attractive, thus setting up more steps before the end. It's what the Lotus Sutra's chapters on skilful means and the three parables are about. The difference in what I say here is that unlike that sutra's positioning a later teaching as the final intention and greater revelation, the argument here is that all the different teachings lead within themselves to the same realisation (not three but one vehicle) and there are no successive attainments (arhat, bodhisattva, buddha).

tobes said:

But maybe I would say that any genealogy has twists and turns, tensions and ambiguities.

Astus wrote:

Certainly it is good to see how different teachings emerged and come to dominate depending on its environment.

TMingyur said:

So the question as to "height of teachings" can be validly asked only in the context of either Mahayana or sravakayana, but it is not valid across sravakayana and Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

The differentiation of inferior and great vehicle is only within a Mahayana context which makes comparison valid even according to your argument.

Rael said:

a Tulku once told me once one experiences Sunyata and combine it with love and compassion your enlightened.

Astus wrote:

Adding prajna to the equation makes the difference indeed.

Rael said:
which isn't exactly what i was talking about.

Astus wrote:
Excuse me for the mistake.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 12:04 AM
Title: Re: Questioning Height
Content:

Huseng said:
Another example to consider is the Mahāyānasūtrālamkārikā which while nominally penned by Asanga is said to have actually been composed by Maitreya and transmitted to Asanga.

Astus wrote:
The Sutralamkara starts with arguing for the authenticity of Mahayana and lists quite a lot of reasons. One of that is that the Buddha hasn't warned about Mahayana, so it is authentic. Putting it in another way, if it is "contemporary" with the Agamas (as the text claims), what did not the Buddha simply state that there is a Mahayana (and others) after? Really, it is not necessary to go to the scholars and wonder why it is that Mahayana teachings keep referring back to those in the Agamas. But even if we put aside historicity, in theory and practice the Agama teachings form the basics of Mahayana.

Yeshe D. said:
including the classical Theravāda

Astus wrote:
It is with purpose I don't say Theravada, as that itself is a development from earlier teachings. Also, I'm not arguing for any sort of "protestant Buddhism".

Here's a fine phrasing of the meaning of skilful means:

"If someone comes and asks about seeking buddha, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of purity; if someone asks about bodhisattvahood, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of compassion; if someone asks me about bodhi, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of pure mystery; if someone asks me about nirvana, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of serene stillness. Though there be ten thousand different states, the person does not differ. Therefore,

According with things he manifests a form,
Like the moon [reflecting] on the water."
(Record of Linji, p. 16, tr. RF Sasaki)

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 2:24 AM
Title: Re: Questioning Height
Content:
Astus wrote:
Geoff,

Sure, I can agree with those. But I'm not sure if it addresses the issue raised.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 4:53 AM
Title: Re: Questioning Height
Content:
Rael said:
It is weird that today we question the Mahayana and some ridicule the superstitious.....
for the ancient masters seemed to believe the Mahayana as words of the Buddha or
transmitted through the Dharma Kaya Body...

Astus wrote:
People questioned quite a lot of things before too. Just when you say "ancient masters",
who do you mean? Like, Xuanzang and Fazang are both ancient masters, just as
Dolpopa and Tsongkhapa. There has never been "The Mahayana" but quite a lot of views
on it, even within the sutras themselves. I'm not sure it's appropriate at all to polarise
between "modern" and "traditional" in this topic.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 9:07 AM
Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara
Content:
Astus wrote:
It's one thing to say there are no phenomena except mental ones. But what I haven't
seen described yet is how mind-streams can actually communicate with each other.
How minds are connected without being the same? I think this is quite an important
question especially in Yogacara. Any answers?

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 7:58 PM
Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara
Content:
Astus wrote:
Geoff,

Thanks for the quote. However, while it explains a bit of the emergence of samsara OK, it
doesn't answer how a common ground can actually be established in the sense of the

interaction between mind-streams. Because even if minds have common factors it doesn't explain a connection between them. In an everyday situation there are speech and other forms of expressions conveying a meaning, so there is a seemingly external space between minds to make contact. But when all external phenomena are mental factors of a single mind-stream it requires some form of connection between different minds to share a common view. Maybe it's me not understanding Mipham's explanation, so please clarify.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2011 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see the difference then in the common version of a world originating from the beings karma and consciousness only. But then it isn't exactly so that the world as commonly perceived is not at all external, since it can't establish connection between mind-streams directly.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

No need to establish a material basis when: 1. in both cases the origin of the world is karmic; 2. it results in a world of four elements. The only difference I see is that Yogacara is explicit about the ultimately mental nature of the world.

Calling it either common or external makes little difference when the world is not taken to be a mental thing compared to emotions and thoughts, also there is a distinction made between the world and beings.

Looking at it this way there's little new in calling it consciousness only or realist. Or, again, it still requires an explanation for direct mental connection between beings. Such an explanation could be also good for other teachings, like certain siddhis and meditations.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dexing,

"This is a matter of different consciousnesses (or minds) influencing the direction of one

another"

And my question is how exactly such an interaction can happen between one mind-stream and another, and I mean direct interaction as there are only mind-streams that do not merge. It is possible to say they're interrelated but that requires a description how they can do that without confusing up individuals mental streams.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, the whole connection between mind-streams is in the realm of samvrttisatya, as obviously on a final level there is neither one nor many and even the concept of a single mind-stream is meaningless. But it is also in the realm of conventionality to say appearances are only mental and that there are individual mind-streams. Now, to say that one mind produces a cause which matches a condition in another mind-stream doesn't mean anything beyond saying that there is a causal relationship, however, that doesn't explain the actual thing of mind-streams connected to each other. I mean, on the conventional level mind-streams are separate and as Yogacara claims, on an ordinary level there is no such thing as perceiving another's mind, which would result in a contradiction of the premise of consciousness only. That's why I ask if there is any description of communication, of inter-relationship between minds.

One way out of this problem that I see is to say that the teaching of consciousness only is not meant to explain the working of the illusory world in a cittamatra way, as mind-streams and beings exist only in the form of parikalpita, consequently it goes along with the common terms of internal and external, one and many, so no need to describe the connection of mind-streams, since from the point on one contemplates how all is a creation of the mind one is moving away from the conventional view out of which no communication exists. But then we are at an almost identical view as the Madhyamaka and others except for the terminology and the approach.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

It'd be a contradiction because if one could perceive another's mind it'd mean it is not just the creation of one's own mind that is perceived but something else too.

I find no problem with different Mahayana schools and sutras meaning the same thing, it's kind of my understanding too. Nevertheless, it's besides the point here.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 4:32 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

I try to clarify the problem I see. If we say there's a common perception it means that two people share the same thought (vijnapti), or that their thoughts are similar. It could be that that thought was given from one person to the other or it came from a third mind. Both for sharing and causing-receiving there's a need for some sort of connection between minds. That connection, however, is problematical because the identity of the mind-stream has to be maintained. If it is possible to directly influence another's mind there's a chance of mixing karma for instance, so it'd become possible for buddhas to liberate beings instantly.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Geoff,

Then it seems what I thought as the resolution agrees with what Mipham (and others before) have said. Well, it is sad.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 31st, 2011 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Because I was looking for a new explanation, a new view, a different method to solve the question.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 1st, 2011 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualism, Right View and Awakening

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is intellectualising? My answer for this is that it is solely for the purpose of defining concepts to elaborate on ideas. Is that something wrong? I don't think so. Is that relevant to Buddhism? Not really. There are lot of sutras with dozens of commentaries and even more treatises written about those texts. Is that just intellectualising, a "l'art pour l'art" thing? Hardly ever. Studying, analysing and contemplating are common practices of Buddhism. And they're not just good for the one cultivating it but also helpful for letting people learn and understand the Dharma. And in the end, pondering

about the uselessness of intellectualising is intellectualising.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 1st, 2011 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) : Will it stick ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why the worry about Vajrayana becoming a mass movement? I mean, it has been out for a large number of people for more than a thousand years, not just in Tibet but in India, China and other countries. I understand that people can have strong feelings for their own religious tradition - so excuse me for this - but Vajrayana is as much a form of (non-tribal) religion as any other and so one of its features is converting as many people as possible. So, with growing numbers, it becomes stratified and there are then a majority of initiates who are the laity and those few who are the zealots. In this sense, initiation (empowerment, baptism, anointment, etc.) is in fact a ritual for accepting new members. Sure, one can understand and see lot more in an initiation, and that is indeed where the difference lies between those who just want to hang around and those who aim high. We can already see a small number of authentic Vajrayana masters teaching through the internet, where practically anyone can join in. And naturally there are people who feel this is desecralisation and blasphemy but others at the same time see the opportunity for introducing people to essential teachings. To keep Vajrayana around it is important to spread it. When HHDL gives a Kalacakra empowerment thousands show up, they make a connection. If an unknown lama does that only a dozen people come. Is it really better to keep it on a family level? I don't think that will make it stay for long.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 2nd, 2011 at 2:24 AM

Title: Re: Should individuals be married and be monk?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thread split to <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=3200>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 2nd, 2011 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: State of Japanese Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know exactly when Rinzai Zen left the Pratimoksha, but it has nothing to do with Eisai whose lineage did not live long and there were a 23 other Zen lineages established later but only one survived after the 19th century. The surviving lineage is of course that of Hakuin, who can be traced back to

<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%8D%97%E6%B5%A6%E7%B4%B9%E6%98%8E> (南浦紹明, 1235 – 1308)) who studied under Lanxi Daolong (蘭溪道隆) in Japan but later

went to China and (allegedly) was transmitted by Xutang Zhiyu (虚堂智愚). As he had two Chinese masters I assume he received the threefold ordination (full precepts) and not just the bodhisattva one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 2nd, 2011 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) : Will it stick ?

Content:

mr. gordo said:

I know it seems like a shallow statement, but it seems dead on. Tibetan Buddhism is alien enough to tap the interest of those brought up in a Judeo-Christian background to the ardent atheist. Also the Dalai Lama embraces the use of technology like Social Media to provide Buddhist teachings, and it seems like this could be further implemented by the Karmapa.

Astus wrote:

Being alien is not enough and can be even counter-productive. It should not be forgot that Tibet has been a part of Western esotericism since the 19th century or even before as a mystical land. There is also the recent history of Tibet that a large number of the population fled from the country and now they are oppressed by the Communists - this whole brings up Western concepts of freedom and the evil enemy of that. There's also the image of Tibetans being a spiritual, peaceful people living close to nature which again resonates with old Western ideas. It's just another thing how neo-pagan movements are growing in numbers and that goes quite well with the magical features of Vajrayana. Thus it is an already existing mythology that Tibetan Buddhism can build on. How Tibetan Studies is a common part of oriental curricula in universities is another positive factor.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 4th, 2011 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: State of Japanese Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Myoshin-ji school of Rinzai Zen to be a head of the meditation hall (i.e. an actual Zen teacher who trains others) one is required to be unmarried and live pretty much like a monk in other countries. Just another example.

"The shike (師家) is the teacher (師) in the monastic household (家). He is the "true" shukke who has - ideally, but not necessarily - gone through all the koan of the particular monastic koan-system, and who stays permanently in monastic life leading the monastery and guiding the monks, thus also referred to as the "elder teacher in the monk's hall" (sōdō rōshi). He has received the certificate of enlightenment (inka shōmei) just as he himself can transmit this to his successor. Unless returning to lay life, or taking up a position as priest in a temple, a shike within the Myōshinji sect is not allowed to marry but must keep the strict rules of renouncement. As such he has the

prestige and generally owns the respect of being a true Zen master, a living symbol of the Zen monastic tradition, the quintessence of zen virtues ideally incarnating wisdom, spirituality, strict discipline, individuality, and yet gentle social personality. He is, in a certain sense, the religious main figure."

(Jørn Borup: Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism: Myōshinji, a Living Religion, p. 60)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 4th, 2011 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Paradox of Buddhahood in Mahayana (newbie's questions)

Content:

Sāvaka said:

After reading further I've come across a wiki quote that there is a Zen perspective takes the trikāya non-literally, if true that adds an alternative look.

Astus wrote:

The only difference there is is that in Zen buddha-mind contains all three bodies thus realising the buddha-mind one is a buddha - this is the concept behind sudden enlightenment. Although there are other interpretations too but not as popular as this one.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 5th, 2011 at 7:33 AM

Title: Re: The Law of NonContradiction and the BuddhaDharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no contradiction in the tetralemma as it is used to negate extreme concepts. Nagarjuna explains in the following stanzas the reason for the teaching of emptiness, how buddhas have used different teachings, why language has to be transcended, that there are conventional and ultimate truths, how dependent origination is emptiness and that it is the essential teaching of the buddhas.

Through the elimination of karma and affliction there is nirvana.

Karma and affliction come from conceptual thought.

These come from mental fabrication.

Fabrication ceases through emptiness.

The Buddhas have designated a self;

And have taught that there is no self;

And also have taught that

There is neither self nor selflessness.

What language expresses is repudiated because

The domain of thought is repudiated.

Unarisen and unceased:

Reality is just like nirvana.

Everything is real; and is not real;
Both real and unreal;
Neither unreal nor real.
This is the Lord Buddha's teaching.

Not dependent on another, peaceful and
Not fabricated by fabrications,
Not conceptualized, without distinctions:
That is the characteristic of things as they really are.

Whatever comes into being dependent on another
Is neither identical to that thing
Nor different from it.
Therefore it is neither annihilated nor permanent.

This is nectar—the doctrine of
The Buddhas, patrons of the world.
Without identity, without distinction,
Not annihilated, not permanent.

(MMK 18.5-11, tr. from Ocean of Reasoning)

We find the following story in the Gateless Gate collection
(<http://www.mro.org/zmm/teachings/daido/teisho38.php>),

Master Yangshan had a dream: He went to Maitreya's place and was given the third seat. A venerable monastic there struck the table with a gavel and announced, "Today, the talk will be given by the monastic of the third seat." Yangshan struck the table with the gavel and said, "The Dharma of Mahayana goes beyond the Four Propositions and transcends the One Hundred Negations. Listen carefully!"

The four propositions (四句) are the tetralemma (being, non-being, being and non-being, nor being neither non-being) and the hundred negations (百非) are either an expression for the complete refutation of all statements or a way of multiplying the tetralemma (the four propositions applied to each proposition (16), multiplied by the three times of past, present and future (48) and also by the two possible states of arisen and not yet arisen (96) to which we add the original four propositions (100) - from the short summary by Zixuan [T44n1848, p318b08-12]). But the real teaching is not even this four propositions and hundred negations but beyond it, that is, non-conceptual which is neither conceptual (grasping concepts) nor not conceptual (refusing concepts) thus realising that all appearances are empty, only ideas, thoughts, names.

Wansong's commentary to case six of the Book of Serenity says,

"The Mahayanasamgraha says, "'Existence' is slander by exaggeration, 'nonexistence' is slander by underestimation; 'both existence and nonexistence' is slander by

contradiction, and 'neither existence nor nonexistence' is slander by intellectual fabrication." If you abandon these four propositions, the hundred negations are spontaneously wiped out. Huangbo said, "If you want to understand directly and immediately, everything is not it." I say, "If you understand clearly and thoroughly, nothing is not it."

The point is that while the laws of logic one may describe certain conventional truths and there is no denial of that. This is where one can say that something is, or something isn't, or something sometimes is and sometimes isn't, or that something is never is or isn't. But from the ultimate point all views of existence and non-existence are extremes and illusions leading only to suffering when clung to.

The law of identity is another fundamental concept. But if we take it from the Buddhist perspective it is impossible to find an identity in anything and this identitylessness is also known as selflessness and emptiness. From this comes that further statements about any "being" is senseless as well since there is no such "being" in the first place. So comes the first part of the tetralemma that one can't say there is a being. Also, it isn't true either to say that there is nothing at all, since there is a "being" on a conventional, conceptual level. Concluding that there is and there isn't a "being" is wrong again, for it is a mental fabrication produced only to maintain one's grasping of something being both like this and that. However, even saying that then it is neither is nor isn't is incorrect as well for similar reasons as before. This is an example of the use of the tetralemma which is a method to eliminate false ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 6th, 2011 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: Favorite Sutra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html,

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0842/0842.htm>, i.e.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutra_of_Perfect_Enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 7th, 2011 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: not a thing, but there is.

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra (two different translations):

"Virtuous man, one who practices Complete Enlightenment of the causal ground of the Tathagata realizes that [birth and extinction] are like an illusory flower in the sky. Thus there is no continuance of birth and death and no body or mind that is subject to birth and death. This nonexistence of [birth and death and body and mind] is so not as a consequence of contrived effort. It is so by its intrinsic nature. The awareness [of their

nonexistence] is like empty space. That which is aware of the empty space is like the appearance of the illusory flower. However, one cannot say that the nature of this awareness is nonexistent. Eliminating both existence and nonexistence is in accordance with pure enlightenment."

"Good sons, in the practice of Perfect Enlightenment of the causal stage of the Tathāgata one understands these 'sky-flowers,' thus there is no transmigration, nor body/mind to undergo life-and-death. But they are not caused to be non-existent. It is because they lack original nature. Now, this [prior] awareness is in itself void, like empty space. Yet since this awareness that perceives it to be like empty space is none other than the appearance of sky-flowers, you also cannot say that there is no nature of awareness. Existence and non-existence both being dispelled is called 'according with pure enlightenment.'"

It is also like what Huairang said to the sixth patriarch: "To say that it is like a thing is to miss the point." - which applies to believing that there is something (or there isn't).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 7th, 2011 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Why use mantras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As little I know, mantras have two uses: as mnemonic devices and as magical words. But the Heart Sutra itself is a short reminder of the prajnaparamita teachings. Thus the dharanis and mantras in a sutra are said to be equivalent of reciting the whole text, just like in the Nichiren school they say that Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is same as reciting the complete Lotus Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 8th, 2011 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Why use mantras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"but as a request to Avalokiteshvara rather than an expression of my own magical power."

Magical use of mantras is quite apparent in Buddhism just as well as throughout India. And using an external being to affect things is still within the realm of magic, although it can be very well within the boundaries of religion (in many cases it's hard to make a distinction).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 16th, 2011 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no record of an Indian lineage, there are records from China showing the development of both the concept and the actual descriptions of the lineages. The book "Seeing through Zen: encounter, transformation, and genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism" gives you a short introduction to the historical study of it. You may also find a couple of relevant essays on http://thezensite.com/MainPages/historical_zen.html.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 16th, 2011 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think he gives a different example when a wrongdoing has been displayed in public compared to the other recent case of Eido Shimano. It looks positive to me.

The other issue that should be considered is the Buddhist rhetoric compared to reality. One's wisdom is supposed to reflect in one's deeds. Being ethical is theoretically a prerequisite to higher achievements, that's one of the reasons why monastics are the bearers of the tradition and not laymen. Zen is said to be the direct path to perfect enlightenment. It's just that it doesn't exactly show in its living form. What can we make of that?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 17th, 2011 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: Divergences from the Jodo Shinshu Teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

"You won't find the sentence 'Amida Buddha is a metaphor and the story of the Pure Land is a myth' in any of Shinrans writings. It wasn't part of Shinrans 'language' so to say."

Symbolical interpretation of Pure Land has been long before known in EA Buddhism and Shinran was quite an educated monk. Also, those who teach mind-only pure land refer to the Vimalakirti Sutra's "when the mind is pure the land is pure", consequently advocate a clearly self-power approach very much in contradiction with total reliance on other-power.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 17th, 2011 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Sooner or Later: Yogacara

Content:

mr. gordo said:

I don't have this particular book:

https://www.amazon.com/Living-Yogacara-Introduction-Consciousness-Only-Buddhism/dp/0861715896/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1297800142&sr=8-1

Is it worth picking up?

Astus wrote:

Certainly it is. Very good intro.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 17th, 2011 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://hardcorezen.blogspot.com/2011/02/disrobing-genpo_11.html

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 17th, 2011 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

Fascinating. So many Zen teachers who believe that it is therapy to solve the problems and not Zen. Then what is Zen good for, really?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 18th, 2011 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that as Genpo roshi is supposed to be a long term practitioner who is proficient in Zen (at least on some levels) he should be able to use Buddhism in correcting whatever unwholesome habits he may have. I don't doubt the usefulness of therapy, it's just that I believe Buddhism has the proper methods for building up beneficial mental habits and fighting the harmful ones. In fact, that's what correct effort (samyag-vyāyāma) is about.

We should also remember that Genpo's primary teacher, Maezumi roshi, was an alcoholic and also had sexual affairs of his own. So, is it possible to separate personal from professional life in case of Buddhism? Unlikely.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 18th, 2011 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is another point that should be considered. That is when the teaching is more important than the teacher. Sheng-yen says in "Zen Wisdom":

"The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters. ... These, then, are the marks of virtuous masters: they have a correct view of the Dharma, their actions reveal no attachment and they have a clear sense of responsibility."

"It's not serious if masters sometimes demonstrate some bad habits, as long as they are aware of their actions. After all, they are still ordinary sentient beings. But if a master were to say, "This is the way of a Ch'an master," or, "I'm a bodhisattva, so I can act this way in order to help others, but you as ordinary people should not imitate me," then that's a different story. That's a sign of a bad master."

And that's where Brad Warner - who obviously doesn't agree with "Big Mind" at all - was pointing to in this case.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2011 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Unknown said:

Morality does need to be enforced among priests.

Astus wrote:

Well, it is possible when there are monks living in a community and any immoral act has consequences there. But when priests live on their own and are financially independent such forcing is not possible except by the law of the state. Also, there's hardly any special moral code upheld by such priesthood generally. No community, no leadership, no control. Monastic communities are quite different from that, especially when they're dependent on lay support so a good reputation is crucial.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2011 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Completion of the path of Tögal

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see how it is related to Togal (circles - beads? maybe). Visions are not restricted even to Buddhism, and this Earth-loving attitude is a bit strange too. There are not enough info on the page either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2011 at 8:45 PM

Title: Re: Lineage Delusions: Eido Shimano Roshi, Dharma Transmission..

Content:

kirtu said:

Well in the Buddhist Channel article the author says that deconstruction of lineage is a solution to the problem. However that is guaranteed to destroy Buddhism. We cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Astus wrote:

Such an importance of Dharma transmission in Zen is a Western idea. I can't speak for Vietnam as I have little information on that area but in China, Korea and Japan the monastic ("church" in Japan's case) order has always come first and the possession of a paper of transmission is mostly irrelevant to one's position and reputation, partially because of its availability and partially because its importance has been downplayed a few times in history. Also, giving such a transmission to a lay person is not a normal thing at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism isn't whatever you want it to be!

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see no problem telling people if they misunderstood something about Buddhism, especially on a forum like this or at a friendly conversation. Another beneficial thing is to point people to the proper sources of information. It is obviously not easy to tell the difference between correct and incorrect websites/books/teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva precepts in the tradition of Nagarjuna

Content:

Astus wrote:

The 10+48 is from the <http://www.ymba.org/bns/bnsframe.htm> used in East Asia. The http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/practice_material/vows/bodhisattva/root_bodhisattva_pledges.html+http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/practice_material/vows/bodhisattva/secondary_bodhisattva_pledges.html version is used in Tibet. The <http://www.mro.org/zmm/training/jukai.php> version is used in modern Soto Zen but it's just a derivation from the Tendai presentation of the Brahma Net Sutra's precepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 5:24 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva precepts in the tradition of Nagarjuna

Content:

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is not an order but a method. Methods don't have precepts as far as I know. What the "tradition of Nagarjuna" is is a question to me but I doubt he could have heard about the above mentioned sets of precepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva precepts in the tradition of Nagarjuna

Content:

Astus wrote:

The book itself explains what it means (on p. 64):

Gambhiradarsanaparampara (Tradition of the Profound View), compiled by Manjusri, elaborated by Nagarjuna et al., propagated by Santideva

Udaracaryaparampara (Tradition of Extremely Vast Conduct) compiled by Maitreya, elaborated by Asanga and his brother, propagated by Atisa
tradition of Padmasambhava follows that of Nagarjuna

Later it says that the 80 auxiliary vows are in the Siksasamuccaya (Compendium of Precepts), which is by Santideva thus the "tradition of Nagarjuna". The mentioned 18+46 set is in the "tradition of Asanga".

The text itself is a Nyingmapa Dzogchen work that was commented upon by Dudjom Rinpoche.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Laughter and the Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

One of the rootless functional consciousnesses (ahetukakiriya-cittani) in Abhidhamma is the smile-producing consciousness (hasituppadacitta) that exists only for arahants (incl. buddhas and paccekabuddhas). Its function is to cause arahants to smile about sense-sphere phenomena. (A comprehensive manual of Abhidhamma, p. 45)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva precepts in the tradition of Nagarjuna

Content:

Inge said:

Yes, so does this mean that the vows presented in the links given by you and Will is from the tradition of Asanga?

I have tried searching for an english translation of the Siksasamuccaya but have not

found one yet. Do you know if such translation is available?

Astus wrote:

Yes, the 18+46 is the Asanga version. There is an old translation, also available somewhere online (don't have the link now, was in a thread a while ago).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 23rd, 2011 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Laughter and the Buddha

Content:

TMingyur said:

This is not comprehensible for me and it appears as if an inherent contradiction.

Why is there this "burst out laughing"? Who is it who laughs? And about what is this laughter?

If there is no "I" who appropriates a discrepancy between illusion and non-illusion then why is there laughter?

But if there is an "I" who appropriates this discrepancy then this laughter is a manifestation of delusion.

Who could there be to compare illusion and non-illusion and burst out laughing about that?

Isn't this actually differentiating "good" and "bad" and "acceptance" and "rejection" in that it discerns that which is laughable?

Astus wrote:

With this concept you could argue that a buddha can't talk and eat either for then there should be an "I" to conceive an other and make distinction between food and non-food (not to mention acceptable and unacceptable food). It is a buddha who can't even breathe.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 24th, 2011 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: The Problem of Modern Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What Bhante Punnaji presents is modern Buddhism itself, in a sense. It is the concept of returning to the original teachings by putting aside the layers of interpretations created by different traditions. This is not at all defending Theravada against Mahayana, that is clear from what he says, but trying to establish what the Buddha really taught and putting aside the myriad views about the Dharma as they're not the Dharma itself. It is also noteworthy when he defines the Buddha's teaching as a problem and a solution to that problem, and whatever solves the problem is the Buddha's teaching. That is hardly sectarianism but rather pragmatism. Identifying the original teachings with the sutras preserved in the Theravada tradition is not his idea but rather a conclusion of many

scholars comparing the different texts we have. Of course, one could as well add here that the agamas found in other languages are representatives of the same original teaching, however, none of them as complete as it is in the Pali language.

Whether diversity in Buddhism is a problem or not is a good question indeed. When those unfamiliar with Buddhism ask "What is Buddhism?" it is not easy to answer unless one wants to present only a single tradition. And every tradition is an attempt to unify the different teachings, especially in case of Mahayana schools. Then we can see how there are many takes on a teaching that is said to be taught by a single person. And as it has happened in different Asian cultures there are ought to be new forms of unifications of the diverse teachings of which one example is the Triratna Buddhist Community (formerly FWBO), another one is Joseph Goldstein's book "One Dharma".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 24th, 2011 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: The Problem of Modern Buddhism

Content:

Unknown said:

Theravada practitioners may scorn the Mahayana scriptures as not being the Buddha's teachings.

Mayayana and Vajrayana may scorn the Theravada as 'Hinayana' and merely a brief prelude to the superior Mahayana.

It's time both accepted that there is no monopoly.

The problem of modern Buddhism, IMHO, is that there is too much analysis of the scriptures and too little practice.

Astus wrote:

There is no monopoly, i.e. everyone goes on their own way and leave each other alone. That is easy to say but I don't think it's fitting the situation. It is avoiding the problem, giving up. Same with emphasising practice over discussion, it is just saying to shut up and mind your own business. Sure, there won't be a universal solution, but there are different ways of dealing with it, one of them being what you suggest. But there are people who feel the need for thinking things over, getting involved in not so mundane issues. Of course there are only a few who care about philosophy and it's normal to go along with an already existing tradition. But since the problem has been raised it might be worth the try to actually discuss it rather than to kill it with a slogan. Sure, it may involve stepping on traditional toes but there's nothing new in that.

By the way, the concept of "returning to original Buddhism" is not restricted to Theravada. Yinshun, famous Buddhist thinker of the 20th century, did just the same but based on the Chinese agamas and prajnaparamita texts. Ven. Huifeng could tell a lot about him.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 24th, 2011 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: The Problem of Modern Buddhism

Content:

Yeshe said:

It also requires acceptance that returning to 'original Buddhism' means that of Shakyamuni. Therefore this negates any previous Buddhas. I would assert, somewhat tenuously, that this may encourage a belief that Dharma also only began with Shakyamuni, which would be a conclusion some may draw, as if Shakyamuni somehow invented a new truth rather than revealed a path.

Astus wrote:

I don't think there is disagreement on Shakyamuni being the buddha of this age and that before him any previous buddha's teaching was gone. Consequently whatever Buddhism one may talk about today started with Siddhartha Gautama and nobody else, a reason why he is called the original teacher (benshi 本師). It doesn't negate previous buddhas at all, also because Shakyamuni was the first who talked about those before him. Again, it was Siddhartha who said that he did not invent anything but rediscovered it. This makes Shakyamuni the primary common factor among all the different Buddhist traditions. As for the historical validity of any teaching, that's another matter. But again, even if we look at the different Mahayana schools what they definitely agree on as the fundamental teachings are generally what we find in the nikayas and agamas upon which all the other doctrines are built upon. So if we want to find the very basics of Buddhism, the root, the origin, we arrive at such essential tenets like the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path and dependent origination. And that is irrelevant of our view on academical research.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 24th, 2011 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Help with chinese characters

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://cojak.org/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false; has that feature, although not for every character.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 24th, 2011 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Pop Heart Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatsune_Miku is a so called vocaloid, i.e. a computer program anyone can use to create music and song with it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 25th, 2011 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Don't know mind is buddha-mind, keeping a don't know mind in zazen is seeing buddha, seeing buddha is enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 25th, 2011 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Images in the Workplace

Content:

Astus wrote:

I put calligraphy on my cubicle's walls. It doesn't necessarily appear as Buddhist unless one reads Chinese. I usually use some Buddhist image as my background picture, although even I don't see it often because of the different windows open.

Baizhang's saying is very good for workplaces:

(one day without work, one day without eating).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 25th, 2011 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It was simply my explanation using a fusion of terminology. The teaching of don't know mind (不知心) is very much Seung Sahn's way of teaching and the expression itself is not a traditional one. Nevertheless, the meaning is the same (going beyond/before thinking). You can read that in The Compass of Zen on Methods of Meditation.

Also here's a quote from a

<http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/augusto/GoingBeyondBuddha.htm> where he uses the term "don't know" (from the story of Bodhidharma meeting the emperor):

So practice is the path itself, rather than the attainment of a so-called goal. There we meet Shitou's mind: not to attain, not to know; returning once again to the "don't know" mind, in which every single koan is understood, seen and presented with the eyes and dance of primal innocence. So here the path is the Tao, is what moment by moment inspires our lives, rather than the goal itself. The path, the koan, shikantaza is not ahead, there; but right here, right now, breathing through our very body. You see, if not like this, if not now, then when and where,?

Thus in the Buddha Tao, in the Buddha way, there is no goal at all; just that dropping off of body and mind. And this happens when the 10,000 dharmas advance to the very bottom of oneself, to the very bottom of the universe. And then that self, (if you wish to call it that), that innermost part of the universe and ourself, comes forward and saves the many beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 25th, 2011 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

So it is. But that connection is a lot more complex than a single line of male monks.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

KwanSeum said:

But again that is Seon and not Zen which I asked about.

Astus wrote:

If you cared to look it up you'd find that it discusses Soto, Rinzai and Jogye Seon. Seung Sahn spent some time in Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

So it is. But that connection is a lot more complex than a single line of male monks.

tomamundsen said:

Right. Which is exactly how it is presented with each and every teacher that has received shiho. There is a long list of names with a line going through each one, starting from the Buddha (not sure if it goes six buddhas before Shakyamuni or not) all the way down to the teacher himself. I've seen a few of these (Kechimyaku, I believe is the term), and every teacher that had one definitely believed it to be true.

Astus wrote:

I think you mean this:

It is exactly a single line of male monks.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Meditation/Contemplation/Visualisation Sutra practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Recitation of the name is easier than visualisation and other such methods and this is a common understanding in Chinese PL too. That doesn't mean one shouldn't do them it's just one has to be clear about one's situation and willingness. Honen puts recitation to the front so that people can grow strong in faith after which it's fine to get busy with so call auxiliary practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for the view of buddha-nature and interdependence, here are some thoughts (mine, not an official point of any organisation).

Dogen emphasises interdependence a lot which is also apparent in his use of terms including his repeated statements on the enlightenment of insentient beings. Also, in his writing on

<http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/title.html> he criticises those who take it as a self (atman) or as a perceiver and knower. He also puts the view of buddha-nature as a seed to the level of ordinary beings (prthagjana).

Korean Zen can be traced back to the works of Yongming and Dahui where buddha-nature is knowing (teaching originally from Heze Shenhui and Guifeng Zongmi). This is quite a different approach compared to Dogen's. To use a common tool here, Dogen is more on the side of emptiness teachings while Jinul on the side of existence. So Dogen disintegrates views to show emptiness (although this is a simplification) while Jinul points to the mind being without views.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Meditation/Contemplation/Visualisation Sutra practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

No disagreement here.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Poverty in the UK

Content:

Astus wrote:

Maybe poverty is not about salary and work, just as the article says. I mean, there are thousands and thousands going to the UK to do some work for a couple of years and bring it home eventually (this is from poorer EU countries, mainly Poland). And most of them do simple jobs like on construction sites.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 27th, 2011 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: Use inner stillness as meditation object & Patriarchal Chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Patriarch Chan and Tathagata Chan are two different terms and they're not used as equals. In the Platform Sutra there's only talk of Tathagata Chan and no mention of Patriarch Chan (first mentioned in a story involving Yangshan Huiji and Xiangyan Zhixian - according to Jiang Wu). As for their meaning, it depends on where you look, so let's just put that aside.

If you want to focus on an inner stillness to attain stillness, well, it is a bit confusing. If there is stillness you don't have to achieve it. If there is no stillness you can't focus on it. Being free from attachments is the goal of the path which can be practised very well by cultivating samadhi and prajna. As for how, I assume that's what you're asking about. If it is Chan you want to do you should learn the huatou method so then you can carry around your question as a point of focus. What seems closer to your intentions is the mozhao (silent illumination) of which you can read <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/silent-illumination-may2005-day1.html> a bit.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 28th, 2011 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: What was the last film you watched?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Star Trek - Generations

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 28th, 2011 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting point from

http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/zazen_as_enactment_ritual by Taigen Dan Leighton in Zen Ritual, p. 168.

Unknown said:

Zazen as Tantra

Before focusing on teachings by Dogen, we may briefly note that such enactment practice is usually associated with the Vajrayana branch of Buddhism, in which practitioners are initiated into ritual practices of identification with specific buddha or bodhisattva figures. Although Vajrayana is often considered the province of Tibetan Buddhism, increasing attention is being given to the crucial role of the Japanese forms of Vajrayana (J. mikkyo). In the Heian period, this mikkyo, also known as “esoteric” or tantric practice, was prevalent not only in Shingon (True Word), the main Japanese Vajrayana school, but also in the comprehensive Tendai school in which were first trained not only Japanese Zen founders like Dogen and Eisai (1141–1215) but also Pure Land founders Honen (1133–1212) and Shinran (1173–1262), as well as Nichiren (1222–1282). Thanks to this mikkyo heritage that permeated all of medieval Japanese Buddhism, in many inexplicit ways mikkyo or tantric practice can be seen as underlying all subsequent forms of Japanese Buddhism. Further studies exploring the direct and indirect influences of mikkyo on Japanese Zen promise to be especially instructive.

For Dogen and others, Zen shares with the Vajrayana tradition the heart of spiritual activity and praxis as the enactment of buddha awareness and physical presence, rather than aiming at developing a perfected, formulated understanding. In the context of Tibetan Buddhism, Robert Thurman speaks of the main thrust of Vajrayana practice as physical rather than solely mental. “When we think of the goal of Buddhism as enlightenment, we think of it mainly as an attainment of some kind of higher understanding. But Buddhahood is a physical transformation as much as a mental transcendence.”

The Japanese Vajrayana teacher Kukai (774–835), the founder of Shingon, emphasized the effects of teachings over their literal meaning. As explicated by Thomas Kasulis, “Kukai was more interested in the teachings’ aims than in their content, or perhaps better stated, he saw the aims as inseparable from their content. He saw no sharp distinction between theory and practice.” The understanding of a teaching was not privileged independently from its practical effects. “The truth of a statement depends not on the status of its referent, but on how it affects us.” For Kukai, physical postures, utterances, and mental imagery are expressions of ultimate reality, and by intentionally engaging in them, practitioners are led to realization of that reality. The performance of the ritual practice helps effect an expressive realization deeper than mere cognition.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 28th, 2011 at 8:50 PM

Title: Practice and Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ven. Shengyan says in <http://immersor.com/cmc/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/ChanPracticeandFaith.pdf>:

People interested in Chan practice often find it difficult to have religious faith. As faith is intrinsically emotional, and Chan practitioners emphasize personal cultivation to gain physical and mental benefits or the experience of Chan, they find it hard to accept

religious faith. This is actually a great mistake.

Many people think that Chan practice depends solely on their own efforts, requiring self-reliance, while those who practice by reciting the Buddha's name depend solely on external help. Both of these views are incorrect. In reality, Chan practice also requires external help, and the practice of reciting the Buddha's name also requires one's own effort. One can hardly become an accomplished Chan practitioner through one's own efforts. In India, China and Tibet, all meditators need the support and assistance of teachers, Dharma-protecting deities, and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. That is why Chan monasteries in China erect and worship the statues of Dharma-protecting deities such as the eight divisions of divinities and the four deva kings.

In the past, eminent masters often encouraged Chan practitioners to "entrust their bodies to the monastery and their lives to the Dharma-protecting deities" during Chan meditation. You don't need to be concerned about your body since it will be taken care of by the masters on duty. You simply follow the monastery's routines. However, to achieve good results in your practice, you need the support of Dharma-protecting deities. Without such assistance, one may face physical and mental obstructions, which may turn into demonic hindrances. Practicing Chan depending solely on one's own efforts without believing in the power of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and Dharma-protecting deities cannot be considered practicing Buddhism at all.

I think I'm not far from the truth if I say that hardly any Western Zen (Chan, Seon, Thien, however you prefer) teacher talks about the presence and meaning of such religious faith in their respective communities and publications. They might have some rituals they preserved that were originally expressions of belief in different entities but those ceremonies are explained only as a nice tradition and nothing more.

Is there any change in this attitude in the West in recent years? Will it ever change? Or is it important not to mention anything resembling a religion when advertising Zen (Buddhism) to Westerners?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 28th, 2011 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: The Proper Meaning of Dedicating Merit

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dedication of merit is the intention of giving the good results coming from a good act one has done. Transference of merit occurs if others learn about one's good deeds and rejoice over it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2011 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: The Proper Meaning of Dedicating Merit

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rael,

Merit is not transferred as money. Karma (individual causality) cannot be given or taken. Merit transference means that if you give food to a homeless and you tell me about it and I feel good about such an act agreeing with it because of my mental attitude I experience similar causes as if I gave food myself. Same happens with wrong deeds, that's how "group karma" is possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2011 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: ok i gotta ask/when did Buddha first attain enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anders said it well, this teaching of eternal buddhas is about affirming the presence of them within people's lives. It's also possible to see the Lotus Sutra as an apology for Sakyamuni. That's because first there was the concept that there are other buddhas still alive in other realms and they can be reached, then some thought about making Sakyamuni a central figure again, thus the idea of the act of Siddhartha. Or, another way to look at it, the story is just an expression of the teaching of buddha-nature and is not about any kind of historical issue. Indeed, the full concept of the trikaya includes all the different versions.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 3rd, 2011 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: ok i gotta ask/when did Buddha first attain enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rael,

It is two different things to ask about the different views on the life and nature of Shakyamuni and starting to dismiss Mahayana sutras on whatever basis. It is all right if you don't accept the Lotus Sutra but it's a confusing thing to first ask a question about the content then say you don't care about the whole thing. Perhaps you should tidy things up for yourself to see what you actually want.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 3rd, 2011 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: ok i gotta ask/when did Buddha first attain enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rael,

What I meant is that first you asked about the content of the Lotus Sutra and then exclaimed how the Lotus Sutra is an unreliable fabrication of later generations and thus you can't accept it. So I thought, if you don't accept the whole thing why bother about details. But I can very well be wrong.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 4th, 2011 at 7:38 AM

Title: Re: ok i gotta ask/when did Buddha first attain enlightenment

Content:

Luke said:

But was Shakyamuni always "predestined" to be the Nirmanakaya Buddha of this kalpa, or was there some time in the past when it was uncertain whether it would be him or some other person? I'm not sure if karma allows for things to be "predestined"...

Astus wrote:

If it is a buddha it can't be a person and karma has nothing to do with it. See, if you put things into a Mahayana context it usually means a transcendental level, a kind of abstract and spiritual perspective. Nirmanakaya than can either mean how ordinary people see a buddha (thus history has relevance) or it means an expression of the ultimate truth (generally you can put both meanings into that same word).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2011 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Chinese Pure Land Death Stories

Content:

Astus wrote:

I doubt there is a clear cut system in it. Being able to foretell one's time of death may not necessarily be a sign of one's birth in the Pure Land.

Nianfo-sanmei is not a requirement to be able to foresee one's death as it can happen to very ordinary people without special abilities. I don't know how it relates to rainbow body. There are possible miraculous signs around the dead but the corpse never dissolves.

Perhaps in Pure Land schools based on Honen's ideas they don't see it important to spread around stories with miracles. Or they have not yet been translated.

The different Mahayana samadhis rarely have equivalents in the 8-level dhyana system. It also depends on what one means by nianfo-sanmei.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2011 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Chinese Pure Land Death Stories

Content:

Unknown said:

One day Puhua went about the streets asking people he met for a one-piece gown. They all offered him one, but Puhua declined them all.

Linji had the steward of the temple buy a coffin, and when Puhua came back the master

said, "I've fixed up a one-piece gown for you."

Puhua put the coffin on his shoulders and went around the streets calling out, "Linji fixed me up a one-piece gown. I'm going to the East Gate to depart this life." All the townspeople scrambled after him to watch.

"No, not today," said Puhua, "but tomorrow I'll go to the South Gate to depart this life." After he had done the same thing for three days no one believed him anymore.

On the fourth day not a single person followed him to watch. He went outside the town walls all by himself, got into the coffin, and asked a passerby to nail it up. The news immediately got about. The townspeople all came scrambling; upon opening the coffin, they saw he had vanished, body and all. Only the sound of his bell could be heard in the sky, receding away: tinkle... tinkle.. tinkle...

(The Record of Linji, tr. by. RF Sasaki, ch. 24, p. 41)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2011 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Vows of Manjushri

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is in Chang's collection.

chapter 10: The Prediction of Manjusri's Attainment of Buddhahood

Sutra 15, Taisho 310, pp. 336-350. translated into Chinese by Siksanda

The land equal to Manjusri's:

"In the east, there is a Buddha-land named Abiding in the Uncexcelled Vow, which is so far away that to get there one must pass worlds as innumerable as the sands of ten billion Ganges Rivers. There is a Buddha there named King of Universal, Eternal Light and Meritorious Ocean. The life span of that Buddha is immeasurable and infinite. He always teaches the Dharma to Bodhisattvas. Good man, the merits and magnificence of that Buddha-land are exactly like those of Universal Sight's Buddha-land."

Some words of wisdom from the text:

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice asked, "Virtuous One, do you not seek enlightenment?"

Manjusri answered, "No. Why not? Because Manjusri is no other than enlightenment and vice versa. Why? because 'Manjusri' is only an arbitrary name and so is 'supreme enlightenment.' Furthermore, the name is nonexistent and cannot act; therefore, it is empty. The nature of emptiness is no other than enlightenment."

...

Good man, the Buddha-Dharma is neither a dharma nor a nondharma. Why? Because the Buddha-Dharma arises from nowhere. If a novice Bodhisattva hears this statement and becomes frightened, he will eventually attain enlightenment. Observing this, one may think, "I must first bring forth bodhicitta and abide in [deep] realization; then I can attain Buddhahood. Otherwise, if I do not bring forth bodhicitta, I can never attain Buddhahood." [However, actually one should not even] harbor this kind of discrimination, because both bodhicitta and Buddhahood are inapprehensible. If they are

inapprehensible, how can they be observed? If they cannot be observed, the realization will not be possible. Why not? Because without observation, realization would have no [germinating] cause.

Good man, what do you think? Can empty space attain enlightenment?

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice answered, "No."

Manjusri asked, "Good man, has the Tathagata realized that all dharmas are the same as empty space?"

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice answered, "Yes, he has."

Manjusri said, "Good man, enlightenment is like empty space and empty space is like enlightenment. Enlightenment and empty space are neither two nor different. If a Bodhisattva knows this equality, then there will be neither that which he knows [and sees] nor that which he does not know or see."

...

To achieve perfection in the Buddha-Dharmas is to achieve perfection in suchness. To achieve perfection in suchness is to achieve perfection in empty space. Thus, the Buddha-Dharmas, suchness, and empty space are [all] one and the same. Good man, you ask, 'How can one achieve perfection in all Buddha-Dharmas?' Just as a person can achieve perfection in form, feeling, conception, impulse, and consciousness, so he can achieve perfection in all Buddha-Dharmas."

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice asked, "What does it mean to achieve perfection in form and other dharmas?"

Manjusri asked in turn, "Good man, what do you think? Is the form you see permanent of impermanent?"

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice said, "It is neither."

Manjusri asked, "Good man, if something is neither permanent nor impermanent, does it increase or decrease?"

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice answered, "No."

Manjusri said, "Good man, if you realize that things do not increase or decrease, you are said to achieve perfection in them. Why so? If you do not thoroughly understand things, you will make discriminations among them. If you thoroughly understand things, you will not make discriminations among them. If things are not discriminated, they do not increase or decrease. If they do not increase or decrease, they are equal. Good man, if you see equality in form, you achieve perfection in form. The same is true with feeling, conception, impulse, consciousness, and all other dharmas."

Then, Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice asked Manjusri, "Virtuous One, since you achieved the Realization of the Nonarising of Dharmas, you have never harbored a notion [in your mind] of attaining supreme enlightenment. Why do you now urge others to progress toward enlightenment?"

Manjusri answered, "I really do not urge any sentient beings to progress toward enlightenment. Why? because sentient beings are nonexistent and devoid of self-entity. If sentient beings were apprehensible, I would cause them to progress toward enlightenment, but since they are inapprehensible, I do not urge them to do so. Why? Because enlightenment and sentient beings are equal and not different from each other. Equality cannot be sought by equality. In equality, nothing originates. Therefore, I often say that one should observe all phenomena as coming from nowhere and going nowhere, which is called equality, that is, emptiness. In emptiness, there is nothing to seek. Good man, you said, 'Since you achieved the Realization of the Nonarising of

Dharmas, you have never harbored a notion [in your mind] of attaining supreme enlightenment.' Good man, do you see the mind? Do you rely on the mind to attain enlightenment?"

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice said, "No, Manjusri. Why not? because the mind, unlike form, is invisible, and so is enlightenment. They are arbitrary names only. The names 'mind' and 'enlightenment' do not exist."

Manjusri said, Good man, there is an esoteric implication in your statement that I have never harbored a notion [in my mind] of attaining enlightenment. Why? because the mind has never come into being, what can it apprehend or realize?"

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice asked, "What does it mean to realize equality?"

Manjusri answered, "To be detached from all dharmas is to realize equality. The so-called realization means the subtle wisdom, which neither arises nor ceases, is identical with suchness, and cannot be discriminated. If a Dharma-cultivator with right view comprehends the truth that in equality there is nothing to be attained, and does not attach himself either to multiplicity or to oneness, then he realizes equality. If a person realizes that all dharmas are signless, comprehends that signlessness is their sign, and does not cling to his body or mind, then he has perfectly realized equality."

Bodhisattva Lion of Thundering Voice asked, "What is 'attainment'?"

Manjusri answered, "'Attainment' is a conventional expression, In fact, what saints attain is inexpressible. Why? Because the Dharma rests upon nothing and is beyond speech. Furthermore, good man, to regard nonattainment as attainment, and as neither attainment nor nonattainment, is called [the true] attainment."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Dzogchen teaching of Tsongkhapa

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd say that for Dzogchen to work it should be based on non-conceptual wisdom.

Mipham, Tsongkhapa, Gorampa, Nagarjuna - these great teachers gave conceptual methods, which is all right as far as they are applied.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: Chinese Pure Land Death Stories

Content:

Unknown said:

Do you think the stories represented in Chinese Pure Land are just that...stories? I mean they're aren't really comparable stories in Japanese or even Tibetan Pure Land. Though there are stories of maha siddhas being whisked away by Vajrayogini.

Astus wrote:

Well, what we definitely have are stories. From a scholarly point of view the only possible thing to analyse is related to the story and not the truth of the content. There are of course religious themes in such stories that many accept just as they are.

Personally, I can view them as expressions of something that certain people have experienced, as it so often happens in religious, magical, spiritual and other such environments (miracles are clearly not restricted to Buddhists). Such experience are real as personal, communal and traditional happenings. Same can be said about many things we take real generally in the West. And so when you ask if they're just stories the implied meaning is that it's all fiction created by writers similarly to novels and films, i.e. lies. I don't believe they're lies - although it is possible that a couple of them were just made up - but as I said, religious experience of some people. Obviously it couldn't be the dead describing what they saw. Also, such collections of stories are probably based on what the writers heard from others, including events that could have happened generations ago. But I haven't studied this area of Buddhist literature thus I can't say anything for sure about their origin and such. What is the common purpose of stories within Buddhism is to educate, and in Pure Land stories that education means generating faith in the power of the vow of Amita Buddha. A side note, explanations in forms of logical arguments also are for education and rousing faith. Not that different, but people usually prefer one over the other. Cultural conditioning is not negligible either.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Ask A Teacher

Content:

Astus wrote:

ZFI can have Zen teachers, Dhammawheel can have bhikkhus (or not). But who qualifies as a Mahayana teacher? Either we can set up a standard or it just doesn't work that way. The bodhisattva spirit says one learns from whomever one can and sees the buddha in all beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Vows of Manjushri

Content:

Will said:

although my edition of Chang has the sutra on pp. 164ff.

Astus wrote:

That pp. 336-350 is in the Taisho not Chang. Starts from here:

http://cbeta.org/result/normal/T11/0310_058.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

Looked into a couple of articles, mainly in the <http://www.meditationexpert.com/zen-buddhism-tao/index.htm> section, and it looked OK to me. Sure, this mixture of different teachings is unusual, but he also clarifies http://www.meditationexpert.com/zen-buddhism-tao/z_whats_so_special_about_Buddhism.html.

By this I don't mean anyone should buy things from there.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2011 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Chinese Pure Land Death Stories

Content:

Astus wrote:

Of course it's possible to be sure. That's what is called faith, the very essence of the Pure Land path.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2011 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Vows of Manjushri

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the sutra translated by Chang from the Maharatnakuta collection, the vows of Manjusri: If all the [future] Tathagatas in countless Buddha-lands in the ten directions, whom I see with my unhindered deva-eye, are not persuaded by me to engender bodhicitta or taught by me to cultivate giving, discipline, patience, vigor, meditation, and wisdom and to attain supreme enlightenment, I shall not attain bodhi. Only after the fulfillment of this vow shall I attain supreme enlightenment.

I have vowed to combine the worlds of Buddhas as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges into a single Buddha-land and to adorn it with incalculable, intermingled, exquisite jewels. If I cannot do this, I shall never attain supreme enlightenment.

I have vowed to cause my land to have a bodhi-tree as big as ten billion-world universes; that tree will shed a light all over my Buddha-land.

I have vowed not to rise from my seat under the bodhi-tree from the time I sit down upon the seat until I attain supreme enlightenment and enter nirvana, [and during that time] to teach the Dharma by magically produced bodies to sentient beings in incalculable, numberless Buddha-lands in the ten directions.

I have vowed to cause my land to lack the name 'woman,' and to be inhabited by numerous Bodhisattvas who are free from the filth of afflictions, who cultivate pure conduct, and who are spontaneously born dressed in monastic robes and seated with crossed legs. have no Sravakas or Pratyekabuddhas, even in name, except those magically produced by the Tathagata to explain the doctrines of the three vehicles to sentient beings [of other Buddha-lands] in the ten directions.

I have vowed that, just as the inhabitants of Amitabha Buddha's land have joy in the Dharma for food, in my land the Bodhisattvas will all have in their right hands a bowl full of delicacies as soon as they think of food. After a moment, they will think, 'Under no circumstances will I eat any of this myself before I have offered it to the Buddhas in the ten directions and given it to poor, suffering sentient beings, such as hungry ghosts, until they are satiated.' After thinking this, they will obtain the five miraculous powers, enabling them to fly in space without hindrance; and then will go to offer the delicacies to the Buddhas, Tathagatas, and Sravakas in numberless Buddha-lands in the ten directions. The Bodhisattvas from my land will give the food to all the poor, distressed sentient beings in all those Buddha-lands and will explain the Dharma to them so as to free them from the thirst of desire. It will take the Bodhisattvas only an instant to accomplish all this and come back to their land.

I have vowed that when they are just born, all the Bodhisattvas in my land will obtain at will in their hands whatever kind of precious clothes they need, clean and fit for sramanas. Then they will think, 'I shall not use these myself until I have offered them to the Buddhas in the ten directions.' Thereupon, they will go to offer their precious clothes to the Buddhas of countless Buddha-lands in the ten directions and then return to their own land, all in a moment. Only after this will they enjoy the clothing themselves.

I have vowed that the Bodhisattvas in my land will offer their wealth, treasures, and necessities of life to Buddhas and Sravakas before they themselves enjoy them.

my land will be free from the eight adversities, unwholesome dharmas, wrongdoings and prohibitions, pain, annoyance, and unhappiness.

I have vowed that my Buddha-land will be formed of incalculable amounts of wonderful jewels and adorned with innumerable, interlaced, exquisite pearls. These pearls will be exceptionally rare and difficult to find in the ten directions; their names will be so numerous that no one could finish recounting them, even in millions of years. My land will appear to be made of gold to the Bodhisattvas who wish it to be made of gold, and will appear to be made of silver to the Bodhisattvas who wish it to be made of silver, without affecting its golden appearance to those who wish it to be made of gold. According to the Bodhisattvas' wishes, it will appear to be made of crystal, lapis lazuli, agate, pearls, or any other treasure without affecting its appearance to others. It will also appear to be made of fragrant sandalwood, of fragrant aloewood, of red sandalwood, or of any other kind of wood, all according to the Bodhisattvas' wishes.

My land will not be illuminated by the brilliance of suns, moons, pearls, stars, fire, and so forth. All the Bodhisattvas there will illuminate hundreds of billions of myriads of Buddha-lands with their own lights. In my land, it will be daytime when flowers open and night when flowers close, and the seasons will change according to the Bodhisattvas' wishes. There will be no cold, heat, old age, illness, or death.

If they wish, Bodhisattvas in my land may go to any other land to attain [supreme] enlightenment; they will attain it after descending from the Tusita Heaven when their

lives come to an end there. No one in my Buddha-land will enter nirvana.

Though they will not appear in the sky, hundreds of thousands of musical instruments will be heard; their music will not be the sounds of greedy desire, but the sounds of the paramitas, the Buddha, the Dharma, the Samgha, and the doctrines of the Bodhisattva canon. The Bodhisattvas will be able to hear the wonderful Dharma in proportion to their understanding. If they wish to see the Buddha, they will see Universal Sight Tathagata sitting under the bodhi-tree as soon as they think of seeing him, wherever they are, whether walking, sitting, or standing. Bodhisattvas who have doubts about the Dharma will break the net of their doubts and comprehend the import of the Dharma at the sight of that Buddha, without receiving any explanation.

I have vowed to fill my Buddha-land with all the merits and magnificence of the lands of the hundreds of thousands of [millions of] billions of myriads of Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, whom I have seen before. However, my land will lack the two vehicles, the five depravities, and so forth. World-Honored One, if I myself enumerate the merits and magnificence of my Buddha-land, I cannot finish doing so even in kalpas as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. Only the Buddha knows the scope of my vow.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2011 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: dharma protectors in Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The topic <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=3435> was intended exactly for this aspect of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2011 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Do you really think existence is an illusion

Content:

Astus wrote:

The error is in the question. To ask "Is this illusion?" implies there is something that is an illusion. So even if one believes it is an illusion he still maintains the view that there is something existent that has the quality of illusion. Of course, this is how language works. But the point of the metaphor of illusion and such is to make beings less attached to their experience. So this investigation of the illusory nature of things is indeed a dream in a dream. There is quite a difference between illusion and suchness, i.e. the things as they are, in terminology. But the meaning of both is simply not to get so hooked on like and dislike.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2011 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: Karma (vipaka) should be fair.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment."

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.099.than.html>

This concept of purifying an unknown amount of past karma resembles the story of Buddha meeting a group of ascetic Jainas working for their purification. See:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.101.than.html>.

"And what is the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma? Just this noble eightfold path"

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.145.than.html>

On the complexity of karma:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.008.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2011 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Practice and Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

"When I started to see how this physical world really could be all but a manifestation of mental activity, the reality of deva, deva-loka, arupa-loka and transcendental dharma guardians became apparent."

Happened in a similar way to me, it's just that I was reading "Pure Land Buddhism: Dialogs with Ancient Masters" (http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf) when the implications of mind only and its relation to buddha-lands and such started to be clear to me, IIRC.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2011 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Practice and Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is all right to have Buddhism as a hobby. Isn't that a great entertainment? I think this has been like this ever since, a number of higher class lay people (and possibly monastics too) used Buddhism simply for their intellectual and spiritual amusement without any religious fervour. We could even call this an entry stage. The question is if this hobby form is something that may lead some to get really involved and take refuge in their heart or not? I believe the answer is positive thus it is fine to spread some kind of "Zen Lite" among the masses, i.e. the path of men and gods (same as the Zen of outsiders and ordinary people).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2011 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Practice and Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

If there are no teachers of hobby Buddhism how could anyone learn about it? Or, you could simply say that it is just normal that it's hard to find a teacher with high qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2011 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: How do you pronounce Kshitigarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kṣitigarbha in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet:
kṣiṭṭ̪igərbʱə (based on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_Sanskrit; another one at <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/sanskrit.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 13th, 2011 at 9:30 AM

Title: Re: Animal products in just about everything :cry:

Content:

Astus wrote:

Where does that list come from? There are a couple of things in it I doubt has any organic component.

Plywood: besides the wood it includes glue that could be produced from animals, however, most of them are now synthetic.

Refrigerator: what part is exactly organic, besides the food content one puts into it? It's all plastic and metal as far as I can see.

Freon: it is chlorofluorocarbon containing carbon, chlorine, and fluorine produced as a volatile derivative of methane and ethane. Also, biologically synthesized organofluorines have been found in microorganisms and plants, but not animals.

Credit card: I thought it's plastic and some metallic parts. I don't know much about these things but I thought plastic is very much non-organic.

Asphalt: it is crude petroleum or crude bitumen, similar to oil. Bitumen can preserve animal fossils but that's not the same as using living beings to produce roads, besides the road workers.

Concrete: made of cement (made from limestone), fly ash (made from coal) and slag cement (a by-product of iron and steel making).

Steel: it's an alloy of different metallic elements, primarily iron and carbon, possibly also manganese, chromium, vanadium, and tungsten. No rabbits, horses or mice included.

I'm no chemist and all the data above are simply collected from Wikipedia. However, before making things sound so dire some background work and fact checking would be useful.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 6:20 AM

Title: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is this reoccurring topic of "Theravada vs Mahayana" and it's usually the same thing repeated over and over. There's also quite strong sectarianism within Mahayana itself. However, there are a few Buddhist teachers who have more to say about this. Please add further more valuable sources on this subject, if you know. And if you're up for a debate, first look into at lease some of the teachings I list here.

<http://www.abhayagiri.org/main/article/1503/> by Ajahn Amaro

<https://sites.google.com/site/sectsandsectarianism/>, in depth analysis by Bhikkhu Sujato

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owq_ougaikU, video Dharma speech by Ajahn Brahm

My take on the subject in brief: <https://eubuddhist.blogspot.com/2010/10/single-taste.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"There is the irreconcilable difference between Arhatship and Bodhisattvahood."

I don't think there is any problem there. Theravada accepts the bodhisattva path, even if they have a bit different set of 10 paramis. You shouldn't forget either that they were the so called Hinayana schools where the whole bodhisattva concept was developed in the first place. On the other hand, I've read somewhere the idea that in those Mahayana communities where they teach "buddhahood in this life" it is in fact reaching arhatship it's just that they had to change the terminology. Anyway, I believe this is a marginal matter compared to actually looking at the very teachings and practices different schools use. It is there to find the singular nature of the path consisting of morality (harmlessness and kindness), meditation (samatha and vipasyana) and wisdom (selflessness and dependent origination).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on the secret school and OM MANI PADME HUM

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think what he says about the Secret School is something opposing to the common view of Vajrayana among a large number of its followers. Would be good to see some reaction to that from mantrins.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: What is precept substance?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a discussion partially involving the precept substance (戒體) at H-Buddhism:

<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-buddhism&month=0606&week=b&msg=bQcV7NhvRAe1/SPvB2oNjQ&user=&pw=> and

look for the same subject <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lx&list=h-buddhism&user=&pw=&month=0606>. It elucidates a few things about it for sure,

including its origin and some later developments.

The very useful series

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/oldweb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach58.htm>

summarises it as "those 'not-to-do' precepts". You can find a modern description in Zhenhua's

https://books.google.com/books?id=NslSjSJDkV8C&pg=PA258&dq=precept+substance&hl=en&ei=b9J9TdqUNMmgtgf67KS6BQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCkQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=precept%20substance&f=false.

<http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/publish/370/vbs370p029.htm> the precept-substance as an actual thing, which appears to me as the common view in modern EA Buddhism:

"The Handbook of Bodhisattva Precepts for the Laity speaks of the unconditioned substance of precepts. The Dharma Master for the Bodhisattva Precepts will say: "All disciples of the Buddha, since all of you can bring forth these fourteen deep, vast vows, I now ascend the seat and bow on behalf of all of you, to respectfully invite the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions to transmit to you the perfect substance of the precepts." That is known as the precept substance. This is the most important time for you during the precept transmission. It's when you receive the substance of the precepts.

Everyone should read this section, so that when the time comes you can contemplate accordingly to receive this superior precept substance.

After producing faith and understanding, when we receive the precepts, we have to truly and sincerely place the six major and twenty-eight minor precepts in our minds, so that we can stop evil and avoid wrongdoing. We should put into practice the dharma of the precepts. We should not do what we are not supposed to do. Even when we dream, we

should tell ourselves that it's not permissible to do such and such a thing. That power comes from the precept substance. We have that power if we have truly received the substance of the precepts. Once we have the precept substance, we will gain a kind of strength in our body, mouth and mind. There is a change in our conduct and demeanor. Even when we are dreaming, our thoughts and our behavior are not the same as before; this is known as the precept conduct. "

http://www.drbachinese.org/online_reading/dharma_talks/5Precepts/5Precepts.b.htm,

"Lay people who like to receive precepts must request them from an ordained monk. To transmit precepts means to give the precept substance to the preceptees. The person who transmits the precept substance to you must be a Bhikshu. In the Vinaya, a Bhikshuni is not permitted to transmit precepts."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"If we all need to use the ferry to reach the other side, the more people who row the better."

Two things here. There is this common Mahayana idea (misconception) that arhats are either just selfish or simply they don't care at all. This is addressed in Amaro's essay. Second, the way to liberation has to be walked alone and there's nobody who can actually make free others, so "rowing together" sounds good for community harmony but it doesn't really make sense in terms of the path to nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"If one isn't inspired by Bodhicitta but by a preliminary mind of love for all it doesn't have the same effect."

What distinguishes kindness on the part of a bodhisattva and a sravaka in your understanding? What makes all the bodhisattva practices special is the realisation of prajnaparamita which is the awakening to emptiness, Arya sravakas have awakened to emptiness, so they practice "unattached love" as well as the bodhisattvas. Bodhicitta is aspiring for buddhahood and in that sravakas and bodhisattvas are different.

"the avowed aspiration of the Bodhisattva is different and formalised as inherently altruistic, as opposed to Arhats who as far as I know don't formally take a vow in such a manner."

Sure, there is no such formal vow for sravakas. But such a vow doesn't create altruism neither it is a condition for it. Arhats are per definition free from all self-attachment, so I don't know how it could not be perfect altruism.

"I place sectarianism partially at the door of such teachers."

Good point. The other half are the disciples of said teachers.

"And how many have done that I can only count one and he was a Buddha as well."

The canon was set up and preserved by the disciples, also there are teachings in it from the disciples. So it was not a one man job.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

"The Mahāyāna generally accepts the Arhat path as legitimate, but Theravāda will generally reject the Mahāyāna vision of Buddhahood."

True, it is a very apparent difference. But I also see a matching point. When it comes to identifying what a buddha is Mahayana agrees with Theravada that it is not something graspable, it is beyond identification and concepts. Thus it could be said that the "transcendental buddhas" are upaya - this view is in line with the Pratyutpannasamadhi-sutra (which is important because it is one of the main sources of meditation on Amitabha) and others.

"The difference between a Bodhisattva and Arhat is quite simple"

I said "buddhahood in this life" and not bodhisattvahood. In fact, those who teach buddhahood in this life categorise the long term bodhisattva carrier as something inferior.

"If you wish to aid in the liberation of all sentient beings, even if it means you have to take rebirth for immeasurable kalpas, you adopt the Bodhisattva path. If you want freedom from your suffering and cessation of rebirth, you take the Arhat path."

This much is taught by Theravada too, no difference on this point.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Caz,

I said, "Bodhicitta is aspiring for buddhahood and in that sravakas and bodhisattvas are different."

You said, "So it is the cultivation of Bodhichitta that is the defining point."

There's little disagreement here in defining bodhisattvas. But, to say they have a more special kindness?

"A Bodhisattva would seek out others to help them because of the intention can the same be said of a Sravakayanist?"

Yes, the same can be said of a sravaka. Also, just a reminder, that from a Theravada POV a buddha is a "perfect arhat", thus spreading the Dharma and liberating beings are things sravakas do as well. If that were not the case the whole Theravada should have died out long ago as there was nobody who wanted to teach it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 14th, 2011 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The two traditions define themselves in a way which necessarily excludes or marginalizes the other."

That could be said about East-Asian and Tibetan Buddhism too, or Nichiren-shu and Jodo-shu. Thing is, both Mahayana and Theravada are names for huge categories for the sake of convenience. There are Theravada people today who have little problem accepting Mahayana teachings as valid methods and consider it Buddhism just as their own tradition, which makes their view a non-exclusive one. Also, it might appear that the Theravada canon is a fixed and closed thing but in reality there are even modern texts, like those of Mahasi Sayadaw, canonised. Technically it is not an unimaginable thing to integrate both Theravada and Mahayana things, and it has happened already several times. like <http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?f=13&t=6599>, or even more widespread teachings, like bhavangacitta. Perhaps sectarianism is less present in the different teachings than in the very concept that there are opposing Buddhisms.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 15th, 2011 at 6:46 AM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The important point is not to enter cessation for the sake of living beings."

In Amaro's article there's a good point about this, "So if we're hanging onto the Southern idea of "me going", and "others being left behind" then that idea, by definition, is missing the mark. Similarly, if we cling to the Northern view and think, "this individual being will persist through infinite time for the sake of all beings," that has also fallen drastically into wrong view." That is, the concept that there is a cessation is one extreme, the concept that there is remaining around is another extreme. In the Pali Canon the Buddha doesn't give a definition of what happens after parinirvana as it doesn't make sense even in this life to pinpoint someone in nirvana (as an arhat, as the Tathagata). In the Prajnaparamita texts it is emphasised again and again that a bodhisattva actually is not a bodhisattva, doesn't go anywhere, etc. Sure, there's then where the sutras got all systematised and the arhats just puff away and bodhisattvas and buddhas are eternal beings - well, this is actually how it all gets simplified and becomes easy to oppose non-existence with existence. Thus reconciling one extreme with the other is impossible, unless we point out that those extremes are wrong views.

"if you can point out to me where a Srvakayanist would develop the intention to free all living beings"

Does a bodhisattva have the concept, "I will free all living beings"? I doubt that. Does a bodhisattva actually free all living beings? Obviously not. Then what is bodhicitta and the vow?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 15th, 2011 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bodhicitta and the Arhat

Bodhicitta is 1. the intention to liberate all beings and attain buddhahood; 2. the true nature of mind, compassionate emptiness

"when one sees that form is Voidness, he accomplishes the great Wisdom, and he abides no more in samsara. When one sees that the Voidness is form, he attains the great compassion and will no more remain in Nirvana. Because form and Voidness, Wisdom and compassion, have all become non-differentiated, he is able to practice the non-abiding acts."

(An Excerpt from the Commentary on the Heart Sutra by Master Fa Tsang, The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism by Garma C. C. Chang, p. 204.)

"There is no emptiness meditation not permeated by compassion;
For the practice of compassion is solely [the practice of] emptiness.
As for emptiness, even those seeking tranquil abiding must practice it,

For this vehicle, however, emptiness is compassion;
And the self-nature of this compassion is emptiness.
So understand that compassion is the essential nature."

(Atisa: Advice to Namdak Tsuknor, Mind Training: The Great Collection by Thupten Jinpa, p. 267.)

"The practice of "clear observation" will cure the followers of the Hinayana of the fault of having narrow and inferior minds which bring forth no great compassion, and will free ordinary men from their failure to cultivate the capacity for goodness. For these reasons, both "cessation" and "clear observation" are complementary and inseparable. If the two are not practiced together, then one cannot enter the path to enlightenment."

(The Awakening of Faith: Attributed to Asvaghosa, tr. by Y. S. Hakeda, p. 95)

The practice of "clear observation", i.e. vipasyana is described as contemplating suffering and impermanence. Indeed, the common four bodhisattva vows are very much the other side of the four noble truths. In Mahayana it is understood that emptiness and compassion go hand in hand, in fact, they're inseparably and ultimately the same. Consequently, if an arhat realises the four noble truths (of which the third is claimed to be the final meaning and equal to buddha-nature in the Srimaladevisutra) he also accomplishes great compassion, fulfilling the requirements of ultimate bodhicitta.

Something interesting to read:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/arahantsbodhisattvas.html> by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

The article "View from the Center" starts with these two quotes:

"Don't be an arahant, don't be a bodhisattva, don't be anything at all – if you are anything at all you will suffer"

Ajahn Chah

A student of Buddhism asked, "Which do you think is the best path: that of the arahant or that of the bodhisattva?"

"That kind of question is asked by people who understand absolutely nothing about Buddhism!"

Ajahn Sumedho

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Tilopa said:

So there's no path that leads to Nirvana and no path that leads to Enlightenment?

Astus wrote:

Another way to say the same thing:

"Followers of the Way, make no mistake! All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty.

All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks."

(Record of Linji, 2.18, tr. by RF Sasaki, p. 221-222)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, here's another one, perhaps this will be clearer:

"In cultivating the Dharma, you may cultivate Dhyana, the teachings, the precepts, the secret school or the Pure Land, but it is all in order to bring your thoughts to a halt so that you do not produce a single thought."

(http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/1_100/vbs70/70_4.html by Hsuan Hua)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are three views regarding the trikaya in Mahayana. 1. there is no trikaya mentioned in the early Mahayana; 2. the dharmakaya is developed by wisdom and the rupakaya is developed by merits; 3. the rupakaya is inherent in dharmakaya, i.e. the buddha-nature is both empty and non-empty. Therefore the difference between Mahayana and Theravada regarding the trikaya occurs only in case of the second view.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Nangwa said:

A vacuous state of mind is not Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

"Far from a mind blank of all thoughts, the "thoughtless" mind is able to see and to know all dharmas free from attachment. It pervades everywhere, functioning freely and smoothly without any fixation, attachment or hindrance. The crucial difference between the wunien state and the ordinary person's mind is that the thoughts in wunien no longer produce defilement nor attachment in the process of cognition. Huineng emphatically pointed out that suppressing all thoughts and refraining from thinking of anything is a misunderstanding of the dharma, and indeed one who did that was being tied up by the dharma, instead of being liberated by it."

<http://www.thebuddhadharma.com/web-archive/2004/6/1/does-no-thought-mean-no-thought.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2011 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

The point is that regardless of what method one uses their aim is the same in eliminating conceptual fabrications as that is the cause of ignorance. That is true for Theravada too.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2011 at 4:10 PM

Title: Re: Finding and leaving the teacher ...

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't even see how the whole teacher issue makes sense in this context. I mean, lay people are generally not bound to any teacher or community and they're free to do as they please. Of course, it is for the benefit of every lay people to listen to Dharma teachings and support the sangha. But when there is talk of a teacher in a Buddhist text - whether sutra or something else - it is primarily from the view of the monastic community where every novice is under the guidance of both a disciplinary teacher and a Dharma teacher, plus the abbot of the monastery where s/he is ordained. For at least five years a newly ordained monk can't move from the teacher s/he receives instructions from (except in special cases). After the first five years are gone a monastic may move to a different monastery if s/he wants to. However, in case of lay people these rules do not exist. So what is the whole point of finding and leaving a teacher? What teacher?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2011 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Finding and leaving the teacher ...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, every Buddhist has a teacher in Sakyamuni himself. What is not mentioned is the category of pratyekabuddhas who attain liberation when the Dharma is not present in a world, so they aren't just without a personal teacher looking after everything they do but they don't even have any other resources available. It is also quite confusing in this discussion that a "teacher" is a quite big category. For instance, in Chinese Buddhism colloquially all monks are called Dharma-teachers (fashi).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2011 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Finding and leaving the teacher ...

Content:

Yeshe said:

Would that be the equivalent of 'Sensei' in Japan ?

'Sensei' was translated to me as 'one who has gone before' and is then in a position to help us.

Astus wrote:

That is a rather literal translation of 先生 (Chinese: xiansheng; Japanese: sensei) which is made up of 先 - first, former, previous and 生 - life, birth. One who is born before me is older, therefore more experienced, more knowledgeable, and of course an elder is to be respected. 法師 (Chinese: fashi; Japanese: houshi) is 法 - law (i.e. Dharma) and 師 - teacher. The difference is that in Chinese fashi is used for monks only while in Japanese sensei is used for any kind of teacher. I think the Chinese equivalent of sensei is shifu (師傅/師父) as a general form of addressing a master (of something) while in Japanese it is oshou(-sama) (和尚; Chinese: heshang) that is a respectful form of calling a monk. However, my knowledge is limited and uncertain, others may point out some errors here.

My point is that it is a limited view to think that a Buddhist teacher is an enlightened master to whom one is loyal until liberation. I'd rather say it is not much different from a school teacher, or a teacher of some sort of art. One may study the Lankavatara Sutra from one teacher and then do meditation with another. It is like a university where students learn different things from a group of teachers and then specialise in a single subject under one professor. However, it is not compulsory to specialise in one thing. A solid understanding of the basics should be perfectly enough to serve as the foundation of one's training. When reading some history of Buddhism we learn about extraordinary people who for some reason remained important for the later generations. But those are only a couple of people. And there were tens and hundreds of thousands who didn't make it to the collections of outstanding masters, which doesn't mean they were lazy

good-for-nothing men (and women - who are hardly ever mentioned anyway). And besides all those monastic people there were many times more lay people, just like us on this forum, who are again non-existent in Buddhist histories except a few kings and such.

Finding a teacher, leaving a teacher, really, that sounds to me like a secondary or tertiary issue. There is this myth that teachers are magical beings bestowing blessings that make everyone enlightened, like Jesus healing the crippled. But Jesus is not coming. On the other hand, there are so many teachers doing their best to make the Dharma available to everyone who wants to learn. Teachings are given in communities, video records of the teachings are obtainable for those who couldn't be there or just want to listen to it again, there are also so many books that it's impossible to read them all. It's like in a restaurant, one only has to choose from the menu and eat. How pointless it is to complain that the chef doesn't come to your table and spoon feed you? And then this idea of finding and leaving a teacher, well, doesn't make sense to me.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2011 at 4:54 AM

Title: Re: Looking for Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

A recommended reading list at the <http://mro.org/zmm/training/readinglist.php>. That is for a modern American Zen community. If you want to study for Chinese, Korean or some other forms of Zen the list can change significantly.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2011 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Meat Eating

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Surangama Sutra, a primary Chan text, has some interesting passages. Quotes from the BTTS translation.

"A person eats a sheep. The sheep dies and becomes a person. The person dies and becomes a sheep, and it goes on that way through ten births and more. Through death after death and birth after birth, they come back to eat one another. The evil karma becomes innate and exhausts the bounds of the future. And the basis for all of this is stealing and greed."

"Bodhisattvas and bhikshus who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less will they pull it up with their hand. How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill? Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm. Why? It is because

when one wears something taken from a living creature, one creates conditions with it, just as when people eat the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth. Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation. What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2011 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on the secret school and OM MANI PADME HUM

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.kwanumzen.org/1996/ko-bongs-try-mind/>:

Only keep a try mind, only one mind: do it mind. When chanting, sitting or bowing, only do it. Practicing will not help if you are attached to your thinking, if your mind is moving. Taoist chanting, Confucian chanting, Christian chanting, Buddhist chanting: it doesn't matter. Even chanting, "Coca Cola, Coca Cola, Coca Cola. . ." can be just as good if you keep a clear mind. But, if you don't keep a clear mind, even Buddha cannot help you. The most important thing is, only do it. When you only do something one hundred percent, then there is no subject, no object. There's no inside or outside. Inside and outside are already one. That means you and the whole universe are one and never separate.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2011 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Sects and Sectarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I recommend discussing group karma in the topic

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=1649> as it's not related to this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2011 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: The height of the Treasure tower (Lotus Sutra)

Content:

Astus wrote:

The http://www.bdkamerica.org/digital/dBET_T0262_LotusSutra_2007.pdf by Tsugunari Kubo & Akira Yuyama is another translation not mentioned.

It's not difficult to make up different interpretations of 500, especially because 5 is a popular number in Buddhism (e.g.

http://viewonbuddhism.org/5_dhyani_buddhas.html), but it isn't integral to the text itself.

Case 35 in the Blue Cliff Record is an interesting one.

Unknown said:

Manjusri asked Wuzhuo, "Where did you just come from?"

"From the south," replied Wuzhuo.

"And how does the buddhadharma fare in the south?" asked Manjusri.

Wuzhuo answered, "There are but few monks in the Final Age of the Law who maintain the precepts."

Manjusri asked, "How many monks are there?"

Wuzhuo replied, "Some are three hundred, some are five hundred."

Wuzhuo then asked Manjusri, "How does the buddhadharma fare here?"

Manjusri said, "Worldly people and sages live together; dragons and snakes intermingle."

"How many monks are there?" asked Wuzhuo.

Manjusri answered, "Front, three and three, back, three and three."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's just that "jing" (經), which generally means scripture and classic work, is the translation for sutra in Buddhist context, so the Liu zu tan jing (六祖壇經) in English becomes Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra. Calling it a sutra is also a sign for its great importance in East-Asian Buddhism. By the way, the text has nothing to do with the historical Huineng and the whole text is pretty much a later creation which also went through some alterations before it became what we have now.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

But what is the definitive attribute of tantra that makes it separate from sutra? Like, for instance, according to Kukai it is that exoteric teachings were taught by rupakaya buddha and they're all upaya, while the esoteric teachings are from the dharmakaya buddha and they convey the truth as it is. Although it's possible to argue with that but I guess that's a start.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Meat Eating

Content:

Unknown said:

The Buddha (in the Pali Canon) never specifically stated that: if you kill then you will have this outcome, if you steal then you will have this outcome,

Astus wrote:

Actually, he did: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.than.html>

Also, here's a great study guide on the matter of

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/kamma.html> made of suttas only.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Superior and passionate. I don't think it could help distinguishing one text/method from the other. Also, I don't see passion emphasised in EA mantrayana at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"That which abides in the class of being distinguished by [1] being Mahayana and [2] having cultivation of a path according in aspect with the form body (rupakaya) of a buddha is the definition of the Vajra Vehicle. This is established by texts of Highest Mantra as well as the lower tantras."

(Jeffrey Hopkins: Tantric Techniques, p. 373)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011 at 2:44 AM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Kare said:

Interesting. So if the Chinese called it a 'jing', who then did attach the sanskrit word 'sutra' to it? And when did that happen?

Astus wrote:

As I said, jing in Buddhist context means sutra. In English both could be scripture that some translators have used (e.g. Flower Ornament Scripture). Calling it a sutra also promotes the Zen concept that patriarchs, zen masters are equal to a buddha. But even the word sutra is said to be a mistranslation as it rather should be sukta. Nevertheless, the point of calling it a sutra is to make its content absolutely authentic and equal to the teachings of the Buddha. And indeed, that's what has happened in East-Asian

Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see your point. 經, which is jing in Mandarin Chinese, carries the same meaning in Japanese (kyou), Korean (kyeng) and Vietnamese (kinh), simply because they all took writing and many other cultural things (including Buddhism) from China. The first English translation of the text made in 1930 was called Sutra of Wei Lang (<http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/clubs/buddhism/huineng/foreword.html#forword>), but since even before that there were translations made from Chinese to Western languages by that time the rendering of 經 to sutra must have been the common practice. Also, 經 is the translation in Chinese for sutra, so giving it that status in the Chinese Canon was intentional long before any European knew about the text's existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011 at 7:42 AM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

四書五經 [sì shū wǔ jīng] - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Books_and_Five_Classics

十三經 [shí sān jīng] - the Thirteen Confucian Classics

易經 [yì jīng] - The Book of Changes ("I Ching")

道德經 [dào dé jīng] - Tao Te Ching

黃帝內經 [huáng dì nèi jīng] - Yellow Emperor's internal canon, medical text c. 300 BC

聖經 [shèng jīng] - Holy Bible / the Confucian classics

古蘭經 [gǔ lán jīng] - Koran

摩門經 [mó mén jīng] - Book of Mormon

etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Could you brush up your sources? I mean, when you refer to a text as a source you should have access to it and be able to give an exact citation. First you say Wayman said the Avatamsaka Sutra is among the tantras, now that Conze was unaware of the large

number of meditation texts. Both are unlikely statements.

"As a more or less public system of thought, the Tantra gathered momentum after 500 or 600 A.D. Its beginnings do, however, go back to the dawn of human history, when an agricultural society was pervaded by magic and witchcraft, human sacrifice and the cult of the mother goddess, fertility rites and chthonic deities. The Tantra is not really a new creation, but the result of an absorption of primitive beliefs by the literary tradition, and their blending with Buddhist philosophy."

(Edward Conze: Buddhism - Its Essence and Development, p. 176-177)

Later he lists three practices specific to Tantra:

1. the recitation of spells
2. the performance of ritual gestures and dances
3. the identification with deities by means of a special kind of meditation

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 25th, 2011 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Korean Pure Land Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Cheontae is Korean for Tiantai/Tendai (天台), and <http://www.cheontae.org/>. As far as I know there is no separate school for Pure Land in Korea either (just as there isn't in anywhere else except Japan), nevertheless, the practice of the yeombul (nianfo/nenbutsu) is widespread.

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/master/priest_view.asp?cat_seq=10&priest_seq=27&page=3 was a Korean monk in the 20th century who propagated yeombul practice combined with Seon. To me it seems that the mainstream view of the majority of the elite monastics and teachers is about the combined Seon and yeombul method where it is more about attaining a pure mind rather than birth in the Pure Land. This is emphasised by Hanam for instance, one of the most influential Seon monks in the 20th century, who sanctioned the abolishment of a yeombul recitation association from the Manil-hermitage in 1921 (see: Makers of Modern Korean Buddhism, p 177ff). As for other levels of Buddhism, I have no information.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 25th, 2011 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Korean Pure Land Buddhism

Content:

KwanSeum said:

Seon is the mind of the Buddha and Kyo is the practice.

Zen and Pureland are not two but one.

Astus wrote:

Pure Land is not a Kyo/Teaching school.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 27th, 2011 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Korean Pure Land Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What qualifies as a Pure Land path is when one's aim is to be born in the Pure Land. If one chants Namu Amita Buddha only for the sake of purifying the mind, gaining concentration and such, that is not a Pure Land method. But if one does bows and pilgrimages for attaining birth, it is a Pure Land practice then. So it is not the matter whether one uses recitation, visualisation or something else but if one has the faith and vow (to be born in the Pure Land) or not. Using the recitation of the name is just the simplest and easiest method in the Pure Land school but not the only one. Also, if one works on purifying one's mind in order to gain birth in the Pure Land, that is a valid method. Even reciting other buddhas' name can be a way to the Pure Land. Or it can be something else. It depends primarily on faith and vow. Without faith in Amita Buddha and the Pure Land it's meaningless to call it anything close to the teachings of the Pure Land school.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 1:21 AM

Title: Re: Korean Pure Land Buddhism

Content:

KwanSeum said:

Are you assuming that the Pure Land is way over yonder and Amitabul is far removed from us?

Astus wrote:

Do I assume that America is on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean? Do I get there if I understand that all phenomena are only mental dharmas, or should I get a plane ticket? I can also say that Barack Obama is the true nature of my mind, however, that doesn't make me the president of the U.S. of A. Thus it is that there is not just emptiness but also causes and conditions.

"Ordinary people generally think that if the Pure Land is Mind-Only, then it does not exist. This is the understanding of demons and externalists. Such a deluded view, which appears correct but is in reality wrong, affects more than half of all people and causes practitioners to forfeit true benefits.

It is precisely because of the Self-Nature Amitabha that the practitioner must recite the name of Buddha Amitabha of the West seeking rebirth in the Pure Land – so as to achieve the Self-Nature Amitabha through gradual cultivation. If he merely grasps at the Buddha Amitabha of the West, he cannot achieve immediate escape from Birth and Death – not even if he is truly awakened, much less if (like most people who ask this question) he is pretentious and just indulges in empty talk without engaging in practice.

Thus, the answer to your question [are the Mind-Only Pure Land and the Self-Nature Amitabha the same as or different from the Western Pure Land and Amitabha in the Pure Land?] is that they are one yet two before Buddhahood is attained, two yet one after Buddhahood is attained."

(Yin Kuang: Pure-Land Zen, Zen Pure-Land, p. 57)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Longjie, very informative. I hope to see you around.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Article: Evolution doesn't bother Buddhists

Content:

Astus wrote:

A good example of how when people don't know enough fill out the blank areas with their own ideas. Or it's more than just that. There is this argument, this myth, that the Buddha said nothing about "metaphysical questions" so people like to use it to adjust things to their ideas whether they believe there is a God - of whom the Buddha said nothing about according to them - or it is evolution. In fact, if we look at Buddhist cosmology we find that there humans devolved from higher, heavenly beings into their current state, and this is quite contrary to the evolutionary concept of evolving from lower beings. Even the idea of natural selection is questioned by the teaching of karma where it is not the environment forming beings but the other way around, beings creating the world. So those who take evolution as if it were in agreement with the Buddha's teachings should take an elementary course in Buddhism. Although it might happen that this part of the Dharma is missing from many teachers' curriculum.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 5:47 AM

Title: Community in Western Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

This piece by James Ishmael Ford made me think:

"The thing that mostly concerned me, however, wasn't doctrinal. The issue of whether there is rebirth or if each breath presents a new life leads to the same disciplines. The issue was that there just wasn't much attention given to community in contemporary Western Zen. Oh, a tip of the hat here and there. But, if a Western Buddhist wanted a spiritual home for their kids, everyone I knew ended up in a UU church. If someone wanted a spiritual community as something more than a place to do the discipline, sort

of like going to a spiritual gym, and then home, pretty much the only place where I could go that didn't contradict the parts of Zen I found useful and true, turned out to be at the local UU church. Bottom line I wanted full spiritual community, and there was precious little at the local Zen center. I found it instead at the UU church. My goodness, I did. But, I also got something more. In fact much more."

<https://monkeymindonline.blogspot.com/2011/03/religion-for-our-times-case-for.html>

What do you think? What is your experience?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: Article: Evolution doesn't bother Buddhists

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is more the usefulness in terms of education in Buddhism of the traditional view of the becoming and destruction of the worlds that should be considered when comparing it with modern views. When it's said that karma defines environment the way of acts and results is quite evident. On the other hand, if we take the evolutionary view, it teaches that there is valid basis for oppressing others and living for wealth, power and enjoyments. In that sense it's similar to the teaching of a Creator who can simply take the responsibility for everything that happens to someone and for the whole state of the world.

As for being bothered by evolution, that's another thing. It's a well known way to categorise different views into a gradual scheme. Evolution is a materialism-based concept with little or no moral value, consequently it doesn't guarantee birth into the human or heavenly realms, in fact, it's quite animal-centred. Other teachings, like Humanism, involve a moral perspective that can provide a good birth. So from a Buddhist perspective evolution is a view below what is called the path of humans and gods. Note that I'm not talking about truths but views.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Do I believe that there was a Caoxi Huineng with hundreds of disciples who attained enlightenment? No, it is very unlikely as Huineng was very much unknown for his contemporaries. It was Heze Shenhui who attributed patriarchy to Huineng after the death of Shenxiu - who was actually a famous master in his time revered by empress Wu Zetian and many others - so he could claim to be the 7th patriarch and single rightful heir. It was also Shenhui who invented the transmission of robe and bowl. As a matter of fact, Hongren had a couple of disciples who (or rather their disciples) claimed

authenticity to themselves. And there were other Chan groups not directly related to Hongren. That's for the historical part. Otherwise the Platform Sutra is a fine Zen work and it's worth studying as it has been done by many others throughout the centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2011 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Although in the Kumarajiva version it only says that the Buddha sat down, in Bodhiruci's translation it goes: sat peacefully in lotus-position straightening his body and posture (跏趺安坐, 端身而住), or in Red Pine's translation "crossing his legs and adjusting his body". Although the Diamond Sutra is not an instruction on meditation, it does refer to proper sitting posture, and even more.

The Lankavatara Sutra 2.24, DT Suzuki translation:

"When a definite acquisition is obtained regarding the aspect of the stages [of Bodhisattvahood], the Bodhisattva will experience joy, and, gradually and successively going up the scale, will reach the ninth stage where his insight is perfected, and [finally the tenth stage known as] Great Dharmamegha. Establishing himself here, (70) he will be seated in the great jewel palace known as "Great Lotus Throne" which is in the shape of a lotus and is adorned with various sorts of jewels and pearls; he will then acquire and complete a world of Maya-nature; surrounded by Bodhisattvas of the same character and anointed like the son of the Cakravarti by the hands of the Buddhas coming from all the Buddha-lands, he will go beyond the last stage of Bodhisattvahood, attain the noble truth of self-realisation, and become a Tathagata endowed with the perfect freedom of the Dharmakaya, because of his insight into the egolessness of things."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

plwk,

How does a mummy prove it? Even if it were the actual corpse of Huineng it doesn't mean that all the legends and stories - created by later generations - are true.

"Thus the 'cast' or 'mummy' of Hui-neng may date back to T'ang times, and may just conceivably be that of the historical Hui-neng. It was seen by the monk Chien-chen circa 748 to 750, and was probably manufactured to provide a source of cohesion among the followers of Pao-lin Monastery, and to associate Hui-neng with Kuan-yin and indicate that he may even be considered a buddha. This production may have borrowed

from precedents like those of Seng-Ch'ieh in the North, for his was not the first case of 'mummification' and coating with lacquer. However, it may also have been influenced by funerary practices peculiar to the locality of Shao-chou or Ling-nan. In any case, this sarira of the 'true body' was to become a most significant relic for Ch'an Buddhism and an object of widespread local veneration and supplications for this-worldly benefits. It formed the core of a cult of the relics to oppose the cult of the book and aided in the propagation of Ch'an among the common people. Whether it is real or not, what is certain is that the earliest extant record of the mummy of Hui-neng in any Ch'an source is in the Ts'ao-ch'i Ta-shih chuan, which wrote briefly of the circumstances of its production. Later Ch'an sources elaborated on this considerably, demonstrating yet again the use of invention in the hagiographical afterlife of Hui-neng."

(John J. Jørgensen: Inventing Hui-neng, the sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and biography in early Ch'an, p. 273)

Other works recommended:

online essays:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/PlatformSutra_Bielefeldt.htm
(note it's from 1975)

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/Legends_in_Chan.html

books:

Philip B. Yampolsky: The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch: the text of the Tun-huang manuscript with translation, introduction, and notes

John R. McRae: The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism

Bernard Faure: The will to orthodoxy: a critical genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism

Wendi Leigh Adamek: The mystique of transmission: on an early Chan history and its contexts

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

"he is too obscure in the West"

Haven't read much from him but from that little Nan reads quite like Hsuan Hua. Not pleasant to me.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 6:12 PM

Title: Translating the Words of the Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.viewmagazine.org/articles/tibet/106-returning-to-the-source.html>

Their website: <http://84000.co/>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Translating the Words of the Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

It depends on how you count. For instance, \$250 is more than three times the amount of average Indian monthly income. Also, for this money, you could get about 20 normal pages translated in Hungary (for instance a contract, but it's unlikely that they could do Buddhist texts from Tibetan, or anything from Tibetan). At an http://www.clarktranslations.com/price_list.htm they do Tibetan to English for \$0.22 per word, which means approximately 1136 Tibetan words for \$250 (not counting other fees). But I suppose they collect money for the whole enterprise and not just getting a page translated.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

A couple of sutras that give instructions in meditation (they're translated, you can check it for yourself):

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.than.html>

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.118.than.html>

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.119.than.html>

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0273.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0277.html>

http://www.fodian.net/world/Contemplation_Sutra.htm

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra22.html>

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html

etc. etc. etc.

Not about meditation:

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0692.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0698.html>

You also shouldn't forget that meditation manuals written not by Vajrayana people (Visuddhimagga, Mohezhiguan, etc.) have nothing to do with tantra and they have been available even before the advent of tantra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2011 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Unknown said:

Vajrayāna is different than sūtra teachings because the methods of deity yoga, prāṇayāma, etc., are never taught in sūtra. No cakras, no ṇāḍīs, etc. None of that newage hippy Vajrayāna stuff is found in the sūtras, nor explained by sūtra masters -- not in India, not in China, not in Japan.

We Vajrayānists assert that all of our hippy methods, deity yoga, and so on, cause our path to be faster than the pure Mahāyāna sūtra route. These criteria did not evolve in Tibet, they evolved in India.

Astus wrote:

Now this is a clear cut explanation of the difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 30th, 2011 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Korean Pure Land Buddhism

Content:

KwanSeum said:

What is the ' me ' you talk of?

Astus wrote:

Don't derail the discussion with questions about linguistics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 30th, 2011 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Practice and Faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ven. Sheng-yen on Prayer

Sakyamuni did not teach his disciples to pray to a deity, to God, or even to the Buddha himself or another, for help or salvation. He encouraged sentient beings to help themselves as well as others. ... When people sincerely pray to deities, bodhisattvas, or even God, they will be helped or appeased. But the response to the prayers does not come from the deities, bodhisattvas or God. It comes in part from the mental power of the person seeking help, and it also comes from the collective power of all the people seeking help from a particular deity or bodhisattva. When a sufficient number of people sincerely seek help from a bodhisattva or deity, power will manifest, whether or not the bodhisattva or deity exists. It happens. People seek help, and their prayers and

answered.

(Zen Wisdom: Knowing and Doing, p. 215, 217)

When someone prays, his faith engenders a mental state of supernormal, unified concentration, by which he can stimulate or arouse the compassionate vow-energy of the beings (such as Buddhas or bodhisattvas) to whom he prays, and thereby receive a response. That is, the mental energy resulting from the supplicant's concentration tallies and interacts with the energy of a Buddha's or bodhisattva's vows. This interaction, in turn, gives rise to an inconceivable, extraordinary power, which produces the special experiences and efficacious results of prayer.

(Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p. 51)

Recitation, or prayer, is another element of the Chan practice that I teach. The power of prayer cannot be explained by psychology or science. When we pray, we generate power. In Buddhism, we say the relationship between the person who prays and the object of prayer is like the relationship between a bell and the person who rings the bell, or a mirror and the person standing in front of the mirror. Then bell won't ring without someone to ring it. The mirror does not make a reflection without someone standing in front of it. The being - the object of prayer - can only have power if people have faith in it. It's the same as in Christianity. You are saved only if you have faith. On this level, the faith in Buddhism is no different from that in Western religion. Faith is what gives prayer its power.

(Footprints in the Snow: The Autobiography of a Chinese Buddhist Monk, p. 182)

Ch'an practitioners do not deny the existence of bodhisattvas. They believe strongly in bodhisattvas, Buddhas, and patriarchs, but they do not pray to them as people would pray to a deity or God. They recognize that patriarchs and bodhisattvas are beings at different levels of practice. They revere bodhisattvas and seek to emulate them, but they do not typically ask for their help. In a humble, sober manner, Ch'an followers practice on their own, or under the guidance of a master.

(Dharma drum: the life and heart of Ch'an practice, p. 281)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2011 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do they have the same Vajrasamadhi Sutra in Tibet as in East Asia? I mean, the one commented by Wohyo and translated by Robert E. Buswell Jr.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2011 at 3:35 PM

Title: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the traditional explanation for the lack of other buddhas in the agamas? It doesn't seem valid to say that teaching about other buddhas is only a bodhisattva matter since in Mahayana texts it is all fine for sravakas to learn about them and even to aspire for other buddha-realms. So why are there no other buddhas mentioned in the Hinayana teachings, only some buddhas of the past and the next future buddha? Again, it is not the modern historical explanation what I'm looking for here but the addressing of it from a traditional Mahayana perspective.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2011 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pema Rigdzin,

What you mean is the Yogacara teaching of the five gotras, and it is not relevant to the question here.

Namdrol,

Yes, there were some Hinayana schools, the Mahasamghikas for instance, who had some concept of other buddhas. So maybe this problem never occurred in India or anywhere else. Still, in the agamas/nikayas there is no sign of other buddhas and those are the texts said to be preached for the sravakas. Consequently, since in the Mahayana sutras sravakas are also present, they should have known about other buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2011 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Well, what sort of text critical conclusion can you draw from that, Astus?"

I'm not looking for text critical conclusions, for that there are some fine scholarly works like "The concept of the Buddha: its evolution from early Buddhism to the trikāya theory" by Guang Xing. Also it's possible to go for a conspiracy theory that the sravakas deleted all the other buddhas but that's just non-sense to me. That's why I'm looking for another perspective on this. Of course, there's always the option to say that buddhas are upaya and such, but that doesn't answer a few things.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

Sure, and that is exactly the historical point. But since, just as you said, Mahayana followers in the past (and present) think that the sutras were spoken directly by the Buddha, thus I was wondering whether there is an explanation from their side on the lack of other buddhas in the agamas. Although it is possible there isn't such an answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anders,

Not all teachings within Mahayana sutras are intended only for a bodhisattva audience. Sravakas are sometimes invited explicitly, not to mention when they take major parts in the stories (Ananda, Sariputra, Subhuti, etc.).

14th vow of Amitabha:

"If, when I attain buddhahood, the number of the śrāvakas in my land could be known, even if all the beings and pratyekabuddhas living in this universe of a thousand million worlds should count them during a hundred thousand kalpas, may I not attain perfect enlightenment."

Also from the Larger PL Sutra:

"The light of Amitāyus shines brilliantly, illuminating all the buddha lands of the ten directions. There is no place where it is not perceived. I am not the only one who now praises his light. All the buddhas, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas praise and glorify it in the same way. If sentient beings, having heard of the majestic virtue of his light, glorify it continually, day and night, with sincerity of heart, they will be able to attain birth in his land as they wish. Then the multitudes of bodhisattvas and śrāvakas will praise their excellent virtue."

From this comes that sravakas could aspire for birth in the Pure Land and in the sutra itself the sravakas gain some attainments from hearing it and rejoice in the teaching. This happens in many other sutras where there were sravakas present. So it is not true that those teachings were meant only for bodhisattvas, while of course there are other sutras meant only for bodhisattvas of which the Avatamsaka Sutra is the most famous. Therefore knowledge about other buddhas is not a restricted doctrine, just as in the agamas buddhas of the past are indeed mentioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 6:15 AM

Title: Re: What Are You Reading? What Did You Just Order to Read?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Great Perfection by Samten Gyaltsen Karmay

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

"First, I'm assuming those Arhats in attendance during the Buddha's supposedly historical Mahayana teachings conceived the mind for enlightenment. Might not they have nonetheless recognized that some future beings would also have an affinity for the Bodhisattva vehicle, while others would only be attracted to the individual liberation vehicle? If that were the case, wouldn't they have been selective in who they passed either vehicle on to once they began to teach after the Buddha's death?"

You can find both ideas in Mahayana, either that the sravakas present in such sutras were bodhisattvas in disguise or that they were just sravakas and nothing more. Yes, it is recognised that there are people with different inclinations thus the three vehicles as gotra/upaya theories. Being selective about the teachings, that's an unlikely option, especially if we conceive the sravaka as a disciple who relies on the Buddha therefore whatever the Buddha teaches is important to them.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

"With that in mind... It was my understanding that the PP sutras were rediscovered by Nagarjuna, and Maitreya's five treatises were kind of like pure vision teachings received by Asanga, etc., but are all of the Mahayana sutras said to have come to us in a similar way? Were none said to have come to us in a long lineage from the Buddha (a la kama)?"

Mahayana sutras were not preserved orally but in written form only. That is apparent from the texts themselves. If you read some suttas in the Pali Canon you recognise the large amount of repetitions and templates used in them (although in translations they're regularly left out with references and dots). That is how they were memorised.

Mahayana sutras are generally longer and more complex, just look at the prajnaparamita sutras that have thousands of stanzas, and they are the earlier

Mahayana texts. So from a historical perspective Mahayana sutras are definitely later works. And that lateness is in fact backed up by the surrounding stories of origin as Namdrol mentioned. If you want to look into it deeper there are books on the history and development of Buddhism.

Here are some on Indian Buddhism:

Bodhisattvas of the forest and the formation of the Mahāyāna: a study and translation of the Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā-sūtra by Daniel Boucher

A few good men: the Bodhisattva path according to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparipṛcchā) : a study and translation by Jan Nattier

Nāgārjuna in context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and early Indian culture by Joseph Walser

Figments and fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: more collected papers by Gregory Schopen

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I am a firm believer in evolution. I personally think that Buddhism is a religion that underwent and is undergoing significant evolution, reaching its high point in the teachings of the great perfection, and adapting itself to various cultures in an evolutionary manner according to the environment in which it found itself.

The reason Buddhism was able to undergo this evolution without it's core being destroyed, but rather revealed and expressed with greater and greater clarity as successive generations of buddhas refined its essential message, is that the essence of the dharma is dependent origination."

To add another view, it is not evolving I believe in but simply adapting (related terms nonetheless). That is, the Dharma is transmitted by those with enlightenment as this has been stated regularly from the Pali Canon on, it is just the form of the teaching that changes according to circumstances but not the meaning. This is how in Chan and generally in East Asia there is little problem in saying that the 8 teachings (classical 8 schools of Chinese Buddhism: Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Vinaya, Mantra, Tiantai, Huayan, Pure Land, Chan) are one.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

Yes, I can agree with that. But it's still not like a living being's evolution as certain teachings can not just go extinct but resurrect too, not to mentioned cases when one teaching is integrated into another and thus lives on as part of a bigger organism from what later it can break off. So much for applying biology to Buddhism. Whether dependent origination is what to be identified as the core, well, if that equals for instance the "tolerance of no-birth", "seeing the nature" and "unity of samsara and nirvana" than sure.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

So we can say that the teaching is dependently originated too, just as the teachings are taught dependent on circumstances. This is a nice explanation for the absence and presence of other buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 2nd, 2011 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Astus wrote:

That kind of wager was used even before Nagarjuna by Gautama himself:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.060.than.html>.

"The Nyingmapa tradition never closed their canon."

I don't know if there is actually any Buddhist canon that is closed. Just in the 20th century new, revised versions of both East Asian and Theravada canons were published. In fact, in East Asia there is no ultimate canon only groups of texts published at different times.

"The Mahāprājñā-pāramitōpadeśa by Nāgārjuna briefly addresses this by explaining that one can infer the existence of other Buddhas."

Inferring the existence of other buddhas and reporting on individual buddhas in neighbouring realms are not exactly the same thing. Just like it sounds a generally acceptable supposition that because there is life on this planet there are other planets with intelligent beings on them, but reporting on the life of the Queen of Naboo is a quite different matter.

"it's not a matter of whether there are Buddhas mentioned or not but rather perhaps more confined to whose list of Buddhas are more 'authentic'"

While there was considerable efforts made for the propagation of worshipping this and

that buddha I find that it was hardly a sectarian issue. Although there could have been incidents.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 2nd, 2011 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Other Buddhas

Content:

Namdrol said:

In the case of the Pali canon, did they add new texts?

Astus wrote:

I thought I remembered where I had read that the works of Mahasi Sayadaw was published in the latest edition of the Burmese canon but now I can't find it. Although I've read that about a year ago. But as I was searching for it I've found a study by Ven. Analayo - who is one of the few monks focusing the early scriptures (all canons included) - written on http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/publikationen/HamburgUP_HBS01_Analayo.pdf, a valuable extra to the works already mentioned.

An article by Ven. Sujato addresses the issue of history and myth:

"It's time. We need a new paradigm. Buddhism is suffering from schizo-phrenia; there is a split in consciousness between the historical and the mythic concep-tions of the origin of the Dhamma. For 2500 years Buddhism has been constantly changing, adapting, evolving; yet the myths of the schools insist that the Dhamma remains the same. All existing schools of Buddhism justify their idiosyn-cratic doctrines mytho-lo-gically; this is what all religions do. Thus the Theravada insists that the Abhid-hamma was taught by the Buddha in Tāvātimsa heaven during his seventh rains retreat. The Mahayana claims that the Mahayana sutras were written down in the time of the Buddha, preserved in the dragon world under the sea, then retrieved by Nagarjuna 500 years later. Zen claims authority from an esoteric oral trans-mission outside the scrip-tures descended from Maha Kassapa, symbolized by the smile of Maha Kassapa when the Buddha held up a lotus. All of these are myths, and do not deserve serious consid-er-ation as explan-a-tions of historical truth. Their purpose, as myths, is not to elucidate facts, but to authorize religious convictions."
<http://santifm.org/santipada/2010/its-time/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 2nd, 2011 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Dennis Genpo Merzel disrobes as a Zen priest

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since Western Zen doesn't address all the emotional and communal aspects present thus generating cults and gurus again and again there can hardly be any rules laid down - especially in a not institutionalised and individualistic environment - that will force the

necessary changes. Meditation clubs are not temples - much less monasteries - and meditation trainers are not Buddhist teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2011 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huangbo (Wanling Record) answers the questions on the trikaya and the different practices necessary:

佛真法身猶若虛空。不用別求。有求皆苦。設使恒沙劫行六度萬行得佛菩提。亦非究竟。何以故。為屬因緣造作故。因緣若盡還歸無常。所以云。報化非真佛。亦非說法者。但識自心。無我無人本來是佛。(T48n2012Bp0384b04-08)

"Therefore, the real Dharmakaya is just voidness. It is not necessary to seek anything whatsoever, and all who do continue to seek for something only prolong their suffering in samsara. Even if they were to practice the Six Paramitas for as many numberless kalpas as there are sandgrains in the Ganges River, they would still not reach the Supreme Stage. And why not? Just because such practice depends on primary and secondary causes, and when these causes separate, the practitioner of this path will still have only reached a stage of impermanence. Therefore, even the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya are not the real Buddha. Also, the one who spreads Dharma is not the real Buddha. In reality, therefore, everybody should recognize that only one's own Mind is the Original Buddha."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2011 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Don't you think it is through studying the Buddhist heritage that it can be gradually understood? Simply by translating a text to another language is a major part of the process and when a term like dukkha is rendered into suffering/stress/unsatisfactoriness/dis-ease/pain/etc. it is already an acculturation and transformation.

2. When it comes to the point that something has to be explained to an audience (written or oral) that explanation must fit the time and place otherwise hardly anyone could actually understand it. In fact, it is quite impossible to present Buddhism as if it were a frozen object.

(3.) It is a Western concept that it is possible at all to have a fixed history and museums can show and preserve the past for the present. The very act of displaying something in a museum transforms the object. But this is just a side note.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2011 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another thing about how Buddhism has changed already through Western influence. The way Theravada is understood today not just in the West but in Asia too is partially because of Western presence in the region. This influence is also true in Japan, plus the development Western Zen communities. Chinese Buddhism got its new impetus in the 19th century from Taixu (whose disciple was the other great master Yinshun) who thought of modernising Buddhism based on his experience of European culture. And I think Tibetan Buddhism had to make its changes since the monks started preaching to a growing number of Westerners, although they seem to be the most traditionalist of all, or it's just that their culture and story is part of the attraction.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2011 at 6:36 AM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Namdrol said:

I am suggesting that there is a constant danger of "Dharma ossification".

On the contrary, Tibetans have managed to do so with spectacular success. There has not been a new idea in Tibetan Buddhism since about 15th century. Tibetan Buddhism is intellectually frozen. I would venture it is the same with all forms of Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

My view of Buddhist history is that Gautama presented the essentials to his disciples (early scriptures) from which came a gradual explanation of the many aspects until around the 13th century, the time when Buddhism established itself throughout Asia and practically disappeared in India. Then on there were no significantly new teachings but only continuing the tradition. In terms of Dharma-age - in my interpretation - the pre-sectarian period was the True Dharma, the sectarian period was the Semblance Dharma and from the 13th century on it is the Declining Dharma age; however, this carries too bad connotations to take it seriously.

I'm not sure if philosophical creativity is necessarily the measure of a living tradition. Hakuin's reform in Japanese and Gyeongheo's reform in Korean Zen didn't mean new ideas but rather a restoration - or reinvention - of old teachings. But it was a reform nevertheless. Same could be said of Theravada monks starting dhutanga communities in Thailand.

In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta the Buddha said,

"But in any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is found, contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order are found. The noble eightfold path is found in this doctrine & discipline, and right here there are contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants."

It is the guarding and practising the path that keeps the teaching alive. There is also a series of talks on the future dangers (AN 5.77-80), later selected by King Asoka into his edicts, that address matters monks should take heed of in order to develop on the path. Another sutta (SN 20.7) warns about the dangers of not listening to the very teachings of the Buddha but instead to "discourses that are literary works — the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples" thus causing the disappearance of the Buddha's teachings. And if we look at Nagarjuna's works their aim is not to establish some new thought but to turn people back to the path itself, this is the expression of the very practical spirit of the prajnaparamita sutras. The same sentiment is found in other teachings that were later regarded as new schools, the attempt to return to the original teachings: not the words themselves but the insight. Isn't that what the upadesha teaching is about in Tibet, a direct discourse? But of course no teaching can avoid formalisation and eventual rigor mortis. That is impermanence. What keeps the Dharma alive is enlightenment, it is revived every time a person gains insight into the truth of the teaching.

So, what is intellectual liveliness? Does the pure citta of Ajahn Chah, the Juigong of Daehaeng Sunim or the Humanistic Buddhism of Yinshun qualify as such? I can't really tell. What do you say?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2011 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is the gradual path of developing wisdom for dharmakaya and accumulating merits for rupakaya. However, Zen is the direct path of sudden enlightenment, seeing nature is becoming buddha as there is no buddha outside the mind. These are the fundamental doctrines of Zen, and while teaching different methods and paths is not incorrect they are part of the gradual teachings that ultimately lead to seeing nature and becoming buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: Cosmology

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think they meant their cosmology quite literally. This is easy to understand from the

Abhidharmakosa where it gives both real and unreal places and relates them to each other in terms of distance and direction. Of course, it is always possible to come up with a psychologised, symbolic re-interpretation. The question is, is it worth it? Is it important in any way?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 2:53 AM

Title: Re: Hui-Neng Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

If you rather rely on Wikipedia than decades of in depth scholarly studies it's up to you.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 4:29 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhist Philosophy - the wisdom part - is about the correct view and liberating insight. It is the final practice so to say since precepts and meditation is about reaching wisdom. Its liveliness is a matter of understanding and application. For instance saying that there are five aggregates is a philosophical concept. If one sees those five as they are within the realm of personal experience it can bring about liberation. If it's left on the level of ideas, well, than it's just an idea. But it's up to the student to use it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 6:17 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the Buddha saw the existence of the five aggregates"

There are no such things as the five aggregates but they're arbitrary categories for human experience probably based on current soul/mind concepts of that era. That's why I say it is a philosophical concept. There are other such categories known in the early scriptures, like the 6 indriya, 12 ayatana, 18 dhatu set; or when the Buddha uses the "seen, heard, sensed, cognised" (diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññāta) series what could also be used for meditation (e.g. SN 35.95).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Ordination

Content:

Astus wrote:

Even in this Suggestion Box the debate on who is an ordained person appeared immediately. Perhaps the discussion can go on in another topic.

As for an ordination forum, since there is little discussion of such matters I see no need for a whole separate place for it. We're also short of both ordained members and Vinaya professionals to give authentic information. Maybe later.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

See the definition(s) of aggregates. All the different aggregates are made of different sensory data, thus they're simply terms to encompass lot of experience but there is no form, etc. aggregate in and of itself to be experienced. The diversity is most apparent in the different dharmas put under samskara in abhidharma texts. Another major difference is in vijñāna when there can be 6, 8 or even 9 of them in Mahayana although it is still called a single aggregate. Thus the aggregates are only names even in the early texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 9:34 PM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a http://www.meditationexpert.com/zen-buddhism-tao/z_dharmakaya_sambhogakaya_nirmanakaya_three_buddha_bodies.htm from the Bodri website. Quote from there,

"Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity speak openly of this trio of principles or "bodies" that must be mastered for complete spiritual attainment. Whether we call this trio Father-Son-Holy Ghost, dharmakaya-sambhogakaya-nirmanakaya, essence-appearance-function, or Brahman-Vishnu-Shiva, they are all synonymous with the same set of principles."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2011 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Hi Astus, perhaps I'm misunderstanding, but when speaking of the material aggregate, it is composed of the 5 sense organs and 5 sense objects. So for example the sense

organ of smell is composed of a patch of atoms that detects the different odors. The sensory data would be the sense object of odor."

That is all right. The disagreement is simply on the nature of the aggregates whether they're things to be experienced or philosophical concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 3:11 PM

Title: Re: How to approach Sutras

Content:

Astus wrote:

While what you say is a possible way to read texts I doubt that's the only one. Such concentrated and repetitive reading sounds good for memorising, one could as well recite the text to make it easier. However, understanding a text requires thinking and analysing too. If it is only concentration one is looking for practically anything can do. If it is understanding the sutras while concentration is beneficial there is a need for making effort in gaining insight through pondering and in depth study that can include beyond the text commentaries and even linguistics and cultural things.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 3:22 PM

Title: Re: How to approach Sutras

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Experience beyond words" is a philosophy, an idea, a concept. So "beyond words" is not beyond words at all. Therefore it is through words one can go beyond words, through study one can go beyond all learnings. Although a map is not the place our path is guided by the map.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Reconsiderations on Not-Really-Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What separates Buddhism from non-Buddhism? On one hand there are criteria for the teaching, on the other for the intention. The teaching can be external and internal, external can be in agreement or disagreement with Buddhism. If it disagrees with Buddhism it should be refuted, if it agrees it should be submitted as an external teaching not leading to liberation. However, if intention is considered, it can be that even if one is interested in internal doctrines many don't care about liberation on any level. So there isn't much to distinguish external in agreement teachings from internal ones. This is called the path of humans and gods.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 4:00 PM

Title: Re: How to approach Sutras

Content:

LastLegend said:

Philosophy to you because you are philosophizing, playing with words. This is why you need to practice to experience. And approaching the Sutras is a practice.

Astus wrote:

It is a practice to recite the sutras, yes, a very old one indeed. What I'm saying is that there is more to it than concentrated reading without thinking about it. Thus when one has a clear and focused mind it is good to study the sutra on a verbal, analytical level too. This is integrating both concentration and insight into practising with sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Restricted books

Content:

Astus wrote:

"According to the Tibetan tradition, true vipashyana is to see the natural state while being free of dualistic clinging. Traditionally, this natural state is introduced after the practitioner has gone through the ngöndro, the 'preliminary practices of the four or five times hundred thousand', as well as the yidam practice with its detailed recitations. After completing these, the student is given the pointing-out instruction according to the tradition of Dzogchen or Mahamudra or one of the other traditions of ultimate wisdom. That is the general way, but times have changed somewhat in the sense that many people these days are earnestly drawn to the essential teachings from the beginning. My late father, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, used to give the pointing-out instruction to whomever was sincerely interested, whether that person was a long-term practitioner or a beginner. he also gave me the mandate to do so."

(Chokyi Nyima: Present Fresh Wakefulness, p. 39-40)

IIRC, the BWM book is advertised on the back cover as an initiatory book that can generate insight simply by reading. Then why the need for being introduced before being introduced?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, even fire is an arbitrary category. Buddhists in ancient India when categorised fire knew nothing about chemical burning and nuclear fusion, nor did they thought of the fire element in terms of thermodynamics. But if we use fire element in the Buddhist sense all that could be included. And yes, it is true, everything is an arbitrary category, a

conceptual thing. A good example is how different languages categorise the world in different ways.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: Reconsiderations on Not-Really-Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the straight way is to point out what is actually taught within Buddhism and explain what that is the Buddhist teaching. It is rarely necessary to criticise other teachings except when they are harmful, but not being Buddhist, well, that's not a sin. Just see how many non-Buddhist rituals and concepts could hang around Buddhism in Asia. Until they don't hurt there's little to worry about. The important thing is to make clear what is the path to nirvana and what is not.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: Restricted books

Content:

Astus wrote:

The quote and my comment on the book is not strictly related.

"This text belongs to the category of atiyoga, the highest of the nine vehicles that constitute the Buddhist path. Moreover, it is from the short lineage of Dudjom Lingpa, a direct transmission of the Great Perfection approach so powerful that even hearing it read aloud ensures that the listener will eventually escape the suffering of samsara. It should be remembered, however, that to benefit fully from the Nang-jang, one must receive empowerment, oral transmission, and teachings from a qualified Dzogchen master."

(BWM, page v)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2011 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: understanding of favourite gongans/Koans that youve heard

Content:

Jikan said:

This is an interesting topic, but might it be better to discuss it with your teacher, in person?

...off to quality-test the cat chow

Astus wrote:

There is no need to mystify koans. True, there is meditation practice with koans called kanna/kanhua (看話 observing the phrase) where one investigates a wato/huatou (話頭 phrase head). But that is just one specific use of koans. Both before and after such practice was invented by Daie/Dahui (1089-1163) they were used for instructing disciples in the meaning of Zen. Although such instructions were generally given by the abbot (i.e. the Zen master) the discussion of them has never been restricted as if it were a private matter. It's another thing that it takes considerable amount of study (!) and training to be able to converse on koans in a meaningful way.

"To begin with, you should study day and night the verbal teachings of the Buddha and patriarchs so that you can penetrate the principles of things in their infinite variety. Ascertain and analyze, one by one, the profundities of the five houses and the seven schools of Zen and the wondrous doctrines of the eight teachings given in the five periods of Buddha's teaching career.

If you have any energy left over, you should clarify the deep principles of the various different philosophies. However, if this and that get to be too much trouble, it will just waste your energy to no avail. If you thoroughly investigate the sayings of the Buddhas and patriarchs that are difficult to pass through, and clearly arrive at their essential meaning, perfect understanding will shine forth and the principles of all things should naturally be completely clear. This is called the eye to read the sutras.

Now, the verbal teachings of the Buddhas and the patriarchs are extremely deep, and one should not consider that one has mastered them completely after one has gone through them once or twice. When you climb a mountain, the higher you climb, the higher they are; when you go into the ocean, the farther you go, the deeper it is. It is the same in this case. It is also like forging iron to make a sword; it is considered best to put it into the forge over and over, refining it again and again. Though it is always the same forge, unless you put the sword in over and over and refine it a hundred times, it can hardly turn out to be a fine sword.

Penetrating study is also like this; unless you enter the great forge of the Buddha and patriarchs, difficult to pass through, and make repeated efforts at refinement, through suffering and pain, total and independent knowing cannot come forth. Penetrating through the barriers of the Buddha and patriarchs over and over again, responding to beings' potential everywhere with mastery and freedom of technique, is called subtle, observing, discerning knowing."

(Hakuin on Kensho: the four ways of knowing, tr. by Albert Low, p. 35-36)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2011 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: understanding of favourite gongans/Koans that youve heard

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is possible to have a meaningful discussion on koans here as well as face to face. It is not a matter of communication form but what one can communicate and that depends on the qualities of the people involved.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2011 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: understanding of favourite gongans/Koans that youve heard

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, let's see the case of the hundred-foot pole.

Sekisō Oshō asked, "How can you proceed on further from the top of a hundred-foot pole?"

Another eminent teacher of old said, "You, who sit on the top of a hundred-foot pole, although you have entered the Way you are not yet genuine. Proceed on from the top of the pole, and you will show your whole body in the ten directions."

(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm>, Case 46)

Here's a small collection of commentaries for a start.

See T'aego Pou chip, 91: "Beneath this great doubt, one must let go of both body and mind." Hakuin later reified this experience as a specific stage in practice; see Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, 112-116. Dogen (1235-1237) relates this "casting off of body and mind" to the final leap off the hundred foot pole; see *A Primer of Soto zen: A Translation of Dogen's Shobogenzo*, trans. Reiho Masunaga (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1971), 93-94.

(Robert E. Buswell, Jr.: *The "Short-cut" Approach of K'an-hua Meditation in Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, p. 374: note 137 to a paragraph on p. 355 that is about the explosion of great doubt resulting in "his own personal destruction")

What does "the top of a hundred-foot pole" mean? Figuratively, it is the stage of complete emptiness. When you attain self-realization, your eye will open first to the state of consciousness where there is absolutely nothing. That stage is called the "great death." It is a stage where there is no dualistic opposition such as subject and object, good and bad, saints and ordinary people and so on. There is neither one who sees nor anything seen. Zen usually expresses this stage with the words, "There is not a speck of cloud in the spacious sky."

Anyone who wants to attain the true Zen experience must pass through this stage once. If you remain there, however, you will be unable to attain true emancipation from deep attachment to this emptiness. This stage is often referred to as the pitfall of emptiness. It becomes a kind of Zen sickness.

When we attain kensho, we come to the top of the high pole where most of us are seized with this malady. It is said that even Shakyamuni succumbed to it for two or three weeks after his great enlightenment. The Zen master in this koan warns not to linger at this point when he says, "Take a step forward from this stage and you will be able to manifest your whole body throughout the world in ten directions." That means that you must become completely free from all kinds of attachments.

Look at this stick, this kotsu. See, it is lying horizontally at first. This position represents

our ordinary life. With the practice of zazen, working on Mu or counting our breath, one end of the stick will gradually come up, while the other is fixed at the original point. When the stick stands perfectly vertical, that is the state of complete emptiness. There you become completely one with Mu, and there is no concept of thought whatever in your mind. This is the great death. It is also the entrance to perfect enlightenment. This stage is void of mental activity. But you must not stop there. You must press on even harder. Then the top of the stick will move forward, and suddenly a whole new world will manifest itself! This is true enlightenment. Perhaps now you understand what this warning means.

...

In our present koan, the last phrase of the case reads: "...to manifest this whole body throughout the world in ten directions." This means you will realize that you are one and alone in and with the whole universe and that you should be able to do anything in an extremely free and positive way. That is the state of true enlightenment.

(Kōun Yamada: The gateless gate - the classic book of Zen koans, p. 217-218)

This state beyond hope, where "there is no place to put one's hands and feet," Ta-hui remarks, "is really a good place." It is a "good place" because it is there that conceptualization is brought to an end: "Without debate and ratiocination they are at a loss, with no place to put their hands and feet." Only then can the student make the all-important transition from the conditioned to the unconditioned, which is likened to a death-defying "leap off a hundred-foot pole." One need only recall the role of no-thought as the access to final realization-awakening to see how thoroughly that earlier account of meditation has been subsumed by the hua-t'ou technique.

The leap off the hundred-foot pole from the conditioned to the unconditioned is perhaps the quintessential expression of what Ch'an means by a sudden style of cultivation and meditation. Sudden cultivation demands that there be no hint of any sequence of practices that would lead the student from one stage to another, progressively abandoning defilements and cultivating wholesome actions, until he achieves perfect purity of mind. The jump off the hundred-foot pole suggests the radical nonattachment, even to one's own body and mind, that Buddhism has always expected as a prerequisite to enlightenment. Ch'an does not deny that it might take time for one to build up the courage necessary to take that ultimate plunge. But its lack of sequence at least freed it from charges of being gradualistic.

(Robert E. Buswell, Jr.: The "Short-cut" Approach of K'an-hua Meditation in Sitting with Koans: Essential Writings on Zen Koan Introspection, ed. John Daido Looi, p. 83)

The top of the hundred-foot pole is the isolation of Hui in a selfless condition. He has experienced one side of the complementarity of form and emptiness, but he has not integrated the two aspects of reality for himself, as himself. Even after meeting the great Nan-ch'üan, he is still stuck in the void.

"Take a step from the top of the pole." This is the test point of the case, which students through the centuries since Ch'ang-sha have presented to their teachers. For our purposes, we can see how Ch'ang-sha is emphasizing the importance of moving on from simple awareness of the unsubstantial nature of the self and all things. With that step, "worlds of the ten directions will be your entire body." That is, you will find mountains, rivers, the great Earth itself, the sun, the moon, the stars, people, animals,

plants, streets, and towers to be your own great self.

(Robert Aitken: Original Dwelling Place - Zen Buddhist Essays, p. 91)

The need to go beyond the way of knowing of the Great Perfect Mirror is also emphasized in many koans. For example, in koan number 46 of the Mumonkan, Zen master Sekiso asked, "How will you step from the top of a hundred-foot pole?" And another eminent master of old said, "You, who sit on the top of a hundred-foot pole, although you have come to realization, you are not yet real. Go forward from the top of the pole and you will manifest your whole body in the ten directions." Manifesting your whole body in the ten directions is this second awakening. It is seeing that all things in the six fields of sense - seeing, hearing, discernment, and knowledge - are your own awakened nature.

(Albert Low: Hakuin on Kensho, p. 59)

This "backward step," at once the casting off of body-mind and presencing of the original face, is fundamentally the same as advancing a step further from the top of a hundred-foot pole. When one takes one more step from the top of a hundred-foot pole and jumps into empty space, one immediately realizes that the boundless empty space is oneself, one's true Self that is nondual with others. It is precisely "the Self prior to the universe's sprouting any sign of itself" (chinchō mibō no jiko).

(Masao Abe: A study of Dōgen - his philosophy and religion, p. 144)

Dogen instructed:

Students, cast aside your bodies and minds and enter fully into Buddhism.

An old Master has said: "You've climbed to the top of a hundred-foot pole. Now keep on going." Most people, when they reach the top, are afraid they will lose their footing and fall to their deaths. Thus they hang on all the more tightly. To advance another step means to discard all thoughts of everything, from your functions as a savior of other beings to the means of your own livelihood, even if it requires casting away your own life. If you do not do this and even if you study the Way as earnestly as though you were trying to put out flames in your own hair, you will not be able to attain the Way. Resolve to cast aside both body and mind.

(A primer of Sōtō Zen: a translation of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō zuimonki, 3.1, p. 49)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2011 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Anders Honore said:

ok, so a problem with Buddhist philosophy has been diagnosed, so what is to be prescribed for it?

Are people like Reginald Ray and Ken McLeod the way forward for 21st century Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

I'd think people like Charles Muller, Thomas & JC Cleary, R.E. Buswell, Jeffrey Hopkins, Erik Kunsang, etc.; and Ven. Amaro, Brahmavamso, Sujato, etc., also Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, Dzogchen Ponlop, HHDL, etc. are the outstanding and influential figures of current Western Buddhism. And I emphasise Buddhism here because those who teach only some form of meditation and don't get engaged in philosophical issues, well, they're not significant in developing Buddhist philosophy.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Are plants sentient?

Content:

Hanzze said:

Who told that? Many?

Astus wrote:

Is it possible to be born as a plant? Not in Buddhism. Is it killing to uproot plants? Not in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

"It would be like those old self-sufficient Chan monasteries where the residents all went to work growing food for themselves."

That's a Chan legend. Although monks did some basic works around the monastery (even in Theravada countries they do that) but monasteries were far from being self-sufficient. Also don't forget that monasteries owned large amount of lands where whole villages cultivated the fields and they still required the support of the local government. It's another thing that monastic rules forbid work for renunciates, plus they could earn lot more in a office than on the fields. And if monks and nuns would be self-sufficient what would be the role of laity? It would isolate monasteries even more.

I think the key to the growth of Buddhism is first in transforming it to a philosophy understandable and acceptable to the "literati" and then based on that develop a Buddhism that is good for average people. This is going from wisdom approach to faith approach. Although it could happen that this model is not applicable in the current situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Nagarjuna, indeed just about any teaching predicated on Hinayana critique, is not that."

Well said!

This requirement of prior knowledge is also a reason why teachings from the Nikayas are doing so well in popularity while Mahayana sutras don't really. Also it explains how practical and meditation oriented teachings are well received while a lecture series on the <http://www.bdkamerica.org/default.aspx?mpid=30&productid=28&languageid=2> (Cheng weishi lun) could hardly find an audience beyond a couple of scholars.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

For me personally it is easier to turn to the Abhidharma texts to find some factual answer to a practice issue than to try and find a specific sutra that deals with the specific issue. From there an Abhidharma text normally directs/refers you to the source of the information (normally a sutra/sutta) so that you can get a fuller picture.

Astus wrote:

Extracts are how certain people want to present a teaching. Treatises seem easier to study but they're presentations of specific views. Abhidharma texts are not "sutras in brief" but philosophical works by people who imparted their ideas through such medium.

"While the abhidhamma is presented as being based on the Buddha's ultimate discernment of 'mind & matter', in reality the classical Theravādin abhidhamma is a scholastic philosophy which is little understood, and which, if examined critically, is full of incoherencies. Within Buddhist tradition, however, the abhidhamma is perhaps more significant for its purely religious or mystical significance, rather than as a guide for practice or understanding."

(<http://santifm.org/santipada/2010/the-mystique-of-the-abhidhamma/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

What does that leave us with? Rejection of all texts as mere personal philosophical expounding?

Astus wrote:

There is no need to go to extremes. Critical examination of texts is not the same as abandoning everything. Also, while the majority of sutras in the early scriptures, similarly to monastic rules, are accepted by all the different traditions that is not true in case of the different abhidharma texts that were used to distinguish one sect from the other.

When new schools appeared in China it was partially because of the change of focus from shastras to sutras. If there is a need to refresh Buddhist philosophy it should be done based on proper foundation in the Buddha's teachings. When it is done based on others' interpretations that is already following a lineage, a school.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2011 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: The Problem With Buddhist Philosophy

Content:

Namdrol said:

The problem with Buddhist Philosophy is Buddhist Philosophy. There is only one way to "refresh" the teachings -- realization.

Astus wrote:

But I assume you don't mean that since the 15th century there has been no enlightened being in Tibetan Buddhism, do you?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2011 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nature of mind/mind nature is citta-prakrti in Sanskrit, 心性 in Chinese. The Ratnagotra/Uttaratantra shastra is the main source of the doctrine of buddha-nature and it exists both in Chinese and in Tibetan besides the Sanskrit original.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2011 at 12:05 AM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma & Padampa Sangye. Same person?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why not say that Bodhidharma was later known as Padmasambhava and then Padampa Sangye? Or Luke Skywalker for that matter. Why not?

But if we want to go with the known facts, Bodhidharma lived hundreds of years before that mahasiddha, he is supposed to have taught some Lankavatara Sutra teachings, practically Bodhidharma's whole life is a legend created centuries later and there is no definitive information of who Bodhidharma was (if he was at all).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2011 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: See Nature, Become Buddha - Can You?

Content:

TMingyur said:

Ah thanks ... does that mean that "citta-prakrti" is equated with "buddha-nature" or that the term is found exclusively in sutras or shastras belonging to the third turning?

Astus wrote:

I don't know if the term is exclusive to teachings on tathagatagarbha but in that context it is indeed buddha-nature, the originally pure essence.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2011 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin's 750th Grand Memorial at Nishi Hongwanji

Content:

mr. gordo said:

Beautiful pictures.

This is my favorite:

Astus wrote:

First I thought that was the funny version of Shinran Shonin.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2011 at 2:16 AM

Title: Re: Is the Lotus Sutra just fiction

Content:

Astus wrote:

"At that time the Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa, having emerged from samādhi, remained sitting for sixty intermediate kalpas and revealed to Bodhisattva Varaprabha the Mahayana sutra called Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the White Lotus of the Marvelous Law, which was the instruction for bodhisattvas and the treasured lore of the buddhas. The assembly also sat there undisturbed in body and mind listening to the Buddha's exposition for sixty intermediate kalpas as if only a single mealtime had passed; during that time not a single person among them experienced fatigue of body or mind."

What is the Lotus Sutra?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2011 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Pre-Buddhist Chan

Content:

Jikan said:

This is something I'd like to know more about--the back-and-forth between TienTai and Ch'an in this period. I haven't studied it systematically. Any pointers?

Astus wrote:

I don't know of any study analysing this relationship. There are pieces and bits in different Zen studies, like in "Seeing through Zen" on p. 142ff "Intersubjectivity in Song-Dynasty Tiantai Practice" and in "The Will to Orthodoxy" on p. 38-39 "The Tiantai Influence". You may find other similar chapters in different works.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2011 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Patrul Rinpoche - Advice from Me to Myself

Content:

Astus wrote:

The poem reminds me this classic Zen koan (Gateless gate, case 12):

Zuigan Gen Oshō called to himself every day,

"Master!"

and answered, "Yes, sir!"

Then he would say, "Be wide awake!"

and answer, "Yes, sir!"

"Henceforward, never be deceived by others!"

"No, I won't!"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body Misconception

Content:

Astus wrote:

I haven't heard that the so called common Mahayana schools admitted they're incapable of producing buddhas. But if you have references for that please show them.

My question in that topic was about the meaning of rainbow body. In your post you just seem to take it as something so obvious that it needs no explanation is if there were no other concepts of buddhahood anywhere else in Buddhism.

As a side note, Samten Gyaltsen Karmay in "The Great Perfection" (p. 190ff) points out that the idea of the dissolution of the body, a concept attested from the 11th century on in Tibet, derives from the reinterpretation of the teaching of nirvana without residue while the rainbow body itself can be connected to tantric views of body and certain Bön beliefs.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body Misconception

Content:

Astus wrote:

Enochian,

No other Buddhist tradition holds the idea that those who become buddhas on this physical earth or any other physical earth (or did you mean Earth the planet - for if you did, well, that is a very much modern Western concept not known in Buddhism until recently) display rainbow body. On the other hand, even non-Vajrayana schools teach buddhahood in this life.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Rainbow Body Misconception

Content:

Enochian said:

Which non-Vajrayana school teaches that the COMMON Mahayana Trikaya with the ability to emanate 1 billion emanations in 1 billion world systems can be obtained in this life?

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva on the fourth stage can "manifest a billion bodies, each surrounded by a billion enlightening beings" (Flower Ornament Scripture, p. 733). Also, the view you represent of buddhahood is not necessarily the same everybody else has.

"What are the hundred thousand myriad Transformation bodies of the Buddha? If you are free of any thought of the ten thousand dharmas, then your nature is basically like emptiness, but in one thought of calculation, transformation occurs. Evil thoughts are transformed into hell-beings and good thoughts into heavenly beings. Viciousness is transformed into dragons and snakes, and compassion into Bodhisattvas. Wisdom is transformed into the upper realms, and delusion into the lower realms. The transformations of the self-nature are extremely many, and yet the confused person, unawakened to that truth, continually gives rise to evil and walks evil paths. Turn a single thought back to goodness, and wisdom is produced. That is the Transformation-body of the Buddha within your self-nature.

Good Knowing Advisors, the Dharma body of the Buddha is basically complete. To see your own nature in every thought is the Reward body of the Buddha. When the Reward body thinks and calculates, it is the Transformation Body of the Buddha. Awaken and cultivate by your own efforts the merit and virtue of your self-nature. That is truly taking refuge." (Platform Sutra, ch. 6)

But this is not discussing the importance and meaning of rainbow body but questioning the teachings of other Buddhist schools. And I don't see the relevance of that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 6:07 PM

Title: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Traditionally it is described that gods live on mount Meru and above in the sky. There are actual distances given and so on. But where are the gods now that we have no mount Meru and even the sky ends at one point and there is just empty space left? This is also a question because gods below the formless realm have some kind of physical body thus they're supposed to be somewhere. But where is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhacarita

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not too long ago I've read a partial (some later chapters were missing) Hungarian translation made from the Sanskrit. The whole text is as kitschy and Bollywood-Indian as it can be. It wasn't a pleasure to read. Although the chapter on Kantaka (the Buddha's horse) was so absurd that it was funny. Well, I guess Kantaka is my favourite character in the entire story.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is a legitimate inquiry. The gods within Buddhism are often forgotten although they're integral part of the religion. Since our current view of the world is radically different from those of ancient India and who came after them the traditional Buddhist cosmology is put aside as irrelevant. But cosmology forms the basis of a couple of other doctrines, especially the six worlds. Of course, it could have been possible to ask where the hells are but I assume - based on my own limited knowledge - that we're more familiar with the sky above than the earth below and their modern understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Well, it doesn't look like thousands of yojanas high and there are no surrounding mountains of different metals plus the inner oceans, etc. So it is mount Meru in name

only.

Being all metaphorical, well, no, I don't think it was all intended as a big over-complicated metaphor. And metaphor for what?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2011 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd say that there is no Mt. Meru on Earth because none can fit the description. It makes little difference if we identify any ordinary mountain as the "real Meru" since there are no terraces on it where gods live their lives, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 3:08 AM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A being cannot see those who live in a higher realm except by magic or other aid, says the Kosha in reference to gods of different heavens. This is actually the answer for not being able to see them normally.

But my question touches upon the issue of the relationship between cosmology and theology (god-lore). As we have a different view of the world where can we position the beings of other realms?

As for the literal nature of the teachings on the realms of gods, in vol. 2 p. 463-464 of the Kosha, Vasubandhu discusses at length the spread of the fragrance of the flowers of a certain magnolia tree situated in the world of the Thirty-Three Gods.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

mr. gordo said:

Those are some real SEO rich posts.

erdweir said:

SEO?

Astus wrote:

Yes, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization. A load of ads you guys have produced here without much contribution.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 6:21 AM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Right, but this chapter three of the Kosha, and we know that the kosha's cosmology cannot be taken literally as written.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's my point too, that we can't take traditional view literally. So the question, what is it that we can accept?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Meditative experience.

Astus wrote:

Does that mean you don't think there could be a common understanding about them? It appears to me that the Buddhist system of the different realms and beings is a good template to be used when analysing different religious-spiritual teachings. But since monotheists lack the diversity (except perhaps with Catholics' saints and angels) and materialists have no understanding of other worldly entities I presume there should be some general system in Buddhism to be accepted and taught beyond simple statements like "there are different realms".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Will said:

On a related thread I expressed that traditional Buddhist or Hindu or Greek etc. cosmogonies & cosmologies must have had some hidden meaning or function. But so far most responses ignore what that is. Instead the attitude is "just drop the goofy notions and move on." Understandable from the modern viewpoint.

But why are they the way they are? Some of these spiritual folk had powers and insight far beyond our ken. So why present these cosmic patterns as they did?

Astus wrote:

Is there any hidden meaning behind the plethora of creation myths and legends of gods

and heroes? Is there a hidden meaning behind modern urban legends?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Will said:

To the former, yes; to the latter, who cares.

Astus wrote:

Urban legends are modern myths. If you read some studies on the development of different myths, like that of Bodhidharma or Guanyin in China, you find that it was through centuries that different ideas, tales, theories and rituals eventually amalgamated into a somewhat complete mythology what now is presented to modern readers as if it has always been like that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Modern Day Pure Land Masters

Content:

Astus wrote:

Recently the master and I were talking about his revolutionary change from Ch'an practice to totally practising the Pureland path of Master ShanDao, unable to maintain my curiosity I blurted out"

"But don't you miss your Ch'an practice? You spent so many years and so much effort doing it, don't you regret giving it up as completely as you have?"

He looked at me sideways, with that really mischievous smile of his and said:

"You don't understand. There's nothing to give up, nothing to lose. Everything I do is Ch'an. Ch'an is all around us. Could you possible let go of the space you're sitting in now? Could you be anything but sitting here in this space? Of course not! Ch'an is in anything and everything I do. I just don't talk about it like I used to anymore. I don't sit and think about it and discuss it and teach it."

"I looked at the people in this world. I saw how much they suffer, how difficult it is for them to understand, to practice, so I started teaching about Amitabha Buddha instead. And I'm the kind of person who only teaches what he practices, so I had to start practicing Pureland, and had to practice it properly, or I wouldn't be able to teach it."

<https://dharmaafrica.blogspot.com/2007/10/giving-up-chan.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2011 at 11:47 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will,

There's the practice of devanasmṛti (god-remembrance) but I don't know any related to cosmology itself. If you think there is a deeper sense of traditional Buddhist (i.e. ancient Indian) world view there should be somebody of the old masters actually mentioning that, don't you think? If they were symbols there has been so many commentators and abhidharma teachers that at least some of them could have explained that. On the other hand, it's never too late to start a new interpretation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2011 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: The ground of empty appearances

Content:

Astus wrote:

As there is no mind without function and mind is eternal emptiness it's all easier to say there is dependent existence from which comes neither being nor non-being.

Dependent existence itself doesn't rule out the relative reality of phenomena. Or let's just say that Buddhism is not for substituting philosophy and science because that simply results in inconsistencies and nonsense.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 17th, 2011 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: William Bodri and Nan Huai-Chin

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm sorry if any of you was offended by my accusation. Frankly, certain posts really look like ads. But that might be just my suspicious mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 18th, 2011 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will,

Thanks for the quote. I'm not trying to fit it into any scientific view but the view of modern humans what is influenced by science and other factors. But I could simply ask: what is it that you believe? It is obvious from Buddhism in different lands that Indian gods easily got out of currency to be replaced by local ones. What local deities would

replace them in the West, if that happened at all? Or, since bodhisattvas and buddhas are not that much bound by culture, for Mahayana followers there is no dealing with gods?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2011 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Favorite Pure Land Quotes

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Even the good person is born in the Pure Land, so without question is the person who is evil"

(Tannisho, ch. 3)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2011 at 7:30 PM

Title: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why is it that Tibetan Buddhists are hardly ever care about East Asian Buddhism? We can see that in China, Korea and Japan there are newer groups appearing in the name of a Tibetan school just like in Western countries. Even before the 50s there were Chinese and Japanese Buddhists and scholars studying Tibetan Buddhism, some of them becoming Vajra masters (e.g. Yogi Chen, Nan Huaijin). Also large number of Tibetan texts have been translated to Chinese and Japanese. And if we look at the Western situation, those who follow a Tibetan lineage show little interest in understanding East Asian Buddhism, perhaps because they simply identify it with Zen just as they did in Tibet a thousand years ago (and do today without considering time as in Namkhai Norbu's "Dzogchen and Zen" essay). In China the Mantrayana (both EA and Tibetan forms) are considered part of general Buddhism that one may study. On the other hand, it seems that within Tibetan Buddhism the existence of East Asian Buddhism is completely ignored. Why?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kyosan,

I don't think they should convert to any EA school, that's not really the question I think. But rather the interest in other forms of Buddhism. For instance I've heard about a plan that they translated the Pali Canon to Tibetan. That's great. However, I don't see Tibetan teachers addressing the issue of other Buddhist schools outside of the Tibetan ones. They are good to discuss Hinayana, Mahayana, Kagyu, Sakya, etc. but no mention of

Pure Land, Chan, Tiantai or Shingon. Maybe they haven't heard about them? I doubt that, especially as many know English and even Chinese. To give an example, it is not expected at all from a Nyingma master to become a Gelug or Kagyu lama but definitely he should be somewhat familiar with their teachings, especially when they do some comparisons between the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 1:37 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

Pure Land, Chan, and Tientai are sutrayana.

Shingon is Vajrayana up to yogatantra.

Astus wrote:

Is that a problem? Don't they study sutras? Indeed, the Tibetan understanding of sutrayana (and vajrayana) doesn't match exactly the different EA interpretations, plus the difference in taxonomy. But I don't see why that is a hindrance. Actually, because of the differences it might be worth understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Will said:

So Chan is Dzogchen lite? or a needed (or helpful) preliminary to DZ?

Astus wrote:

In that text it is said that there is gradual sutrayana, sudden sutrayana (i.e. Zen) and then there is vajrayana. So in that view Zen comes above all other sutrayana but below the lowest mantrayana. Dzogchen is of course the top of all tantra. This is what that text says in brief.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 3:01 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Kyosan said:

Perhaps the Tibetan teachers don't know much about forms of Buddhism outside of Tibet because they don't need to know. For them to teach the dharma they don't need to know about every form of Buddhism that exists. But, if they have students from other schools inside of Tibet, I think they'll be able to communicate better with them if they are knowledgeable about those schools. They'll have a better idea what experiences the

students have had and what terminology they are familiar with.

The belief that Tibetan Buddhism is superior could be a part of it, but it's not necessary always the case.

Astus wrote:

I don't think the reason that they don't need to know it is sufficient to neglect other forms of Buddhism. They learn about many forms of Hindu doctrines including those that are not relevant today any more. They study Vaibhasika and Sautrantika teachings that have no followers today. They study Yogacara and Pramana that are in the end serve only to culminate in Madhyamaka what is also put aside as a theoretical thing compared to the practical Vajrayana. They also learn the lower tantric doctrines to be ultimately overthrown by Anuttarayoga.

Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche explains (<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-BH/bh117479.htm>):

"About 100 volumes of what the Buddha, himself, taught, the extensive sutras and the profound tantras, are in print. The commentaries on these, written by the panditas and great masters of the past, also have commentaries written about these commentaries. Some of the commentaries on the sutras, the tantras, and the different sciences and philosophies have innumerable commentaries. In this way, there is a tremendous amount of literature composed by the masters of India and Tibet. It is best if one is able to study all of these and get a complete understanding through learning, personal experience, and practice. The scriptures have great beneficial effects and great blessings. If one is to become a great teacher in a monastic college, one should possess the nine attributes of a noble person or sublime being. For example, one should be skilled in compassion, debate, and elaboration, in study, contemplation, in practice, in wisdom and noble character, and have a pure and excellent attitude. In order to become a great teacher able to expound all these different philosophies, or if one is studying in a Buddhist college, it is indispensable to learn all these things. But, if one is a householder with a family and no time to devote one's entire life to these studies, then a vast theoretical understanding should not be emphasized. On the contrary, the experience through practice is more beneficial. In such a case it is unimportant to go through this vastly detailed learning, but rather more important to condense all the teachings into a very short and precise one. If one stayed alone in a cave and practiced one-pointedly, then all this vast learning would be inconsequential. Therefore, the pointing out instruction of the old lady means that all the teachings have been condensed into just a few essential lines of text which contain the vital point, the secret or key point, or how the mind is. If one can take such an instruction to heart, then it is more beneficial for one's mind than all the scriptures."

So it is possible to restrict one's knowledge to just the essentials. But those who have the time and energy should learn a lot more.

It should also be noted that in the Yuan (1271–1368) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties the "official" (imperial) religion in China was Tibetan Buddhism (mainly Sakya and Gelug).

Also today the different Buddhist schools come close to each other (esp. in California).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 4:17 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Pero said:

A lot more doesn't necessarily mean learn EA Buddhism. I don't know why you think it should. Tibetan Buddhism is vast. A life time is perhaps not sufficient to learn everything there is in it (nor is it necessary), so why would people bother learning other forms of Buddhism? It's a different matter if you have some intellectual curiosity or some other special reason but in general I think there is no need. Better to study one thing and study that well.

Astus wrote:

I'm not trying to make a policy here that everybody has to learn EA Buddhism. Indeed, EA Buddhism is such a vast subject that there's hardly anyone who is familiar with all of it even on a medium level. What is raised here as a question is the apparent ignoring of it even by modern teachers. A general, introductory level is not a big thing. Of course, it could mess up some traditional ideas about what sutrayana is.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

DN,

There is a split in EA Buddhism. On one hand there are those who focus on practice only and rely heavily on a teacher. And there are the scholars who may or may not be Buddhists, can read in one or more canonical languages and study scriptures. Indeed, I find that while there are many translations from Tibetan works there is little publication of scholarly studies of Tibetan Buddhism unlike in the case of EA Buddhism where translations come in smaller quantity but studies (of good quality) come in pretty high numbers. And while translations of Tsongkhapa or Longchenpa are interesting for students of TB there are only a handful of EAB followers who would read a 500 p. study on the evolution of Guanyin or on early Chan. There is also significant lack of important works of EAB in English, for instance the most popular sutras are available but there are no commentaries; there are almost no translations of Tiantai, Huayan, Sanlun and Faxian treatises that formed the intellectual basis of EAB. Also, you can't really find any Buddhist teacher giving lectures on them in English. On the other hand, TB teachers do lecture on shastras. It is interesting how intellectual power is arranged in different ways in TB and EAB; in this I think Theravada has the middle ground. This is of course the Western situation. However, for instance in Hungary where translations are rare, both TB and Zen followers are focused only on practice and they have little knowledge even of

their own traditions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is justified in many cases.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's actually a whole movement called

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_Buddhism based on refuting what they call dhatu-vada where dhatu stands for an underlying absolute as the source and basis of all (like the dharmadhatu).

I wouldn't say it's just the less talented students who misunderstand certain teachings. In Zen the mind is regarded as the source of all, in Huayan it is the Dharmadhatu, in Mind Only it is the alayavijnana, etc. Vajrayana also has some similar concepts with Primordial Buddha and nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

Surely there are further explanations about those terms that makes them fit for a middle way view. However, if we apply a strict criticism of them we find them refuted as skilful means only because they are apparently reifying concepts that objectify nirvana. The same could be said about Abhidhamma with its nibbana-dhamma/dhatu and they too say it is anatta. On the other hand it is similar to misunderstanding selflessness and emptiness as nihilism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 7:43 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Anders Honore said:

The key is whether they fundamentally hold to this though.

ie, in Zen "all things return to the one, yet do not even hold to the one." Madhymika is elegant in the sense that the structure of its own arguments quite logically undermines itself as being any kind of ultimate or fundamentally true position as well. Other methods of presentation may not have quite the same intellectual elegance, but the same pattern can be found.

Astus wrote:

True. However, Zen is not a unified teaching but a group of different teachings. Some teachers teach this, others teach that. And even when it is said that no nature is true nature it makes no difference when it comes to the concept that all phenomena are manifestations of buddha-mind and that original enlightenment is the true characteristic of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that when ultimate reality is talked about as a thing, or more than that even as a living being, it is hardly different from any atmavadin or substantialist view. Buddha-nature/mind is described as original purity (never defiled in sentient beings), as original source (from what all arises and returns to), as the final subject (who experiences everything), as the true doer (what makes a body alive). These are views that appear as universal and personal bases of existence.

By strict criticism I meant analysis based on any classical Buddhist system (abhidharma, madhyamaka, yogacara).

"Long ago, before the split between samsara and nirvana occurred, within the basic spaciousness that is the natural state of everything, exactly as it was since the beginning, glorious Samantabhadra, the self-existing buddha of natural awareness, awakened to true enlightenment in the nature of equality - the very state within which both samsara and nirvana first arise and then again subside. This is why he is known as the primordial buddha, original protector, and as the universal forefather of all samsara and nirvana."

(Wellsprings of the Great Perfection, p. 13)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Counter-literature to the common-Zen:

Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing lu: A Special Transmission Within the Scriptures

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meeting of Minds - A Dialogue on Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism

From May 1st through the 3rd, 1998, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and Venerable Chan Master Sheng Yen presented In the Spirit of Manjushri: the Wisdom Teachings of Buddhism at the Roseland in New York. Sponsored by Tibet House New York and the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, this event drew some 2,500 people from all Buddhist traditions, as well as scholars of medicine, psychology, education, and comparative religion from around the world.

Full Text:

http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/chan_garden/chan_garden2.aspx?sn=38

<http://www.shengyen.org/UpFile/FlashBookENFile/E-1%20Meeting%20of%20Minds.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg, don't misunderstand me, I'm not attacking tathagatagarbha teachings but actually subscribe to them as a follower of the Buddha-mind School (i.e. Zen). Nevertheless, the concepts of Buddha-mind, original purity, etc. are literally substantialist teachings. Here is something to ponder in that regard (Platform Sutra, ch. 8, tr. by John R. McRae):

[Xingchang] said, "Your disciple has been reading the Nirvana Sutra constantly, but I do not understand its doctrines of permanence and impermanence. I beg Your Reverence, in your compassion, to explain these for me briefly."

The master said, "That which is impermanent is the buddha-nature. That which has permanence is all the good and evil dharmas and the mind of discrimination."

[Xingchang] said, "What Your Reverence has said is quite different from the text of the sutra. ... The sutra teaches that the buddha-nature is permanent, but Your Reverence says it is impermanent. [The sutra says that] the good and evil dharmas and the mind of

bodhi are all impermanent, but Your Reverence says they are permanent. This difference has made this student even more confused!”

The master said, “Do you understand? If the buddha-nature were permanent, then no matter what good and evil dharmas one explained, not a single person throughout the entire eon would generate bodhicitta. Therefore, I preach that it is impermanent. This is precisely the Way of true permanence preached by the Buddha. Furthermore, if all the dharmas were impermanent, then everything would have its own self-nature that would experience birth and death, and those true and permanent natures would not be omnipresent. Therefore, I preach that they are permanent, which is precisely the true doctrine of impermanence preached by the Buddha. Because ordinary people and heretics are attached to false permanence and those of the two vehicles consider permanence to be impermanence, together forming the eight confusions, the Buddha in the authoritative teaching of the Nirvana [Sutra] destroyed their prejudices and revealed his explanation of true permanence, the true bliss, the true self, and true purity. You are now relying on the words but going against the meaning. With an annihilationist impermanence and a deterministic permanence, you have misunderstood the Buddha’s last words.”

As for the mystical and esoteric, they might have some value in being cryptic, but I find that the case is rather that integrating a contradictory teaching requires only the right amount of explanation. Like, the sutra says one thing but actually it means another thing. This is creative exegesis.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Nangwa said:

Primordial Buddha's, buddha nature, etc. are symbolic and should in no way be interpreted as asserting an identity.

Astus wrote:

Do you take the view that the doctrine of buddha-nature is provisional and a skilful means only similarly to those who follow the so called second turning? Still, there are others who think that tathagatagarbha is a definitive teaching, and those are not just students.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Nangwa said:

Not really. I actually think Buddha-nature is emptiness. That it is in no way an entity or phenomena at all.

Astus wrote:

Have you heard that buddha-nature is also "not empty, but is endowed with numberless excellent qualities"? You might also be familiar with the Zhentong teachings where "naturally radiant self-cognizant pristine awareness that is not divided from the expanse is known as ultimate reality". Also from the Nyingmapas, "It is wrong to refer to the mere emptiness, which is nothing at all, as the ultimate truth. Thus, absolute reality is the pristine cognition of the non-dual nature of just what is. It is indicated by the words buddha-body of reality or essential buddha-body which genuinely transcends the phenomena of consciousness." (Dudjom Rinpoche: The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, p. 185)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Metaphysical tendency in Mahayanists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I don't see how the presented interpretation of buddha-nature as only a capacity and a skilful teaching against icchantika views takes into account that tathagatagarbha is said to be inherently complete with the buddha qualities and such and from that view came all the teachings about the possibility of sudden realisation of buddhahood. But it is not just the buddha-nature teaching that has this metaphysical-ontological scent but the emptiness teachings too fall into it when everything is reduced to emptiness, dependent origination, conceptual proliferation, illusion. In fact the no-substance becomes the sole substance it keeps putting on everything or putting everything in it. We could also say that emptiness is the atheist position within metaphysics (against monists/monotheists and pluralists/politheists) that is the position of "not one, not many".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2011 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Unknown said:

But my point is I don't think there are any scorecards of happiness or path to measure beings progress against. If there are beings who aspire to Buddhahood and/or liberation and making good work towards that, well that's wonderful. For where they are in life. If there are people who used this life make just a seed of goodness worth of progress, that is really wonderful too. For where they are in life.

Astus wrote:

"You should speak appropriately about the affairs of your own life, for each matter you encounter constitutes the meaning of your existence, and your actions are without hindrance. The fruit of the bodhisattva way is just thus, born of mind, taking names to be

forms. Because of the knowledge of the emptiness of forms, birth is nonbirth. Comprehending this, one acts in the fashion of one's time, just wearing clothes, eating food, constantly upholding the practices of a bodhisattva, and passing time according to circumstances. If one practices in this manner is there anything more to be done?" (Mazu Daoyi in Zen's Chinese Heritage, p. 67)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2011 at 12:21 AM

Title: Tibetan Buddhist View of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Based on the " <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=3863> " I thought it's better to get a new topic for the subject. For a start here are a few quotes.

We have already said that the primordial state contains in potentiality the manifestation of enlightenment. The sun, for example, naturally has light and rays, but when the sky is cloudy, we don't see them. The clouds in this case represent our obstacles that are a result of dualism and conditioning: when they are overcome, the state of self-perfection shines with all its manifestations of energy, without ever having been altered or improved. This is the characteristic principle of Dzogchen. Not understanding this may lead one to think that Dzogchen is the same as Zen or Ch'an. At heart, Zen, which without any doubt is a high and direct Buddhist teaching, is based on the principle of emptiness as explained in sutras such as the Prajnaparamita. Even though in this regard, in substance it is no different from Dzogchen, the particularity of Dzogchen lies in the direct introduction to the primordial state not as "pure emptiness" but rather as endowed with all the aspects of the self-perfection of energy. It is through applying these that one attains realization.

(N. Norbu & A. Clemente: The Supreme Source, p. 88)

The Zen tradition is the actual application of shunyata, or emptiness, practice, the heart of the mahayana teaching. Historically, the zen method is based on dialectical principles - you engage in continual dialogues with yourself, asking questions constantly. By doing that, in the end you begin to discover that questions don't apply anymore in relationship to the answer. That is a way of using up dualistic mind, based on the logic of Nagarjuna. The interesting point is that the practice of traditional Indian logic used by Hindu and Buddhist scholars is turned into experiential logic rather than just ordinary debate or intellectual argument. Logic becomes experiential.

...

These two practices are not polarities. You have to go through Zen practice before you get to mahamudra practice, because if you don't realize that asking questions is the way to learn something, that the questioning process is a learning process, then the whole idea of study becomes distorted. So one must learn to see that trying to struggle for some achievement or goal is useless; you have to start from the Zen or mahayana tradition. And after that, you realize that asking questions is not the only way, but being a fool is the only way. If you see the foolishness of asking questions, then you begin to learn something. Foolishness begins to become wisdom. At that point, you transform

yourself into another dimension, a completely other dimension. You thought you had achieved a sudden glimpse of nonduality, but that nonduality also contains relationship. You still need to relate yourself to that sudden glimpse of beyond question. That's when you begin to become mahamudra experience. In other words, the Zen tradition seems to be based on the shunyata principle, which is a kind of emptiness and openness, absence of duality. The mahamudra experience is a way of wiping out the consciousness of the absence: you begin to develop clear perceptions beyond being conscious of the absence. ,, I suppose you could say that Zen and mahamudra are complementary to one another. Without the one, the other couldn't exist.
(The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, vol. 6, p. 43, 44)

You see, an interesting point is that once you begin to get into big mind - as the Yogacharins or Zen call it, the BIG mind [laughter] - it extends your vision. But then, once you begin to get into VAST mind, even BIG mind is so small.
(ibid., p. 471)

Dzogchen teaches that all we have to do to become enlightened is to recognize and rest in this natural state of mind. In Zen they call this original mind. This is raw, naked awareness, not something we've learned or fabricated. This is the Buddha within - the perfect presence that we can all rely on. Waking up to this natural mind, this Buddha-nature, is what meditation is all about.
(Surya Das: Awakening the Buddha Within, p. 316)

The Zen practice of shikantaza, the Tibetan practices of mahamudra and dzogchen, and the Theravadan practice of full mindfulness of breathing are all examples of the practice of presence.
(Ken McLeod: Wake Up Your Life, p. 419)

Many people are more accustomed to doing practice in the Sutra style, and when they speak of meditation, for example, they always consider it to be sitting with crossed legs and closed eyes. In the Sutra teachings, there are gradual and nongradual methods. The origins of latter methods are to be found in the history of all the present day schools of Zen.

Zen methods are nowadays very developed; and since many methods from different sources have been integrated with them, they no longer exist exactly as they did in ancient times. Nevertheless, even if they have been altered over time, they are still based on the Sutra teachings. This is why, in Zen, it is believed that the main point of practice is to get into the state of shunyata, or voidness, and to remain in it. That is what meditation is considered to be in Zen.

In any kind of Sutra teaching, meditation involves sitting silently in a quiet place. Many people are attached to that form of practice, and some people have an aversion to Tantrism because they feel that it requires too many things to recite and construct, and the use of many ritual instruments for doing rites and pujas and so on. Such people prefer to simply meditate in silence.

(Namkhai Norbu: Dzogchen Teachings, p. 25)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2011 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

To avoid off topic posts: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=3886>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2011 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhist View of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Enochian, it is the Tibetan view of Zen, not How Zen is not Vajrayana (as it is obviously not Tantra). Should have emphasised that I guess.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2011 at 4:31 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhist View of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me, as it appears in the Namkhai Norbu and Chögyam Trungpa quotes, that they take Zen to be only about emptiness and based on prajnaparamita. It is actually a strange interpretation to me since one of the most fundamental tenets of Zen is "mind is Buddha" and it is actually based on tathagatagarbha teachings. Why they still think that Zen is only about emptiness is a mystery to me.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2011 at 5:23 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhist View of Zen

Content:

Namdrol said:

It is an interpretation based on Chan as it was presented to Tibetans by a number of Chinese masters of the Northern school. There are a few Chan texts authored by Tibetans in Dunhuang corpus. One of them is by Trisong De'utsan.

Astus wrote:

And you think that while both Trungpa and ChNN are modern teachers who can actually read and hear of Zen, not to mention knowing Zen teachers, they still base their interpretation on 1000-year-old Tibetan texts? In the Namkhai Norbu quote he actually says that there were "developments" in Zen since then so at least he must be aware on some level that there's more to it than what they have in Tibetan from ancient times. On the other hand, Western teachers of the TB tradition seem to be more sympathetic to Zen, like Surya Das who regularly makes references to it in his books.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2011 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: Good Translation of Saddharma-Lankavatara-Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not in English. Strangely enough nobody yet tried to translate it again while we have half a dozen Lotus Sutra. So much for content vs. popularity.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2011 at 8:06 PM

Title: Nonmental Indestructible Element

Content:

Astus wrote:

In "Ocean of Reasoning" (p. 355) Tsongkhapa says in the commentary to MMK 17:14,

"Although all virtuous and nonvirtuous actions cease immediately upon their completion, they are not without effects, because when the karma arises, a nonmental compound called an indestructible element associated with karma arises in the continuum of the agent like a promissory note."

What is this nonmental element associated with karma? It sounds like an abhidharmic teaching, however, from the text it appears to me that Tsongkhapa actually accepts the existence of such an element. Could anyone explain please?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2011 at 1:18 AM

Title: Re: Nonmental Indestructible Element

Content:

Astus wrote:

I might be mistaken here but it wasn't Nagarjuna who mentioned that element but Tsongkhapa. Also, it seems quite unnecessary to explain the efficacy of karma. Third, it is not explained in the text itself nor does it sound really convincing how such an element exists.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2011 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Nonmental Indestructible Element

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Namdrol, you're of great help. Also explains why simply avipraṇāśa is translated in Chinese as 不失法 (avipraṇāśa-dharma).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2011 at 7:42 AM

Title: Reasons for Rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is the best straightforward explanation of rebirth I've met so far. From the book *The Center of the Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition* by Karl Brunnhölzl, p. 183-185.

"Result reasons are used to establish the functioning of cause and result in general. This refers not only to outer or material causes but, more important, to the inner level of causality, which is the operation of karmic causes and results. Karma means that all our physical, verbal, and mental actions or impulses are causes that have effects in the same way any other causes do. In Buddhism, this principle of causality is also employed to establish the continuity of former and later lifetimes. In any case, result reasons infer prior material or mental causes from the observation of certain material or mental conditioned phenomena in the present that are the results of these causes. Basically, Buddhism says that the functioning of cause and effect means both that something cannot come from nothing and that something cannot become nothing. Otherwise, anything could randomly happen at any time or nothing would ever happen. Moreover, without cause and effect, all intentional actions, such as farming to produce the result of a harvest, would be completely unpredictable or pointless. Therefore, in Buddhism, it is not really a question of just believing or not believing in the law of karma or former and later lifetimes. Rather, if we generally accept the process of cause and effect, we must acknowledge that it does not make sense to arbitrarily exclude some causal phenomena—that is, certain or all of our physical, verbal, and mental actions—from this general principle. This holds true even if we do not see an immediate result of these actions and hope to have avoided their consequences. In fact, we generally do experience the effects of our impulses, emotions, and thoughts, since our physical and verbal actions are constantly driven by them. When we plan a project or do our work, we do not think at all that our mental activities have no results; we take it for granted that our thoughts and imagination will result in visible actions and products. Also, we know very well the strong and possibly devastating effects of certain mental impulses, such as falling in love or declaring war. That it might take a long time for the effect of some action to ripen cannot be a basis for claiming that this action has no effect. Otherwise, it would equally follow that the movements of the original continents on earth are not the causes for the location and shape of the present continents, since the beings at that time did not experience the effect at present, nor do we at present observe these causes.

It would be highly inconsistent to say that some things or experiences have causes while others do not. This would also imply that there are some causes that have results and others that have no results. How could we reasonably define and distinguish between such phenomena? (In addition, for those phenomena that do not have causes, all the above absurd consequences would apply.) Whenever someone discovers the cause of something that was previously considered a random event—as has happened

and continues to happen in science—the entire notion of causelessness or randomness is fundamentally questioned. Moreover, how could uncaused phenomena interact with phenomena that do have causes? If they interacted in a purely random way, even phenomena within an established causal continuum would become random phenomena. And if they interacted in a way that is determined by causes, random phenomena would enter the realm of causality. If there were, however, two entirely separate realms of phenomena, they could not interact at all.

As for the classical proof for the existence of past and future lives, we must first realize that if we accept the principle of causality as functioning in an all-encompassing way, then there have to be infinite chains of specific causes and results. For example, a tree that we see now has a beginningless “case history” of causes and conditions, each of which again entails its own causes and conditions. Likewise, according to Buddhism, the present moment of our mind does not come out of nowhere but arises from the immediately preceding moment of this mind. In other words, mind does not depend on anything other than mind as its specific substantial cause.⁴⁵⁵ By extending this backward and ahead in time, we naturally arrive at a mental continuum without beginning or end, which manifests as what is called the different lifetimes of cyclic existence. To arbitrarily postulate any starting point or a total extinction of this continuum—such as the beginning or the end of this life—amounts to nothing more than saying that something can come from nothing or something can become nothing. Yet this openly contradicts the notion of cause and result as such in the first place. Further indications that are adduced for the existence of other lifetimes include facts such as newborn mammals immediately knowing without learning where and how to drink milk from their mothers.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, what would account for the immense range of differences just among human beings even at birth, such as being born healthy or with a severe disease, being intelligent or dumb, being born rich or in a slum, in a loving family or a violent one? How else could one explain that some people “have success” or get rich almost without any effort and others always “have bad luck” or stay poor even if they work hard? Why is it that some children can play complex pieces of classical music at an early age without training or excel at sports, while others are never able to do nearly as well even with a lot of training? Even conventionally, none of these facts can be sufficiently explained by causes that can be found in this present life, but this usually just leads to subsuming them under rubrics such as “fortune,” “fate,” or “talent.” The most fashionable category these days seems to be that “it’s all in the genes.” This is not the place to discuss this issue in detail, but if we just consider how little the genetic code of human beings differs from that of chimpanzees and some primitive worms—by just 1 percent and about 30 percent respectively— it is quite amazing to assume that the genes alone can serve as an explanation for all the differences between humans and other beings. To be sure, these differences do not consist of only physical features, but include the entire range of the human mind and its expressions, such as culture, science, philosophy, and religion, not to mention all the mental and behavioral diversity of human beings themselves, who have even less genetic variance from one another.”

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2011 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

If anyone knows something better I'm really open to it. If possible please copy it here.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

You say that in Vajrayana they add a third - not known before component, vayu, what makes a dualist view monist? I'm not sure if monism is really a better concept than dualism when both are pretty much substantialist. Also, if dharmas are understood not as ultimate realities but provisional categories of multifunctions within the realm of experience there is neither dualism nor monism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Rebirth

Content:

Namdrol said:

Vāyu is the material element of air (part of the rūpaskandha). Specifically, the mind and the prana vāyu are merged and inseparable.

In sutrayāna mind and matter are different substances.

Astus wrote:

If it is just the wind element that is material, does Vajrayana take mind to be immaterial or material? If it is immaterial the same problem stands that you said about sutrayana. If it is material, well, then it is an interesting form of materialism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find the view I've already mentioned briefly above that if we understand dharmas as instances of experience without trying to imagine behind them any self, self-nature or substance, the whole issue of mind-body is solved. In fact, the question of the sameness and difference of body and mind is among the unanswered questions, that were actually answered by the Buddha (SN 44.7-8) by saying that only those have such concepts who think of the six entrances and five aggregates as self or pertaining to a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: Good Translation of Saddharma-Lankavatara-Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why would the 4 fascicle translation be better for being translated when it is not even a good Chinese translation? Just because it's supposed to be the text of a school that has almost zero relevance to Zen? The so called Lankavatara School was attached "posthumously" to the East Mountain School ("northern school") lineage. Also it was Gunabhadra who was first attributed with the position of the number one patriarch and Bodhidharma came only after him. Nevertheless, if there were translations of all the different editions it would be useful.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 7:12 PM

Title: Throw Out Buddhist Philosophy / Phenomenology / Psychology

Content:

LastLegend said:

Throw away philosophical jibberish and your problem will be solved.

Astus wrote:

That is the "throw away philosophy" philosophy. Doesn't lead far, or anywhere for that matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 8:02 PM

Title: Buddhist Origin of Easter

Content:

Astus wrote:

We know that "once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a young hare and lived in a wood." (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/j3017.htm>) He was then a very charitable bunny who offered even his own body. What is not mentioned then is that Sakka gave the hare some special powers by putting his image on the moon. This power the rabbit attained was a magical way of giving gifts. Those gifts materialised in the grass everywhere in the world in the form of colourful eggs. These egg-like presents are what one can still see on paintings like this one, right in front of the Buddha:

This is also the reason for the Easter Bunny to lay eggs, an ancient tale preserving the story of a former life of Shakyamuni. Such is the Buddhist origin of Easter.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2011 at 8:32 PM

Title: Belief in Reincarnation Strongest in Hungary

Content:

Unknown said:

The belief in reincarnation was strongest in Hungary.

Of people who believed in reincarnation 13 percent were from Hungary, while Swedes made up the biggest proportion of people who said they don't know what happens after death. South Korea and Spain had the highest percentage of people who thought "you simply cease to exist."

Astus wrote:

Source: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/04/25/us-beliefs-poll-idINTRE73O24K20110425>

Countries that participated in the poll: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and the United States

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2011 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: Good Translation of Saddharma-Lankavatara-Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hongren's "Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle" (T48n2011) doesn't mention the Lankavatara Sutra at all, Daoxin's "The Fundamental Expedient Teachings for Calming the Mind Which Attains Enlightenment" (in T85n2837, i.e. Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka) only mentions the sutra once but doesn't quote from it (unlike from other scriptures), the complete Record of Lanka teachers, including preface, quotes the sutra 5x (compared to: Avatamsaka 8x, Lotus 5x, Vimalakirti 4x, Nirvana 3x, Dharmapada 2x) and refers to it 9x. In the Bodhidharma Anthology's translation part the Lankavatara Sutra is quoted only once. McRae explains it this way,

"Note, for example, the shift from Lankavatara Sutra to Diamond Sutra implied in the account (i.e., in the cancellation of the painting commission and Hongren's teaching to Huineng), which parallels the two texts' changes in popularity over the course of the eighth century. The position of the Lankavatara within Chan was always ambiguous, since the text was more revered in the abstract than actually studied. However, it was generally associated with "Northern school" teachers. Shenhui was one of the first monks of his day, but by no means the only one, to favor the Diamond, which was becoming more widely popular throughout the Chinese tradition at the time. Hence, in the Platform Sutra the two texts roughly symbolize the Northern and Southern schools." (Seeing Through Zen, p. 62)

Also, if you take the Records of Lanka Teachers, it lists Gunabhadra as the first and Bodhidharma as the second patriarch and Shenxiu is the sixth patriarch while Huineng is just a mediocre student of Hongren (among those who are "fit to be people's teachers, but will only be local figures"). It's just another thing that Daoxuan's story of Huike in his collection of biographies of eminent monks (T50n2060), where he is a Lankavatara teacher just as his students, has little connection to the later Zen tradition. Thus it is understood that it was Faru and other disciples in the "northern school" who made the connection between Bodhidharma and Huineng to Daoxin and Hongren. It also explains the lack of any reliable information on Sengcan.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2011 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is simply using a known name to propagete one's goods. Trade mark works in commerce but not in religion. It reminds me somewhat of off- and on-mountain Tiantai, although that involved monks. Just think about the many uses of Buddha, Buddhism, Zen and Tantra. Perhaps it means Tendai is gaining some popularity.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2011 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not difficult either to sell something as Buddhism, Zen or Tantra. Why so much worry about some Tendai imitators? Have you tried to tell them they should include some actual Tendai teachings too?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2011 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Seishin said:

All we can do is practice and practice well. Our actions should speak louder than our words.

Astus wrote:

From Zen history it appears to me that it is the words that matter. Nobody cares if you are a buddha lost in the mountains and you'll be soon forgotten by the people and history. So a proper tactic would be to set up quality Tendai places, publish books and spread the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2011 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Unknown said:

Rather than trying to peddle bits of Dharma like so many commodities, Tendai-shu has focused on building institutions, sanghas, leaders. It's slow and difficult work. It's also expensive.

Astus wrote:

What about translations and other publications? There isn't much of them. Not even some comprehensive introductory book, perhaps besides Numata's edition of the "Collected Teachings of the Tendai Lotus School". Online sources are minimal too. Couldn't by a DVD even if I wanted to.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2011 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Gardening and non-killing

Content:

Astus wrote:

The monks would have had nothing to eat if all the many lay people stopped cultivating the fields. To paraphrase an advice from Mazu Daoyi, if you work in the garden you can reap the fruits of your work, if you avoid killing even small insects you reap your good karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2011 at 9:41 PM

Title: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nyogen Senzaki (Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy, p. 73-74)

A Lecture on Meditation: For Beginners

"Quietness is an element in meditation, but merely striving to attain quietness leads nowhere. It is like putting a paper bag over a cat's head: It will walk backward but will never be able to advance. A cranky old man who scolds children for making noise violates with his loud voice the very quietness he upholds. The same thing happens when one forces oneself to enter quietness. It is only when one forgets both the world of noise and the realm of quietness that one is able to enter into the kingdom of true silence. This, however is not what we are gathered here for, either. Watching movies or resting in the park is just as good as sitting in a zendo, if what you want is quietness. Strangers to a zendo usually are unable to see anything more than its atmosphere of quietness; the vastness lying beyond can only be detected by those who know what real

Zen practice is all about.

You should never for a moment think that you are dwelling in quietness. You are students of nonthinking—what right have you to tarry in tranquillity! Just march on bravely, regulating your breath or working on your kōan. Zen meditation is the most simple method in the world for mind-training. Meditation is complicated and difficult only when one becomes more interested in one's own opinions and ideas than in disentangling oneself from all traces of dualistic thinking. As Zen Master Nanin once said: "Unless you empty your teacup, I cannot fill it."

In the beginning, you aim to empty your mind and try to drive all thoughts away. But aiming and trying are also thoughts! So aiming and trying keep you from your goal, of becoming emptiness itself. When you think you are in emptiness, you are not in emptiness. When you think you have discovered your Buddha-nature, you are far away from it. When no thought arises, there is no need to drive thoughts away. When nothing is born, nothing dies. When nothing is good, nothing is bad. What you never had, you will never miss. What you do not see does not disappear. What cannot increase cannot decrease. This is true emptiness. This is samādhi. "When you enter into this condition, then you are walking in the Palace of Realization. Never to think—even for a moment—that you are enlightened: This is the ideal of Zen meditation."

Some points to ponder about this text:

You don't work on attaining quietness but you have to regulate your breath.

Students of nonthinking has to work bravely on their koans.

No aiming, no trying - a student has to cultivate zazen to attain it.

When there is no thought they don't have to be driven away, but if there are thoughts of emptiness and buddha-nature it is bad.

True emptiness is that non-existent things are non-existent.

If you don't think you're enlightened you've attained Zen meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2011 at 10:11 PM

Title: Brain Surgery in Ancient Tibet

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=7,10079,0,0,1,0>

"Brain surgery was practiced by doctors at least 2,900 years ago, a specialist on Tibetan culture and literature said Wednesday after four decades of research on the Tibetan Tripitaka, an ancient encyclopedia."

Does anyone have some background information about the reliability of this claim?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2011 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Unknown said:

My position is that persons who are interested in practicing Buddhism of any form will do well to avoid the products Mr Lepine is marketing, and instead to find an authentic teacher in a normal, boring lineage instead of this too-good-to-be-true appeal to magic in your mailbox (and now by skype, of course).

Astus wrote:

The four empowerments imparts the complete teaching and you realise the four bodies of buddha, through pointing out transmission you awake to the true nature of mind, no guru no buddhahood, etc. When Tantra did this in India it was no less dubious for monks in orthodox monasteries than it is today for you. Authenticity comes with sustained popularity.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2011 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Tendai and Pretend-ai

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not just Vajrayana that gains authenticity from sustained popularity but every tradition. Usually it also involves some meddling with history.

He may call himself this and that, it is simply imitating others in use of special titles. And by others it is not necessarily meant Buddhist clergy but also Christian, like the term bishop. It is the expectation that a teacher himself has to bear special features (starting with the 32+80 marks) and other kinds of legitimating stuff. That's why bodhisattvas should care about the Dharma and not the person. It's emphasised exactly because the majority cares a lot more about who is teaching instead of what he's teaching. It was clearly wise on the part of the Buddha to establish a community instead of a hierarchy. But then we see how Buddhism got into establishing positions and titles.

The quality of any teaching lies in its content, I think we're very much in agreement on this. They might call it Tendai, Zen or whatever, until it is Saddharma it carries little significance. The Pretendai people you've introduced has hardly anything to show up as Buddhism, so they're agents of Mara.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2011 at 12:54 AM

Title: Re: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not much interest in discussing Zen, is there, DN?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2011 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

Look at this text quoted in the original post. Read it like any normal English text and add your knowledge of Buddhism. What can you make of it then? Zen teaching is not more difficult than any other Buddhist doctrine. Its way of expressing itself, yes, that can get pretty messed up.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2011 at 7:30 AM

Title: Re: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

Astus wrote:

I hear you, DN. Scholars believe it is one of the long lasting effects of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shenhui> 's (684?-758?) arguments against gradualist teachings that later teachers adopted a <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subitism> rhetoric. Putting aside the whole Zen history, it is indeed the lack of common Mahayana knowledge that is missed by the Western non-Buddhist lay audience. On the other hand, just as Senzaki says, "Zen meditation is the most simple method in the world for mind-training". It's just that while TNH can use a straightforward everyday language in teaching mindfulness for some reason most of the Zen teachers are stuck with technical lingo. I wonder when the Western Zen community will realise that one of the main attractions of Zen in China was its ordinary language (later that has changed of course).

As for the quality and moral integrity of Japanese Zen I'm sure there are a couple of people who know more about it than me to compose proper critiques. The style of the quoted instruction for beginners obviously suffers from negligent wording that lacks consideration of its audience. On the other hand, if we care to make an interpretation of it, it's in line with common teachings of meditation similar to Dogen's (Fukan)Zazengi, what is also full of old platitudes. What I mean is that there is some level of validity in it and does represent Zen, but not in an original and user friendly manner.

If you consider those points I've mentioned after the quote they show how the text appears to be radical while it in fact advises ordinary practice of samatha (breath meditation) and vipasyana (koan introspection).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2011 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

Astus wrote:

"A firm understanding of the Buddhist teachings is assumed prior to entry to a sodo."

I seriously doubt people who go to any Western Zen group have studied Buddhism to the point they can understand clearly what the Awakening Mahayana Faith, as a primary text of East Asian Buddhism, talks about. On the other hand, in Japan monks first have to study Buddhism at a university and then they can go to practice meditation. Such systematic education for monks also exists in Korea and Taiwan too. Of course, after years of studying texts and passing exams it is normal for a meditation instructor to go straight to the point.

But we do get clear instruction on it, and it is corrected and adjusted at the regular interviews because in traditional Zen the teacher only has to look at you to know what your problem is.

Certainly there is difference between a short text and regular training under a teacher. On the other hand, if one relies solely on a single person who he believes to be a living buddha, that is very much like blind faith. Being educated has the same advantages in Buddhism as in any other areas of life. Exchanging knowledge for relying on a person is like illiterate people asking for a bank loan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2011 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: The real truth behind Zen masters' self-mutilation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://myweb.fsu.edu/jyu2/pdf/Bodies%20of%20Sanctity1-JY.pdf> (PDF)

Also there's a short topic on similar subject

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=174>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2011 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Meditation for Beginners by Nyogen Senzaki

Content:

James418 said:

Hello Astus, Zen stresses the limits of intellectual thought. Knowledge of the basics of Buddhism is necessary, but in the Zen tradition the sixth patriarch was illiterate.

The Buddha likened his teaching to a raft. Once you reach the other shore, it should be put down, not carried around. This is because its not ultimate truth. It is not ultimate

truth because it is intellectual knowledge - and the intellect is a useful tool, but is limited and deals in opposites - yes, no, this, that. This is the problem of the beginner, and that is why the zen teacher mentions the opposites in the text. The fact that you take the text and start analysing them further, breaking them down, and further analysing them is probably not what he intended lol

The intellect is a useful tool - as you say - but there are a few other tools in the tool box that can only be developed when the discriminating intellect is cut off, and that is why Zen can appear baffling at times.

Astus wrote:

Yes, in the Platform Sutra we are told that Huineng was illiterate. Those who made up the story were obviously literate people, not to mention that the Platform Sutra itself warns people in chapter 10: "You must not revile the sutras, which is a transgression immeasurable." Also, considering that to become a monk one first had to pass examinations (it was imperial law for quite a few centuries), it was practically impossible for any monk to be totally unfamiliar with writing and some common Buddhist texts. Plus Zen was elite Buddhism in China and East Asia (few Westerners realise that those who have received dharma transmission and became recognised Zen teachers were abbots of monasteries, that's why the so called Zen monastic rules of Baizhang talk a lot about the abbot but there's little mention of any Zen master per se) that thrived in literary production, you just have to check out the number of Zen related texts in the Buddhist canon that exceeds the works of any other Buddhist school.

The Buddha has certainly told the simile of the raft. It means that once you're on the other shore you don't need the vehicle. However, it is nonsense to talk about letting go of the raft before we even have one. Here is a good example of completely misunderstanding both Zen and the simile.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2011 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Bothering things about Vajrayana and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

A short explanation for using conditioned phenomena to reach the unconditioned:

"It is like making a fire with two sticks. The fire blazes and the wood is consumed; the ashes fly away and the smoke vanishes. Using illusion to remedy illusion is exactly like this."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html, ch. 2)

And commentary by Kihwa,

"That which is cured is like original wood, it represents the personality that is transformed. The ability to cure is like the ignition of the wood, it represents the remedy that is able to transform. The "remedy" is actually "compassion and wisdom." The fire is

the enlightenment that is actualized, this is "actualized enlightenment." The emergence of actualized enlightenment depends on compassion and wisdom. The arousal of compassion and wisdom depends on being sensitive to the actual circumstances of individual people. That which the actual circumstances of individual people follow is the karma of all sentient beings. That which all sentient beings follow depends upon Great Enlightenment. Apart from Great Enlightenment there are no sentient beings; apart from sentient beings there is no application to the actual circumstances of individual people; apart from application to the actual circumstances of individual people there is neither compassion nor wisdom; and apart from compassion and wisdom there is no actualized enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the Jonang Foundation website:

"Since their existence cannot be established externally or separately,
The realization is that creators such as Brahmā and other such creator gods do not exist."

(http://www.jonangfoundation.org/pdf/jf_rangjung_1.pdf)

A summary of Buddhist refutations of theist ideas:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/jackson.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness within Yogacara...

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Yogacara, according to the Mahayanasamgraha and others, the first step is realising that all phenomena are only consciousness and the next step is realising that "only consciousness" is illusion too. Chan is not strictly bound by tathagatagarbha teachings as it is clearly presented by the Niutou school (disappeared long ago) that based itself purely on madhyamaka doctrines. Also, "seeing nature" doesn't mean finding something existent or non-existent. Here are two cases from the Platform Sutra:

On Shenhui (ch. 8)

One day the Master addressed the assembly as follows: "I have a thing. It has no head or tail, no name or label, no back or front. Do you all know what it is?"

Shen Hui stepped forward and said, "It is the root source of all Buddhas, Shen Hui's Buddha nature!"

The Master said, "I just told you that it had no name or label, and you immediately call it the root-source of all Buddhas. Go and build a thatched hut over your head! You're nothing but a follower who pursues knowledge and interpretation."

On Huai Jang (ch. 7)

Dhyana Master Huai Jang was the son of the Tu family in Chin Chou. He first visited National Master An of Sung Mountain, who told him to go to Ts'ao Hsi to pay homage. When he arrived, he bowed, and the Master asked him, "What has come?"

He replied, "Sung Shan."

The Master said, "What thing is it and how does it come?"

He replied, "To say that it is like a thing is to miss the point."

The Master said, "Then can there still be that which is cultivated and certified?"

He replied, "Cultivation and certification are not absent, but there can be no defilement."

The Master said, "It is just the lack of defilement of which all Buddhas are mindful and protective. You are like that, and I am like that, too."

And two koans:

Mazu's story

A monk asked: "Why do you teach that Mind is no other than Buddha?"

"In order to make a child stop its crying."

"When the crying is stopped, what would you say?"

"Neither Mind nor Buddha."

"What teaching would you give to him who is not in these two groups?"

"I will say, 'It is not a something.'"

"If you unexpectedly interview a person who is in it what would you do?" finally, asked the monk.

"I will let him realize the great Tao."

Nanquan's (Nansen) story:

A monk asked Nansen, "Is there any Dharma that has not been preached to the people?"

Nansen answered, "There is."

"What is the truth that has not been taught?" asked the monk.

Nansen said, "It is not mind; it is not Buddha; it is not things."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Keshin said:

Once again: I don't believe in a creator god.

I can't believe I keep having to say this.

Astus wrote:

I had actually read your post about it before I posted that quote. The Buddhist point is that there can't be any ultimate being/substratum. It is a common mistake to take alayavijnana/tathagatagarbha/dharmadhatu as something behind/beyond the world as the origin of everything. Also, if "God" (with a capital) is not a creator and/or a ruler the word itself has practically no meaning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Unknown said:

(God is in all and beyond all) and transpersonal (does not intervene and make prophets and stuff, but is not an unfeeling, personality-less, non-sapient entity)

Regarding Soul: Effectively, it's our "True Selves", free some skandhic-ness

Astus wrote:

Let's clarify here then. The five skandhas are all there is and you can't have a self/soul/X beyond them. The difference between samsara and nirvana in Buddhism relies on whether one is attached to the skandhas or not. Thus any entity, thing or being outside (or inside, for that matter) the skandhas is practically impossible. Thus there is no self/soul in Buddhism, neither an absolute God.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Keshin said:

I disagree; the story of the turtle and the fish comes to mind.

Astus wrote:

Could you elaborate?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2011 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see. Well, the Buddha was clear about the nature of skandhas and dhatus. Nagarjuna also have some nice arguments against a soul outside the skandhas, if you're interested. It is all right to do some speculations about far away lands and never seen entities,

however, if the point is to establish it as something acceptable to Buddhism, it's better supported by the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Keshin said:

That doesn't make sense to me.

Astus wrote:

Here are some useful teachings by Thrangu Rinpoche:

"Thus we can conclude from the foregoing analysis that there is no way for there to be any particular single real nature or essence to anything. And if there is no single real nature, there also could not be any multiple real nature, because multiplicity is based on single units. If there is no single unit, there can be no multiplicity. These being the only possible modes that a real nature or quality might exist, we can see from this one method of examination that there is no self in any appearance, no self in any dharma, no essential nature to anything at all."

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/madhyamaka.htm>

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/buddhanature.htm>

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor1.htm>,

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor2.htm>,

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor3.htm>,

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor4.htm>

http://archive.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2003/winter/thrangu_rinpoche.html

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Keshin,

You have certain views you cherish and you label those views to be in accordance with the Buddhadharma. It may not have occurred to you before that Buddhism, regardless of what school we're talking about, has some fundamental tenets that form the very basis of what can be called the teaching of the Buddha. The question is whether you prefer your own views above the Dharma or the other way around. And if it happens you

take the Buddhadharma above your own current views, that is you take refuge in the Triple Jewel and not something else, you put your faith in the Dharma at least on the level to be open toward it and be ready to learn and contemplate it. Now I don't mean that you should just accept whatever people here tell you. What I'm saying is that you should study the teachings. Studying the teachings means that you look into the words of the Buddha, that is the sutras, and may also read the explanations of teachers who are widely accepted within the Buddhist community as reliable. For instance, if you prefer Dzogchen, you should first learn about the general doctrines present in Tibetan Buddhism, and it doesn't even need any special transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The attitudes of the Tibetan Lamas from the eleventh century until today toward Chan have been, by and large, exceedingly negative, except for certain Nyingmapas like Longchenpa and Urgyan Lingpa. The Tibetan Lamas are content with their Indian-derived traditions as representing the authentic corpus of the Buddha's teachings. They have had absolutely no interest in the post-eighth-century developments of Buddhism in China, including Chan, and have had little or no contact personally with the Chinese teachers of Chan and the Japanese teachers of Zen. ... This Olympian disinterest, if not disdain, for non-Tibetan manifestations of Buddhism clearly represents a feeling on the part of Tibetans of their cultural superiority more than anything else. "

(John Myrdhin Reynolds: The Golden Letters, p. 223)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 6:51 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

remm said:

One thing I took into consideration was the Samye debate between Kamalaśīla and Héshang Móhēyǎn. The fact that Móhēyǎn lost and ultimately "suicided" showed how inferior the Northern Ch`an school was compared to the lineage of Indian Buddhism. I mean, this could be a major reason as to why Tibet seems to have disinterest in Buddhism in China.

Astus wrote:

"I won't go into the question of whether the debate actually happened, although the very different version in the Chinese text certainly suggests that we might be better off thinking of a series of discussions, mostly by exchanges of letters, rather than a debate. And the author of 10th century Lamp for the Eyes of Meditation, which is all about how to rank the simultaneous and gradual methods, fails to mention any debate. And many, if not all, of the Tibetan Chan manuscripts from Dunhuang date from after the Tibetan empire, and thus well after when the debate was supposed to have happened,

suggesting that the decline of Chan in Tibet happened slowly, and for other reasons."
<http://earlytibet.com/2010/03/31/tibetan-chan-iv/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Remm,

The thing with scholarship is similar to science, you should look at the latest developments and not at those that are 20 or 30 years old (that study you refer to, written by Jeffrey Broughton, was published in 1983 - but that in itself doesn't invalidate his study of course). For instance, about the schools to which Hashang belonged to we now know a lot more. Also, if you look into the history of different Buddhist schools, abolishing a lineage or teaching from an area is a political and not a religious decision and this is exactly what Sam van Schaik refers to with the involvement of different Tibetan clans. So I would say that the debate and Hashang losing to Kamalasila is pretty much a cover story to ridicule those Tibetans who then found Chan interesting. Nevertheless, even if the debate have happened it doesn't explain why Tibetans had no interest in EA Buddhism when there was communication between the two nations, like under the Mongol and Manchu rulers.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2011 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness within Yogacara...

Content:

remm said:

According to the Śrī-mālādevī Siṃhanāda sūtra, the Tathāgatagarbha is void of all defilement stores, which are apart from knowledge which does not lead to liberation. The Tathāgatagarbha is said to be a substratum which is permanent, steadfast, and eternal. This consciousness is intrinsically pure, never defiled, and yet its apparent defilement is the cause of samsara and bondage.

Doesn't this mean that there is something in 'existence' that needs to be actualized?

Astus wrote:

'Existence' is grasping a thought, 'non-existence' is rejecting a thought. Neither grasping nor rejecting, that is buddha-nature. Then we can also find instructions in Chan that say there's nothing to find and all is empty, also instructions saying that the one knowing and acting is the true mind. They're all pointers to attain realisation. Realisation simply means being free from attachment to thoughts and emotions. The nature of mind is originally pure because it is empty, it displays perfect function so it is complete with the powers of a buddha. It is possible to talk like that in Zen but that's only for entertainment. That's why there isn't a clear philosophical system in Zen, so the maxim

"separate transmission outside scriptures, not based on words and letters, directly points to one's mind, to become buddha by seeing nature" (教外別傳 不立文字 直指人心 見性成佛). Thus you can use virtually any teaching to explain Zen. It is embodying the bodhisattva ideal of using whatever skilful means that is necessary to liberate beings. Of course, if we look into the teachings of a single school or a teacher we are able to pinpoint their doctrines.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2011 at 5:54 AM

Title: Re: buddhist hinduism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The difference in brief. Those who believe there is an actor behind action think there is a self/soul. Those who realise that the mind is empty, without a self, understand that it is buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2011 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: buddhist hinduism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The saying that "it gives rise to phenomena" means that everything is conceived by the mind and the mind is empty. It is the same as dependent origination where ignorance gives rise to formations, etc. When ignorance is eliminated, the nature of mind is realised, ignorance is transformed into wisdom - it is explained in detail in Yogacara with 4 wisdoms, in Vajrayana with 5 wisdoms. In Zen it is summed up as if you're aware you are a buddha, if deluded you are a common being. This is not the case that there is an absolute substance behind everything but it's like as it's explained in the early texts as the difference between skandhas with and without attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2011 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Sanatan Dharma?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=4056>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2011 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Meditation practices for the layfolk

Content:

Astus wrote:

On the Japanese side Bankei comes to mind, he was quite a popular teacher then

among the laity. Also Kodo Sawaki, I think, taught meditation to householders, just like the teachers in the Sanbo Kyodan group. Hakuin, on the other hand, taught some mantra and recitation practices to the laity. In Korea Gyeongheo, the reviver of modern Seon, had lay students too, currently Daehaeng kunsunim has a large number of lay followers. In China Dahui Zonggao, inventor of the koan-huatou meditation, taught huatou practice to many householders (in fact, it appears that he meant huatou for the laity rather than monks). Same with Caodong teachers like Hongzhi and others who taught silent illumination to many lay people and they were quite popular. In modern times Xuyun taught Chan to both monks and lay people. Ven. Shengyan had a number of lay students in the West who practice Chan. Since all those mentioned are famous teachers you can easily search on their names.

Theoretically Zen makes no difference between lay and monastic, sudden enlightenment is available for everyone. In reality only a few dedicated householder took it seriously. It should also be noted that meditation is for monks. Fortunately, Zen is not about meditation or other practices but seeing the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2011 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: buddhist hinduism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The two Surangama sutras:

Taisho 642 (section of Collected Sutras): 佛說首楞嚴三昧經 (Buddha Speaks the Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sutra), translated into English by John McRae as "The Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sutra", published at Numata. Also translated by Lamotte.

Taisho 945 (section of Secret Teachings): 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經 (The Sūtra on the Mantra Spoken from above the Crown of the Great Buddha's Head, and on the Hidden Basis of the Tathagata's Myriad Bodhisattva Practices Leading to Their Verification of the Ultimate Truth), translated into English by Charles Luk & BTTS.

T642 exists in Tibetan, T945 doesn't. T642 is an Indian text, T945 is Chinese.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2011 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: A Critique of "Buddhism Without Beliefs"

Content:

Astus wrote:

The wind was flapping a temple flag, and two monks started an argument. One said the flag moved, the other said the wind moved; they argued back and forth but could not reach a conclusion.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves; it is your mind that moves."

The two monks were awe-struck.

From one's personal point of view there is necessarily a mind that perceives and understands experienced phenomena. From an objective point of view everything has to be without subjective biases, in fact, what is objective can't possess any trace of mental signs. Thus subjective and objective are exclusive to each other. Therefore mind, as it is accessible only to the mind itself, can't be within the realm of objective phenomena. On the other hand, it is only mind that conceives of both subjective and objective, they are points of view made up "within" the mind. In one's actual experience both mental and material phenomena appear and display different attributes, from what comes that a keyboard doesn't call itself a keyboard but we call it that way, so matter is unaware and mind is aware. But there can be no duality within the realm of experience itself for we perceive matter without any problem. However, when we try to think about it in a roundabout way so that the perceived has to be without perception so when the perceiver is perceived it is also without perception, thus mind becomes matter. Still, believing there is an independent mind is another extreme. Both are based on substantialist self-views. None can serve as logical bases of rebirth. The Buddhist understanding, however, has rebirth as a logical consequence of the way things are.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2011 at 11:46 PM

Title: Re: buddhist hinduism?

Content:

conebeckham said:

I.E., T945 has no antecedent Indian text, correct? It is purely Chinese?

Astus wrote:

Yes. That made it to rise among the most popular texts in East Asia.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2011 at 3:57 PM

Title: Re: what is Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen is a form of Buddhism in East Asia consisting of different schools. It has nothing to do with chakras. "Dhammachakkha" means "Dhamma Wheel" and it is a symbol of Buddhism, has nothing to do with chakras.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2011 at 2:47 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Interest in EA Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

From "Approaching the Great Perfection":

p212

You have made the assertion that the view of Hashang was like this, based on refutations like the similarity of nonmentation to an egg. Yet scriptures such as the Buddhavatamsaka were known to Hashang. During the debate, Kamalasila asked what was the cause of samsara by the symbolic action of whirling his staff around his head. [Hashang] answered that it was the apprehender and apprehended by the symbolic action of shaking his robe out twice. It is undeniable that such a teacher was of the sharpest faculties. If the nonrecollection and nonmentation entail the offense of rejecting the wisdom of differentiating analysis, then the Prajnaparamita sutras of the Conqueror also entail this fault. Therefore what the view of Hashang actually is can be known by a perfect buddha, and no one else.

p339n220

Jigme Lingpa's insistence on this distinction between the two methods makes the note he attaches to this passage, in which he suggests that the common understanding of Hashang's erroneous method is a misinterpretation, quite surprising. There is a precedent for this statement in the works of Longchenpa however. In his Desum Nyingpo (pp. 155-56), Longchenpa writes on the subject of the transcendence of the consequences of positive and negative actions. There is a famous statement attributed to Hashang Mahayana on this same subject, that virtue and sin are like black and white clouds, in that both cover up the sun. Rather than distancing himself from this, Longchenpa uses the same metaphor and then goes on to say:

The great master Hashang said this, and although those of lesser intellects could not comprehend it, he was in accordance with the [ultimate] truth.

Longchenpa himself was also following a precedent set by the twelfth-century Nyingmapa Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124-92), who state that there is no difference in [ultimate] truth (don) between the two paths, but that for those of the best faculties, there is the simultaneous method of Hashang, and for those of medium and below there is the graduated path (Chos 'byung me tog snying po p. 435b). I discuss Jigme Lingpa's use of this distinction between the faculties of trainees with regard to the simultaneous aspect of the Great Perfection in chapter 7. Perhaps Jigme Lingpa's really original contribution in this note is to point out that there is a scriptural basis for the simultaneist method as much as for the gradualist method in the Prajnaparamita sutras, an insight that appears to be based on comparative readings of texts rather than the standardized rubrics of Tibetan scholarship.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2011 at 7:15 AM

Title: Re: what is Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A "video reply" on Zen.

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2011 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: what is Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Naite,

It is all right to make up your own interpretations about whatever you like, until you recognise it is a conceptualisation based on your ideas. To be aware of dependent conceptualisation and not to take them real, that awareness is what the circle expresses in Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2011 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Time Magazine "Bad Buddhists"

Content:

Astus wrote:

The article is a nice representation of the difference between the realities of books and actual humans. Such a discrepancy makes many confused even today.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2011 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Time Magazine "Bad Buddhists"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

Are you saying that cheap practices like fortune telling and house blessings were/are not everyday practices in Theravada countries? I think they generally are. And even today many conceive Buddhism as something pure and otherworldly thus seeing such things can be shocking.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2011 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: Introduction to Zen Buddhism Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

Also highly recommended:

Mahāyāna Buddhism: the doctrinal foundations by Paul Williams

The Awakening of Faith: attributed to Aśvaghoṣa by Yoshito S. Hakeda

The Surangama Sutra: A New Translation by Hsüan Hua OR Surangama Sutra by Lu-Kuan-Yu

Cultivating Original Enlightenment: Wonhyo's Exposition of the Vajrasamādhi-sūtra by Robert E. Buswell

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment: Korean Buddhism's Guide to Meditation (with commentary by the Sŏn Monk Kihwa) by A. Charles Muller

Zongmi on Chan by Jeffrey L. Broughton

Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean way of Zen by Robert E. Buswell

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2011 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharmakośa, Longevity and Mantras.

Content:

Will said:

If there is no evidence against these Arhats, only modern suspicions, and there are many sadhanas, texts, statues etc. that do support their existence and function, I will support the tradition. Where there is smoke, there once was fire. Perhaps the names and/or numbers of Arhats and the length of time Buddha asked them to watch over his Dharma are off. It seems more odd to me that Buddha would have no competent Arhat disciples to carry on his Dharma for many eons in the future - only the "Dhamma-Vinaya" to rely on. The Mahayana also mentions Ksitigarbha Mahasattva as the guardian of the Dharma until Maitreya.

Astus wrote:

If there were such Dharma heirs to live infinitely Buddhism would look very differently with a hierarchy and such. Since that's not what the Buddha has established we can correctly assume that there are no Dharma heirs, especially not virtually immortal ones.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2011 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Introduction to Zen Buddhism Books

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anders, you're right, too much info kills the message.

A list of introductory essays and speeches on the

<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/first-reading.html>, which has Ven. Shengyan's classic <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/what-is-chan-shengyen.html> and more importantly Xuyun's <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/chan-practice.html> and <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/methods-in-chan-hall.html> that are really good

introductions to Chinese Chan practices, also short and easy to read.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Abhidharmakośa, Longevity and Mantras.

Content:

pueraeternus said:

The impression I get when reading the accounts of long-lasting Arhats, is that the Buddha meant them to guard the Dharma from behind the scenes, rather than outwardly as lineage holders.

Astus wrote:

Quite a conspiracy theory I say. It's like Anne Rice's children of the millennia and the Theosophist's ascended masters. There are also the so called Taoist immortals and Zen stories about Bodhidharma returning to India after his death. Not to mention Manjushri living on Wutai Mountain.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharmakośa, Longevity and Mantras.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The two favourite disciples of the Buddha, Shariputra (Sariputta) and Maudgalyayana (Moggallana), who had superb attainments, died before Gautama. Maudgalyayana's death is especially noteworthy here because he died a violent death as a result of previous karma. And he was not the only arhat who died like that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Mutated...

Content:

Astus wrote:

This book explains it neatly:

Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition by Paul Williams

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

If everything were me I wouldn't need to pay myself for the lunch.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Mutated...

Content:

beautiful breath said:

...don't have that one...what does it say

Astus wrote:

The reason why a whole book is recommended because the development of Buddhism from the earliest texts to Tibetan Buddhism covers about 1500 years, actually the time Buddhism existed in India. Just think about summing up the history of European poetry from Virgil to Shakespeare. Too many details to cover in a single post. Perhaps if you can make the question more specific...

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2011 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Mutated...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Or <https://buddhisttorrents.blogspot.com/2009/02/buddhist-thought-complete-introduction.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 11th, 2011 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Giving: you have to pay to learn Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Giving Dharma books freely exists in the West, primarily among Theravada communities where monks have no trouble giving out their writings without charge. Obviously monks don't need extra income since they're already covered. However, it explains why only a few books are for free: the writers do need the income. Well, perhaps those scholars who are employed full time by a university are not in need of money, but then they may not believe that their academic products should be free. Thing is, the economy of donations don't work very well in most Western communities, like when there are fees on retreats and even for being a member. Again, it can be explained by the lack of significant lay support that exists in Asia. Note also that many Westerners who practice Buddhism don't think of it as a religion but more as a hobby/training/lifestyle, unlike in case of Christianity and such. And when you refer to karma, you might have noticed this, many don't believe in that at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 11th, 2011 at 2:47 AM

Title: Re: Giving: you have to pay to learn Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good idea. We should make Dharma free instead of expecting others to do so.

Mahayana sutras repeat regularly that we should keep, read, recite, copy and teach them.

By the way, this very forum is a gift in itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 3:08 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:

Astus wrote:

The fault lies in the original idea itself that there is such thing as nature (svabhava/dhatu). It is no different from the view of self.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:

Sherab said:

So if there is no nature, does it mean that there is completely nothing?

Astus wrote:

I think the most detailed and logical explanation of the attainment of buddhahood is what you find in yogacara's transformation of mind from the eight consciousnesses to the four wisdoms, or an upgraded vajrayana version with 5 wisdoms and four bodies. In brief, the mind-stream contains defilements and if those are eliminated, thus have no more effect, the mind-stream becomes pure, so from a sentient being we get a buddha. Also, it can't be polluted again because defilement was sustained by the mind itself therefore once the corrupting factors are removed they're forever gone.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 3:45 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:

Sherab said:

So are you saying that something that is previously conditioned by various factors can become something that can no longer become conditioned again, ie., something previously conditionable can become something unconditionable?

Astus wrote:

No. A mind-stream is not a single thing but the causal continuum of mental factors.

Among those factors we find the three roots of samsara. If they're removed the functioning of the mind-stream changes from defiled to pure, from ignorance to wisdom. It doesn't mean it becomes unchanging per se since there is wisdom. But it doesn't become defiled again because there is no cause for defilements any more.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:

Sherab said:

"the three roots of samsara" - do these have a changeable nature or unchangeable nature?

Astus wrote:

All composite things (samskara) are impermanent and dependently arisen. Because they're dependently arisen they're empty of nature (nih-svabhava). Also, if by changeable you mean disappearing and by unchangeable you mean eternal, these are the extremes of annihilation and permanence.

Sherab said:

"It doesn't mean it becomes unchanging per se since there is wisdom" - so the mind-stream is changeable because there is wisdom?

Astus wrote:

No, the mind-stream is a stream of causal continua similarly to a river where you find no permanent component.

Sherab said:

"But it doesn't become defiled again because there is no cause for defilements any more." - So no ignorance implies wisdom just as no apple implies orange?

Astus wrote:

Lack of inhibiting factors means freedom, from the freedom of perception comes insight into dependent origination and that is wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: What is a tantric teaching in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Urgyen Chodron,

You might find these works interesting:

<http://vajrayana.faithweb.com/DGrayCompassionateViolence.pdf> (PDF)

<http://vajrayana.faithweb.com/female%20energy.pdf> (PDF)

<http://vajrayana.faithweb.com/consort.pdf> (PDF)

All from: <http://vajrayana.faithweb.com>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:

Sherab said:

So composite things have no nature and are therefore unreal/untrue but there are real/true connections between them?

Astus wrote:

Like true love between imagined lovers? Unlikely, don't you think?

Sherab said:

So there is a permanent continua even though the components are impermanent? If so, is it not possible for all components to cease and therefore a cessation of the permanent continua?

Astus wrote:

To suppose a continuum besides components is like saying that there is a body besides the arms, legs, torso and head.

Sherab said:

What is it that previously has no such insight but now has this insight?

Astus wrote:

Insight is a direct understanding just like one understands how to ride a bike. To conceive there is a separate self understanding it is, again, falls under the concept of self-view, about which you may read in general Buddhist books.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2011 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Theravadans That Believe in the Bardo

Content:

Astus wrote:

An insightful work by Ven. Sujato: <http://santifm.org/santipada/2010/rebirth-and-the-in-between-state-in-early-buddhism/>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2011 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: Attainment of Buddhahood is impossible

Content:
Sherab said:
So dependent arising does not truly exist, you agree?

No such supposition. The point is when the components ceased, then there is no continua. Hence, no point using continua as an argument.

The point is that there is still a change.

Astus wrote:
Dependent arising means that phenomena appear based on causes and conditions. There is no separate dependent arising just as there is no separate emptiness. Where could you establish "dependent arising" itself as truly existent?

Components come and go but not without cause and effect. The idea of total cessation is the view of annihilation.

Again, such concepts as "change" and "permanence" are expressions only. Without understanding that change refers to impermanent phenomena it is easy to draw inaccurate conclusions.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2011 at 5:28 PM
Title: Re: Approaches taken in the contemporary discourse on Buddhism
Content:
Astus wrote:
Too vague, too many categories.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2011 at 8:48 PM
Title: Re: Approaches taken in the contemporary discourse on Buddhism
Content:
Anders Honore said:
aren't the tow usually exclusive of each other?

Astus wrote:
A group of vague categories. Not exclusive then. As Tobes said, it can depend very well on context. I can use any of those approaches to Buddhism.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2011 at 9:02 PM
Title: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism
Content:
Astus wrote:

A fascinating new Chinese derived Esoteric and Zen group: <http://www.dari-rulai-temple.org/index.html> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
Historically, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, or the Hanmi Mystery School, was thought to be lost when Emperor Tang Wuzong banned the teaching. Huiguo, the last known disciple of Amoghavajra, had left China and went with Kukai to Japan to establish the Japanese Esoteric school of Buddhism, later known as the Shingon sect. Unknown to history, Amoghavajra had another disciple, Huisu, who received all the religious instruments and dharma transmission. He then became the Dharma Lineage Bearer. Since then, Hanmi has been underground for over twelve centuries.

The Hanmi lineage has been passed on through one master per generation. Master Yu Tian Jian is the highest and only living master of Hanmi, the Honorable Abbot of the 1000-year old LongQuan Temple in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, a doctor of Chinese medicine, and acknowledged as a Living Buddha in China.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2011 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

How is it remarkable? Mahayana sutras hidden for half a millennium, tantric texts unknown for a thousand years, what is new about it? By the way, he is not alone in being an heir to the so far hidden Chinese Esoteric school, so his claim of being the only representative of it is even more bold but not a new phenomenon either (just think of the Huineng story).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2011 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

It doesn't take much to make up a lineage. One can also just say that it was a transmission from one of the buddhas, bodhisattvas or vajrasattvas.

But I'm not trying to defend them just point to the phenomenon of legitimising oneself through claims of lineage and tradition. This exists not just in Buddhism but in so many other forms of doctrines (教 - can't think of a better word that covers religions, schools of thoughts and such) like neo-paganism, Western esotericism, Hinduism, etc. And all these traditions most of the time lack the kind of historical background they want people believe in. It seems to me that either a tradition dies out at some point and then it's later revived or it becomes established enough to stay alive but because of its institutionalisation lineage becomes meaningless, a mere formality and paperwork.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2011 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

I know several people that have had a very bad experience with this person.

Astus wrote:

It was <http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/news/article/default.aspx?objid=53721> of a programme that caught my attention and made me think it'd be advisable to provide views of this group beyond what is on their sites. They call him there "Top international Zen Master Dechan Jueren".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2011 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Huseng said:

This sounds suspicious:

Earlier this year, Dechan Jueren, already the 49th Master of the Esoteric School, became the New Master of the Chinese Linji school of Zen Buddhism, the most authentic and recognised Zen school in China.

As most people know, Chinese Linji is Chan, not Zen. Moreover, who nominated him as the New Master of Linji? The Linji isn't even a school anymore, but rather just a ordination lineage without any institution behind it.

Again, Linji is an ordination lineage, not an institution. Claiming to be a master of the "Esoteric School" and a master of the "Linji school of Zen" should alarm people.

Astus wrote:

Linji is not just an ordination but a Dharma-transmission lineage too and the two exists separately, for instance check out Ven. Shengyan's lineage. On Youtube you can actually find Dechan's transmission ceremony, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAoVqA-n78Q>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2011 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Huseng said:

The fact that it is presented on youtube the way it is raises more suspicions.

You might be sympathetic to him, but his story strikes me as suspect.

Astus wrote:

Nah, it's not sympathy but a good example when the focus is on legitimacy instead of authenticity, on lineage instead of doctrine. There is a lesson to learn here for Western Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2011 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Huseng said:

Legitimacy and lineage are essential in the case of Vajrayana.

Astus wrote:

So it is said about Zen. Perhaps there aren't enough scholars in Tibetology to look at history with a critical eye.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2011 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Seishin said:

Nuff said

Astus wrote:

It's magic. You have to use the right mantra (spell) to generate the required karma (spiritual energy) that will result in the desired effect. Logical.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2011 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, I've read some of the testimonials, although my favourite is their warning at the start.

Have you noticed that the mask is \$150 for disciples? You can also get buddha statues (enlivened - like a golem?) for mere \$360.

But what about relics, blessed rosaries and scarves, mummies, statues, etc.? They're said to be powerful things.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2011 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Jikan said:

I think I'm less skeptical about the claims of institutional Vajrayana lineages than Astus is. I don't think it's possible to put projects like this, or Aro gTer, or the Mahajyra people, in the same category as Shingon or Nyingma for instance.

Astus wrote:

I think the emphasis is on institutional. These small (or not so small) groups lack the institutional system that the "old churches" have. But besides that I find their ways of presentation and spreading similar to those groups (not necessarily Vajrayana related) that are now the great institutions. Just think how many schools started as unorthodox sects with questionable practices from India to Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2011 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: My rant on Hui Neng's poem

Content:

LastLegend said:

Shen Hsui spoke of what we need to do to keep our mind empty or pure. So we have to practice to get there. And I am more interested in discussing about our attachments to this life such as wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep for examples as these attachments need to be gone in order to help with meditation.

Astus wrote:

A practical and understandable position of course. However, I don't understand then why you would choose a text like the Platform Sutra that is very much about the sudden path instead of gradual cultivation. There are so many other texts on gradual methods explaining everything in detail. In fact, the Platform Sutra (just like most of the Zen texts) are quite useless in giving instructions at length.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

I know a whole crew of people who know this guy personally, who were his students for quite a long period of time. He is not a scrupulous person.

Astus wrote:

Could you share some stories or other information for those who are searching on this teacher and his group on the web?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Buddhists in America get political

Content:

Unknown said:

6) Drug usage - We as members of the Buddhist Party, in keeping with the Precept of No Intoxicants, do not support Drug usage.

7) Alcohol usage - We as members of the Buddhist Party, in keeping with the Precept of No Intoxicants, do not support Alcohol usage.

8) Tobacco usage - We as members of the Buddhist Party, in keeping with the Precept of No Intoxicants, do not support Tobacco usage.

9) Gambling - We as members of the Buddhist Party, do not support Gambling.

10) Prostitution - We as members of the Buddhist Party, in keeping with the Precept of No Inappropriate Sex, do not support Prostitution.

11) LGBTQ - We as members of the Buddhist Party, in keeping with the Precept of No Inappropriate Sex, do not support LGBTQ.

Astus wrote:

Then who would support this Buddhist Party?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Buddhists in America get political

Content:

Seishin said:

Exactly. So they're not going to get very far, but it makes the rest of us look bad.

Astus wrote:

Why would it make other Buddhists look bad? There are many organisations supposedly representing different groups of people. But representatives are never those who are being represented. Or you agree with your governor/senator/MP/PM?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Lama Ole Nydahl, what do you think?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This topic has been about Ole against Islam, Ole's title(s), Ole and the karmapas. What about Ole and his Buddhism? If there is a teacher to be checked on his status as a teacher, shouldn't it be his teachings investigated first of all? No wonder that it's easy to mislead people when nobody gives a damn about what is actually being taught.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Buddhists in America get political

Content:

Seishin said:

Myself and my teacher have had emails and conversations with people who believe Buddhism is something that it's not due to inaccurate webpages/blogs/groups/literature that they have found. Quite often these people with misconceptions can be very intimidating.

Although, most well educated, well read people understand this, there are still those that believe what they read on the net or hear on TV as if it's gospel truth. Think about how many people think that all Muslims are terrorists. I'm not trying to link these Buddhists with the Taliban, I'm just using that as an example.

Astus wrote:

I'm with you on this, there's a lot of misinformation about Buddhism including school textbooks and pop-science magazines. But since Buddhism is without a single authority - while many believe it's the Dalai Lama - the only thing we can do is to raise the banner of the correct teaching (what is accepted universally as the fundamentals) as high as we can. This actually requires constant reference to the basics (4NT, DO) and moving a bit away from Asian traditions in that regard. On the other hand, Buddhist involvement in politics is almost as old as Buddhism itself, this includes dark events too.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Buddhists in America get political

Content:

Seishin said:

What do you mean by the highlighted? I don't follow.

Astus wrote:

Mahayana schools don't keep referring back to doctrines like the noble eightfold path but rather to teachings of pure lands, buddha-nature, etc. that superficially separate Buddhists and are easily misunderstood without proper studies. Thus to take a clear stance on where is the line between Buddhism and non-Buddhism there's a need to establish the common ground and let everyone know about them so they can actually discern fake from real.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Lama Ole Nydahl, what do you think?

Content:

Pero said:

Like I said before, when I looked at a few videos of his teachings on youtube it seemed to me that he doesn't really know what he's talking about. Also he seems like he's on kind of a "trip". For more details I'd have to watch him again and frankly I don't want to spend my time on it.

Astus wrote:

They have quote a lot of books, mainly authored by Ole himself. I haven't read any of them that's why I'm particularly interested if anyone actually knows his teachings and not just his biography.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Buddhists in America get political

Content:

Seishin said:

I still don't understand how this relates to what you said; "moving away from Asian traditions" ? But, as we are now off topic, would you mind taking this up in a new topic?

Astus wrote:

Never mind then, it's not that important. Take it as an underdeveloped thought appearing unexpectedly.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 18th, 2011 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Lama Ole Nydahl, what do you think?

Content:

Astus wrote:

My personal interest in this thread lies in not my connection to Ole and his group (since I have none) but that in Hungary (and some other European countries) they are the largest Buddhist organisation and there's not one even close to their popularity and number of centres. Their website actually says they have the largest city centre in the Western hemisphere in Budapest. It was mentioned that there are so many other authentic lamas around and lot of translations - but that is not the case everywhere in Europe, nor does everybody know English.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 18th, 2011 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: Lankavatara Sutra

Content:

Will said:

What is this Sagathakam that is not included?

Astus wrote:

This: http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-sagathakam.htm#sagathakam

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2011 at 4:48 PM

Title: Online Nenbutsu Retreat, 21 May 2011

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/sakura/fuji/sinsei/event/24fudan/Untitled6.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2011 at 4:54 PM

Title: Supermonk - A Buddhist Comic

Content:

Astus wrote:

The writer was inspired by Ajahn Brahm's advice of creating a Buddhist hero who doesn't beat up people but turns them to the right path.

Just click on the pictures and enjoy:

<https://zarthelyiosztaly.blogspot.com/2011/05/vesak.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2011 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Conventions contrary to scripture.

Content:

Astus wrote:

S. Dhammika's book <http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf> (PDF) addresses this issue in detail within the Theravada tradition.

There are precepts against magic and all sorts of rituals but at the same time it is found everywhere in Buddhism. There are precepts against music, dancing, working and games while monks may do all that in East Asia.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Conventions contrary to scripture.

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a difference between occasionally breaking a precept for compassion's sake and having a whole tradition not following certain rules that they took at the time of ordination, and that includes bodhisattva precepts too.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 5:18 PM

Title: Re: understanding of favourite gongans/Koans that youve heard

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the koan it becomes easier to see the meaning of "wu/mu".

趙州和尚因僧問。A monk asked master Zhaozhou.

狗子還有佛性。也無。Do dogs also have buddha-nature, or not?

州云無。- Zhou said no.

The words in the question are 有 and 無 and they are like yes-no, existence-emptiness, thing-nothing, positive-negative. And that's why Wumen emphasises not to make of this a nihilistic (虛無) or a thing-nothing (有無) issue.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Conventions contrary to scripture.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Without a monastic community there are priests/ministers/brahmanas. Japan is an example in general, Jodo Shinshu in particular. Are priests better than monks to preserve and spread the Dharma?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Conventions contrary to scripture.

Content:

Huseng said:

I don't think a hereditary priesthood works all that well. It becomes a profession rather than a calling.

The same thing happens in communities with monks, though not as much.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't have to be hereditary. Could be like Catholic priests (western or eastern), or Protestant ministers, or any other form. There could be universities to qualify who can be a priest, but then it would also mean that those who lack the financial background will have no chance (a reason for monasticism, or scholarship).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Where are the Gods?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Well, Tibetan Buddhism tends to import its Gods. That said, I personally know of one instance of a realised teacher "discovering" a local God and adding it into the mandala (pantheon) of a traditional protector practice.

Also, and I don't know where you live, but here in the "West" where I live there are many local deities and guardians worshipped by the locals within the confines of their Judeo-Christian faith. Like Padmasambhava oath bound local gods to protect and uphold the Dharma so Greek Orthodox Christianity incorporates local "saints" and "spirits" (it baptises them as angels) into its pantheon. Unless of course you don't consider Greece as "the West".

Astus wrote:

Geographically Greece is "the South" as I live in Hungary, religiously it is "the East" because it is Orthodox instead of Roman, but all this is just European politics. I know that the cult of angels is quite popular and they could be fine materials for deities, however, they're very Christian in my view and I'm unaware if they have anything to do with local spirits (if there are any...) since angels are common Christian deities and also servants of a higher god. But I find this dualistic view of good and evil, upper world and lower world a bit difficult to match with Buddhist cosmology.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Don't understand Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Awareness of delusion is enlightenment. One might have to first follow the path of ethical conduct (!), meditation and wisdom, or simply gain insight immediately. Zen is supposed to be the second one.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2011 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: Conventions contrary to scripture.

Content:

Astus wrote:

This line of reasoning for the futility of monasticism and that we are in the final days make me think of Shinran who realised his utterly evil, totally deluded situation and put his faith solely in Amitabha's vow as the only way to escape samsara and attain buddhahood. That argument makes all other teachings totally pointless.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2011 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Faith and Letting Go

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you describe is one form of Pure Land practice. Shinran's teaching is that because we can't let go we have to rely on the vow. If we could let go there would be little need of other power since we could manage on our own. That's how Amitabha's Pure Land is available for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2011 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Jinzang said:

Practicing without a teacher is stumbling around in the dark.

Astus wrote:

What is it specifically that only a living teacher can tell but not scriptures? Also, what makes a teacher? Suppose my friend's brother learnt sitting meditation in an Austrian zendo and then from him my friend learnt it from him and from my friend I. Is my friend a Zen teacher then? And what if I just watched a video on meditation? Would I be stumbling in the dark?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2011 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

LastLegend said:

In advanced levels of meditation, one can easily become possessed with no guidance from a teacher.

Astus wrote:

Possessed? Like, possessed by demons? And what kind of advanced levels are there in Zen that you are referring to here?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2011 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

LastLegend said:

I know not much about this for I am not a practitioner of Chan. But there are stages that you go through. And sometimes when images appear in your meditation, you have to know how to deal with them. Things can harm you when you don't recognize what they are. Having a teacher is to guide you through meditation.

If you are still thinking about sudden enlightenment, then I am sure there are no stages or levels. I mean if you practice, of course you will make progress. So I am talking about

progress.

Astus wrote:

Yes, there can be progress and there are hindrances occurring in meditation. That's why from the sutras through abhidharma texts up to meditation manuals they are discussed. A teacher who is familiar with them both in theory and practice is of course a great help. Problem is, among Western Zen teachers you hardly find anyone who actually has such in depth knowledge. And if one is not too lazy to occasionally grab a book all the necessary information is available. Even if one is still confused about something after looking through the teachings he may come to this forum and ask. At the same time it is very good to be part of a community and talk to good friends. A community can give the right milieu for personally knowing each other and a forum like this one with hundreds of members can be a wonderful source of information.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 22nd, 2011 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jinzang,

If what you said were true about teachers making sure everyone got it right there couldn't exist any schools within Buddhism as all would agree. But there are not just many traditions generally but within Zen you find quite a lot of disagreements between groups and teachers. If it is a matter of making sure somebody properly understands the teaching there should be exams, tests and diplomas, but that is only a modern phenomenon in East Asian Buddhism that people study at universities. Also, if understanding can be measured one could even take online tests. Then again a personal instructor would not be necessary.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2011 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: Chan Texts: Translations & Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd add a few others, mostly studies.

Cultivating original enlightenment: Wonhyo's Exposition of the Vajrasamādhi-sūtra by Robert E. Buswell Jr.

Seeing through Zen: encounter, transformation, and genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism by John R. McRae

The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism by John R. McRae

The mystique of transmission: on an early Chan history and its contexts by Wendi Leigh Adamek

Inventing Hui-neng, the sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and biography in early Ch'an by John J. Jørgensen

The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- Through Tenth-Century China by Jinhua Jia (a good complementary to Poceski's work)

The Linji lu and the creation of Chan orthodoxy: the development of Chan's records of sayings literature by Albert Welter

How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China by Morten Schlutter

The Power of Patriarchs: Qisong and Lineage in Chinese Buddhism by Elizabeth Morrison

Monks, rulers, and literati: the political ascendancy of Chan Buddhism by Albert Welter

Enlightenment in dispute: the reinvention of Chan Buddhism in seventeenth-century China by Jiang Wu

Eminent nuns: women Chan masters of seventeenth-century China by Beata Grant

The origins of Buddhist monastic codes in China: an annotated translation and study of the Chanyuan qinggui by Yifa, Zongze

Sōtō Zen in medieval Japan by William M. Bodiford

Five Mountains: the Rinzai Zen monastic institution in medieval Japan by Martin Collcutt

Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism: Myōshinji, a living religion by Jørn Borup

Works by Bernard Faure:

The will to orthodoxy: a critical genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism

Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition

The rhetoric of immediacy: a cultural critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism

Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2011 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: Chan Texts: Translations & Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd add a few others, mostly studies.

Cultivating original enlightenment: Wonhyo's Exposition of the Vajrasamādhi-sūtra by Robert E. Buswell Jr.

Seeing through Zen: encounter, transformation, and genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism by John R. McRae

The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism by John R. McRae

The mystique of transmission: on an early Chan history and its contexts by Wendi Leigh Adamek

Inventing Hui-neng, the sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and biography in early Ch'an by John J. Jørgensen

The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- Through Tenth-Century China by Jinhua Jia (a good complementary to Poceski's work)

The Linji lu and the creation of Chan orthodoxy: the development of Chan's records of

sayings literature by Albert Welter

How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China by Morten Schlutter

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Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2011 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jinzang,

There is not so much doctrinal variation in Buddhism as you are saying.

No, not that much. But even if you just look at Zen in China you find how there were different factions and how the interpretation of certain teachings differed. But you can do the same with Korean and Japanese Zen too, not to mention comparing these Zen forms. Also, there were not just debates about doctrine but political and economical issues too - likely to be more often the subject of arguments than teachings.

I think Buddhist teachers function more like sports coaches or art teachers than academic professors.

I think there are different Buddhist teachers depending on what they focus on but what is common in them is that they are all teachers of religion. They teach (or supposed to teach) faith, morality, doctrine and practice (where practice means not just yogic/meditation stuff but many other things). From the time of Dahui Zonggao the practice of huatou was assigned to many lay men and women who were to maintain the big doubt throughout their daily activities. The book "Swampland Flowers" is actually a selection of Dahui's correspondence with his lay students who may or may not have

visited him in person. And it's enough to consider when one is an abbot of hundreds of monks and has a high reputation the schedule is pretty full for the following years. Even among the monks it was a privilege to meet the abbot (i.e. the Zen master) besides formal encounters. The position that would fit best your definition of a coach is the monk in charge of the meditation hall to supervise regular sessions, technically that person is the meditation (but not Zen) master.

"A special transmission, outside of the scriptures," remember?

That is a Zen slogan misunderstood and misused too often. Special transmission is no transmission because there is nothing to transmit, it simply means seeing the nature is the transmission of mind, thus it is not within the scriptures, that is verbal explanations and concepts. But to think that there are actually people who dispense enlightenment, that is absurd.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2011 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Chan Texts: Translations & Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

A few more:

Integrating Chinese Buddhism: A Study of Yongming Yanshou's Guanxin Xuanshu by Yi-hsung Huang

Inquiry into the origin of humanity: an annotated translation of Tsung-mi's Yüan jen lun with a modern commentary by Peter N. Gregory

Tsung-mi and the sinification of Buddhism by Peter N. Gregory

Coming to terms with Chinese Buddhism: a reading of the Treasure store treatise by Robert H. Sharf

Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought by Peter N. Gregory

Buddhism in the Sung by Peter N. Gregory, Daniel Aaron Getz

Steven Heine, Dale Stuart Wright:

Zen ritual: studies of Zen Buddhist theory in practice

Zen classics: formative texts in the history of Zen Buddhism

The Zen canon: understanding the classic texts

The Kōan: texts and contexts in Zen Buddhism

Zen Masters

Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism by Dale S. Wright

Steven Heine:

Opening a mountain: kōans of the Zen Masters

Shifting shape, shaping text: philosophy and folklore in the Fox kōan
Zen skin, Zen marrow: will the real Zen Buddhism please stand up?
Did Dōgen go to China?: what he wrote and when he wrote it
Dōgen and the Kōan tradition: a tale of two Shōbōgenzō texts

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Did Dōgen go to China?: what he wrote and when he wrote it

Dōgen and the Kōan tradition: a tale of two Shōbōgenzō texts

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2011 at 5:18 AM

Title: Re: Chan Texts: Translations & Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

Seeing through Zen by McRae I think is the best for starters in the topic, and it is in quite an enjoyable style. Zongmi on Chan, The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, Cultivating Original Enlightenment and Tracing Back the Radiance are wonderful and comprehensive works on Zen doctrine and practice I can recommend for everyone who is serious about understanding this kind of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2011 at 5:18 AM

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Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2011 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: Should we teach our children to be Buddhists?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think teaching Buddhism to children means explaining impermanence, selflessness, emptiness or even death. Wisdom teachings are OK only in small amounts in wrapped in digestible stories. Otherwise it should be more of moral teachings and different practices of good deeds. And in case it is Mahayana teaching about bodhisattvas and buddhas plus some recitation is also good.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2011 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Spreading the Dharma in Africa?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://blog.biz/node/47>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Buddhism_in_Africa

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2011 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: Spreading the Dharma in Africa?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't remember if there were any country where immigrants could actually spread

Buddhism. That's for two reasons: 1. immigrants either form a closed community or assimilate; 2. immigrants lack the social position to be listened to by the hosting population. Christianity and Islam didn't spread in Africa because of immigrating Europeans and Arabs. And if Ethiopia doesn't allow other religions then Buddhism is not a religion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2011 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Spreading the Dharma in Africa?

Content:

Luke said:

But religions do have a history of inspiring prophets and saints who spread their religions, such as Guru Rinpoche and Bodhidharma (who were Indian foreigners in Tibet and China respectively). The locals became inspired to convert after meeting such amazing teachers.

Does anyone know if the Dalai Lama has ever visited Africa?

Astus wrote:

Good point, there are outstanding teachers, although the two you mentioned are mostly legendary figures (Chan definitely didn't become famous because of Bodhidharma). There are well known and widely respected teachers in the West among whom the Dalai Lama is the number one. However, we shouldn't forget the optimal conditions for such teachers to appear. The Dalai Lama is famous because he was the leader of Tibet, D. T. Suzuki became famous because there were people hungry for knowledge about the mystical East, and so on with other notable masters. If there are some groups in Africa looking for inner changes instead of outer rituals Buddhism has a chance of spreading.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2011 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Why is Buddhism so appealing to educated Caucasians?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think this should be a racial question, simply because I doubt it has much to do with it. Education and social situation on the other hand are important factors. It is also a question what kind of Buddhism one talks about. As I've heard Nichiren Buddhism is quite popular among working class people in America.

There is an important misconception about Buddhism among Westerners. That it is all about inner peace, meditation, philosophy and enlightenment. Quite far from the day to day reality of the majority of Buddhists. However, it would be nearly impossible at the moment to make people believe in the Pure Land instead of Jesus. That's why Buddhism first spread among the literati, the intellectuals who found foreign views inspiring. Even among the Buddha's immediate disciples many were from higher castes who lived in cities while the laity, who supported the Buddhist monks and nuns, kept their gods and

rituals according to tradition.

The primary message of Buddhism to the common people is about alms giving, morality, merits and rebirth. The very part that Westerners rarely take notice of. But if one could choose between higher salary and a month long retreat it'd be the money in 9 out of 10 cases. So the Buddha says that if you want more money, a faithful spouse, a loving family and perhaps a good next life you should be generous and keep some precepts. However, if you are stingy and do bad things you'll be poor, sick and might even spend a few aeons in hell. This is easy to understand and makes sense, unlike talks about no-self, five aggregates, sitting on a cushion doing nothing and such. I don't know if there are teachers who try to spread this as Buddhism among people in the West. That's why those who are less interested in material gains - i.e. those who already have more than enough - want to learn Buddhism and not those who prefer a good meal over a good book.

As for Hungarian gypsies and Buddhism check out the <http://www.jaibhim.hu/>. They also have a school for gypsies: <http://www.ambedkar.eu/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2011 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Dechan Jueren and Hanmi Buddhism

Content:

remm said:

The guy calls himself a "Living Buddha". This has fraud written all over it.

Astus wrote:

"Living buddha" is the same as "tulku".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2011 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Master Sheng-yen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Very good interview, touches many important points.

I can only wish that the word "ego" eventually gets lost from being associated with Buddhism or used in that context.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2011 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: Treaders of the Path, why are you not liberated?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One day on the mountain Master Huike met a lay practitioner who had a skin disease.

The layman asked the master, "This disciple's body is bound up in illness. Master, please help me repent for my sins."

The master said, "Bring me your sins and I will absolve them for you."

After a pause the layman said, "Looking for my sins, I can't find them anywhere."

The ancestor said, "There, I have absolved your sins. From now on live in reliance on your true nature, on practice, and on spiritual community."

Master Huike ordained the layman and gave him the name Sengcan.

(<http://touchingearth.info/dregs/>)

Daoxin said, "I ask for the Master's compassion. Please tell me of the gate of emancipation."

Sengcan said, "Who has bound you?"

Daoxin said, "No one has bound me."

Sengcan said, "They why are you seeking emancipation?"

Upon hearing these words, Daoxin experienced great enlightenment.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p. 24)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2011 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Master Sheng-yen

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

Is Mahayana more restrictive in its view of what can be accomplished?

Astus wrote:

As always, it depends on whom you ask and what texts you cite.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2011 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

How does a live webcast differs from a record, if at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2011 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

So technically it is OK to have a recorded teaching, right? Then books are practically the same.

DN,

Intention is quite an internal thing, I don't see how its simultaneity has any relevance. Plus there is always a delay in transmission, even if just a few seconds.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2011 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:

You can have a recorded teaching -- but you cannot receive transmission from a recording.

Astus wrote:

That's why I ask what the difference is between a live webcast and its record. If no transmission is possible through a record what makes the live one special? IIRC there were video cassettes used before online transmission. But even if the teacher simultaneously takes part without being seen or heard by the student, how is that relevant to those sitting in front of a screen?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

My question basically was/is that since it is all right not to have a teacher there in person but it is enough to hear his voice and see his form via TV/computer, why would not a record of it be the same? And if digitally there is no difference at all between recorded and live - there isn't - whatever is communicated is either what is seen and heard or it is not. If it is communicated through perceptible means a record is as good as live. If it is not communicated through anything perceptible then what and how is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

What does synchronicity stand for in this case? If the teacher is in a particular state that in fact nobody else can sense or touch in any way how does that influence those who attempt to be in the same state? Or even if both teacher and students are in the same state how is that related to each other? What is the connection between the state of the teacher and the students if not anything perceptible?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

username said:

Apart from the session's pithy instructions which are secondary to intending and achieving instant presence anyway, conceptualizing or worrying about unnecessary temporal (synchronous/asynchronous) & causal clockworks are obstacles.

Astus wrote:

Since that is presented as an explanation of the mechanism I am actually interested what that really means. I don't see how that is bad.

Vajrahridaya said:

Basically, it was deeply felt, beyond the intellect, through the transmission due to the energy of intuitive synchronicity, like a grid of positive intention sweeping the globe.

"Snap"...

Astus wrote:

"energy of intuitive synchronicity" - very poetic expression. But it seems to me only a concept with little actual meaning. Is it that you're explaining an experience with a theory or that you are aware of a causal relation behind the events?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 5:22 PM

Title: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Astus wrote:

He is one of the less known teachers as he tours only in Europe. I find his style very modern and appropriate for the audience. There are transcripts and videos on the website, there are also books you can buy.

http://simplybeing.co.uk/simply/Simply_Being_Dzogchen.html

"Simply being is the ground, path and fruition of all existence. The teaching of this is known as dzogchen or the natural perfection of all experience.

This is not an abstract idea but is the vital presence which we embody and engage with as the world around us. Dzogchen teaching recalls us to the open nature of all things, the natural state we have never left, yet have somehow forgotten."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

James418 said:

Without a teacher the training cuts no ice. You just cannot get around it. Meditation doesn't mean jack unless you are being confronted with your fears and put through the wringer on a daily basis. Sure, life puts you on the precipice a couple of times, but a good teacher will put you through it far more frequently. Even in the more sedate traditions, they can be extremely rough - I know the Thai forest monks are very hard on the new monks for a few years until they get "softened up". In Zen there are the "fearful shouts and blows". In a traditional training they have a thousand or so years experience in knowing just how far they can push an individual before they crack - and a person on their own just can't recreate that.

Astus wrote:

You talk about a brainwashing camp, not Buddhism, as far as I can tell. I understand there are people who imagine Zen to be like the marine corps but I don't think it is. Have you heard of the Buddha beating monks? Or shouting at them? Unlikely. Zen stories are not the reality but religious tales, nobody should take those literally.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Zen Training

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, lets then clarify things here. What monastic training you mean? Japanese, Korean, Chinese or Western? If Japanese, what school? If it is Western Buddhist, which monastery? Generalisation would be very misleading here. I know that some Japanese Zen temples do it in a very tough fashion, but those are primarily the so called training monasteries where most of the people send only a little time and it is intensified like that because it is meant to be an intensive training. Such concept doesn't exist in other Buddhist countries where monasteries are just monasteries and monks won't leave to take over the family temple. Also, an intensive retreat is like Christmas, a special time of the year and not the normal way of daily activities. Such "pressure cooking" and "boot camp" is hardly the everyday experience of a common monastery where monks and nuns are busy with their daily activities - where sitting meditation is part of the morning and evening ceremony but otherwise optional.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 31st, 2011 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Zen Training

Content:

James418 said:

If you live with 10 people at close quarters for 6 months with few distractions, you will see some real fireworks. Like I said, it is a pressure cooker - all monasteries are.

Astus wrote:

And there are monasteries with hundreds of monks, a range of departments to organise publications, ceremonies, charities and many other programmes. Just check out

<http://www.fgs.org.tw/english/>, <http://www.ctworld.org/english-96/html/index.htm>,
http://www.hanmaum.org/eng/2007new/seon_center/history.html, etc.

You can also read Robert Buswell's brief summary of monastic life in Korea:

http://eng.buddhapia.com/_Service/_ContentView/ETC_CONTENT_2.ASP?pk=0000594076&sub_pk=&clss_cd=0002183611&top_menu_cd=0000000871

"But the importance of the meditation hall to Korean monasteries should not be overemphasized. While it is true that the meditation hall and the monks practicing there are the focus of much of the large monastery's activities, the majority of its residents spend no time in meditation and many have no intention of ever undertaking such training. Son monastic life therefore is broad enough to accommodate people of a variety of temperaments and interests—administrators, scholars, workers—offering them many different kinds of viable religious vocations."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: What should you do when you don't have a Zen teacher yet?

Content:

Huseng said:

Actually the idealistic view of Zen monasteries in the west would have them as brainwashing camps.

The reality is much different.

Astus wrote:

A fertile soil for abusive "masters". I don't even understand this fascination with military style. Monasteries are not about training "Soldiers of Buddha". And fighting (inner and outer) doesn't lead to peace. In that short article Buswell has another good point in that short article quoted before (BTW, he also has a book on Korean Zen monasticism):

"Finally, many Western works on Zen describe the school as attempting to develop forms of Buddhist praxis that would appeal to the special religious needs of the laity. But the realities of modern Son training in Korea testify that it is only within the specialized practice institution of the meditation hall that anyone has much of a chance to succeed at meditation practice. Even monks in the support division of the Korean monastery are presumed to be so busy with their sundry duties that they are not meditating. But if the demands of meditation practice are considered to be beyond the ability of even the support monks to fulfill, what reasonable hope would there be for laypeople? The protestations of past masters to the contrary, Son monastic life suggest that Zen meditative techniques were never seriously intended for the laity, but targeted those few monks with the fortitude to endure many years of ascetic training in the meditation hall."

Here I'd like to add that Zen has never really been about rigorous meditation practice and asceticism (dhutanga), something that existed in Buddhism from the very beginning but cultivated only by a minority of monks.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

username,

Of course I didn't mean to ponder about these things when one is attending a transmission. I'm asking about this here on the forum. Could you then explain, please?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Zen Training

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think I've already made clear my point that Samurai Zen is a phenomenon limited to certain monasteries and not at all a general thing, especially not among fully ordained monks (and nuns!) in other countries.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

username,

Thanks for the long response. Unfortunately, and this may be my fault, I don't see how it explains what I'm asking about. What I'm asking is simply the connection. It's like there are two computers and I'm asking how they are connected. I can't find in your answer that connecting relation. This I assume is important because that's why a live transmission is OK but not its recorded version. So it is the connection, not other parts I'm asking about.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

username,

If it is beyond time-space it is always "at the same time" of no-time, so there's no difference between live and recorded.

Namdrol,

Of course not. However, a transmission is not a two-way communication but there is one speaker/transmitter and many listeners/receivers, like a radio/TV programme where whether the show is live or recorded makes no difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: "Integral Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Merzel has been involved with the Integral thingy for a while now, no surprise they create a One Big Integral Enlightenment Week.

OTOH, Zen has always been an open "school" ready to integrate different Buddhist and not so Buddhist teachings and practices in China, Korea and Vietnam, as it served as the organising system for the whole sangha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

And that's the core of it. Who said transmission is a one-way thing?

I suppose you could say something like this. There can be only one person talking on the phone while the other just listens, but he still had to pick up the call. If he hadn't, the other person would not be talking and/or there would be no chance of hearing.

But, I think this changes with the type of transmission. I'm actually in the camp of people who believe that receiving a lung transmission should be possible through recordings. Dodrupchen used to send his students lungs on CDs. But you have to respect that teachers' idea from whom you're receiving teachings, so if he says it's a no go then it's a no go.

Astus wrote:

Well, transmission, pointing out instruction, they can be both one-way and two-way. In the form a webcast is done or when large number of people take part in it it is a one-way thing since it'd be quite impossible to involve even 50 people into a single event personally, not to mention hundreds. A two-way version is when there is communication between teacher and student and they personally know each other. If there is a visiting teacher from far away and gives whatever initiation/empowerment/teaching/etc. to a local group or audience, that's a one-way event, a one man show. Being part of a small community and having a close relationship with a teacher, that's a two-way thing.

I raised the question about communication exactly because I see no reason why it shouldn't be the same in a recorded form as in live. But since there were people who said there is a difference I wanted to know what it is. But I still have no definite answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

Intention is the difference. Above you're talking about relationship, not transmission. Transmission doesn't have anything to do with it. (though even for relationship you don't have to be together with the teacher physically)

The teacher has to have the intention to transmit or there is no transmitting. The person on the receiving end has to have the intention to receive, otherwise there can be no receiving. So it's like someone calls you and you don't pick the phone or you pick up the phone. The moment you picked up the phone it's no longer a one-way communication.

Astus wrote:

The intention on the part of the teacher can be in writing, painting, speaking, moving, etc. A record is made with the intention to bring it to others. Others listen to the teaching - live or recorded - with the intention to receive something. Thus there is no apparent need for a live event.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

The need is based on time.

The intentions have to be simultaneous for the connection to occur at its full potential.

Astus wrote:

What connection occurs? Connection between teacher and student through what?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

That could only be true for a lung transmission. For an empowerment I don't think so, since how can you record someone's inner dimension? If the teacher manifests as a deity to give an empowerment for example, how are you going to record that? There is no technology in existence that is capable of doing that.

Astus wrote:

If there is a personal contact (physical) required it is understandable that no record - or digital transmission - can substitute that (unless perhaps if we invent a holo-room like in Star Trek). My intention wasn't about going into other areas besides Dzogchen but only the discussion of this specific webcast format.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

Its hard to explain or describe.

Its easy for us to say romantic things about mind to mind transmission or karmic ripening etc. but the reality of the situation is more personal and I dont think the experience is uniform among students.

The only thing we can really talk about in the context of what "connects" is based on our own experience.

For me it has been a strong experience of clarity with some other odd occurrences. Both via webcast and in person.

Astus wrote:

Thanks for your reply, what you say is so intimate. I understand it is this emotional-magical aspect that can make a lot of difference, when one thinks there are others doing the same and the teacher is doing the transmission. But once the magic (the personal attitude toward the event) is taken out of the context what remains, well, is just the video record.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 11:46 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

I don't think it's really any different. For a direct introduction the teacher has to be in the state of Dzogchen. When he is giving transmission he is in that state for sure. If you just have a recording, there is no way of telling whether he is in that state or not, and that state cannot be recorded.

Astus wrote:

Direct introduction is said to happen when Phat cuts all conceptual elaborations. The teacher being in the state of Dzogchen, that's what I don't see how it affects those who receive the transmission. It should be a personal and direct experience on the part of the students who are to be introduced. Some realises it, some don't. But another being's state of mind, that is not accessible to the students, they don't see it or experience it any way. The teacher can't directly influence the minds of the listeners

either, otherwise all should attain enlightenment right there.

Nangwa said:

Its not particularly magical.

All it really is is the Three Statements of Garab Dorje making sense in ones experience.

Its actually quite practical and what remains are the second and third statements.

Astus wrote:

That is quite a different thing in my interpretation. What you say doesn't explain the first statement itself as an interaction between teacher and student.

DN said:

What are you searching Astus? Some physical medium that allows the connection, like air conducting sound or the electromagnetic fields conducting information allowing the teacher, student connection? I don't understand what are you looking for.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. If there is an qualitative difference between a live and recorded transmission I'd like to have defined that quality.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

How is it different?

The teacher has completely integrated into the state of the third statement and uses many methods (not just phat) to introduce the students to that state via the first statement/direct introduction.

Direct introduction works from a distance because the principles of the base are not constrained by space or time. What is constrained by time is the current condition of the students. Therefore, they must have the intention of receiving transmission at the time it is given and the teacher must give it simultaneously via a means by which he or she feels will be most conducive for students.

Its not very complicated. But it is highly experiential and the students have various different experiences based upon their prior training and connection to the teachings.

Astus wrote:

The base is unconditioned, the student is conditioned. The method of introduction is conditioned as it has to be on the level of the student. The teacher abiding in the base have an unconditioned mind, so it is not a method being communicated and not something a student perceives. What is perceived is the method and that method can be recorded and replayed since it is perceptible to the physical senses. That again is the reason I ask for the difference between the live and recorded transmission.

Am I repeating myself? Is it something I'm not getting?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 1:53 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

The method is just a symbol to transmit the introduction.

It can be perceived or experienced if the student goes beyond the symbol of the method of introduction. And thats the rub. It IS a shared experience/connection that occurs at that very moment between the teacher and students. A recording just wont cut the mustard because the moment has passed.

Thats kind of the whole point. You are sharing an experience with the teacher via the methods he or she employs for the introduction.

Like I said before, its difficult to explain. Its up to the student and teacher to make that connection and work with it directly.

Astus wrote:

Letters are symbols to represent language, language is also a set of symbols to communicate thoughts. I don't see your thoughts and you don't see my thoughts. If I say the words you can't hear since you are not near me but as I write it down my thoughts eventually reach you in some form. Same goes on with symbols meant to convey the experience of realisation. The realisation itself is not communicated without some sort of expressions, and just as in case of words, the expressions don't lose their conveying nature if they are preserved in some way. To say that there is something is actually communicated without expressions means that there is actually no need for any form of communication, so the point of organising an event for transmission is meaningless. We can share an idea because we communicate in words or other means. Without words we don't share any idea neither can we decide if we share it or not. How is that different with realisation? Just because you have realised something - Dzogchen or anything else - if you don't tell me about it I won't be able to share it with you.

The Samdhinirmocana Sutra says, "Thus, good son, the saints, being freed from language through their holy wisdom and insight in this regard, realize the perfect awakening that reality is truly apart from language. It is because they desire to lead others to realize perfect awakening that they provisionally establish names and concepts and call things conditioned or unconditioned." This points clearly to the relationship between the ultimate and the conventional and how it is the conventional that teaches the path to the ultimate. Same what Nagarjuna said. How then can the Dzogchen transmission communicate something without conventional means? I know you said it's difficult to explain, but perhaps it's not impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 1:54 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:
Yes.

Astus wrote:
What?

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 3:31 AM
Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen
Content:
Namdrol said:
Who said that Dzogchen is not communicated through conventional means?

Astus wrote:
Webcast happens in a video format. If it must be live and can't happen through a record there must be some extra beyond conventional means. That's what I'm inquiring about, that non-conventional part.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 3:48 AM
Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen
Content:
Namdrol said:
No, it just means that two people have to be in a process of communication with each other.

Astus wrote:
In response to this (phone call) I said that at the time of a webcast (or even in a live session) the audience listens to the teacher and does not talk to him/her, so there is no communication between two people but communication from one person to the others. Of course, there is a room later for a Q&A part.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 3:55 AM
Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen
Content:
Namdrol said:
That is communication between two people, a speaker and a listener.

Astus wrote:
OK, I feel we're getting somewhere now. The question then is: why is it important that the teacher is in the same state at the same time as the student? Isn't the point of the whole thing that the student realises it? How does it make a difference if somebody else is also in that realisation?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

The student is not in the same state.

The teacher shows it to the student.

The student has a moment or two of recognition of that state.

It is then up to the student to continue to work with it.

Astus wrote:

But the state is not shown by the teacher being in it. It is not even a state that can be grasped, how could then the experience itself be shown?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 6:51 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Sönam said:

You try to use the dualistic mind environment to catch precisely a non-dual experience.

If the experience is non-dual, how can a difference between teacher and practitioner mind be perceived?. synchronization does not need to be in the same geographical space ... it would not need to be in the same time either, but then then experience is of a much more higher level ...

Astus wrote:

The question was/is about the difference between live and recorded forms. If neither time nor space matters that means there is no difference. Also, as Pero mentioned, oral and symbolic forms convey the direct one, since both oral and symbolic can be recorded without any problem, again, a recorded Dzogchen transmission is as good as a live one.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

This is an incorrect conclusion. The direct transmission cannot be recorded at all, so how is a recording as good as a live one? A recording cannot give you a direct transmission, only a live teacher can.

Astus wrote:

Now we're going in circles. Direct transmission is that both student and teacher are in

the same state and the same time. To bring a student to that state oral and symbolic methods are used and just because a teacher is in the state doesn't make the student attain in. Also, the state itself is not bound by space nor time, so being synchronous doesn't make sense. As you say, it is not "direct transmission" that is recorded but the methods that bring students to the realisation and that realisation is essentially the transmission. Based on these I ask why would a live teacher be necessary. The main point is the distinction of realisation and method where the method is perceivable but the realisation is not. If you say there is still a need for a live teacher there must be some error in the above reasoning.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

The teacher is not necessarily in that state all the time. So if you listen to a recording, who knows what the teacher is doing. Without the teacher there cannot be a direct transmission. I'm repeating myself but I'm not sure how to explain it otherwise to you.

Astus wrote:

OK, the teacher has to be in the state for the transmission. Why? What difference does it make from the perspective of the student who either gets it there or not, perhaps realises it months later without the presence of any teacher. Why is a teacher needed there? Is there no explanation? Just because?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

I already told you, every student gets it. They just might not be able to "understand" it at that time.

Astus wrote:

What do they get if they don't know about it? How is that different from saying that everybody has buddha-nature it's just they don't realise it? Getting something means there was something missing - but buddha-nature is already perfect so they can't be missing that. What people don't have is realisation and introduction to rigpa is supposed to be that, seeing original awareness. If they don't see it there what is it they still get?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

mindyourmind said:

But surely that question is valid regardless of whether the transmission or event is an electronic one or not. That scenario you sketch can, and no doubt does, happen in a more regular "face-to-face" meeting? I'm not sure that the question takes the discussion on the electronic transmissions any further.

Astus wrote:

Might be, still, the question is about the electronic form because it can be both live and recorded and it shows no difference from the perspective of the viewer.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Master Sheng-yen

Content:

Huseng said:

Incidentally, the whole works of Master Sheng Yen are online now. Mostly Chinese, but click number 9 on the left-hand side for his writings in English.

<http://ddc.shengyen.org/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

Unfortunately those are not all of his English books. More free literature here:

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Pero said:

That does happen, but it's like a flash. You might not realize it or even if you do it doesn't last. Soon after mind arises again and then you're left in doubt.

Astus wrote:

How does that qualify for transmission? People get shocked naturally in their daily lives. Also, there are the so called gaps between thoughts one could realise any time. But there is no recognition, no awareness of awareness on its own, so no realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Layman Pang and me/us

Content:

Astus wrote:

The story of Pang Yun is just a story, take it as that. Renunciation of possessions can happen mainly in two ways: you become a monk or you remain a lay person but learn not to be (too) hung up by the things you have. Throwing out things for the sake of not having them, sure you can do that, but how would it help anyone? The problem doesn't lie in the things you have but your relationship with them. Ultimately you don't need anything beyond the four things needed by a monk (food, clothes, abode, medicine). Practically, as you're living in a developed country and you're not a monk hidden in a remote monastery, there are many things you use from spoon to central heating. And as I've heard UK is not the best place for spending your life in the shade of a tree.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

mindyourmind said:

In a face-t-face situation, can you really say that the viewer will always be able to pick up everything? My point about the lesson about "reality" remains. We treat a face-to-face meeting as "real", and an electronic one as seemingly less "real". Is that justified?

Astus wrote:

A good topic but I don't see yet how it pertains to this discussion on transmission. Perhaps if we take into account the possibility of visionary and dream transmissions. But then we just have lot of different settings without defining the relationship between teacher and student. It could be also added that infinite buddhas transmit the complete teaching all the time.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Astus:

You are wasting everyone's time with this question.

Dzogchen is a Vajrayana system. The Guru is indispensable.

If you want transmission, you must get it from a Guru. Live.

N

Astus wrote:

Is it a waste of time to investigate the nature of transmission? What you're saying is that "that's how it is, that's the tradition". Actually, that is an answer too and if that's all then I'm fine with it.

I've participated in Dzogchen transmission both face to face and DC's webcast, but I don't think it is relevant.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:

You don't think what is relevant?

Astus wrote:

My personal relationship with Dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Layman Pang and me/us

Content:

KwanSeum said:

So I should keep my car and Tag Heuer watch because otherwise I'd have to live in a field?

Astus wrote:

Keep it or leave it - these are extremes. You should find your priorities and see what use you can find for the things you have. If you want some extra cash you can sell your watch, if you don't need money now you can just keep it in a drawer. Or you can throw it out the window or give it to someone, whatever. Pang threw out his stuff because he didn't want them and thought that they'd only cause trouble to others. What do you think? If you gave your watch to a poor man, is that good for him or bad? If you keep it, is that good for you or bad? What makes something good or bad?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Layman Pang and me/us

Content:

LastLegend said:

Astus is right. If we are deluded, everything can be really bad. If we are not deluded, bad and good can not really bother us.

Astus wrote:

I'd rather say that we should be clear about causes and results while also aware of our mental state.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Plugging it in makes it work. Transmission is like the plugging in a device. Here you are plugging in your continuum to the living continuum of realization which comes from Samantabhadra to you.

Astus wrote:

Very plastic metaphor, and lineage is central in Vajrayana, I understand that. I was looking for a different kind of explanation but I can accept that it is something that doesn't exist. Thanks for the help.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2011 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Nangwa said:

Its not for everybody.

People have tried to give you a wide variety of explanations and metaphors etc. throughout this thread. At this point its repetitious and a bit silly.

Its starting to look like you have an aversion, rather than interest.

Astus wrote:

No aversion, I was simply looking a different kind of explanation. From the repetition it is clear there isn't such. No result is still a result.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2011 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Electronic Dzogchen

Content:

Namdrol said:

ChNN also uses example of tuning in a radio or a TV to proper station.

Astus wrote:

And if we use that example it's the radiowave I don't really see.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2011 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: are all observations delusions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

All our observations are delusions because we maintain a subject-object duality, this is

our fundamental ignorance. Shinran's deluded person is prthagjana in sanskrit, that is an ordinary being without insight into the true nature of reality. Since it is practically impossible to attain enlightenment in the Dharma-ending age, says Shinran, the only realistic option is to rely on Amida's vow. That is a religious-soteriological statement. It doesn't mean if you see a cat it is not a cat.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2011 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: are all observations delusions?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If all of our observations are delusions, then how do we know we are deluded? Wouldn't that observation be a delusion?

Astus wrote:

Delusion in Buddhism is not some sort of Matrix-like concept where everything is fake. Delusion means that in our experience we imagine into an inherent self and we reify concepts. In the Pure Land teaching what matters is that we are bound by karma - as a result of ignorance - and to attain freedom the best choice is to be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha. Being bound by karma means that our acts are based on the view of a self, whether we do good or bad, consequently we keep being reborn in the six realms of samsara. This is not about our ability to comprehend our situation but about liberating ourselves from karma. In terms of the four noble truths, the Pure Land teaching means that we can understand that samsara is suffering, our desires cause the suffering, desire can be eliminated, but since we have low capacity to liberate ourselves we rely on the vow of Amitabha to be born in the Pure Land and there attain enlightenment and liberate all beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2011 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: are all observations delusions?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But that's what I am talking about. "we imagine into an inherent self and we reify concepts" is the setting in which we experience the senses, suffering, pleasure, etc. and the means by which we establish for ourselves the validity of the Buddha's teachings. But because "we imagine into an inherent self and we reify concepts" doesn't that make what we experience also a delusion? And if we observe that they are delusions, then isn't that observation a delusion as well?

Astus wrote:

Then please clarify what you mean by delusion. In my understanding the chair I'm sitting on is a chair for any other human being and it has the function of a chair. This is its conventional reality, something that people call real, so calling it a chair and perceiving it as a chair is correct comprehension, not mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2011 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: Zen Training

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I'd been working, or attending to something, or in the midst of the eternal wait (for phones, for guests, for orders or requests from senior nuns, for work, for anything) that typifies temple life for young nuns. Maybe it typifies it for senior nuns, too; but young or old, we're rarely found in an attitude of formal meditation if we live in an average temple. We're usually found in a state of mild anxiety, trying to anticipate what might happen or need to happen next. Do we cultivate patience? Yes. Generosity? Yes. Attention to the moment? Yes: but not by sitting on cushions, not by scheduling in practice, not by having "space," not by having "down time." Would I like to see practice more formally structured and addressed among the young monastic community? Yes, but that's not the present situation we have to live with."

<http://fromthisshore.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/the-chance-to-not-do-morning-walk-4-23/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 4th, 2011 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: are all observations delusions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Yüan-chao states:

In breaking through delusion and realizing true reality in this world, one employs self-power; hence, [self-power practices] are taught in various Mahayana and Hinayana sutras. In going to the other world to listen to the dharma and realize enlightenment, one must rely on Other Power; hence, birth in the Pure Land is taught. Although these two ways differ, they are both means [provided by Sakyamuni] for leading one to realization of one's mind.

(http://www.shinranworks.com/majorexpositions/kgssII-81_83.htm)

Shinran:

"I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I could know thoroughly, as Amida Tathagata knows, that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathagata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world- this burning house- all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real."

<http://www.shinranworks.com/relatedworks/tannisho3.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Astus wrote:

In other words, the primordial state of enlightenment is discovered. Mind-essence was pre-enlightened; our original ground is already enlightened. In the Dzogchen approach, this discovery is called being re-enlightened. Mahamudra does not use these terms re-enlightened and pre-enlightened, but at the fourth stage of nonmeditation the meaning is basically the same. ... Third is awareness-rigpa reaching fullness, and the fourth stage is called the exhaustion or depletion of all concepts and dualistic phenomena. This stage is equivalent of the stage of nonmeditation in Mahamudra. The ultimate state of enlightenment is being re-enlightened in the pre-enlightened original ground, as mentioned above.

(Adeu Rinpoche: Correlating Mahamudra & Dzogchen in Quintessential Dzogchen, p. 210-211)

The best situation would be if we had never strayed into the deluded way of perceiving to begin with. But somehow it seems that we missed the opportunity to be primordially enlightened, and now we are deep in confusion. ... Even though we missed the chance to be primordially enlightened - "pre-enlightened," if you will - we can still attain stability in the natural freedom of our essence and become "re-enlightened."

(Drubwang Rinpoche: Fearless Simplicity, p. 95)

We possess an enlightened essence, but having temporarily lost that connection we are deluded. Continuously missing the opportunity to awaken, we fall under the power of our ordinary experience, governed by habits so strenuous to maintain such a clinging to a self. ... The loosening of our grasping untangles a knot in our heart; we do not need to stay bound and strangled by it. Likewise, from our confused state, we can be reprogrammed because we are primordially enlightened and we have the potential to return to that state as re-enlightened. Best to leave this for now and conclude by using Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche's words: ... The dirt has to be removed to re-establish the purity of the jewel.

(Marcia Dechen Wangmo: Confessions of a Gypsy Yogini, p. 15-16)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Namdrol said:

There is no term or concept in Dzogchen as being "re-enlightened". Does not exist and does not make sense.

Astus wrote:

Nevertheless, the above authors did use it with the same meaning in a Dzogchen context. If it is not a traditional term it might be a new one.

Tulku Urgyen's "Repeating the Words of the Buddha" has a whole chapter entitled "Re-

enlightenment".

At the second movement, the delusions are dispelled and the (perfection) of primordial wisdom develops. That is the development of the basis (itself) as the result (of enlightenment). It is called the re-enlightenment (or self-liberation) through the realization of the essence, the primordial Buddhahood.

(Longchen Rabjam: The Practice of Dzogchen, p. 207)

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche said, "The confusion that arose in ... the path can be cleared away. When we remove the temporary stains from primordially awakened rigpa, we become re-enlightened instead of primordially enlightened. This is accomplished by following the oral instructions of a fully qualified master."

(Nyoshul Khenpo: Natural Great Perfection, p. 71)

We should train in the state of rigpa that is originally pure. Although the essence is primordially enlightened, the yogi has to be re-enlightened. We have fallen into delusion. Attaining stability in non-delusion is called re-enlightenment.

(Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche: As It Is, vol. 2, p. 67)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magnus,

As the quotes themselves explain, "re-enlightenment" is meant within the context of Samantabhadra as the primordially enlightened buddha and the teaching of original wakefulness. Nobody said that it implies we were all once buddhas then became ordinary beings even if the explanation is given again and again how one keeps straying from buddha-mind every moment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

Astus wrote:

You won't get rid of sectarianism ever. I see a good chance for the merging of different teachings because of the varied sources one can find now, however, even then there are differing interpretations.

"the Buddha was not a fundamentalist because he invited people to test and debate his Dharma, something a fundamentalist would normally not allow."

It's not that so called fundamentalists don't invite you for a debate but it is how they

debate. Debates in most cases are about personal emotions and not the subject of the debate especially when the goal is to convert somebody. Debating for the sake of learning is a different matter, but then fundamentalism is not an issue.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Authority in dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't it be surprising to find a group of people where everybody agrees on everything? Sounds unnatural, isn't it? Or like brainwashed cultists. There are teachers, groups, lineages, traditions so different people can follow the idea they prefer. One might believe that "ultimately everything is one" but relatively there is an obvious diversity. However, once there is authority, orthodoxy, then there are heretics and enemies of the true faith.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 1:12 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Considering that there are quite a few Vinayas and pratimokshas it is a bit naive to think that all of them are directly from Shakyamuni himself. Understanding the history of Buddhism can actually facilitate the weakening of sectarianism, like <https://sites.google.com/site/sectsandsectarianism/> by Bhikkhu Sujato. This crossing the barriers I think is a major task of 21st century global Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

Namdrol said:

All the vows come from the Buddha, they are just different transmissions.

Astus wrote:

Since the vows are different the transmissions are corrupted - although the different pratimokshas are like 95% identical. We could say that since the Dharmaguptaka vows only have a few extra and minor rules compared to Theravada it is no big thing to make Dharmaguptaka a Theravada version. The idea of a transcendent "spirit of transmission", well, I better leave that to abhidharmikas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Geeez, and here was me, dumb ass that I am, thinking that enlightenment is enlightenment until a bunch of academics came along and proved me wrong. Now ordination is not ordination and somebody is gonna come along and say to me that Buddhism is not Buddhism.

Can somebody please remind me again exactly how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

While I agree that there must be some kind of continuity in the ordination lineages isn't it enough to just get three or more precept holders, regardless of lineage, to bestow the vows? What would happen if you got two precept holders from one lineage and one from another lineage together to give you the vows (for lack of three plus from a single lineage)? Would that mean your vows are not valid? I know it's highly hypothetical (or maybe it isn't really) but I am interested in what the answer is.

Astus wrote:

It isn't hypothetical since that's what happened at nun ordinations for Theravada and Tibetan groups. You can also see now how Vinaya can be not much different from the Canon Law of the Catholic Church and how fundamentalism - or

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism_%28theology%29 - is very much present in the debate over ordaining nuns. But I think it's not difficult to find other incidents similar to that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

Namdrol said:

The key point is this: the Mūlasatvastivadas, the Theravadins and the Dharmaguptakas all have their own Vinaya tradition. They are not interchangeable, though some wish it were so.

Traditionally, each vinaya tradition came from one of Buddha's arhat disciples. So for example, Mulasarvastivada came from Rahula; Thervada from Upali, and so on.

Each vinaya has its own oral tradition and explanations of the vows, as well as procedures for ordination. They are not interchangeable.

Astus wrote:

That can be said supposing that there is something more to those precepts besides what is actually written down. But there isn't.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist fundamentalists?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Based on this statement, and your confusion about Dzogchen in the other thread, one thing is clear: you do not understand the concept of transmission. You cannot get transmission from a book.

Astus wrote:

Indeed. I was thinking about starting a separate topic on transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 11:24 PM

Title: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Based on two previous topics I'd like here to discuss the notion and meaning of transmission within Buddhism. By transmission there are three versions I can think of now: transmission of precepts (ordination), transmission of Dharma (as in Zen), transmission of empowerment (as in Tantra). The concept of transmission always involves a lineage behind it that goes back to Shakyamuni or some other major figure (human or non-human). My problem and cause of disbelief in the concept of transmission is based on two points: lack of historical basis and lack of anything perceptible that could be transmitted beyond the apparent texts and rituals. But, there are those who believe transmission is real and important. How so?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is called 文字禪 (wenzi chan), Literary Chan. While literacy and culture has a lot to do with Chan that is not the only thing there is to it. Besides those of high status who composed many works you should consider the hermits and forest monks too - who of course seldom left anything to future generations. One exceptional person is Miyun Yuanwu from 17th century who was from a lowly family and had minimal education. But then his simplistic "hit and shout" Chan was ridiculed and attacked by Hanshan Deqing and many others while at the same time he revived Chan throughout China.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2011 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Knowledge is conceivable and perceivable by mind. It can also be spoken of and written down. Transmission beyond the six senses, that is the mystical part I was talking about.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

I find the eight-consciousness model a provisional one. Same for tathagatagarbha. I've never taken part in a Tantric initiation in order to be empowered to practice it - it would require faith in it on my part to do that. Curiosity is a different matter.

Nangwa,

Sharing directly, in my understanding that would require something like telepathy. It is another thing that one generates the appropriate mental state, that is the work of the faithful within the context of a religious event.

Kyosan,

We might share the experience of eating apple. Still, you have no direct access to my taste-consciousness to compare it to your taste-consciousness. Same goes with other kinds of experience. It is also because of the impossibility of accessing others' experiences directly that I find transmission a rhetorical means only.

Adinatha,

You can't transmit your karma to me and I can't transmit my karma to you. Of course, if such thing were possible fulfilling the bodhisattva vows would be pretty simple.

Will,

Yes, one can have the feeling and the idea that one has received blessings, transmissions or curses as well. But do you feel blessed when sprinkled by holy water? Do you feel ecstatic when meeting XY celebrity? Do you feel moved when hearing the national anthem? Even if you don't, many do. And some others feel and think the very opposite. Should we then say that the holy water is truly holy, the celebrity is charismatic and the national anthem is beautiful?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Will said:

True enough, but you are shifting your query. The question was not, was X objectively holy etc, but if the alleged source of the transmission was extra-sensory or mystical how could that source affect one? I pointed out that our mind is beyond the 5 regular senses and thus mystical & extra-sensory itself. Are thoughts, feelings, ideas, imagination etc. confined to the 5 senses - no.

If you think the mind is identical with the brain, then say so; if not, then it appears to me that the non-physical mind is ideal for knowing the extra-sensory.

Astus wrote:

I said six senses not five. The mind is not extrasensory since it is something I am very much aware of, how could it be otherwise? I'm not talking about physical or non-physical. However, one can't just implant a thought or feeling into another being's mind directly, without the use of the other sensory perceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

adinatha said:

There is both individual and common karma, right?

Astus wrote:

Only beings can have karma. A group has no karma of its own only its members, since a group is not a being to have a will.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 3:23 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Astus wrote:

I agree very well that Zen is a "literary movement", meaning that it's full of rhetorical methods and relies heavily on written materials. Also, as you mentioned, lineage and Zen masters were/are the matter of leadership, the abbots of monasteries who are busy with obtaining lay support and organising the community. There are now a couple of studies investigating in depth the development of the Zen school throughout the centuries in terms of socio-political events.

Geoff, what you mention in Korea is their system of dividing the year into three months periods where summer and winter are for retreats, spring and autumn are for wandering. But retreat doesn't necessarily mean one has to sit in the hall, it is just one of the options a monk/nun can choose.

But besides that Zen has little to do with rigorous meditation, meditation retreats are usually done once in a while by many monastics as part of their training. Although there's not much specifically Zen in that.

I think there are three important factors in Zen that made it the most successful form of Buddhism in East Asia: sudden enlightenment, dharma lineage and literary style. These three proved to be useful in organising monasteries and involving the literati to give ample support for the Zen people instead of others when they had to vote for the new abbot in a public monastery.

side note: the "dharma lineage" idea that created the Zen family (禪家) - besides its resonance with EA culture - makes it look like a mafia group...

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Kyosan said:

But you know that the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism says that people are deluded and don't experience the world as it really is. And through practicing Buddhism one is able to overcome the delusion. Suppose that both of us became enlightened. Don't you think that your experiencing the world as it really is would be the same as my experiencing the world as it really is? And don't you think that we would agree on what the true nature of the world is? I think we would.

Astus wrote:

Do you find that Buddhists throughout the world agree on what ultimate reality consists of? I don't.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 4:46 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Adinatha,

So you would establish transmission based on the existence of a group karma? We can try that way, of course. Then it first needs to be established what is group karma. Does group karma exist within each member's mental continuum or is it somewhere else? If it is within the members' mind and people can't share their minds to make a single consciousness it turns out that group karma means nothing but common features among individuals. So we can say that we're all humans, that's a group karma. We have either black, brown, blonde or red hair (or perhaps white), another group karma. We can have blue, brown, green or grey eyes, still, you don't see what I see. Another question is, if there is group karma, what creates it and what suffers it? If a member of the group

does something, does that affect everyone even if they don't know about it? If one Ukrainian gives a dollar to a beggar does the whole nation share the merit? If a Belgian beats a French in Amsterdam will the Belgians share the demerit and the French the pain? If one member's acts have no consequences for the group than how can anyone's act affect the group? By the way, what makes somebody a German or Austrian? Citizenship? Birth? Culture? Language? Personal choice? And there are a few other problems I can find with it.

But this still doesn't address what transmission actually is.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

He said enlightened people, and enlightened people exist and existed in the different Buddhist schools. And those enlightened people could even debate with each other.

Whether alayavijnana exists or not, and how, I'd rather put that aside for a different thread to discuss it.

What I meant this topic for is to clarify transmission. Unfortunately, most of the posts here talked about something else. I assume that is because there is just this word "transmission" but nothing more to put our finger on.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm sure there were Zen teachers (abbots) without insight into the depths of Buddhism, however, that I would rather not generalise. Many of them were monks for one or two decades already when got into the position of Zen teacher, so technically they were elders. Also they were supposed to be outstanding people within the community and that's why they were chosen to serve as leaders. They had the necessary education and understanding to maintain the quality of the monastic training. Of course, when we think of thousands of temples and convents where each of them needed an abbot (member of the Zen family) it is natural that some Zen teachers were better than the others.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Jñāna said:

Yes, and some do choose it. And some also choose to enter into longer solitary retreat.

Astus wrote:

And that is all right. But there are two things to see here I believe: 1. Zen is not mainly about meditation practice, 2. meditation practice (up to its ascetic form) is not restricted to Zen but is present in all traditions (including Pure Land).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 9:12 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Huseng said:

To borrow a term from Jan Nattier it is the "spiritual elite" that engage in those yogic endeavors that result in realization.

Astus wrote:

Sudden enlightenment is a teaching that makes yogic/ascetic practices also unnecessary, an important feature of Zen. The huatou practice is an obvious combination of literary works and meditation in daily activities.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Since you have not "perceived" transmission so how can you understand it? Through metaphor of course! Everybody here is using metaphors to try to explain to you what transmission is otherwise the conversation will be kind of like this:

Astus: What's an apple?

Everybody else: It's an apple!

Kinda stoopid, huh?...

Astus wrote:

So you say that it can't be explained what is being transmitted because "you have to experience it"? Even about <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple> there is quite a lot to say, and this is just Wikipedia. If somebody asks about selflessness it would be a weak and dismissive answer to say "you have to experience it" or give a few metaphors as if one were talking about human reproduction to little children. Fortunately there are many teachings on selflessness to provide a clear and lucid explanation to anyone interested. Anything even close to that on transmission?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Namdrol said:

A common example is a seal and its impression.

Astus wrote:

Would that mean that the teacher/preceptor directly inputs certain mental patterns from his mind to the receiver of the transmission? That would be like reprogramming somebody's mind. That sounds to me contrary to common sense and karmic integrity.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

adinatha said:

Group karma is similar results from similar causes. Each individual has its own continuum, suffering alone. It is like a mirroring effect. The nature of awareness is mirror-like. If I hold up a mirror, and you hold up a mirror while standing nearby one another, we will reflect one another. And so it goes on down the line through space and time. The master/disciple dynamic is just this with regard to body, speech and mind of Buddha.

Astus wrote:

The nature of awareness being mirror-like doesn't mean that we keep reflecting everything we see. Reflecting to whom, anyway? But this is just a metaphor and it may not necessarily be about the reflective attributes of mirrors. If I sit in front of a person that person's body won't appear as my body, nor will that happen with speech or mind. Where is the mirroring effect then?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Notice how nowhere in this apple is there a discussion about the taste of an apple? Why? Because it cannot be defined through concepts, it has to be experienced. So does that mean that there is no such thing as the taste of an apple? Just because it cannot be defined?

Astus wrote:

A large number of words refer directly or indirectly to sensory experience without which

we would have little to talk about. But if you're up to some apples, try this https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_apple_cultivars where they give some hint on the taste of different varieties. And I assume those who are really into the apple business can go on and on about the different tastes and textures of apples. Think about those wine and cheese experts.

gregkavarnos said:

Really? So a lecture on ethics that makes you decide to follow a certain code of conduct is contrary to common sense and karmic integrity? I mean really the lecture is just sounds, ideas and visual images, it is nothing really substantial yet it causes you to change your whole way of seeing...

Astus wrote:

A lecture on ethics may transform people, yes. But that doesn't mean it was because the lecturer had a special aura, was part of a lineage thousand years old, was initiated and anointed by a group of ethics lecturer, not even because the lecturer lives and ethical life. It is simply through being able to conceive the words said and through understanding them puts it into practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Padma,

Your analogy is all right, it is the meaning of tradition and how customs are passed down the ages - although never without modification. Cultivating apples can be learned from the old apple farmer, sure. It can also be learned at university where you study things from a scientific point of view and learn not just a few things a single farmer may tell you but knowledge collected, tested and proved by large number of people. That does make a difference between medieval and modern agriculture. And the old farmer and a university are not the only two possible sources of how to manage an apple orchard. Compared to that, insisting on a personal transmission is saying that all who want to learn cultivating apples must find an apple farmer whose father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc. were also apple farmers; or that the apple farmer was a disciple of another apple farmer who was also a disciple of an apple farmer all the way back to the inventor of apple farming.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

adinatha said:

Your body is not the mirror. Your mind is exactly a mirror. There are even "mirror

neurons." This is why when you see someone experience a sensation, you also experience it to a degree; your brain will light up as if it were in first person. You can google "mirror neurons."

Astus wrote:

Mind is also said to be like: space, light, water/ocean, monkey, sky, sun, tree, etc. I wouldn't rely so heavily on a metaphor for mind to explain something else. And even if you got it with a metaphor, how do you explain in terms of actual events?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Compared to that, insisting on a personal transmission

Namdrol said:

Without personal transmission, you will never practice Vajrayana or Dzogchen. Ever. Instead, you will lead yourself and your students into hell.

N

Astus wrote:

I neither practise nor teach any of that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2011 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I am not saying that you need a transmission. But if you want a transmission, then this is what it is. That's just the route you take. "Transmission" suggests something that is passed from one to another. In this case, it isn't something that you don't already have. It's just that the person who is transmitting to you (notice I didn't say 'transmitting IT ' to you) had the transmission to them, so they know how and when.

Maybe, instead, you will be walking along, deeply absorbed in the meditation of all the dharma you have ever learned and then a truck drives by and honks its horn and BOOM! You are enlightened. It's not very likely to happen, but if it slices your apple open, why not?

Astus wrote:

What you described fits any kind of discipleship, Buddhism or not. Transmission, when understood as something occurring on a ceremony, is not really that. And I'm asking

about this second form, whether it's the transmission of precepts (as in the Fundamentalists? topic) or the transmission of something Tantric.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Astus wrote:

The following quotes show how Chan Buddhism was reinvented in 17th century China - Japan's Obaku school comes from this phenomenon - through the strong influence of the literati and based solely on texts. A summary of it is found in the last quote.

"In particular, the literati were deeply immersed in reading and writing Buddhist texts. In their religious reading and writing, the literati displayed a unique spiritual orientation that shaped their understanding of Buddhism. For most of them, reading and writing Buddhist, especially Chan Buddhist, literature was one of the many cultural pastimes in which they dabbled during their leisure time. Because their entry into Buddhism did not begin with faith in the Buddhist belief system, they tended to emphasize the supreme and most sophisticated expressions of philosophical wisdom rather than precepts and devotional activities. Many of them simply dismissed the Buddhist teaching of retribution and reincarnation because for them this coarse reasoning of punishment and reward was obviously designed for the unsophisticated minds. Even in their meditation practice, the literati preferred to use Dahui Zonggao's method of meditating on the key phrases (huatou), a spiritual exercise transformed from the attentive contemplation on doubts that have been aroused from intensive koan study. This practice has a clear trace in their habit of religious reading because of its origins in textual study. Because their spiritual experience was largely generated and fostered during the process of reading, writing, and discussing, without leaving a carefully constructed textual realm, I tend to call such a religious experience "textual spirituality" to distinguish it from a more devotion-based religious experience. Exploring the characteristics of textual spirituality is important in this study because, through reading and writing, a shared mentality took form in some literati's communities, in which Chan monks were members and were deeply influenced by such a text-based spiritual orientation."

"In this sense, the textual authority generated from a kind of textual spirituality would invest the literati and the literati-turned-monks with a particularly advantageous position in the Buddhist world, especially in Chan Buddhism, which is largely textually constructed."

"Here, the issue of religious reading looms large because the literati's understanding of Chan was largely a romantic imagining based on their leisure reading of Chan texts. Some of these Confucian literati, without serious interest in everyday monastic routines, such as liturgical services, observance of precepts, and ordination, envisioned Chan as iconoclastic and antinomian, exactly as the authors of numerous Chan texts wanted their readers to believe. Evidence shows that some members of Wang Yangming's

movement played pivotal roles in nurturing Chan ideals in monastic communities. I tend to call the religious experience generated purely from reading and writing religious texts “textual spirituality” to distinguish it from a more devotion-oriented type of religiosity.”

"As I have pointed out, Chan texts served as the source of new interpretations and inventions for Chan monks and the literati. Their religiosity is therefore a type of textual spirituality, as I called it in chapter 2, because it is largely textually based and nourished by activities such as reading and writing. Along with the rise of such textual spirituality was a conscious search for a new hermeneutic strategy to approaching texts.

Depending on the hermeneutic strategy that was chosen, the meanings of these texts could be understood in different ways: A metaphorical reading could regard all occurrences recorded in Chan texts as if “real” or, in other words, as “pedagogical devices” to induce enlightenment experiences for students of these texts. Or, as Bernard Faure suggests, Chan texts are basically products of a “writing-act,” which follows the rule of textual production and thus must “be read as [a] self-referential literary work” (Faure’s emphasis).⁸ A more literal understanding, however, could lead one to the belief that the events, or textual precedents, created in Chan texts were distinctively “real.” The implication of this reading is that the idealized events are considered performable and realizable.

This literal hermeneutic strategy became the way that Chan masters recreated reality. The fact that Chan Buddhism in the seventeenth century lacked any spiritual innovations comparable to those in early periods shows exactly that Chan Buddhism intended to be loyal to Chan’s past as reflected in Chan texts. The controversies reveal that, in the seventeenth century, Chan monks advocated exactly this literal mode of interpretation, which considered the events recorded in Chan literature to be real and practical. For example, encounter dialogue, a seemingly real occurrence, was imitated and repeated; a strict definition of dharma transmission, based on the principle of face-to-face instruction and authentication by evidence, was put into practice. In short, the Chan monks read Chan texts literally and intended to revive an imagined past in the present.”

source: Jiang Wu: Enlightenment in Dispute, p. 53-54; 67; 82; 248

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 5:46 AM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Namdrol said:

This has been explained already a hundred time: a teachers talks from his experience and realization using words and similes. You actively listen and understand.

That is all there is to transmission. It's not telepathic, it is not a substantial "something" you can put in a box.

Transmission means direct communication from one person who has some knowledge

(in this case, creation and completion stage, dzogchen, etc) to someone who wants to develop that knowledge themselves. There are different methods for giving transmission. But they all share one thing in common -- a realized teacher communicates using words and similes and a student listens and understands at the same time. This is really not so fricking hard to understand. So I don't see why you are wasting people's time with this inane question anymore.

N

Astus wrote:

If that was it all I wouldn't raise the issue at all. But then there's exactly what Cone said about an unbroken lineage. I'm not so familiar with other kinds of Buddhism as with Chan, and while the common rhetoric is that there is an unbroken lineage from Shakyamuni to the present masters, historically speaking that is just simply wrong and nothing more than a religious concept. There was no unbroken lineage in the 9th, 13th, 17th or 20th century, there wasn't even an unbroken lineage between these eras. And with all the messing around with ordination it is not at all unfounded to consider that precept lineages are not unbroken either. It might be that in other countries politicians and kings were all pious Buddhists, that monks were all holy people, but in China it was not unusual to sell ordinations, make the nobleman's son the abbot, and sometimes exile, disrobe or even execute monks just because somebody didn't like them. Also, the common practice of mass ordination - as it has been in practice for a thousand years - is against Vinaya IIRC.

The other, not historical part is that I see no special benefits and sanctity in a lineage. This extra importance of a lineage is what makes me ask: what is transmission then? It is obviously not just receiving teachings from educated and experienced people. It is not just comprehending the words and symbols but receiving The Lineage, the transmission. What is that lineage then? Is that just a list of names people should believe in as their spiritual ancestors? It is this kind of transmission that I don't see as something so important and essential.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen being a literary movement should be understood as something that makes Zen special among other forms of Buddhism is their literature and language. That means that Zen doesn't really have its own philosophy but has a way of speaking about common Buddhist teachings in a special way. Besides this literary part Zen monks do practically same as any other monk does. It might also be considered that almost every monastery in China and Korea is nominally a Zen monastery, thus being a Zen monk means nothing more than being an ordinary monk. And then there were times when Zen became especially popular and that resulted in new Zen texts in large numbers, texts that later became the classics. In that sense Zen is largely a literary thing, because

outside of such literature there is nothing specifically Zen one may find.

As for the emphasis on meditation practice, it'd be interesting to enumerate the actual number of meditation handbooks. In the Song dynasty there were only two written, both of them quite brief. Compare that to other schools' manuals and it'd appear that Zen people never even meditated - which is of course not true. But meditation itself, just like all the other common monastic practices, were nothing "Zen specific".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Correct. There is an unbroken lineage. In Vajrayāna is goes Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya -- then some mahāsiddha, etc.

All these lineages are unbroken. Chan did not invent the idea of "lineage" until they were put in competition with Vajrayāna in the late seventh century.

N

Astus wrote:

As for Vajrayana, I don't know if there is evidence for such lineage or not. Chan didn't invent the idea of lineage, true. It first appeared in Chinese Buddhism in the Tiantai school. Connection to any Vajrayana lineage idea can't be established. That is, if we look at the Buddhist context. Otherwise ancestor worship and such existed in China long before Buddhism arrived there.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Sherab said:

If all that is involved in a transmission is that the teacher speaks and one listen and understand, then as Astus mentioned previously, one should be able to get transmission from a recording.

If the presence of the teacher is required in a transmission, something else (other than the teacher speaking and the students listening and understanding) must be happening that cannot happen in a recording.

Therefore to say that a transmission is that a teacher speaks and the students listen and understand and then to insist that a transmission can only be a transmission when the teacher is present just does not gel.

Astus wrote:

Thanks. Somebody who understood my point.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Zen the Literary Movement

Content:

Fu Ri Shin said:

So if every other tradition has as little emphasis on meditation as Zen, what are they a tradition of then?

Astus wrote:

I think the point is that Zen is not The Meditation School. Meditation does not even define Zen. Meditation is one of the many religious practices in Buddhism and it is practised in all traditions. However, just as prayer doesn't define a theist or a denomination, so meditation doesn't define any particular school.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Somebody who understood or somebody that agreed with your point?

Astus wrote:

I didn't propose a point but asked a question that few seemed to even understand so far, not to mention answering.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Serenity509 said:

What do you think of this video's idea of God?

Pandeism

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQRCsbO_rk4 "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

I think that many people are opposed to the idea of God because of the image that's been given them from Abrahamic faiths, not because of personal experience.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism first spread in India. When the Buddha and later Indian teachers talk about

rejecting the existence of an Absolute God they refer to Hindu gods primarily. Christian and Muslim contact with Buddhism happened later.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

I think you'll find you got a lot of answers, just that you don't want to agree with any of them!

Astus wrote:

True, because I don't see them as answering the question, but rather avoiding it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For a review here are the answers to "What is Transmission?" so far in this thread. As far as I can see, none of them specifies what it is that makes transmission qualitatively different from any other kind of study.

Nangwa:

The transmission/introduction to this state is a state of knowledge that one receives from another being. Its direct, applicable, and perceivable.

The transmission is like guru yoga in the sense that you enter into that state by being introduced to it by someone who has the capacity to share it with you directly.

Zerwe:

transmission is something that plants the seeds that will later ripen in our own understand at deeper and deeper levels. Thus, transmission becomes essential for removing obstacles to understanding and the achievement of realization. So, transmission could be thought of as essential to our realizing the dharma on the ultimate level.

Kyosan:

I think of transmission as actualization of the dharma and acknowledgement by the teacher that the student has actualized it. That's what it means in Zen.

PadmaVonSamba:

Transmission is love. It goes by the same rules.

adinatha:

If I hold up a mirror, and you hold up a mirror while standing nearby one another, we will reflect one another. And so it goes on down the line through space and time. The master/disciple dynamic is just this with regard to body, speech and mind of Buddha.

Namdrol:

A common example is a seal and its impression.

transmission means a teacher speaks, in words and similes according to his realization. You actively listen and understand. That is transmission. This why, for example, at the end of transmitting vows, the officiating upadhyaya asks you "Are you happy"? This means, "did you really participate in this ritual of transmitting the precepts?"

This is all there is to transmission. It cannot be gained from a book. It must be gained from another living, breathing human being.

Will & adinatha:

If you have ever been in presence of someone you did not know at all, yet you were irritated or inspired far beyond anything said by them; that is their aura affecting yours. Did you think all those paintings with discs of light around buddhas & bodhisattvas are just artistic flourishes? The best proof is being in the silent atmosphere of someone and recalling later that one's racing, worrisome mind was calmed.

Yes. This is right. Part of transmission of ultimate realization involves this.

Namdrol:

There is no magical "transmission" fairy dust.

PadmaVonSamba & Namdrol:

So, are you saying that anyone who ever went to any sort of teaching or public talk by a lama received a transmission?

Yes. Listening to a recording however has no transmission.

Namdrol:

No. Recorded words are not the same. They are a recording of an act of speech, but not the act of speech itself. Teaching and bestowing transmission are acts.

The words recorded are divorced from the act of speech. They are relics, not alive.

It is the act of speaking and the act of listening happening together at the same time that constitutes a transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

This is why direct personal contact is needed and not just a book or a record, because a book or record doesn't know if you are ready or not. "Ready" means that at that moment it is the right time, just as planting a seed must be done when the soil is receptive, when the conditions are right for growing and so forth. You can read a book or hear a recording about the "evils of alcohol" but if you are not ready, it won't stop you from drinking.

That is the 'something else' mentioned above.

Astus wrote:

If it is only that a teacher gives the teaching when the student is ready the teachers who give different kinds of transmissions should personally know the students. That can't really be true when the Dalai Lama gives a Kalachakra empowerment to thousands of people, or when dozens (maybe hundreds) of monks receive ordination together (in case of ordination the idea of "ready" is strange a bit anyway). One could also say that those who go to lectures, retreats and study from books - i.e. continue training themselves - may understand something deep at any time, and there are a couple of Zen stories where people got enlightened reading/hearing a sutra, or just experiencing something ordinary. So the teacher knowing the situation of the student's mind doesn't sound like the thing that explains the need of face-to-face transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Nangwa said:

The question has been clearly answered in this thread and others over and over again. Its not others avoiding the question, its your strong aversion to the answer.

Astus wrote:

What has been said again and again is that transmission happens within a personal contact between master a student where the student "receives the transmission" (tautology). But what makes personal contact special is not answered. What makes something a transmission and not just learning something about Buddhism, again, not answered. If you think it was already answered, please point to the post. I have collected all the answers the best I could from this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

What do you prefer: being told by somebody face-to-face that they love you or hearing a recording of it on your cell phone message service? Which of the two do you reckon gets the point across more clearly?

Astus wrote:

Both get the point across clearly. Or an e-mail, a video, a postcard, a piece of paper on the fridge, etc. Both tell the same thing and I understand the same thing. There are of course possibilities to make it sound/look more emotional, aesthetic, passionate, and so on, but the message remains the same. For some unknown reasons that can't be done with a few specific (but obviously not all) Buddhist teachings. If I read the 5 precepts and keep them is not the same if I hear and then keep them - no reason why. But if I watch a video about the Diamond Sutra is just as good as if I were present at the teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2011 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zerwe,

What you say is very understandable. However, such enthusiasm and connection with a teacher is not restricted to any school or even to Buddhism. That doesn't mean it is not great or anything like that. And perhaps one may feel similarly toward certain teachings too regardless of the source.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2011 at 8:43 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

Thanks for <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&p=43958#p43958>, I think it has all the answers for the question of transmission. I may not be as strict about living communication since there were and are people who realised the Dharma without direct contact, but those instances are the exception rather than the rule. Buddhism, just like any other religion, exists within a community and as such can live as long as the community does. And sometimes there are revivals of a dead tradition, another known phenomenon within Buddhism, religions and other philosophies and traditions. I consider such revivals just as legitimate as the continued lineage, not to mention the creation of new schools and appearances of new teachings. That's how I see no problems in accepting modern historical views about Buddhism where most of the living traditions have little basis to claim Shakyamuni as the founding teacher of the

doctrine and practice as it exists now.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2011 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: Psychedelic Buddhist Dharani on Electric Guitar

Content:

Astus wrote:

I really liked this one:

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2011 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Monks can't get full enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For those unaware of the nature of everything,
Great bliss is attained in sexual union;
As if thirst-ridden, chasing after water in mirage,
They die from thirst, and do they ever drink the sky-water?
Whoever frolics in this bliss,
Living between vajra and lotus,
What for? This has no capacity for truth,
So {where} in the three worlds will you be complete?
The bliss of means is the moment,
And this itself becomes both;
Through the kindness of the master,
A handful in a hundred will understand.

(Saraha in Dreaming the Great Brahmin, p. 166)

The Kalachakra-tantra states:

Out of critical determination, one dissociates from the female consort (karmamudra)

And abstains from the inner consort of manifest awareness (jnanamudra).

By concentrating on that which is supreme and immutable,

One meditates on Mahamudra.

Padmavajra in the Guhyasiddhi advises:

The female consort of transformation is tumultuous and devious.

So is the inner consort of manifest awareness.

Abandon these, which are replete with discrimination,

And meditate on Mahamudra.

Manjusri, in his Tawai Döpa Dortenpa, says,
Crazy and malignant is the female consort;
The inner consort of manifest awareness is the same.
Abandon these in the dualistic realm
And practice Mahamudra.

(Mahamudra: The Moonlight, p. 98)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2011 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the Jodoshu website (http://www.jodo.org/about_plb/what_plb.html "onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;):

"On the other hand the Christian God has a different nature from Buddha. God is the creator of the universe, the absolute existence, the highest being, etc. God is quite different from man. He is the creator and man is the created. God is perfect good and man is a sinner. Man cannot become God however hard he may try. God and man are totally different from each other by nature, different ontologically. While God is perfect truth, man cannot attain the perfect truth of God. God is far from us. He is beyond our apprehension. God and man differ from each other epistemologically. Thus the difference between God and Buddha in relation to man would be as follows: God is different from man epistemologically and ontologically, whereas Buddha is different from man epistemologically but not ontologically."

And what you've quoted already from there: "Amida Buddha is not the creator or ground of all being."

Buddhas are not like any Absolute God other religions and philosophies have. That is because: 1. any being can achieve buddhahood and buddhas all went through such a path, i.e. no beings are born buddhas 2. buddhas are not the substrata of the universe, they are not omnipotent nor omnipresent 3. the sole purpose of buddhas is to help beings become free from samsara 4. there are infinite number of buddhas with different attributes 5. when buddhas are talked about in an ultimate sense what is meant is the true nature of all beings and not a single being or even a being or a thing.

Here is a collection of different forms of refutations:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/jackson.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2011 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Serenity509 said:

"God became man so that man could become God." - Athanasius of Alexandria

In the ancient Christian church, it was taught that God became man in Christ so that humans could attain Christhood. That's somewhat similar to the view that the eternal Buddha became man in Siddhartha Gautama so that we could attain Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Certain similarities doesn't make two things the same, like ducks have two legs just as humans do. In case of your example, they don't really match in many aspects. From the perspective of three bodies the Buddha never became human, it is not some sort of incarnation but only an illusory display that appears because of sentient beings' karma, while the birth and death of Christ was part of the divine plan of God to sacrifice himself in exchange for the sins of mankind. Shakyamuni taught the Dharma but the birth and death of the Buddha is not in itself the solution of men's problems. If you take things out of context and give them a new interpretation it is easy to make bold statements about religions being the same. It is being able to think within the appropriate context that can show the actual meaning of a teaching. Even in case of Amita Buddha, he simply provides the optimal environment for completing the bodhisattva path, that is hardly the same as bestowing liberation upon beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2011 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Serenity509 said:

In the doctrine of theosis, Christ provides the grace for the path, but he doesn't do all the work either.

Astus wrote:

In theists religions men are completely in the hands of God. That is not the case in Buddhism, including Pure Land Buddhism. That is quite an important difference. The idea of grace itself relies on the concept that it is God who has to be merciful. Saying that Amita Buddha provides a grace toward deluded beings is nothing but a Westernised simplification of the idea that Amita Buddha gives the opportunity because of his vows to beings to relatively easily attain birth in his buddha-land. Buddhas have nothing but compassion toward beings, God can be just as loving as wrathful. In theist religions one's salvation depends on God, in Buddhism enlightenment is available both with and without buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2011 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

What I've found as the answer to the question is that transmission is defined as a live connection between teacher and student. It is like saying that swimming is moving in the water by the movement of one's body. It is a matter of definition and that's all, nothing more.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2011 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: What is Transmission?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

The

http://www.buddhistdoor.com/oldweb/resources/sutras/6_Patriarch_Platform/sources/platform_sutra_10.htm has an answer, "Those who grasp at emptiness slander the Sutras by maintaining that written words have no use. Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2011 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Looking for evidence? Should try some reading first.

A history of Indian Buddhism: from Śākyamuni to early Mahāyāna by Akira Hirakawa, Paul Groner

Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism by Eugène Burnouf, Katia Buffetrille, Donald S. Lopez

Indian Buddhism by A. K. Warder

Figments and fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: more collected papers by Gregory Schopen

Bones, stones, and Buddhist monks: collected papers on the archaeology, epigraphy, and texts of monastic Buddhism in India by Gregory Schopen

Bodhisattvas of the forest and the formation of the Mahāyāna: a study and translation of the Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā-sūtra by Daniel Boucher

Indian esoteric Buddhism: a social history of the Tantric movement by Ronald M. Davidson

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2011 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea that the proof lies simply in personal testing is a bit risky. Followers of every other religion have loads of testimonies how God, gods, angels, saints, etc. helped the faithful in myriad ways. Also, as the Buddha explained in different texts, like the Brahmajala Sutta, followers of other doctrines base their views on what they have experienced.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2011 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

muni said:

No practice without guidance of "those who understand", or without teachings.

Astus wrote:

Thus the reason for investigating what the correct teaching is, that may include historical validity too.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2011 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Shin Buddhism a 'spiritual path for busy people'

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't really see yet how Shin Buddhism could become even the most popular among Buddhist schools, not to mention in a whole country. That's because of three reasons: 1. requires faith not just in rebirth but in external buddhas too, 2. has no meditation practices that are so popular today and promises no immediate results, 3. reminds many people of Christianity.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2011 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Are you a buddhist when...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you often think about being human? Nevertheless, it is a good question you made. Without establishing a concept there's no identification with it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2011 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: Shin Buddhism a 'spiritual path for busy people'

Content:

Astus wrote:

I believe Shin Buddhism has a profound message, however, it is to be understood strictly within the Mahayana context and no other way. Unlike most of the other Buddhist school, Shin Buddhism doesn't have a practice to offer to non-believers. It is also interesting to note how Shinran and his followers were against non-Buddhist practices like worshipping gods.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2011 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: Defining Buddhism - Theravada/Mahayana/Varayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

This argument on that the Mahayana sutras and tantras were taught by the Buddha because the omniscient lama says so is very much like "The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it." That isn't an argument at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2011 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a bit funny that God can be seen in the Shin school of Buddhism. What I mean is that Shinshu is a very, if not the most simplified form of Buddhism where the primary goal is to attain birth through faith. Now, this whole God concept is a load of misguided interpretation that has nothing to do with attaining birth in the Pure Land of Amita Buddha. Since it has nothing to do with it there is no point in assuming any relevance to Jodo Shinshu. The Pure Land sutras don't talk about any God, neither do the seven patriarchs. What basis is there of this abstract conceptual proliferation within the Pure Land context? Nothing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2011 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

There is pretty clear indications that Amitabha literature and modes of conceiving and writing Amitabha's pure land are very influenced by Persian culture.

Astus wrote:

The most important parts are the vow and the buddha-land as a safe place for liberation

because these are the essentials for attaining enlightenment in that way. Other details make little or no difference at all. And the Pure Land school with focus on recitation and the 18th vow is quite an East Asian thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2011 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Karmamudra-the reality, the myth

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting case of karmamudra:

There is another reason vetalas were so important. Sexual practice ("karmamudra") was central in Indian Tantra. It was said to be the swiftest and surest Tantric method, for those capable of it. A difficulty was finding someone willing to do engage in it with you—since the early forms of karmamudra were considered utterly disgusting. The usual approach, for men, was to hire a low-caste prostitute. Not everyone was able to do this, due to lack of funds or other practical problems. If you were a monk, there were also tiresome issues of vinaya—the monastic vows, which prohibit sex with women.

An alternative was to raise a vetali (female vetala). At a certain point, an official ruling was made that for a monk to practice karmamudra with a vetali was not a violation of vinaya. This made the practice extremely popular. Or, at any rate, there was considerable demand for information on how to raise vetalis.

Authentic sexual practice necessarily benefits both parties. You wouldn't know that from reading some of the male-oriented literature on the topic; but any attempt to "use" a prostitute, slave, or corpse for karmamudra, in a one-sided way, is entirely self-defeating. Clueful Tantrikas understand this, and practice accordingly. Vetalas and vetalis are often malevolent—like humans—but can be transformed by Tantric practice—just as we can. All sentient beings have Buddha-nature; the undead are no exception. Mainly due to karmamudra, it seems that there were many highly-realized vetalis in India at the time of the Mahasiddhas. No doubt some were famed as teachers as well as consorts.

In fact, at the dawn of Tantra, at least one vetali became fully enlightened in this way. She is Vajra Vetali, Queen of the Vampires, who attained Buddhahood as the consort of Yamantaka. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote a hair-raising invocation of her that is regularly practiced in his Shambhala centers: "You enjoy drinking the blood of ego . . . As night falls, you cut the aortas of the perverters of the teachings."

<http://buddhism-for-vampires.com/the-tibetan-book-of-the-undead>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2011 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the opening page of the site most of the quotes are from:

"Imagine a religion without original sin, judgment, a wrathful God, a multitude of gods and saints, an eternal hell, Satan, a sense of guilt, a personality cult, idolizing a book, a blood sacrifice for atonement, a rejection of personal experience, holy wars, hypocritical rules, sexism, a cultish mindset, and money and power obsessions. Luckily, a religion without all of this negative core baggage does exist and it is called Shin Buddhism."

<http://buddhistfaith.tripod.com/beliefs/index.html>

And you still maintain that Shinshu and Christianity are "ultimately" the same. It's just that apparently they are not.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Serenity,

Explain this to me. If all religions and spiritual traditions teach ultimately the same why is it that no prophet, philosopher or enlightened master who were founders and outstanding teachers of a particular doctrine never said that the others before them and contemporary with them teach the same? Shakyamuni Buddha did not agree with any of the other religions whether it was the Jains, brahmins or other sorts but rather refuted their views? Abraham could have just say that those of other faiths are fine, Moses could have accept the Egyptian religion, Jesus could have praised the Pharisees and Samaritans, Mohamed could have get along fine with the Jews and Christians, etc. But none of them did that. Shankara and other Hindu masters were eager to refute the Buddhists and vice versa. When Chinese Buddhists met Christian priests they composed treatises to refute their faith and correct their understanding of Buddhism while the priests were eager to convert the misguided idol worshippers they saw in Buddhists. And then today when we have those who claim all religions are the same in essence are not accepted in the organised religions and they don't agree with the orthodox doctrines of any religion. It is rather that those who believe in the unity of religions simply form another, although very loose group of people among all the others. So, why is it that Buddha, Jesus and Mohamed, instead of going along with the existing religions, started new ones and refuted the others as mistaken? At least they should have known that it's all the same truth everywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 19th, 2011 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: God in Buddhism

Content:

Serenity509 said:

Jesus told his disciples to follow the teachings of the Pharisees but not their example. There are New Testament scholars today who contend that Jesus himself was a Pharisee. Muhammad recognized Jews and Christians as "people of the book." Hinduism regarded the Buddha as an Avatar of Vishnu. Buddhism incorporated the folk beliefs and practices of the different areas where it spread. Jainism recognized the multifaceted nature of truth as part of its philosophy. The appreciation for different religious viewpoints has existed among the world's religions for centuries.

Astus wrote:

You seem to mistake subjugation of other religions' elements to accepting their teachings. Sure, you can find ancient Indian gods in Buddhism, but in the position of being mortal and incapable of any assistance to attain enlightenment. Buddha is an avatar in Hinduism but only in the form of being a trap for non-believers and a preacher of ahimsa. Saying that, for instance, Jesus was a teacher of moral discipline from a Buddhist perspective does not equate him even to a stream-enterer, not to mention a bodhisattva.

Guifeng Zongmi - Chan and Huayan master of Tang dynasty China - writes this of Confucianism and Taoism:

"the essential meaning of the outer teachings merely lies in establishing [virtuous] conduct based on this bodily existence and does not lie in thoroughly investigating the ultimate source of this bodily existence. The myriad things that they talk about do not have to do with that which is beyond tangible form. Even though they point to the great Way as the origin, they still do not fully illuminate the pure and impure causes and conditions of conforming to and going against [the flow of] origination and extinction. Thus, those who study [the outer teachings] do not realize that they are provisional and cling to them as ultimate."

(Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity, tr. Peter Gregory)

From Ven. Sheng-yen:

Do Buddhists Believe in the Existence of God?

The word God or god has many definitions. There is the God of religionists and the God of philosophers. In fact, there are many different "Gods" in religion, and many different "Gods" in philosophy. Depending on the standpoint taken while viewing God, God changes according to the requirements of that standpoint.

Some Christians say the Confucian tian or shangdi is the same as the Christian God. But in fact, the supreme Confucian God is only a philosophical, pantheistic god loved by humans but without the capacity to reciprocate. It is similar to the God of the agnostics. In contrast, the Christian God has a human personality, and he is the Creator, existing separately from the cosmos he created; he is the omnipotent sovereign of everything that exists.

...

The Daoist supreme deity is the Jade Emperor, who is a different God from those of Confucianism, Christianity, and Hinduism. From the Buddhist cosmological

perspective, God in both Daoism and Islam is equivalent to the Lord of Trayastrimsa Heaven, the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods. The Christian God (from Moses, Jesus, St. Paul, to St. Augustine, the status of God was elevated several steps) is equivalent to the Lord of the Great Brahma Heaven. And the Hindu God is equivalent to Mahesvara, the ruler of the Heaven of Ultimate Form. The Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods is the second heaven in the realm of sense desire, so it is very close to the human world. The Great Brahma Heaven is in the First Dhyana Heavens in the realm of form. The Heaven of Ultimate Form is the highest heaven in the realm of form. ... Anybody interested in gaining a thorough understanding of this issue is urged to compare the concept of God in different religions to the twenty-eight heavens of the three realms in Buddhist literature. ...

The ruler in each heaven has some propensity to arrogance, and likes to tell his ministers and subjects that he is the one and only creator or sovereign god. This is similar to an earthly monarch [in ancient China] who, despite calling himself "this person of little virtue" (guaren), nevertheless thinks he is the greatest king on the earth second to none. ... The same attitude motivates the lords in various heavens to call themselves the one and only sovereign-creator. Some of them even bragged to the Buddha. Is any one of these gods really the creator of our universe? Hardly so - it is impossible for a single god to have the power to create the universe. Rather, the universe is engendered by the karmic energies of sentient beings and takes its form according to multiple conditions.

From what is written above, we can see that Buddhists do recognize the existence of Gods, but not as the creators or rulers of our cosmos. As for the Gods of philosophers, Buddhists do not believe in their existence, because such Gods are only theoretical constructions based on suppositions and inferences without empirical verification.

...

Buddhists do not believe that God is the creator, nor do they think any God has the authority to control the fortunes of sentient beings. To Buddhists, a God is merely one kind of being within the six destinies.

(Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p. 41-43)

Also see:

Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera:

<http://www.buddhanet.net/budsas/ebud/whatbudbeliev/259.htm>

Access to Insight: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#comparative>,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#god>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2011 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: Was the Buddha "FULLY" enlightened?

Content:

caveman said:

Can you or anyone address the REAL LIFE ACTIONS of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Real life actions must go along with real life teachings, I assume. From such teachings

one understands that desire is an affliction and the root of samsara. Those who have attained nirvana have no sensual desire but see that it is only pain, then why live in marriage at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2011 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: Was the Buddha "FULLY" enlightened?

Content:

caveman said:

Sir, the teaching state that nirvana is just as much an illusion as is samsara.

"But see that it is only pain". DUALITY, DUALITY.

No PAIN no PLEASURE you are talking DUALITY ().

"Then way live in marriage at all" .

You are joking aren't you.

Astus wrote:

Which teaching state that nirvana and samsara are both illusions? Mahayana, of course. Mahayana teachings also say that the whole life story of the Buddha was only for the education of beings. Mahayana also has the teaching that the Buddha is never born and never begotten a son.

The Buddha says in the Nirvana Sutra (ch. 7),

"Everybody says that Rahula is my son, that Suddhodana was my father and Maya my mother, that I carried on a secular career in my life, that I enjoyed peace and happiness [as a young prince], and that I abandoned all such things and sought the Way. People further say: "The prince of this king, of the great clan of Gautama, renounced worldly pleasures and sought the supramundane." But I had long since been away from worldly love and desire. I merely displayed all such things. Everybody says that I am a man. But truth to tell, I am not. O good man! I manifest myself in Jambudvipa and often enter Nirvana. But in truth I do not enter Nirvana at all. Yet all people say that the Tathagata is now dying. But the nature of the Tathagata, truth to tell, eternally does not die out. So you should know that I am one Eternal and Unchanging."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2011 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

So, Buddha is the product of mind. The mind is the product of what?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2011 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

LastLegend said:

The mind is empty.

Astus wrote:

Then how can it produce anything?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Pure Land is beyond samsara as it is a realm created by a buddha and not by deluded sentient beings' karma.
 2. Direction is understood in our normal everyday understanding. Even today when we say west we don't think about its cosmological relativity, how much less thousands of years ago.
 3. We could say it is a planet, however, that would be mixing our current cosmology with a traditional one. Also, planets and such are modern human concepts and not the views of those outside of this paradigm.
 4. Understanding Nirvana as total extinction is not the Mahayana understanding.
 5. The Pure Land is only mind and it is as real as our realm which is also only mind. There is no disagreement between Chan and Pure Land on this, only people who can't see how these are not contradictory at all.
 6. I assume your question was why Shakyamuni isn't as honoured as other Buddhas. That is not actually true, Shakyamuni's statues and paintings are found in many temples and there are Mahayana schools where he is the main buddha.
 7. Saha world is a reference to this human world we now live in. If we happened to colonise the whole solar system then that'd be the Saha world.
- +1 Recitation itself can have a positive effect on one's mind. That is not the criterion of being a Pure Land Buddhist. The definitive thing is the intention, i.e. having faith in Amita Buddha's vow and wishing to be born in his Pure Land. To reinforce that attitude and maintain the right view is what practices are for. Also, when recitation (and possibly visualisation) is used to purify the mind, it is the thought of Amita Buddha that takes over the thoughts of samsara, thus forming a connection between us, the Buddha and the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 4:33 AM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

LastLegend said:

Because it is empty, it can and not at the same time.

Astus wrote:

If it can produce something from nothing, that is a violation of causality. If it can't produce anything it is not true that the Buddha is made by mind. If both are true then both faults apply.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sönam,

East Asian Buddhism uses the Ten Realms (十界) system. In brief:

The lowest six realms are known as the Six Paths or Six Realms. These six states of existence are subjected to birth and death, and then rebirth for many lives. One's state of existence depends on one's karmic activities. With evil karmic power, one will be born in the lowest three realms, known as Three Evil Path (of transmigration). With good and kind karma, one will be born in the upper three realms, known as Three Good Paths (of transmigration).

The upper four realms are known as the Four Holy Realms. These four states of existence are beyond birth and death and liberated from the Samara.

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/oldweb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach4.htm>

More info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_spiritual_realms,

<http://web.singnet.com.sg/~alankhoo/DharmaRealm.htm>,

<http://ronaldc.wordpress.com/2007/11/29/buddhism%E2%80%99s-ten-spiritual-realms-in-simple-terms/>, <http://www.cttbusa.org/dharmataalks/10drealms.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

LastLegend said:

How can there be truth and false when it is empty?

How can there be caused or not caused if it is empty?

Astus wrote:

So with calling it empty you can avoid actually verbalising it. That's sneaky.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

Jinzang said:

Emptiness and cause and effect are not contradictory. It is only because phenomena are empty that cause and effect are possible.

Astus wrote:

Then is mind within the realm of causality or not? And buddhas? Emptiness is equated with dependent origination by Nagarjuna. Could we say then that mind is a result of causes and conditions just as any common thing? If so, buddhas are nothing but cheap tales for kids.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Pure Land there is no suffering, no compulsory birth and death (生死 "birth-death" is a synonym of samsara), guaranteed enlightenment, created by a buddha. That's why it is not considered samsara. Also, as mentioned, the four holy realms are above samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2011 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Sönam said:

This is not vajrayana pov ...

Astus wrote:

I meant it as an explanation not as a representation of Vajrayana. Pure Land is not a Vajrayana school anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2011 at 12:40 AM

Title: Nirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've been reading the Nirvana Sutra this week and now I finished about 20% of it. So far one of the things I've been wondering about is that how could this text could gain such a fame. It keeps repeating its only message that the Tathagata is eternal but otherwise nothing of importance. I'd like to ask those who have found this sutra deep and

interesting what exactly it is that caught their attention. Because so far it is pretty boring in my view.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2011 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rory,

Nice to see you add new perspectives here.

A few things. The teaching of "mind only" is very much in line with Huayan as well as Chan, Tiantai and Chinese Pure Land. Yogacara, i.e. Faxiang is understood as the "consciousness-only" (vijñaptimātra, 唯識) school while the others are "mind-only" (cittamātra, 唯心). More on this: <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/lai4.htm>, <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-JOCP/lai.htm>.

It is useful to see how in China there has never been any separate Pure Land School, that was something Honen created/started for the first time in history. In China (+ Korea and Vietnam) Pure Land and Chan are not separate schools but only different practices that are used together most of the time. More on this:

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf2003.%20T%20Chan%20and%20Pure%20Land.pdf>.

It was PadmaVasambha who brought up intellectuals and recitation as a remedy.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 26th, 2011 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could we say then that mind is a result of causes and conditions just as any common thing? If so, buddhas are nothing but cheap tales for kids.

kirtu said:

Really? Bodhisattvas are cheap tales for kids? Paul Rusesabagina, Irena Sendler, Dr. Martin Luther King, Cheif Joseph, Thich Nhat Hahn - these are cheap tales for kids?

Pure mind, perfect mind, holding the precepts purely - these are cheap tales for kids?

Kirt

Astus wrote:

Check again the reasoning. Buddha-mind being only a conditional phenomenon

invalidates buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 26th, 2011 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land beyond Samsara?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a matter of making difference between consciousness (識) and mind (心). In the Faxiang/Hosso school of Xuanzang there is no buddha-nature but only the eight consciousnesses and everything arises from the defiled alayavijnana. In other schools (like Huayan) they accept universal buddha-nature and ultimately everything arises from the pure dharmadhatu, i.e. buddha-mind. So there are consciousness-only and mind-only.

No Pure Land dedicated community in Hungary except for Chinese groups where it is a major part of their Buddhism. The closest one is Adrian Cirlea's Shinshu temple in Bucharest that I know of.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2011 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

kirtu said:

Check again the reasoning - we have visible manifestations of bodhisattvas even if they aren't Buddhist and their actions come from their minds and their intentions.

Thought is a conditioned phenomena, Buddha activity (conditioned) comes from Buddha-mind which can be seen in Huayen and Cittamatrīn thought as possessing reality (or as being real).

Bodhisattva activity and Buddhahood are real because they ease or eliminate the real experience of ultimately illusory suffering of apparently real sentient beings who also don't truly exist and just abide in the mode of sentient beings. But such verbiage does not cool their thirst.

Astus wrote:

Manifestations are the work of the deluded minds of sentient beings grasping at forms and sounds. What activity is there then? So it turns out that whether it is conditioned or unconditioned, buddhas and bodhisattvas are illusions. If the real buddha is the mind what is there to conceive as buddha or mind? Nothing really. Free from ideas all words and phrases can be used at one's will. That is buddha activity. Conditioned and unconditioned are labels to assist the readers. This is not negating the conditioned but saying that if buddha-mind is understood as something conditioned it will be just another concept. And if we understand it is unconditioned it reveals that all forms of ideas are still within the realm of conditioned. Then it is not logical to say that any

activity of a buddha is conditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to be a common idea that there are no women in Sukhavati because they have to change sex. In the three primary sutras I have found no such statement, unlike in the Medicine Buddha Sutra where it is explicitly stated there are no women. In commentary literature it is indeed said that no women exist in the Pure Land (see: Visions of Sukhavati, p. 299). At other places it is understood that while the doctrinal position was that there are only males, women often believed they need no sex change to be born there.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2011 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Only the 35th vow addresses the issue of women and doesn't state anywhere there are no females there. Also, the vow gives only the option of changing sex, it doesn't say women have to do that.

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, women in the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha-lands of the ten quarters who, having heard my Name, rejoice in faith, awaken aspiration for Enlightenment and wish to renounce womanhood, should after death be reborn again as women, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2011 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

A source of the concept that there are no women in the Pure Land:

"Women, the disabled, and those of the two vehicles
Are never born in the Pure Land of happiness as they are;
The sages of the Tathagata's pure lotus
Are born transformed from Dharmakara's lotus of perfect enlightenment."
(<http://www.shinranworks.com/shorterworks/gateways1.htm> by Vasubandhu)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2011 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

That 35th vow says that if women want to be born as men it can be done. It doesn't say sexless nor does it talk about attaining birth in the Pure Land. On what do you base your interpretation?

Gods are also born through transformation and they still have their genitals all right.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2011 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Aemilius said:

What would they need them for ?

Astus wrote:

No eunuch or hermaphrodite can take the higher ordination. Even if there is no use of such organs within the sangha. Also, only gods of the lowest heavens use their sexual organs but none above. I assume it is not about the use of them but the integrity of the body.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 29th, 2011 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sukhavati is advertised in the sutra with incredibly luxurious features from food and clothing to baths and music. Pretty heavenly. Then how could there be no sex?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 29th, 2011 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Quotes from the Larger Sutra:

Vow 38: "If, when I attain buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not obtain

clothing as soon as such a desire arises in their minds, and if fine robes as prescribed and praised by the buddhas should not be spontaneously provided for them to wear, and if these clothes should need sewing, bleaching, dyeing, or washing, may I not attain perfect enlightenment."

"those born in that buddha land are endowed with such bodies of purity and provided with various exquisite sounds, supernatural powers, and virtues. The palaces in which they dwell; their clothing, food, and drink; the wonderful flowers; and the various kinds of incense and adornments are like those naturally provided in the sixth heaven of the world of desire."

"The śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, and humans there have lofty and brilliant wisdom and are masters of the supernatural powers. They are all of one form, without any differences, but are called 'heavenly beings' and 'humans' simply by analogy with states of existence in other worlds. They are of noble and majestic countenance, unequaled in all the worlds, and their appearance is superb, unmatched by any being, heavenly or human. They are all endowed with bodies of naturalness, emptiness, and infinity."

"Devas and humans in the land of Amitāyus are each provided with robes, food and drink, flowers, perfume, ornaments, silken canopies, and banners, and are surrounded by exquisite sounds. Their abodes, palaces, and pavilions are exactly in accordance with the size of their bodies. One, two, or even innumerable jewels appear before them, as soon as they wish. In addition, beautiful jeweled fabric covers the ground where all the devas and humans walk."

So, from this sutra we learn that the beings there have uniform bodies but at the same time their sizes are different. They have no desire but at the same time wish for food, clothes, water temperature, music, etc. They have brilliant wisdom and supernatural powers while at the same time they have to spend aeons to attain any sort of enlightenment.

If we think about it a bit then we can come to the conclusion that the Pure Land appears to those who are there according to their individual needs and perspectives to eventually help them attain liberation. That makes any fixed interpretation of the Pure Land impossible and contrary to the intention of Amita Buddha to accept all kinds of beings with all kinds of karmas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 30th, 2011 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Madhyama Pratipada said:

The doctrine that a woman must be reborn as a man in order to attain Buddhahood - 変生男子之説 (Japanese: henjo nanshi setsu; Chinese: biàn shēng nánzǐ zhī shuō) - is not at all unfamiliar to Pureland Buddhism. To dwell in Sukhāvatī, the female form must be

shed and transformed into male form. In the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, the Buddha refers to the Pureland as being devoid of women, but there is no mention of it being devoid of men. Why is this so?

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra says,

If there is any woman who hears and holds to this chapter 'Ancient Accounts of Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja,' she will never be reborn with a female body. If there is any woman five hundred years after the pari nirvāṇa of the Tathāgata who hears this sutra and practices according to the teaching, she will immediately reach the dwelling of the Buddha Amitāyus in the Sukhāvatī world, surrounded by great bodhisattvas, and will be born on a jeweled seat in a lotus flower. Never again troubled by the [three poisons] of greed, anger, or ignorance, by arrogance or jealousy, he will attain the bodhisattva's transcendent powers and the acceptance of the nonorigination of all dharmas.

First of all, there is no need to take the Lotus Sutra as definitive from a Pure Land perspective. In fact, it isn't. There are some other sutras that have no problem with female buddhas, not to mention tantras (that are also part of the Chinese Canon). Also, Guanyin is female.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 30th, 2011 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Mantras

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mantra sources:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/mantra0.html>

<http://www.visiblemantra.org/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 30th, 2011 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think there is an important point that some have missed. The path of Pure Land is not only for those who can detach from the body and say that there are no sexes and this body is just a momentary conglomeration of the four elements. This path is also (or as Shinran would say: especially) for those who are fully loaded with attachments and karma and so identifying with our present sex is nothing extraordinary at all. Indeed, if we didn't do that we would be free from all our lust toward others. So to say that no women but only men are born there is explicit chauvinism - not that it doesn't exist in many Buddhist texts - and it is also a projection into the three essential Pure Land sutras as they don't exclude women at all, not to mention the part of Vaidehi in the

propagation of this teaching by the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2011 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemelius,

Tell me, if gender doesn't matter, why is it that Amitabha is male and Guanyin is female?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2011 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

rory said:

in the Lotus Sutra, the dragon king's daughter attains buddhahood in her female form.

Astus wrote:

Actually the dragon princess had to change first into male, a classical case.

Śāriputra spoke to the daughter of the nāga king, saying:

“You say that you will soon attain the highest path. This is difficult to believe. Why is this? The female body is polluted; it is not a fit vessel for the Dharma. How can you attain highest enlightenment?

“The buddha path is long. One can only attain it after diligently carrying out severe practices, and completely practicing the perfections over immeasurable kalpas. Moreover, the female body has five obstructions. The first is the inability to become a great Brahma. The second is the inability to become Śakra. The third is the inability to become Māra, and the fourth is the inability to become a universal monarch (cakravartin). The fifth is the inability to become a buddha. How can you with your female body quickly become a buddha?”

...

Then the assembly there all saw the daughter of the nāga king instantly transform into a man, perfect the bodhisattva practices, go to the vimalā world in the south, sit on a jeweled lotus flower, and attain highest, complete enlightenment, become endowed with the thirty-two marks and eighty excellent characteristics, and expound the True Dharma universally for the sake of all sentient beings in the ten directions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2011 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: The fate of Arhats?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Question 1: Is there an end of samsara or there is existence beyond that?

Hinayana and some Mahayana teachings say there is an end, other Mahayana says there isn't. If there is an end there is parinirvana from what there is no return. If there is no end nobody can finish existence only change a samsaric to a nirvanic existence.

Question 2: Without an end what is non-samsaric existence?

The four kinds of lands of nobles (arhat, pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva, buddha) is an option. What exactly those are and how they differ from the usual six realms is something I have no definite information on besides the usual descriptions of specific buddha-lands. Or, as some sutras suggest, it is this realm we are in now with the difference being in the perspective of the beings thus it is very much like the case of nirvana-with-residue in Hinayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2011 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

MP,

Indeed, more reasons why people have thought that there can be no women in Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 3rd, 2011 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: The fate of Arhats?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The small problem with an eternal world is that we practically arrive at a sort of dynamic Hindu philosophy where the ultimate aim is to arrive at the universal dharmadhatu - the realm of the eternal buddha. Thus we arrive at the problem of eternalism that was avoided by the early teachings.

"However far the six contact-media go, that is how far objectification goes. However far objectification goes, that is how far the six contact media go. With the remainderless fading & stopping of the six contact-media, there comes to be the stopping, the allaying of objectification."

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.174.than.html>

Whatever samsaric or non-samsaric realm we would conceive falls within the domain of the six sense media. That's why I said that the Mahayana conception of the non-abiding nirvana - the basis for eternal buddhas - is virtually the nirvana-with-remainder.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rory,

Arhats and bodhisattvas can be either males or females but not buddhas, it is because of the mentioned hindrances (五障 - pañca āvaranāni) of women that they can't become Brahmā-kings, Indras, Māra-kings, Cakravarti-kings, or Buddhas. Later Mahayana (especially Vajrayana) did overwrite that theoretically.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism as something that matches with science and rationalism is a modern myth, a way of presenting Buddhism to those conditioned by such thoughts. But as you have noticed yourself, there is lot of "religion" going on in this religion too.

There are people who have difficulty conceiving an actual Pure Land and so they say it is symbolic. It is a similar argument when some think rebirth, gods, spirits and buddhas are only symbolic and not real at all. Of course, many teachings do have a symbolic value but that is just one level. Reducing seemingly irrational elements into comfortable theories is on one hand a creative way of adapting, on the other it is being blind to the different facets and layers.

Why no sex is mentioned in the Pure Land while other delicacies are there? Basically because monks live in celibacy and it might be counter-productive if they meditated on lustful acts. That is because meditation and most of the Buddhist teachings are primarily/originally for monastics.

The teaching of Pure Land, just like all the other teachings, are expedient means to guide people to liberation. Until liberation is attained the practitioner should hold on tightly to the method just like one would grasp firmly on the raft in the middle of a dangerous river. Only after one has left behind the perilous waters it is wise to let go of the vessel.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Mantras

Content:

Astus wrote:

The <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=43&t=235> used commonly in

Chinese Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Aemilius said:

People here seem to think that attaining enlightenment is like acquiring a car or a new house or an estate, they themselves remain the same, they only get a new thing added to their identity, a thing that is called "liberation" or "enlightenment".

This is contrary to the actual truth of the matter.

If you become a new being, a higher being, your previous identity as a man or a woman dissolves and dies.

Astus wrote:

So, are you on the position that beings in the Pure Land are without gender, they have a non-human body?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: "On White Women and Buddhism"

Content:

Astus wrote:

daelm,

That is news to me. Is there a policy change in FGS?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Ryoto said:

Monks also don't live in mansions, get to eat whatever food they want whenever they want etc. According to Buddhist teachings this may also be counter productive so I don't think this is a very good argument for no sex.

Astus wrote:

The beauty/purity of the Pure Land is something one may contemplate without much emotional disturbance. The beauty of the body is, on the other hand, the opposite of meditating on the impurity/ugliness of the body.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2011 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Will said:

The Pure Lands are ideal places for further practice, not pleasure palaces.

Astus wrote:

Well, in a sense it is the penultimate pleasure palace, the Land of Pleasure (Sukhavati).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2011 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Belincia, so it is!

"The working of blind passion also causes us not to want to go to the Pure land and makes us feel uneasy worrying about death when we become even slightly ill. Impossible it seems to leave this old house of agitation where we have wandered aimlessly since the beginning of time, nor can we long for the Pure Land of peace which we have yet to know. This is due to blind passion so truly powerful and overwhelming. But no matter how reluctant we may be, when our life in this world comes to an end, beyond our control, then for the first time we go to the land of Fulfillment. Those who do not want to go immediately are the special concern of true compassion. For this very reason the Vow of true compassion is completely dependable, and our birth in the Pure Land is absolutely certain.

If our hearts were filled with joyful happiness and we desired to go swiftly to the Pure Land, we might be misled to think that perhaps we are free of blind passion."

(<http://www.livingdharma.org/Tannisho/TannishoChaptersI-X.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2011 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Rory, great job.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2011 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

rory said:

Oops I posted in the wrong thread. Anyway, Pure Land is older than either Tibetan or Ch'an schools. The Pure Land sutras are some of the oldest in the Mahayana canon.

Astus wrote:

It is a bit strange to say the Pure Land "school" since while the practices and teachings were present for long there was no specific organisation until Honen called themselves such a school. Indeed, even today it is only in Japan we see such churches.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2011 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: Directory of European Dharma magazines?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not familiar with the topic but here are one French and one German magazine:

<http://www.bouddhisme-actu.net/>

<http://www.buddhismus-aktuell.de/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 6th, 2011 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nosta,

1) Sexism can be applied to both sexes.

3) Fortunately there is no such thing as "Buddhism's eyes" but a large variety of teachings and interpretations.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 7th, 2011 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Agganna Sutta - human origins

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will,

An expression is defined by context. Birth in heavens is always spontaneous, mind-made birth. Generating a mind-made body in meditation is a different context. The word connects them in the sense that both are mentally generated, one by ignorance, one by conscious effort.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

So, are you on the position that beings in the Pure Land are without gender, they have a non-human body?

Aemilius said:

One obvious thing that is forgotten these days is the tantric visualisation process where you start with lotus & moon seat, then seed syllable and so on... this describes birth through transformation.

Birth through transformation is present in Theravada and the Mahayana, it is described in detail in tantras, and in the sadhanas. There are some variations in birth through transformation as it is visualised in different classes of tantra.

According to a tantric teaching of the 12 links of dependent origination, the process of visualisation transforms the 12 links, it transforms the links of your present life, and your future life; in the 11th link you attain the birth through transformation and you become a Sambhogakaya.

Astus wrote:

What does all that have to do with Pure Land teachings? I see no connection. People who are born in the PL are not sambhogakaya buddhas and they don't do any tantric techniques beforehand.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Expulsion for raped Buddhist nun ?!?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/What+is+a+position+of+a+bhikkhuni+being+raped%3F-a0158093981>

"The Vinaya, a voluminous collection of rules for the monks and nuns first written down in the fifth or sixth century CE, says she [Uppalavanna] was raped, completely disregarding the foregoing poem and her power of iddhi. (31) This story is told to make the point that if a nun is not willing to have sex and is raped, there is no fault on her part, and she has not broken the rule of celibacy. The same story is told in the commentary on the Dhammapada, which says she was raped while meditating alone in the forest, adding that as a consequence nuns were thereafter required to live together."
(<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-169176308.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 12th, 2011 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

The Pure Land practices as understood in East-Asia does not involve Tibetan phowa,

while phowa is not restricted to birth in Amita Buddha's land. The general view of the Pure Land school in East Asia is that it is the optimal path for deluded sentient beings who have little time and capacity to engage in complicated practices. This is the difference made by Shandao about the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land. Tantric methods are clearly within the Path of Sages. And all this confusion of different traditions have little to do with the original topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 12th, 2011 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Tantric sexual bliss vs. dhyanic bliss

Content:

Astus wrote:

Vitarka and vicāra don't exist in the 2nd dhyāna already, how could then it be called conceptual? Nirvikalpa-jñāna also exists in common Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2011 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Tantric sexual bliss vs. dhyanic bliss

Content:

Huseng said:

The claim, though, that I'm trying to understand is that the nirvikalpa samādhi achieved in tantra is superior to the one achieved through conventional dhyāna.

Astus wrote:

If it is non-conceptual (nirvikalpa), how could it be in any form higher or lower? They agree in Vajrayana that the emptiness of Madhyamaka and Tantra are not different, the paths/methods are distinct however.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2011 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Astus wrote:

How strange that self-aware wisdom is originally not self-aware.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 15th, 2011 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

rory said:

As to my keeping a woman's body, why not? Why would there be hang-ups in Sukhavati? Kannon has a female body.

Astus wrote:

Also, how does a neither male nor female body look? Like a small child or a very old person?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 15th, 2011 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides the Buddha's male genitals he also has half of his chest out of the robe.

A guess it is possible to tell the difference between who's male and who's female:

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 15th, 2011 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Women in Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

An important point of the Pure Land teaching - as it has developed in East Asia, especially by Honen - is that it is for deluded beings who are profoundly attached to their samsaric existence. The difference between being a PL follower or a non-Buddhist here is that one is very much aware of one's existence as a deluded being and that samsara is the place of suffering. The land of Amita Buddha itself thus is meant to be understood as simply as one can, a wonderful place without any pain where one can eventually attain enlightenment and liberate all beings. In order to conform with common people it is absolutely all right to say that one reappears there in the body one took refuge in Amita Buddha's vow. Whether it actually happens like that or not, how could anyone tell? And that's an important point here. Neither Honen, nor Shinran, nor most of the Pure Land teachers claimed to be enlightened, they had no direct knowledge of the Pure Land itself. They have simply relied on the teachings that say anyone can attain birth through relying on Amita Buddha's vows. It is an inclusive doctrine where sinners and saints can both attain enlightenment.

It is no big problem to come up with different theories about how and why there would or would not be genders. But it's losing the primary goal of the teaching itself, that is, to comply with the karmic inclinations of ordinary humans. This is part of the skill in means of the teaching of Pure Land. Therefore it seems appropriate to say that men and women can be born there in a perfect body, whatever they think a perfect body is. What difference does this faith means? That they have less worries about what is the Pure Land like and if it is really what they want or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2011 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Chinese Buddhist canon

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another book to look into:

The fundamental teachings of early Buddhism: A comparative study based on the Sutranga portion of the Pali Samyutta-Nikaya and the Chinese Samyuktagama by Mun-keat Choong

Also interesting:

Metaphor and Literalism in Buddhism The Doctrinal History of Nirvana by Soon-Il Hwang

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2011 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hinayāna'

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hinayana is an illusory teaching attributed to deluded ascetics who pretend to be the true Buddhists. In reality such Hinayana has never existed but served well to conceive a Mahayana and build arrogance in those who felt insecure. Based on a certain Madhyamaka teaching if we agree that arhats realise the same emptiness as bodhisattvas and buddhas and that emptiness is inseparable from compassion, the self-absorbed lowly sravaka is clearly a fantasy monster only.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2011 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hinayāna'

Content:

Namdrol said:

We don't agree that a certain Madhyamaka teaching teaches this.

Astus wrote:

Didn't Tsongkhapa argue that even sravakas realise the emptiness of both personality and phenomena?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hinayāna'

Content:

Namdrol said:

He did, but he was corrected on this point by Gorampa.

Tsongkhpa is not Candrakirti.

Astus wrote:

OK, so it is not that there isn't such form of Madhyamaka but rather that you take a view that doesn't accept it just like many others don't agree with the Gelug interpretation (not to mention those who have never even heard of it). No big deal really, there are many views in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 2:35 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Military Sangha (U.S.)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see little problem with having a Buddhist chaplain and community in any military until it is meant to represent the Three Treasures. It seems contrary to Western ideas about Buddhism that it is all about peace and serenity but as a major religion it is no different in its cultural and political presence from Christianity and Islam. When emperors, dictators and warlords took/take Buddhism as their preferred state religion the military is obviously included. Even gangsters can be Buddhists! And if those who commit evil acts understand that there are serious consequences in this life and the subsequent ones they may eventually reform themselves. If they realise that samsara is the place of suffering they might even turn their minds toward higher goals.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Military Sangha (U.S.)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not in the US but I seriously doubt that young men can chose only between the military or crime. What about young women first of all? They could join the military too but for some reason most of them don't make such a choice. Also, if for poor people the military is a good option then poorer countries would have lot bigger armies than the US, especially when they have a higher population. It is also an interesting phenomenon compared to the option of a military career that in many Buddhist countries poor families send a few children to the monasteries to ease their financial burden; this practice was also common in Europe before the materialist era. It would be a lot nicer if all those desperate young people joined the community of Buddha instead of a group meant for killing and conquer.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 3:38 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Military Sangha (U.S.)

Content:
Astus wrote:
Greg,

Indeed. A story of a man I personally know who was conscripted (conscription was abolished in Hungary about 9 years ago) but didn't want to leave his wife and baby daughter for years because they needed the money he earned went to the dentist and had most of his teeth pulled out because then he was not eligible for service. So yes, there is always a way out.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 4:06 AM
Title: Re: Chinese Buddhist canon
Content:

some1 said:
However, English translations (e.g. <http://www.fodian.net/world/sutras.html>) from the Chinese canon are still far less extensive or complete compared to the Pali canon. I think that is partly due the bigger difference between Chinese and Indo-European languages, and the larger volume of Mahayana text in general.

Astus wrote:
I think there are significantly more people who speak Chinese, Korean or Japanese than those who know Pali. However, there are lot more Western monks within Theravada than those in East Asian traditions and also more Western followers of Theravada generally than those of Chinese or Korean Buddhism. So it is the number of followers that makes the real difference. (Zen followers don't really count as only a handful of them consider themselves Buddhists.)

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 3:22 PM
Title: Re: Chinese Buddhist canon
Content:

Jnana said:
Doctrinally, all of the early texts are very similar. The only major differences are in word choice and how the basic pericopes are strung together to form larger units, and then how these larger units of sūtras are arranged into Āgamas/Nikāyas.

Astus wrote:
And that similarity led people to conclude it is the Theravada school that could preserve the best the original teachings, or the closest to the original ones, as a living tradition.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2011 at 4:05 PM
Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hīnayāna'

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Recently, many diverse Theravada practices were brought to Spirit Rock through the visit of Achaan Jumtien, a sixty-year-old monk from the jungles of Southern Thailand. In the course of nine days he taught thirty different practices. These included chakra practices (opening of the wisdom-eye and the heart center), skeleton practices (on the nature of the body), and meditations with the elements of earth, air, fire, water and space. He trained people to understand emptiness by resting in what he called the "Original Mind" or the "Natural State" and he offered practices unifying participants' consciousnesses with his own. He also performed many kinds of blessings, described exorcisms, taught chants, and offered protection rituals, visualizations and vows (including bodhisattva vows, practice vows and refuge vows). Throughout, he emphasized that freedom and emptiness and joy can be found in all circumstances. And this in only one week from one Theravada teacher!

It is essential to understand that "Theravada Buddhism" has no fixed definition. If we claim that the only true and complete locus for the tradition is the monastic sangha, then it is all too easy to undervalue the religious expression and practices of the "Theravada" laity. Regardless of how we choose to define Theravada Buddhism, we do not want to accept the label "Hinayana" for the tradition. The term itself is even more pejorative than the usual English translations of "the Small Vehicle" or the "the Lesser Vehicle." Hinayana could more literally be translated as the "crummy or lousy vehicle." (The Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary gives "inferior" and "defective" as translations for Hina.) When the word "Hinayana" was first used in Buddhist India it did not refer to any particular school of Buddhism, but rather to a selfish and arrogant attitude of particular practitioners. It is mostly through the quirks of history that it became a label used to contrast the Theravada with the Mahayana tradition.

It is also commonly assumed that the Theravada has different goals from the Mahayana. That is, the Theravada teaches the path to arhathood (a path to full enlightenment which neither develops all the qualities of a Buddha nor cultivates a vow to save all beings), while the Mahayana teaches the bodhisattva path to buddhahood that involves the altruistic vow to save all beings. Though often overlooked by writers on Theravada Buddhism the bodhisattva path has remained available within the Theravada tradition from before the rise of the Mahayana down to the present time. A small but significant number of Theravadan monks and teachers, some of whom were popularly considered to be arhats, have chosen this difficult option as their own."

<http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/the-treasures-of-the-theravada/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 21st, 2011 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

LastLegend said:

You are trying to verbalize the mind?

Astus wrote:

That's what is called "teaching" and "studying" in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 22nd, 2011 at 4:43 AM

Title: The Passing of Chan Master John Crook

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is with great sadness and sense of loss that we announce that Chan Master Dr John Crook has died suddenly at his home at Winterhead Hill Farm in Somerset, UK.

John was the first Western Dharma Heir of the late Chan Master Sheng-yen. He was the founding Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship which is a lay Chan Buddhist community with members and associates in UK and Europe. He was a pioneer who brought great wisdom and creativity to the translation of Chinese Chan Buddhism into a Western context. Through the establishment of the WCF and the training of its leaders he has ensured that this work will continue.

(<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/news-item+M5b5ed9f8ce5.html>)

<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/news-item+M5a90884dfd4.html>

<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/news-item+M52557a6a91f.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 22nd, 2011 at 5:23 AM

Title: Re: Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think that Buddhism is much different from any other field of knowledge. You learn about it, you understand it, you put it into practice. Trying to put something into practice what one has no or minimal information of is simply ineffective. So when it is said, "do meditation", it has to be clear what that meditation actually means and what the process of it is. If one knows only as much as to count the inhalation and exhalation that it is that much one can develop and attain. If one knows how to go from counting breath to eventually gaining insight into emptiness then that path one can go through. Ignorance is the root of suffering, on every level.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 22nd, 2011 at 3:20 PM

Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hīnayāna'

Content:

pueraeternus said:

Actually, many of these practices are probably remnants of ancient Mahayana practices, which existed in the region before the advent of Theravada as a state religion. Some of these practices are in no way endorsed by Theravadin orthodoxy, which stems from the Mahaviharin commentarial tradition. Hence, I am not sure if it is correct to assert all of these teachings under the rubric of Theravada.

Astus wrote:

I think it should be noted that there was a "purification" of Theravada in the 19th century. So when people think of Theravada as a "pure Buddhism" it is because of a modern development, a bias generated also by Western influence.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 23rd, 2011 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Use of the term 'Hīnayāna'

Content:

Nangwa said:

His translations are all agenda based.

Astus wrote:

Show me one he has no agenda. You can't. From the point of deciding to translate, in the process of choosing what to translate up to the point of polishing that translation is all influenced by the views of that translator. And if you say there is an "orthodox" and an "unorthodox" view, it just means you have your chosen agenda.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 24th, 2011 at 7:18 AM

Title: Re: Doubt about Pure Land and Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it highly misleading to conceive Chan and Pure Land as separate sects (except in Japan). Chan and Pure Land are merely different practices. It is meaningless to distinguish practitioners' views based on whether they prefer walking, sitting or bowing as primary meditation practice. Why is it said that Chan is superior than Pure Land? It's because using the name of Amitabha as the focus of attention to calm the mind is generally easier than not having any particular point of focus as in Chan. It is easier to conceive an ideal realm where one can attain liberation than to understand how one can already be a buddha. The real proof of this is apparent in the West too when you see all the phony crazy speaking Zen followers and those who could choose the Pure Land path with all sincerity.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 25th, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: and again ... Jesus is a bodhisattva

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jesus was a bodhisattva, that is definite. Why? Because Amaterasu is an emanation of Vairocana, etc. It is common Buddhist practice to "tame the local spirits". How is that a problem from a Buddhist perspective?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 25th, 2011 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: and again ... Jesus is a bodhisattva

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The story of Jesus tells the story of a person whose behavior was that of a bodhisattva. But that doesn't mean that any person(s) on whom the stories of Jesus may be based was a bodhisattva.

Astus wrote:

And I think it is totally irrelevant. Saying that "Jesus was a bodhisattva" is subordinating the figure of Jesus - as the most popular Western deity - to a Buddhist order of the universe. It is a way of religious conquer to change the view of people and emphasise aspects that agree with Buddhism (kindness, non-harming, self-sacrifice, patience, etc.) and downplay those that are important in Christianity (son of God, forgiveness of sins, sacrifice for God, resurrection, etc.).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 25th, 2011 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Did the Lotus Sutra render all previous sutras invalid

Content:

Astus wrote:

Many other sutras claim to be the ultimate and final teaching of the Buddha. In the end it is one's personal choice which text one should take the highest of all, as the source of distinguishing the true from the provisional. There is also no rule in Buddhism that one has to take only one sutra above others or that there must be an ultimate teaching. In fact, it is possible to interpret the Lotus Sutra in a way to say that every teaching is a skilful means to conform with sentient beings and there is no such thing as the "one true doctrine".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 25th, 2011 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Did the Lotus Sutra render all previous sutras invalid

Content:

Astus wrote:

You may not be aware of it that Nichiren followed the Tendai chronological order where the Lotus Sutra is said to be preached in the last 8 years of the Buddha's life and then finally he taught the Nirvana Sutra just before his passing. This of course has nothing to do with actual history as we understand it today but a sectarian classification of the teachings made originally in China. Nichiren tried to create a purified Tendai with his own modifications added. Other, non-Tendai based schools provide their own reasons how a different sutra or teaching is superior. Zen - in its radical form - says that relying on an scripture is an inferior view. The Jodo school says that the only way to reach liberation in the final age of Dharma is relying on Amida Buddha's power. The Shingon school differentiates between the exoteric and esoteric teaching, esoteric being superior and definitive. And if you look outside of Japan you find that the distinction between sects is almost non-existent. You should also see how Nichiren was fighting against every other established Buddhist school in order to be recognised and accepted by the ruling class of the country. The Lotus Sutra is similar in spirit to the struggles of Nichiren in the sense how it repeatedly praises itself without much deeper content compared to other more philosophical and meditative texts. This naturally made the Lotus Sutra a good choice for Zhiyi - the original founder of the Tiantai school, known in Japan as Tendai - to use it as the organising principle of the Buddha's teachings and a way of authenticating his own ideas that he projected into the sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 26th, 2011 at 4:06 AM

Title: Re: Doubt about Pure Land and Chan

Content:

rory said:

So you will find critiques. Pure Landers will say 99 out of 100 who practice Pure Land succeed, 1 out of 100 who practice Ch'an succeed.

Astus wrote:

That saying is attributed to Yongming Yanshou - well, he actually wrote it - who was a great master and wrote extensively on Chan and how Chan is in harmony with the other teachings. I'm mentioning this only to point again to the fact that while there are practices used widely by all sorts of Mahayana practitioners there is no such thing as a Pure Land school outside of the Japanese tradition. That means that the opposition between Pure Land and Chan followers is virtually a myth. Chinese Buddhists greet each other with "Amitufo" (Amita Buddha) - I think it says a lot.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 26th, 2011 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Doubt about Pure Land and Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Yinguang said, these are methods. When I say there was and is no Pure Land school outside of Japan I mean that in the sense of an institution, a separate church, organisation. Monks follow the same precepts, get ordination in the same way. The

differences are between local rules of a monastery. But there is hardly any monastic community dedicated solely to one form of practice or doctrine. Focus on a single method exists on an individual level so there are teachers emphasising their favourite way. But that is really an individual thing and not institutional. In a monastery some monks study sutras, some do recitations, some do meditation, some do administrative tasks, etc. They are all monks living in the same monastery under the same rules and doing the same ritual procedures.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 12:29 AM

Title: Re: Tantra of the Tachikawa-Ryu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yuukai (1345-1416) also played an important role in purging what was known as the Tachikawa school. ... The Tachikawa teachings were extirpated by orthodox Shingon: Yuukai burned all the writings of the Tachikawa school at his temple on Kouya-san, saving only a list of the texts destroyed.

(Taikou Yamasaki: Shingon - Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, p. 44)

The Tachikawa school appears to have indulged in the sexual rites practiced by the somewhat similar Shaktist sects of Tibet. In 1335, as the result of a memorial submitted by the Mount Kouya mongs against the Tachikawa school, its leader was exiled and books expounding its principles were ordered to be burned. Traces of its doctrines still survive, however, in existing Buddhist sects.

(Yoshiko Kurata Dykstra: Sources of Japanese Tradition, p. 180)

This Tachikawa school later spread to the province of Etchuu. In successive generations, two teachers, Kakumei and kakuin, lived on Mount Kouya [and taught Tachikawa doctrine there]. At this time, many secret manuals and texts of this heretical school were in circulation, often called "oral transmission of the secrets of esoteric doctrine." To this day, there are ignorant people who study such works and believe them to possess the loftiest thoughts. In truth, they are neither exoteric nor esoteric but merely so many stones wrapped in jade. ... Many people studied these teachings, but they did not meet with divine favor, and for the most part, both the teachings and the men have perished. A few are left, but i do not know how many.

(Sources of Japanese Tradition, quotes from Yuukai's Houkyoushou: "TD 77, no. 2456:847-849", quote on p. 189)

It is in Shingon and Tendai Buddhism that we find for the first time two movements that have been commonly labeled "heresies" (jakyō). For all its radical criticism of established Buddhism, even the Nichiren school was not disqualified by this label, and it remained a powerful trend within Buddhism. The Shingon and Tendai traditions, however, tried for centuries to assert a rather problematic distinction between "esoteric Buddhism", or "pure esotericism," and Tantrism (or "mixed esotericism"), that is, a form of Tantrism unexpurgated of its darker magical (and in particular sexual) elements. The Tachikawa branch is said to have emerged during the Kamakura period, with the

teachings of Ninkan (d.u.) and Monkan (1281-1357). It advocated sexual union as the fusion of the two mandalas and as the technique leading to the apotheosis called sokushin joubutsu ("becoming a buddha in this very body"). Certain aspects of the Vajrayana, which were considered if not entirely orthodox at least acceptable in Tibetan Buddhism, came to provoke strong reactions on the part of conventional Japanese Buddhists. Consequently, the Tachikawa movement was forbidden during the Muromachi period. Despite its formal disappearance, however, its influence lingered and was felt in many places, in the imperial house as well as in Shingon and Zen monasteries.

(Bernard Faure: The Red Thread, p. 126-127)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 12:38 AM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Namdrol said:

Natural state is not rigpa. Rigpa is one's knowledge, or recognition, of the natural state.

Astus wrote:

That makes sense.

There is a problem then with the use of the word.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Tantra of the Tachikawa-Ryu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

All the sources I've quoted above maintains that it has disappeared as a school. The practices themselves, since the texts are still available, maybe done by a few, but that doesn't make it a tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 8:13 PM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen is not a single doctrine, both interpretations of buddha-nature exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: Tantra of the Tachikawa-Ryu

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think you should contact Stevens to provide his sources.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Categories in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

The lists by numbers are used to sum up the teachings of the Buddha. It is an ancient method that also appears in one of the primary collections of the Buddha's teachings, the Anguttara Nikaya.

A useful picture of the essential teachings:

http://www.leighb.com/mid_way.htm

A very basic list:

<http://www.leighb.com/listlist.htm>

Improved list:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/Buddhism_by_Numbers.html

Huge list:

<http://www.thedhamma.com/buddhaslists.pdf> by David N. Snyder, Ph.D. (founder of this forum)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 30th, 2011 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Tantra of the Tachikawa-Ryu

Content:

Namdrol said:

It also does not make it "tantric".

Astus wrote:

Depends on definition. When it has the characteristics of tantric teachings it could be called that, even if from the perspective of traditional(ist) Vajrayana they are heretics.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 31st, 2011 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen's explanation:

In "all living beings" spoken of here on the way of the buddha, those with minds are "all living beings"; for the mind is living beings. Those without minds are similarly living beings; for living beings are mind. Therefore, all minds are living beings, and living beings all "have the buddha nature." The grasses, trees and lands are mind; because they are mind, they are living beings; because they are living beings, they "have the buddha nature." The sun, moon, and stars are mind; because they are mind, they are living beings; because they are living beings, they "have the buddha nature."
(<http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/translation.html>)

A classical story:

Dongshan asked Yunyan, "Who can hear the teachings of the insentient?"
Yunyan said, "It can be heard by the insentient." Dongshan asked, "Do you hear it, Master?" Yunyan said, "If I heard it, then you would not hear my teaching." Dongshan answered, "That being the case, then I do not hear your teaching." Yunyan replied, "You don't even hear my teaching, how could you hear the teachings of the insentient?"
Dongshan was enlightened on hearing this and responded in verse:

Wondrous! Marvelous!
The teachings of the insentient are inconceivable.
If you listen with the ears, you won't understand.
When you hear with the eyes, then you will know.

http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp/translations/shobogenzo/translations/mujo_seppo/translation.html
<http://www.mro.org/zmm/teachings/daido/teisho11.php>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 31st, 2011 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The reasoning is quite simple. All is mind - mind is buddha - rocks and trees are buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2011 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Piss poor reasoning.

Astus wrote:

That is not a reasoning at all.

Besides the one already mentioned it is possible to relate it to the teachings of the Tedai school's "ichinen sanzen" and the Huayan school's Dharmadhatu of unhindered interpenetration of phenomena. But as I said, not all agreed with the idea that buddha-nature is universal on that level, for instance the teachers within the Hongzhou (Zen) school.

"The Dharmakaya (Dharma-Body) has no form, but it assumes different forms according to the needs of sentient beings. Thus, some say that green bamboo is the Dharmakaya and that the fragrance of yellow flowers is Prajna. If green bamboo really were the Dharmakaya, then the Dharmakaya would merely be like wood or grass. Thus, a person eating bamboo shoots could say that he was eating the Dharmakaya. If one talked like this, would there be any possible benefit for anyone in recording it? Such a person is really quite confused about the Buddha, who is right before him, as well as about his substance, which permeates all things; and so he seeks him elsewhere, outside, in error, kalpa after kalpa."

(<http://www.ymba.org/TaChu/tachu3.htm>)

An essay by Robert Sharf discussing the whole issue:
http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert_Sharf-e.htm

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2011 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Introductory Texts

Content:

Will said:

Most of these downloadable 10 Kalavinka Press PDFs are good introductions to the Mahayana:

<http://ifile.it/t3aqukl/MahayanaPDFs.zip> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

Unfortunately that file is gone. If anyone could upload it it would be a great help.

Will said:

This title has been around since the 1920s, but it is free from BDK:

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/default.aspx?MPID=53> "

onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

It presents a Japanese perspective of what constitutes the Buddha's teachings. I'm not sure if it really fits for the category of introduction since it contains many different levels of teachings without explaining the connection.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2011 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Guns?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Technically having a weapon is forbidden in Buddhism only to ordained people and those who have taken all the bodhisattva precepts in the Brahmajala Sutra that has a precept against possessing any kind of weaponry. What is to be avoided is killing, the ultimate expression of anger. That is the minimum for lay people who want to train on the path and become free from the pains of the three lower realms.

On the mental side it is as Master Yoda said to young Anakin, "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." I don't know what form of Buddhism you practice but there are many methods in all traditions to use in order to alleviate fear. This means that instead of acting upon the feeling (more defence, more power, stronger walls, etc.) you face it within yourself. Perhaps the easiest step halfway between outer and inner is to get protection from the beings of non-material realms like different gods, protectors, bodhisattvas, buddhas. On the inner level you can look up meditation techniques of your choice. A selection of texts is found in " In the Face of Fear: Buddhist Wisdom for Challenging Times " by Barry Boyce. Also you may like this book by Tsoknyi Rinpoche, " Fearless Simplicity: The Dzogchen Way of Living Freely in a Complex World ". And one by Thich Nhat Hanh, " No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life ".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 2nd, 2011 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Guns?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I have mentioned before, there is generally no problem in Buddhism with ordinary lay people owning weapons. Even more, we could cite here the involvement of Buddhism in military culture - where that is relevant, of course, in Asia. There are different levels of practitioners. As you may well know from European history, religious views don't necessarily make people morally better. One can be a serial killer and a Buddhist, that's because in that case being a Buddhist is only a weak idea. Also, one can be a living saint without being a Buddhist.

About the levels of practitioners, it is up to each and every one's commitment to the Dharma. Many think only about the benefit in this life so they use Buddhism to get some peace - this is the most common Western view. Many think about the immense suffering in the lower realms (hell realm, ghosts' realm, animals' realm) and about the benefits and pleasures of the higher realms (humans, gods), so they try to avoid the lower and gain birth in the higher - this is the most common among culturally Buddhists. Then there are those who understand that samsara is a big waste of time and effort where there is no lasting peace ever. So the three important levels are those living for this life, those living with the perspective of past and future lives, and those who want to go beyond all kinds of births.

In the case of those who think only of the present life, owning a gun is no big deal. It could be even positive. That's because it makes little difference. Such people only consider if they feel all right or not. From the Buddha's teachings they may understand the benefits of harmlessness and how it relates to mental calm, so it is possible to say that since a weapon is a source of violence one should avoid such things. Just think about how the USA and the USSR raced against each other in creating nuclear bombs, all because of fear. Fear is "what if something bad happens?", so they "prepared for the worst".

In view of past and future lives, the present one is the result of past deeds and the future is formed by the present decisions. If I am robbed, harmed, beaten or killed, those are all the consequences of my past actions. On the other hand, my violence brings harm to me in the future. This is understanding the causal relationships between my acts and my experiences. In order to avoid harm I have to be harmless myself.

"Whoever takes a rod to harm living beings desiring ease, when he himself is looking for ease, will meet with no ease after death.

Whoever doesn't take a rod to harm living beings desiring ease, when he himself is looking for ease, will meet with ease after death."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.10.than.html>)

To attain ultimate peace, nirvana, one has to practice peace. It is actually one of the http://www.shantideva.net/guide_ch6.htm. It is not just a matter of avoiding the extreme pains of the lower realms, it is developing perfect inner peace. Because here one understands that true peace doesn't exist in samsara. Here is a short discussion between Punna and Buddha.

"Well then, Punna. Now that I have instructed you with a brief instruction, in which country are you going to live?"

"Lord, there is a country called Sunaparanta. I am going to live there."

"Punna, the Sunaparanta people are fierce. They are rough. If they insult and ridicule you, what will you think?"

"If they insult and ridicule me, I will think, 'These Sunaparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don't hit me with their hands.' That is what I will think, O Blessed One. That is what I will think, O One Well-gone."

"But if they hit you with their hands, what will you think?"

"...I will think, 'These Sunaparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don't hit me with a clod!...'"

"But if they hit you with a clod...?"

"...I will think, 'These Sunaparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don't hit me with a stick!...'"

"But if they hit you with a stick...?"

"...I will think, 'These Sunaparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don't hit me with a knife!...'"

"But if they hit you with a knife...?"

"...I will think, 'These Sunaparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don't take my life with a sharp knife!...'"

"But if they take your life with a sharp knife...?"

"If they take my life with a sharp knife, I will think, 'There are disciples of the Blessed One who — horrified, humiliated, and disgusted by the body and by life — have sought for an assassin, but here I have met my assassin without searching for him.' That is what I will think, O Blessed One. That is what I will think, O One Well-gone."

"Good, Punna, very good. Possessing such calm and self-control you are fit to dwell among the Sunaparantans. Now it is time to do as you see fit."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.088.than.html#sunaparanta>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 2nd, 2011 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Why is possible to achieve Buddhahood?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are many texts describing systematically the stages how buddhahood can be attained. Some of them are available in English. One example is Ven. Yinshun's "https://books.google.com/books/about/The_way_to_Buddhahood.html?id=W2RSDTGGQJEC" (<http://wisdom.buddhistdoor.com/huifeng/2011/07/27/yinshun-the-way-to-buddhahood-verses-%E6%88%90%E4%BD%9B%E4%B9%8B%E9%81%93-%E9%A0%8C-english-chinese/>). Other works, like Gampopa's "Jewel Ornament of Liberation" and Tsongkhapa's "The Great Treatise On The Stages Of The Path To Enlightenment" are great and you can also get modern commentaries on them.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 2nd, 2011 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: The "Indian" Mahayana Tradition

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are studies you can look into (although it may not be what you were looking for):

Buddhist thought: a complete introduction to the Indian tradition by Paul Williams

Figments and fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: more collected papers by Gregory Schopen

Nāgārjuna in context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and early Indian culture by Joseph Walser
Power, wealth and women in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra by Douglas Osto

A history of Indian Buddhism: from Śākyamuni to early Mahāyāna by Akira Hirakawa
Indian Buddhism by A. K. Warder

The continuity of madhyamaka and yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism by Ian Charles Harris

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 4th, 2011 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism & Guns?

Content:

Sönam said:

From a non-American point of view it's simply unbelievable ... even the interpretation of the dharma to justify that cow-boy culture. Sorry David, but something is certainly wrong in the empire of the United States.

Sönam

Astus wrote:

Indeed there is a big difference here between how American's view guns and how others where guns are not something just anybody can buy in a supermarket. That is a reason why I'm not really in the position of telling if it is OK to own a gun for self-defence in that particular case. Generally speaking, when one has to think of defending him/herself it is about fear, and fear is a source of lot of bad stuff.

"If even a hundred-thousand rapists came across me like this, I wouldn't stir a hair.

I'd feel no terror, and I'm not afraid of you, Mara, even alone like this.

Here — I disappear. I slip into your belly or stand between your eyebrows, and you don't see me.

I have mastery over the mind, have well-developed the bases of power.

I'm released from all bonds, and not afraid of you, my friend.

Then Mara the Evil One — sad & dejected at realizing, "Uppalavanna the nun knows me" — vanished right there."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn05/sn05.005.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 6th, 2011 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Book of Bodhisattva Precepts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Very interesting. Thanks for the notification Will.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 6th, 2011 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: My Spiritual history and a plea to young Buddhists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Topic Split: <http://dharmafire.net/viewtopic.php?f=34&t=4935>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 6th, 2011 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Because the power of afflictions is too strong.

Astus wrote:

What exactly is it that made afflictions any stronger than a hundred years back? Or is it geographical, or cultural perhaps? I don't see any apparent reason why living as a renunciate now would be more difficult than any time before. True, Buddhism doesn't have the same level of support as in Asian countries, however, that is a different matter that can change with time.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 6th, 2011 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Do any ancient Tibetan Buddhist texts give practical advice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

How about "Ordinary wisdom: Sakya Pandita's treasury of good advice"? There are also numerous works on ethics, like Tsongkhapa's "Tantric Ethics", Sakya Pandita's "A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes", Ngari Panchen's "Perfect Conduct: Ascertaining the Three Vows" and the not so ancient Jamgön Kongtrul's "The Treasury of Knowledge: Buddhist Ethics". One should also look into Indian texts like Nagarjuna's Ratnavali and Suhrillekha, or Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara and Siksasamuccaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 7th, 2011 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Do any ancient Tibetan Buddhist texts give practical advice?

Content:

Luke said:

No, that statement is very beneficial, and in the long run, practical because of its benefits. What is not practical is "You are forbidden to ever kill any sentient being in any situation ever, and if violently attacked, you must throw yourself down and let yourself get massacred like a Buddhist saint." Such a statement is more like Jainism.

Interesting. I guess this is another problem of Tibetan Buddhism first being spread by only the elites in a new country.

Astus wrote:

No one forbids anything in Buddhism. They just tell you if you kill you'll end up in hell or in some other bad situation.

The whole of Buddhism is spread by the elite to the elite. Buddhism is still a foreign, exotic and strange religion/philosophy/therapy/psychology/WTF in the West. Simple people has all the different Christian sects, or New Age, or Physicalism if they want to believe in something. Buddhism will remain an elite religion until you see villagers praying for health to Medicine Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2011 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Dorje Chang Buddha III

Content:

Astus wrote:

"living buddha" is the Chinese equivalent of Tibetan tulku. It should be based on the teachings that a group is rejected or accepted and not subjective lists of "Buddhist Cults".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2011 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is like saying that it's impossible to learn Sanskrit. Just because only few people have the motivation and perseverance to actually master the language. There are thousands of Buddhist monks who live every day by the precepts. There are even hermits living in remote mountains. To say that these are the ending days of the Dharma and the only path to salvation is Vajrayana and the others are pointless is pretty radical. Well, even Honen were a bit more sophisticated in claiming almost the same thing. But this is very much in the area of "praising oneself and criticizing others".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2011 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Namdrol said:

For example, even in Theravadin countries, most of the monks do not actually practice renunciation -- they have property, cars, money, debit cards, etc.

Astus wrote:

But that is not a new development. It's not that monks got lax in the last centuries only.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2011 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Namdrol said:

More evidence for my case -- did I say this was a 21st century problem? It has been true since the 5th century C.E.

Astus wrote:

I doubt there was such a start date.

"What is the cause, lord, what is the reason, why before there were fewer training rules and yet more monks established in final gnosis, whereas now there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis?"

"That's the way it is, Kassapa. When beings are degenerating and the true Dhamma is disappearing, there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis."

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn16/sn16.013.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 12:14 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation not Impossible

Content:

Will said:

Why not? Since oodles of tantric Geluk adepts have followed the vajrayana (based in renunciation) with success up to the present, they would have dropped teaching renunciation by now if they agreed with Namdrol.

Astus wrote:

Indeed, why the huge monastic order in Tibet if it's pointless. They could have done better building economy and such.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation not Impossible

Content:

Nangwa said:

The monasteries were the economy.

Astus wrote:

You mean they served as manufactures, etc. to produce goods? Or they were commercial centres and stock markets? I thought Tibet had a very feudal economy.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 12:34 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see. Thanks for the info. Then in Tibet Vajrayana was truly the only viable teaching for the majority.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

mr. gordo said:

Hi Astus, can you clarify? I thought Honen also believed all practices were ineffective except for Pure Land in his day. Granted, he didn't support the withdrawal of funds from other Buddhist schools or believed in a proactive type of conversion.

Astus wrote:

There is difficult and there is easy, but not impossible and possible. Honen emphasised that the exclusive Nenbutsu is a valid and easy way, not that all the others are wrong. Honen also recognised the validity of auxiliary practices for Pure Land followers. Indeed, how could the Buddha's teaching be false? The attitude is shown here very clearly,

"Supposing that followers of other schools ridicule us by saying that the Name is meant for those of low intelligence and that this teaching is shallow and inferior, we should avoid any dispute and reply: "As we are convinced that the ignorant who are poorly gifted and illiterate like ourselves will be delivered by faith, for us this is the supreme doctrine, even though it may seem contemptible to those of higher ability. Although other teachings may be superior, we cannot practice them because they are beyond our powers. Since the original intention of all the buddhas is to free everyone from birth and death, we request those of other views not to interfere with us." If we treat them without malice, who then will harm us?"

(Tannisho, 12)

And here the problem is addressed in detail,

"To attain buddhahood while still in this body is the essence of the secret teachings of Shingon and is the result of the three esoteric practices. The purification of the six senses is taught by the One Vehicle of the Lotus Sutra, and this is attained by practicing the four peaceful observances. But these are all stages along the difficult path, which can be followed only by those specially endowed and belong to the enlightenment attainable only by meditational methods. The basic principle of the other-power teachings of the Pure Land school is to gain enlightenment in the next life, since it follows the path of the assurance of faith. Besides, it is the easy way that can be followed by those of poor ability and is a teaching that does not discriminate between good and evil adherents.

Because, moreover, it is almost impossible to eliminate defilements and hindrances during this lifetime, even the holy monks who practice Shingon and Tendai methods still look forward to reaching enlightenment in the next life. How much truer is this of those of us who lack in discipline and wisdom! Yet even we can cross over the painful ocean of birth and death on board the ship of Amida's Vow. As soon as we have reached the shore of the Pure Land, the dark clouds of the defilements will instantly be cleared away and the enlightening moon of buddhahood will at once appear."

(Tannisho, 15)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 4:45 PM

Title: Taoist Origin of Tantric Energy System

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the introduction of Peter Alan Roberts' new book "Mahamudra and Related Instructions" it says that the energy system as it appeared in India with the chakras and nadis originates from Central Asia and it has a Taoist source. Anyone to provide more information on this?

The text says,

"The candali practice also involves the physiology of sexuality, generally described from a male perspective. It corresponds with far more ancient Taoist practices, which have a greater number of pressure points in breath control, called jade locks, and a specific female morphology that has the retention of menstruation as the parallel to the male retention of ejaculation. Candali and the cakra system appeared in the Buddhist tradition subsequent to a period of Buddhist and Taoist coexistence in Central Asia. The cakras, literally "wheels," are the points where subsidiary channels branch off into the body, but they were unknown in India before the latter centuries of the first millennium, when they first appeared in both Saivism and Buddhism."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Taoist Origin of Tantric Energy System

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you say is one of the reasons that such Chinese connection surprised me. Perhaps I will contact him for clarification.

update: Except that I couldn't find any contact info for him...

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2011 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

So you say it will eventually become a deep analysis with wide ranging arguments? Perhaps I skip then the boring stuff...

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2011 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: An independent Mahamudra forum?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Greg said, the Kagyu section could be used for discussion on Mahamudra. It is unfortunate that there is rarely any discussion here on it, especially as I'm quite fond of this wonderful teaching. But if there are special reasons why a separate Mahamudra forum would be worth a try I have no objections against it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2011 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: An independent Mahamudra forum?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There it is. Use it well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2011 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: An independent Mahamudra forum?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Some of us were given Mahamudra pointing out instructions before we even took refuge let alone started ngondro!

Astus wrote:

So much for karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2011 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra - The Moonlight

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yesterday I was re-reading the http://www.dharma-media.org/media/kagyu/drigung/garchen/mamamudra-trans_khenchen/mahamudra.pdf by Garchen Rinpoche.

"Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of Mahamudra], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the Mahamudra teachings. He spoke about the method of directly guiding the disciple toward the intrinsic reality of the mind." (Mahamudra: The Moonlight, p. 123)

connected to that statement, from Shenpen Ösel:

<http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/A%20-%20Tibetan%20Buddhism/Authors/Gampopa/Mahamudra%20->

%20The%20Very%20Essence%20of%20Mind/Mahamudra%20-%20The%20Very%20Essence%20Of%20Mind%20-%20By%20Gampopa.htm

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:13 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One thing that doesn't seem to have occurred here is to question what renunciation stands for. It's used here like something very bad and painful, a great struggle against the sins of the flesh. But as I see in the Buddha's teachings, renunciations is because one realises the futile and harmful nature of indulging in different worldly pleasures. So renunciation is not about "I have to be good, although I feel bad" but "I'm fed up with this crap, I better just leave it". Renunciation is not forcing yourself to leave your family but realising that family life is so much senseless trouble. Therefore, when it is said that one chooses "fun and pleasures" instead of renunciation, well, that is the confusion of seeing something painful as blissful; while of course, calling renunciation hard and tiresome and impossible is conceiving what is blissful as painful. So Sthiramati said, "You see, the vehicle of the bodhisattvas, the great beings (mahasattvas), is actually the Great Suffering Vehicle."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:43 AM

Title: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zazen Ron -

"Discussion of Zazen"

by Zen Master Enni (1202-1280)

The Zazen school is the way of great freedom. All myriad things come from this gate. All myriad practices are mastered in this way. The mysterious workings of prajna and psychic powers are born from within it; the world of gods and men have also come from this. Thus, the Buddhas live in this gate, and the Bodhisattvas practice to enter into this way. Even the Hinayana and infidels practice it, but are not yet in harmony with the true way. All the outer and inner (esoteric) schools have their validation by attaining to this way. Thus, the Patriarch says "All the wise ones in the 10 directions enter this school."

Q: Why is it that you say this Zen gate is the source of all the teachings?

A: Zen is [just] the Buddha mind. Precepts are its outward characteristics, the teachings are its elucidation, and the recitation of the Name is the tool. These 3 religious practices all come from the Buddha mind. Thus, I say this school represents the source [of all the

teachings].

Q: The Dharma of Zen has a signless essence. How does it account for the manifestation of spiritual qualities, and by what does one take as a verification of seeing one's nature?

A: Your own mind is Buddha. What spiritual qualities are there beyond that? And what verification should we look for beyond the recognition of the mind?

Q: When we cultivate the mind, this is only one practice. But if we cultivate many practices and meritorious deeds, how could the merit from these be inferior to that of the one practice?

A: An ancient said, "At the time you suddenly see the Tathagata Zen, the six paramitas and the different [spiritual] practices are complete in your own body." So, the one Dharma of Zen includes all things. Even in the world they have the saying, "Many talents are not as good as One Mind." So, even though we cultivate different practices, if we cannot end the delusion of our One Mind, we will not be Enlightened. And, not being Enlightened, how could we become a Buddha?

Q: Why should we cultivate the Buddha-mind school? We cannot be certain we will be Enlightened even if we do, and if we can't be certain what use is there in cultivating it?

A: As this school is the way of incomprehensible freedom, the one who lends ear to [it's teaching] gives rise to an exceedingly [good] cause of Enlightenment, and if he then cultivates the school it will represent the ultimate Buddha Mind. The Buddha Mind is fundamentally free from ignorance and enlightenment; the mysterious practice of six years of sitting erect in the Snow-covered Mountains [Buddha's practice] is evident in this school. Although you may not have attained the way, when you do Zazen for even as little as one sitting, you are a one-sitting Buddha. If you do Zazen for a day, you are a one-day Buddha. And if you do Zazen for a lifetime you are a one-lifetime Buddha. To possess such faith is to have very keen faculties, and to be a great vessel of Dharma.

Q: When we practice this way, what do we do with our minds?

A: The Buddha Mind is signless and free from attachments. The Diamond Sutra says that Buddhas are free from all characteristics. So, when we have no-mind and no-thought while walking, standing, sitting and lying down, this is what should be done with the mind, and is the true concentrated effort.

Q: It is hard to believe this type of cultivation and it is very hard to practice. What if I were to seek merit by reading sutras and reciting dharanis, keeping precepts and being mindful of Buddha by calling his name?

A: The sutras and dharanis are not words, but are the Primordial Mind of all beings. Though they are speech, they are intended only for those who have lost [sight of] the Primordial Mind, and teach us in different ways so as to bring about Enlightenment to

this Primordial Mind and end the cycle of birth-and-death which is caused by delusion. If we just recite words with the mouth and say this is the highest, does it not also follow that we should get warm by saying “fire” or cool off by saying “wind”? When we are hungry, would we just say the name of the food we want and get it? So, even though we may say “fire” all day, we will not get warm. Even though we say “water” all night, our thirst will not be quenched. Words and speech are like the picture of a rice cake: though we say them with our mouths our whole life, our hunger will not be satisfied. It is a true pity that the ordinary person, having ignorant ideas of birth and death running very deep, is constantly thinking of attainment in regard to the Dharma. This is very foolish! To practice all things without thinking of attainment is called the Prajna of Mahayana. This is the Buddha Wisdom, pure and without thoughts. Because this wisdom cuts away the source of birth and death, it is called the Prajna-sword.

Q: But if we don’t gain merits and plant good spiritual roots, how can we arrive at Buddhahood which is endowed perfectly with the various virtues?

A: He who seeks Buddhahood by gaining merit and planting good spiritual roots might become a Buddha after 3 kalpas, but one who cultivates the direct pointing at one’s own mind, seeing into one’s nature and becoming a Buddha, knows that one is a Buddha from the very beginning. It is not that he attains the fruit of Buddhahood.

Q: Then do those who cultivate Zen reject the value of merits and good roots?

A: Even though such a one cultivates good roots to help others, because such a one has no aspirations one doesn’t seek any merits at all. He has no-mind at all times.

Q: If no-mind is represents the ultimate, who is it that knows the seeing of his nature and Enlightenment to the way?

A: The ultimate no-mind means to put a stop to all false knowledge and wrong views - all the discriminating activity of thought. As it does not give rise to a view of cultivation, it does not does want to become a Buddha. As it does not give rise to a view social engagement, it does not delight in praise and high standing; as it produces no such view of love or hate, it does not discriminate between closeness or aloofness between self and other. Don’t think of good & evil - such a one is called the one on the no-thought path. This path is not something that the ordinary person knows about, or even those of the two Vehicles.

Q: In the teachings (sutras), the merit derived from various good deeds and practices are explained many times; why then is the merit of no-mind not explained directly?

A: Because the Bodhisattvas of the Original Enlightenment already hold it in high esteem and understand it [directly], isn’t explained. This is why the Lotus Sutra says, “Do not preach this sutra to those lacking wisdom.” Even though the teachings contain 84,000 dharma gates, if we trace them back to their source [we find] they do not go beyond the two things of form and emptiness. “Form” means the substance of the four great elements and five aggregates; “emptiness” is the true nature of affliction and enlightenment. Since this body has shape, it is called “form”; because mind has no

shape, it is called “emptiness.” In all the worlds, there is nothing to be spoken of beyond this very body and mind.

Q: Are the shape & substance of the four great elements originally deluded or enlightened?

A: From the beginning there is no distinction between ignorance and enlightenment in body or mind. All things appear conditionally, like a dreams and hallucinations. Have no thought concerning the myriad things.

Q: The two-Vehicles also teach no-mind, along with enlightenment and Nirvana. How is the Mahayana different from them?

A: Originally, the Arhats of the sravaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles consider body and mind as an affliction and have aversion for them. They desire to extinguish body and mind and become like dead trees, bricks and rocks. Even though they practice like this, in the end they only become gods of the formless realms. This isn't the true Dharma, but is rather the fruit of Hinayana. The no-mind of the Mahayana is not the same.

Q: Do Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana also have this way of no-mind?

A: Bodhisattvas have many defiling and obscuring obstacles in their consciousness and do not yet accord with no-mind until they reach the tenth Bhumi. These “defiling obstacles” means that, until the tenth bhumi, they still desire to seek the Dharma, and they do not accord with their original way. It's only when they arrive at the tenth Bhumi and the virtual enlightenment that they arrive at the way of no-mind.

Q: If it is so difficult for even a Bodhisattva to accord with, how then could beginners so easily accord with this way?

A: True Dharma is inconceivable. The setting up of the Bodhisattva path is for those of dim spiritual vision. Those who are clear-sighted realize the true enlightenment of no-mind when they first give rise to the aspiration.

Q: One who see's one's true nature and awakens to the Buddha way is called a Buddha. Why then do they no also have psychic powers, show radiant lights, or perform the mystic feats of the Buddha which would distinguish him from a regular person?

A: Since this body has been built from ignorant thoughts from the past, even though we see our nature it does not show off the psychic power and radiance. Yet, is it not psychic power to be master over the six dusts of the senses and deluded thoughts? Without resorting to hard & painful practice, without passing through the 3 great incalculable eons, to cut off birth and death, see straight into one's nature and become a Buddha - this are the mystic feats [of a Buddha]. And to employ the light of prajna that is the pure Dharmakaya to save all beings from the darkness of delusion - what other kind of radiant light do we need? To desire psychic powers other than great wisdom and understanding is the way of Mara and the infidels. Even foxes have these psychic

powers and ability to transform themselves - but should we pay homage to them? Just cultivating no-mind, we can extinguish at once the three incalculable eons and suddenly see our nature, becoming Buddhas.

Q: What kind of wisdom should we use to awaken to the true meaning of “Seeing one’s true nature, becoming Buddha.”?

A: Knowledge you gain by studying sutras and shastras is called the knowledge of the senses. This might be considered knowledge to the ordinary, ignorant person, but it is not true knowledge. To recognize this inherent Buddha-nature by turning the light around and shining it back is called the Eye of Prajna. We use this prajna eye to see our natures and become Buddhas.

Q: What is this inherent Buddha-nature? And what is meant by “turning the light around and shining it back.”?

A: All beings have self-nature (svabhava). This nature is intrinsically non-arising and non-ceasing; it always abides without change. Thus it is called the inherent self-nature. Both the Buddhas of the past, present and future and all beings have this same nature as the Dharmakaya of the Original Ground. The radiance of this Dharmakaya fills the entire Dharma realm, turning the light and shining it back on the darkness of delusion of all beings. Where this light does not reach is called Mara’s realm of ignorance. In this realm of Mara dwells the spirit of the afflictions, seeking to devour the Dharma nature. Those beings who are damaged by this spirit, taking their deluded thoughts as their Original Mind and enjoying the seeds of desire, constantly spin in the four kinds of birth and three evil destinies. When will they ever cut off birth and death?

Q: Since birth and death arise from deluded thoughts, when one awakens to the source from which these deluded thoughts arise, will birth and death naturally stop?

A: Throughout all hours of the day, beings are tainted by deluded thoughts, and their Original Buddha Nature is buried by afflictions. It can be compared to the bright moon hidden behind clouds. Once they have awakened to the source of these thoughts, it is like the bright moon emerging from out the clouds. It is like a mirror that, once cleaned, clearly reflects the myriad images. It has full mastery over all things and, though facing myriad objects, suffers not even a hair’s breadth of defilement. This is because the Original Buddha Nature has the freedom of psychic power.

Q: What does it mean that, while directing our mind in Zazen, we “should not think of good or evil.”?

A: This saying will directly cut off the root source of birth and death. Do not imagine that it is limited only to Zazen! One who arrives at this saying is a Buddha without beginning or end, and is practicing Zazen whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down.

Q: What are big and small thoughts?

A: Small thoughts are thoughts which arise from conditions, whereas big thoughts are desire, hatred and delusion since beginningless births and deaths. One who only puts an end to these thoughts while in Zazen - big or small - is one who lacks the true mind of the way, does not discern the root source of beginningless birth and death, and does not exhaust the consciousness characterized by desire, hatred and delusion. But when one has discerned this root source, afflictions are Bodhi, the three poisons are the three precepts, birth and death become Nirvana without beginning, and the six dusts become the six psychic powers.

Q: The mind of one who has long practiced Zazen will clearly be pure, but how does a beginner practice to put an end to the taint of deluded thoughts?

A: Don't feel repulsed by the taint of deluded thoughts; just discern the mind's nature. Because we are confused about the One Mind, we think that there is the taint of deluded thoughts when, in fact, it is originally pure. For instance, when sleeping we see various things in our dreams, but when we wake up from the dream all these are recognized as simple deluded thoughts. When we awaken to the One Mind, everything is empty, with nothing remaining.

Q: What does it mean to say, "affliction is Bodhi, birth and death is Nirvana."?

A: Afflictions are foolishness and ignorance; Bodhi is the Buddha-nature of everything. Beings, not recognizing their own Buddha-nature, look for it outside themselves; they look at good and evil outside themselves and give rise to attachment to the aspects of these things. This is great foolishness! And then when those who manage to leave these things behind and seek out their own Buddha-nature give rise to some view of this awakening, distinguishing themselves from ordinary people, they will become proud of themselves and fall back into Mara's way. This is ignorance! Unaware that the One Mind is originally no-mind, we rouse the mind to seek the mind and, in doing so, give rise to the present taints. This is the seed of birth and death. But once we have awakened to the truth that from the beginning the One Mind neither arises nor ceases, then there is no difference between self and other, good and evil, love and hate; we are completely with no-thought and no-mind. This is what is meant by "birth and death is Nirvana." Failing to awaken to the root source of the One Mind, we lose our permanent self and obscure our true Buddha nature. If we look back to the source of afflictions, they are like dreams, illusions, bubbles and shadows. Realizing the truth that the One Mind is originally pure is what is meant by "the afflictions are Bodhi." And when we arrive at the source of the One Mind, the radiance of our inherent wisdom will be manifest to us. At that time, the myriad things will be at rest, and we will attain the ultimate emptiness of all Buddhas. For instance, suppose there is a dark cave, into which the light of the sun and moon does not go; yet when we take a lamp into it, the darkness of many years is naturally illuminated. In the same way, when the dark night is touched by the light of the moon, space naturally becomes bright without changing its substance. The mind's things are like this; when beings, lost in the darkness of ignorance and afflictions, encounter the light of wisdom, they are naturally purified without changing body and mind. This is what is meant by "the afflictions are Bodhi, birth and death is Nirvana."

Q: Even though the nature of mind constantly abides changelessly, and Buddhas are sentient beings are one and the same, sentient beings who have yet to master and realize this truth cannot avoid suffering and, because of this, must cultivate the way. But once they have seen their nature, should they still cultivate?

A: That Buddhas and sentient beings are one and the same is what is pointed out by wisdom. The teachings of the sutras are but fingers pointing to the moon. If we don't see the moon, you should rely on the finger; after you've seen the moon, the finger is useless. When we have yet to awaken to the Buddha Mind, we should rely on the teachings; when we recognize the Buddha Mind, the eighty thousand dharma gates are all clearly apparent in one mind. After we have awakened to the one mind, there isn't use for even a single teaching. The words of the Patriarchs are like a brick used to knock on a gate. Before you enter the gate, you take up the brick; once you've entered the gate, what still hold the brick? Thus, so long as we have yet to awaken to the original meaning of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, we should take up and investigate the phrase, "see your nature and become a Buddha." But once we've already opened the gate of the great liberation and completely awakened to the original meaning of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, seeing one's nature is nothing special and become a Buddha can't be grasped. There is no Buddha, no sentient beings; from the beginning there is not a single thing, and the three worlds can't be grasped.

Q: When we face the end of our lives not having clarified the important point of "seeing our nature and becoming a Buddha," how should we direct the mind at the last?

A: When one mind arises, there is birth and death; when there is no-mind, there is no body that is born, and when there is no-thought, there is no mind that ceases. When there is no-thought and no-mind, there is no birth and death whatsoever. This body is like the dew that forms on grass; the dew is originally without a self. When we stop the mind that thinks we have a body and turn toward the truth that from the beginning there is not a single thing, when we no longer think that there is either birth and death and have no-mind and no-thought, this is equivalent to the Great Nirvana of the Buddhas of the past, present and future. Although the good and evil attributes of things appear to us in their variety, we should take no notice of them. If we give rise to even a hair's breadth of mind, it is seed of Samsara. If we just cultivate no-mind and don't forget it, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, there is no special way to direct the mind at the last. When we truly abide in no-mind, we depart like blossoms that fall and leaves that scatter in the wind; like frost which melts in the morning sun. What is there that directs the mind in such events as these? When we truly arrive at no-mind, there are no three realms of being or six paths of rebirth, no pure or defiled lands, no Buddhas, no beings - not a single thing.

Of this mind that abides in the path of no-mind and makes an end of birth and death, the Buddha said at his death (in the Nirvana Sutra), "All compound things are impermanent; their nature is to rise and fall. When both rising and falling cease, their calm cessation is joy." The phrase "all compound things are impermanent" refers to the conditioned things of all beings; they are like dreams, illusions, reflections, like the moon in a puddle. "Their nature is to rise and fall" means that, from sentient beings to plants, all things

that are born must necessarily die. The mountains, rivers and great earth of this world will break down and disappear in the end. All things, wherever they may be, are things that arise and cease. This is merely birth and death from the continual transformations of one thought; none of it is real. "When rising and falling cease" means that when, because the true state of all beings is pure and signless, we reach the source of our signlessness, the beginningless, endless birth and death, coming and going, cease all at once, and the openness of the mind is like empty space. "Their calm cessation is joy" refers to the truth that Buddhas are no-mind, sentient beings are no-mind, mountains and rivers and the great earth, all the different phenomena arrayed are no-mind. When all beings are no-mind, hell is no-mind, heaven is no-mind; there is neither joy nor sadness. Trusting in the way like this, we see all things without seeing them in mind, and we hear all things without hearing them in the mind, and so too with the minds of tasting, smelling, etcetera. Just have no-mind in all circumstances. The mind of no-mind is the original teacher of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future. It is the fundamental Buddha. The realization of this original Buddha of no-thought is what is called the Supreme Perfect Enlightenment of the Buddhas. To wake up to the meaning of this is what is called "their calm cessation is joy." Trusting in the Dharma like this and leaving the body behind, we should not think of anything for a single thought.

With all respect.

(A discussion of Zazen intimately revealed to the Prime Minister Kujo by the National Teacher Shoichi)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

Astus wrote:

Because I've found no Google link to this text and I find it a very interesting piece of work I posted it here. If anybody happens to know the actual source of this translation it'd be appreciated. Discussion on it is also welcome.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: Meditation practices for the layfolk

Content:

Astus wrote:

"In this there are no distinctions between the sharp and the dull, the rich and the poor, mendicants and lay people, Easterners or Westerners, ancients or moderns. It only depends upon whether or not the will for enlightenment is there, and whether instruction and guidance are mistaken or accurate."

(An Elementary Talk on Zen by Man-an)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

LastLegend said:

So how do Zen beginners practice?

Astus wrote:

It is not a gradual practice where you can have beginners and advanced students. See you nature, that's the single essential point.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

mindyourmind said:

I remember reading it somewhere in some Soto booklets I received from a friend many years ago. I still have the teachings, I will have a look over the weekend.

Or maybe the old memory is incorrect as to where I saw it

Astus wrote:

Enni was a Rinzai teacher, contemporary of Dogen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

PadmaVonSamba,

What I meant is simply the life of renunciation, the life of a sramana, not any special mental training in that.

DN,

I think I don't have many illusions about monastic life, not because I've ever lived like one but because I like reading about history of Buddhism. What I see as the great appeal of a monastic lifestyle is the relatively more freedom it provides compared to a family or even a lay life without marriage and children. Not that monastics can't be busy with their different duties and other things, but it's still less than working all day and other necessities that most worldly person has to do. I don't think in the way that renunciation is about struggling with the longing for all the pleasures of life but as a conscious choice to dedicate one's time to the Dharma. Yes, this is idealistic in a sense and there were and are monastics who live like that not for the Dharma but for other reasons. Still, if you think about it, if the many Vajrayana teachers that travel around had

to sit in an office 8 or more hours a day they would hardly be going from a lecture in Germany to a retreat in California. Having a job, doing work, this is not the result of modern society. Actually, because there is a middle class there are more people who have the freedom to think about the Dharma and occasionally go to a retreat.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: Classic Kagyü Mahāmudrā Texts

Content:

Chaz said:

It should be noted that it's a restricted text.

Astus wrote:

While at the same time you can get a couple of to the point and in depth explanations without any problem. Strange thinking, perhaps it's a marketing thing to make it look more important and more esoteric.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 6:26 PM

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Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Classic Kagyü Mahāmudrā Texts

Content:

heart said:

I got the book, some part of it contains remarks that makes it more in to a teachers manual rather than a disciples manual. Such as what the student is supposed to answer to certain questions if they got it and if they didn't get it. Apart from that it cover the same things as his shorter texts. I

/magnus

Astus wrote:

Isn't that supposed to be the part of the pointing out instructions, as a next point after analysing, just like in Wangchuk Dorje's other two manuals? Clarifying the Natural State

also has the "correct answers".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 10:52 PM

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Astus wrote:

Isn't that supposed to be the part of the pointing out instructions, as a next point after analysing, just like in Wangchuk Dorje's other two manuals? Clarifying the Natural State also has the "correct answers".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Self-Ordained Monks

Content:

Huseng said:

This just goes to show you how some crazies signed up for the early sangha and as a result many many rules had to be laid down as a result.

Astus wrote:

Many such cases in the Vinaya were invented by the writers rather than actual cases remembered by tradition. See on this Bernard Faure's "The Red Thread", first few chapters where he discusses Vinaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Classic Kagyü Mahāmudrā Texts

Content:

heart said:

Not really. During the pointing-out instructions there is outlined a number of instructions and questions that the teacher should ask the student and also a number of possible answers and what the further instructions should be for a student answering this or that. Never seen anything similar in any other text.

Astus wrote:

I see, so it's more elaborated there, just as you said: a teacher's manual.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2011 at 11:49 PM

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Astus wrote:

I see, so it's more elaborated there, just as you said: a teacher's manual.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 13th, 2011 at 1:58 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

DN,

If Vajrayana is preferred because it is easier than the "path of renunciation", and that is its primary advantage, why not then choose the "path of Pure Land"? That is the easiest of all even in Tibetan Buddhism. Then there is no need to renounce, no need to transform, no need to study, no need to meditate, no need to avoid anything an ordinary modern citizen would do. And at the same time it guarantees perfect enlightenment in one lifetime, unlike virtually any other path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 13th, 2011 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

Astus wrote:

To see nature means just the non-grasping awareness as the original essence of mind, the mind that does not rest on any thought, idea or emotion, therefore it doesn't generate a whole world, the samsara. To practically see nature one has to "make a step back", that is, see how thoughts arise and cease, see how when any thought (dharma, mental phenomenon) is grasped further thoughts arise and one creates a world - so it is taught that the world is created by the mind. Seeing that thoughts arise and cease, what they come from and where they return to is the nature of mind. In fact, even where thoughts abide is the nature of mind.

The teaching on this of the Zazen Ron is summed up like this:

When asked how one is to use the mind (youjin) in Zen spiritual practice, the author of the Zazen ron replies that the true use of the mind is no-mind and no-thought (munen) (5; 412-413). Since all things appear only provisionally, we should not consider (shiryou) them (11; 415); if we do not consider them - if we have "the ultimate [practice of] no-mind" - we put a stop to all false views and discriminations of thinking (akuchi akuken shiryou funbetsu) (9; 414). This way of no-thought, or no-mind, "does not consider any good or evil" (9; 414); hence it has no aspiration for merit (kudoku) (8; 414) or even for the buddhadharma itself (13; 415). It simply "sees all things without seeing them in the mind and hears all things without hearing them in the mind" (24; 421). This is by no means a Hinayana practice of stilling the mind (12; 415) and eliminates the three aeons of the path (15; 416). One who "does not consider any good or evil" directly cuts off "the root source of sa.msaara"; he is "a buddha without beginning or end and is [practicing] Zen whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining" (19; 417). (No-Mind and Sudden Awakening: Thoughts on the Soteriology of a Kamakura Zen Text by Carl Bielefeldt in Paths to Liberation: the Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought, p. 492)

Also, I could find out that the Zazen Ron quoted in the OP is only a selection (translator still unknown to me), the full translation of the same text's Chinese version is found in Thomas Cleary's "The Original Face" under the title "Zen Master Daikaku's Treatise on Sitting Meditation" (大覺禪師坐禪論), in simplified Chinese transcription found here: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4d3f203e0100ftpj.html.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 15th, 2011 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

LastLegend said:

Interestingly, all the meditative Mahayana sutras (such as Diamond and Shurangama) talk about just that—non-grasping. That says one should not rely on the discriminating consciousnesses but the original essence of mind. If one is able to do this, then he/she will realize enlightenment. In other words, if one is not attached or reacting when the 6 consciousnesses contact with the external, he/she is said to have samadhi.

But nowadays this can be hard.

Astus wrote:

I don't think it'd be harder now than any time before. Although there are many new things around us in terms of technology and culture, the way human mind works is pretty much the same as at the time of the Buddha. But seeing the nature of mind and abiding in that mind is indeed not that easy, so one should practice all the six paramitas and follow a gradual training until things become clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 15th, 2011 at 6:00 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Jnana said:

The same can basically be said of Chan.

Dechen Norbu said:

Can you substantiate that, please? Are you saying Chan is not a path of renunciation then, right? If so, I would like you to develop a little further if you don't mind. I would like to know if they don't consider the five aggregates something to be given up and don't practice under such perspective.

Astus wrote:

"The buddha-nature is not the good and not the nongood. This is called nondual. The skandhas and sensory realms are seen as two by ordinary people, but the wise comprehend their natures to be nondual. The nondual nature is none other than the buddha-nature." (Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, ch. 1)

When ever was it in Buddhism that the skandhas had to be given up? It is attachment to the aggregates that generates suffering, it is to view the skandhas as self that creates ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 15th, 2011 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

Astus wrote:

You can say that Zen teaching is not specifically something you choose for personal reasons. Generally claiming that the times are worse than before, in my opinion, is a concept that has been repeated over and over for more than thousand years in Buddhism. Therefore I believe it is not that everything is getting worse every minute but that it is easy to believe in some golden age when everything was perfect and compared to that we are in a truly bad situation. The "masters of old time" are hardly some historical fact but rather a view of history, an interpretation, that is heavily coloured by the imagination of the people who came later. Just consider that at the time the Zazen Ron was composed there were people like Honen and Shinran who preached that because this is the age of Dharma-decline and the difficult practices are too hard for the majority while there were also Zen masters like Eisai and Dogen teaching sudden enlightenment. And although now Dogen is recognised as a very important Zen teacher, in his time he was very much unknown. So now you may say that there are only few great masters but a few hundred years later people might as well say that the 21st century was an optimal time of great masters and great achievements while the 24th century is so bad that there is no hope at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 15th, 2011 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Zazen Ron by Enni

Content:

Astus wrote:

What masters are you missing now? I don't know your criteria for who counts as a proper Buddhist teacher, but if you simply look at the amount of published teachings it is surprisingly large, at least in English. Probably the amount is a lot higher in Buddhist countries. So it comes down to the question whom you judge as "correct" and as "incorrect, as "enlightened" and as "non-enlightened". And that will be your personal judgement based on your own view of Buddhism. Others do have different interpretations of course.

Since you mentioned the list of masters, in Zen there is the concept of transmission, and until this day many such transmissions are alive. Consequently the heirs of the old masters are here among us.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 16th, 2011 at 2:53 AM

Title: the great vegetarian debate

Content:

Astus wrote:

Caring about those who suffer is compassion. To think of not only those animals that are killed for their meat but also those that suffer because of the way they are treated is a larger circle of compassion. This way the final conclusion will be to live like a Jain monk. But if you add some wisdom and not just get lost in the deep emotions it becomes obvious that beings live on other beings, and even plants - that are not considered sentient beings - live on not just sunlight and water but organic elements coming also from animals. Diet itself is rarely a matter in Buddhism except for a few texts, including those that say animal products, including dairy, are impure. What does matter is intention because that is what actually affects oneself and eventually others. This is an important difference between how Buddhists and how other religions, like Jainism, understand karma.

Rory,

I presume you've been in Budapest downtown where obviously you find a large variety of restaurants. But even if you just look around outside of that area in the city, you hardly find any place where you can order purely vegetarian food, unless you want to eat only vegetable soup or pasta (although pasta usually contains egg). This is a country where you spread liver-cream on bread (https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-ooP4gqeVIBw/TWNQDk9mFQI/AAAAAAAAA1c/GNzoZqTAoso/s1600/DSCF3423_resize.JPG) for breakfast. So Luke is indeed not in an easy situation to keep a vegetarian diet.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 16th, 2011 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From Dogen's Zuimonki, "A Primer of Soto Zen",

"If you say that this is a degenerate age and do not arouse the mind that seeks the Way in this life, in what life do you expect to gain it? Even if you are not a person such as Subhuti or Mahakasyapa, you should study the Way in accordance with your capacity."
(p. 18)

"Did not even the Buddha offer twenty years of his life for our benefit in this degenerate age! Because of this, offerings by men and devas are still being made to Zen monasteries. Even though the Tathagata possessed supernatural powers of the greatest merit, he had to eat grain meant for horses and get through one rainy season. How can disciples in this degenerate age want things easier?"
(p. 19)

On another occasion Dogen said:

Most people in this world say: "I have the desire to study Buddhism; yet the world is degenerate, and man, inferior. The training Buddhism requires is too strenuous for me. I will follow the easy way and merely strengthen my links with Buddhism and put off enlightenment until another life."

The attitude these words express is completely wrong. In Buddhism, the setting-up of the three periods of Law was merely a temporary expedient. In the Buddha's time, the monks were not necessarily all outstanding; there were some who were extraordinarily depraved and of low character. It was for such evil and inferior persons that the Buddha drew up the precepts. All people inherently have the capacity to awaken to Buddhism. Don't think that they do not possess it. If you practice in accordance with the teachings, you will gain enlightenment without fail.

As long as you have a mind, you can distinguish between good and evil. As long as you have hands and feet, you have the ability to join your palms together and to walk about. There fore, there is no such thing as not having the equipment to practice Buddhism. All human beings are born with this potential; this is not so of those born in the animal world. Students of the Way, do not wait until tomorrow. This very day, this very moment, practice in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha.

(p. 72)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2011 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"When self dissolves, everything is already awakened. Trees are awakened, rocks are awakened, birds are enlightened, and the clouds in the sky are enlightened. When the Buddha had this moment of complete realization, he discovered that this whole universe is already enlightened. More than that, he realized that every particle on the ground is enlightened. He saw that every particle is a Buddha paradise. In each particle

there are billions and trillions of Buddha paradises. In each of those particles there are billions of buddhas residing. This whole universe becomes suddenly enlightened and perfect just as it is."

(Anam Thubten: No Self, No Problem, p. 46)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2011 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Don't mistake poetry and rhetoric, like the above, for what is actual.

It simply means that all objects of knowledge are the display of one's own jñāna. It does not mean that rocks, trees, and such are independently awakened.

Astus wrote:

That's the same point as in Zen, Huayan, etc., it's just that they might call it dharmadhatu or mind or something similar.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2011 at 5:23 AM

Title: The Rinpoche's Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Today I've been reading the book "No Self, No Problem" and although it is by a Nyingmapa teacher of the Tibetan tradition, I recommend it to every Buddhist who feel attracted by the teachings of the Zen tradition.

"If we want to realize the truth, the first thing to remember is that we don't have to do anything. No sacred dances. No secret mantras. No religious conversion. We just sit quietly wherever we find ourselves and simply don't do anything. This is most important. Don't do anything. We look directly and see what is true in that moment without labeling or judging anything. Now we see the truth which is beyond our fantasies. We also see that our mind is a conglomeration of mental events, fleeting and insubstantial. At that moment it's impossible to become attached to any personal story line. This is a perfect moment. It lacks nothing. That recognition brings about a sense of inexhaustible joy. We might feel like we want to get up and dance wildly. If so, do it and call it sacred dance."

(Anam Thubten: No Self, No Problem, p. 84-85)

One day Yaoshan was sitting on a stone. Shitou asked what he was doing. Yaoshan said he wasn't doing anything. Shitou said, "You're just sitting here?" Yaoshan said, "Just sitting doing nothing is doing something." Shitou asked, "What exactly do you mean by 'doing nothing'?" Yaoshan said, "If you asked all the sages, they wouldnt be able to tell you." Then Shitou recited a poem:

A person doesn't know how it works,
Just goes along with it naturally.
All the sages in history can't explain it,
And ordinary people don't understand it either.

(Soto Zen Ancestors in China, p. 60)

One day after Yaoshan had sat down, a monk came and asked, "What are you thinking about here by yourself?" "I'm thinking about not-thinking." "How do you think about not-thinking?" "By not thinking."

(p. 63)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2011 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Mind is not jñāna.

Astus wrote:

You may have noticed by now that terminology is not universal even within Buddhism. Mind (xin 心 - citta) in Zen is used not just for the deluded but the enlightened mind too, while other words like consciousness (shi 識 - vijñāna) or intelligence (yi 意 - manas) are not used in both senses.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2011 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Namdrol said:

Nevertheless, Dzogchen and Zen are different and are in no way equivalent, even when one is confronted by very similar statements. The difference in these statements hinges on very subtle points. You need to seek out a teacher who can explain them to you.

Astus wrote:

I'm not arguing that - at least not here - since the work quoted makes no mention of Dzogchen, and it doesn't have to. The topic of this thread is something else anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: An independent Mahamudra forum?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Some of us were given Mahamudra pointing out instructions before we even took refuge

let alone started ngondro!

Astus wrote:

So much for karma.

Pero said:

What do you mean?

Astus wrote:

That it depends on karma what one meets, hears, studies and understands.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: The Rinpoche's Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The awakening has nothing to do with our background. It has nothing to do with whether we have been meditating for a long time or not. It has nothing to do with meeting impressive teachers or gurus. It is simply dependent on whether or not we are open to it."

(No Self, No Problem, p. 4)

"In the same way, when we pay attention to our breath, body sensations, and to the awareness that arises, then all the illusions, suffering, confusion, sorrow, and personal issues, all of this begins to dissipate. We see that all of these experiences are born of delusion. This is the sense of "I." "I am real. I am truly existent." Everything is gone except this "I," this sense of self. Then, when we continue meditating, the sense of self also goes away. When we just keep meditating, when we just remain in that present awareness and observe, then the self dissolves too. When the self dissolves there is just pure awareness. When the self completely collapses, there is this inexpressible, simple yet profound and ecstatic, compassionate awareness. Nobody is there. "I" is completely nonexistent in that place. There is no separation between samsara, bad circumstances, and nirvana, good circumstances, and there is nobody pursuing the path or chasing after enlightenment. In that moment we realize the essence of the Buddha's teaching."

(p. 41)

"Suddenly, when we stop producing concepts and ideas, when we stop feeding that illusory reality, when we stop associating with ego, it is very simple. It is simple to stop associating with ego. However there are no twelve step programs in transcendent wisdom. There is only the one-step program and that is to not associate with the ego. The moment we stop associating with ego it just immediately ceases right there."

(p. 128)

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 10:18 PM
Title: Re: The Rinpoche's Zen
Content:
Namdrol said:
The following is not Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:
Indeed, there is no mention of Dzogchen. As I've found, Anam Thubten talks of Prajnaparamita in his own way but associates with no specific teaching beyond that. Was it claimed otherwise somewhere?

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 11:21 PM
Title: Re: Introducing the practice of Daimoku to friends and relatives
Content:
Namdrol said:
Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo during the physical union of man and woman is indeed what is called "earthly desires are enlightenment," and "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana."

I wonder if this applies to chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo while watching porn.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 11:24 PM
Title: Re: Classic Kagyü Mahāmudrā Texts
Content:
Greg said:
I'd also like to put a plug in for Pointing Out the Great Way: The Stages of Meditation in Mahamudra by Daniel P. Brown (<http://www.wisdompubs.org/Pages/display.lasso?-KeyValue=32808&-Token.Action=&image=1> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;)

It's academically rigorous yet oriented toward the practitioner, a survey of all of the important texts of the tradition. Really an impressive and very useful piece of work.

Astus wrote:
I've pondered on buying it but his relationship with Ken Wilber eventually deterred me.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2011 at 11:24 PM
Title: Re: Classic Kagyü Mahāmudrā Texts
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It's academically rigorous yet oriented toward the practitioner, a survey of all of the important texts of the tradition. Really an impressive and very useful piece of work.

Astus wrote:

I've pondered on buying it but his relationship with Ken Wilber eventually deterred me.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Conservation Efforts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Who owns the resources? The rich.

Who protects the resources? The soldiers.

Who produces the resources? The workers.

Who organises the production? The managers.

Who distributes the products? The merchants.

etc. etc.

The idea of equal distribution is great. Communism, however, didn't work out so far. The Buddha's recipe for the perfect world is the five precepts. How do you convince everybody to abide by it?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Conservation Efforts

Content:

Namdrol said:

Screw the proletariat, the consumers must seize the means of production, and create a dictatorship of consumption...!

(oh wait...that won't work...)

Astus wrote:

It won't work only because consumers have no idea where those "means of production" are. Never even heard of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: The Rinpoche's Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Dogma seems to be one of the biggest obstacles in many spiritual traditions. It is often disguised as the wisdom of an infallible lineage, while sometimes it is simply ego's creation for the purpose of postponing the true realization of oneness. As long as such spiritual teachings are based on dogma, they are dead wisdom, full of superstition. ... What is transcendent wisdom? Let's inquire into that. Actually you can call it by many names, whatever name you prefer. It is a direct momentary process of dissolving all illusion right now, in this very moment. It is dissolving the illusion of pain, sorrow, and hatred. It is dissolving the illusion of self. There is a fire of awareness ignited in our consciousness which ruthlessly burns everything, without any exception. Sometimes it burns everything in a single moment and sometimes it burns one illusion after another. That burning process is transcendent wisdom. You can call it "transcendent wisdom" or you don't have to call it anything. It is really awareness, not conceptualization. It is momentary. It is direct experience. It is a realization of losing everything, losing all of our cherished ideas and concepts, sometimes even without any resistance. It is a beautiful way of losing everything, not a painful way."

(No Self, No Problem, p. 125-126)

"In the Son approach, all these true teachings deriving from the faith and understanding of the complete and sudden school which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are called dead words because they induce people to create the obstacle of understanding. Nevertheless, with complete descriptions which accord with the nature they do instruct beginning students who are not yet able to investigate the live word of the shortcut approach, and they help to ensure that they have nonretrogressive faith and understanding. But if there is a person of superior faculties-one fit for the secret transmission who abandons all stereotyping as soon as he hears the tasteless word of the shortcut approach-that person does not stagnate in the defects of knowledge and conceptual understanding but, rather, comes to know his abiding place. This is called "to hear once, have a thousand awakenings, and attain great dharanis.""

(Collected Works of Chinul, p. 240)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: A thought

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra is more than a single meditation technique, while "vipashyana" covers a very big area. That's why I don't think so.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Conservation Efforts

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Infinite source of energy" does not exist, especially not on Earth. Keeping population low (it's already too high) and living in a rural environment would mean a sustainable livelihood where small communities can live on locally produced food and move regularly to arable land until the used land regenerates. That's quite medieval and would require a global catastrophe to reduce humanity into such a culture. Another option - if we want to believe in the salvational nature of science - is to reach a higher technical development, like in the Star Trek universe, that brings with itself the cultural change and so even money disappears. Religions, however, have already proven to be ineffective as social forces, same with other ideological systems, the reason for that is probably in the diversity of humans and opinions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Hua Tou and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shattering the great doubt means becoming free from attachment to concepts. That is seeing the nature of mind, entering the gate of no-gate, experiencing non-conceptual mind. This is the equivalent of pointing out instruction. How one continues to practice is another question.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Hua Tou and Dzogchen

Content:

kalden yungdrung said:

Some questions:

- Free from attachment to concepts does mean?
- Seeing the Nature of Mind will be with the eyes?
- Are there also more ways to see the Nature of the Mind?
- Which mind would be here meant?
- What are pointing out instructions ?
- Where is this shattering of the great doubt explained?
- What is doubt and about what is one doubtful?

Astus wrote:

I think you better look into this yourself as your questions are far beyond a simple post. And when you have some questions left you can go to the Zen forum section to start a topic for it.

Online:

<http://www.purifymind.com/PracticeBegin.htm> by Master Hanshan Deqing

<http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/index.html>

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/hwadu/cat.asp?cat_seq=5

Books to read by Ven. Sheng-yen:

Shattering the Great Doubt: The Chan Practice of Huatou

Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master

Illuminating silence: the practice of Chinese Zen

Attaining the way: a guide to the practice of Chan Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Conservation Efforts

Content:

Astus wrote:

LastLegend,

"efficient and sustainable energy source" in my understanding - and I can be wrong of course - is the same as an infinite source of energy. Not realistic. But my knowledge is very limited here.

You may call it giving, compassion, enlightenment, etc. - these are ideas. You can't make people give - unless you start a so called "proletariat dictatorship". Since you can't make them give, can't convert them to new views either, the plan fails. That's what I was saying with the failure of religions and ideologies. Therefore, either we go medieval or new technologies. Both are mostly external (i.e. easier to recognise and accept by the majority) forces that make people follow new rules.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2011 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Conservation Efforts

Content:

Unknown said:

rural does not equal feudal, though perhaps for Europeans this is the only equation they are familiar with. You have to bear in mind that during the 19th century, literacy rates in the United States was the highest in the world

Astus wrote:

I don't find the perspective of a peasant civilisation that enticing, even if it's sustainable. And when you keep yourself busy on the farm and you are isolated from other areas, literacy disappears as it is useless. Also, don't forget that the 19th century was already the modern age with steam power and gun powder.

Unknown said:

You are talking ahead of yourself. We are not advocating revolutionary or change of

government or system. Why people have to bring this in every time?. We are only discussing ideas. But I think there are organizations out there that have people who come from different backgrounds, working on world peace. We can all sit and think it won't work-how is it gonna work? It will not work because that's what we think. Why don't we think that we can at least try?

Astus wrote:

I am discussing such ideas and I'm not marching on the streets or anything like that. But I don't find much to discuss about "how nice it would be if the world was a utopia", but rather considering ways that can be actually effective. Leaving change to those who are already in power, well, why would they want to make any changes? They already have it all, except they want more. Rich people are not less greedy than the poor.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2011 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & bhūmis

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The great seal is the very essence of reality and the all-in-one path. The essence of reality being nondifferentiable, its division into the grounds and paths cannot be acceptable from the ultimate standpoint."

(Tashi Namgyal)

Tsele Natsok Rangdrol (Lamp of Mahamudra):

general preliminaries - lesser path of accumulation
special preliminaries - medium path of accumulation
guru yoga - greater path of accumulation

3 stages of one-pointedness - path of joining

some say: 3 stages of simplicity and arriving at one taste - first bhumi and path of cultivation

most say: post-meditation after attaining simplicity - first bhumi / path of seeing

first stage of simplicity - 1-3 bhumi

medium stage of simplicity - 4-5 bhumi

greater simplicity - sixth bhumi

first stage of one taste - seventh bhumi

medium one taste - eighth bhumi

higher stage of one taste - ninth bhumi

lesser and medium stages of nonmeditation - tenth bhumi

greater nonmeditation - buddhahood/vajradhara, 11-13 bhumi

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (Mahamudra: The Moonlight):

based on Drelpa Dönsal:

[path of virtuous absorption - one-pointed yoga
path of insight - non-discrimination yoga]
path of meditation (bhumi 2-10) - one taste yoga
buddhahood - nonmeditation yoga

based on Je Gyare:

path of spiritual merit - preparatory practices
path of virtuous absorption - one-pointed yoga
path of insight - nondiscrimination yoga
path of meditation - one flavor yoga
9-10 bhumi - lower-middle nonmeditation
buddhadhood - greater nonmeditation

Tashi Namgyal's own:

path of spiritual merits and first ground - preparatory practices and three levels of one-pointed yoga
path of virtuous absorption and ground of joy - three levels of nondiscriminatory yoga
path of insight and meditation, 1-10 grounds - 1-3 levels of one flavor and 1-2 levels of nonmeditation
buddhahood - greater nonmeditation

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2011 at 4:11 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Buddhist View of Zen

Content:

mzaur said:

So from a Tibetan pov, Zen does not lead to the same realization as Vajrayana?

Astus wrote:

It does lead to buddhahood since it is Mahayana, so they simply put it into their interpretation of sutrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2011 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Haiku for Mahayana Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

this life is a dream
nothing can be grasped or seen
where do you wake up?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2011 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Saichō's Monastic Reforms

Content:

Astus wrote:

A side note:

In Japanese schools they possess the proper doctrinal-practical transmission of the different schools, like in the case of Zen, but because they not necessarily live up to it, they're false. Again, even if they live up to the moral standards because they don't have the right set of rules and transmission they are false. So we could say that neither transmission nor the reality of practice makes one proper Dharma follower. Or it is that if we want we can view it as all right, if we want we can view it as totally wrong. That's because we can argue on the side of either ideal purity or practical situation. But I think what should be asked is the purpose of the whole training and whether a training used can generate the desired results.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2011 at 9:25 PM

Title: Seon Master Jinje

Content:

Astus wrote:

First time I've seen an ad on the Shambhala website that brought me to this page:

<http://www.jinje.us/Jinje.us/Home.html>

Here we read: "Enlightened Seon (Zen) Master Jinje, the 79th Patriarch in the Korean lineage of the Buddha" And also: "The greatest living master of Ganhwa Seon (Korean Zen), he practices a distinctive questioning style of meditation that traces its roots back to the Buddha and remains virtually unknown in the US."

On his <http://jinje.kr/eng/> it's simply stated, "He is the spiritual leader of the Korean Buddhist."

His https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinje_Seonsa plainly says: "Seon Master Jinje(1934~) is the greatest living master of Seon Buddhism secluded in Korea."

His

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/master/priest_view.asp?cat_seq=7&priest_seq=118&page=1 says, "He is currently the spiritual patriarch (joshil) of Donghwasa Temple. He became a member of Jogye Order's Council of Elders in 2003. He also received the prestigious designation of Great Master (Daejongsa) from the Jogye Order in 2004."

Is he really the leader of all Korean Buddhists? Is he the head of the Jogye Order? Neither of that seems accurate to me. Does he have an impressive campaign for his visit to the US? Sure he does. By the way, he is an elder teacher, so it is a programme worth visiting by anyone who can.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2011 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Those speaking the rhetoric of decline are "more interested in establishing a particular orthodoxy of "true teaching" than in voicing historical predictions of actual decline, prophetic warnings of moral failings, or existential statements about humankind's capacity for realization. In fact, the beginnings of the Buddhist tradition of decline are best understood as a rhetoric of orthodoxy that marks the appearance of doctrinal differentiation in the Buddhist community. The elements of this argument can be found throughout the various canons, but always in the sense of an exhortation to adhere to the true teachings lest the predicted decline actually come to pass. It was also in China that we first encounter individuals convinced that the predicted demise had actually arrived, due in part to a preexisting and pervasive indigenous discourse of decline. In an interesting twist, the dominant use in China of the Buddhist polemic of orthodoxy was to legitimize new teachings, of which the Three Levels is one example. An important reason for this was that the decline came to be seen in terms of a decline in human nature, a claim about the corrupt existential condition of living beings rather than a decline of time or doctrine."

(Jamie Hubbard: Absolute delusion, perfect Buddhahood : the rise and fall of a Chinese heresy, p. 35)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2011 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Adamantine said:

academic gibberish. why are you quoting it?

Astus wrote:

It fits well the situation. Those arguing for a decline also posit their form of Buddhism as appropriate for this rotten age. So it is more a rhetorical device than anything else, as it has been used as such for a long time now in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2011 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Adamantine,

Examples from this thread is in the OP itself: this is the age of decline, therefore renunciation is impossible as a path, the path all can use is Vajrayana. This is practically negating the validity of all the other Buddhist teachings and selecting Vajrayana as the

sole option. The book the quote is from is about a long ago extinct Chinese school that first propagated the presence of the age of decline. We can also find similar arguments in sutras, most prominently those that are associated with the Pure Land practice as the Pure Land school itself claims that in the age of decline it is the best path to choose.

You may disregard the careful study of Buddhism and put aside other teachings than those you like the most. But I think it is understandable for you that not everyone shares your view regarding Padmasambhava and other Tibetan Buddhist concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Not really, since if you examine things carefully, Mantrayāna is the only Indian Buddhist tradition that asserts full Buddhahood in one lifetime is actually a possibility.

All other Indian Buddhist traditions of which we have knowledge, Mahāyāna or not, assert that at minimum full awakening is impossible in less than three incalculable eons.

Astus wrote:

Renunciation is a key element in attaining arhatship, the goal of the majority of Indian Buddhist traditions. However, Buddhism in India died out long ago so it's not something I include in "other Buddhist teachings" simply because there is no such living religion. On the other hand, we have East Asian and South Asian Buddhism, neither of them defined as particularly Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Namdrol said:

Outside of Tibeta Buddhism/Vajrayāna, Chan alone proposes that it is possible to attain fullbuddhahood in a single lifetime. But it seems that in Chan, "buddhahood" is a generally a euphemism for attaining the bodhisattva stages, and no Indian Mahāyāna tradition denies that it is impossible for someone to attain the path of seeing and so on. However, they would have done so based on past accumulations. So even here, Vajrayāna remain unique in asserting that one can attain full awakening 11 bhumi + in a single lifetime, soup to nuts.

Astus wrote:

It is not only Chan but also Huayan and Tiantai teach sudden enlightenment - interestingly Huayan puts "sudden enlightenment" one level below its own "complete teaching of the one vehicle". As for the difference between the entry to the bodhisattva

stages and full buddhahood, in Chan it is clarified with the distinction of gradual and sudden paths. Gradual means the bodhisattva stages, sudden means immediate buddhahood. Of course, not everyone among the Chan teachers agreed with this view.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is all right to not accept that Chan teaches the sudden gateway to buddhahood. Just as Huseng quoted, Zongmi is one of the few outstanding teachers who did not accept that view. But a large number of teachers did accept.

The fourth principle of Chan is "see nature, become buddha" (jianxing chengfo / kensho jobutsu 見性成佛). As it's said in the Platform Sutra, "If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood." (T48n2008, p351a, 12)

To make it clear how it was understood in the Hongzhou school:

"The deluded man seeks to obtain or attain something, while the enlightened man neither seeks, obtains nor attains anything whatsoever. The deluded man yearns for attainment in some distant kalpa in the future, while the enlightened man perceives the nature of all things suddenly and instantaneously."
(Huihai's "Tsong-Ching Record" tr. by Lok To, X63n1224, p26c, 5-6)

"Some students attain the state of liberated Mind quickly, some slowly. After listening to a Dharma talk, some reach "no mind" directly. In contrast, some must first pass gradually through the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith, the Dasabhumi of Bodhisattva development, and the ten stages before attaining the Perfectly Awakened Mind. Whether one takes a long or a short time, however, once attained, "no mind" can never be lost. With nothing further to cultivate and nothing more to attain, one realizes that this "no mind" is true, not false, Mind. Whether reaching this stage quickly or after passing through the various stages of Bodhisattva development gradually, the attainment of "no mind" cannot be characterized in terms of shallow or deep."
(Huangbo's "Chung-Ling Record" tr. by Lok To, T48n2012A, p380b, 5-9)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Astus wrote:

topic split: <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=5102>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Awakening in Chan means realising the nature of mind, i.e. the buddha-mind. Since the buddha-mind is perfect in qualities and omniscience, how could that awakening be limited? It is free from the emotional (klesa) and conceptual (jneya) obscurations, how could it be bound by anything at all? Teachers of Chan were well aware of the gradual stages and aeons of bodhisattva practice when they talked about buddhahood and claimed that Chan is a sudden path. Those who viewed it in a different way did say so.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Huseng said:

Mantrayāna was introduced in the 8th century into China and seems to have become somewhat popular, perhaps because of the mysterious theatrical appeal of it to the common people, but it was effectively doomed in 845 when Wuzong crushed all Buddhist institutions. Any sort of urban Buddhism with state sponsorship received a deep, and sometimes fatal, blow.

Astus wrote:

That is a bit of an exaggeration. Vajrayana was available in China in later ages too, including translation of tantras, and enjoyed state sponsorship under the Mongols and Manchus. But I think it's that since the Taoists already satisfied those who were looking for yogic and magical practices, there was little need for a new one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 9:04 PM

Title: Devices Zen and the Direct Path

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Generally speaking, Zen teachers nowadays instruct people by setting up rules or using devices. believing that without devices they can't manage, behaving as if without them it's impossible to instruct anyone, they're unable to teach by simply pointing things out directly. To teach people [this way], unable to manage without devices, is 'devices Zen.' "Others tell students pursuing this teaching that it's no good unless they rouse a great ball of doubt and succeed in breaking through it. 'No matter what,' they tell them, 'you've got to rouse a ball of doubt!' They don't teach, 'Abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind!' [but instead] cause people without any ball of doubt to saddle themselves with one, making them exchange the Buddha Mind for a ball of doubt. A mistaken business, isn't it!"

(Bankei Yotaku, tr. Peter Haskel)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

The difference lies in equipoise and post-equipoise.

Frankly, it is obvious that realizing the nature of the mind does not make one a buddha. That is why I stated that "buddhahood" in Chan is a euphemism for awakening, but it does not mean that one who has awakened is a Samyaksambuddha, though I imagine there are some deluded Chan practitioners even today who think it is so.

Astus wrote:

Equipoise and post-equipoise matters when there is a specific state of mind to cultivate. Zen is not about creating any mind. So it is called no-mind.

Realising the nature of mind doesn't make one a buddha, the mind is buddha, so there's nothing to be transformed. This is the teaching of buddha-mind - not just as a possibility of becoming buddha but that the qualities of a buddha are inherent. There is no buddha outside the mind, this is a fundamental Zen teaching. Of course this is not like as in the doctrinal teachings where the buddha is far away out there and reaching that level is almost impossible.

"Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi is a name for the realization that the Buddhas of the whole universe do not in fact possess the smallest perceptible attribute. There exists just the One Mind." (Huangbo, tr. Blofeld, T48n2012B, p384c, 21)

"All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks."

"But you, weren't you born of a mother? If you seek buddha, you'll be held in the grip of Buddha-Mara. If you seek the patriarchs, you'll be bound by the ropes of Patriarch-Mara. If you engage in any seeking, it will all be pain. Much better to do nothing.

There are a bunch of shavepate monks who say to students, 'The Buddha is the Ultimate; he attained buddhahood only after he came to the fruition of practices carried on through three great asamkhyeya kalpas.' Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin sala trees at Kusinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours."

(The Record of Linji, tr. Sasaki, p. 222-223)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Devices Zen and the Direct Path

Content:

LastLegend said:

If the teachers are not enlightened, they cannot teach direct path.

Astus wrote:

Neither can they teach Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Huseng said:

However, none of that was really part of Han/Chinese Buddhism 漢傳.

Tibetan Vajrayāna in China was for Mongol and later Manchurian aristocracy.

Astus wrote:

Primarily, yes. But that doesn't mean monks - especially close to the higher circles - didn't know about it. For instance, Hanshan Deqing did practice some Vajrayana techniques.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

the mind is buddha...

Namdrol said:

Nice, a conditioned, impermanent, afflicted buddha.

N

Astus wrote:

"Good sons, all hindrances are none other than ultimate enlightenment. Whether you attain mindfulness or lose mindfulness, there is no non-liberation. Establishing the Dharma and refuting the Dharma are both called nirvana; wisdom and folly are equally prajna; the method that is perfected by bodhisattvas and false teachers is the same bodhi; ignorance and suchness are not different realms; morality, concentration and wisdom, as well as desire, hatred and ignorance are all divine practices; sentient beings and lands share the same dharma nature; hell and heaven are both the Pure Land;

those having Buddha-nature and those not having it equally accomplish the Buddha's enlightenment. All defilements are ultimately liberation. The reality-realms's ocean-like wisdom completely illumines all marks to be just like empty space. This is called 'the Tathāgata's accordance with the nature of enlightenment.' "

(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch. 6, tr. C. Muller)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Devices Zen and the Direct Path

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not that there is a problem with expedients. But Zen - unlike the other paths - is about directly seeing the nature of mind. Using methods and techniques to gradually come to realisation and instantly accessing the buddha-mind are both valid. Bankei was among those few who kept alive that tradition of Bodhidharma, Huineng, Mazu and Linji to teach the immediate way. On the other hand, Hakuin - who lived a bit later - established a gradual practice of training with koans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Renunciation Impossible?

Content:

Huseng said:

Whatever influence there might have been I have never noticed it either in terms of text or in modern Chinese Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

I don't know much about Chinese ritual practices, but you may have noticed the large number of dharanis present in monks' daily rituals and their general popularity. There are also rites like "Liberating the Flaming-Mouths" (fang yankou 放焰口) based on a Tantric text by Amoghavajra, and the grand ceremony of "Liberation Rite of Water and Land" (shuiliu fahui 水陸法會).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Kyosan said:

We can have some idea of what Buddhahood is and there is nothing wrong with that, but we should realize our limitations and not think that we know what Buddhahood is. Of course we don't, only Buddhas know what Buddhahood is. We are just deluded sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

"Buddhahood" is our own idea that we already have. Whether you say we can analyse this idea of Buddhahood or not doesn't touch the immediate truth that it is a concept we have in our minds. The reason it is said that Buddhahood cannot be figured out is exactly because we just have to drop these ideas and there it is.

"habituated discursive thought arises from the conditioned mind. The six data- fields, false conceptualization and conditioned energies are not the true essence of mind—indeed, they are like sky-flowers. But using discursive thought to discern the Buddha-state is like the sky-flowers further producing 'sky-fruits.' Circular false thoughts are useless here."

(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch. 4, tr. C. Muller)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

LastLegend said:

Don't talk practice. When we have realized enlightenment we can come back and talk about all the paths not just the path we have employed.

Astus wrote:

Is there some taboo on discussions? This is a Buddhist Forum. Is it that the purpose of such a board as this is unclear? It is meant for talking about Buddhism, about Zen, etc. Questions like "why talk about this?" is saying that we should just shut down this section or even the whole forum. I doubt that's what you or those who make similar comments actually mean. But such meta-discussions like this is disrupting and very much off topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, this discussion was started based on the different interpretations of Buddhahood in Chan. So it is a "debate topic". And unless it deteriorates into personal attacks I find it a very fruitful form of interaction.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

Actually, I am questioning the entire basis of certain Chan claims to buddhahood because they broadly contradict Indian Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

That was Xuanzang's view too, he wanted to "correct" Chinese Buddhism - and he didn't really mean Chan since at that time it was still marginal. However, his doctrines were soon forgotten and the Huayan-Tiantai interpretations conquered the land on which Chan was built. Therefore, to connect Chan to Indian Mahayana one has to go back in time a bit, to around the 4th century when things started to take shape. That means that the primary treatises of Chinese Buddhism are not those that are used in Tibet to understand Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I didn't mean they knew nothing about those works from India but they rather developed on their own way. The Maha-Prajnaparamita-Upadesa is one example, it was used heavily by both Sanlun and Tiantai, the Mahayana-Sraddhotpada-Sastra is another classic example used often by Huayan teachers.

Consider these works studied in the Korean Jogye Order's curriculum for novices (<http://longquanzs.org/articledetail.php?id=4743>): Diamond Sutra, Heart Sutra, Vimalakirti Sutra, PP8000 Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, Shurangama Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, Awakening Faith in Mahayana, Abhidharma teachings, Huayan teachings, Seon teachings. And if that sounds a very broad range, the texts studied in depth are (<http://www.acmuller.net/articles/ogahae-oxford.html>): Flower Adornment Sutra, Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith, Sutra of the Heroic March Concentration, Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, Platform Sutra, Diamond Sutra. They are all related to Chan/Seon and Huayan/Hwaeom in different ways. No Nagarjuna, no Vasubandhu, no Haribhadra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2011 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

As I said, they tended to ignore Indian Mahāyāna masters, preferring their own interpretations. The only text of clear Indian origin in the short list given here is the first. The rest are native Chinese compositions.

Astus wrote:

Plus the Diamond Sutra. But yes, that is part of the difficulty of simply putting Chan under "sutrāyana" and expecting it to conform with Tibetan views what it should be like. Therefore, if we don't count Indian Mahayana, perfect enlightenment in this life can be as valid a claim as in Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Carl Bielefeldt in his "Dogen's Manual of Zen Meditation" discusses nicely (p. 87ff) that the Tiantai meditation system (the Mohezhi guan) that included both gradual and sudden methods (where the sudden part was the culmination of the practices) served as a model for Chan that took out only the sudden part - that is the Tathagata Dhyana (based on which it's called Tathagata/Rulai Chan), the vajropamasamadhi, the very state of buddhahood - and left behind the gradual stages. (Bielefeldt there also explains other important developments that are not relevant here but it's a good source to understand how Zen became like it is in Dogen's teachings and even today.) This shows that Zen is not at all without reasoning or doctrinal bases but what people see are teachings that were well established by that time and needed no apologetics - this is what is also called Patriarchal Chan, where the patriarchs are equal to living buddhas expressing the Teaching of the Unsurpassed Vehicle.

Zongmi, who emphasised the sudden enlightenment followed by gradual practice model, argued primarily against the Hongzhou and Baotang schools who taught instant liberation. In the end, however, the Hongzhou style won and from that appeared the Linji and Caodong schools to be the orthodox lineages then on.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some quotes on the view of Mahayana and the three kalpas long practice from different Chan works.

But the Buddha said, "Only after undergoing innumerable hardships for three asankhya kalpas did I achieve enlightenment," Why do you now say that simply beholding the mind and over-coming the three poisons is liberation?

The words of the Buddha are true. But the three-asankhya kalpas refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call asankhya in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts, And every thought lasts a kalpa. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three asankhya kalpas, Once the three poisons obscure your real self, how can you be called liberated until you overcome their countless evil thoughts? People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three releases are said to pass through the three-sankhya kalpas. But people of this final age are the densest of fools. They don't understand what the Tathagata really meant by the three-asankhya kalpas. They say

enlightenment is only achieved after endless kalpas and thereby mislead disciples to retreat on the path to Buddhahood.

(Breakthrough Sermon)

Q: What is the difference between the Mahayana and the Supreme Vehicle?

A: The Mahayana is the Bodhisattva's vehicle, and the Supreme Yana is the Buddha's vehicle.

Q: How can one practice to attain these vehicles?

A: To practice the Bodhisattva's vehicle is simply Mahayana practice. After attaining the Bodhisattva stage, where there is no longer any need to practice, one arrives at the stage of no-practice, which is permanently still and deep and where there is neither increase nor decrease. This is called the Supreme Vehicle or the Buddha's Vehicle.

(Entering the Tao of Sudden Enlightenment)

The monk asked: How can one suddenly attain the Tao through practice?

The master said: If one really has some good reason and is very sincere, with no trace of falseness, there is, for him, no need to spend endless Asankhyeya-Kalpas in practice. The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says, "A man who sails a boat on the ocean can move very far in a short time in a favorable wind." If there were not a favorable wind, the boat would only stay in the same place for many years. Also, if the boat were to leak, it would submerge and the man would die. The situation of all sentient beings can be compared quite closely to this one. The Surangama Sutra says, "There is Samadhi of seeing all things as illusion, which, in a finger-snap, leads to the state beyond all study." Therefore, in this case, it is not necessary to understand the Three Vehicles nor to attain the Ten Stages of a Bodhisattva's Progress to become Buddha in one thought, thereby transcending Kalpas of practice suddenly.

(Practice and Attain Enlightenment After Understanding the Principles)

"Followers of the Way, if you take my viewpoint you'll cut off the heads of the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya buddhas; a bodhisattva who has attained the completed mind of the tenth stage will be like a mere hireling; a bodhisattva of equivalent enlightenment or a bodhisattva of marvelous enlightenment will be like pilloried prisoners; an arhat and a pratyekabuddha will be like privy fi lth; bodhi and nirvana will be like hitching posts for asses. Why is this so? Followers of the Way, it is only because you haven't yet realized the emptiness of the three asamkhyeya kalpas that you have such obstacles."

(Record of Linji)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 6:23 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

Yes, these are often trotted out, but they do not prove anything other than that Chan Buddhists had a view of buddhahood that does not correspond to mainstream Buddhist

thinking on the subject.

Astus wrote:

What "mainstream" actually means is debatable since Chan has been the primary doctrine of elite Buddhism in East Asia for a thousand years now.

Proving that Chan, and particularly sudden enlightenment, is a valid Buddhist teaching is the real issue then. For that we would need a couple of terms defined, especially buddhahood and buddha-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

"Mainstream" means "rest of the Buddhist world..."

Astus wrote:

That means a few of millions in Tibet, Mongolia and Bhutan, and the many Theravadins. In terms of the number of followers Vajrayana is not mainstream at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

"Mainstream" means "rest of the Buddhist world..."

Astus wrote:

That means a few of millions in Tibet, Mongolia and Bhutan, and the many Theravadins. In terms of the number of followers Vajrayana is not mainstream at all.

Namdrol said:

Mainstream means Buddhism in India.

N

Astus wrote:

Hm, the current Buddhism in India or sometimes in the past? And what time? Why only India and why that time? Among the Indian schools which is mainstream and which is marginal? This is getting messy...

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

Because India is the source of the Dharma, the place where Mahāyāna developed, etc., and the site of Vajrāsana.

Astus wrote:

Do you deny the possibility that authentic Buddhism is not bound by geographical location? You defined a "mainstream Buddhism" as all Indian Buddhists while we both know that Buddhism there was neither unified nor static. Vajrayana claims buddhahood within one lifetime, so it is not exactly true that all agreed on the time it has to take to achieve it. The concept of sudden enlightenment was first taught by Daosheng (360?-434), a disciple of Kumarajiva. Because he was a Chinese master and not Indian, his view of Buddhism must be wrong? Saying that Indian Buddhism is the definitive because that's where it first appeared is very much an argument based on an irrelevant fact. Buddhism developed pretty much independently in China after Buddhism established itself. Why would then it be inferior only because of geographical reasons? Just as in India so it was in China that there were different traditions and interpretations of the Buddhadharma. Sudden enlightenment might be inconceivable for the Theravada and early Mahayana followers, but not so for the Vajrayana. Vajrayana developed in India and Chan developed in China. Neither of them are something you could find in such mainstream schools as the Sarvastivadins or the Dharmaguptakas. But then it comes down to the spatial distance between India and China. Do you find that an important point? In my view, the source of Dharma is the Buddha and not a place, nationality, ethnicity, political system or climate.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 26th, 2011 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see. So the problem is the lack of the two accumulations. But even in the Prajnaparamita teachings we find that one paramita includes all the other paramitas.

In the Mahaprajnaparamitasastra (30.5.3; vol. 2, p. 859, tr. Lamotte-Migme) we find even the concept of abstaining for all kinds of practices, "Furthermore, the bodhisattva acquires the Prajñāpāramitā without practicing any dharma and without acquiring any dharma. Why? All practices (caryā) are erroneous and futile: from near or far, they present faults. In fact, bad dharmas (akuśaladharma) are faulty from close up; as for good dharmas, they are transformed and modified from far away; those who become attached to them will end up by experiencing pain and sorrow; thus they show defects from far off. [Good and bad practices] are like an appetizing food and a disgusting food both of which have been poisoned."

There is also the story of Prasannendriya and Agramati (MPPS, vol. 1, p. 323ff) where the first only taught insight into the true nature of reality without renouncing the world and

the other all the many practices and ascetic methods. Prasannendriya became a buddha eventually and Agramati had to undergo lot of suffering later on.

Adding the buddha-mind teachings, the nature of mind has perfect function, the functioning of a buddha, and this is the display of all the qualities. What is there to accumulate for it?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding the dana-paramita (although the quoted MPPS section does not mentioned it) here is a little explanation from Dazhu Huihai:

Q: Where can one enter the doorway to this understanding?

A: Through the perfection of charity (dana-paramita).

Q: Buddha has said that the six paramitas are the action of the Bodhisattva path, so how can we enter the doorway to this understanding by practicing, as you have said, only the dana-paramita?

A: People who are confused or deluded do not understand that the other five paramitas all evolve from the dana-paramita. Therefore, in practicing the dana-paramita, one also fulfills the practice of the other five paramitas.

Q: For what reason is it called the dana-paramita?

A: "Dana" means the perfection of charity.

Q: What things can be given up in the name of charity?

A: Clinging to thoughts of duality can be given up.

Q: Just what does this mean?

A: It means to give up clinging, in the name of charity, to thoughts of good and evil, existence and non-existence, love and hate, emptiness and fullness, concentration and non-concentration, pure and impure, etc. In the name of charity, give up all of them. Then, and only then, can you attain the stage of the voidness of duality, while, at the same time, letting neither a thought about the voidness of opposites nor about charity arise. This is the genuine practice of the dana-paramita, which is also known as absolute detachment from all phenomena. This is only the voidness of all dharma-nature, which means that always and everywhere is just no-mind. If one can attain the stage of no-mind everywhere, no form will be perceived, because our self-nature is void, containing no form. This, then, is true Reality, which is also called the wonderful form or body of the Tathagata. The Diamond Sutra says: "Those who have abandoned all forms are called Buddhas."

The two accumulations of merit and wisdom are present in the mind. Emptiness is wisdom, function is compassion. Zen affirms that the trikaya is present in the nature of mind, so it is not that one has to develop wisdom for the dharmakaya and merit for rupakaya, but the buddha-mind is already perfect in all aspects. Still, that doesn't deny that there is also a gradual path of the bodhisattva, however, the gradual path doesn't

deny the existence of a sudden path. Thrangu Rinpoche says that on the sutrayana it takes a long time to achieve buddhahood because they use analytical-conceptual meditation but Mahamudra uses an experiential method of directly looking at the nature of mind. A similar argument could be made in the case of Zen too.

This might help better understanding, here is Zongmi's differentiation between the five dhyanas, that is, the levels of practice:

1. With ulterior motives, one appreciates what is above, and rejects what is below, in order to cultivate. This is the dhyana of non-Buddhists.
2. Correct faith in cause and effect, one uses appreciation and revulsion, in order to cultivate.* This is the dhyana of unenlightened beings.
3. Ending rebirth through emptiness, fully realizing the true path, in order to cultivate. This is lower vehicle dhyana.
4. Comprehending the two forms of emptiness, that of the person and that of dharmas, in order to cultivate. This is Mahayana dhyana.
5. Direct (sudden) realization of the essential purity of ones own mind, originally without defilements, itself endowed with the influx-free (non-afflicted) gnosis - this mind is Buddha, ultimate with nothing else beyond - cultivating in this manner, is the Supreme Vehicle Dhyana. It is also known as the Pure Dhyana of the Tathagatas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What then is the difference between a Buddha and first stage bodhisattva?"

It depends on how the first stage and how a buddha is interpreted. Here's one interpretation from Wonhyo's commentary to the Vajrasamadhi Sutra that is based on the Huayan view,

"the first bhûmi in fact encompasses all ten bhûmis, for in one moment one may suddenly access the ten types of dharmadharmatâ. The ten bhûmis are in fact the first bhûmi, for all [ten] may instantly be completely fulfilled at this initial gate [of the first bhûmi]. Owing to the fact that the ten bhûmis are in fact the first bhûmi, [the first bhûmi] is called the "one." But because the first bhûmi is in fact the ten bhûmis, it is also "many." Consequently, [the first bhûmi] is called the "one-and-many bhûmi."

In a similar fashion it is discussed by those who follow (Zongmi, Jinul) who attempted to connect Chan with the doctrinal teachings, mainly Huayan. So it is not much different from what you say, however, they called sudden enlightenment not the entry to the first bhumi but the entry to the level of faith which is the first of the 52 levels. That makes your interpretation of Chan's sudden enlightenment a lot more positive than theirs. On the other hand, their interpretation is a bit more complex, as it is briefly explained by Buswell in a footnote:

"The "Brahmacarya" chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra states that the initial arising of the bodhicitta-the thought of enlightenment-which occurs at the entrance to the bodhisattva path at the first abiding stage is equivalent to the final achievement of Buddhahood (HYCb, p. 449c). This is the hallmark of the complete teachings, the fifth of the five divisions of the teachings recognized by the early Huayen patriarchs. With the awakening to the Buddha-wisdom which is inherent in his own self-nature, the bodhisattva is fully endowed with all the qualities of Buddhahood in their potential form. Only his habitual patterns of thought and behavior must be adjusted through gradual cultivation until Buddhahood is finally actualized. Nevertheless, as the bodhisattva has understood through his initial awakening that these residual habits are essentially void, no cultivation is actually done throughout that period. Therefore, once the innate Buddha-wisdom is recognized at the beginning of the bodhisattva path, Buddhahood has already been achieved."

Thus it is explained in a doctrine oriented way the achievement of complete enlightenment at the moment of realising the nature of mind. From a more common Chan perspective all the stages and classifications are so much hot air and entangling views. Hongren - who lived before Chan turned totally to the doctrine of subitism - wrote in his treatise, "The foregoing dialogues could be expanded endlessly, my hope for now is that you will become conscious that your own basic mind is Buddha. This is why I exhort you so earnestly, nothing in the thousands of scriptures and myriads of treatises surpasses preserving the basic true mind - this is essential." Later, now in the developed Zen form, we find the following story expressing the same view, "Tokusan brought his notes on the Diamond Sutra to the front of the hall, pointed to them with a torch, and said, "Even though you have exhausted the abstruse doctrines, it is like placing a hair in a vast space. Even though you have learned all the secrets of the world, it is like a drop of water dripped on the great ocean." And he burned all his notes. Then, making bows, he took his leave of his teacher."

Zhaozhou, when once instructing the assembly, said, "I do not enjoy hearing the word 'Buddha'". It's that "buddhahood" is still strongly connected to doctrines and ideas. Dahui quoted one of Pang-yun's poems,

"Mind is Thus and objects are also Thus:
There is no true and also no false.
Existence doesn't concern me,
Nor does nonexistence hold me:
I'm not a holy sage,
But an ordinary fellow who understands things."

So, even if it sounds a lot of "sophistry" and "sleight of hand", Chan focuses on immediate experience of the ultimate and so there aren't many discussions on bodhisattva stages, because having "stages", "levels" and "grades" of enlightenment are all ideas of "how it could be", while directly attaining no-thought and maintaining it in all situations - that's why I protested against the distinction of equipoise and post-equipoise - is the essential teaching and realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 7:08 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

"This is just intellectual contrivance."

Yes, so is the whole stages system. No, it is a summary of the Huayan view of the first bhumi.

"The first of the 52 bhumis is not anywhere near the path of seeing, so there is no immediate experience of the ultimate that can even be discussed."

You make the mistake of identifying one interpretation of the bodhisattva stages with another.

"You protested, but did not answer my observation concerning the identity of the content of a first bodhisattvas realization and a buddha's realization.

In the end, all you have succeeded in showing is that Chan is systematically incoherent."

What I showed is that both "first stage" and "buddhahood" are relative terms that depend on interpretation. Unless you give a definition you want to base the comparison on your question can't be answered, or it can be answered in any way.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 4:00 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Unknown said:

No, it is a Huayan view of the initial production of bodhicitta, which is the entrance to the path of accumulation.

Astus wrote:

It says first bhumi and it means the first bhumi. However, the five paths system is not used but the 52 stages. That means, for instance, that the buddha-nature is realised on the level of faith (first ten of the 52) in Zongmi's interpretation, or on the level of dwelling (second ten) in Li Tongxuan's version. A description of the arousal of bodhicitta, following Zongmi's teachings, is explained in Peixiu's "Exhortation to Resolve on Buddhahood" translated by Ven. Dharmamitra and is available on his website.

Unknown said:

No, since the ten stages are treated the same way. In Chinese Buddhism they are merely encased within an alternate scheme, but when I say first bhumi, I mean the first

bodhisattva bhumi as described in the Dasabhumika sutra.

Astus wrote:

That's the point, it is not treated the same way. Here's Buswell's summary based on Tongxuan's work:

"The ten bhumis are the original foundation of all dharmas. Here the bodhisattva pervades all dharmas, all directions, and all positions simultaneously. Development before this stage involved some measure of effort and entailed as well the progressive development of meritorious practices. By the time the bodhisattva has reached the ten bhumis, however, he has nothing left to practice and nothing left to achieve. It is a kind of "firming-up" stage at which all the qualities and achievements attained throughout the previous levels are matured and allowed to infuse his entire being. He merges with all dharmas without, however, losing his own identity in the process. This is the stage of the unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena- the highest expression of spiritual attainment in the Avatamsaka Sutra and, by implication, in all the Buddhist scriptures."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Which first bhumi?"

Only the usual ten bodhisattva stages are the bhumis, the others are faith, dwelling, conduct, transference, then the stages/bhumis.

"As I said, it is treated in the same way. When a bodhisattva realizes the first bhumi, there is no more emptiness to realize, all that is left to do is to complete the two accumulations, as I told you, the ten stages only map qualities, not realization."

As the quote said, there is no realisation on any of those bhumis. The realisation happened on the 11th level, the first level of dwelling, and the 1st bhumi is the 41st level.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2011 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Since Chan, Huayen, and so on do not add any new insights into the nature of reality, nor do they add any revolutionary new methods, any claims they make to sudden buddhahood are merely rhetoric and philosophical trickery."

On one hand, Chan can be deduced from the sutras, so it is in no contradiction with the Buddha's teachings. On the other, the interpretation they make of the Dharma is unique in content, method and style. In content it teaches the sudden enlightenment that

accomplishes buddhahood directly. In method it uses immediate insight into the true nature of mind. In style it has developed a language of enlightened action, most apparent in koans.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

What I do know is that certain Chan claims have no basis in Mahāyāna sutra.

Astus wrote:

The classical definition of Chan:

教外別傳 - Separate transmission outside doctrines

不立文字 - Doesn't rely on words and letters

直指人心 - Directly points to human mind

見性成佛 - To see nature and become buddha

So indeed, Chan is not based on sutras, shastras, or any doctrine. That is, of course, not the same as denying them. Also, those who wanted to match Chan with Jiao (doctrinal teachings), happened to do that using primarily Huayan teachings, which again does not fit Indian Mahayana interpretations in every aspect. You may call that "plain wrong" and such, but that doesn't make things any clearer. Chan is a practical tradition, calling it buddhahood, bodhisattvahood, enlightenment, awakening, etc. are all rhetoric, names and words.

Record of Linji, tr. Sasaki said:

"According to the masters of the sutras and śāstras, the threefold body is regarded as the ultimate norm. But in my view this is not so. The threefold body is merely a name; moreover, it is a threefold dependency. ... you must recognize the one who manipulates these reflections. 'He is the primal source of all the buddhas,' and the place to which every follower of the Way returns."

"There is only the man of the Way who depends upon nothing, here listening to my discourse—it is he who is the mother of all buddhas. Therefore buddhas are born from nondependence. Awaken to nondependence, then there is no buddha to be obtained. Insight such as this is true insight."

"Seeking buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do. Therefore, [for them] activity and the defiling passions and also nonactivity and passionlessness are 'pure' karma."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

deepbluehum said:

Let's just say Chan's method of introducing is equivalent to this. I don't think so. I think such an introduction is special to Vajrayana, but it could be in theory.

Astus wrote:

Here's Zichang's conversation with Huineng from the Platform Sutra (tr. McRae).

[Zhichang] said, "After arriving there I received no teaching for three months. Because of the importance of the Dharma, one night I entered [Shenxiu's] quarters alone to inquire of him, 'What is my fundamental mind, my fundamental nature?' Shenxiu then said, 'Do you see space?' I said, 'I see.' He said, 'When you see space, does it have characteristics or not?' I answered, 'Space is without form. What characteristics could it have?' He said, 'Your fundamental nature is like space in that there is not a single thing at all that can be seen. This is called correct seeing. For there to be not a single thing that can be known is called true knowing. There are no blue and yellow, long and short. Just see that the fundamental source is pure, the essence of enlightenment is perfect and bright: this is called seeing the nature and achieving buddhahood. It is also called the perceptual understanding of the Tathāgata.' Even though this student heard this explanation, I was still not certain, and I beg Your Reverence to teach me." The master said, "That teacher's explanation still allows perceptual understanding to exist, which is why you were unable to comprehend. I will now reveal a verse for you:

Not seeing a single dharma but maintaining the view of nonbeing
Is much like floating clouds blocking the face of the sun.
Not knowing a single dharma but maintaining one's knowledge of emptiness
Is just like the great void generating lightning and thunder.

When such perceptual understanding arises for the slightest instant,
How can mistaken recognition ever understand expedient means?
You should understand the error of this yourself, in a single moment of thought,
And the numinous brilliance of the self will be constantly manifest.

When Zhichang heard this verse, his mind became suddenly expansive [in enlightenment], and he related a verse:

There is no reason to activate perceptual understanding,
To be attached to characteristics and seek for bodhi.
When one's intelligence harbors a single thought of enlightenment,
How can one transcend the delusions of the past?

The self-nature, enlightened to the essential source,
Illuminates the crazed currents [of awareness].
Without entering the room of the patriarch,

In a daze, going about with two heads.

One day Zhichang asked the master, "The Buddha preached the three vehicles, and he also spoke of the Supreme Vehicle. I don't understand these doctrines and would like you to explain them for me."

The master said, "When you contemplate your own fundamental mind, do not be attached to the external characteristics of dharmas. There are no four vehicles in the Dharma; it is only that peoples' minds vary. To learn and recite is the small vehicle, to be enlightened to the Dharma and understand its meaning is the middle vehicle, and to cultivate according to the Dharma is the Great Vehicle. To penetrate all the myriad dharmas and to be equipped with all the myriad dharmas, without any defilement at all; to transcend the characteristics of the various dharmas, without anything that is attained: this is called the Supreme Vehicle. 'Vehicle' has the meaning of practice and cannot be argued about orally. You must cultivate yourself, not ask me about it. At all times the self-nature is itself suchlike."

Zhichang thanked [Huineng] and served the master until the end of his years.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

(my version of answers)

1)What is the process for a normal person who just started zen/chan to reach full enlightenment, anuttara samyak sambodhi?

Study, practise, realise. Then study, practise, realise. Then... for innumerable lives. This is dedication and effort, the two important things to keep on walking the path. As for the specifics, it depends on under whom and in what tradition you practise.

2)Are there different levels of enlightenment?How to "climb" the levels?

Yes and no. Levels in Zen can be many or few, from 3 to 52. Stages are only weak explanations, you are either enlightened or not.

3)What is the difference between a zen practitioner who has reached enlightenment(any level) and an Arhat?

"Subhūti, what do you think? Does the arhat think, 'I have attained the realization of the arhat?' "

"No, World Honored One. And why not? There is, in reality, no such a thing called 'arhat.' World Honored One, if an arhat should give rise to the thought, 'I have attained the realization of the arhat, this would mean that he is attached to the notions of self, person, sentient being, and life span.' "

(Diamond Sutra, ch. 9)

4)What are the difference & similarities in zen schools on the view of enlightenment?

Clinging to any view is non-enlightenment. This is agreed on by all Buddhist schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 2:59 AM

Title: Re: The virgin birth of Gautama.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ultimately no birth, no death. Conventionally, it should serve the understanding of the ultimate. So it can be normal birth, c-section, virgin birth, magical appearance, beaming down from a spaceship...

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

You missed my point -- certain Chan claims seem to be based on nothing more than the personal fabrications of those who make those claims.

Astus wrote:

The sudden teaching - compared to the gradual bodhisattva path - occurred with the appearance of Chan itself, it's been one of its fundamental doctrines since about the 7th century. You may call that the personal fabrication of all these people, but that is practically making the tradition a mistaken idea. Could it be that this claim of immediate liberation is wrong simply because the Indian Mahayana interpreted in a particular way can't accept it, very much like the legendary debate between Hashang and Kamalashila. On the other hand, when it came to (Gampopa's) Mahamudra - accused to be Hashang's teaching - they could say without much trouble how it is present even in different Mahayana sutras, like the Samadhiraja and the Lankavatara Sutra. I'm not saying here that Mahamudra would be identical to Chan, it's just that because you split up teachings as sutrayana and mantrayana Chan becomes predefined as necessarily a teaching that must fit into a specific interpretation of Mahayana, while the fact is that - as you have said before - Chinese Buddhism took its own course in interpreting the Mahayana teachings. Of course, not all in China agreed that there could be such a thing as sudden perfect enlightenment, although it has become the dominant view long ago.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

kirtu said:

This was not always the case. Chan evolved in this direction over time.

Astus wrote:

The first line about being outside of doctrines (jiao) was added in the 10th century when Chan was gaining popularity and posited itself against other schools. The other three are, however, were there before. So we can say that this definition is the hallmark of mature Chan as it's appeared in the Song dynasty.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 29th, 2011 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

What I do know is that certain Chan claims have no basis in Mahāyāna sutra.

Astus wrote:

"The use of the Buddha-nature idea, the sun of enlightenment within all human beings (indeed, within all sentient beings), the quality of non-discriminatory wisdom that is the sine qua non of buddhahood itself, is a profound innovation that separates proto-Chan and early Chan from early Indian Buddhism."

(John McRae: Seeing Through Zen, p. 42-43)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 5:54 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

klqv said:

hi,

i think this is a silly question - but i like it ha.

doesn't zongmi survey the prominent chan houses of his day - including hongchou - and decide that hongchou teaches sudden sudden enlightenment?

the thing about that being that for him, i am pretty sure though confused because you must know this already, sudden sudden means enlightenment into the abodes?

i would guess that either he distorted their teachings or they did indeed state that none of them were, quite, identical to the buddha.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi had his own unique interpretation of Chan. Others had their own. Jinul, following Zongmi, taught sudden enlightenment and gradual practice. Seongcheol, a former head of the Jogye Order, said that Jinul is wrong and Zen is sudden enlightenment and sudden practice. In Soto Zen they say that practice is enlightenment, in Rinzai Zen they have many levels of enlightenment. In Chan, well, you can find them

all.

klqv said:

A monk asked, "What is the Buddha right before my eyes?"

The master said, "The one inside the Buddha Hall is."

The monk said, "That is an image of Buddha. What is Buddha?"

The master said, "Mind is."

The monk said, "Mind is still something limited. What is Buddha?"

The master said, "Not mind is."

The monk said, "Mind or not mind, do you allow me to choose between them?"

The master said, "Mind or not mind, you can choose as you wish, and, if you can, tell me which one it is and it will be all right."

(The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu, tr. James Green, p. 57-58)

"Buddha said, if you want to know the realm of buddhahood, you must make your mind as clear as empty space and leave false thinking and all grasping far behind, causing your mind to be unobstructed wherever it may turn. The realm of buddhahood is not some external world where there is a formal "Buddha": it's the realm of the wisdom of a self-awakened sage."

(Dahui's letter in "Swampland Flowers", p. 1, tr. Cleary & Cleary)

"To become a buddha, one must definitely pass through three asamkhyā (immeasurable) great kalpas; or must definitely pass through incalculable, countless, unthinkable kalpas; or else must definitely pass through one moment of thought. Although these three [time periods] are not the same, [fulfilling buddhahood] is neither difficult nor easy, and is neither a far distant time nor a sudden instant of time. Some fulfill buddhahood within a fist; some fulfill buddhahood at the top of a monk's staff; some fulfill buddhahood on the headtop of a patch-robed monk; and some fulfill buddhahood within the eyeball of a patch-robed monk."

(Dogen's Extensive Record, 6.446, tr. Leighton & Okamura, p. 402-403)

What you all have from your parents innately is the Unborn Buddha Mind alone and nothing else, so instead of trying to realize buddhahood, always abide in that Unborn Buddha Mind. Then, when you're asleep, you're sleeping in the Buddha Mind, and when you're awake, you're awake in the Buddha Mind; you're always a living buddha, and there's no time when you don't remain a buddha. Since you're a buddha all the time, there's no other special buddhahood for you to realize. Rather than trying to become a buddha, nothing could be simpler than taking the shortcut of remaining a buddha!

(Bankei Zen, tr. Peter Haskel, p. 22)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

klqv said:

bbbut i wasn't talking about zongmi's interpretation of chan, i was talking about his

understanding of other people's interpretation of chan. Elsewhere he [shenhui] claims for himself the tenth bhumi, something that is only possible in the most demythologized interpretation of the bhumi theory.

Peter Gregory.

edit more to the point it's fine quoting ancient sources but i think to make your point you've got to do more than you have done - because there's always the possibility of adding "but" to them; the caveat that one is not [in all senses of whatever] as close to buddhahood as that.

what you need is something that say but absolutely no buts, or says that some particular buts are not the case.

i find the idea that there are 100s or 1000s of buddhas running round, a strange one. e.g., wasn't maitreya the next buddha? that kind of thing...

Astus wrote:

Zongmi had a double presentation. On one hand, he affirmed that all Chan schools ultimately teach the same thing, on the other hand, he listed the Heze teaching (again, his interpretation, doesn't have much to do with Shenhui himself) as the superior one. He differentiated between talking to outsiders and insiders. I think he was biased a bit since he wanted to make the point that schools like the Baotang and Hongzhou are wrong and even immoral - a reasoning similar to the Tibetan view of Hashang.

Talking about a "demythologised view", one of the great innovations of early Chan (Hongren, Shenxiu) was to interpret common teachings in the light of buddha-mind, and not as a theoretical buddha-mind but as direct experience. And this is really an important point, that it's not a doctrinal idea they taught but wisdom unbound by fixed tenets.

Maitreya is the next buddha, yes. But the real buddha is the buddha-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

klqv,

I believe there are quite a few enlightened beings among us, some are openly spreading the Dharma, some are hidden. However, I don't think that the presence of sages would mean global or even local revolution. This issue is addressed in the Vimalakirti Sutra's first chapter regarding the buddha-fields and its perception. Creating a "better world" is up to each individual, not some outer beings, otherwise even a single buddha could have liberated all beings instantly.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Tenzin1 said:

Is it really possible to paint all Chan traditions with one brush? Chan has an esoteric side that borrows heavily from Tibetan tantra. I would think the attainments in that tradition would be similar to those in TB. And for that matter, is the level of attainment of advanced practitioners in TB all identical? Do they all reach the same level? It sounds like to some extent, this discussion is dealing in oversimplifications.

Astus wrote:

Chan is certainly not uniform. However, "esoteric side" is something new to me. Any references?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Daelm,

The nature of the mind is the dharmakaya, to realise the dharmakaya is to realise buddhahood, that's why "seeing nature" is becoming buddha. Or rather, it is realising that the nature of the mind has always been the buddha. It's been taught like this since the early times, based on the Nirvana Sutra and others. This is one end of the possibilities of viewing it. The other end is what Zongmi propagated, that seeing nature is the first step that will eventually complete in buddhahood, although even in his interpretation it is not a matter of kalpas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2011 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Buddhafield or Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

The term "pure land" has appeared in Chinese Buddhism, first as a term for Amitabha's buddha-land, then it's become the common term for any buddha-land. So I'd say it's simply a matter of language.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:
Astus wrote:
klqv,

I didn't intend to make a huge gap between "scholastic Buddhism" and "Chan" since there isn't much. Whether enlightened beings they would change the world or not, I leave that to another discussion. But it's an interesting question for sure.

I searched in that book for "Chan" and found no connection. One can find certain rituals of tantric origin in Chan, but that's all I know of.

This little part seems relevant here a bit (also noteworthy how Kukai couldn't accept that not only esoteric Buddhism has all the cool stuff):

"The theory of quick attainment of Buddhahood, it must be added, is not peculiar to esoteric Buddhism. The Tendai and Kegon schools have a similar doctrine, and Zen advocates instant realization of enlightenment. Kukai's contemporary and the founder of the Japanese Tendai sect, Saicho (767-822), in fact, promulgated the teaching of quick realization of buddhahood based on the Lotus Sutra against the Hosso teaching that expounds gradual progress toward enlightenment over a period of three incalculable aeons. In Kukai's view, Tendai and Kegon talk only about theoretical possibilities of attaining buddhahood quickly and lack an actual experience of realization."
(Tantric Buddhism in East Asia, p. 100)

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 3:14 AM
Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan
Content:
Astus wrote:
daelm,

I've used "seeing" and "realising" as synonyms, both mean the experience vis-a-vis theory.

There was no such transition from gradualist Chan to subitist. Well, not in the sense of "long bodhisattva path" to "sudden buddhahood". Chan advocated from the beginning direct attainment. Zongmi was an exceptional teacher who wanted to merge Chan suddenness and experiential attitude with the elaborate teachings of Huayan. And although he had an outstanding follower in Yongming, the Hongzhou style came out as winner in the Song dynasty and became the orthodox interpretation.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 3:18 PM
Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan
Content:

Astus wrote:

Tenzin1,

That site is quite a modern form of teaching. Not that it's a problem, but this kind of mixture of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism is a recent phenomenon.

kirtu,

Of course, there are mantras and dharanis, they have been present for a long time. However, the presence of such practices only makes Chinese Buddhism more varied. I mean, there is no fixed line between Chan and other practices, no strong distinction between imaginary schools. Nonetheless, if we look at texts attributed to Chan teachers it's hard to find any tantric practices recommended or used. Also note that like in the case of Seung Sahn, mantras are only used as objects for meditation without any extra value, unlike in tantric teachings where mantras have a meaning.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: "The Tulku System Could Ruin Buddhism..."

Content:

Astus wrote:

"You must see the difference between Dharma and tradition. When problems occur, understand that they do not come from the enlightened ones, but from the administrators. Even the Chinese communists who do not believe at all in religion nevertheless use it from time to time for their own political ends. This is because the administration system is so well established and is so powerful." (The Shamarpa, <http://www.shamarpa.org/index.php?id=57>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

daelm,

I see. I can't clearly describe its development generally in Chinese Buddhism as I'm not familiar with all the details. Daosheng was the first to conceive and teach it to a wider audience. But I think there are a couple of other factors that I'm unaware of until we get to the Tiantai teaching of sudden enlightenment.

I don't have it, but there is a book: "Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought" by Peter N. Gregory, it has some essays on the subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2011 at 8:43 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Quote from Dan Lusthaus: Buddhist Phenomenology, (p. 256-257; 263-264):

We are now ready to return to the question: Should *prajñā-paramita* be understood as connoting an essentialistic understanding of *tathatā* or should it be understood as connoting an epistemic process? Both positions have had their adherents within the Buddhist tradition. Since this controversy stands at the heart of the East Asian appropriation of Buddhist thought, and has determined many important parameters for doctrinal developments in China, Korea and Japan, closer examination of its features is in order. *Yogacāra*, in particular as disseminated in China, polarized around this opposition, and in part Hsüantsang's project can be seen as a systematic refutation of the essentialist position as advocated by *Paramārtha* and others.

If Awakening, at least provisionally, is considered to be a goal, and sheer knowing is that goal's necessary (and perhaps sufficient) condition, the question arises: Is the goal something essentially existent, such that the epistemic method (*jñāna-mārga*) uncovers it; or, does the method subsume the goal, such that the goal's provisionality is exposed, revealing not an essential truth, but rather an insight into the epistemic process itself? In the first case, knowledge (*jñāna*) will be considered the means or agent for attaining some -thing which in itself is impervious to or indifferent to the vicissitudes of epistemological approaches, though made accessible through such approaches. In the second case, nothing relevant exists outside or apart from the dynamic, progressive sphere of knowledge; Awakening here would mean that knowing (*prajñā, jñāna*) becomes transparent to itself. Again, the former implies an absolute, objective Truth, while the latter implies a progressional unfolding that never posits anything apart from the process itself.

In Buddhist terminology, the former (the Essentialist) posits Buddhahood as a distinct realm, distinct precisely because it is accessible only to Buddhas, and hence somehow essentially other than the realms accessible to the remainder of sentient beings. At best, non-Buddhas might contain a germ or seed (*tathāgatagarbha*) that offers the potential of entry into the distinct Buddha-realm, but they are considered non-Buddhas precisely because they have not yet actualized this potential. Here, as in other philosophical contexts, essentialism inscribes itself through the discourse of 'potential /actual.' Buddhahood and its corollaries *tathatā*, *sambodhi*, etc. would signify an ultimate, transcendental Reality.

The latter (the Progressionalist) would argue that the process of Awakening can never be separable from the *Bodhisattva* path, and that (i) the pre-Awakening striving, (ii) the Awakening realization and (iii) the post-Awakening aid offered to other sentient beings can never be seen apart from the *samsāric* process in which that path occurs; moreover, *samsāra* is able to proceed only in virtue of its emptiness (*iünyata*).²⁶ The full career of the *Bodhisattva* is nothing other than this process. During (i), the *Bodhisattva*'s progress is largely determined by *samsāric* and *samskaric* conditions, though efforts are made to overcome these determinants through theory and practice. During (ii), theory and practice converge, such that the inseparability of *samsāra* and *nirvana*, or process

(pratitya-samutpāda) and emptiness, infuse the whole of the Bodhisattva's life-world. The remedied process continues and disseminates in (iii).

Practical considerations also arise from this problem. If Awakening unfolds through a process, then to some extent this unfolding is temporal. These temporal aspects necessitate that practice towards Awakening be gradual. If, on the other hand, a ready-made transcendental realm already exists, then what is essential about Awakening remains entirely separate from temporal considerations, and entry into it may be 'sudden,' i.e., nondependent on any temporal considerations.

...

As Mahayana Buddhism developed, the essentialist vs. progressionalist controversy peaked. One text which preserves the tensions is the Lotus Sutra. The first half deals with upaya, the provisional, deceptive character of Buddhist doctrine and practice. The 'truths' of Buddhism are mere provisional ploys designed to bring one to a place where ploys are no longer necessary nor possible. The second half presents the 'True Buddha,' an ahistorical, unborn, undying, mythologically omniscient and omnipresent Power or Being. Centuries later East Asian schools, such as Tendai and Nichiren, rightly asked and debated which of these two visions of Buddhism contextualized which? If the first half gives the 'truth,' then the second half should be seen as an elaborate upayic ploy. If the second half gives the 'truth,' then the ploys of the first half are merely indirect, pedagogical instruments for reaching this truth, for reaching this ontological realization. Beyond the Lotus Sutra the essentialist vs. progressionalist opposition is found shaping Buddhist methodology, which is to say, the marga, the Path. Those taking Buddhism to hold an ontological nature as its essence, who conceive of Buddhism as grounded in Being, develop their essentialism by understanding prajna-paramita as 'perfect-ion,' and posit that perfection as an ontologically primal and definitive 'tathata'; i.e., a thing. Suchness 'suchness' which is the universal, sacred, perfected nature of all becomes a cosmic essence, the primal, originary scene. Buddha is no longer a teacher who perfected himself, but the universal essence of all things, the potential perfection ontologically concealed behind a veil of transmigratory appearance. And yet, the veil and what it veils are united in essence. It is this interpretation which reads Nagarjuna's statement that not an iota of distinction can be drawn between samsara and nirvana (an epistemic observation) as if it were an ontological claim, a statement of essentialistic identity: sarpsdra is nirvana."

On the other hand, those who take the progressionalist stance displace the notions of nature and essence with a theory of perdurance, of continuity which, precisely because it is grounded in neither identity nor difference, can engender progress and betterment (or worsening). Prajñā-paramita here means 'perfecting,' as that which perdures becomes that which it is not, without ever being totally other than itself. The path is tread, and as with Heraclitus' river, the foot never truly stands on the same ground twice. The doctrines of the four gatis (stream-enterer, once returner, etc.), the bodhisattva career of ten or eighteen or fifty-two stages (bhūmī), etc., all exemplify the progressionalist attitude.

But like the Lotus Sūtra, one way of dissipating the tension is to accept and attempt to harmonize both extremes. Thus hybrids arose: progressive essentialists claimed that one progresses toward the essence, and that the progress itself was grounded in the

essence (tathāgatagarbha); essentialistic progressives mounted elaborate schema in which one ultimately progressed beyond essentialisms by working through them (tattva, vastu, bhūta, dharma svalaksana, svarūpa, svabhāva, etc.). Yogācāra was a case of this last type of hybrid.

Finally, is tathatā, 'indexicality,' indicative of liberating universals, or repetitive, reiterative particulars? Given the incompatibility of essentialist universals and sūnyatā, tathatā must remain ontologically open. It is entirely without conceptual (kalpita, vikalpa, kalpanā, etc.) ontological commitments. For the Ch'eng wei-shih lun, tathatā is a mere prajñapti.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 1st, 2011 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matching evolution with Buddhism, doesn't work. Different axioms, different views.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2011 at 2:58 AM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism teaches that the primary driving force of the world is karma. That is reflected in Buddhist cosmology. The sequence of the becoming of the world is from top to bottom. That means that humans existed before animals. The view of evolution is from bottom to top, humans evolved from animals. The diversity of beings in Buddhism is explained by karmic dispositions, in evolution by selection and adaptation. In terms of society, the Buddhist view is the cycle of golden age toward a bad age and from then to a golden age. Evolutionary view of the society teaches a progress from hunters-gatherers to modern cities. Buddhism explains that the true goal of every being is happiness and they are confused by the three poisons. Evolution says that the primary instincts and the meaning of all life forms are self-preservation and reproduction. Buddhism says that it is consciousness that makes one a sentient being. Evolution derives living organisms from molecules. These are the reasons why I say that Buddhism is not compatible with evolution.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2011 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Acchantika said:

Therefore, I respectfully object to the notion that evolution is not compatible with Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

You've changed the meaning of evolution and specified it in a way that might fit into certain Buddhist concepts. That is not objection in my view, but coming up with a whole different argument.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2011 at 4:46 PM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism teaches that the primary driving force of the world is karma. That is reflected in Buddhist cosmology. The sequence of the becoming of the world is from top to bottom. That means that humans existed before animals.

Pero said:

Wow really? Can you give a link or something, I'd like to read a bit about it.

Astus wrote:

See the Aggañña Sutta: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agga%C3%B1%C3%B1a_Sutta,
http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Agganna_Sutta

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2011 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Dechen Norbu said:

So unless one restricts our birth to this planet and forget that the fact that animals were here first doesn't mean we were those animals and couldn't take rebirth as humans (or equivalent) somewhere else, I see no problem in accepting the theory of evolution. I even think that the fact that there is an evolution (why not some sort of staticism instead, a different model of life and environment) goes pretty well with the theory of karma.

Now, is the theory of evolution in accord with Buddhist cosmology? No. Do I think Buddhist cosmology is more than expedient means? No. To me, it's just an ornament to the finger, perfectly changeable, not the direction it points. That's how I see it. I never bought that Mount Meru stuff anyway.

There's a story Chogyal Namkhai Norbu tells about a Gelugpa teacher that wanted to write a book insisting on this cosmology in spite of his advice for not doing so, since we now knew things weren't like that. If memory doesn't fail me, he was translating this book. It didn't fly, I guess. Funny story that goes to show how Buddhist cosmology is not such a big deal in terms of Path or View. Perhaps someone can tell you this story better. I found it quite amusing.

Astus wrote:

Sure, there are many realms and many "planets". Still, if we go with the sequence of

lives there is still a problem. Also, many jatakas and stories about former buddhas are placed in India, including cities from the Buddha's time. We can put all this into the category of "myths", nevertheless, these are the traditional views. Just like anything, this can change too. But it's a good reminder how ANY teaching may be reviewed and changed or forgot for ever.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2011 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Acchantika said:

In genetics, evolution is defined as a change in the frequency and distribution of alleles at a given locus.

Astus wrote:

OK, that's evolution in genetics. Then what was mentioned under "evolution" is mainly the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution#Evolutionary_history_of_life.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 3rd, 2011 at 4:32 AM

Title: Ven. Guo Cheen's Works

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know how many of you have heard of

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000090044883>, who runs

<https://www.thecompassionnetwork.blogspot.com/>. She's dedicated to translating sutras and commentaries to English. She has also uploaded useful works onto

http://www.scribd.com/Guo_Cheen_5750.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/49134211/List-of-Mahayana-Tripitaka-Titles>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/39077716/The-Sutra-of-Sitting-Dhyana-Samadhi>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/39077692/On-Human-Origins>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/39077648/Advice-for-Monastics>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/32987507/Avatamsaka-Matrix-on-Entering-the-Dharma-Realm-Chapter>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/32987336/A-Matrix-on-the-Essentials-of-the-Avatamsaka>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 5th, 2011 at 2:03 AM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd argue that "small beings" and microorganisms are not the same thing. Tiny insects

are one thing, bacteria are another, and the second type of beings are not filtered by a simple cloth. It's also problematic to call bacteria "sentient beings" from a Buddhist point of view.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 5th, 2011 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microorganism>

Small animals, so called "micro-animals, are included within the category of microorganism.

N

Astus wrote:

I guess I should have listened better on biology classes...

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 5th, 2011 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Seon Master Jinje

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good advice, Ven. Huifeng.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 6th, 2011 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: "Mahamudra and Related Instructions," Peter Roberts

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is explicitly in the book that the texts were selected based on the recommendation of Thrangu Rinpoche, who is a Karma Kagyu teacher. So it is not really a surprise that it contains mostly Karma Kagyu texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 6th, 2011 at 6:41 AM

Title: Re: Evolution of humans and Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think revising Buddhist geographical understanding is one thing, while revising the order of the birth and destruction of the world is quite another. Even with the geographical modifications there can be some problems (see:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=77&t=3803>), how much so with larger changes. Of course, I believe it is possible to turn the classical Buddhist cosmology into an updated sci-fi universe.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2011 at 1:56 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Andreas Ludwig said:

I don't know how many times I have tried to explain to others that Pure Land Buddhism is not a monolithic block, there are sub-traditions so to say. In Shinshu the Pure Land is NOT a means (which is what you meant in your post I suppose?) but indeed the end - because the Pure Land is a way to talk about Nirvana in positive terms that we can relate to, rather than in denials (like Theravada does).

Astus wrote:

And I have to add to this that the Shinshu interpretation is not monolithic either. There are people who view it as you said and others who view it in a different way where the Pure Land is an actual buddha-land and not a metaphor.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2011 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the interdependent self-nature
Comes discrimination arising from conditions;
The perfection of the fruit comes from
Always being apart from the former nature.
(Trimsika, 21)

The imagined nature is the elephant;
The other-dependent nature is the visual percept;
The non-existence of the elephant therein
Is explained to be the consummate.
(Trisvabhava nirveda, 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2011 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

klqv,

There are many different interpretations. In Zen the buddhahood of magical features has been put aside/refuted/rejected by several teachers, as something one should aspire for. Let's call that the practical side. On the other hand, the common Mahayana view of buddhas around us in different buddha-lands has not been neglected or removed from daily practice, even if the "true pure land is the pure mind". While the real buddha is the mind-nature, provisionally there are many buddhas. Maitreya is the next buddha to turn the wheel of Dharma after a period of no Dharma. But while in early Buddhism the buddhas were primarily identified as the initiators of the teaching, later it stopped being the main criterion, therefore there can be infinite buddhas even at the same place.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2011 at 12:04 AM

Title: Rigsum Gonpo

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could someone give me a general information on the level and form of practice related to this trinity of bodhisattvas? Also, if there is some info on what it has to do with the Sakyapas is also appreciated, just as an extra.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 12th, 2011 at 1:03 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

klqv,

See how there are different perspectives and levels of the teaching. For an enemy of Buddhism a teacher is a charlatan deluding people. For a non-Buddhist a teacher is just an old fellow. For a king the head of a monastery is an influential figure. For a lay person full of devotion the master is a holy embodiment of the buddhas. For an educated lay person the abbot is a wise man. For a novice the preceptor is the strict but kind leader. For an aged monastic the master is a fellow practitioner. A good teacher addresses all these people accordingly. So a Chan teacher can be anything from a deluded ordinary person to a living buddha. So Linji said (same concept as Vimalakirti Sutra's inconceivable liberation):

"If someone comes and asks about seeking buddha, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of purity; if someone asks about bodhisattvahood, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of compassion; if someone asks me about bodhi, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of pure mystery; if someone asks me about nirvana, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of serene stillness. Though there be ten thousand different states, the person does not differ. Therefore, According with things he manifests a form, Like the moon [reflecting] on the water."

and

"Virtuous monks, don't acknowledge robes. Robes cannot move of themselves, but people can put them on. There is the robe of purity, the robe of birthlessness, the robe of bodhi, the robe of nirvana, the patriarch-robe, and the buddha-robe. Virtuous monks, these spoken words and written phrases are all nothing but changes of robes."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 12th, 2011 at 1:09 AM

Title: Re: Longquan Temple

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sadhu!

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 12th, 2011 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: What are some "must have" books?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For East Asian Buddhism (after reading Paul Williams' Mahayana Buddhism):

Orthodox Chinese Buddhism by Ven. Sheng-yen

The Way to Buddhahood by Ven. Yinshun

Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism by Robert H. Sharf

Entry into the Inconceivable by Thomas Cleary

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment by Charles Muller

Tracing Back the Radiance by Robert Buswell

Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation by Carl Bielefeldt

Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith by Thich Thien Tam

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 12th, 2011 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: Images of descending Amida

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's Amita Buddha greeting the deceased to escort them to the Pure Land. I guess.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 12th, 2011 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: Images of descending Amida

Content:

Astus wrote:

"When an aspirant is about to be born in that land through dedicated and undaunted practices, the Tathagata Amitayus arrives together with Avalokiteshvara, Mahasthamaprapta, innumerable transformed Buddhas, a great assembly of a hundred thousand monks and shravakas and innumerable devas in seven-jewelled palaces. The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, carrying a vajra-seat, together with the Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, approaches the aspirant. Amitayus releases a great flood of light which illuminates the aspirant's body and, along with the bodhisattvas, extends his hands in welcome. Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta, together with innumerable bodhisattvas, praise and encourage the aspirant. Seeing this, the aspirant rejoices so greatly as to dance. Then he sees himself sitting on the vajra-seat, and following the Buddha, is born into that land in the time it takes to snap one's fingers."
(Contemplation Sutra, tr. H. Inagaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2011 at 5:43 AM

Title: Re: tendai and zen

Content:

Jikan said:

The Rinzai and Soto schools did not exist in the time of Zhiyi.

Astus wrote:

Even in the time of Saicho they did not exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2011 at 5:47 AM

Title: Varieties of Ganhwa Seon Teachings in Contemporary Korea

Content:

Astus wrote:

An essay by Ryan Bongseok Joo:

"Western Buddhists, who were introduced to Korean Seon (Jp. Zen, Ch. Chan 禪) Buddhism through Seung Sahn sunim (1927-2004), might find it surprising that gong'an (Jp. kōan 公案) meditation practice is taught quite differently in Korea from the way Seung Sahn sunim trained his disciples in the West. For instance, Seon masters in Korea generally do not ask their student to resolve a series of different gong'an gates like the way Seung Sahn sunim did. Instead, meditating on a single gong'an is considered sufficient in itself to bring the student to full awakening. It is also not a common practice to allot one-on-one private interview (Jp. dokusan 独参) time with a Seon master as part of the daily training schedule in a Korean monastery; although students can certainly meet with their teacher after having a breakthrough experience or when facing a difficult internal obstacle outside the regular monastic schedule. For native Korean Buddhists, it has been an open secret that Seung Sahn sunim heavily adopted the Japanese Rinzai Zen style in his teaching of gong'an practice, which was familiar to his Western disciples, but foreign to most Korean Buddhists. In this paper, I would like to introduce the other side, the teachings of gong'an practices by contemporary Korean

Seon masters in Korea, which would be familiar to Korean Buddhists, but probably new to many Western readers."

<http://international.uiowa.edu/centers/caps/documents/RyanJooAAS2011.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2011 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: Varieties of Ganhwa Seon Teachings in Contemporary Korea

Content:

Astus wrote:

I would assume it is a "borrowed" practice because it was Hakuin who organised the Rinzai curriculum in the way it is today with many levels of koans.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2011 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Mahakala as your 1st empowerment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What if it is looked in a different way? He goes to that specific empowerment because he already has a connection with it. It does no harm to participate but can create imprints that will, in the near or far future, urge the person to know more and get involved.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2011 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Mahakala as your 1st empowerment?

Content:

Tilopa said:

What connection? He's not even a Buddhist.

But sure if the lama tells him it's ok to attend and take it as a blessing without binding commitments then it can only be beneficial.

Astus wrote:

Everybody has to start somewhere. If it's an empowerment, then so it be. Even hearing the name "Buddha" is a proof of connection and a source of enlightenment.

These empowerments are open for anybody. There are no bodyguards standing at the entrance asking you questions, there are no registration forms where one has to prove one's competence for being there. Either you are there or not. What level of understanding one can make of it is another question and that's where things like being a Buddhist, etc. matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 15th, 2011 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

The two Buddha's (Dogen and Daido Roshi) did not IMV intend this literally but as an expression of intimacy with all things. From Dogen's perspective it may have been specifically from this perception of the interpenetration of all phenomena. It could also have been from a serious expression of Mind Only.

Astus wrote:

The buddha-nature of all is an expression of universal dharmadhatu, which includes both the view of interpenetration, mind only and buddha-nature.

I don't think it has anything to do with "animism".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 15th, 2011 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Rocky Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

booker,

This is not a koan that is discussed here, neither any other practice, but a view, an interpretation of the Dharma, that exists in Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 15th, 2011 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: What are some "must have" books?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think one should see the difference between essential books and auxiliary ones. There are also introductory books and in depth works. Just before this becomes a list of all the books people like.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2011 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This topic of the interpretation of Pure Land in Shinshu has been discussed here: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=60&t=1084>, that involved Andreas and Al Bloom too.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2011 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Rational?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is being rational Zen? Is being irrational Zen? Of course not. Can Zen be rationalised or "irrationalised"? Definitely. So it is not something but can be made into anything, such is the magic of mind. Zen can be presented in any way it is needed, that's the primary approach Zen has. That is quite a rational attitude that understands dependent origination and how to assist people in seeing the nature of mind, i.e. perceiving that ideas such as rationality and irrationality depend on each other without any real basis.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2011 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Is Pure Land "Buddhism" contradictory to Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Andreas,

There are two problems with a symbolic interpretation: it makes Shinshu a path of salvation without any need for personal enlightenment, since in this life there is no effort, no development, and in the next there is no place to practice but instant liberation. The second problem is the lack of actual sources for this interpretation in the written teachings of Shinran.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2011 at 4:39 PM

Title: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is said that you can tell whether or not you have genuinely heard the teachings and understood their point by whether or not you are tame and peaceful in your conduct. And you can tell whether or not your meditation is effective by whether or not your kleshas are diminishing. Ideally, someone should finally have no kleshas whatsoever. But even on the way to that klesha-free state, your kleshas and thoughts should diminish. Therefore, I think that it is of far greater importance than the experience of dramatic instantaneous pointing out that people be taught mahamudra as a full system of instruction that they can implement on their own gradually through diligent application using either one of the three texts by the Ninth Gyalwang Karmapa—The Ocean of Definitive Meaning, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, or Pointing Out the Dharmakaya— or one of the texts by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal—either Moonbeams of Mahamudra or The Clarification of the Natural State.

In short, I think it is of far more importance that people receive this kind of complete

and systematic instruction so that they can gradually develop experience on their own, than that some kind of dramatic pointing-out procedure be done. Of course, it is possible to give dramatic pointing-out instruction, and when you do so, some people do recognize their mind's nature. But, if I may say so, I question the stability and, therefore, ultimately the value of that. It certainly is a dramatic experience for those people who achieve it, but I see no evidence of their kleshas diminishing as a result. And furthermore, they then carry away with them the arrogance of the thought, "I have seen my mind's nature." I think it is of far greater importance actually to practice meditation slowly and surely and make all possible use of the resources which this book in particular gives you.

(Thrangu Rinpoche: The Ninth Karmapa's Ocean of Devinitive Meaning, p. 127-128)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2011 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I really admire in his approach - and Kagyu Mahamudra generally - is the detailed methodology they apply in this training.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2011 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Namdrol said:

Dzogchen etc., also have very detailed methodologies. They are just less sutra oriented.

Astus wrote:

Sure they do. It's just that I've never found those so clear, not that I've seen it all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 1:45 AM

Title: Re: Religion or family

Content:

Astus wrote:

If one is a householder it is likely one has a family. Because there are several duties one has to perform because of one's responsibility towards one's family there is little motivation to practice the Dharma. And even if there is some motivation it is usually a low level goal one wants to achieve. Rarely, if one does have great determination toward the Dharma, family then can appear as a major obstacle. Only a few fortunate people can manage having family and being deeply involved in the Dharma. That's why most of those who aspire for liberation leave the family behind and become renunciates, just like Siddhartha. Thus in Buddhism family is rather a symbol of attachment and samsara rather than something sacred, primarily because the Buddhist tradition is preserved

and transmitted by monastics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: "On White Women and Buddhism"

Content:

rory said:

So in all conscience as a feminist how can I promote Buddhism when it has done zero for women? I turned East as I found a philosophy that explained the world to me in a rational way. But years later I've read Greek philosophy: Heraclitus everything is flux Democritus, Pythagoras, Epicurus etc & I've found everything in Buddhism there. It's better for women, I don't have to deal with male hierarchical institutions or the hypocrisy.

Astus wrote:

Ancient Greece and Rome were fine patriarchal societies. In Athens women were simply confined to their homes just like in the Chinese Empire; in Rome, although they had lot of freedom until Christianity took over, were not allowed any political position. Also, the philosophers you listed were all men, just like all the others who are considered outstanding. So it seems to me that there's nothing special about ancient Western cultures and philosophies compared to the Eastern ones regarding the role of women. It shouldn't be forgotten either that Buddhism is not a culture but a religion, and as such its philosophy may not be - and cannot be - adequately mirrored in its socio-historical appearance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: "On White Women and Buddhism"

Content:

deepbluehum said:

No. I would have to say dharma is sexist, homophobic and racist. From the earliest suttas the superiority of men and inferiority of women has been reiterated many times. That Buddha is always a man is standard. Vajrayana changes this and gives women Buddha status. However, it is explained in Vajrayana that you have to have a "precious human body" meaning it has certain endowments (for practicing tantra). For example, being a hermaphrodite is not a "precious human body." So homosexual bodies are not invited to the karmamudra. Being blind or deaf or missing any of the sense faculties is also not a "precious human body." Being mentally disabled is not "precious." You also have to be born in a "central country" where dharma is taught. So being in a tribal culture in some distant island is not a "precious human body" either. That country must be mostly peaceful with high institutions. So most of Africa is excluded. You can see how dharma is a rather exclusive club and is not all inclusive. In a sense it is justified because achieving Buddhahood is something winning a gold medal in the Olympics (if meditation were a sport). You would have to be world class.

Astus wrote:

This is a distorted interpretation of such terms. Talks of precious human body and fortunate birth is about motivating people who hear and learn about the Dharma, not about talking against those who are outside of such disciples. It is absolutely not a "hate speech" but a "motivational speech". And yes, being able to learn about the Dharma and practice it is a privilege, an elite club in samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Wall Gazing

Content:

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by "wall gazing"?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 3:27 PM

Title: Re: Religion or family

Content:

Astus wrote:

Epistemes,

If you look closely at my post I talk about motivation and goals, not about specific teachings. Also, most of the teachings are meant for monastics, although many of those can be used by lay people.

Bhikkhu Cintita has a series on Lay life:

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/07/07/lay-buddhist-practice-1/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/07/14/the-art-of-lay-life-2/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/07/22/the-art-of-lay-life-3-selecting-elements/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/07/29/the-art-of-lay-life-4-selecting-elements-cont/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/08/06/the-art-of-lay-life-4-rejecting-elements/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/08/13/the-art-of-lay-life-6-rejecting-elements-cont/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/the-art-of-lay-life-7-balancing-elements/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/08/27/the-art-of-lay-life-8-balancing-elements-cont/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/09/05/the-art-of-lay-life-9-simplifying/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/09/12/the-art-of-lay-life-10-lay-and-monastic/>

<http://bhikkhucintita.wordpress.com/2011/09/19/the-art-of-lay-life-11-lay-and->

monastic-cont/

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Wall Gazing

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Bodhidharma's case "wall gazing" likely meant not a physical posture but maintaining the mind like a wall, that is, without discrimination or attachment to emotions and ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: "On White Women and Buddhism"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rory,

"Show me something similar in China, Tibet, Vietnam, Korea? "

Nothing similar to that that I know of, and I know little. Beata Grant has some interesting studies on women and Chan, and there's Faure of course. However, if you look at it, it's not Buddhism itself that had a campaign against women. Sure, there was no big social liberation because of Buddhism, but that was never its purpose anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Wall Gazing

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is "wall contemplation" (biguan 壁觀) and there is "facing the wall" (mianbi 面壁). In Bodhidharma's story the two becomes the same eventually. As for why in Soto Zen they rather sit facing the wall and how they call it, I do not know.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 3:02 AM

Title: Re: Gelugpa View Overshadowing Madhyamaka

Content:

Astus wrote:

It could be added how the Tibetan view overshadows other forms of Madhyamaka. However, since it is primarily the Gelug school that upholds Madhyamaka as its central doctrine, and in Tibetan Buddhism they have generally a stronger emphasis on Madhyamaka than anywhere else, it is quite a natural outcome.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: Religion or family

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

Not to take away from what Astus has said but why does it have to be either/or? Awareness is awareness whether you're aware of other monks or of other family members. As long as that awareness is undistracted why try to change where we already are?

Astus wrote:

Being aware of doing something wrong is not enough to change such acts. Being aware of suffering is not enough to eliminate suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Religion or family

Content:

Astus wrote:

Both monastics and lay people are humans, so there is no difference here. A major difference is in the environment. A householder life with job and family has limited freedom and there are binding duties one can't really avoid, including family dinners and earning enough to pay the children's education, plus all the other emotional baggage. A renunciant has a lot more freedom, not bound by family relationships, has nobody else to take care of while at the same time being taken care of through donations. Of course, one can be a householder bodhisattva and a renunciant worldly person, so one's spiritual qualities are not determined by one's social situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2011 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: The first precept / upasaka vow ...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not killing in terms of lay vows primarily means only killing other humans. This is usually extended to all sentient beings as killing in any form involves negative karma. But full karma exists only when there is intention, act and result. Without result (somebody dying) it is not killing, neither it is without intention. Killing includes any method to kill other beings from direct murder to convincing someone to commit suicide. However, killing oneself is not always included as the precept is interpreted as always in relationship with others. If you keep looking even into this single precept, you can find many different interpretations.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2011 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

It uses the practices of shamatha to tame the mind, then vipashyana to guide one to the insight of the nature of mind. Then on, of course, all actions can be based on the realisation of the nature of mind, and that is continuous practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2011 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

Not necessarily. It goes through different forms of shamatha with and without object. Insight into ordinary mind comes through vipashyana. That is, in the systematic works like those by the 9th Karmapa, Tashi Namgyal and Natsok Rangdrol.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 10th, 2011 at 5:36 AM

Title: Re: If Mahakashyapa was first Zen/Chan patriarch..

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides that the whole succession of patriarchs, especially the Indian part, is a fiction, one of the Mahayana interpretation of the major disciples of the Buddha is that they were actually bodhisattvas under cover.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 10th, 2011 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: What's wrong with Buddha's 6th sense?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a couple of implications of that story.

1. The Dharma is not easy to understand.
2. At that time only Siddhartha understood it.
3. The great Brahma implored the Buddha to teach, acknowledging him as superior and as a buddha.

From a Mahayana perspective the whole thing was a show, a skilful means only, as the Buddha was enlightened aeons ago. That is another way of saying that one should not get lost in verbal details but see the purpose of a story.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 10th, 2011 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Intelligent design

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Scientists have calculated that the chance of anything so patently absurd actually existing are millions to one. But magicians have calculated that million-to-one chances crop up nine times out of ten."

(Terry Pratchett: Mort, p. 1)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 10th, 2011 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Vietnamese Pure Land compared to Jodo Shinshu?

Content:

kirtu said:

Also there is no notion of Shinran's (or was it Honen's) Self-Power/Other-Power view. Kirt

Astus wrote:

Self- and other-power were conceived by Shandao, so it's present in other Pure Land schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 12th, 2011 at 1:58 AM

Title: Re: Jogye head vows to further globalization of Korean Buddhism

Content:

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 12th, 2011 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Vietnamese Pure Land compared to Jodo Shinshu?

Content:

Dodatsu said:

Actually self and other power were conceived by Tanluan (Donran), and inherited by Daozuo (Doshaku) and Shandao (Zendo).

Astus wrote:

Thanks.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 14th, 2011 at 4:15 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Experience in Jodo Shinshu?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shin is a school of Buddhism, sounds evident but it's quite important not to forget. Therefore to comprehend its doctrine to the fullest requires some understanding of Mahayana. "Mystical union" is quite a theist concept. In Buddhism there is no "Self" that unites with a divine being. Also, Buddhism has a sophisticated meditation tradition, so all those "experiences" one may have are very well studied and explained there. If you're looking for something similar to union, in other schools' teachings you find that Amida is identified with buddha-nature that is the original nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 15th, 2011 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Experience in Jodo Shinshu?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If mystical union is interpreted as seeing one's buddha-nature then it's not something one would experience as a deluded being who has no hope but the vow of Amita Buddha. Shinjin - as I understand it - is the unwavering faith in being assured of birth in the Pure Land. It also includes the understanding that one is an ignorant human while Amita is a perfectly enlightened buddha. Although without doubt there are people who like to interpret Shinshu in quite a different way to the point of equating shinjin with enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 19th, 2011 at 3:37 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen teachers being equal to buddhas, only in the sense that mind is buddha and there is no buddha outside the mind. But it should be understood in the way that only those are true teachers of Zen who are enlightened to the buddha-mind, not the other way around that people bearing different titles are buddhas because of that.

Mind to mind transmission is the same as seeing nature, because Zen is not in words or concepts but enlightenment itself. Thus there is nothing transmitted. It is an organisational matter that official papers are also called mind to mind transmission while in fact they are not.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 20th, 2011 at 6:58 PM

Title: Seosan's Argument for Pure Land Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The worthies in the above passages all directly point at the Original Mind. There is no

other method. This holds true at the level of ultimate reality; however, in the phenomenal realm, paradise and Amitabha Buddha with his forty-eight vows, really exist. So anyone who recites Amitabha's name just ten times will ascend with the power of Amitabha's vows and be reborn on a lotus leaf. In this realm, he will soon break free from the wheel of transmigration. All the Buddhas of the Three Dimensions of time say that this is so. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions⁸⁵ all vow to be reborn there. In addition, the records describing all of those who have been reborn there in the past or present have been transmitted accurately. All of you practitioners who have made a vow to be reborn there should beware of mistaken views. You must be diligent!

The Sanskrit "Amita" means "unlimited life-span" or "unlimited brilliance." It is the name of the most excellent Buddha throughout the Ten Directions and the Three Dimensions⁸⁶ of time. When this Buddha was practicing, he was called Dharmakara. He made forty-eight vows in front of Lokeshvararaja Buddha. He said, "When I become a Buddha, if any deva or human being — or even the smallest insect — residing in any of the myriad worlds in any of the Ten Directions chants my name just ten times, I will cause that being to be reborn in my realm. For, until I am able to fulfill my vow, I will not enter Buddhahood." The sages of the past used to say, "Each time one praises the Buddha, the demons lose their courage. In addition, one's name is removed from the register in hell, as a lotus flower⁸⁷ blooms in a golden pond." It has also been said in the Dharma of Repentance, "There is your own power and the power of others. The former is slow, whereas the latter is fast. It is like a man who wants to cross the sea. If he plants trees for timber to make a boat, it will take a long time. This is like using your own power. But if he borrows someone else's boat and crosses the sea, he will get there fast. This is like the power of the Buddha." It has also been said, "If a child approaches water or fire and then yells, his parents, hearing his shout, come quickly to save him from danger. It is the same with a man on his death bed who shouts the Buddha's name. The Buddha, who is in possession of mysterious powers, will definitely come and greet such a person. In this sense, the compassion of the great sages surpasses that of parents. Moreover, sentient beings' birth and death is much more dangerous than water and fire."

There are those who say, "The mind is the Pure Land. You cannot be 'born' in the Pure Land. Your Self Nature is Amitabha Buddha. There is no other Amitabha to meet with." These words seem to be correct, but in fact they are not. Amitabha Buddha has no desire or hatred. Do we likewise have no desire and hatred? The Buddha transforms hell into lotus flowers as easily as you might turn your hand over. Yet, we are constantly afraid of falling into hell through the force of our own karma; we certainly could not even consider transforming hell into lotus flowers. Amitabha Buddha observes infinite worlds as if they were right in front of his eyes. For us, even the things happening right outside our wall cannot be seen, let alone the worlds in all the Ten Directions. Therefore, man's nature may be Buddha but his actions are characteristic of a sentient being. If we discuss both character and function, they are as far from each other as the sky and the earth.

Master Kuei-feng once said, "Even though you actually awaken suddenly; in the end, you must cultivate gradually." These words are true indeed!

Then, what could we say to someone who insists that this Self Nature is Amitabha Buddha? How is it that Sakyamuni was born with his fine endowments? How is it that one like Amitabha Buddha appeared through spontaneous birth? If you think about it, you cannot help but understand. When you are on your death bed, suffering and on the

verge of death, are you confident that you will be completely free? If you aren't, then you should do something to avoid falling into some long-lasting torment as a result of a moment's pride.

Even Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna, both of them patriarchs, clearly bestowed upon us their words and teachings which strongly advocated working for a good incarnation in the next life. Who am I to say that one should not concern oneself with the next life? Even the Buddha himself said, "The Western Paradise is far from here. One must pass through 180,000 worlds to get there." This is an explanation of characteristics for the sake of those with dull faculties. "The Western Paradise is not far from here. This very mind/sentient being is the Buddha/Amitabha Buddha." This is an explanation of the Self Nature for the sake of those with "sharp faculties." The teachings consist of both the provisional and the actual. Speech has an exoteric and an esoteric aspect. One whose understanding and actions are in agreement can penetrate both what is near and what is far. Consequently, the School of the Patriarchs has those, like Hui-yuan, who called out to the Amitabha Buddha and those, like Jui-yen, who called out to his own self."

(Seosan Daesa:

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/master/dharma_talk_view.asp?cat_seq=32&content_seq=133&priest_seq=0&page=1; Mirror of Zen, 52)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 21st, 2011 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Seosan's Argument for Pure Land Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lip service is quite useless. As mentioned by Ryoto, the minimal requirement is to have faith. Without intention and reliance on Amita Buddha there is no birth. Without mindfulness of the practice there is no meditation.

Seosan says in the Mirror of Seon (52):

Chanting with the mouth is called "recitation," while chanting with the mind is called "reflecting on the Buddha. To merely recite a chant without awareness does not benefit one's practice. The Dharma Gate of the six syllables "Na-mu-a-mi-ta-bul" is a short-cut approach that can definitely lead you out of the cycle of transmigration. When you chant, your mind should be directed towards the realm of the Buddha. In your thoughts, you should maintain the chanting without falling into forgetfulness. With your mouth, you should chant the Buddha's name distinctly and not let your voice become sloppy. If you do this, your mind and your voice will come together. This is the meaning of "chanting the Buddha's name."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 21st, 2011 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: The Complete Path...by the Seventh Dalai Lama

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wonderful summary. Can you give an exact source?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 22nd, 2011 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Seosan's Argument for Pure Land Practice

Content:

plwk said:

Sometimes I wonder how is it that a 'simple' practice can be turned into such a mountain of views...

Astus wrote:

There's never been even a "simple thought", only naive philosophies and superficial views. That's why through analysis one finds both inter-dependency and emptiness at the same time, one thought including all thoughts and at the same time being without true basis.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 23rd, 2011 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two approaches regarding the status of Zen teachers. One is that there is a bodhisattva path one takes on, you can find this view in the teachings of Zongmi, Jinul and Shengyan. The other is to point out that concepts of bodhisattvas and buddhahood are just concepts, it is mistaken to take them too seriously and one's better be a man of no affairs.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 23rd, 2011 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Buddhist path is about putting the teachings of the Buddha and teachers into practice within our life. In that sense Zen is no different at all from any other "school".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 24th, 2011 at 3:37 PM

Title: Re: Seosan's Argument for Pure Land Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Simplicity doesn't necessarily mean it is for people of low capacity. In fact, one may need lot of explanations to reach an understanding. I think it is quite rare that one just

accepts a foreign religion based only on faith. And the original quote I brought here addresses a common view that the Pure Land and Amita Buddha are just symbols and not real at all. That is, in my view, a shallow understanding of the Pure Land teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 24th, 2011 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: The Complete Path...by the Seventh Dalai Lama

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there anywhere on their website or in a book? I'm asking because a Google search did not help me to find it. I just want to get the references clear if I happen to translate or quote it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 24th, 2011 at 5:16 PM

Title: Re: The Complete Path...by the Seventh Dalai Lama

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK. Where do you have it from?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2011 at 7:37 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you mean Toeong Seongcheol and his view of sudden enlightenment, sudden practice? If so, while I have only minimal information on his teachings, he seems actually more like a teacher of gradual training to sudden enlightenment.

The two views mentioned can be merged into a single interpretation, and that's what Zongmi and Jinul did in their own ways. There is no need to take them as distant extremes or opposites. But it should still be recognised that it is possible to work only with one or the other, or create a hierarchical structure of them. Also, views emphasising a narrow path are usually more rhetoric than practical, while very diverse and complex interpretations tend to be rather theoretical than applicable.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2011 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

klqv said:

i don't follow.... from a merely analytic point of view, if even those that teach that there is no path don't practice as if there were none, then they are working with both.

more generally, the rhetoric of there being no path i thought was found in all chan. and if it is rhetoric for those that teach the most stringent sudden enlightenment [that's what we're talking about - right] then how can they be differentiated from the other camp. or, even, why would it be necessary to work with only one approach and not the other?

Astus wrote:

OK, let me explain a bit of the distinctions.

Gradual path: doing different practices (e.g. six paramitas) that eventually result in liberation.

Gradual enlightenment: different levels of enlightenment (e.g. 52 stages).

Sudden enlightenment: direct realisation of buddhahood.

Sudden path: immediate insight into buddha-mind without any further methods.

You can come up with any combination of the above four and find some school or teacher who advocated that. The Complete Enlightenment Sutra is a great example where the sequence goes from a subitist (sudden-ist) approach to a gradualist, each to match the different capacities.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2011 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I lined up those four options in an attempt to show that these are different approaches to practice. They are not really opposites but aspects one can bring up according to situation. There are different advances and drawbacks for each point, so it's better to see them all. It's very similar to the two truths teaching.

The gradualist views are true because there is hardly anyone who could understand the Dharma from just a few words, much less realise it immediately. The subitist views are also true because everybody has the ability to see the nature of mind right now and that buddha-mind needs neither perfecting nor manifesting. And there are students who like a systematic step by step approach, others like to focus only on the essential.

In the subitist way there is no path, no practice. Just being natural and ordinary. But usually this naturalness has to be practised for a while before it starts to actually become natural. This is practising not practising.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2011 at 2:47 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

klqv,

I think I've lost you. What is your question exactly?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 29th, 2011 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: John R. McRae Dead

Content:

Astus wrote:

Very sad news. He was a true pioneer in East Asian Buddhist studies.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 30th, 2011 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Dharmakaya of Amitabha sanskrit naming?

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is not a definite distinction accepted by all. Amita Buddha (without dividing it to Amitabha and Amitayus) was thought of by different authors in East Asia as any of the three buddha-bodies.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2011 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Dharmakaya of Amitabha sanskrit naming?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya Amitabha,
Sambhogakaya Avalokitesvara,
Nirmanakaya Padmasambhava -
I bow before the divine Trikaya!

(Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer quoted in Approaching the Land of Bliss, p. 24)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2011 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kyosan,

There is no point of a teaching that only buddhas can understand as they have no need of teachings.

Food_Eatah,

Authenticity and quality are not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 1st, 2011 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

cdpatton said:

Overall, I personally think at the time of its composition, the Saddharma-pundarika was not so much a text for teaching praxis but rather a text advocating the Mahayana and attempting to convert the non-Mahayanists to the Mahayana teaching with the arguments against the three vehicles, recasting the bodhisattvas as the new exemplars, etc.

Astus wrote:

Do you know about the magnitude of the Lotus Sutra's success among Indian Mahayana followers? Are there Indian commentaries?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 2nd, 2011 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is possible - and perhaps advisable at a later stage - to get into details of Buddhist ethics. But in brief, the precepts are meant to regulate social behaviour. It is not about enlightenment or no enlightenment, but good karma and bad karma, higher and lower birth. Harmlessness in terms of avoiding inflicting pain (physical or mental) on others is a fundamental principle in Buddhism. Since BDSM is about giving and receiving joy - although in an unusual way - it is not harmful. While it is a form of sensual attachment, the precepts are not meant to eliminate such desires but only to regulate them. So until whatever one does remains within the boundaries of not harming others intentionally, it is not against the precepts generally. That's how I see it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 2nd, 2011 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

mint said:

Doesn't the latent harm beg some consideration, though? While I agree that BDSM situations may not (and should not) entail intentional harm, as others in this thread have pointed out, accidents happen. This doesn't really affect the karmic element much; however, it is like toying with a loaded weapon which is falsely regarded as having been emptied. What happens when the weapon misfires? Wouldn't responsible thing be to minimize the potential for such harm?

Astus wrote:

I'm no expert in BDSM but I assume most of its practices are not dangerous at all. Weapons can do serious injuries while hot wax or even needles are hardly threatening. No doubt there are accidents, just like in the bathroom. But if you consider that people practice this form of entertainment with those they care about, it is hard to think of it as morally wrong, not to mention that even "common sex" has some potential dangers, from physical injuries to STIs.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 2nd, 2011 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

mint said:

I guess I was thinking more along the lines of erotic asphyxiation or even fantasy rape scenarios. I can imagine the rape scenario getting out of hand with the right balance of hormones and aggression. It's what mother called "horsing around."

Astus wrote:

There are extreme cases, but just as well I can think of extreme cases of other activities, like certain sports. Still, exactly because they are extreme, only very few people pursue them, therefore it should not be projected on what the majority does. And as Keith mentioned before, every case deserves its own analysis. Generally speaking, BDSM is not about strangling each other or fantasising about crimes.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 2nd, 2011 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

Food_Eatah said:

It's one thing to be tolerant to other people's actions, but another thing for disciples of the Buddha to condone behaviours that are harmful and clearly against the precepts!

Astus wrote:

Two questions then:

1. How is it harmful?
2. Exactly what precepts are those?

Food_Eatah said:

This domination crap is harmful for the sprititual practice.

Astus wrote:

BDSM is not intended to be a spiritual practice. But how and what kind of spirituality it harms is another question.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Please return to the topic of this thread. Other discussions should be brought to another place.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 7:28 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wisdom,

There are a range of impulses that drive one to practice some form of BDSM. I consider none to be part of the path of a bodhisattva. However, the question is about ethics, and within Buddhism there are different levels of ethics. Any form of sexual practice can only be considered within the ethics of an ordinary lay person - neither ordained, nor enlightened - very much within samsara. The ethics of an ordinary lay person are meant to protect from the lower realms, to avoid excessive hatred, lust and torpor. BDSM, just as any other form of sensual pleasure, exists on different levels of intensity. In extreme forms it is as inadvisable as over indulgence in food, sleep, etc.

The "minimalist" definition of the relevant precept is:

"He is given over to misconduct in sexual desires: he has intercourse with such (women) as are protected by the mother, father, (mother and father), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also with those that are garlanded in token of betrothal." (MN 41.8)

This means not to disrupt the boundaries of family and social law. Quite sensible.

"Sexual misconduct is much censured in the world because it is the corruption of another's wife, and because it leads to retribution in a painful realm of rebirth."

(Abhidharmakosabhasyam, 4.I.J.9.b.i, vol 2, p. 604)

If we get deep into the commentaries, we find under the third category (protected by the Dharma) of sexual misconduct the form of improper behaviour - something that is not found as a category in the Abhidharmakosabhasyam (4.L.III.F.3, vol. 2, p. 651) - that is:

"Improper behavior refers to beating..." (Jewel Ornament of Liberation, 6.II.A.3.a, p. 113)

In this case beating might cover certain forms of BDSM. But that is quite a weak point and nothing generally regarded as definitive.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 7:33 AM

Title: New Administrator

Content:

Astus wrote:

Tara has become our very new administrator of Dharma Wheel. Please welcome her.

I'd also like to thank Ngawang Drolma's wonderful service she had done here since the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics and BDSM?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wisdom,

I can agree that BDSM mixes lust with anger, fear, pride, inferiority-superiority ideas and other disturbing impulses. At the same time, you can find the same emotions in common relationships, whether sexual or otherwise. And when one creates an identity of BDSM practices it can go very deep. From this a lot of pain and suffering may come eventually. It is clearly negative to reinforce a mental conditioning for hurting others. But at the same time, BDSM puts different levels of violence into a more lust than anger based context. While lust is a primary factor here, the second strongest emotion seems to be pride. It is about pride whether one takes the role of being superior or inferior, ruler or servant. However, pride is a rather subtle affliction and it's not really addressed by common precepts, because it is not an act in itself or necessarily a source of harmful actions.

Buddhist morality or ethics is not something that is prescribed to all who follow the religion but these are so called training rules. One is a lay Buddhist from the point refuge is taken in the Three Jewels. Taking up the five precepts is the next step, but one can take any amount from 1-5, or even more. To make BDSM in itself a sexual (or rather sensual) misconduct would require it to be consuming the person who practices it, while if it were wrong because it is physically harmful it'd fall under the first precept. We can make a distinction between "healthy" and "unhealthy" sensuality, as there are abusive and nourishing relationships in many forms. BDSM in itself is not abusive, but it can become detrimental. So it is with marriage, etc. In case of sexual/sensual misconduct the important questions are whether it is socially disruptive and if it is obsessive. Both are harmful for one's mental state and create big troubles through conflict with others and extreme emotional attachments. In this sense, identifying with BDSM as a life form is equivalent of taking refuge in BDSM, so one better avoids that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 4th, 2011 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Purelands

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is said that Amita Buddha's land is the easiest to reach, that's why it is the one emphasised and taught primarily and not any other.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 4th, 2011 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Purelands

Content:

Astus wrote:

But you should look at the criteria of birth for those different buddha-lands. They are rarely available for just any ordinary being.

In case of Abhirati, "one with passion or attachment cannot be born in that Buddha-land. Only those who have planted good roots and cultivated pure conduct can be born there." (Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p. 323) Also, answering Shariputra's question, Shakyamuni says that only those who follow the same practices as Akshobhya can be born there, plus other practices. (p. 332ff) It is definitely not an easy task.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 4th, 2011 at 7:47 AM

Title: Re: Purelands

Content:

Astus wrote:

Then what do you make of the other passages in the sutra that lists all the different practices one should perform in order to attain birth in Abhirati? It says that one should follow the same vows as Akshobhya plus aspire to be born in his land. It doesn't add that it's all right to do without everything else but faith. Or you see it otherwise?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 4th, 2011 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Purelands

Content:

Astus wrote:

gingercatni,

It is not a matter of Akshobhya denying access nor Amitabha accepting people. Every buddha has the universal vows to liberate all beings and they have unbounded compassion toward all. At the same time there are specific vows that make buddhas and buddha-lands different. Thus conditions of getting to a buddha-land differ.

Historically speaking, it was quite a long process that Amitabha's practice became reduced to recitation and spread among lay people. Akshobhya's practice died out long ago, it wasn't competitive enough to survive on the religious market unlike other buddhas and bodhisattvas. If you prefer Abhirati I'm sure it is no problem to do practices related to that based on the sutras available. You might even find others who fancy

Akshobhya above all the others.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 6th, 2011 at 6:33 AM

Title: Re: are karma and rebirth for real?

Content:

KevinSolway said:

You must be aware that there are other interpretations of rebirth than your own, and that your own interpretation may not be the correct one.

Astus wrote:

Truth can be established only on defining principles. A correct interpretation exists only as far as one has the means to measure correctness. Truth on its own does not exist. Such is the teaching of dependent origination and emptiness. Therefore one may try to understand rebirth based on Buddhism or based on something else. This way the conclusions are already determined by one's preconceptions. Only when one becomes open to the Dharma it is possible to begin comprehending the teaching of the Buddha. How to be open and trusting toward this teaching of liberation? There are several ways depending on one's mental habits and ways of thinking. Debates like in this thread may serve such purpose, to assist in generating faith. But again, before openness there are only repetitive thought patterns coming from old mental conditioning. To eventually have insight into such a conditioned and narrow state of mind and see how that mentality could not yield happiness so far is the very first step on the path to enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 11th, 2011 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: Dogen translation in English

Content:

Astus wrote:

As an intro to Dogen I'd recommend the Shobogenzo-Zuimonki, then the Shobogenzo, and only after that the Eihei Koroku.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 11th, 2011 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Dogen translation in English

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I'm not a Dogen scholar or Japanese expert, my best advice is to check the different translations and choose the one you like. The Zuimonki was also translated by Thomas Cleary. As for the Shobogenzo, the Nishijima translation seems to be more literal while the Shasta Abbey's try to be more of an explaining translation (thus a bit easier to read first). You can get both online actually, the Nishijima tr. is on the Numata's website: <http://www.bdkamerica.org/default.aspx?MPID=81>

In my opinion, however, if you want a fine introduction to Dogen, I recommend Carl Bielefeldt's "Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation".
The <http://hcbss.stanford.edu/research/projects/sztp/index.html> is another valuable source for alternative translations.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 14th, 2011 at 7:20 PM

Title: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka and other Buddhist thoughts have sophisticated and detailed methods to prove ultimate reality. What about establishing the correct view of conventional reality? Are there lists of arguments? Is it possible to logically argue for the Buddhist view of conventional reality?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 14th, 2011 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

The correct (i.e. Buddhist) view of conventional reality can be summed up as dependent origination. That includes the general law of causality, the teachings on morality, karma, realms, beings, mundane samadhis, and from a Mahayana POV the dharmas, five aggregates, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 14th, 2011 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think this is going to an unintended direction. My question is if there are arguments to establish correct view on the conventional level. To give an example that is quite an important point here, is to differentiate mind from matter, as that is essential for the system of rebirth, morality and even liberation. Again, I'm looking for arguments to establish correct view of the conventional realm, not anything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Namdrol,

I'm looking for convincing reasons to validate the Buddhist view, obviously for non-Buddhists who want to get a grasp of it. I assume there are reports of how different teachers spread the Dharma among new converts who were not familiar with such concepts as samsara, morality and karma, mostly non-Indians. I'm also curious because Madhyamika, Yogacarín and other teachers went on and on to prove their understanding of ultimate reality, but that is a later step.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Paul said:

It is just for the sake of refuting non-Buddhist opponents

That the learned ones have promoted them

Astus wrote:

And for this purpose I'd like to see all the many reasons for the validity of the Buddhist view vis-a-vis non-Buddhist views.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a couple of points where all Buddhists agree to some level, for instance that there are 5/6 realms of existence, and not 7 or 4. That stealing is conducive to lower birth and giving is conducive to higher birth. That there are magical powers, curses, healing spells, etc. That there are distinct cyclic eras on both social and cosmological levels. That there are five aggregates and six senses. These and other basic teachings are taken as facts and evident attributes of the conventional reality. However, in this culture in our time it is not that easy to just accept them. But this is not a unique situation. Such realms, deities, afterlife, they were not normal in many other cultures where Buddhism spread throughout the centuries, and that includes the time and land of Shakyamuni too. So when Buddhists had to debate with brahmins, warriors, merchants, shamans, yogis, zoroastrians, taoists, confucianists, etc. they didn't just have to say that "all phenomena are empty" but also that Indra is a mighty god but doesn't really help humanity, that it is wrong to sacrifice animals and monks should not bow before kings.

So defining conventional reality as just something that are commonly accepted doesn't really fit here. Even if we go into epistemology.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jnana,

Thanks, I'll look into it.

https://www.google.hu/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=tattvasamgraha%20santaraksita&source=web&cd=3&sqi=2&ved=0CCIQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scribd.com%2Fdoc%2F61415472%2FGanganatha-Jha-tr-Santaraksita-Kamalashila-Tattvasangraha-of-Santaraksita-With-the-Commentary-of-Kamalasila-Vol-I-1937&ei=b43BTrDXAsbQ4QTE78STBA&usg=AFQjCNEtuxDx7GVwcBV_3WRoDuXikUI9_g&cad=rja (Very big file on Scribd!)
<http://www.archive.org/details/tattvasangrahaof015823mbp> (on Archive)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chapter 17 of MMK is a fine example of conventional reality in the Buddhist interpretation.

The point of arguments are, however, not to debate others but to serve as logical reasons for the Buddhist world view. So if one were to investigate why one should believe in the Buddhist understanding of conventional reality instead of others, there are clear explanations.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 15th, 2011 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

edearl said:

That the Buddhist world view is superior seemed obvious to me, as I began to read about Buddhism. Unfortunately, logical arguments have little effect on people who memorize and emotive rather than learn and think; otherwise, the world would be filled with Buddhists and people similar to Buddhists.

Astus wrote:

Logical arguments do have an impact, at least among those who value rational thinking. However, I still have to see those arguments to be able to apply them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

edearl said:

There is nothing wrong with your logic.

I would like to be able to convince those who emote, but have had no success, because they think so differently than I do. A conversation might go like this: They say, "I believe my brother and I communicate telepathically." Whereupon, I say something like, "There is no scientific basis for telepathy, and experiments have not demonstrated it works." Then they say something like, "I don't care. Once my brother was struck by lightning, and I got the feeling something bad had happened. I called him from around the world, and sure enough he had been struck by lightning." Frustrated, I say something like, "IT IS MERELY COINCIDENCE. SCIENCE HAS DISPROVED TELEPATHY." And, they say, "Why are you yelling? I don't care what science says."

I have given up trying. My communication skills are inadequate.

Astus wrote:

You think in terms of debating, but all I'm looking for are sensible arguments for the Buddhist view of the world on the conventional level (and not arguments for emptiness, two truths, etc.). Reasons set up systematically to explain the ordinary realm of experience and fundamental teachings on the path of humans and gods (not above).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

conebeckham said:

..and Astus, sorry for derailing the thread. I'm not sure that there are "good" Buddhist arguments for a certain view of conventional reality, as compared to other sorts of arguments. Karma, D.O., these things should appeal to those with a scientific mind, I think.

Astus wrote:

Maybe there are no such arguments. I've been looking into the Tattvasamgraha's arguments, but one of the major difficulties when it argues against materialists is that the modern view of the body is quite different from those in ancient India. But even if we put that aside, it is difficult to accept its explanations for instance for the body not being the basis for the mind when it falls to a reasoning applied to any sort of causal relation (one-many argument on p. 898).

Just to show how easily certain basic concepts are viewed as evident:

"The other aspect of looking at the relationship between appearances and mind is whether the body and mind are the same or different. Normally, we tend to think of

them as different. Most people have a vague idea that their body is like the dwelling place of their mind—as though the body were the house and their mind were someone living in that house. In fact, they are indivisible, because the mind pervades the body." (Thrangu Rinpoche: Ocean of Definitive Meaning, p. 110)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 4:32 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Sherab said:

Here's how I see it:

Buddhist view of conventional reality is the same as the ordinary man's view of conventional reality. It is what is generally accepted by ordinary people. Why? How can there be any other type of conventional reality given the meaning of convention.

Things like the five elements, skandhas etc are conventional reality in the past in India. Given the progress in science, no one who has undergone a "modern" education would really hold that fire is an element or water is an element and so forth. So conventional reality changes with time.

So is there a need to establish a correct view of conventional reality, Buddhist or otherwise? No, conventional reality is what is generally agreed upon i.e. the convention. It is accepted as such without proof. It is accepted as such because it is what is commonly accepted.

What happens if you try to talk to a modern man of science using conventions prevalent at the time of the Buddha, using terms like the five elements as if they are the current convention? The man will probably think that you are caught in a time warp, and rightly so.

Astus wrote:

Good point, it is conventional without the need to be proved. However, many believe that there is only body (materialism - annihilationism), that there is an eternal soul (eternalism), a creator god (theism), etc., that are contrary to the Buddhist view but could be called conventional. Thus there is correct and incorrect view of conventional reality, and having right or wrong view is karmically important. It is also important in order to make any sense of the path to liberation, since it relies on several concepts of conventional truth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherab,

If in your interpretation conventional reality is only defined by agreement between people and nothing else, even causality can't be established, not to mention morality and karma. Those are the very bases of all Buddhist practice without which there can be neither sravakas nor bodhisattvas. Madhyamaka reasoning is great once the fundamental doctrines are clarified, but before that it's pointless to discuss emptiness. So instead of quotes and arguments about Buddhist sophisms one should first of all investigate the crude basics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

zangskar said:

Trying to understand what your aim is, is it: how are the conventional truths associated with Buddhism 'proved' or argued for (regardless of the fact that they are ultimately held to be 'wrong')? I.e. what methodology (if any) is used in Buddhist doctrine to arrive at these conventional truths?

Is what you are looking for some explicit, written down philosophy of the conventional? Or is it what one could call the actual and perhaps tacit methodology, that would have to be discovered and elucidated through hermeneutic study of the texts?

Astus wrote:

Yes, you understand the question correctly. The second part, not necessarily needed.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 16th, 2011 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Namdrol said:

A view is a position concerning either existence or non-existence, that is the basis of all views. Madhyamakas do not have views concerning either.

Astus wrote:

Should add that it's independent existence and total annihilation. But to say that "there is no self" is not a position of non-existence, i.e. annihilation, and to say that "phenomena are inter-dependent" is not a position of existence, i.e. eternal self-sufficient being.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 17th, 2011 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Sherab said:

I thought that agreement between people automatically means that whatever is agreed is "established" for them individually. Method of establishment could be different for each individual but there has to be "establishment" before agreement takes place.

Astus wrote:

By established I meant a logical system. That is rarely something people care to contemplate.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 17th, 2011 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Best Language to Learn First?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chinese has the largest number of Buddhist texts (including tantras and modern translations). Sanskrit only has fragments and incomplete canons. So I think the question is whether you want to be a scholar-linguist or just want to read and study texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: Why is Vajrayana Better?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Vajrayana is better than what? Obviously, it is better than those teachings it posits as other teachings. But as for those who actually know and follow other paths, it has no knowledge of, so comparison is not possible, unless someone would actually care to learn about those other paths. But so far I haven't met a Vajrayana follower who knows in depth about at least one East Asian or Theravada school.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 5:02 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

conebeckham said:

Perhaps we need to define what a "view" is.

Astus wrote:

Apparently there is a major linguistic chaos generating unclear reactions here.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Why is Vajrayana Better?

Content:

Nangwa said:

Vajrayana includes the methods of Theravada and East Asian Buddhism plus many more.

The other paths are limited in scope and method.

Astus wrote:

Hardly. It has no four dharmadhatus, no three truths, no three minds, no five ranks, no three mysteries, no fifty-two stages, etc. It doesn't even have many of the sutras, treatises and other texts that are in the East Asian canons, neither does it have the Theravada canon or later works.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Why is Vajrayana Better?

Content:

Nangwa said:

Maybe not by the same name but the Vajrayana scholastic tradition certainly accounts for these things.

Canons are not the same as traditions.

Astus wrote:

So you are claiming this based purely on faith in Vajrayana, not on actually knowing anything about them. That is when the all-inclusiveness of Vajrayana becomes a matter of another belief next to it being faster, better, etc., and not something even close to an established fact. Of course, this is not a problem at all, since all the other non-Vajrayana schools like to say that same things about themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Best Language to Learn First?

Content:

Food_Eatah said:

It's probably also easier to learn Chinese since those slitty eye homeboys are everywhere!!! You certainly wouldn't have trouble finding teachers and sources.

Astus wrote:

Modern Mandarin/Cantonese/etc. are not the same as literary Chinese (the language of the majority of Buddhist texts) and there is also the matter of Buddhist terminology. Similarly, spoken Tibetan is not the same as the language of the sutras and tantras.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 6:00 AM

Title: Re: Why is Vajrayana Better?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nangwa,

A well known practice of Japanese Rinzai Zen is the koan practice. What is that in Vajrayana?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

Sherab said:

I don't know about others, but I do try to establish for myself the reasonableness of various aspects of Buddhist teachings (e.g. cause and effect, impermanence) and practices (e.g. rationale for yidam visualisation) through logical arguments/reasonings. But these logical arguments/reasonings cannot establish the validity of the teachings or practices.

In addition, the logical arguments/reasonings that I use for myself may not suit others because there are always assumptions upon which an argument/reasoning has to rest upon, and these assumptions may not make sense to or may not be accepted by others.

You may wish to ask yourself, how you yourself come to accept various aspects of Buddhist teachings.

Astus wrote:

It is possible to say that since ultimately nothing is established, one can come up practically anything and call it illusory conventional reality. However, there is a huge amount of "shared reality" that allows us to think there is a system in all this. In Buddhism the basis of everyday experience is karma, from karma arises the whole universe, and karma is based on the work of the mind. Mind also has its own organised functioning that is explained mainly in abhidharma and yogacara works. Now here is a problem that divides Buddhist thinkers, whether there is an outer reality independent of mind or not. Either case, it is difficult to explain the relationship either between a separate mind and outer things, or between personal and shared reality.

However, saying that nothing is ultimately established is not exactly correct because of dependent origination as the organising law of phenomena. But that is not enough to explain the mind-continuum as separate from the body, thus dependent origination is insufficient to be the basis of the Buddhist view of conventional reality. But perhaps if to this we add the existence of a mind-continuum we could be set.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2011 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Continuity / Discontinuity; Eternalism / Annihilationism

Content:

Astus wrote:

We can say that there is continuity in a middle way interpretation. It only requires understanding that:

1. there are no separate instances that follow each other (e.g., moments of time)
2. the term "continuity" is not a thing in itself but an expression

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 28th, 2011 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Diamond Sutra in latin

Content:

Astus wrote:

Very nice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 29th, 2011 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: Diamond Sutra in latin

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the use of translating the Diamond Sutra at all? The content is too difficult for anyone without prior education to make sense of, so any translation of it should be done with commentary. Not to mention there are dozens of English translations. A Latin version, well, it's fun, that's all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2011 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Diamond Sutra in latin

Content:

Dharma Atma said:

But why to translate them in the dead languages...

Astus wrote:

Buddhist sutras were translated into literary Chinese, a dead language by that time. Same can be said about Sanskrit. Latin, of course, is not that popular now as those were in their respective cultural spheres. Still, there is some beauty in Latin. Even two volumes of Harry Potter were translated to Latin (and one volume to ancient Greek).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2011 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Strict causality requires that every effect has definite causes and conditions, and those causes and conditions are also conditioned by previous factors. So it goes on and on. Consequently, if we knew all conditions at a single point of time and the rules how they go on, we could tell all past and future. This is not nihilism but determinism. Mental factors are subject to causality as well as material things. Whatever thought one has now is then a necessary consequence of the development of the entire world, or at least the chain of causes and conditions from past unknown.

As for whether buddhas are meant to be omniscient in this particular form or it means something else, I think it's debatable.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2011 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not an unconditioned reality opposite to conditioned reality. It is because all is conditioned that it's empty, it's actually the same thing.

As for free will, the mind is a series of conditioned factors that interacts with other conditioned experiences. It doesn't mean that there is some external force ruling over people. In fact, this idea that there is a "free self" is an illusion. Without such self, it is also pointless to conceive oneself being controlled by anything. Thinking itself is a series of conditioned factors. But, this basic causality should not be confused with karma because it is a special case.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2011 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

Acchantika said:

In fact, this idea that there is a "free self" is an illusion. Without such self, it is also pointless to conceive oneself being controlled by anything.

Selves, karma, emptiness, liberation are all illusions. Everything is already empty, so why strive for enlightenment when both the striving and the enlightenment are empty? Because sentient beings perceive their suffering as real, there is no other reason.

Astus wrote:

From a simple conventional perspective, beings have free will and can act as they please then bear the consequences. From the same point of view, ten powers and such are magical and inconceivable. Also, on this level you either believe it or not all these things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2011 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for free will, the mind is a series of conditioned factors that interacts with other conditioned experiences. It doesn't mean that there is some external force ruling over people. In fact, this idea that there is a "free self" is an illusion. Without such self, it is also pointless to conceive oneself being controlled by anything. Thinking itself is a series of conditioned factors. But, this basic causality should not be confused with karma because it is a special case.

mint said:

How does this relate to the so-called Ten Powers?

Astus wrote:

If we suppose that from a single point of time all past and future can be known, buddhas with omniscience are aware of it all. This is of course very much a theoretical assumption, not something based on traditional Buddhist explanations.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2011 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Why not teach buddhism, instead of your mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you care to elaborate?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2011 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: Why not teach buddhism, instead of your mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mazu generally taught that mind is buddha. Then there was neither mind, nor buddha. Dazhu Huihai was quite satisfied with the first teaching, others preferred the latter. But without understanding the meaning it's pointless to debate the words. The meaning obviously is to see mind's true nature, what else is there? Then look at the different teaching methods used.

A monk asked, "Master, Why do you say that Mind is Buddha?" Mazu said, "To stop babies from crying." The monk said, "What do you say when they stop crying?" Mazu said, "Neither Mind, nor Buddha." The monk asked, "Without using either of these statements, how would you instruct someone?" Mazu said, "I would say to him that it's not a thing." The monk asked, "If suddenly you met someone who was in the midst of it, then what?" Mazu said, "I would teach them to realize the great Way."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2011 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: A Question for Abhidharma analysts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sounds (sound-consciousness) associated with pleasurable (or painful, or neutral) feelings generating attachment (or aversion, or disinterest).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 3rd, 2011 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Do Arhats have to become Buddhas?

Content:

Mr. G said:

Outside the three realms? A Pure land?

Astus wrote:

It isn't really pure if it's within the three realms, is it?

Anyway, after early Buddhism first the idea of arhatship was raised to very high, then gradually in Mahayana they made it into a very low level of attainment, something dangerous and more detrimental than committing the 5 worst crimes. I find it better to view it as a religious concept and how it changed through the ages if one is looking for the big picture. Otherwise, there are different traditions and interpretations within Buddhism, including the view (in Mahayana) that arhats simply attain nirvana and that's all.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 3rd, 2011 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Why not teach buddhism, instead of your mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

MalaBeads,

Getting lost in content is wondering whether "mind is buddha" or "neither mind, nor buddha" is the better. There are no "best methods", only working methods that one can understand and use. The majority of old Zen teachings in that sense are very much useless as they speak in a foreign language using unknown ideas. If one wants to uphold the principle that Zen is only about pointing to the nature of mind, one must use intelligible language and not dead Chinese rhetoric. So how could we translate this saying, "neither mind, nor buddha", into something sensible? I'd say, it is not intelligence, emotion or awareness, neither it is anything supernatural or beyond current existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 3rd, 2011 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: A Question for Abhidharma analysts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Music is not an ultimate truth (in the abhidharmic sense) but an interpretation of the mind of specified series of sounds, a conventional truth. What you identify as music is conditioned by the culture and one's aesthetic taste.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Do Arhats have to become Buddhas?

Content:

Huseng said:

Such a view is easily refuted with scripture and reasoning, just like holding that icchantikas can never attain liberation.

Astus wrote:

As always, it depends on what scriptures you consider definitive and how you interpret things.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Agents acting and deciding is OK, that is our normal reality. But if you go to a "deeper level" then decisions and choices can't come from nothing but must be conditioned, otherwise it's very much a violation of dependent origination and causality in general. So in one sense there are free agents, in another the agents themselves are conditioned beings with conditioned minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

That all comes, abides and returns to the buddha-mind is found in Chan. And the classic definition of Chan explicitly says direct pointing to the nature of mind as the hallmark of the tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Ten Powers

Content:

tobes said:

No doubt about that - the range of possible choices are determined by the range of samskarahs which have been previously accumulated.

So, you're right in pointing out that agency in Buddhism is not akin to a completely free agency; but neither is it wholly determined by past accumulations - there is always the possibility of creating new intentions and undertaking new actions.

Astus wrote:

There are always new actions, decisions, and such. However, they're based on the conditions present in the mind, including of course external circumstances that influence the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

The first is not lhun grub, and the second is not direct introduction.

Astus wrote:

Could you define the difference?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

MalaBeads said:

I have heard the phrase 'the chan school' often and have understood the phrase being used to distinguish it as "the meditation school" and not "the ritual school" (ie Vajrayana).

...

Chan, and it's Japanese descendent, Zen, are full of esoteric methods that are not available in the common literature.

Astus wrote:

Chanzong/Zenshu is incorrectly translated as "meditation school" as meditation itself is not unique to it, neither is there any special emphasis of it (not counting modern interpreters).

Esoteric practices, like what? Chinese Buddhism has several rituals that can be called "esoteric" but then its no point calling it Chan, unless as a reference to the entirety of Chinese Buddhism. Japanese Zen has different sources, like Tendai and Shingon. But

this is not really the topic here. For discussion I recommend a separate thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2011 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

it would be better for you to properly learn Dzogchen and find out for yourself what the difference is.

Astus wrote:

As you seem to already know that difference, it would be beneficial for all reading this thread if you could explain it. General statements like "that is sutra, this is tantra" and "ask your guru" doesn't help.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 at 1:32 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

Does Buddhamind have color?

Astus wrote:

Essentially no, functionally yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

How so? You mean you can see it with your eyes?

Astus wrote:

I can see colours with my eyes, also perceive and imagine colours in my mind. That is functioning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

I see, those colors are conditioned or unconditioned?

You can see where this is going, right? lhun grub is not conditioned. But your "function" is. So they are completely different.

Astus wrote:

Is rupakaya conditioned or unconditioned? Are the qualities of buddha-mind conditioned or unconditioned? Are the wisdoms conditioned or unconditioned? It is possible to argue for both actually. Still, since the conditioned is in fact unconditioned, such extremes are only pedagogic.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

The main point behind lhundrup is practical, it is not theoretical or abstract. It has to do with how Dzogchen is practiced.

Astus wrote:

Then it'd good if you could give it a definition. As a start, I bring here one.

Spontaneous presence/accomplishment is an inherent aspect of buddha-mind, and means the aware side and the buddha qualities.

As such, the same teaching is found not only in Chan but in all East Asian schools following the buddha-mind teachings as found in the treatise "Awakening Mahayana Faith" and other works.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

kalden yungdrung said:

Chan fails to understand cleaning or not cleaning the mirror so we have here 2 aspects or point of view. Even without cleaning the mirror, i never heard the practice or Tantra about the Bardo States in Zen, which are unique only to the Dzogchen Traditions.

Astus wrote:

This is a valid point here, as far as Chan is not concerned with specific practices related to the intermediate state, however, such is not unique to Dzogchen but found in other Vajrayana traditions too. Nevertheless, that is not relevant to seeing the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Namdrol said:

I really suggest you learn Tibetan and learn Dzogchen teachings in a proper way. Otherwise, you are just spinning empty words.

Astus wrote:

Thanks Namdrol, I appreciate your concern and I can only agree that knowing the canonical language and doing extensive studies with intensive practice is a proper way. At the same time, it seems that either you think that Dzogchen can be discussed only by those who have gone through rigorous training of some sort, or that discussion means to continuously avoid addressing the topic by disparaging remarks.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Jinzang said:

I can't claim to be expert in dzogchen (far from it.) But the way I remember Khandro Rinpoche explaining the issue is that while other paths (she specifically said mahamudra) teach that buddha nature is inherent in all beings, dzogchen teaches that the buddha qualities (such as omniscience) are inherent in all beings.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature includes the buddha qualities as explained in detail in the Ratnagotravibhaga and other works.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

LastLegend said:

Both will lead to Buddhahood. The only difference is the time it takes to become Buddha.

Astus wrote:

How so? Chan is the school of sudden enlightenment (not gradual development on the bodhisattva path), and the Pure Land path has 100% guaranteed buddhahood in one lifetime.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

LastLegend said:

If I remember correctly, in Mahayana teachings, Bodhisattvas have to go to Pure Lands to become Buddhas. Or they might be "stucked" just like Arahants are stucked in

Nirvana until they wish to go to Pure Lands.

Astus wrote:

There is no such necessity for bodhisattvas, they even work on building their own buddha-lands. What stops them from getting stuck is great compassion and the proper understanding of prajnaparamita.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

LastLegend said:

But Bodhisattvas might not have the necessary Wisdom like Buddhas do to build Buddha lands.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-lands are created/completed once they become buddhas. If you want to carry on with this topic I recommend a separate thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2011 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no such thing as a Pure Land lineage, although in China and in Jodoshinshu they like to talk about certain patriarchs. There are several sutras talking about different buddha-lands, including the land of Amita Buddha. They are the primary sources of the teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2011 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Separate discussion of <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=6158> moved.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2011 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are different interpretations and presentations of Chan, however, those who fully embrace the teaching of sudden enlightenment, don't aspire to aeons of bodhisattva

practice but complete attainment in this life. As for Amita Buddha's Pure Land, it is a path with assurance of attainment, but that doesn't mean it skips the common stages of the bodhisattva path. That's why many teach the combined practice of Chan and Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2011 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

LastLegend said:

How do you explain this?

Astus wrote:

It is as often said in Chan: see nature, become buddha. The mind is buddha, realising this you become buddha. What else remains?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 2:15 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Caz said:

Sudden Enlightenment or Sudden Liberation ? Full enlightenment isnt sudden.

Liberation could be though...

Astus wrote:

There are different views about this ranging from minimal (entry to the level of faith, roughly identical to entry to the path of accumulation) to maximal (perfect buddhahood). It depends on what teacher/lineage/school you ask.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

LastLegend said:

Eventually will become Buddha?

There is no really past, present, and future right? Only to sentient beings there is.

Astus wrote:

Not eventually, but it is what becoming buddha is, seeing the true nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is from a different version than those three that exist in Chinese as far as I know. Tibetans like this "foretold by XY sutra/tantra" thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

LastLegend said:

Ok becoming Buddha.

But at that moment become the fully enlightened Buddha?

Astus wrote:

Exactly.

"To practice in every moment of thought is called the true nature. To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of prajñā, to cultivate this practice is the practice of prajñā. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body. Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi." (Platform Sutra, ch. 2, tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Mariusz said:

I don't think Zen has the similar practical jargon related to Lhundrub (Spontaneous presence). As I know Zen has not even the concept of the Bardo of Dharmata (Chönyid bardo), let alone instructions how actualise its spontaneously accomplished "visions" (the 4 visions; wylie: snang ba bzhi). Nevertheless, it is very easy to take carelessly sentences from Madhyamaka/Yogacara as a Zen "slang" or even as a Dzogchen "slang" for the practice.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't. I haven't seen any Zen work dealing with intermediate state practices, nor similar practice with lights, sounds, deities, etc. And while there is the understanding that buddha-mind has the perfect qualities inherently, it is not conceived of in tantric images.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Caz said:

I could understand Sudden Liberation in cutting the bonds of Samsara once Emptiness is realized but Buddhahood is progressive even Bodhisattvas still have subtle imprints of delusion and it takes time after they're liberation to wipe these from the mind. So how would it be possible to have sudden Enlightenment? Liberation and Enlightenment aren't interchangeable yet I've seen a fair few people mistake them for being so, How is this distinction made in the Chan school?

Astus wrote:

Bodhisattvas go through stages, yes. But according to Chan that is a lower understanding, and Chan teaches the Sudden and Perfect Vehicle where there is sudden enlightenment to buddhahood.

Here are Zongmi's categories: 1) the teaching of men and gods, 2) the teachings of the Hinayana, 3) the teaching of phenomenal appearances, 4) the teaching of the negation of phenomenal appearances and 5) the teaching that reveals the true nature of phenomena (intrinsic enlightenment)

But Zongmi was not really the advocate of sudden complete enlightenment, and those who were did not really care about setting up elaborate scholastic systems.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2011 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

The buddha qualities in Zen is put under the term of function that is the perfect functioning of the six sense spheres in general. There are a few detailed discussions of these functions but it is not really important as one can use them spontaneously once the nature is realised, and such functioning is exemplified in many Zen stories.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 11th, 2011 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Taego Order: 2011 Bikkhu Ordination

Content:

rory said:

Or who knows maybe they are gay, it's a tradition and cliché that Kukai who brought Shingon to Japan 'introduced' homosexuality to the Japanese.

Huseng said:
What is your source for this?

Astus wrote:
Faure mentions this legend (or not just legend) of Kukai's part in introducing "male love" (but not lesbianism!) in his book "Red Thread".

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, December 12th, 2011 at 2:52 AM
Title: Re: Tibetan Myth of Chan
Content:

Caz said:
But wouldn't one need to first progress through the Bodhisattva stages to reach sudden enlightenment of Buddha? One cannot be a Buddha without first developing Bodhicitta. This is a prerequisite to enlightenment so how can this just suddenly perfectly develop in one's mind stream? What method is it that is used. It was often said that Dzogchen was Ch'an in disguise so could you please elaborate the 5th category of teaching?

Astus wrote:
Here are two brief explanations by Zongmi (tr. by Ven. Huifeng):

"If one suddenly realizes that the essence of one's own mind is originally pure, solitary and without defilements, itself originally endowed with the nature of undefiled wisdom, that this very mind is Buddha, absolutely no difference, and thus cultivates based on that, this is the supreme unsurpassed Chan, also named the pure Chan of the Tathagatas, also named the Single Act Samadhi, also named the Suchness Samadhi. This is the fundament of all samadhis."
(CBETA, T48, no. 2015, p. 399, b16-20)

"Direct (sudden) realization of the essential purity of one's own mind, originally without defilements, itself endowed with the influx-free (non-afflicted) gnosis - this mind is Buddha, ultimate with nothing else beyond - cultivating in this manner, is the Supreme Vehicle Dhyana. It is also known as the Pure Dhyana of the Tathagatas."
(CBETA, X64, no. 1276, p. 808, c9-15 // Z 2:18, p. 494, c7-13 // R113, p. 988, a7-13)

And a fancy explanation from the Linji-lu (tr. Sasaki, p. 17):

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma. You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma. Seeking Buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do."

Therefore, [for them] activity and the defiling passions and also nonactivity and passionlessness are 'pure' karma.

There are a bunch of blind shavepates who, having stuffed themselves with food, sit down to meditate and practice contemplation. Arresting the flow of thought they don't let it rise; they hate noise and seek stillness. This is the method of the heretics. A patriarch said, 'If you stop the mind to look at stillness, arouse the mind to illumine outside, control the mind to clarify inside, concentrate the mind to enter samādhi—all such [practices] as these are artificial striving.'

This very you, the man who right now is thus listening to my discourse, how is he to be cultivated, to be enlightened, to be adorned? He is not one to be cultivated, he is not one to be adorned. But if you let him do the adorning, then everything would be adorned. Don't be mistaken!

Followers of the Way, you seize upon words from the mouths of those old masters and take them to be the true Way. You think, 'These good teachers are wonderful, and I, simple-minded fellow that I am, don't dare measure such old worthies.' Blind idiots! You go through your entire life holding such views, betraying your own two eyes. Trembling with fright, like donkeys on an icy path, [you say to yourselves,] 'I don't dare disparage these good teachers for fear of making karma with my mouth!'"

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2011 at 7:25 AM

Title: Re: Reasons for Conventional Reality

Content:

zangskar said:

Astus, as I was surfing for more books to shell out on I stumbled on this one

Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy [Paperback]

The Cowherds (Author)

Oxford University Press 2011

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Moonshadows-Conventional-Truth-Buddhist-Philosophy/dp/0199751439/ref=pd_sim_b_10 " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

In case it would be of interest to you

Astus wrote:

Thank you, great recommendation!

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2011 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Taego Order: 2011 Bikkhu Ordination

Content:

Huseng said:

I've never heard of this in Japanese sources.

Astus wrote:

You can start here:

Kukai and the Tradition of Male Love in Japanese Buddhism by Paul Gordon Schalow, in Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender, p. 215ff

The Great Mirror of Male Love by Ihara Saikaku (tr. P. G. Schalow)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2011 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a few things missed here about the Pure Land teaching.

Mahayana is not just about being full of compassion to save beings, but also about a whole pantheon of bodhisattvas and buddhas who can save beings. Actually the two comes in a single package. The Lotus Sutra is famous for describing how Guanyin saves anyone from all sorts of troubles, it also explains that she does that via a large amount of good karma being transferred. Same happens in case of Amita, anyone who has the faith and intention creates a connection because of that and receives the merits from Amita, thus it is guaranteed that one attains birth in his Pure Land.

Compassion is not developed by being subjected to suffering. Bodhisattvas and buddhas do not suffer, they have already transcended all the mundane concerns and troubles of people. Compassion emerges with wisdom, they are not separate. It is exactly because they have realised emptiness of all that they have unconditioned compassion for all.

Amita's Pure Land is not a simple heaven where people enjoy themselves ad nauseam. It was created with the sole intention of accepting all and establishing them in the path of buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is for those who want to attain enlightenment. Bodhicitta exists in the very intention of being born in the Pure Land.

People have doubts about the Pure Land path because it seems too easy, but if one has faith in the teachings of other Mahayana schools, the method of Amita is also there, as well as it is mentioned in several sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2011 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Simple question about Pure Lands

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddha-lands exist because of the buddhas who created them, just as the world exist because of people's karma. Now the questions are whether buddhas live eternally or not, and sentient beings are infinite or not. But is there a definitive answer?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 14th, 2011 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

I don't think it will lead to dhyāna as there is an active willed intention ongoing throughout recitation.

Active will exists on all levels of dhyana, otherwise it would not be maintained, except during the 9th, but even then it's decided beforehand when the practitioner would exit from it.

It is a practice whose purpose is to achieve rebirth in a paradise, as I have explained above, hence I think it is escapism.

In the Pure Land there is minimal suffering and the work of salvation is left to Amitabha.

Paradises are the realms of gods, the Pure Land is a realm of a buddha. It is not minimal suffering but zero suffering, so it is called the Land of Bliss. Salvation is not left to Amita Buddha, he only provides the environment, the work is left to the individual.

Serious bodhisattva aspirants stick it out in this world and foster compassion, whereas in a paradise with minimal suffering there is little need to foster compassion.

Beings in the Western Pure Land have access to billions of worlds where they can carry out bodhisattva work. Being stuck in a single world doesn't really compare to that. Plus, talking about saving beings without being at least a 1st level arya bodhisattva is pretty deluded.

The Pure Land is still technically samsara as it is within the three realms and arises due to causes and conditions.

It is beyond samsara as it is not created by deluded beings' karma. See Tiantai's ten world teaching on this.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 15th, 2011 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Huseng said:

This is not so. Even Ajahn Brahm teaches that in the first jhāna there is no active will. I am speaking of the four jhānas as one finds in the Nikayas.

Astus wrote:

Ajahn Brahm has his own specific view of the jhanas (I'm not saying it's good or bad, just that it's quite unique). Since to achieve successive absorptions one has to maintain a focal point (see the system of 40 kammattana), there are sustained mindfulness, intention and effort involved.

Huseng said:

Technically this Earth of ours is a buddha-realm and this is not a land of bliss for all but liberated beings.

Astus wrote:

This was not created by a buddha, unlike Sukhavati and others.

Huseng said:

You can still aid beings despite not being a realized arya.

Astus wrote:

Sure, but not actually liberate them. Plus, without prajnaparamita all merits are mundane merits.

Huseng said:

Sentient beings reside there, and they exist by virtue of defilements, hence it is samsara.

Astus wrote:

Beings exist there because of Amita Buddha's power - this is the so called other-power, that is a form of merit transference. Otherwise only arya bodhisattvas are capable of going there on their own.

In fact, the basic principles of the Pure Land school rely on the doctrine of merit transference, because that is what makes it possible for buddhas and bodhisattvas to assist beings in many ways. Merit transference requires the recognition of the offered merit, that's why buddha-mindfulness is the essential practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 15th, 2011 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Huseng said:

I understand it well enough. I just think much of it is incompatible with older lines of Buddhist thought.

I just don't think Amitabha is omnipotent and capable of bypassing karmic law.

Astus wrote:

What older lines do you mean? Teachings about different means to attain birth in buddha-lands has been part of Indian Mahayana and of East Asian Mahayana as well. The land of Amitabha was emphasised by the Tiantai school and then on by others. It is

older than the whole Vajrayana.

No buddha is omnipotent and in interaction with beings they can't overwrite karma. As I said before, merit transference is what allows the assistance of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and that is a doctrine found even in the Nikayas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 16th, 2011 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Huseng said:

You can be Buddhist and disagree with the tenets of other schools. This is to be encouraged, otherwise you'll end up accepting everything as equal without acknowledging all the contradictions.

Well, Shinran had a rather notable position in that even evil people get into the Pure Land by virtue of the grace of Amitabha. That overrides karmic theory big time.

Astus wrote:

No problem with disagreeing, but the reasons you give in order to refute the Pure Land teachings don't actually address the proper doctrines themselves.

Shinran's "evil person" is simply a prthagjana, and the possibility of ordinary beings being born in the Pure Land was argued and accepted long before him by Jingying Huiyuan (523-592, see: *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine*, p. 109). It doesn't negate karma but shows that via merit transference evil karma is overridden by good karma, as it is explained in the Lotus Sutra's Guanyin chapter.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 16th, 2011 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Taego Order: 2011 Bikkhu Ordination

Content:

Jikan said:

Hi Anders,

It's unclear to me if the Taego order's vinaya lineage comes from Japan as I think you are saying, or not. When would it have been transmitted from Japan? or am I misunderstanding you?

Astus wrote:

Korea was under Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea_under_Japanese_rule). However, it is said that the idea of married clergy was started not because of the Japanese but because of Manhae (<http://sonbuddhism.org/history.html#marriage>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 16th, 2011 at 8:01 AM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Dechen Norbu said:

Can you explain me then why do we have to do anything at all if such rebirth depends on merit transference, Astus? Why is it only transferred to those who do this or that recitation instead of everyone, not mattering what they do? What does the doctrine says about it?

Astus wrote:

This requires understanding what merit transference is, which is quite simple actually. One receives another's merit when one rejoices in another's merit. The same is true of demerit of course. So the name "transference" is a bit misleading because there is no "merit energy" transferred from one person to another, but what happens is the identification with another's deeds. That is the reason why no buddha can just simply save the beings but beings must save themselves. That is why one has to create a connection between himself and a buddha. It is explained with the following analogy in the Shurangama Sutra:

"Those Buddhas taught me the Buddha-recitation Samadhi: Suppose there are two people, one of whom always remembers the other, while the other has entirely forgotten about the first one. Even if these two people were to meet or see each other, it would be the same as not meeting or seeing each other. On the other hand, if two people develop intense memories for one another, then in life after life, they will be together like an object and its shadow, and they will never be separated. The Tathagatas of the ten directions are tenderly mindful of living beings just like a mother remembering her son. But if the son runs away, of what use is the mother's concern? However, if the son remembers his mother in the same way that the mother remembers her son, then in life after life mother and son will never be far apart. If living beings remember the Buddha and are mindful of the Buddha, they will certainly see the Buddha now and in the future. Being close to the Buddha, even without the aid of expedients, their hearts will open of themselves."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 16th, 2011 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: Diamond Sutra in latin

Content:

Huifeng said:

"Buddhist sutras were translated into literary Chinese, a dead language by that time."

If you mean that literary Chinese was dead at the time the Buddhist sutras were translated, I would have to disagree with you very strongly.

Even to this day, a fair percentage of Chinese Buddhists can still read these translations

without too much difficulty.

Classical Chinese is still taught at most levels of education in Taiwan, for example, and plenty of people can read and recite some classics from memory.

It's not dead today, let alone 1500 years ago.

Astus wrote:

Dead language in the sense that it is not a spoken, everyday language. Latin is also preserved in its written, literary form, and in the USA it's the 8th most popular language learned by university students

(http://www.vistawide.com/languages/us_languages.htm).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 17th, 2011 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: commonalities and divergences between traditions...

Content:

Astus wrote:

DN,

There is no failure on the Pure Land path. Those who have faith and determination in the vow of Amita Buddha are guaranteed to attain birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss. This is the general understanding of this teaching, some may add other requirements. If one is not born in the Pure Land, well, it's just like with anyone else. However, the practices of buddha-remembrance, prostrations, visualisations, recitations, etc. are all beneficial on other levels too. Also, the Pure Land path is for all kinds of practitioners from low to superb. That is why I consider it the apex of the Mahayana teaching that can universally liberate everybody.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 19th, 2011 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: what is the cause of Avidyā(ignorance)?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is not realising the empty, impermanent nature of mental formations, thus there is habituation that maintains ignorance. Avidya generates samskara, samskara generates vijnana, vijnana reinforces samskara, samskara reinforces avidya. Ignorance is not a thing that is created or not created by something, but a condition of being that is constantly maintained by habits, or we can say that being attached to habits is ignorance itself. There is no beginning as conditions come from former conditions and result in further conditions. This conditioning can be ended any moment by not creating it again. It is not simply a theory but our own mind and its functioning right now.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2011 at 9:07 AM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There has never been a uniform tradition but a diversity of teachers and teachings with differing levels of mutual understanding. It is also a false impression to conceive of existing traditions as things that survived centuries intact, unchanged and continuous. Naturally some think in terms of "preserving the old" and others in "adapting to the new situation". Pure lineages and teachings exist only in the realm of theories, and that's also the place of arguments about superior and inferior, original and corrupt, etc.

Institutionally speaking, universities are institutions where students learn about not only the local forms of Buddhism but others too. The Nikayas have been translated to Chinese and Japanese to serve as sources of knowledge and more, while at the same time different Mahayana works are available in Thai and other languages. I think that today there are people who want to believe in preserving and upholding only what they see as their own tradition, others think about reforming traditions in different ways, and there are those who just want to learn useful and interesting teachings regardless of labels.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2011 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, there must be a respect and appreciation toward different forms of Buddhism. I often see how teachers of different traditions simplify and misinterpret other Buddhist teachings. A very common example is when people from Mahayana view Theravada simply as if it were the Hinayana doctrine they learnt a little about from their own traditions, or even worse, when they call Theravada what should be called Hinayana. This simplification and misinterpretation is a usual source of not understanding different Buddhist teachings. It would be enough to start with an open mind and hear what others actually teach. Calling others' faiths "hinayana", "sutrayana", "deviation", "superstition", etc. is the sign of closed minds. As it should be obvious for all Buddhists, it is ignorance that keeps us in the dark.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2011 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: what is the cause of Avidyā(ignorance)?

Content:

Astus wrote:

To add to the above post, ignorance is not a thing in itself but the lack of something, namely knowledge (jnana).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2011 at 2:41 AM

Title: Re: what is the cause of Avidyā(ignorance)?

Content:

Anders Honore said:

Nah. Ignorance is a dharma. It is not so much a lack of knowledge as it is actively looking at things wrongly.

Things couldn't arise in dependence on ignorance if it weren't a dharma.

Astus wrote:

Desirelessness (alobha), non-harmfulness (ahimsa), impermanence (anityata), space (akasa) and even suchness (tathata) are all dharmas. But "dharma" does not mean a "thing" but rather a category as used in abhidharma works, a mere linguistic term.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2011 at 1:18 AM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sönam,

That is one common interpretation of the one vehicle doctrine. It seems it provides an explanation for the diversity of the teachings and traditions. What it actually always does and always used for that, is a justification for whatever the highest vehicle is imagined to be. It seems tolerant, but in fact it is simply arrogant. And I'm not saying here that you personally are arrogant, but this argument, known throughout Mahayana, is nothing more than an attempt to explain the superiority of a doctrine above others, based not on proper knowledge, but on fabricated karmic deficiency. A similar argument is used for the caste system.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2011 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

You identified the levels of practitioners with distinct teachings, that are again put into a hierarchical system. So those who follow sravakayana are necessarily low level practitioners, who follow sutrayana are medium level practitioners, who follow vajrayana are higher level practitioners, and who follow dzogchen are the best of all. This, I think, is a faulty identification on many levels.

First, these so called yanas are not real vehicles or traditions, but only one school's categorisation of the teachings as they understand them. Other schools have different interpretations of those teachings, just as they have different categorisations. However, the Nyingma categorisation does not and cannot include any other school's view of those teachings, otherwise they would actually be the same school. So it is with any other school. Thus there is no basis here to differentiate between existing schools, only

a theoretical categorisation of certain teachings within a single school.

Second, the level of practitioners does not depend on what teaching they claim or seem to follow, but it is an inner quality others can hardly judge. There are beginners and advanced practitioners everywhere in every profession, just as there are students who learn slow and who learn fast. If students master French faster and German slower, does that mean those who study German are students of lower, and students of French are of higher ability? Or is it that French is simpler, easier and so inferior, while German is more complicated, harder and therefore superior? Does it make sense at all to call those students and languages superior or inferior? I don't think so.

Finally, to call things inferior and superior requires a value system, a measuring tool. But such values and measures are necessarily arbitrary. From a Nyingma point of view others are inferior, from a Zen point of view others are inferior. That's why I said that that kind of interpretation of the one vehicle doctrine is nothing more than arrogance. And arrogance is a very self-absorbed and closed-minded attitude.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2011 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: Sex in pureland?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's Ven. Yinshun's view of the pure lands of Amitabha and Bhaisajyaguru. He says basically that the western land is for those with renunciation, and the eastern land is for those with a more worldly attitude.

Those who are timid and inferior,
Wish to have an easy path to practice.

The Buddha has special skillful means
To embrace and protect these beginners.

Of these, one of the most special
Is to be reborn in the Most Blissful Land.
Blessed by the Power of Amitabha Buddha,
They will not retreat from attaining enlightenment.

For those who cannot renounce worldly pleasures
But wish to attain enlightenment,
The Medicine Buddha vowed compassionately
To provide a Pure Land in the east.
(Yinshun: The Way to Buddhahood, Taking the Easy Path, v. 139-142)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2011 at 4:17 AM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I prefer to follow a more historical view on the development of different Buddhist teachings. I add to that that in different times, places and circumstances the Dharma was adapted both intentionally and naturally. Thus all texts and teachings are to be understood in its own context and not in a misplaced or anachronistic manner. This leaves us the option to see all forms of teachings as many ways to express the same truth, same Dharma. This is evolution, not in the sense of progression to a higher level - since there is no higher truth than the Dharma - but in the sense of adapting in order to stay alive and relevant. In China they could come to the view, but of course not all agree with this, that the eight schools are one (i.e. all the major views are valid). And although this interpretation can also be used to create a "more equal than others" situation, I believe that this view generates a less biased and more open perspective on all the Buddhist traditions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 23rd, 2011 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Happiness, suffering and the Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Happiness means the lack of suffering. It is not the common happiness of worldly people that is filled with desire and attachment, but the peaceful contentment of liberated beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 28th, 2011 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An ecumenical approach is found in several Chinese masters' teachings, among whom one of the most prominent is Yongming Yanshou. Just as he could personally connect to and comprehend the major teachings of his time, it is also possible today to do the same with diverse traditions.

"The term zong is problematic owing to its different meanings. It can refer to a doctrinal interpretation, particularly the underlying theme or essential doctrine of a text, or to a "school," which in Chinese Buddhism often refers to a tradition tracing its origin back to its founder. In this case, Yanshou is clearly closer to the first meaning, suggesting a unified underlying theme or essential doctrine of Buddhist teaching as a whole, and clearly countering narrower interpretations favored by sectarian lineage. The means to accomplish this aim are also made clear: using the question-and-answer method to dispel doubts and citing writings that make true principle—the central, unifying source (zhengzong 正宗) of Buddhist teaching—explicit. The suggestion that such a unifying doctrine underlies all Buddhist teaching is essentially antithetical to sectarian concerns.

According to Yanshou, the citation of authoritative scriptures, the teachings of the Buddhas and patriarchs, makes clear that the one, all-encompassing, universal mind (yixin 一心) is the zong , the central, unifying source of Buddhist teaching. The myriad dharmas of phenomenal existence (wanfa 萬法) are the mirror, or reflections (jing 鏡) of the mind. Hence, the title of the work, Zongjing lu , refers to a record (lu 錄) of sources that reflect or mirror (jing) the essential, underlying doctrine of Buddhist teaching (zong)."

(Albert Welter: Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan, p. 24-25)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 30th, 2011 at 4:15 PM

Title: Re: Metta in Theravada Vs Bodhicitta in Mahayana

Content:

Namdrol said:

The former does not have the capacity to bring you to liberation, since it is a mundane meditation.

Astus wrote:

Metta and the other three can lead to liberation.

Namdrol said:

"Then again, a monk keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will — abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He reflects on this and discerns, 'This awareness-release through good will is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.' Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental fermentations. Or, if not, then — through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five Fetters — he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.052.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 30th, 2011 at 8:24 PM

Title: Re: Is ecumenical Buddhism realistic?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting source for an ecumenical outlook of Buddhism is Yogi Chen who studied both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. Another could be the Tendai type of ecumenism as it includes so many different practices, although within a single frame of theory.

As for this Greek part, this could be interesting for some:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/mcev.htm>

<http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/phil371973.pdf> (PDF)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 30th, 2011 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Metta in Theravada Vs Bodhicitta in Mahayana

Content:

Namdrol said:

It is actually the opposite, this passage shows that metta cannot lead to liberation since it is "is fabricated & intended".

Astus wrote:

Metta is not the direct cause of liberation but it leads to liberation, just as meditation and morality leads to liberation. Bodhicitta is not the direct cause of liberation either but it leads to that. The quoted sutta lists 11 different practices to attain liberation with, among them are the immeasurables.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 31st, 2011 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Metta in Theravada Vs Bodhicitta in Mahayana

Content:

Namdrol said:

Bodhicitta is the direct cause of buddhahood.

By itself, metta has no force to lead to liberation, as Dharmakirti points out.

Astus wrote:

Bodhicitta is the intention to become a buddha, but there is a path to be followed and without that path there is no buddhahood. If bodhicitta were the direct cause of it there would be no need of a path. However, from the practice of metta there is only one more step to liberation. But I agree, by itself metta does not cause liberation, only birth in the heavens.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 31st, 2011 at 5:36 AM

Title: Re: Metta in Theravada Vs Bodhicitta in Mahayana

Content:

Namdrol said:

For a bodhisattva, bodhicitta is an intention and the path as well.

This is why, in terms of relative bodhicitta, there is both aspiration and engaged bodhicitta.

In terms of ultimate bodhicitta, there is śamatha and vipaśyāna.

Astus wrote:

I see your point. I had a narrower meaning of bodhicitta in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 31st, 2011 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Metta in Theravada Vs Bodhicitta in Mahayana

Content:

Virgo said:

So as far as beliefs go, Theravada has no criteria whatsoever?

Jnana said:

The Theravāda has never been a monolithic entity or institution beyond the various monastic ordination nikāyas.

And not only doctrinally, but in terms of practice as well.

Astus wrote:

And Mahayana is even more diverse. So "Theravada vs Mahayana" is a pretty obscure thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: The Aro gTér: some answers and questions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lineage is one thing. But another important thing is proving one's doctrine based on the teachings of canonical scriptures. How is that in Aro gTér's case?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: The Aro gTér: some answers and questions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks David, I appreciate your approach to the matter. My question, however, was primarily for those who question the Aro gTér's validity. I am merely a curious bystander waiting for the outcome of this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Beatzen said:

I don't know what kind of sanghas here in the states you guys are familiar with, but my sangha refers to sutras all the time. Especially the Heart Sutra, which i am quite fond of as my favorite.

Astus wrote:

The Heart Sutra is a tricky one. It is like a 1.5 minute trailer to a 4 hour film, or a half page note to a 10 volume encyclopaedia. And because of its brevity it is easy to interpret it in many different ways. If you're for short and comprehensive texts, I recommend Ashvaghosha's "Awakening Faith in Mahayana" as a fundamental treatise of East Asian Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Doesn't a statement like this leave the whole deal open to tantras that do not have an Indian origin (or at least a lineage to back them up), like the English language tantra of the Aro mob?

Astus wrote:

Very good question. History clashes with myth. Were the Mahayana sutras spoken by Shakyamuni? And the tantras? Are these sutras and tantras from India, Central Asia, China or Tibet? Could there be treasure texts in an e-mail attachment?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Beatzen said:

I don't see how you can interpret the heart sutra in many different ways... could you give me an example of that?

Astus wrote:

Read commentaries of the Heart Sutra by different people and you'll find how many things can be found in it.

For example:

The Heart Sūtra explained: Indian and Tibetan commentaries by Donald S. Lopez

Essence of the Heart Sutra: The Dalai Lama's Heart of Wisdom Teachings by Mark Epstein

Heart Sutra: Ancient Buddhist Wisdom in the Light of Quantum Reality by Mu Soeng

The Heart sutra: an oral teaching by Sonam Rinchen

The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra by Thich Nhat Hanh

There is no suffering: a commentary on the Heart Sutra by Ven. Shengyan

An Arrow to the Heart: A Commentary on the Heart Sutra by Ken McLeod

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's turn the things around a bit and look at Mahamudra and Dzogchen from a Zen perspective. For the sake of argument, I take up the classical Zen definition as a special transmission outside teachings, not established on words and letters, but points directly to the mind, so by seeing its nature one reaches buddhahood.

Mahamudra and Dzogchen are full of expedient means, they require devotion and transmission, then extensive training. There are also many teachers who say that besides Mahamudra/Dzogchen one should also do different ritual practices, analytical meditation, deity yoga, etc. Beyond all those practices, one should also familiarise oneself with many levels of doctrines appropriate to the tradition where one studies, as preliminary requirements.

Zen doesn't require anything special, there are no transmissions, no guru devotion, no deities to pray to, no recitations and secret mantras, no long texts to learn. One is instructed from day one how to realise buddha-mind right there without anything else left to achieve. No hidden teachings, no obscure symbolism, just the essence of the Dharma from which all other teachings come. There are no fixed methods to follow but one is free to utilise whatever one wants to.

So there are quite a few differences here.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

Mahamudra can be combined with this energy stuff, such as 6 yoga Naropa, but I think that one is the enhancement.

The core teaching is free from that.

Correct me if I am wrong here.

Astus wrote:

Unlike certain (theoretical) forms of Zen that has been reduced to the bare minimum, both Mahamudra and Dzogchen are generally understood as integral parts of a more complex teaching of Vajrayana. Also, unlike Zen, neither of those existed as independent traditions but only within the frames of the many schools of Vajrayana. Besides a very few modern teachers you won't find Vajrayana masters who cut off these practices from the others. Although Gampopa and some later Kagyü teachers taught about a stand alone Mahamudra, it is more of an exception than the rule.

Note that Zen hasn't really existed in its minimalistic form either in real life, nor as a strictly separate teaching. That's why Dogen said that it is wrong to call his teaching Soto or even Zen, as what he actually imported from China was a large curriculum of Buddhism in general (from temple design to koan collections).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Huseng said:

A lot of people outside of Japan have completely mistaken ideas of what Zen is, and this I guess is to be expected given that most literature available on the subject in the English speaking world is either academic or written by complete fools who make up most of what they write.

Astus wrote:

I have to correct this a bit. It was those few Japanese teachers who implemented the current view of Zen in the West. DT Suzuki was the first, but many others followed.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

Namdrol said:

This is the main different between Zen on the one hand, and (Kagyu) Mahāmudra and Dzogchen on the other. It is also the main difference between sutra and tantra i.e. the presence or absence of direct introduction. Mahāmudra and Dzogchen are based on direct introduction. This does not exist in any school of Zen, much less sutra.

Astus wrote:

I really want to add here the whole guru concept (and related yoga) as an outstanding difference - although some confuse it with blind worship of authority that exists everywhere. Zen has no such direct introduction partially because there is no such person to introduce one, and also because there is no such system one would have to adhere to in order to call it a feature of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2012 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Huseng said:

A lot of time has passed since DT Suzuki.

Type "Zen" into Amazon and you'll see all kinds of books on the subject with

questionable titles and even more silly content.

Astus wrote:

By Zen I meant the religious part, not the mp3 player stuff, neither the books "Zen and the Art of..."

As for Amazon, among the first twelve items are (in order of appearance):

An Introduction to Zen Buddhism by D. T. Suzuki and Carl Jung

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Shunryu Suzuki and David Chadwick

The Religion of the Samurai A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan by Kaiten Nukariya

The Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment by Roshi Philip Kapleau

Everyday Zen: Love and Work (Plus) by Charlotte J. Beck

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

As I see it from the history of Zen (in any country), it takes outstanding teachers (or rather appropriate circumstances) to enliven the tradition. This reform recently happened in China through Xuyun, in Korea through Gyeongheo, but in Japan the last big impact teachers were Menzan and Hakuin more than 300 years ago. Western Zen (and Ven. Shengyan for instance) was influenced mostly by Sanbo Kyodan, a modern, 20th century school, but it had little influence in Japan itself. Buddhism in Taiwan is very fresh and new, most of the founders are still alive.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 3:09 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

kirtu said:

I haven't read the McLeod book or the Mu Soeng book but the others are essentially pointing to or teaching the Prajnaparamita (I was going to say they are essentially the same).

Astus wrote:

Since the Heart Sutra is brief, one can explain it in as many different ways as emptiness can be explained in different ways. Same with the concept of prajnaparamita. You can go with Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Tiantai, Huayan, Chan, Tantra, Mahamudra, or something new.

For instance, Ven. Seung Sahn distinguished three forms of Zen (theoretical, tathagata, patriarchal) based only on "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" (Compass of Zen, p.

229f). Dushun's Mirror of the Mysteries of the Universe of the Huayan (tr. by Cleary in Entry Into the Inconceivable) sets up the whole discussion based on a fourfold relationship between form and emptiness. There is also a Heart Sutra commentary by Fazang translated in Francis H. Cook's "Mahayana Buddhist Meditation" that follows Huayan exegesis and differentiates three meanings of the relationship between form and emptiness (mutual opposition, not mutual opposition, mutual creativity), then gives the four meanings of true emptiness, after which he lists another fourfold relation from the viewpoint of form, following in essence Dushun's analysis. Shunryu Suzuki, in Zen Mind, Beginner's mind (p. 25f) makes difference only between two views of form and emptiness, where the view of "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" is a dualistic view. These were only Buddhist interpretations. But if we look into other sources, like "The Eye Aware: Zen Lessons for Christians" by Jeroen Witkam, we may find even more interesting explanations. That's why I say that studying the Heart Sutra is far from simple and straightforward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqJ9qC2DRFc> (video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDD_UUGMp2c

Finally, here's a bit of Dogen (SBGZ: Bussho), just for its nice wording.

(tr. C. Bielefeldt):

This "emptiness" is not the "emptiness" of "form is itself emptiness." "Form is itself emptiness" does not mean that "form" is forced into "emptiness"; it does not mean that "emptiness" has been divided up to author "form": it is the "emptiness" of "emptiness is emptiness." The "emptiness" of "emptiness is emptiness" is "a single stone in space."

(tr. Nishijima & Cross):

This emptiness is beyond the emptiness of "matter is just emptiness." [At the same time,] "matter is just emptiness" describes neither matter being forcibly made into emptiness nor emptiness being divided up to produce matter. It may describe emptiness in which emptiness is just emptiness. "Emptiness in which emptiness is just emptiness" describes "one stone in space."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism...

Content:

Astus wrote:

And anyway the reason for the difference in expositions and view is that the Heart Sutra is vast and profound and is a pith summary of the direct experience of the Prajnaparamita. That it is brief is not a real factor.

Its shortness is a factor in my opinion, because it doesn't explain the meaning, therefore leaves the rest to one's imagination/previous study. Not unlike a Zen koan.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Whose Buddhism is Truest?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Chinese Canon - in fact, several canons edited in China - contains thousands of texts, including multiple translations of the same work, but they did not start any movement saying that "nobody and everybody is correct". Since Buddhism never had a uniform and single Holy Scripture, the diversity of texts has been always present. At the end of the day, it is naturally MY (teacher's) BUDDHISM is the truest.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

Soto is a gradual enlightenment school of zen

Rinzai is a sudden enlightenment school of Zen

Astus wrote:

What an absurd idea. If anything, Rinzai could be labeled as gradual because of their koan curriculum. But as all lineages originating from Huineng is per definition sudden, you can't find any "gradual Zen". Plus, there's nothing gradual about shikantaza.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

Astus wrote:

SPLIT TOPIC: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=6498>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

No time to argue based on personal idea.

It is better showing fact, fact, and fact.

Astus wrote:

Good, let's see facts. The Caodong tradition was created in the Song dynasty (see: Morten Schlütter: How Zen Became Zen). Their teachings were mostly the conservative form of Chan, compared to Dahui's innovation of kanhua practice. The teachers considered Caodong in the Tang dynasty were likely related to the Hongzhou school anyway (see: Jinhua Jia: The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- Through Tenth-Century China). So it is clear that Caodong masters did not conceive anything like a gradual practice.

Dogen himself was an advocate of inherent buddhahood, very much in line with current Japanese Buddhist thought. He taught no enlightenment to be achieved but zazen itself became buddhahood for him.

Sudden enlightenment was accepted by the early Japanese Soto masters as well. Dogen praised Hui-neng because "once he was suddenly enlightened, he left his mother and sought a teacher."
(Kenneth Kraft: Eloquent Zen, p. 92)

Where Dogen identifies the "right thought" of the nondeluded mind with nonthinking, a classical author like Hui-hai prefers to call it no-thought. To this extent the essential art of zazen seems to have become, in the vulgate Fukuan zazen gi, nothing more (nor less) than fixed sitting in sudden enlightenment.
(Carl Bielefeldt: Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation, p. 148)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen... taught no enlightenment to be achieved but zazen itself became buddhahood for him.

tomamundsen said:

A common misunderstanding of Dogen.

Mr. G said:

I always thought this too:

From Dogen's Bendowa:

...

I thought Dogen's Zen was a completely different animal. Definitely not gradual though. How is it classified?

Astus wrote:

The quote itself shows Dogen's view of inherent buddhahood and the unity of zazen and enlightenment. That is because in shikantaza one "abides in the buddha-mind".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Is Soto Zen Gradual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another great source is Keizan's Zazenyojinki.

"Although we speak of realization, this realization does not hold to itself as being "realization". This is practice of the supreme samadhi which is the knowing of unborn, unobstructed, and spontaneously arising Awareness. It is the door of luminosity which opens out onto the realization of Those Who Come Thus, born through the practice of the great ease. This goes beyond the patterns of holy and profane, goes beyond confusion and wisdom. This is the realization of unsurpassed enlightenment as our own nature."

(<http://www.wwzc.org/translations/zazenYojinki.htm>)

"And although we talk about enlightenment, we become enlightened without enlightenment. This is the king of samadhi. This is the samadhi that gives rise to the eternal wisdom of the Buddha. It is the samadhi from which all wisdom arises. It is the samadhi that gives rise to natural wisdom. It is the clear gate that opens into the compassion of the Tathagata. It is the place that gives rise to the teaching of the great comfortable conduct (zazen) - It transcends the distinction between sage and commoner; it is beyond dualistic judgment that separates delusion and enlightenment. Isn't this the enlightenment that expresses one's original face?"

(<http://terebess.hu/zen/szoto/zazen.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Universities/Buddhist Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think there's much point in translating the entire Chinese canon (which one exactly, BTW?). Also, I find it a bit presumptuous to think that all who translated texts to Chinese were like living professor bodhisattvas. Let's say a few people translate Xuanzang's prajnaparamita collection. How many will want to read it? How many who could read it today in Chinese reads it? On the other hand, we have a dozen translations of the Lotus Sutra and at least four translations of the Shobogenzo, just to mention the bigger works that have fairly little use, and people love to read them. Why? Because they believe it's important. However, until the scriptures are the interest of only a handful of scholars and even less Buddhists, translations will come slowly. Compare that to the Pali Tipitaka that was translated first by the BTS and then again it's being translated by others. Because they care about it. But who cares about Xuanzang's Great Prajnaparamita Sutra? So the situation is not that bad at all. Most of the popular works in East Asian Buddhism have already been translated, many of them more than once, some even have commentary. Realistically speaking, there are so many scriptures in Chinese that it'd take a few lifespans to read them all, and most of them have not been actually studied by anyone for hundreds of years.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Universities/Buddhist Studies

Content:

Astus wrote:

SPLIT TOPIC: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=102&t=6506&p=77069>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Translating the Tripitaka

Content:

Will said:

Astus: most of them have not been actually studied by anyone for hundreds of years. An embarrassment of riches is no excuse for indifference, now or in the past. If Buddhists long ago and now ignored many texts it is their and our loss.

By the way, I recall there are 5100 or so texts in the Chinese canon. If one subtracts the overlap of many scriptures being translated more than once, how many actual different titles are there; 3000 or...??

Astus wrote:

I think more of it as textual evolution. Those that are not found useful enough are left alone, the useful ones survive. Of course, usefulness in this context is quite difficult to determine, perhaps something along the line of religious and cultural trends.

I can't tell. But different translations are important sources actually as they were usually done in different eras from different sources, or even perhaps languages. Also, don't forget that a single text can be quite long, sometimes hundreds of fascicles.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Universities/Buddhist Studies

Content:

Mr. G said:

Perhaps Honen was the last determined one to do so? It's said he read the Tripitaka 5 times.

Astus wrote:

I think you know the difference between hagiography and history. It is also a matter of what Honen had as the canon.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Is Soto Zen Gradual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd add an important aspect regarding Dogen's career in his later years, the Daruma-shu disciples.

"A number of Daruma-shū adepts, following Ejō (1198-1280) had collectively joined Dōgen's community, and this new audience strongly affected Dōgen's teachings and sectarian identity as a Sōtō patriarch. The change is drastically reflected in Shōbōgenzō and its increasing criticism of Ta-hui, Nonin's alleged master, extending gradually to the entire Rinzai tradition."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/DogenStudies/DarumaShu_Dogen_Soto.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: How is Dzogchen/Mahamudra different from Zazen Samadhi

Content:

Beatzen said:

All this technical stuff makes my eyes hurt.

Astus wrote:

Bang... simple English killed the sophistry.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Is Soto Zen Gradual?

Content:

Anders Honore said:

It's been a while since I read on it, but from what I recall, Daruma shu read almost like a caricature of the pop Zen clichés of the day.

Astus wrote:

In a sense it sounds like "pop Zen". You could say the same about a couple of other Zen groups, like Baotang, Hongzhou and Linji. However, I think that is just the surface. If you read a bit of what Faure says, Daruma-shu actually became mainstream under Soto label.

The more intellectual type of Zen with elaborate teachings, like those of Zongmi and Yongming, naturally could not obtain true popularity, and even those who knew about them and used their teachings, like Jinul and in the modern days Shengyan, used the methods of the more radical kanhua Chan. So it is rather a matter of balance between theory, rhetoric and practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 4:29 PM

Title: Re: Is Soto Zen Gradual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding this "sudden" issue, I'd like to remind you all what Anders mentioned before, that it is more like "immediate", and the temporal meaning is just a small part of it. It is

an immediate teaching because it is directly about the buddha-mind without any extra practices, and it is immediate compared to other Buddhist methods. How fast one actually attains liberation, that is a matter of personal abilities and not the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2012 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Universities/Buddhist Studies

Content:

Huseng said:

No, people won't read a lot of it cover to cover, but on the other hand many people would make use of parts of major texts. Just as now people don't normally read the whole translation of the Pali canon cover to cover, but make use of sections of it for citations and research.

Astus wrote:

I see your point and concur. We are fortunate at least in the sense that even if we don't have the canon in English, we have search engines to do the searching.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 7th, 2012 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: How practical is consort practice for the majority?

Content:

Namdrol said:

One of the funny things that people say is that lower tantra is more suitable for general public. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Actually, in lower tantra there are many rites for attracting and seducing human and non-human woman, killing enemies, and so on.

The model for the four activities, pacifying, enrichment, power, and destructive rites, etc., come directly from kriya tantra. Kriya tantra is practiced for these siddhis specifically.

Astus wrote:

What do you make of the similar magic techniques described in HYT like the Cakrasamvara Tantra? It becomes symbolic suddenly?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 7th, 2012 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Whose Buddhism is Truest?

Content:

Will said:

This will (hopefully) lead to the dying of sectarianism and the accepting of the plausibility that many Dharma heresies of the "lower" "mistaken" schools may have

been genuine Dharma teachings direct from Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Historically, the winning sectarian arguments were not really based on texts. Chan took over in East Asia with the rhetoric of an outside scriptures lineage, Vajrayana is also organised around personal contacts. Social control of religious organisations requires social networking, those who care about books remain hidden in the libraries. Neither political rulers nor common people (lay or monastic) care much about philological and theoretical issues. Miracle making and big words, these work.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2012 at 11:15 PM

Title: Orthodoxy in Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

What constitutes orthodoxy (including orthopraxy) in Vajrayana? What is its definition? Or is it that there are several definitions? What are they?

I find that faith is emphasised as an essential key to Vajrayana practice. However, is it based on pure faith in the tantras, the lineage and the guru, or there are objective criteria for what makes a teaching Vajrayana? What are the requirements of a lineage, transmission, treasure text? Is it possible at all to separate transmission from the teaching, or they implicitly require each other? What is the guarantee for a transmission to be true?

What would be good to have here are actual references in answer for the above questions, and then some extra discussion of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2012 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Japanese creating management model to attract Buddhists

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no guarantee for what will actually work in the long run. So they have to try. Chan Buddhism started as a marginal movement of a handful of monastics. 700 years later it was the dominant Buddhist school. Nobody could have foretold that, neither the changes it needed to become the ruling doctrine.

Japanese Buddhism is still a living religion with diverse sects and communities. Maybe some schools will disappear in a few hundred years while new sects turn out to be major institutions eventually. The so called widespread "corruption of the Sangha" is not a new phenomenon at all but a necessary consequence of large churches.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2012 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Orthodoxy in Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Namdrol for the initial input. You listed the major differences between sutra and tantra, but what are the fundamental doctrines that tantras have to accord with in order to be considered authentic? I think of something similar to the four seals and such.

You say the transmission is valid if the teacher is realised or if s/he has an unbroken lineage. I assume there are no verifiable proofs for either of that, are there? Is a lineage authentic as long as it originates from a realised master - like if Jigme Lingpa was realised, then he is the primary originator of a new lineage, and those following him are members of an authentic transmission?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2012 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Japanese creating management model to attract Buddhists

Content:

pueraeternus said:

It's rather difficult for Japanese Buddhism to flourish without reviving the Vinaya. Without it, the foundational base for a proper Sangha is missing. I am surprised it lasted that long and that there are powerful lines of transmission still alive. But it might not last another 2-3 generations.

Astus wrote:

I don't find it a definitive source of problems. Shinshu survived just fine throughout the centuries to become the biggest school in Japan. Japanese Zen could spread in the West quite well. It looks like that while there are parish priests everywhere who serve the community, there are a couple of monasteries with strict rules and training. Thus it became more stratified than a single group of ordained monks.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2012 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Energy from Buddhist perspective

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two questions:

1. What is energy in Buddhism?
2. How could there be anything constant when all is impermanent?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2012 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Energy from Buddhist perspective

Content:

Astus wrote:

A "closed system" is only a hypothetical thing. It does not exist in reality. It'd mean an independent realm, a substance, a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2012 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Shobogenzo & Commentary

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think those translations on the Soto Zen Text Project page are the best in English. (However, for some reason the website seems to be hidden in the last few weeks.)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 12th, 2012 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Orthodoxy in Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anyone else with some further info?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 14th, 2012 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: Energy from Buddhist perspective

Content:

catmoon said:

1. I'm using the definition of energy as one-half mass times velocity squared, and it's various equivalents.

Astus wrote:

My question was: "What is energy in Buddhism?" and not in modern physics, or anything else. I think that if this turns out to be a discussion on natural science, well, it's irrelevant to Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 16th, 2012 at 1:32 AM

Title: Re: You know you're...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a thorough one from Yongming Yanshou's Zongjinglu (tr. by Albert Welter):
I now present ten questions in order to form a framework [to test your understanding].

[1] Do you thoroughly understand seeing [one's] nature, as if delineating and

contemplating phenomenal forms similar to someone like Mañjuśrī?

[2] In everything you do—whether encountering situations or dealing with externals, seeing phenomenal forms or listening to sounds, raising a foot or lowering a foot, opening the eyes or closing the eyes—do you illuminate the implicit truth [zong] and comply with Buddhism?

[3] Do you read the teachings of each age and the statements of former patriarchs and masters, listening deeply and unafraid, completely understanding the truth in all of their teachings and not doubting it?

[4] In response to different [types of] difficult questions and all manner of trivial queries, are you able to provide [answers] according to the four kinds of eloquent responses and completely resolve the doubts that others have?

[5] At all times and in all situations, does wisdom shine forth unhindered and does thought after thought pass perfectly, without encountering a single dharma that is able to cause obstruction, or being interrupted for even a single instant?

[6] In all the occasions that present themselves to you in the external realm, whether contrary or agreeable, good or bad, do you resist [the desire to] elude them [on the one hand] and are you always conscious of destroying [any attachment to] them [on the other]?

[7] Within the realm of the mind and its objects comprised of a series of one hundred dharmas, do you get to see the extremely subtle essence-nature and the original point of rising of each and every [dharma], without confusing them with the circumstances of birth and death and the organs of sense and their objects?

[8] Regarding the four types of behavior—walking, standing, sitting, and lying—do you address others respectfully and exercise restraint when replying? And when wearing clothes and eating food, performing and carrying out [tasks], do you understand the true reality of each and every grade [in rank]?

[9] When listening to claims that there are Buddhas or there are no Buddhas, there are sentient beings or there are no sentient beings, do you sometimes applaud them and sometimes refute them, sometimes agree and sometime disagree, with a firm unwavering mind?

[10] When you hear about how all the different kinds of wisdom are able to clearly fathom how nature and form complement each other, how li and shi are unhindered, how nonexistence and existence are one and the same phenomena and do not reflect the origin [of phenomena] itself, and how the thousand sages appear in the world, can you avoid doubting it?

Even if you have not actually attained merits like these, you will never conceive the inclination to trespass or deceive, or form ideas of self-indulgence or satisfaction in one's knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 16th, 2012 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Western Buddhists, modernity and the European enlightenment

Content:

Beatzen said:

There is nothing wrong with modernity. It has nothing to do with zazen practice though.

If you sat zazen, all these opinions you hold about zen would exhaust themselves.

But, I take it you don't have any interest in zazen practice. And like any other philosophically sophisticated (compliment) Buddhist, the groundlessness of zen and its flexibility in terms of expression must seem inferior, incredulous or something. You're only looking at the patina of zen though.

Astus wrote:

This simplification of Zen to sitting meditation could be a modern phenomenon. It is right next to the concept of Zen as something mystical, ineffable and beyond comprehension (thank you DT Suzuki). By turning Buddhism to a secular-looking minimalist practice(!), it becomes a consumable product, even something scientists can research by putting wires onto people's head. But while it is true that Dogen confirmed zazen is the essence of Zen, following the tradition he learnt in China, overemphasising sitting meditation, or the practice of meditation itself, is turning a blind eye to all the works of Dogen, to the fact that Dogen's works was practically unknown until the 17th century in Soto Zen, to the fact that no Buddhist school has ever - not even today - consisted only of sitting meditation (actually, the practice of meditation is quite a neglected think even among monastics), and to the fact that the whole utilitarian-consumerist thinking is a modern idea.

Unmasking Buddhism by Bernard Faure is a must for all who want to think a bit about modern Western Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 16th, 2012 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: FPMT

Content:

Astus wrote:

What Ven. Huifeng has recommended is a good start. One should be familiar with general Mahayana before getting deeper into Chan. DDM's website has some free literature that you could read: <http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/>.

Then as some better introductions to Chan and Chinese Buddhism, you should also try these works:

Paul Williams: Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations

Robert H. Sharf: Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2012 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: You know you're...

Content:

Huseng said:

You should visit Komazawa University. There is a lot of modernism and self-identifying

Zen Buddhists there and not so much zazen going on.

Astus wrote:

It might sound strange, but seated meditation hasn't been the focus of Zen in most of its lineages and teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2012 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva Hsuan Hua

Content:

Will said:

I am a monk from the Changbai (Eternally White) Mountains, a Chan cultivator from the Black Waters.

Astus wrote:

Then if we consider what Hsuan Hua meant as Chan practice, it's not that difficult. Although even this interpretation is still quite inclusive.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2012 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: James Low & Simply Being

Content:

Astus wrote:

Indeed, it is his straightforward manner of teaching that grabbed me in the first place. It is difficult to find teachers who don't just repeat the common terminology all the time. Perhaps it is also an advantage that he can teach directly in his native tongue, thus breaking down those cultural and linguistic difficulties.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2012 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: You know you're...

Content:

Huseng said:

Well, as I've said here before, I think Zen has largely been a literary movement.

Astus wrote:

Actually, if you think about, there's lot more to Zen than its literature. It has unique ritualistic aspects, organisational forms, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2012 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Western Buddhists, modernity and the European enlightenment

Content:

Thug4lyfe said:

Isn't that the same thing what most other Mahayana schools are teaching? If all Dharma gates are equal, why does it sound like your trying to say Dzogchen is da best au? Know wat im sayin?

Astus wrote:

Sectarian thinking never becomes outdated.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2012 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: The Sole Practice of Avalokitesvara For Liberation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea of "exclusive practice" occurred with Honen and only in Japan. As you may know, in other countries, Pure Land practice involves many different methods. Guanyin is indeed a popular bodhisattva and there are practices with her, but it'd be strange to find an exclusivist branch.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 21st, 2012 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Big Mind, Big Money, Big Scam

Content:

Astus wrote:

I can't totally disagree with charging money for such sessions. In China (any practically everywhere else) monks had to go to kings, princes and officials to get appropriate support for entire monasteries and such. Today that is not the situation, but things still cost money. In the old times religious things were covered by the taxes paid to the state or directly to the church. In many countries today that is not even an option, or only a couple of locally important churches (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Paroslav, etc.) recieve such money from the state. Another historical example, Genpo roshi may have a Harley, in the old times (and in traditional countries) they have silk-brocade robes, golden statues, etc. It is a big illusion to believe that Buddhist organisations can miraculously function without material wealth, and with wealth comes corruption and other such things.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 23rd, 2012 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Ajahn Amaro tells a story about Venerable Master Hsü Yün

Content:

Astus wrote:

I assume there are quite a few (miracle) stories about Ven. Xuyun and the Communists. He's become a legendary figure.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2012 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: Nikujiku Saitai Law (肉食妻帶)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it should be viewed as a matter of progress instead of "corrupting the Sangha". They simply removed legal punishment of monks who did not abide by ecclesiastical rules.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 26th, 2012 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Ajahn Amaro tells a story about Venerable Master Hsü Yün

Content:

Astus wrote:

These "schools" existed mostly on paper only and not in real life. It also begs the question, how a "school" is defined. Those "schools" which had actual organisational structure and governed monasteries (although never as the exclusive teaching being taught at such a monastery, but the leader(s) of the monastery belonged to that group) were the Tiantai (Tang, Five Dynasties, Song) and Chan (Hongzhou in Tang, Linji (and Caodong) since the Song); Huayan and Vinaya existed to a small extent, but only a few monasteries in the Song. But even these had no main patriarch, no "head of the school", as none of them were that organised. The only actual leader of any Buddhist school one could find in China is the emperor, and other political rulers around the many regions.

So, Ven. Xuyun was hardly a leader of anything, even if he was an outstanding figure in 20th century Chinese Buddhism, but there were others too, like Ven. Taixu and Ven. Yinguang.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 26th, 2012 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: Ajahn Amaro tells a story about Venerable Master Hsü Yün

Content:

plwk said:

So Astus, besides the Emperor, what was the role and purpose of the National Master other than advising His Majesty on Buddhist related stuff or was it another puppet role?

Astus wrote:

Being a National Teacher/Preceptor is a rank, a recognition of one's achievement by the government. It doesn't mean that all National Teachers were remembered by history, actually, most of them were not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2012 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: A question of faith

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Mr. G said, compassion is essential to the bodhisattva path, buddhahood is perfect unbounded compassion. Indeed, not only buddhas care about your freedom from suffering, but all bodhisattvas and even many who have not yet become bodhisattvas, or Buddhists.

plwk,

Zen's "great doubt" is quite different from doubting Buddhist teachings, it is more like doubting one's illusory preconceptions and this conceptual reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2012 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: Evidence for Design?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no evidence of design. There is evidence of intelligence conceiving rules and a mystical designer.

Seriously, why not all these theists mention parasites, plagues, viruses and all the rest among the grand creations of an almighty benevolent god? "And God said, 'Let there be flesh-eating disease', and God saw that it was good."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2012 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: The Original Doctrine and Discipline

Content:

Astus wrote:

Stories can be different as they are mostly irrelevant and in many cases could be simply made up to make a point regarding a rule or a teaching. The cardinal teachings are found in the same way in both the Nikaya and Agama collections. The rest is speculation.

https://books.google.hu/books/about/The_fundamental_teachings_of_early_Buddh.html?id=yLU-oZio9_oC&redir_esc=y

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2012 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Matchmaking service gives Buddhist monks a boost...

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a form of natural selection in religion too. Institutions that are not viable eventually die out.

In Europe one is free to join a Christian monastery or become a priest. But only few wants to, and not because it is expensive (it's mostly free).

BTW, are women allowed in Shingon to be heads of temple?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 28th, 2012 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Evidence for Design?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An unconscious intelligence? That is a bit absurd.

Taoist or any other mono-causal system is refuted by dependent origination.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 29th, 2012 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Ajahn Amaro tells a story about Venerable Master Hsü Yün

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not clear on why Ven. Xuyun recognised Ven. Xuanhua as a teacher in the Guiyang school, but it is certain that the Guiyang lineage existed only for a short period of time between the 9th and 10th century. In the list of Xuanhua's transmission record we find Sanjiao Zhiqian (<http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/search.php?aid=A019850>) from the Tang era. The one following him, Xingyang Ciduo (<http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/search.php?aid=A019852>) in the <http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/> is listed as a disciple of Baoci Deshao, who was the teacher of Sanjiao. Nevertheless, they all lived in the Tang era, while Xuyun lived a thousand years later. This kind of remote transmission (遙嗣) is not unheard of, but it's hardly person to person.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2012 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Which is the biggest teaching?

Content:

Astus wrote:

You'll find the statement that "this is the best/highest/foremost sutra" in many Mahayana sutras. We could say that there is a strong inferiority complex within these texts. We can also say that different sutras were written/collected by different factions who tried to propagate their own teachings. We can do what later theorists did in Buddhism, categorise the sutras according to our taste and thus create a taxonomy, that way decide what sutras are to be taken symbolically and what literally. We can also say that all the sutras ultimately talk about the same thing - of course, we decide what that same thing is - and handle them accordingly. It is also an option to say what has been said before here, that people choose different sutras according to their own inclinations. These, and possibly even more, are existing and working ways of looking at

the large variety of Mahayana sutras.

"Outside the mind there is no Lotus Sutra and outside the Lotus Sutra there is no mind."
(<http://terebeess.hu/zen/hakuin1.html#8>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Which is the biggest teaching?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is one major problem with the idea that "the teaching fits the mind" is that then one has to conclude that only stupid people believe in low level teachings while the smart ones follow the highest teachings. So, if you believe that X sutra/teaching is the best, you are stupid, because it is Z sutra/teaching that is the best and that's what I follow.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: Which is the biggest teaching?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Will, what I meant is that matching the teachings to the recipients' minds it becomes not just claiming that X doctrine is the best, but it adds a personal insult to it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Which is the biggest teaching?

Content:

Will said:

Do you really think that the IQ scale or intelligence is the main factor that leads Buddha to target his teachings to "recipients' minds"? Does high intelligence = wisdom?

Astus wrote:

First, I don't equate IQ with intelligence, nor intelligence with wisdom. Second, being open to higher teachings is usually defined by one's karmic disposition, and only on a second level by one's wisdom and thirdly by intelligence. On the other hand, it is unlikely that somebody with a lower than average intelligence could study the Dharma in depth.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: Uncontrived

Content:

Beatzen said:

But in zazen, we aren't doing such things. Steadying the mind on the breath in the tanden region, we empty our mind of its contents and relax into glimpsing our original face.

Astus wrote:

Where is this kind of seated meditation from? What text, which teacher?

Sitting down, focusing on breath, in the tanden region, emptying the mind of its contents, relaxing, glimpsing the original face.

Well, that's quite a complicated and restrictive practice with several steps to go through, not to mention understanding many foreign and obscure concepts. No doubt this is a possible form of seated meditation, but it's hardly uncontrived or unique/universal in Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 3rd, 2012 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in Chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

klqv,

I'm not sure what you're getting to. As a Mahayana path, those who follow the Zen methods aspire to be bodhisattvas and buddhas who liberate sentient beings. It is not the path of the small minded who want only to escape from the cycle of birth and death, but the way of those who realise the inseparability of samsara and nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 3rd, 2012 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: What are 84000 teachings?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.dhammadawheel.com/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=8813#p137154>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 4th, 2012 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: What are 84000 teachings?

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

You are looking for something that does not exist. I gave the link because the very first post by Ven. Gavesako explains this. "Dhammakhandha" means simply "groups of teachings", like a stanza, or a sutta, however you like it. If you work really hard, you might

come up with a unit that makes the Pali Canon (whichever version you use) to make 84000 such groups. But it's really pointless.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 4th, 2012 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Evidence for Design?

Content:

Beatzen said:

There are many examples of unconscious intelligence. Take the cells of your body and the way they naturally intuit life-sustaining action.

The cells are not conscious of themselves, yet they "know" - similarly, a Buddha does not consciously think "I have attained enlightenment".

Astus wrote:

You call a biological function intelligence. In that sense, everything has intelligence as far as they have some function, and because whatever exists has a function, everything has intelligence. That makes the word "intelligence" pretty meaningless.

If the Buddha doesn't know that he is a perfectly enlightened being - although according to the scriptures he actually says he is one several times - he would be simply stupid and not enlightened.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 5th, 2012 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Which is the biggest teaching?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I specifically said "study the Dharma in depth", and I really meant study. There are of course many practices that does not require one to know anything about the teachings, or only the bare essentials related to that specific practice. It is no coincidence that devotional methods are what generally taught to the masses, because it is something easy to follow. And I'm not saying here that such practices are pointless or misguided. There are also many stories where people who followed simple devotional methods displayed miraculous things in their lives or even after their deaths. But if we consider those who transmitted the teachings to the next generation and had long term influence within a school or an area, they were people of great intelligence and solid education, and usually advantageous social background. Of course, realisation does not require studying the scriptures, nor does it require practising meditation, nevertheless, besides legendary saints, outstanding teachers always had both knowledge and experience. And that includes even Pure Land teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 5th, 2012 at 6:41 AM

Title: Re: Uncontrived

Content:

Astus wrote:

In many Zen centres they carefully explain to you how to sit, how to walk, how to eat, how to bow, etc. And when it comes to what to do actually when you're supposed to meditate, that is, what to do with the mind, they can only say a few words like "just let it go", "only don't know", and such. I call this super-ritualistic and quite uninformative.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 11th, 2012 at 3:23 AM

Title: Zen Master Subul

Content:

Astus wrote:

A famous living Korean teacher, not so known outside his homeland.

Website with teachings and poems:

<http://www.angukzen.org/English/Introductions.html>

DON'T SEEK NO-MIND

You will feel as if the heavy load were off your shoulders
and cast off your skin
all of a sudden like a thunderbolt from the blue sky.
Who could express this joy of dharma
you feel through the whole body?

However,
you should neither indulge in the feeling
nor be dragged about by arising thoughts.

Don't wander in search of something in vain.
Time will be ripe enough of itself
for everything to reveal itself as it is
if you pass time like this.

On acquaintance
you are no-mind itself from the beginning.
Don't seek no-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 12th, 2012 at 7:44 AM

Title: Re: Way to Buddhahood

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's called the "panjiao" 判教, classification of doctrines. Different schools had different versions of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 12th, 2012 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Way to Buddhahood

Content:

Will said:

Thanks Astus. Although I am interested in stages of practice, not so much "classification of doctrines". Any influential examples before 900CE; any translated into English?

Astus wrote:

There is Dushun's meditation manual, translated by T. Cleary in Entry into the Inconceivable. It uses stages of meditation practice in line with the classification of doctrines. Actually, the classification itself can be understood as what follows what, just as in lamrim.

Dharma Atma said:

Guys, is there any difference between words Buddhahood and Buddhahood? Or it's the same?

Astus wrote:

It's easy to tell the difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 13th, 2012 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist response to Jesuits in China

Content:

Huseng said:

Interesting analysis of Ouyi Zhixu's polemic against them. It is funny how he accused them of theft.

Astus wrote:

Interestingly enough, repentance is not something people associate with Buddhism here.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 16th, 2012 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Noah,

"It can be seen as an "energy" that is at work for the sole propose of producing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas."

Enlightenment is someone personally realising the ultimate nature of phenomena. It is hard to say that a very subjective experience should be imagined as an im/personal and separate energy creating beings.

In this sutra, the Buddha all but abandons skillful means to preach the truth of Ultimate Reality.

What is that "Ultimate Reality" he preaches about? The sutra doesn't really give an answer.

"It is meant to speak to the heart and be read aloud by like minded individuals to inspire the mind and heart of ultimate practice."

No argument here. It is an inspirational text, much like popular entertainment films with a religious concept.

"the fact that the process of Enlightenment, on a cosmic scale, is something we all are taking part in right now in our practice and, one "day" many millions of "years" from now we may be part of such an assembly"

It sounds very much like that one doesn't have to actually do anything but we are all automatically participants in this massive liberating event which we know practically nothing about.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2012 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Noah,

What you say, is this how you interpret the Lotus Sutra, or is it based on somebody else's teachings? I'm asking this because while you talk about compassion and buddhahood, the concepts in the end don't really match with what I understand as the basics of the bodhisattva path or Mahayana. For instance, how could it be a meaningful truth that there is only one vehicle? How does that make a difference? What is that vehicle about? And I could go on.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Are some Buddhists more equal than others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The majority of the laity care only about the basic religious services, for them the monks function as clergy. Just as in society in general, men are preferred over women, this is reflected in the monastic community. Inequality is generated by the laity, by the society. The few who seek actual spirituality and are rather intellectual people don't take all forms of apparent sanctity at face value. The concept of equality is another thing, mostly a legal matter and such.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: Are some Buddhists more equal than others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Therefore a bhikkhu ... should not present himself as equal to, nor imagine himself to be inferior, nor better than, another."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.4.05.irel.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 1:28 AM

Title: GigaPedia/Library.nu Shut Down

Content:

Astus wrote:

News on:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/15/librarynu-book-downloading-injunction_n_1280383.html

<http://torrentfreak.com/book-publishers-shut-down-library-nu-and-ifile-it-120215/>

<http://www.theverge.com/2012/2/16/2802060/library-nu-ifile-it-ebook-piracy-site-shut-down>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 3:38 AM

Title: Re: Are some Buddhists more equal than others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Equality requires a mind that sees all as equals. However, "equality" itself is meaningless. It should be defined the equality of what one talks about. Human relations go to different directions and considering some more important than others comes naturally from that. In secular life there are financial differences, in religious life there are spiritual differences, and in both forms of communities there are political differences. It is an immensely difficult thing to make a community functioning and harmonious. For such functioning humans generally use a hierarchical system where only people in specific positions have the power to make decisions about the community. Leadership could be changed to rules, however, rules require interpreters,

and the need of interpretations create again a hierarchy of judges, lawyers, law enforcement, etc. It is an impossible idea to believe that the leaders are enlightened and saintly people.

A possible solution is perhaps a network of small egalitarian communities with properly trained members. Movement between communities is free, but the number of a single community is maximised. This is actually not much different from how Buddhist monasteries developed without any centralised power.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 7:19 AM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've been intrigued by the Lotus Sutra ever since I heard of it. For that reason I've read it several times in case I missed something. This was all because of its reputation in East Asian Buddhism. However, on its own I could not find anything that really came through as extraordinary. Basically that is the reason I asked what you and others find in it fascinating. But then we can just say it is not my type of teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 18th, 2012 at 7:51 AM

Title: Re: Natural Ch'an

Content:

Astus wrote:

If we look at the actual Recorded Sayings of Layman Pang the story is a bit different.

居士一日在茅廬裡坐。驀忽云。難。難。難。十碩油麻樹上攤。龐婆云。易。易。易。如下眠床腳踏地。靈照云。也不難。也不易。百草頭上祖師意。
(X69n1336_p0134a18-20)

The Layman was sitting in his thatched cottage one day [studying the sūtras]. "Difficult, difficult," he said; "like trying to scatter ten measures of sesame seed all over a tree." "Easy, easy," Mrs. Pang said; "like touching your feet to the ground when you get out of bed." "Neither difficult nor easy," Ling Zhao said; "on the hundred grass tips, the great Masters' meaning." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layman_Pang#cite_note-0)

"Natural Chan", well, a strange concept indeed. But the words "when I'm tired, I eat..." are more like what is in the Records of Linji, and it's a way of expressing the unconcerned and unattached mind, ordinary mind, which is another term for liberation and enlightenment. Nothing to do with "naturalistic" and unrestrained behaviour.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 19th, 2012 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Natural Ch'an

Content:

pung S said:

Astus, thanks for the differing translation. I am not sure if the translation I posted was the one that I read, but it was similar. The one you provided clears things up a little bit at least. So, if you know, would it be safe to say that Ven. Hsu Yun changed it when he gave this teaching; or that the translator of the book changed it when it was published? I was not sure if it had anything to do with "naturalistic" or unrestrained behaviour. I was thinking more along the lines of what is commonly referred to as "natural talent." In other words, in this story, was Ling Zhao the Ch'an equivalent of a violin prodigy or a child-athlete? I am thinking this is not the case.

Astus wrote:

Stories change easily by retelling and occasionally by translating it. Of course, it'd be good to see Xuyun's Chinese original too, if there is any.

No natural talent, only good or bad karma (almost the same). But Zen can be realised by anyone regardless of age. It is only a matter of attitude and circumstances.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 19th, 2012 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Noah,

"Not being critical and letting this sutra just communicate to your heart is the way to take this one, I think."

This could be said about any sutra. One can be devoted to any text, statue, idea, whatever. And it happened and happens quite often. Such faith requires no reason, no arguments, and usually it has none. But that attitude leaves no space to discussion, to criticism, to analysis, thus it is not something debatable on a forum. Of course, debate is only one form of communication, and sharing information does not require it. But, as you are well aware of this, every sutra has a wide range of interpretations. Telling which one is useful or valid needs some comparing and reasoning. The question is whether it remains a calm discussion on confrontation of views, or a heated and even violent repetition of personal remarks. Obviously, the second one leads to nothing good.

"It is a text that spearheaded the transformation of entire societies and cultures of people that had no previous experience with the Dharma."

I can recall no occasion in the history of Buddhism where the Lotus Sutra was the first Buddhist text to be introduced to a culture or that it had a significantly larger influence on a culture than other Buddhist teachings. As a matter of fact, only Nichiren Buddhism emphasises the Lotus Sutra to the level of exclusiveness, while Tiantai and Tendai are more rounded doctrines where they use certain concepts from the Lotus Sutra itself to

classify the other teachings. Nichiren Buddhism, however, is only one of the smaller traditions in Japan making it less influential than several other schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 19th, 2012 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rory,

"In general, all the Dharmas of the Thus Come One, all the sovereign spiritual powers of the Thus Come One, all the secret storehouses of the Thus Come One, all the extremely profound deeds of the Thus Come One are all proclaimed and revealed in this Sutra."

While the sutra says so, it does not actually lists and explains all those things. Also, there are quite a few other Mahayana sutras stating practically the same thing about themselves, to the level that we can say it is a common Mahayana theme.

"The Sutra proclaims that Shakyamuni Buddha is eternal, that the other buddhas are his replica bodies, that all previous paths are replaced by the One Vehicle, that all things are essentially equal, that beings can attain buddhahood."

The idea that all buddhas are eternal are said in other sutras, although it is true that the Lotus Sutra stands out as a major text to re-emphasise the importance of Shakyamuni. The teaching of one vehicle are also found in other sutras, and the universality of buddha-nature is more prominent in the Nirvana Sutra.

"Not just people, animals and even grasses and trees."

The idea of enlightenment of insentient beings is very much a Chinese concept that is unknown to Indian and other Mahayana schools, also not found stated in the sutras, while at the same time it is proclaimed that only sentient beings possess buddha-nature. A longer discussion of this by Robert H. Sharf:
http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert_Sharf-e.htm.

"Also it contains the buddhahood of a female, the Dragon King's daughter, so important."

As a matter of fact, before the attainment of buddhahood there happens a transformation into a male bodhisattva. Thus it is not easy to argue from the Lotus Sutra that there can be woman buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 19th, 2012 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Will said:

They clarify that "proclaiming and revealing" mean only to one who "upholds" the sutra, through their diligent practices. The lines above do not mean there is a printed list in the sutra.

Astus wrote:

Good point. Another instance of the repeated statement that the Lotus Sutra is the best sutra. I actually find it interesting how a whole sutra can be mainly about its own praising.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 20th, 2012 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Noah,

Good. Now we can then turn back to the sutra itself instead of discussing personal matters.

"Then the assembly there all saw the daughter of the nāga king instantly transform into a man, perfect the bodhisattva practices, go to the vimalā world in the south, sit on a jeweled lotus flower, and attain highest, complete enlightenment, become endowed with the thirty-two marks and eighty excellent characteristics, and expound the True Dharma universally for the sake of all sentient beings in the ten directions."

Even before the perfection of the bodhisattva path the naga princess turned into a man. Why? As Shariputra reiterates the five hindrances, "Moreover, the female body has five obstructions. The first is the inability to become a great Brahma. The second is the inability to become Śakra. The third is the inability to become Māra, and the fourth is the inability to become a universal monarch (cakravartin). The fifth is the inability to become a buddha. How can you with your female body quickly become a buddha?" Although it seems that the intention of the sutra is to refute this as a lower view, actually it explicitly says that the naga princess transformed into a man. So it actually confirms it.

In the 23rd chapter it is also said, "If there is any woman who hears and holds to this chapter 'Ancient Accounts of Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja,' she will never be reborn with a female body." Why? Because it considers male body to be better.

On the other hand, in the Vimalakīrti Sutra the essentialist view of sex is clearly refuted. "The goddess said, "Śāriputra, if you were able to transform this female body, then all females would also be able to transform themselves. Just as Śāriputra is not female but is manifesting a female body, so are all females likewise. Although they manifest female bodies, they are not female. Therefore, the Buddha has explained that all dharmas are neither male nor female."

The Nirvana Sutra actually talks about how Shakyamuni was also a female buddha, "I also manifest myself in Jambudvīpa as a female Buddha. People see this and say that it is strange that a female should attain unsurpassed Enlightenment. The Tathagata, after all, has never once been a female. In order to subdue people, I manifested as a female." And the Nirvana Sutra also points to a transcendental meaning of male and female (after a series of degrading remarks on females), "If one does not know the Buddha-Nature, one cannot be called a man. Why not? Because one does not realise that one has the Buddha-Nature within. Any person who does not realise that he has the Buddha-Nature is a woman. If he does so realise, he is a man. If any woman knows that she has the Buddha-Nature, she is a man."

It is true that the Lotus Sutra promises the attainment of buddhahood to practically everybody. However, it is neither a clear statement of universal buddha-nature, nor is it a proclamation that there are actually buddhas in female form.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 20th, 2012 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: The Dalai Lama's Solution to Overpopulation

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Globally, the growth rate of the human population has been declining since peaking in 1962 and 1963 at 2.20% per annum."

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_growth#Human_population_growth_rate)

It seems that the largest growth rate is in underdeveloped countries

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Population_growth_rate_world_2011.svg). So the solution is not really in some form of forced childlessness but proper development both economically and culturally.

BTW, China's "one child policy" results in excessive number of male children, which is not a good thing at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 20th, 2012 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

"How can you say that the Lotus Sutra is "not a clear statement of universal Buddha-nature"? This kind of statement can only come from not understanding the text. The fact of Buddhahood as the "final goal" of the Bodhisattva path, which is available to anyone to tread, is THE POINT of the Lotus Sutra. Why it is so important that ALL vehicles are in essence the 1 vehicle is....this makes the whole idea of being a Buddha (Buddha-nature) accessible to all beings."

Do you know a single passage in the sutra where it says that all beings without exception has buddha-nature?

The teaching of the one vehicle means that whoever started practice, whether as a sravaka, pratyekabuddha or bodhisattva, will all eventually attain finally buddhahood. But, this does not include those who have not started on any of the paths, the so called icchantikas, who are without any root of goodness. And this is the difference between saying that there is only one vehicle or every being has buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 20th, 2012 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good points Jikan. It is for those reasons that it is often quoted by a large number of teachers in different schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2012 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: GigaPedia/Library.nu Shut Down

Content:

Astus wrote:

Copying sutras and other texts have been a major merit making activity among Buddhists. Digital media simply makes it easier to gain merit by spreading the teaching.

You can even roll a prayer wheel from home (Hungarian site, no English, button is at the bottom of the homepage, you can also leave a message above it):

<http://www.imamalom.hu/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2012 at 7:27 AM

Title: Re: Natural Ch'an

Content:

Astus wrote:

Never just read. Read with wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2012 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

rory said:

so let's see: ichinen sanzen, somoku jobutsu, sokushin jobutsu all derived from the Lotus Sutra.

Astus wrote:

It is important to make a difference between what are actually stated in the sutra itself, and what are the creations of commentators. For instance, the idea of buddhahood in this body became prominent in Japan and it was argued from two different perspectives using different scriptural sources. Since the Lotus Sutra was already well known in China and the concept of buddhahood in this body was not really used, it's hard to say that it is in the Lotus Sutra, but rather Saicho used the Lotus Sutra to back up this idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2012 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Tatsuo said:

Where did you get the idea, that Nichiren Buddhism is one of the smaller traditions in Japan?

Astus wrote:

What I meant is that it is among the smaller ones among the big traditional churches. I didn't mean it's like some new religion with a few thousand followers.

Here's some statistics (<http://kaimyo.net/butu/>):

Shingonshu has 12,000 temples and 13.8 millions followers.

Shinshu has about 20,000 temples and 13.3 million followers.

Sotoshu has 15,000 temples and 6.9 million followers.

Tendaishu has 4,200 temples and 6.9 million followers.

Jodoshu has 8,000 temples and 6.5 million followers.

Nichirensu has 5,200 temples and 3.3 million followers.

More statistics with all the sub-schools: <http://www.kohzansha.com/datalink.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2012 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Aemilius said:

I am astonished, are the Zen schools then a small minority ?!

Astus wrote:

Zen schools (Soto + Rinzai + Obaku) have about 20,000 temples throughout Japan and 8.7 million followers. But of course, if you compare that to the 128 million population of Japan, it is not so big, only 6.8%. Not to mention that these official numbers don't say much of actual religious practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2012 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh: Reading Suggestions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not TNH expert, but in his "The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching" he teaches on many basic Buddhist concepts and shows his way of looking at them.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2012 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh: Reading Suggestions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

He also has a commentary on the teachings of Linji Yixuan: "Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go", if you want to look at his way of interpreting Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2012 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: The Lotus Sutra

Content:

Tatsuo said:

So together with Tendai, which has also high regards for the Lotus Sutra, more 1/3 of the traditional Buddhist schools consider the Lotus Sutra as their central text. And this without counting in the various Nichiren related "new religions"! So the Lotus Sutra was and still is enormously popular in Japan.

Astus wrote:

It is very interesting how these statistics turned out. Well, so it is then.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2012 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: The myth of the eight-hour sleep

Content:

Astus wrote:

This idea of sleeping in two sets makes sense of midnight prayers/meditations at least.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 24th, 2012 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh: Reading Suggestions?

Content:

pung S said:

Astus, have you read this? Would you say that this is not only TNH's interpretation of Zen, but also a good look at Vietnamese Zen in general?

Astus wrote:

I have read chapters, but never grasped my attention enough to finish it, so it stays on the shelf. But others may like it very much.

I wouldn't call a single man a good source of looking at a whole country's Buddhism, not to mention that TNH is a very creative and innovative teacher (this is not criticism).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 27th, 2012 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: How Germany Became Europe's Richest Country

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting discussion how people see their and others' country. From my limited perspective, Germany achieved its status through its own people's will to work. I don't really know how it was in Hungary before the second half of the 20th century, but in the Socialist era people learnt how best to evade doing their job and get the highest benefits from the state/government. Tax evasion today is normal, only those few who work for larger (multinational) companies pay the full extent of income tax. Cheating is "normal" in this culture on every level, from school exams to governmental macroeconomic statistics. There is a significant number of the population who turned pensioners at an early age (around their 40s) based on false medical papers, while the full number of pensioners is one third of the whole population (not an unknown problem in Europe of course).

What is the most fascinating of all is that no matter where one lives, there are problems one sees there. And certain other countries always look lot better than one's own. Perhaps about a month ago there was a BBC report on Italian young people wanting to move abroad for better opportunities. I'm sure for those Italians their country is not a wonderful place. On the other hand, for the Romanians who go to Italy for menial jobs and the refugees from Africa it is the land of their dreams.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 27th, 2012 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Understanding SHINJIN by Paul Roberts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a short correspondence with Al Bloom on this issue:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=60&t=1084&start=60#p8252> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 29th, 2012 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: A "Christology" of Amida Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

The issue has been resolved by the doctrine of the three bodies (trikaya) long ago.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 5th, 2012 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Complete Works of Sheng Yen

Content:

Astus wrote:

No new translations there in the last few years. Unfortunately, there are quite a few books that are not uploaded there, like those about huatou and mozhao practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 8th, 2012 at 8:20 PM

Title: What is the Point of Tegal?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What are the reasons for Tegal practice? What does it help in? How is it better than, or complement, Trekcho?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 8th, 2012 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: What is the Point of Tegal?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Jax, it's a great summary. So Tegal is a (group of) special method(s) to enhance the presence of rigpa, thus strengthening Trekcho?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 8th, 2012 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: What is the Point of Tegal?

Content:

Jax said:

All Dzogchen "methods" have only one goal: to enhance and stabilize the presence of Rigpa in experiential consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Then why the methods? Shouldn't abiding in non-dual awareness be sufficient? Just as Garab Dorje's three statements say.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 10th, 2012 at 1:37 AM

Title: Re: What is the Point of Tegal?

Content:

Jinzang said:

Because of our strong habituation, it is difficult to see through dualism and abide in non-dual awareness. This is true even after the initial opening. So one uses special methods, like the Six Yogas to complement mahamudra or Tegal to complement Trekcho. This is why tantra is considered a fast path, because it speeds up the process. Otherwise mahamudra/trekcho would be more or less the same as sutra practice.

Astus wrote:

Interesting. They explain the nature of mind as complete with the three bodies and needs no improvement. Of course, that doesn't mean there is no need for practice. But what is strange to me is that compared to "By not altering it from being as it is, The state of buddhahood is now spontaneously present." and "The conduct is nondoing and the fruition beyond adopting and discarding.", I find that, however natural those visions are, all the techniques and instructions are extraneous. Comparing this to Mahamudra teachings, the Six Yogas can be complementary, but they are not necessary nor are they the next step.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 10th, 2012 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Uncontrived

Content:

LastLegend said:

I watched a video yesterday that explained to me Zen is one mind if you sit, eat, or walk without being distracted then that is Zen. Zen is meditation in this sense. Meditation is to abandon grasping.

Astus wrote:

Must have been a good video.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 10th, 2012 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: What is the Point of Tegal?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks for the replies, it was very helpful.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2012 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: Sutra's

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are many kinds of sutras and different Zen traditions take different sutras as their

source. Here is a non-definitive list of those that are available in English.

The common sutras among the different lineages: Vimalakirti Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, Nirvana Sutra

Sutras that are important mostly in China and Korea: Perfect Enlightenment Sutra, Shurangama Sutra, Vajrasamadhi Sutra

Treatises of great importance: Mahayana Sraddhotpada Shastra, Mahaprajnaparamita Shastra (partially translated)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2012 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Why the Buddha banned booze.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is not exempt for the religious and purist zealots. When someone teaches about how alcohol/meat/etc. is evil and impure on its own, because of being what it is, that is a substantialist and extremist argument. It is another thing that people who care little about the details - i.e. the majority - tend to simplify everything, and it's easier to say not to drink at all and alcohol is bad than allowing alcohol but warning about the bad effects of intoxication. Also it should be noted that drinking is not included in the 10 wrong deeds.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2012 at 1:42 AM

Title: Re: Why the Buddha banned booze.

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Okay, if the whole frackin' assembly, including the Buddhas closest students and aids, Arhats, once returners, etc... were incapable of deciding which precepts should go and which should remain on what basis do us ignoramuses decide?

Astus wrote:

It is quite an assumption that every rule existed right at the death of the Buddha. Rather, there was some development over time, although the basics are pretty uniform in the different Vinayas. By the way, the Pratimoksha explicitly says what are the major and the minor rules.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2012 at 1:45 AM

Title: Re: Why the Buddha banned booze.

Content:

Huseng said:

Maybe what I'm suggesting is only suitable for bodhisattvas with knowledge of skilful means.

It isn't really suitable for śrāvakas who abide by rules for the sake of personal liberation above all else.

Breaking the rules to help others is something bodhisattvas can and often should do. A lot of the literature points to this.

Astus wrote:

I find that sravakas in Mahayana are mostly caricatures of religiously/spiritually immature people. But yes, the Bodhisattva Vinaya Sutra does say what you do.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2012 at 7:59 AM

Title: Re: Self-immolation is not against religious tradition

Content:

Astus wrote:

Self-immolators were listed in collections about outstanding monks in China. It is a very old practice in Buddhism.

Book review: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=24572>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 15th, 2012 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Simple question about Pure Lands

Content:

Last Legend said:

Exist and not exist at the same time that's when one has become a complete Buddha.

qweqwe said:

Of course Buddhas live forever!

Astus wrote:

There are four extreme views:

the view of " existence "

the view of " non-existence "

the view of " existence and non-existence "

the view of " neither existence nor non-existence "

However, in common language we use all four, and for the sake of simplicity we can say that the buddhas exist, the pure lands exist, just as humans, animals and others exist. But it's beneficial to understand that the teachings are not meant to be clung to like dead statements but used for the benefit of oneself and others. And when they are not conducive to peace and kindness we know we are doing something wrong.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 16th, 2012 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Haemin said:

This is incorrect. I've just confirmed this with the Bishop, Venerable Dr. Jongmae Kenneth Park. The Taego and Jogye orders follow the same pratimoksa (Caturvagga Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka--which is in use in the Chinese and Vietnamese traditions as well). However, celibacy is optional for men in the Taego Order. There are 250 bhikkhu precepts, 348 bhikkhuni precepts, and 10 samanera precepts. Also, both schools adopted the Indraraja Sutra that contains 10 bodhisattva vows and 48 lesser precepts. Contrary to some misconceptions, the Taego Order does not use bodhisattva vows as the basis of its monastic ordinations. So there's just that one difference: celibacy.

Astus wrote:

Then it is strange how they can explain committing a parajika offence being acceptable. Although considering that monks can even act as soldiers it is not that outstanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 17th, 2012 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: "Location" of mind in Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Certain late rNying ma pa tantras even go further in localizing the sems and ye shes in the body. Ye shes resides in the heart whereas sems is in the lung."
("The Primordial Basis as Having a Physical Presentation" in The Great Perfection by S.G. Karmay, p 185ff)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 19th, 2012 at 2:52 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Haemin said:

It isn't a parajika because male Taego clergy aren't required to take a vow of celibacy to begin with. It's only a parajika if you take a vow of celibacy and then break it. Of course, more traditional orders would most likely not recognize non-celibate Taego clergy as bhikkhu.

Astus wrote:

It is more than just a single vow involved in being non-celibate, like the first four sanghadisesa precepts. It is quite a heavy change in the common Pratimoksha of 250 vows. Also, if we consider that many precepts of the minor vows are not observed because they are outdated, celibacy is one of the few things that can still be upheld. On the other hand, it can be argued that since there are precepts that are irrelevant and generally has not been observed for a long time (e.g. eating only before noon), one could

as well say that celibacy is not that important. However, I'm not sure if the laity is OK to support not just a monastic with minimal needs but a whole family or even families who make little contribution to the community.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 19th, 2012 at 6:37 AM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Haemin said:

For centuries throughout the Buddhist world, the official pratimoksha has not been the list of rules actually observed by the sangha. Each tradition, and sometimes individual monasteries, have had their own rules that have actually governed monastic behavior. I've heard this from monks and nuns from more than one tradition and from scholars as well. It has also been my own observation over the years.

Astus wrote:

Ordination is about taking up the precepts, and those precepts are the sramanera, bhikshu and bodhisattva vows in the triple ordination system. Thus technically those who participate actually vow to uphold them. Local monastic rules and further vows are only extra. It is OK to say that ordination is mere formality and the reality is different, however, that is the same as saying being a monk is a mere formality too. So perhaps some other definitions are required then.

Haemin said:

How are you defining "contribution to the community"? Personally, I feel that teaching the Dharma and providing for the spiritual needs of the community (through leading communal holidays, funerals, memorial services, etc...) contributes a great deal to the community.

Astus wrote:

What I meant is that while the cleric does serve the community, his family does not and thus they are a burden on the supporters. Self-supporting monks are a different matter. But again, if a monk earns a living, what makes him a bhikshu, a beggar? It's not that I don't understand the difficulties involved in Western Buddhism, but making money (not to mention having a family) is quite the opposite of renouncing the world and living on donations. It is not true that one can't live on donations in the West, since many unfortunate homeless people do exactly that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 19th, 2012 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Taego Lineage Seminary

Content:

Haemin said:

Based on what do you assert this? I've seen no such problems as this. I'm a celibate monk and I don't feel jealous toward my non-celibate brothers and sisters in my own

order or any other.

Astus wrote:

I assume you know about the incident when the Jogye Order monks took back temples by force from the married clergy after the Japanese left Korea.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 20th, 2012 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: essential texts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Generally for Zen you can read classical Zen works (Bodhidharma, Huineng, Mazu, Huangbo, Zongmi, etc.) and basic Mahayana sutras of the tradition like the Vimalakirti, Diamond, Perfect Enlightenment, Shurangama, any of the Prajnaparamita, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 22nd, 2012 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and Right Concentration

Content:

Astus wrote:

Developing concentration is very beneficial in both inside and outside of Buddhism. That's Right Concentration if you do it in a Buddhist context following the relevant instructions. Zen, while a Buddhist tradition, is a direct path of what is called prajnaparamita, or buddha-nature. In Zen there are no gradual stages - well, there are differences between lineages and teachers within Zen, but let's not go into that right now - but it is about immediately realising the enlightened mind. One can of course, and is advised, to use techniques to develop a certain level of mental peace within Zen, however, that is more of a preliminary practice before one can actually come to the point of doing Zen practice, which is no-practice. So, the two can be related, but they are not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 24th, 2012 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: The Big Fix - Official Trailer

Content:

Astus wrote:

These films always make me think that it's only a conspiracy theory drama and nothing more. I guess it's my prejudice against films versus books.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 26th, 2012 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not saying that the FMZO or Lynch is OK or not OK. But questioning their validity on the basis of personal relationships within a Buddhist community is pretty much bureaucratic. Why not ask and analyse if what they actually teach is correct or not? Isn't that what should matter?

A good point by Ven. Chong Go:

<http://wakeupandlaugh.wordpress.com/2010/08/23/authority-and-transmission/>

In the comments, where Lynch mentions the transmission between Ko Bong and Seung Sahn, he replies, "This type of transmission was almost never heard of before the era of the Japanese occupation, and has since basically disappeared."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 26th, 2012 at 2:23 AM

Title: Re: zen daily life

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhiyi>, the actual founder of the
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiantai>, taught meditation in the form of Four Samadhis
(<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/oldweb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach73.htm#t733>,
<http://www.tientai.net/lit/mksk/v2outline.htm>) that consists of sitting, walking, sitting
and walking, neither sitting nor walking. The fourth of this means practice without
restrains, practising in all circumstances. Zen is very much like this fourth samadhi,
while other methods - not just sitting and walking meditation, but sutra recitation,
prostrations, confession, etc. - are preliminaries, gradual and even unnecessary (or
rather optional).

What does Zen practice mean? It is simply abiding nowhere, not grasping concepts and emotions, but also not rejecting them. It is working and functioning without attachment, so it is the prajnaparamita of every bodhisattva. It is the manifestation of buddha-mind, the true nature of this very mind reading now, without being hooked up on ideas of self and other. Zen is no different from life itself, it simply drops all illusions about what life should and should not be.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 29th, 2012 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Incest

Content:

Astus wrote:

Incest is an immoral act in Buddhism, and it is part of the third lay vow that one does not engages in such an act.

This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: "There are these two bright qualities that safeguard the world. Which two? Conscience & concern (for the results of unskillful actions). If these two bright qualities did not guard the world,

there would be no recognition of 'mother' here, no recognition of 'mother's sister,' 'uncle's wife,' 'teacher's wife,' or 'wife of those who deserve respect.' The world would be immersed in promiscuity, like rams with goats, roosters with pigs, or dogs with jackals. But because these two bright qualities guard the world, there is recognition of 'mother,' 'mother's sister,' 'uncle's wife,' 'teacher's wife,' & 'wife of those who deserve respect.'"

Those in whom concern & conscience are not always found have strayed from the bright root, are headed to birth & death. But those in whom concern & conscience are rightly established always, who are mature in the holy life: they are calm, their further becoming ended.

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/iti/iti.2.028-049.than.html#iti-042>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 30th, 2012 at 7:11 AM

Title: Re: Is My Job Wrong Livelihood?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two explicitly mentioned business among the others in the list of forms of wrong livelihood are dealing with weapons and poisons. Both are meant to harm beings. So, even if one is not a butcher or murderer himself, creating and selling means of murder is a type of wrong livelihood. That makes the case of training soldiers for battle another form of wrong livelihood. Note, however, that wrong livelihood is not equal to actually doing something evil, it is not the same as generating bad karma, especially as long as one does not condone and agree with evil acts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 30th, 2012 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Is My Job Wrong Livelihood?

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

In any situation, there is no absolute right and absolute wrong.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism has quite clear ethical standards, with its basis in non-violence and compassion. Karma is not negotiable nor avoidable. Excuses only strengthen ignorance about it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 30th, 2012 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Is My Job Wrong Livelihood?

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

Everything is relative. Relative to your motivation.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. Murder does not have good motivation, neither does war, theft, etc. So you get the ten wrong deeds of body, speech and mind. And it is quite misleading to say that enlightened beings are not affected by karma. It is intentional act that generates merits, with wisdom one makes infinite merits and so the form-body becomes. While it is stated by some texts that all the events in Shakyamuni's life were a teaching, a display, it was the show of causality regarding the illusion-body of a perfectly enlightened one, not to mention bodhisattvas and arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 2nd, 2012 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: Question: Errors on Buddhist Scriptures

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Bible has an immensely larger importance in Christianity than a single sutra in Buddhism. If you look at any of the canons - and there are many - you find many teachings of different sorts. Also, besides the Theravada claim for Pali, there are no sutras in the language of the Buddha, but different translations. And when it comes to English, it's another translation. However, while translators can make mistakes, it's not really the point. Buddhism is more than just texts. Plus, if you have doubts about a certain scripture, you can investigate it, once you have the necessary knowledge for that of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 2nd, 2012 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and space

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna says it all.

Know therefore that space
Is neither existent nor non-existent
Neither a characteristic nor characterisable
And that the other five are the same as space.
(MMK 5.7, tr. B.C. Bocking)

Therefore, space is not a thing;
it is not a non-thing;
it is not something characterized;
it is not a characteristic.
The other five elements too are similar to space.
(MMK 5.7, tr. S. Batchelor)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 3rd, 2012 at 4:08 AM

Title: Two Books by Ven Jian Liao

Content:

Astus wrote:

The basic purpose of meditation is to help one to recognize the nature of the Mind, to master the Mind and to become cognizant of the clarity of the Mind. A Mind that is not mastered is a Mind full of worries. Worries are created by an untamed Mind—thinking of what should not be thought of, or, vice-versa, not thinking of what should be thought of. Consequently, life cannot be lived to the fullest unless the Mind is tamed and mastered.

PDF's:

<http://www.vzmla.org/file/Chan.pdf>

http://www.vzmla.org/file/Essence_of_Life.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 3rd, 2012 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: Two Books by Ven Jian Liao

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What is pure Mind? The Master says: "I am speaking to you, and you are listening to me. The capability to listen without discriminating, without the intervention of interpretation or judgment, is a capability of pure Mind."

If the Mind is judgmental and discriminating, then it can no longer be called pure Mind. It is the Mind of the ordinary person because it is controlled by attachments. Take for example the phenomenon of hearing. Some can hear sound and some cannot. The deaf are aware that they do not hear sound. This knowing is an immutable characteristic of Mind. The ability to be aware of the absence of sound in the deaf is no different from the ability to be aware of the presence of sound in normal people. This ability is inherent in all human beings. Adults as well as children have it. This Mind is formless, non-discriminative and it has neither beginning nor end. It can neither be created nor annihilated. All possess the same Mind, yet, due to distortion, the oneness of Reality fragments into duality. Therefore, different things are heard. This means that even though the same words are heard, the discriminating Mind interprets the words differently. Therefore, each one forms different notions and concepts based upon these very same words because of conditioning to a certain way of thinking. What is manifested by pure Mind (Truth) is compared to what has been altered by personal judgment or interpretation (subjective reality)."

(Jian Liao: Chan)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 3rd, 2012 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and Right Concentration

Content:

Astus wrote:

Right concentration is "samyak samadhi", in Chinese 正定 (zheng ding), while it is in the different dhyanas where "chan" is used (1st dhyana, 2nd dhyana, etc. - 初禪、二禪), however, this is not the meaning of the word as it is used for the Chan/Zen school, but only a common misunderstanding. In fact, Zen doesn't have much to do with meditation practice itself.

See the fourth chapter of the Platform Sutra on the subject of concentration (samadhi 定) and wisdom (prajna 智): http://www2.fodian.net/world/2008_04.html.

"Good Knowing Advisors, there are those who teach people to sit looking at the mind and contemplating stillness, without moving or arising. They claim that it has merit. Confused men, not understanding, easily become attached and go insane. There are many such people. Therefore you should know that teaching of this kind is a great error."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 4th, 2012 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and Right Concentration

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is the common practice of concentration where one focuses on a single thing, that is not what Huineng talks about. The meaning of concentration in the Platform Sutra is being free from phenomena. It says in the fifth chapter: "Not being confused inwardly is 'concentration.' --- The original nature is naturally pure, in a natural state of concentration. Confusion arises merely because states are seen and attended to. If the mind remains unconfused when any state is encountered, that is true concentration." This kind of concentration is not developed by any means but it is the natural state of buddha-mind. So in the fourth chapter Huineng says, "this Dharma-door of mine, from the past onwards, has been established from the first with no-thought as its doctrine, no-mark as its substance, and no-dwelling as its basis." Obviously, the common practice of concentration is a form of dwelling on a mark with a maintained thought.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 4th, 2012 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and Right Concentration

Content:

Astus wrote:

seeker242,

I'm not saying that concentration in its common form is pointless. But it is not the concentration taught within the context of (high class) Zen, like the Platform Sutra. There are meditation teachers who even go in details about dhyanas, like Rev. Cheng Kuan's

http://www.buddhistlibrary.org/en/displayimage.php?album=102&pid=85#top_display_media. And if you look at my first post here, I've referred to all the different methods there are. But, and this I find important, the Chan way is about seeing the nature of mind

and not the myriad practices. It doesn't mean they can't complement each other, or that one has to choose between them. However, unless it is about directly realising the nature of mind, it is not specifically Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 5th, 2012 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Zen meditation and Right Concentration

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a good question. What makes one see the nature of mind? The so called myriad practices are useful for sure in this case. The direct cause, however, is vipashyana meditation, as far as the gradual path is concerned. But in the case of Zen, there is directly pointing to the nature of mind, immediately severing conceptual attachments. Even what appears to be meditation is nothing but abiding not on a single thought, that is non-dwelling and no-thought. But, to put it back into the normal gradual context, this is simply the final level of vipashyana, prajnaparamita itself.

Still, it is not easy to find a teacher who actually instructs in seeing the nature. Most of them are just lost in techniques like sitting, bowing, contemplating a phrase, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 6th, 2012 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

jisahn108 said:

But if someone says they teach "Zen", then they should have credentials to allow them to do this. These will vary school to school, teacher to teacher. But generally its not unreasonable to expect them to have at least 15 years of practice experience, and certainly unequivocal authorization of their teacher or teachers. This isn't just "bureaucracy." This is the nature of the entire Zen and Buddhist system going back millenia. And this is true for many other spiritual and esoteric traditions. It's master to pupil.

If a person LIES about what there credentials are - well that's it, game over. I don't care what they say - it's based in manipulation and deceit. frak it. Go somewhere else. Next, please.

Also, there are a lot of Zen stories about how two students give the same response and one has "it" and one doesn't. "The tongue has no bone." Nor do a few words on a page. You have to know people by their deeds, their presence, and the patterns of behavior they leave in their wake. I say Lynch's are not very orderly, wise, or clear.

Astus wrote:

Credentials going back to millennia, that is no more than a myth. The whole lineage idea started with the goal to convince others of one's superior position, and lineages were

forged again and again according to one's personal needs. Also, even if a new lineage starts up, there is zero guaranty that it will be maintained according to the founder's intentions even in the second generation, not to mention the third and those coming after it. On the other hand, it gives a fine excuse to abuse power, as it did happen again and again. It also doesn't stop anyone to spread adharma. So what is its worth?

There are Zen stories, sure. But first of all, stories are just what they are, neither facts nor proofs. And when there is something mystical beyond the comprehension of those poor uninitiated people, that is the point where it starts to stink. What qualifies people are their words and deeds, I agree. And there is not much room left then for ambiguous tales on who has one eye and who hasn't.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 6th, 2012 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan,

I agree that that part could go on the negative side regarding Lynch. But what I am asking for is that before rejecting the whole person and his school, it would be only fair and sensible to actually look at what he talks about. It does not refute the Buddha that he was not from the brahmin caste, nor does it refute Lynch that there was a disagreement between him and his teacher. It is nothing more really than clinging to a mostly irrelevant point. Buddhist teachers - whatever lineage or tradition it is - should be measured by their Dharma, since that is what actually matters. So if people feel like criticising or defending Lynch, they should do that based on the right arguments. And not because it makes a difference for Lynch, since I assume it does not, but it makes this topic and this discussion board a lot more sensible, sane, and transparent place, not to mention that for refuting or proving a teaching requires some effort on the part of the members.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 6th, 2012 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist cosmology and the problem of the infinite task

Content:

Astus wrote:

If such reasoning held any sense, it would be actually true that

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achilles_and_the_Tortoise#Achilles_and_the_tortoise.

However, in the above argument I see the flaw that it assumes one should go from an infinitely far away time to the present one, while actually where one is is indeed the present time, and it took no effort to reach it, since it was never away.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 10th, 2012 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh, Pure Land, & Zen practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find that the view of a mind only Pure Land is either for non-believers who cannot accept anything beyond their current world view, or for those with faith who can also understand the connection between mind and phenomena. But in the first case, there is little meaning of calling it a Pure Land practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2012 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh, Pure Land, & Zen practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

The meaning of the mind only teaching is that all phenomena are mental phenomena, thus the concepts of inside and outside are mere terms. So speaking of Pure Land being inside or outside of the mind is pointless. That's it in brief.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2012 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

jisahn108,

This is the history of Zen lineages repeating all over again. Seung Sahn's lineage is only a little less problematic since he was a monk and came from Korea. Seongcheol, former head of the Jogye Order, had no lineage of his own, and it was not a problem.

Gyeongheo, reformer of Korean Zen from whom modern teachers claim succession, did not state a transmission for himself, so others came up with one later. Now that the situation is a lot closer and the sources are in English, faults with a transmission history can be more obvious. But, for instance, can you check in any way Master Jinje's lineage (Gyeongheo 경허 (鏡虛), Hyewol 혜월 (慧月), Unbong 운봉 (雲峰), Hyanggok 향곡 (香谷)), who is the current head of Jogye? Unless you know Korean and have access to the relevant sources, it's not really possible. So, as I said before, it is not the lineage that defines a teacher, but the teaching. Lineage is used not to guarantee any kind of quality, but to promote oneself. And that's what happens in Lynch's case.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2012 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: zen daily life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Taking the "awareness of the present" as the meaning of Zen is a common mistake. The present is no more relevant than the past or the future. What one should realise and keep is the buddha-mind, the mind without grasping, without self. This is no different from what is called the wisdom of selflessness and emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2012 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

jisahn108,

OK, we can say that while Lynch believes lineage is important, he doesn't have any solid support for his claim of transmission. From this we could infer that he tries to deceive people, or he simply makes use of the lineage idea to make his teachings more attractive. The view that Lynch is suspicious or wrong is based on at least two preconceptions: lineage qualifies a teacher, and Lynch has evil intentions by creating a lineage for himself. As McRae's second Rule of Zen Studies says, "Statements of lineage identity and "history" were polemical tools of self-assertion, not critical evaluations of chronological fact".

So if we put aside lineage as relevant and don't assume Lynch has sinister goals in being a teacher, what is left is to look at the teachings he actually spreads.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 12th, 2012 at 6:58 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh, Pure Land, & Zen practice

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

I think this question has been asked somewhere before -- but isn't rebirth in the Pure Land more or less analogous to the non-returner stage? That might give some added weight to TNH's interpretation, since being a non-returner (anagami) is defined in terms of mind state and not by some set of external circumstances. I mean, ultimately the task at hand has nothing to do with being in this place or that; it's about purification of mind.

Astus wrote:

It is not like an anagami for two reasons. Anagamis are sravakas and not bodhisattvas.

Those who are born in the Pure Land don't automatically possess any attainment beyond what they have already achieved before their birth, but they have to practise themselves there on the path of the bodhisattva in order to reach full liberation.

What is meant by being similar to a bodhisattva on the level of irreversibility (avaivartika) is that those born in the Pure Land will definitely attain buddhahood without any chance of falling back from the bodhisattva path.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 12th, 2012 at 7:09 AM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh, Pure Land, & Zen practice

Content:

Huseng said:

In my experience it is mostly Chan practitioners who hold such views. Many Chan practitioners also simultaneously do Nianfo practices as well, though they may not see it as a means to being reborn in the pure land.

This is actually necessary, otherwise if you believe that post-mortem Amitabha saves you from all your suffering, then there is no point to sitting on a meditation cushion for years attempting to achieve liberation. Better to just recite the Nianfo and feel content in having a saviour.

I suspect that is part of the reason why in Chinese Buddhism not many people seriously meditate or only do so sporadically (or not at all). If you believe Amitabha will save you, then there is little pressing need to cultivate yourself in meditation.

Thich Nhat Hanh's idea is appropriate to Chan practice as it encourages realistic practice rather than discouraging it. Pure Land practice as it is normally advocated (rebirth in the Pure Land due to Amitabha's grace) negates all need for meditation and yogic attainment.

Astus wrote:

The Pure Land doctrines were never against to meditative practices as far as I know. In fact, there are a great number of methods within the area of Pure Land praxis. The wish to be born in the Western Land of Peace and Bliss is not contrary to working on the bodhisattva path in this life, but they are actually the very same path. There are differences between teachers and groups in terms of what they emphasise, but under the banner of the Pure Land school you can find both hermits with unshakeable samadhi and common men with little understanding. And this is fulfilling the Mahayana idea of saving all sentient beings, regardless of their capacity for wisdom, meditation and meritorious deeds, as the Pure Land teachings address both high and low.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 12th, 2012 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hanh, Pure Land, & Zen practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Pure Land doctrines were never against to meditative practices as far as I know.

Huseng said:

I'm not saying this.

I'm saying Pure Land ideology discourages meditation. It is unnecessary if you believe post-mortem Amitabha plucks you out of the sea of suffering. In that case, why bother trying to master the fourth jhana?

Astus wrote:

Most of the Pure Land teachers, especially outside Honen's heirs, teach the combined use of self-power and other-power. One works on oneself in order to gain a higher birth within the Pure Land, since there are 9 different levels explained by the sutras. Please check this topic: <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=5650> (Seosan was an outstanding Zen teacher of 16th century Korea).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 13th, 2012 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jisahn108,

Anyone can call him/herself a Zen teacher and claim whatever lineage they like. And if you say that he has lied about being an heir to this and that master, OK, that is bad. Unless, as I said before, you look at it as a skilful means to attract students to Buddhism.

"But real insight, call it zen or otherwise, has a literal gut aspect, and neither lynch, his heirs, or his ever changing series of orders, titles, colleges, seminaries, centers, monks or teachers seem totally digestable."

So what is that "real insight" you are missing?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 13th, 2012 at 6:43 AM

Title: Re: zen daily life

Content:

seeker242 said:

What exactly is the "buddha mind"? Does "Buddha mind" have a need to go trudging through past and projecting into the future? Why does the mind go trudging into the past and projecting into the future to begin with? Is it not grasping that causes that very activity to begin with? Why would a mind with no grasping need to conjure up the past or make some ideas about the future?

Astus wrote:

Buddha-mind is the fundamental knowing awareness that is empty of all substances but full of all functions. Thoughts about past, present and future things are all workings of normal thinking, otherwise one cannot either eat or shit, not to mention more complex deeds. What makes the difference between freedom and bondage is whether there is attachment to reified views about self and objects or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 13th, 2012 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: zen daily life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hope and fear, wish and worry, these are emotional troubles. But thinking about past and future events are just thoughts. Walking down the street, if one has no knowledge and perception of the direction, it's called being lost.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 16th, 2012 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Question about Zen School

Content:

Huifeng said:

But, as is probably well known on this Forum already, my perspective on "Zen" is not the usual Western (American?) one.

Astus wrote:

Things get changed in translation, like the word Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 16th, 2012 at 7:42 PM

Title: Who is the True Master?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ultimately, Buddha is the pure Mind that resides in each individual. The true master is the Mind that allows one to listen, for example, to a lecture. Mind is the master of existence. Without Mind, nothing can exist.

(Chan (Chinese Zen), p 24)

So, it is said, "Once we reach our Pure Mind, there we are." When we finally find our home, we meet our Source, the true Master, and the generator of our life. By finding and living from our Pure Mind, we are no longer lost and cease to exist in the world of ego and delusion. We can finally begin to live from our own free will. This is what we mean when we speak of being "liberated."

(Essence of Life, p 6)

To really make progress in Zen or spiritually, we need to find and operate from our true Master, the Pure Mind. By finding our Master, we become the conscious maker of our thoughts and life conditions. Until we meet our Master, we never really know who we are and thus, will continually fail to recognize that we are entirely responsible for the conditions and quality of our life.

(Essence of Life, p 13)

For this reason, practitioners need to learn that thoughts and emotions are merely tools—servants of the Mind. The Mind is our true Master. This is a very important Zen principle.

(Essence of Life, p 17)

When we know and learn to follow our true Master, we are on the road to enlightenment. We no longer follow faulty thoughts, circumstances, or negative emotions because we know that such things are fleeting—they come and they go. When we understand this, then we are the true Master. As the Master, we know that every aspect of daily life is nothing more than a product of the Mind. By practicing Zen, we learn to use thoughts as the servants of the Mind. Thoughts should be trained to arise and respond only as we, the Master, dictates. Hence, we are the true Masters of our Mind, thoughts, and life. (Essence of Life, p 60)

Quotes from <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=7757>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2012 at 2:35 AM

Title: Re: Innovation in North American Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

This is what happens when you have people deemed leaders who have shallow realization.

Astus wrote:

Not really. It is a religious hubris to believe that just because one has strong faith/deep realisation, that makes the person superhuman and perfect in everything.

Enlightenment doesn't qualify anyone to drive a train or govern an organisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2012 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Who is the True Master?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The true master is not somebody or something who leads to awakening. It is the awakened mind itself.

http://eng.buddhapia.com/_Service/_ContentView/ETC_CONTENT_2.ASP?pk=0001354172&sub_pk=&clss_cd=0002200682&top_menu_cd=0000000057&menu_cd=&menu_ode=0000008421,

"It is mind that can free mind. It is also mind that hinders itself, saying, "This can't be done." What tells you this are the thoughts that were input in the past. It's these thoughts, which over eons have accumulated within you, that are the source of what is sometimes called defilements and delusions. These thoughts have accumulated within you one after another and will eventually manifest one by one, according to circumstances. How, then, can you free yourself from these thoughts? If your mind can leap over these thoughts, everything will be fine. You have the ability to do this, but most people don't make the effort to use it."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2012 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Who is the True Master?

Content:

Wesley1982 said:

What the quote is saying that the mind must overcome its own hurdles? . .

Astus wrote:

It's saying that it's one's own decision to dwell on thoughts or not. That's what makes the difference between host and guest, master and slave.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2012 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: The permanence of enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a Chan story discussing impermanence and permanence of enlightenment.

Unknown said:

A monk asked Dasui: "When the great fire at the end of the aeon rages through, and the whole universe is destroyed, is this destroyed or not?" Dasui said: "Destroyed." The monk asked: "Then it goes along with that?" And Dasui said: "It goes along with that." Later, a monk asked Longji the same question: "When the great fire at the end of the aeon rages through, and the whole universe is destroyed, is this destroyed or not?" Longji said: "Not destroyed." The monk asked: "Well, why is it not destroyed?" Longji said: "Because it's the same as the universe."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2012 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: does shikantaza lead to equanimity and insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is not a meditation practice as generally understood in Buddhism, it is not about developing concentration nor about gaining insight. It is being buddha. Practically, however, it takes time to reach the point where one can actually manage for even a short time doing just sitting, so there are preliminary practices taught in most communities, like counting and watching breath.

This teaching by Keizan is a good guide for Soto style zazen:

<http://www.wwzc.org/translations/zazenYojinki.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2012 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Who was this Bodhidharma character?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Historically there is nothing certain about Bodhidharma himself, except that we can be quite sure he is not the founder of any Chan lineage nor even Chan teachings. Based on what could be found about Huike and related Buddhist teachers, that there was a Lankavatara school where they lectured on that sutra. The connection between the group of Bodhidharma and Huike to the teachers of East Mountain - Daoxin and Hongren, the first originators of Chan - was made later, after the death of Shenxiu (who was the first famous Chan teacher in China, but not yet identified as "Chan"). Practically, Bodhidharma became a mythological figure with many stories created throughout the centuries, until it reached the form as we have it today around the 10th century.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2012 at 2:56 PM

Title: Re: Who was this Bodhidharma character?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Bodhidharma film (English in subtitles):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kOvLb4YnRI> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2012 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Who was this Bodhidharma character?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One of the greatest questions:

或庵曰、西天胡子、因甚無髭。

Wakuan said, "Why has the Western Barbarian no beard?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2012 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: "Applied" Zen: Ginny Whitelaw on Leadership

Content:

Astus wrote:

With the Zen of "go beyond yourself", "be in the moment", "big mind", "focus on one thing", "be one with it" and such slogans, they could train kamikaze pilots. How is this relevant to the bodhisattva spirit? A fake emptiness is nihilism. Nihilist leaders, well,

what is that good for? They should learn compassion and love, not samurai attitude.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2012 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist opinions about the Historical Jesus

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jesus (historical or not) is important for two kinds of people: Christians and anti-Christians. Buddhists are none of the two.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2012 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: "Applied" Zen: Ginny Whitelaw on Leadership

Content:

Wesley1982 said:

Zen should have a practical application to everyday life.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism has all the practical applications with moral guidance, meditation training, and wisdom. But, one can use it in everyday life when and if one has the experience and understanding of the Dharma. It's not like applied chemistry where people can simply moisturise their face as a result of extensive research. The teaching of the Buddha changes people, and that change in one's views and acts is the application. More compassion, more peace, less frustration, less anger. More giving, less greed.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2012 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: Suggest Ch'an Reading

Content:

Astus wrote:

As mentioned before and can't be emphasised enough, it's important to have an understanding of Mahayana first to see the appropriate context for Chan teachings. "Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctorial Foundations" by Paul Williams should cover the basics. But there is a distinct teaching called Chan, although this becomes very confusing since in China (and Korea, and Vietnam) almost everyone is a Chan monk/teacher in a Chan temple/monastery. It's become a common name for anything Buddhism there. So, to find out what Chan actually stands for, can be tricky, as different teachers say different things. Hsuan-hua's Chan is not exactly like Sheng-yen's Chan, and the Chan of Hsing-yun (Fo Guang Shan) and Wei-chueh (Chung Tai Shan) are also different.

For an introduction to Chan, however strange it may sound, is Robert Buswell's translation of the works of Bojo Jinul (a Korean master), who combined the teachings of Zongmi (in English on his teachings of Chan see "Zongmi on Chan"), Yongming

("Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu"), Dahui ("Swampland Flowers: The Letters And Lectures of Zen Master Ta Hui"), and the teachings of the Huayan school (Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-Yen Buddhism) in the book "Tracing back the radiance: Chinul's Korean way of Zen".

Or, if you are not yet up for intensive studying, and want to go to the essential things, there is this online book <http://www.vzmla.org/file/Chan.pdf> (PDF) by Ven. Jian Liao. Another highly recommended and short reading are the <http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/index.html> from Ven. Hsu Yun, especially his http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions1.html and http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 25th, 2012 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment/Knowing What You Are

Content:

Astus wrote:

Following the logic of the Brahmajala Sutta, these teachings - just like most of the other spiritual and religious doctrines - come from certain meditative experiences. So, instead of the common mindset people follow, some find for themselves an alternative consciousness to identify with. The eight dhyanas and the many heavens of the three worlds are all fine descriptions of these possible points of self-view. So we find that she talks about a playful god imagining everything. Well, there are such gods who just play around creating things for their own pleasure in Buddhist cosmology, they live on the second highest heaven of the desire-realm. A lot more serene and splendid than this human world. But it's not as good as the first dhyana and related heavens. And then, of course, nirvana is not like any heaven at all. Because as long as one finds a "perfect mind", a "divine consciousness", or anything similar, that is still attachment, that is still impermanent, the realm of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 25th, 2012 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Waitress asked to prostitute her self or loose bennetits

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is legal to be a prostitute in Germany. That means if they have an official job they are entitled to certain benefits. What it doesn't mean is that anyone has to be a prostitute. It's only one option. And unlike in many other countries, it is an option within an appropriate legal frame. Not so many countries count prostitution among acceptable jobs.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 25th, 2012 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: "Myth busting" the Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

We believe in past events, although they don't exist. The reason we think there is a past is our memory, which is only a matter of mental functioning. We also find explanation in "past events" for our present situation.

The same works with any "uncommon" beings. We don't see them out there as we do people, but there are other forms of experience we have. We can also identify effects to relate to those beings. And then we can also ask why it is Guanyin and not Jesus, why Vairocana and not Allah? From a Buddhist perspective, all of them exists, but in different realms and with different functions. Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings, gods are not.

Materialists like to say that it's all in people's minds. But aren't interpretations and explanations are all mental creations? Why some people get better and some don't? Materialists believe it's all about biology, but the scientists have not discovered the cause yet. That's a big faith in research, and they can show many results of research to prove their point. So, should we try to prove that there are invisible beings throughout the galaxy? Absurd.

What the difficulty is for modern people is that they have little idea of the existence of the mind and the mental realms. They are taught that there is only matter and everything is made of matter. So they become ignorant of their own mind and their own perception of the world. Meditation teaches people to become aware of it. However, old views and old habits die hard.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 26th, 2012 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment/Knowing What You Are

Content:

Kunga Lhadzom said:

Have you read The Precious Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena by Longchenpa Rabjam ?

I'm starting to feel a real need for direction and a teacher that can help me. I put off looking for any other teacher other than the one I've had all these years....even though he doesn't teach anything...only when I ask him a question.....but I don't care about empowerments, initiations, ritual, etc anymore.....I rarely practice anything....I feel like a misfit.

Can Longchenpa be my teacher or do I need a living Dzogchen teacher ? Or can my Sakya teacher do the same thing for me that

ChNN can ?

Astus wrote:

Vajrayana is more than just a single book or a single teacher. While you may stick to one Living master and follow his programme of training, if you first or at the same time want to study the written teachings, you better do it in a circumspect way. That is, familiarise yourself with the different Buddhist doctrines (Abhidharma, sutras, Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Tantra) in a gradual and systematic fashion. You may only want Dzogchen, but without an established knowledge of Buddhism in general, people are prone to misunderstand many things, because they don't have the appropriate frame of reference, so they just read the teachings according to their own mundane views.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 28th, 2012 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Are some Buddhists more equal than others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no need to talk about the rise of nations and countries if it were simply a matter of warfare. We could say as well that those who waged war were criminals with heightened greed for power and little care for others beyond themselves and their clan, family and friends. The ruling class is a minority living on others, with the idea that they protect the people from other such parasites. We can also say that a king comes in exchange for smaller thugs, thus "peace" is achieved on a larger territory. But it's simply not true that there are nations born from such power struggles. The actual people, the majority, stays at the same place, while rulers and dynasties change. A king unifies people, gradually spreading a single culture and language within the conquered territory. Such events are not necessary at all. People can continue living without others pretending to be their protectors. Why? Because it's not the protectors feeding and housing them but the other way around.

Buddhism could spread fine throughout India, Central and South Asia, and the Far East without any single ruler forcing it on others. Other large religions have different history as we all know. If there is anything good to be learnt from the history of Europe is that it's a lot better to stop fighting each other and start to cooperate without forcing your values on others. That's the idea of the Union. It is a new turn after all the Julius Caesars, Napoleons and Hitlers. It is also a reason why death penalty is banned in the whole EU.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 30th, 2012 at 4:26 AM

Title: Re: Online Zen Buddhist Temple

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know how you imagine an online Zen temple. What should be clear, is that a temple is a place of religious service. People go there to get something. Most of the time rituals. Even in a Zen temple. It can also be a place of worship, as it usually houses a buddha statue, sutras, and occasionally relics. Temples also have at least one priest to do the services. Question is then, are you a priest, or do you know one to serve in the online temple? Another function of temples is community life. The online form of

community life is found in forums, chatrooms and networking sites. Are you planning to have that too?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 30th, 2012 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Are some Buddhists more equal than others?

Content:

Aemilius said:

It is not like that, understanding of history is important, it is valuable for understanding the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

History is not an easy concept. You propose "history" as the exploits of different ruler classes, and not as the history of all humans. Of course, it would be a lot more complicated to consider the day to day lives of peasants, artisans, scholars, monks and everyone else. In China there were several monasteries established and supported by the local people, and separately there were special state sponsored monasteries. The proportion of local and state monasteries changed throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism based on the strength of the central government and its willingness to take control of religious life. It is very much an exaggeration to say that Buddhism could flourish only with strong state support. In fact, those who were dependent on the dynasty could also fall with them. Buddhism in the West spread so far since the 19th century without state support and exists without it quite well.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 4th, 2012 at 11:11 PM

Title: Dzogchen Seminar and Rushen in Hungary

Content:

Astus wrote:

HUNGARY: BUDAPEST & BAKONY

Dzogchen Seminar

Friday May 11 - Sunday 13th evenings

Sambhala Centre: Neduwa

Outer Rushen Retreat

Ráktanya Cottage near Hárskút in the Bakony mountain area

Monday May 14th -Thursday May 24th

This Rushen has become the best opportunity for Dzogchen practise scheduled in Europe. For those who have neither the experience nor the fortitude for the outer, the inner rushen can be practised. But the Bakony mountains with their deciduous forest provide an unexcelled sun-filled user-friendly environment for the outer rushen retreat. Everyone who attends will have had the Dzogchen pointing out instruction.

Contact:

Tibor Hendry

email: <mailto:sambhala@elender.hu>

website: <http://www.tibet.hu> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Tibetet Segítő Társaság Sambhala Tibet Központ

Tibet Support Association Sambhala Tibet Center

source: <http://www.keithdowman.net/diary/index.htm> "

onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 5th, 2012 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: Reading suggestions about the history of Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It might sound strange, but the books you have listed at the start are practically all there is. Or, at least I could not find anything more, although I did not do a very thorough search. There are surely some essays here and there.

As for the book Wellsprings of the Great Perfection, it's a nice collection of legendary history, but that's all it is. Not many teachings in it either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 7th, 2012 at 4:13 AM

Title: Re: Reading suggestions about the history of Dzogchen

Content:

pensum said:

I suggest you check the contents of Wellsprings yourself and make your own personal decision as to whether the contents are of interest to you or not

Astus wrote:

I have had it on my shelf for a while now. I usually don't talk about books that I have not looked at myself. But, as always, I present only my view of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 8th, 2012 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: zen/chan practices and the pali canon

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chan is about sudden enlightenment. The concept itself can exist because there is the teaching of buddha-mind. From this, in practical terms, comes the method/instruction to see one's nature. From this arises the practice of no-thought, the mind without abiding on anything - a derivative of Prajnaparamita teachings. This can be likened to the

Theravada teaching on the three gates (emptiness, signlessness, desirelessness) which is also in the Prajnaparamita sutras. Huatou practice is meant as a gateway to no-thought.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 8th, 2012 at 3:21 PM

Title: Re: use of mala in zen/chan

Content:

Astus wrote:

A common practice with mala is nianfo, usually reciting the name of Amita Buddha.

Here is a book for you on that practice: <http://www.ymba.org/monkey/monkeyfrm.htm>

But it's not very complicated at all, I mean, using a mala. You recite, you count, or just hold it in your hands, and that's it. You might find special practices taught by some teachers, but that's likely to be a larger area where differences are abundant.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 8th, 2012 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Astus wrote:

That four-line verse says nothing about teachers, telepathy, and papers of enlightenment.

First, note that all monastics are also teachers of the Dharma. So there is no point in saying that you are now a special teacher. Of course, there are specific roles in a monastery monks can take up, among which the highest is the abbot, who is the primary organiser of life there. The so called lineage was and is used (to a minimal extent) to relate the abbots of different monasteries.

In the West it is obviously different. Zen came here first from Japan, and also it is not practised in a monastic environment. This resulted in the idea that the only proper teachers are those who have been recognised as such by other teachers. Then you can add to this the legend of recognition lineage going back to Shakyamuni. Since in the West everyone is a lay person, the only obvious way to make a difference between teachers and students is using this paper transmission like a diploma to authenticate people to teach.

This can be detailed on and on, but I can assure you, there is no telepathy involved, neither is anyone actually enlightened by being handed down a piece of fancy writing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 9th, 2012 at 1:28 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Or if you want to know about the formation of the idea of "transmission outside the scriptures", you should read "How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China" by Morten Schlütter.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Issues with deficient teaching masked by the illogic of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

When something is read in English it's easy to forget that it's a translation from long ago and from a foreign sub-culture. Those who today actually talk like the people in koans, well, they're just lost in language. Zen is not illogical, nor is it about being illogical. If something doesn't make sense, one should ask, investigate and study. There is no use of believing that just because a guy in robes said something it must be some mystical revelation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: Sheng Yen's "Footprints in the Snow"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Stuart Lachs is well known for criticising modern Zen and its teachers. He usually has some good points, but as always, one should be careful about the sources. Religious biographies are famous for exaggerating and creating an otherworldly picture of whoever is the subject of the writing, but that's not necessarily intentional, just the way the writer conceives it. What to make of all this? Not much, I think. Let the teaching and the precepts be one's guide, not superstitions, personal cults, historical claims, angry criticism, or anything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 1:12 AM

Title: Re: Issues with deficient teaching masked by the illogic of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a bodhisattva's mission to help people suffer less, ultimately leading them to complete liberation. A teacher of Zen should embody that aspiration by all means possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 1:52 AM

Title: Re: Any regular Mahamudra webcasts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra is not as bound to transmissions as Dzogchen, when it is understood to be separate from the path of sutra and tantra. So it is very much acceptable to have books, DVD's and all the other forms spreading the teachings made available. It is, after all, a liberating instruction.

The Quintessence of Mahamudra says in the chapter "The Description of the Preparatory Exercises for This Meditative Path" (p. 123f)

"Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of mahamudra], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the mahamudra teachings. He spoke about the method of directly guiding the disciple toward the intrinsic reality of the mind."

and

"On the other hand, if one follows venerable Gampopa's system in elucidating mahamudra alone, it is not necessary to bestow the empowerment upon devotees. In keeping with his system one should adhere to the preparatory exercises he prescribed without incorporating the tantric meditation of Vajrasattva, the utterance of mantra, the transformation of oneself into yidam, and the visualization of one's guru in the form of Buddha Vajradhara, the source of the mystic empowerment."

And Thrangu Rinpoche's view related to this:

"I think that it is of far greater importance than the experience of dramatic instantaneous pointing out that people be taught mahamudra as a full system of instruction that they can implement on their own gradually through diligent application using either one of the three texts by the Ninth Gyalwang Karmapa—The Ocean of Definitive Meaning, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, or Pointing Out the Dharmakaya— or one of the texts by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal—either Moonbeams of Mahamudra or The Clarification of the Natural State.

In short, I think it is of far more importance that people receive this kind of complete and systematic instruction so that they can gradually develop experience on their own, than that some kind of dramatic pointing-out procedure be done. Of course, it is possible to give dramatic pointing-out instruction, and when you do so, some people do recognize their mind's nature. But, if I may say so, I question the stability and, therefore, ultimately the value of that. It certainly is a dramatic experience for those people who achieve it, but I see no evidence of their kleshas diminishing as a result. And furthermore, they then carry away with them the arrogance of the thought, "I have seen my mind's nature." I think it is of far greater importance actually to practice meditation slowly and surely and make all possible use of the resources which this book in particular gives you. It is after all a big book and contains within it much instruction, much guidance, and a lot of questions that can help you to question and therefore refine your own experience."

(Ocean of Definitive Meaning, p. 127-128)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 2:02 AM

Title: Re: Issues with deficient teaching masked by the illogic of Zen

Content:

shel said:

It's not clear what you are saying, Astus. Are you suggesting that Zen teachers should get medical training, for example, to "embody" the aspiration to help "by all means possible"?

Astus wrote:

Some do have medical or therapeutic training too. But that's not the point. If somebody comes with a problem with their relationship or their boss, the teacher can give some useful instructions on how to make the mind more peaceful and compassionate. Since problems exist in the mind, it is in the mind where they can be handled in the first place. Then, if it is needed, the student can take further steps, but with more wisdom and kindness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Sheng Yen's "Footprints in the Snow"

Content:

Astus wrote:

I did not read the whole article, but Lachs says at the beginning that the book was not written by Ven. Shengyan but an American reporter who does not even speak Chinese. That's one thing. Another is that no biography contains every details. If someone would actually want to investigate the life of Ven. Shengyan and the truth of and biographical detail, it would take lot more effort than simply going through one book written by a person without actual connection to the events. To conclude from this that Ven. Shengyan lied, that is quite a big leap.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2012 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: Any regular Mahamudra webcasts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche also gives regular teachings made available online, but it's not only Mahamudra of course.

I think that since hardly any teacher restricts the teachings to Mahamudra, it is unlikely that there will be anything more than perhaps a series of teachings on this subject. But, with some growth in interest, this might eventually change.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 15th, 2012 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Quite simple. Don't grasp whatever occurs in the mind - the complete field of experience - but just let it come and let it go. Then you add to this all the formalities of a Soto Zen temple, if you want to.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 15th, 2012 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know what mixed teachings of Dogen you refer to. Without thoughts how can you make an analysis?

Jhana is a Pali term used to denote some level of absorption, vipassana can have several meanings. Please specify.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 15th, 2012 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Frank said:

I know the jhanas forwards and backwards (on paper, not in practice. i'm no jhana master... maybe the first one once or twice, but that's probably all, i'm wondering which jhana, if any, shikantaza correlates with and whether or not practicing shikantaza will take one through all four and then through the further formless jhanas? Dogen taught both thoughtless shikantaza and taught to analyze the mind while in that state. It is a confusing topic. Vipassana is a term used with such great ambiguity that I don't even know where to begin.

Astus wrote:

Jhanas are from samatha practice, different stages of the calmness of the mind and gradually subtler points of focus. Whether one experiences any of the jhanas in zazen or not is mostly irrelevant. On the other hand, the actual meditation requires a calm state, therefore at least the first jhana, optimally the fourth jhana is similar to what one has. As shikantaza is understood is mostly just sitting without attaching to any state. It doesn't mean that's the only possible practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 15th, 2012 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://mro.org/zmm/teachings/daido/teisho20.php> by Daido Roshi.

"Abide in neither thinking nor not thinking. Thinking is linear and sequential, a separation from the reality that is the subject of thought, and thus is an abstraction rather than the reality itself. Not thinking is suppressive. It cuts away thoughts the moment they arise, making the mind into a great impenetrable mountain—dead, unresponsive. Non-thinking has no such edges. It is the boundless mind of samadhi that neither holds on to, nor lets go of, thoughts. It is the manifestation of the buddha mind in which the dualism of self and other, thinking and not thinking, dissolve. This is the dharma of thusness that is the right thought of all the buddhas in the ten directions."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Frank said:

Interesting, could you explain why it's irrelevant? It seems like you either will go through them with said practice or not.

Astus wrote:

So, I think it has been made clear already what kind of attitude shikantaza has. Samatha meditation is about focusing on one thing, and that develops jhana in the form realms. Not focusing on a solid thing but extending the view to infinity and beyond, one maintains the calmness of the fourth jhana. Shikantaza is not about focusing or extending one's mind, but not attaching to any phenomenon. Since that non-attachment results in a calm mind, it can be compared to the gradual cooling within samatha. Nevertheless, it is irrelevant because all these mental states just come and go, and the goal is not to make it some graspable state, but to learn to be aware without attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 3:28 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Frank said:

So I get really calm and near the first jhana by focusing on my breathing, then I drop my meditation object and just abide in calm awareness. Does that sound like shikantaza?

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. What you describe is more like samatha without object, or a more subtle object. Shikantaza is about not grasping any state, any thought, any feeling, no matter what comes up.

Frank said:

The question now then I suppose is: where does shikantaza stand in the great scheme? Jhana meditation can (allegedly) lead to enlightenment when combined with insight. Where can shikantaza lead? Are there stages one goes through? Or is it just that pure awareness for as long as you can hold it?

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza has no stages, it is not something to develop, maintain or master. That's why it is called practice-realisation, it is buddhahood itself. If you want to put it into a scheme, check out Zhiyi's "The Six Dharma Gates to the Sublime", where in the first chapter under the first gate the different jhanas (hinayana dhyana) are covered, while Shikantaza is the perfect contemplation in chapter 9. I recommend you read the whole treatise to get a full picture. Also, "The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation" by Zhiyi is another important work that can greatly help understanding the position of Zen. As you may notice, Zhiyi was the founder of the Tiantai school before the emergence of Chan. However, you won't really find such detailed meditation manuals in Zen, and monks have relied on Tiantai instructions everywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Namdrol said:

Dzogchen is the heart of all paths, whether of samsara or nirvana, and is the truth that everyone is trying to discover. What is Dzogchen? We all know the answer to that question -- it is our real condition.

Everyone, no matter what religion they belong to, is trying to discover the truth. That truth exists in the heart of every single sentient being. So when you discover that truth, there is no need to remain locked in the limitations of "Buddhist" and "non-Buddhist".

...

If we ground ourselves in the deep natural transformation that comes from recognizing and integrating with our primordial potentiality, then we can go beyond the limitations of religion, ideology, nation, class, race and tribe. By going beyond these limitations (as well as the limitations of conceptuality, imputation, paths, stages, realizations, attainments, buddhas and sentient beings) through recognizing our own innate state that is originally pure and naturally formed, we can move freely through the world and meet everyone and everything from the authentic space of recognition of great original purity of all that is.

Astus wrote:

I don't know how much you wander in Buddhism, but this is a topic others have also thought about and wrote of. Just a few examples:

One Dharma: The Emerging Western Buddhism by Joseph Goldstein

Rebel Buddha: A Guide to a Revolution of Mind by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

Just Use This Mind: Follow the Universal Truth to Oneness of Mind, Body and Spirit by

Ven. Miao Tsan

And don't forget the modern movements of Vipassana and Zen that detached themselves from cultural and religious limitations and started to focus on personally experiencing the true nature of mind. This is basically the recipe of their success among Westerners.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: "Applied" Zen: Ginny Whitelaw on Leadership

Content:

Matylda said:

What do you mean by this? do you think that in Japanese zen there is no teaching on compassion and that they exercise nihilism? How this idea came to your mind?

Astus wrote:

I meant a limited understanding of Zen. Its not related to any specific nation, but only the human tendency of grasping at words without seeing the context.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Lhug-Pa said:

Since Direct Introduction from the Guru is the foundation of Dzogchen, it follows that the only way that Vipassana or Zen could be integrated with the Natural State of the Great Perfection as pointed out by a Guru, would be if the Vipassana or Zen student or teacher has received the Direct Introduction him or herself; whether in this physical dimension or in a Dream Yoga state.

Astus wrote:

That was not my point. I talked about the attitude Namdrol presented how Dzogchen can be taught to all humans regardless of race, country, creed, etc. is an idea took up by other people too. And there the teaching is also presented as something that can be experienced by all and not as a doctrine, thus it universally applies to everybody.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 6:58 AM

Title: Re: "Applied" Zen: Ginny Whitelaw on Leadership

Content:

Matylda said:

Well if you speak of samurai or kamikaze that is pointing out certain connotation. Just this...

Astus wrote:

There is a quite strong idea in the West that Zen and martial arts are closely connected, if not inseparable.

A good example for this is Ginny Whitelaw herself who is both a Zen master and 5th degree black belt Aikido master, who studied in the Chozen-ji Rinzai line where they practice both sitting meditation and martial arts together.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

Where is shikantaza taught the way you talk about? Is it a specific teacher, temple or lineage of Soto Zen? Or more of a philosophical branch?

There were clear instructions quoted and referred to here, and there are many more available. For instance, from the Soto church's official website:

"Do not concentrate on any particular object or control your thought. When you maintain a proper posture and your breathing settles down, your mind will naturally become tranquil.

When various thoughts arise in your mind, do not become caught up by them or struggle with them; neither pursue nor try to escape from them. Just leave thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely. The essential thing in doing zazen is to awaken (kakusoku) from distraction and dullness, and return to the right posture moment by moment."

Before and after this it gives all the ritual and physical acts one should be aware of, pictures included. What else could be there to it? Gives the same instructions one finds everywhere. That's why I ask where all those other extras you mention come from.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Lhug-Pa said:

But this could get into a debate about whether or not non-Dzogchen traditions in themselves could introduce to people that which is introduced (the Nature of Mind) in Dzogchen (a debate which has been done to death).

asunthatneversets said:

I think bottom line is most of them only go as far as the ālaya (interpreted in the context

of their own traditions of course). That coupled with being severed from the lineage makes it quite difficult. Most traditions reify a ground as a true existent. No other tradition does direct introduction, and not sure if they could given their self-inflicted shortcomings in that respect. Doesn't mean they cannot receive introduction and practice/benefit from it though.

Dechen Norbu said:
That's the point.

Astus wrote:

Interesting. Although the nature of mind in all different schools are understood to be universal, and it is something quite easy to see, there is this idea that only one specific school/lineage has the actual methods to comprehend it, while obviously the teachings are known to so many. It is all right that there is an independent group of Dzogchen practitioners who don't want to identify with Nyingma, Bon, or any other school. But this ignorance of other teachings can easily result in arrogance that there is not a single Buddhist outside the Dzogchen group who has a proper understanding of the teachings that are actually found in their own sutras, tantras and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

kalden yungdrung said:

Are there then "Buddhists", who have understanding or are willing to understand Dzogchen?

Forgot to ask you, what do you understand under:"can easily result in arrogance" ?

Astus wrote:

I think it is quite simple that those who are interested in Buddhism and those who consider themselves Buddhists have contact with Dzogchen. In fact, it is quite easy to get both teachers and books on Dzogchen in English and other Western languages, unlike several other Buddhist teachings, like Yogacara and Abhidharma.

What I meant is that people hear about hinayana, sutrayana, lower and higher tantras, but without actually studying them they are just told that those are limited teachings, theoretical teachings without practical application, and they don't lead to real enlightenment. So, without proper understanding, people will disregard them in contempt that whoever follows those are people of mediocre karma and intellect.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

As you said, most of those practices you have mentioned are not really transmitted to the West, for a couple of reasons. You may also know that most of the Soto Zen groups in the West are not associated with the Soto church in Japan. These are differences that should be recognised, and handled separately. So what you write about is all very interesting. Perhaps you could organise these information a bit and create a website or blog about it in English, to show how things are currently done in Japan. You might also make some comparisons with the teachings and methods spread among Western Zen students.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good points Jnana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 16th, 2012 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Any regular Mahamudra webcasts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sutra Mahamudra is just what Mahamudra as a gradual path is understood. Tantra Mahamudra is what is found in completion stage. Essence Mahamudra is the nature of mind and it being pointed out as the method. But this is just one way to explain the different forms of Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 17th, 2012 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a nice summary in your signature Magnus. The truth, the real condition being beyond concepts is not difficult for any student of Madhyamaka (or Yogacara, Mahamudra, Chan, etc) to comprehend and even experience. As Jnana mentioned, cutting up space is nothing but proliferation (prapanca) that even the old suttas teach not to do. Dzogchen can be the essence of all vehicles, because all have the same essence, i.e. non-conceptual wisdom. Arguing about which method, doctrine, lineage is superior or inferior has already been discussed, and everyone sticks to their chosen path as the best, so let's just put that aside for now. If we accept that non-conceptual wisdom is the essence of the teachings, and that Dzogchen leads one to just that, it is only natural that it works as a path on its own without any other requirements, and that way it perfects whatever there is to accomplish on the path of all nine vehicles.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 18th, 2012 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: What is the end all be all manual on chan/zen or buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are lot of manuals on Buddhism, lot of books, lot of explanations. Theravada is good, Mahayana is good, Vajrayana is good. But none of them is Chan. Chan is just this mind reading and thinking, searching for something to hold on to. Have you found it yet?

As for a Chan meditation manual, the most comprehensive in English is "Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation" by Carl Bielefeldt.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 19th, 2012 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: What is the end all be all manual on chan/zen or buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The problem is that Chan is not an organised doctrine. There are a few basic concepts and practices that are favoured in Chan, but nothing exclusive, unique or definitive. Even more, there are different trends that can all be categorised under Chan. It is a common practice to distinguish Chan from Jiao, i.e. the doctrines, but only since the early Song dynasty when Chan emerged as a separate school. Therefore the saying "separate transmission outside doctrines" (jiao wai bie chuan 教外別傳). What is transmitted is the buddha-mind, enlightenment itself, and not specific teachings, methods or anything like that. Some misunderstand this as a rejection of scriptures, or that this is some hidden transmission between master and student. But that is not the case. Still, it explains the nature of this tradition. That's why there are no manuals like the Visuddhimagga or the Mohezhiguan in Chan. It's not about stages, practices, doctrines or methods. It also does not reject them, but uses freely whatever is required. That's how it can encompass the whole Mahayana without being bound by specific texts. Chan is the essence of all the teachings of the Buddha, so whatever manual you pick it eventually leads to Chan. Or you can just directly enter the gateless gate yourself, and that is the ultimate Chan way.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 19th, 2012 at 8:47 PM

Title: Being in the Present

Content:

Astus wrote:

We speak of the three times - past, present and future - as an expression of the insight that nothing lasts but everything is characterized by impermanence. Our impression of time passing is brought about by the continual movement of our mind, with its incessantly changing world of experiences. Intellectually, this is easy for us to

understand, but we find it difficult to apply this insight to our daily lives, in which we often have the tendency to want to stop time and prevent certain situations from developing.

It is precisely our wish to want to halt the continual change of things that causes us to suffer. When we deeply accept becoming and ceasing as something inevitable, then there is no longer any cause for suffering. If we live impermanence and deeply understand it, then it becomes a friend who helps us settle in the dimension of the present moment and experience the unity of mind and its projections.

If our mind did not project appearances, would there be past, present and future? Surely not. There would be no feeling of time passing, as the impression of time is solely caused by the changing projections of our mind. If we wish to achieve certainty about this, we must look directly into our mind in meditation again and again; words and intellectual understanding are not adequate for this. Only through repeated investigation of our own mind can we truly grasp that the world that surrounds us is nothing but a projection of our mind - its dynamic expression, its luminosity.

Our mind is a succession of moments of awareness - and these moments of present awareness cannot be extended. We cannot say: "Thoughts, please stop for a moment, so that I may look at you and understand you." Trying to stop the movements of our mind, in order to look at a thought or insight more carefully, blocks the natural, spontaneous dynamics of the mind. There is no point in trying to seize an insight so that we can look at it closely. In true insight, there is nothing that could be looked at or understood.

As long as we cherish the desire to understand something, to define and explain it, we miss the real point of our practice and continue in our ordinary mental fixation. If we wish to appropriate an insight, there needs to be someone who wants to understand something - and immediately we recreate the 'I', the thinker. In reality, there is nobody who understands and no object that is to be understood - there simply is only seeing. As soon as we cling to an 'I', there is no more seeing.

If we are dissatisfied with the prospect of not being able to understand, that is because we wish to have something for ourselves. We hope to be able to control and master things. But in truth we cannot control or understand anything. If we wish to arrive at a true understanding, we must let go of all personal desire. We should search for the thinker who wants to understand and control. Then we will see that we cannot find them, since they do not exist as such. If there is no thinker, then it is only natural that there is no understanding of thought processes and the mind.

Thinker and thoughts are empty, without true existence. This fundamental emptiness is the truth body. The luminosity, or dynamics, of this empty mind, its capacity to create thoughts, is the enjoyment body. The manifold expression of the mind, its capacity to assume a myriad forms in a continual change, is the emanation body.

When we allow our mind to engage in its natural, spontaneous activity, we will recognize its three fundamental qualities: emptiness, luminosity and unobstructed manifestation.

We will not, as we may have feared, find ourselves in an empty, blank state. Rather, we will discover that our thoughts are the treasure of the three bodies of enlightenment, the inexhaustible source of wealth of qualities.

What can we do to gain insight into the nature of mind? We should meditate and allow our mind to rest in the awareness of the present moment. The true nature of mind is nothing other than this moment of open awareness. In this sense of presence, there is nothing that could be grasped by thought, described or seen. This does not mean, however, that there is nothing at all, but only that no awareness as such is seen. When we rest in this immediate awareness that is the nature of mind, we understand that all appearances are created through the habitual tendencies of our confused mind. The goal of Mahamudra meditation is to see directly the nature of this confusion. This happens when the mind merges with the awareness of the present moment which is its basic nature. In that moment, it is freed of all the negativity and obscurations of all our lifetimes. To penetrate to this experience, we must meditate again and again, over a long period of time, and use all situations for the meditation on the true nature of mind. If we do this, one day we will attain realization and with it complete certainty. We will see directly what the mind is and how it works. From that day on, all our doubts will have been resolved completely.

In Mahamudra meditation, we simply allow body and mind to relax and rest in openness. To relax completely does not mean to slump in a lazy way. Rather, it entails maintaining a clear, vivid awareness that perceives all impulses of the mind to hold on to something and lets go of it immediately. Without getting annoyed about our attachment, we simply perceive it and allow it to free itself. Attachment is the sole thing we must abandon, and that is why the teachings speak so insistently of the need for complete relaxation of the mind.

In the view of Mahamudra, in which we make no distinction between good thoughts and bad thoughts but allow all appearances equally to dissolve in their true nature, there is one danger. We may regard ourselves as great yogis and think that with this view that is as expansive as the sky, we no longer need to pay attention to the small details of life and of our actions. This erroneous view is rooted in a pride that is as big as a mountain. To think that everything in its nature is emptiness and, therefore, it is no longer necessary to perform wholesome actions and to avoid unwholesome ones, leads to arrogant, inconsiderate behavior. A "great yogi" of that persuasion would entangle themselves more and more in the worldly thinking and acting. Their disturbing emotions would increase, and they would move further and further away from awakening.

In order not to fall into this error, we should cultivate the flawless behavior of a bodhisattva and constantly check whether our body, speech and mind conform to the teachings of the Buddha. Even with the very expansive view of Mahamudra, a view that is all-embracing as the universe, we have to be very sensitive and exact in our actions. As soon as we have developed the correct view and actually apply it in practice, we are able to recognize the ultimate reality in ourselves, without having to undertake any great effort to accomplish this. The recognition of the nature of mind is the only thing that we actually need - it has the power to liberate us from everything and to liberate all beings in the universe, too.

All phenomena of the external world are only the manifestations of the luminosity of our own mind and ultimately have no reality. When we allow our mind to rest in the recognition that everything that it experiences is its own projection, the separation between subject and object comes to an end. Then there is no longer anyone who grasps at something and nothing that is being grasped at - subject and object are recognized to be unreal.

In order to experience this, we allow our mind to remain in its ordinary consciousness, the awareness of the present moment, which is the deep, unchanging nature of mind itself and which is also called "timeless awareness." That is the natural insight that arises spontaneously when in every moment we look directly at the true nature of mind.

In seeing the nature of mind, there is nothing to "see" since it is not an object of perception. We see it without seeing anything. We know it without knowing anything.

The mind recognizes itself spontaneously, in a way beyond all duality. The path that leads to this is the awareness of the present moment, free of all interference. It is an error to think that the ultimate truth is difficult to recognize. The meditation on the nature of mind is actually very easy, as we do not have to go anywhere to find this nature. No work needs to be done to produce it; no effort is required to find it. It is sufficient for us to sit down, allow our mind to rest in itself and directly look at the one who thinks that it is difficult to find the nature of mind. In that moment, we discover it directly, as it is very close and always within easy reach.

It would be absurd to worry that we might not succeed in discovering the nature of mind, as it is already present in us. It is sufficient to look into ourselves. When our mind directs its gaze upon itself, it finds itself and understands that the seeker and the sought are not two different things. At the moment, we cannot see the nature of our mind because we do not know how we must look. The problem is not that we do not possess the capacity for doing this but that we do not look in the right way.

To become capable of recognizing the nature of mind in the way described, we have to work at relaxing deeply and letting go of all wanting, so that the natural state of mind can reveal itself. This work is the exact opposite of worldly effort, in which we strive to obtain concrete things and put ourselves into a state of strain. In the practice of Dharma, we must "strain without effort." This does not mean that we do nothing at all and simply remain as we are, because then we would continue to reproduce the same behavior patterns that have existed in us since beginningless time. We must make an effort to purify our ego-centered tendencies and become aware of our intentions.

(Gendun Rinpoche in "Heart Advice from a Mahamudra Master", p. 144-149)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 21st, 2012 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Need info regarding Zen and Pratityasamutpada

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides Nagarjuna - as the primary master on dependent origination in Mahayana - you should as well look at the Shalistamba Sutra

(<http://www.scribd.com/doc/29421082/Salistamba-Sutra>), the Yogacara teaching of the eight consciousnesses (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight_Consciousnesses), and the Huayan teaching of interpenetration

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huayan_school#Interpenetration) and the metaphor of Indra's net (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indra%27s_net). These teachings provide the

basis of East Asian Mahayana's view of dependent origination, and Dogen relied on them implicitly.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 21st, 2012 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lhug-Pa,

The basis of Mahamudra (whether sutra or tantra) is the ground Mahamudra, and that is nothing else but buddha-nature. Alaya-vijnana, the storehouse consciousness, is simply our habits. There is no Buddhist practice founded on habits, since it would not lead to liberation. Thus the foundation is always wisdom, ordinary consciousness, or whatever name you prefer.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 21st, 2012 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lhug-Pa,

Why don't you simply look at the actual instructions of Mahamudra and Dzogchen where the nature of mind is being pointed out/at? Terminology can be very different, and without the necessary definitions very confusing.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 22nd, 2012 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Need info regarding Zen and Pratityasamutpada

Content:

Astus wrote:

And, as Anders said before, East Asian Buddhism is not the same as Indian or Tibetan Buddhism. Even Madhyamaka was forgotten after the 7th century, and the leading views of Buddhism are found in the works of Tiantai, Huayan and Chan masters.

Another thing to mention is that dependent origination outside of Theravada is rarely associated with the 12 nidanas, it is more of a general understanding about all phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 22nd, 2012 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Does the precept of no drugs or alcohol mean no coffee?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The meaning of the fifth lay precept is to avoid a state of mind where one could easily break the first four precepts. Drinking alcohol and consuming drugs have no karmic effect in and of themselves as far as the ten good/bad deeds are concerned. Coffee, tea, different medicines, etc. don't make it any more likely to break the first four precepts, thus using or avoiding them is irrelevant to Buddhist ethics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra meditation means nothing other than just being there, being within the simplest state of ourselves. Most of you will have heard of the meditation technique in which one does not heed any thoughts of the past or future. One neither dwells upon memories nor speculates about future plans. One just rests in complete nowness. This is what is meant here. When we do not follow thoughts of the past and do not anticipate future events, but are just here, in tune with the present moment, we are in a state of newness and freshness. The text describes this as the essence of whatever thought arises being ever new.

This means that we let things arise and do not stop or manipulate them. We just sit there totally open and unblocked, completely fresh and alert. We hear things, see things, sense and feel things, but do not react in anyway. We just are in the precision and newness of the very moment itself. This is the uncontrived state of being in which we are completely natural and fresh, totally uninvolved, not speculating or manipulating or making up images. We are just then and there, conscious, alert, and clear.

If we are able to remain in that state and look at our present mind, completely leaving what is there at this moment, without interfering with anything, just relaxing and being in that very moment, this is the meditation of Mahamudra beyond preparatory stages.

Being in the present moment does not mean being stuck there. It means being in the stream of passing moments, leaving ourselves to the flux. Whatever arises, let it arise.

Do not label it, just let it be. Let it arise and arise, and do not react no matter how good or bad it may seem. Do not fall to evaluations and concepts about it. When we are able to do that, we will be in a state that is free from contrivance. In this state there is no distraction, as one does not follow or react to anything.

Being distracted means pursuing a thought that comes up. For instance, when we hear the sound of a car passing by, this in itself is not a distraction. But the moment we think, "There is a car," we have labeled what we heard as being the sound of a car. Then, we build up a chain reaction: "This place is noisy. I shouldn't be distracted, but now I am. There are too many cars in this city." In this way we become more and more angry, thinking, "This is terrible! I am disturbed. I cannot meditate in this place." This is distraction. When a car passes by, let it pass by. Then, it is finished, it is all right; there is nothing wrong with it. The problem is not the sound of the car, but our reaction to it.

(Ringu Tulku in "Daring Steps Toward Fearlessness", p. 197-198)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Konchog1 said:

Serious Question. Isn't this Eckhart Tolle's core teaching? To remain in the present instant at all times, waiting for the next thought like a cat waiting for a mouse to appear?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Power_of_Now#The_ego_and_the_deeper_Presence "onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Astus wrote:

Student: When I just watch my thoughts without following them, is that meditation as it is meant here?

RTR: What I was trying to say is that you do not watch your thoughts. You just are, and let your thoughts come and go. Can you understand that?

(Daring Steps, p. 200)

One method he recommends is simply to listen to the voice in the head without judging it in any way or getting caught up in its contents. Just by 'watching the thinker' in the head, he says, "You'll soon realise: there is the voice, and here I am listening to it." That I am realisation is "a sense of your own presence ... (arising) from beyond the mind." And as one becomes aware of this deeper self as a conscious presence, so the involuntary thinking begins to subside, giving way to stillness, peace and what he calls "the joy of Being."

(from the above linked Wikipedia article)

"At this time, you may have an experience of bliss, from which you feel you cannot bear to be parted. Do not cling to it. There may be an experience of clarity. Do not hold onto it, getting the conceited idea, 'This is the flow of my innermost nature, which is clear and distinct.' You may be in total absence of thought, resembling all remembrance and scheming being cut. Do not get attached to this either. Within the notion, 'This is freedom from conceptual mind,' remain beyond. You should turn toward the one who perceives and creates all these things. Get to the top of that itself and settle right there. Then you will remain in meditative equipoise with nothing to settle upon. The nature of everything is apparent. There is no reason for thought or conceptual grasping. When you are meditating, there is no inner onlooker present. When you are not meditating, the cause of distraction is lost. Mindfulness being self-liberated, the knot of hope and apprehension is untied within the sphere of openness and relaxation. The chains of doubt are severed. There is ever-present purity, beyond bondage and liberation. This is primordial wisdom, freed from the need of applying an antidote. It is dharmata, in which everything to be abandoned is exhausted. From this alone we realize our nature, the mind of the primordial protector."

(Daring Steps, p. 170 - emphasis added)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: finding a teacher.

Content:

Astus wrote:

You might also think a bit about what kind of guidance you want. It is a bit unrealistic to keep wondering about another's inner qualities without actually knowing them. In fact, anyone who has studied Buddhism for a couple of years and practised meditation can give sensible advice. You just have to open your ears for it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Konchog1 said:

What's the difference? Isn't it the same thing at first? Letting thoughts arise and waving at them as they pass?

Astus wrote:

If you take the position of watching your thoughts, that is still grasping at a mental state, a thought. So even if the instruction is to watch the thoughts, it means not grasping any of them, not forcing anything, not elaborating. If you try to be the watcher, that is a contrived and tiring practice. And it is also a mistake to believe that there is somebody looking at thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Europe near the end?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Europe near the end? Sounds like some bad newspaper headline. Does people have any idea of what Europe actually is outside this continent? Belarus, Macedonia, Norway, Moldavia, Albania, etc. are all in Europe but they are not members of the EU, and not all EU members use the Euro (17 of 27 member states use it). Also, a financial crisis, even if it goes to the worst possible level, would not mean the end of Europe. Many empires, kingdoms and nations have emerged and disappeared already, but the people are still here.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 24th, 2012 at 3:50 AM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Konchog1 said:
I still don't quite get it, but thanks.

Astus wrote:
Which part do you find incomprehensible, or unacceptable?

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 24th, 2012 at 3:53 PM
Title: Re: Being in the Present
Content:

Astus wrote:
We like to think we are the one watching the thoughts. But that is based on the assumption that otherwise we would miss them. Also, it is the idea that is the problem, the reification of the mind. Just relaxing, resting in the nature of the mind means no objectification of any subject. That's why there is first the insight meditation and the analysis of the mind, to establish clearly it's ungraspable and luminous nature.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 24th, 2012 at 11:55 PM
Title: Re: the true nature of siddhis
Content:

Astus wrote:
And since these siddhis are all very personal, just like miracles in any other religion, it is not verifiable by any scientific test, or shown to a general public, like on TV or in a theatre. Thus it is not possible to be used to convert people.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 25th, 2012 at 6:23 AM
Title: Re: the true nature of siddhis
Content:

Astus wrote:
Well, in fact there is a way to convert people with miracles. Certain types of Christians actually do that and they have large groups of followers. Korea is an example for a country with strong Buddhist connections where today there are probably more who believe in Jesus than Buddha, partially because of the miracle makers.

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 25th, 2012 at 7:15 AM

Title: Re: the true nature of siddhis

Content:

kirtu said:

Praetyakabuddhas are supposed to perform miracles to help and convert people during the times between Dharma dispensations. In some stories masters and saints do the same.

Astus wrote:

There are stories, yes. But as the original question says, where are the living miracle makers in Buddhism, if siddhis exist like magic in Harry Potter's world? And miracles are very much present in Buddhism, starting with the life of Shakyamuni in the earliest texts (see: The Concept of the Buddha by Guang Xing). How should they be understood? I believe there are several factors present, like that people experience miraculous things around teachers today as well, even though it may not necessarily be the teacher's intention, therefore such events seem more like the signs of deep faith. From a subjective perspective, possessing siddhis could be about one's mind reaching new levels of consciousness. It seems quite natural that with meditation they actually appear.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 25th, 2012 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

We don't even need to go to Dogen. The very idea of a Chan school is based on direct insight into the nature of mind. The early teachers, those from the East Mountain (Daoxin, Hongren) and what was later called as the Northern School (Shenxiu and heirs) still used some forms of specific meditation techniques, but after Heze Shenhui and the schools of Baotang, Niutou and especially Hongzhou the Chan school was defined as the direct path that does not require gradual stages like in other Mahayana schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 25th, 2012 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

bulhaeng said:

Of course in the countries where mahayana assumed a more syncretic form like China and Korea it is not easy to distinguish which practice is zen, which is not zen. Some will agree that chan is only sitting, or only sitting with a huatou, or only silent illumination. But then again, a teacher who is nominally chan/seon could teach whatever - chanting, bowing, different kinds of meditation, mantra, sutra studying - if it makes it a chan/zen practice remains for me an open question. But considering that all off today's zen schools have their root in the idea of "seeing nature", teaching gradual meditation stages seems an acquired addition.

Astus wrote:
Syncretism

I wouldn't say there was a point when in China/Korea/Vietnam they begun syncretising schools. First of all, there were never really separate schools, so it's not possible to mix them up. The exception is actually Japan where they separated Buddhism to different institutions. What happened is that Chan - actually, the idea of dharma-transmission and lineages - spread far and wide in the Song dynasty and again in the Ming dynasty in China and created a seeming unity among monastic leaders. But Chan as a school, a path, a practice was not taken up and preserved with the same enthusiasm or exclusivism.

Chan practice

There is no Chan practice really. It's not about practising something specific. What can be called distinctly Chan method is the huatou technique, which was actually made up by Dahui. And that is why any Mahayana meditation can be embraced as Chan, or rather as a preliminary to Chan.

Chan teacher

If Chan teacher is anyone with a Chan lineage, the majority of Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean monks are Chan teachers. If it means those who specialise in teaching meditation, the leaders of the meditation hall in a monastery, then it can be any kind of meditation method. Only if Chan is defined by a specific doctrine and praxis, or a set of those, can we state that the teaching given is like what Chan meant for certain ancient teachers.

Additions

As said before, the common practices are not really additions to Chan, rather they have always lived together, as both the monastic and lay community possess several methods and traditions of those practices. Exclusive Chan practice is quite rare in fact.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 2012 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jnana,

True, neither Changlu nor Foxin makes their meditation different from dhyana, and that statement appears only in the revised version of Fukanzazengi and the Zazengi in the Shobogenzo. But long before them there were Shenhui's criticism of all sorts of gradualism and the Platform Sutra addressing this subject more than once.

"The deluded person is attached to the characteristics of dharmas and grasps onto the samādhi of the single practice, merely saying that he always sits without moving and without falsely activating the mind and that this is the samādhi of the single practice. To have an interpretation such as this is to be the same as an insentient object! This is rather to impede the causes and conditions of enlightenment!"

"When the mind does not reside in the dharmas, one's enlightenment flows freely. For the mind to reside in the dharmas is called 'fettering oneself.' If you say that always sitting without moving is it, then you're just like Śāriputra meditating in the forest, for which he was scolded by Vimalakīrti! Good friends, there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these. These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings are greatly mistaken!" (Platform Sutra, ch. 4)

"In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness."

"Good friends, what is seated meditation (zuochan)? In this teaching, there is no impediment and no hindrance. Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called 'seated' (zuo). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called 'meditation' (chan). Good friends, what is it that is called meditative concentration (chanding; samādhi)? Externally, to transcend characteristics is 'meditation' (chan). Internally, to be undisturbed is 'concentration' (ding)." (Platform Sutra, ch. 5)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 2012 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Jnana said:

There's little doubt that this sort of rhetoric was the more popular and therefore more successful meme, with the consequence that important authors such as Guifeng Zongmi and Yongming Yanshou were relegated to second class status.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi put the dhyanas into the path of humans and gods, the first "chan", while the sudden teaching is in the "fifth chan". As he says, "[One who] cultivates the four stages of meditative absorption and the eight attainments is born into [one of] the heavens of the realm of form or the realm of formlessness." (Peter N. Gregory: Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity, p. 49) So it is not even the "lesser vehicle" by his assessment.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 2012 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Huifeng said:

Hmmm, well, yes. But, just saying that dhyana will only get one to the human or deva realms is not the same as saying that it is not taught. For instance, the five precepts basically is standard for rebirth as a human, but that doesn't mean that chan / zen does not teach the five precepts. The basic "five vehicles" notion - which is related to the position above from Zongmi - almost always emphasizes that the higher stages rely on the lower ones, and the higher ones cannot be attained without the lower ones. I hope you can see the distinction here. (Not to mention that there is basically no Buddhist school that indicates that dhyana is ultimate...)

Astus wrote:

Yes, all is seen in a complete view, all teachings are included. But it points out very well that what is understood by Zongmi as the Chan of the Tathagata, what the Chan School is about, is a very "minimalist" path. His definition of the Chan path is no different from what was stated by the already mentioned meditation manuals of Changlu, Foxin and Dogen, and also matches the Platform Sutra's no-thought teaching.

"If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices. With respect to understanding, it is to see that all characteristics are non-characteristics. With respect to practice, it is called the practice of non-practice. When the depravities are exhausted, the rebirth process will cease; once arising and disappearing has extinguished, calmness and illumination will become manifest, and responsive functions will be without limit. It is called becoming a buddha." (Chan Letter in "Zongmi on Chan", p. 88)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2012 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Suffice it to say that there are many approaches to meditation in Buddhadharma that are to be found under the headings of Ch'an and Ch'an Ting. Ch'an Ting alone is an umbrella name for many methods: the Four Dhyanas, the Four Infinities, the Four-Void Worldly Ch'an, the Nine Observations, the Samadhi of Nine Degrees (supramundane), the Ch'an of Self-Nature and the Ch'an Ting. These approaches can lead one to deep dhyana, where real wisdom is to be found; and with real wisdom, there can be self-enlightenment, enlightenment of others and the Ultimate Perfect Enlightenment." (The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice by Ting Chen, tr. Lok To, p. 71, http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chanmed1.pdf)

In the above book Ting Chen (about whom I have no information) gives meditation guidance mostly according to Zhiyi's manual of Six Gates and in general the samatha-vipasyana method.

"The Sweet Dews of Chan" (http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chandew.pdf) by Cheng Kuan, who is a 20th century Chinese monk, gives a rather traditional instruction that includes the dhyanas and even meditation on a corpse.

But, as I've mentioned before, it is not easy to pinpoint what Chan stands for. Since it can include any method, there are no restrictions. On the other hand, what is called the Chan School has always embraced the direct path.

Huangbo said,

"From now on whenever walking, standing, sitting or lying down, only practise no-mind. You wait for a long time to have true realisation, because you have little strength for sudden break through. So for three, five, or even ten years you wait to obtain entrance and naturally progress then on. Because you are not that sort of person, you have the need to practise meditation and practise the path. But what does that have to do with the Buddhadharma?" (T48n2012Ap0383c05-08, my translation)

Zongmi's "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" approach is not really different. Zongmi says, "Therefore, from the first time one produces the thought [of awakening] up to and including becoming a buddha [it is] just calm, just Knowing, immutable and uninterrupted. It is just that according to the stage [of practice] the terminology differs somewhat." (Zongmi on Chan, p. 94)

What is that gradual practice then? Jinul says,

"From this passage we see that the "no-mind which conforms with the path" of the patriarchs' school is not bound by samadhi and prajna. And why is this? The training in samadhi accords with the noumenon and absorbs all scatteredness; hence it involves the power which can forget conditioning [by lessening the entrancement with sense-objects]. The training in prajna investigates dharmas and contemplates their voidness; hence it involves the effort of effacement [by clearing away the deluded process of thought]. In the direct cognition of no-mind which frees your path of obstructions, the unhindered wisdom of liberation manifests before you and not even one sense-object or thought can enter from outside. They are nothing special; why waste your effort on them?"

(Collected Works of Chinul, p. 286-287)

Zongmi, also quoted by Jinul, explains here the meaning of gradual cultivation within Chan, as different from common gradual techniques. This matches the idea of continuing the original practice of no-thought, what in Dogen's case is called shikantaza.

"If one's practice is based on having all-at-once awakened to the realization that one's own mind is from the outset pure, that the depravities have never existed, that the nature of the wisdom without outflows is from the outset complete, that this mind is buddha, that they are ultimately without difference, then it is dhyana of the highest

vehicle. This type is also known by such names as tathagata-purity dhyana, the one-practice concentration, and the thusness concentration. It is the basis of all concentrations. If one can practice it from moment to moment, one will naturally and gradually attain the myriad concentrations. This is precisely the dhyana that has been transmitted down from Bodhidharma. Before Bodhidharma arrived, all of the scholars from early times had understood only the four dhyanas [of the realm of form] and the eight concentrations [that is, those four plus the four formless concentrations of the formless realm]. Various illustrious monks had effectively practiced them, and they had all obtained results. Nanyue [Huisi] and Tiantai [Zhiyi] relied upon the principle of the three truths to practice the three tranquilizations and three viewings. Although the principles of their teachings are most perfect, their entrance gate is step-by-step. It also involves the type of dhyana mentioned above. It is only in the transmission from Bodhidharma that the practitioner all-at-once identifies with buddha substance. This is like no other gate."

(Zongmi on Chan, p. 103-104)

Hanshan Deqing advises the same,

"So called sudden enlightenment and gradual practice refers to one who has experienced a thorough enlightenment but, still has remnant habit tendencies that are not instantaneously purified. For these people, they must, implement the principles from their enlightenment that they have realized to face all circumstances of life and, bring forth the strength from their contemplation and illumination to experience their minds in difficult situations. When one portion of their experience in such situations accords[with the enlightened way], they will have actualized one portion of the Dharmakaya. When they dissolve away one portion of their deluded thinking, that is the degree to which their fundamental wisdom manifests. What is critical is seamless continuity in the practice. [For these people,] it is much more effective when they practice in different real life situations."

(<http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>)

But there is another point that should be considered, whether one faces stronger or weaker defilements. In this case application of general methods is recommended.

"Question: Having awakened to the true mind of the third teaching, how does one practice it? Does one employ the cross-legged Chan sitting of the first teaching?

Answer: The person who is prone to turbulent, uncontrollable emotions does make use of the teaching devices of the first teaching, but the person of weak depravities and strong intellect relies on the one-practice concentration (samadhi) of Southern Chan and the third teaching. The one-practice concentration is movement and is carried out in the midst of all activities."

(Zongmi on Chan, p. 139)

Finally, Zongmi actually gives an explanation for the case when teachers have to use first the gradual methods to bring students to sudden enlightenment. And this is where the use of dhyanas fits very well.

"In a master-student transmission, [the master] must know the medicine [for each and every] disease. This means that all instructional teaching devices inherited from the past first show the original nature and then require reliance on this nature to practice dhyana. In most cases, when the nature is not easily awakened to, it is due to the grasping of characteristics. Thus, if [a master] wants to reveal this nature, he must first eradicate grasping [on the part of the student]. In [the master's] teaching devices for eradicating this grasping, he must [employ a type of rhetoric in which] common person and noble one are both cut off, merits and faults are both gotten rid of, in the precepts there is neither violation nor observance, in dhyana there is neither concentration nor distraction, the thirty-two marks are all like flowers in the sky, and the thirtyseven parts of the path⁵⁸ are all a dream or illusion. The idea is that, if [the master] enables [the student] to have a mind free of attachment, then [the student] can practice dhyana." (Zongmi on Chan, p. 119)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2012 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: the virtue of non-attachment in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's a good beginning. Then stop being attached to non-attachment. And finally, don't create a concept of not being attached to non-attachment. So says Baizhang.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2012 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: pure land practices?

Content:

Nighthawk said:

I follow Honen's interpretation mostly.

Chinese Pure Land practice seems very intense.

Astus wrote:

Jodo Shu also has nenbutsu retreats.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2012 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: the virtue of non-attachment in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Being patient is good. Waiting for enlightenment is delusion and incorrect practice. The patience to practise in Zen is, however, the patience of non-production of phenomena (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). That is seeing emptiness without fear, letting go without worry.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2012 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Daehaeng Kun Sunim

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oh, my number one living Chan master. Sad news indeed.

On the funeral:

<http://wakeupandlaugh.wordpress.com/2012/05/27/daehaeng-sunims-funeral-the-last-day/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 29th, 2012 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: pure land practices?

Content:

Nighthawk said:

Honen never said it was a requirement.

Astus wrote:

There are no requirements in Buddhism. People do whatever they think is best for them, and accordingly they will get the results. You don't have to go to retreats in order to attain birth. But it is good if you have the willing and ability to separate a longer time for buddha-remembrance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 30th, 2012 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

nirmal said:

Once the mind is concentrated, purified, bright, rid of defilement and steady, should we not direct it to investigate?

Astus wrote:

The steps of shamatha and vipashyana are like that, and they are meant to establish one in Mahamudra, what is described above in the quotes. Or, if you can, start right there.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 30th, 2012 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anders

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Religion versus spirituality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Religion puts the emphasis on tradition, rules, structure, external authority. Spirituality puts the emphasis on individuality, modernity, personal freedom. What they hide with these terms is the opposite side. Religion exists as long as there are people who find their spirituality in it. Spirituality exists because there are other people telling what that means. We usually don't invent our own beliefs, only pick and choose from what we learn about. And we don't believe everything we are told, but only those that feel true to us. Religion gives the illusion of an ultimate truth above us. Spirituality gives the illusion of our freedom from being influenced by others.

Those who prefer religion have the idea of "spiritual people" that they are lost, they are selfish, they are heretics. Those who prefer spirituality think that religion is superficial, militaristic, old fashioned. In the end, both are simple terms for simple thinkers, who find some comfort in identifying with some general idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Religion versus spirituality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jeeprs,

What you say, that organised religion is against any mystical experience, that sounds like the propaganda of "spiritual people". Both Eastern and Western Catholic Churches have many recognised mystic saints, and it's a living tradition, especially among Christian monastics. But preconceptions about "religion" naturally make one ignorant of all of these, because one would not even think to look for it there.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Religion versus spirituality.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's look at this in our Buddhism. Those who think of it as their religion try to follow whatever they perceive as the true teachings (this may or may not fit others' interpretation). And those who think about themselves as spiritual people only want to use whatever they find acceptable in Buddhism but disregard the rest without much worry about it.

Thus, when it comes to debates, the religious Buddhist will probably hold fast to his view of the teachings, while the spiritual user of Buddhism won't really care but see that the religious is dogmatic. On the other hand, the religious Buddhist will see that the spiritual guy has no respect for the teachings and accepts doctrines that are not Buddhist, therefore the spiritual person is not a Buddhist but an outsider, a Dharma-lite consumer.

In fact, the religious Buddhist fails to see that s/he selects whatever school/lineage/interpretation is acceptable to him/her, and even in her/his studies and practices s/he's selective. And the spiritual fellow fails to see how s/he incorporates traditional ideas from Buddhism and other thoughts, while at the same time accepting unquestionably the attitude of individualism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 7:28 PM

Title: Re: Religion versus spirituality.

Content:

jeeprs said:

That assumes, however, that to be spiritual is to be someone who only wants to use whatever they find acceptable. It might not mean that at all, however. I recall the last words of the Buddha as saying 'be a light unto yourselves'. This doesn't mean 'pleasing yourself' but 'finding your own way'. In any case, this 'light' is what I regard as 'spirit', which can be distinguished from rules, methods and external forms.

Astus wrote:

That is a modern interpretation of those words, typical of an individualist view. What the Buddha says is internalising, realising the teaching.

"Therefore, Ananda, be islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge." (DN 16)

"For that which I have proclaimed and made known as the Dhamma and the Discipline, that shall be your Master when I am gone." (DN 16)

This is living a spiritual life within a religion (set of doctrines and practices). The extremes of "religion" and "spirituality" are gasping either the external structure, or relying only on personal interpretation. But the word (external) and the meaning (internal) should go together.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: Right Effort - How Is It Understood in Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

First of all, in Mahayana the eightfold path is generally forgotten, and usually reduced to the threefold training of morality, meditation and wisdom. In stead, there are the six paramitas, what has the virya paramita (paramita of vigour/effort/diligence). And then if we go to Chan, such gradual and detailed practices are mostly left behind and focus is on realising the buddha-mind, and that is mostly equivalent to prajna paramita. So we arrive to Dogen - who is, however, not the only source of Soto Zen - who transforms Zen into shikantaza, just sitting, and in that the primary thing is non-thinking (hishiryo). When there is non-thinking, it is pointless to talk about effort or no effort. What we may interpret, if we really want to, as right effort, is keeping non-thinking.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 31st, 2012 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: name change

Content:

Astus wrote:

Contact an admin.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 1st, 2012 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: Right Effort - How Is It Understood in Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In "Sanjuushichihon bodai bunpou" (Thirty-seven Elements of Bodhi) Dogen does give some explanation for right effort. Here it is quoted from the Nishijima translation.

SBGZ 60 [SZTP] /70 [Shasta] /73 [Nishijima] said:

The Four Kinds of Right Restraint (Also called the four kinds of right exertion)

The first is to prevent bad that has not yet occurred.

The second is to cause to be extinguished bad that has already occurred.

The third is to cause to occur good that has not yet occurred.

The fourth is to promote the good that has already occurred.

“To prevent bad that has not yet occurred”: What is called bad does not always have established forms and grades; the term has been established land by land and sphere by sphere. Nevertheless, prevention of that which has not yet occurred is called the Buddha-Dharma, and we have received its authentic transmission. They say that in the understanding of non-Buddhists the prime val self is seen as fundamental, but in the Buddha-Dharma we should not be like that. Now, let us inquire, at the time when “bad has not yet occurred,” where is it? To say that it will exist in the future is to be forever a non-Buddhist of nihilism. To say that the future becomes the present is not an insistence of the Buddha-Dharma: the three times would have to be confused. If the three times were confused, all dharmas would be confused. If all dharmas were confused, real form would be confused. If real form were confused, buddhas alone, together with buddhas, would be confused. For this reason, we do not say that the

future will, in future, become the present. Let us inquire further: what thing does “bad that has not yet occurred” describe? Who has known it or seen it? For it to be known and seen, there must be a time of its nonoccurrence and a time of something other than its nonoccurrence. In that case, it could not be called something that had not yet occurred. It would have to be called something that has already vanished. Without studying under non-Buddhists or śrāvakas and others of the Small Vehicle, we should learn in practice “the prevention of bad that has not yet occurred.” All the bad in the universe is called “bad that has not yet occurred,” and it is bad that does not appear. Nonappearance means “yesterday preaching an established rule, today preaching an exception to the rule.”

“To cause to be extinguished bad that has already occurred”: “Already occurring” means totally happening. Totally happening means half-happening. Half-happening means what is happening here and now. What is happening here and now is obstructed by happening itself; it has sprung free from the brains of happening. Causing this [bad] to be extinguished describes Devadatta’s living body entering hell, and Devadatta’s living body attaining affirmation; it describes a living body entering a donkey’s womb, and a living body becoming buddha.³¹ Grasping this principle, we should learn in practice what “causing extinction” means. Extinction means springing free from extinction and getting clear of it.

“To cause to occur good that has not yet occurred” is satisfaction with the features we had before our parents were born, is clarification prior to the sprouting of creation, and is understanding preceding Majestic Sound.

“To promote the good that has already occurred”: Remember, this does not speak of causing to occur the good that has already occurred; it is about promoting [good]. It is [the Buddha], having seen for himself the bright star, going on to make others see the bright star; it is eyes becoming the bright star; it is “confusion being followed by thirty years of not lacking for salt and vinegar.” For example: because we are promoting [good], [good] is already happening, and so “the ravine being deep, the dipper’s handle is long,” and “only because we had it did he come.”

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 1st, 2012 at 11:46 PM

Title: Re: Right Effort - How Is It Understood in Zen?

Content:

greentreeee said:

hi,

i'm just curious as to the origination of the eightfold path. ie; textual references etc.

Astus wrote:

Not specifically a Zen related question, but here it is, the very first teaching of the Buddha in the early scriptures (Zen follows the East Asian view that the first teaching of the Buddha was the Avatamsaka Sutra):

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 2nd, 2012 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Buddha on Romantic Relationships - Personal Empirical Observ

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is in the "Personal experience" section because the initial question is about one's personal experience regarding relationship and Buddhism. Impersonal theories can go to other threads. Thank you.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 3rd, 2012 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: 84,000 illnesses of the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

The number "84,000" is only a figure of speech in Buddhism and it simply means many. As for the "illnesses of the mind" you can find the different abhidharma works that list the unwholesome dharmas, and another popular source in East Asian Buddhism is the Surangama Sutra's fifty skandha demons.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 4th, 2012 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From a practical point of view, insight into impermanence, the rise and fall of phenomena, is the same as self-liberation. Realising that the nature of mind is empty matches the insight into selflessness.

But, in theory, Dzogchen is very far from Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anders and Jnana,

How does that question relate to Dzogchen where the three bodies are immediately perfect in the nature of mind, and buddhahood is attained without effort? Not much discussion of any arduous bodhisattva path where everything is already perfect.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 12:26 AM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:
Astus wrote:
Anders,

I just meant that the presence of the bodhisattva path is not really relevant in this case in my opinion.

Here's one from Ajahn Sumedho,

"That's when you hear the sound of silence, because your mind is just in that state of attention; in pure awareness there's no self, it's like this. Then to learn to relax into that, to trust it, but not to try and hold onto it. We can't even grasp the idea of that — "I've got to get the sound of silence and I've got to relax into it". This is the dodgy part of any kind of technique or instruction, because it is easy to grasp the idea. Bhàvanà (meditation or cultivation) isn't grasping ideas or coming from any position, but in this pañipadà, this practice, it's recognising and realising through awakened awareness, through a direct knowing."

(Intuitive Awareness, p. 104 - http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/intuitive-awareness.pdf)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 2:25 AM
Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?
Content:

Astus wrote:
What I talk about is the practical side of both Theravada and Dzogchen (or any other vehicle for that matter). There are lot of theories about stages of progress, small and big future goals, and so on. However, when it comes down to the essential wisdom to be realised and practised, it's the same all over. This is prajnaparamita, to use a common Mahayana expression. The mind people have works in the same way, either there is attachment or there isn't, either it is the conditioned or the unconditioned. There is a large variety in conditioned phenomena, but the unconditioned is equal everywhere and for everyone. Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana all aim for realising the unconditioned and functioning from the unconditioned.

In terms of meditation, this is seeing that thoughts come and go. When grasped, thoughts proliferate. When left alone, they are unhindered. In this there is no difference whether it's Theravada, Mahayana or Vajrayana. It is just how mind works.

And as an extra, here's a nice teaching from Manjusri,

The Elder Subhuti asked Manjusri, "Do you not explain the Dharma of the Sravaka-vehicle to the Sravakas?"

"I follow the Dharmas of all the vehicles."

Subhuti asked, "Are you a Sravaka, a Pratyekabuddha, or a Worthy One, a Supremely Enlightened One?"

"I am a Sravaka, but my understanding does not come through the speech of others. I am a Pratyekabuddha, but I do not abandon great compassion or fear anything. I am a Worthy One, a Supremely Enlightened ONE, but I still do not give up my original vows."

Subhuti asked, "Why are you a Sravaka?"

"Because I cause sentient beings to hear the Dharma they have not heard."

"Why are you a Pratyekabuddha?"

"Because I thoroughly comprehend the dependent origination of all dharmas."

"Why are you a Worthy One, a Supremely Enlightened One?"

"Because I realize that all things are equal in the dharmadhatu."

Subhuti asked, "Manjusri, in what stage do you really abide?"

"I abide in every stage."

Subhuti asked, "Could it be that you also abide in the stage of ordinary people?"

Manjusri said, "I definitely abide in the stage of ordinary people."

Subhuti asked, "With what esoteric implication do you say so?"

"I say so because all dharmas are equal by nature."

Subhuti asked, "If all dharmas are equal, where are such dharmas as the stages of Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas established?"

Manjusri answered, "As an illustration, consider the empty space in the ten directions. People speak of the eastern space, the southern space, the western space, the northern space, the four intermediate spaces, the space above, the space below, and so forth. Such distinctions are spoken of, although the empty space itself is devoid of distinctions. In like manner, virtuous one, the various stages are established in the ultimate emptiness of all things, although the emptiness itself is devoid of distinctions." (The Inconceivable State of Buddhahood in "A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras", p. 30-31)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Spirituality said:

That was way more than necessary, but clear, at least in this translation. You're right: in this translation this sutra does teach Buddha is eternal and is, as such, hard to reconcile with traditional Buddhism.

I'd love to hear what someone with access to the original language who knows something of the Buddhist history of ideas has to say about this text.

Astus wrote:

Reconcile with which traditional Buddhism? Do you mean Theravada? Just because Mahayana seemingly has many teachings not in accord with Theravada. Otherwise, however, the Nirvana Sutra is a basis of traditional Buddhism, at least in East Asia. The Buddha is eternal. But this eternity is the unborn nature of all, it is the dharmadhatu. In other words, emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 2:35 AM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Lhug-Pa said:

Does anyone know which Sutra I'm referring to here?

Astus wrote:

Perhaps these suttas:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an01/an01.049.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Jnana said:

I think it's prudent to acknowledge specifics. With the Theravāda & Sarvāstivāda śrāvakamārga, experience is reducible to momentary minds, mental factors, and forms, all of which are to be recognized as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and selfless. The purpose of these recognitions is to sequentially terminate the ten fetters and attain liberation.

With the dzogchen rang grol lam, experience is reducible to rigpa and the display of rigpa, which is to be recognized as alpha pure and spontaneously perfect. Thus whatever arises is naturally liberated without being established or recognized as "this" or "that" phenomenon, and there's nothing whatsoever to accept or reject.

Astus wrote:

What you describe is difference in theory, in explanation of what goes on. Insight into the three attributes is non-conceptual even in Theravada, and that is when they are the three doors of liberation. That's why I see little difference in practice.

From Mahasi Sayadaw's (quoting from him since he relies more on classical works than Ajahn Mun's lineage) "Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation"

(http://www.mahasi.org.mm/e_pdf/E09pdf.PDF):

"But the present phenomenon is what comes up at the six doors right now. It has not yet been defiled. It is like an unsoiled piece of cloth or paper. If you are quick enough to meditate on it just as it comes up, it will not be defiled. You fail to note it and it get defiled. Once defiled, it cannot be undefiled. If you fail to note the mind-and matter as it rises, grasping intervenes."

"If you meditate, you find that what you see passes away, what you hear passes away. They pass away in no time at all. Once you see them as they really are, there is nothing to love, nothing to hate, nothing to cling to. If there is nothing to cling to, there can be no clinging or grasping."

"When one is well-practised in insight meditation, after the arising of life-continuum following the seeing process, insight consciousness that reviews "seeing" takes place. You must try to be able to thus meditate immediately. If you are able to do so, it appears in your intellect as though you were meditating on things as they are seen, as they just arise. This kind of meditation is termed in the Suttas as "meditation on the present.""

"If you fail to meditate even at the apprehending, you get to form process and name process. Then graspings come in. If you meditate after the emergence of grasping, they will not disappear. That is why we instruct you to meditate immediately, before the concepts arise."

"You note it the moment it arises. You note it and it ends right there. Sometimes as wandering of the mind is about to arise. You note it and it quiets down."

"So, if you note the moment you see, hear, touch, or perceive, no subsequent consciousness will arise to bring about graspings.

" you will simply have the sight of the things seen, the sound of the things heard, the sense of the things sensed, and the idea of the thing cognized."

As this extract from Mælukyaputta Sutta shows, the mere sight, the mere sound, the mere sense, the mere idea is there. Recall them and only the real nature you have understood will appear. No graspings. The meditator who meditates on what ever arises as it arises sees how everything arises and passes away, and it becomes clear to him how everything is impermanent, suffering, not self. He knows this for himself- not because a teacher has explained it to him. This only is the real knowledge."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, I can be wrong about Mahasi Sayadaw's vipassana, although it seems to me that since he talks about immediately noting whatever arises, it's not the same kind of mental noting as when one actually says the word in one's head. IIRC, in another book he explained that such pronounced noting is eventually dropped, which makes sense to me. If needed, I can try to find that work, but can't remember the title now. He follows the description of the Visuddhimagga about the steps of vipassana, so I assume he is a proper representative of traditional Theravada.

Jnana said:

What the classical theras consider to be non-conceptual is still considered conceptual for mādhyamikas, and hence, for dzogchen as well.

Astus wrote:

Do you say that because they use the term dhammas appearing and disappearing?

"As this extract from Mælukyaputta Sutta shows, the mere sight, the mere sound, the mere sense, the mere idea is there. Recall them and only the real nature you have understood will appear. No graspings. The meditator who meditates on what ever arises as it arises sees how everything arises and passes away, and it becomes clear to him how everything is impermanent, suffering, not self."

How is this different from the simple coming and going of phenomena as given in Madhyamaka, Chan or Vajrayana?

Anders said:

There is nothing to note there nor anything to meditate upon.

Astus wrote:

What is it then here where there is just being aware of experience immediately?

Anders said:

And 'theory' does impact method. to a certain extent. Mahasi Sadyaw works within a framework of freeing oneself from affliction. In the aforementioned ones, there is nothing to attain and Klesha and Bodhi are considered nondual. These kind of assumptions (or lack of same) embedded into the method ('theory') are quite relevant in terms of contrivance and effort. This is how sudden Chan distinguishes itself from gradual practise and how Dzogchen and Mahamudra distinguishes itself from the lower vehicles.

Astus wrote:

Oh, I don't mean to say that they are totally the same. Obviously they are not. However, my point is that, like in this case Mahasi's method, while goes through several steps, which makes it a gradual instruction, the most advanced method in it matches Chan and Dzogchen. This is similar to the relationship between Tiantai and Chan, or Madhyamaka and Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Jnana said:

A Theravāda yogi observes the rise and fall of mind and matter. Through this observation s/he recognizes the universal characteristics (sāmānyalakṣaṇa) of impermanence, etc., which are common to all conditioned phenomena.

A Madhyamaka yogi removes the vikalpas of "mind" and "matter" and observes unestablished suchness. Here, all phenomena are unestablished (sarvadharmāpratiṣṭhāna), and there are no "things" to observe, neither the unique particulars (svalakṣaṇa) of objects nor the universals such as impermanence, etc.

This latter Madhyamaka insight is axiomatic for chan, chagchen, and dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that in case of Theravada concepts remain, and the yogi identifies those concepts as the ultimate reality? Don't they realise suchness?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Jnana said:

Right, what the classical Theravāda & Sarvāstivāda consider to be ultimates (mind, mental factors, and matter) are not considered ultimates from a Madhyamaka perspective. They are merely conceptually designated and the basis of these designations are mere appearances.

Astus wrote:

I know they have a different view of paramattha dhamma, and so there is difference. Although I find that since mind, mental factors and matter are conditioned even in Theravada, it agrees somewhat with Madhyamaka. But OK, if it goes down to practice in the way you just pointed out that one has to create these cognitions about the specific dhamma and their impermanence, etc., it does not match Dzogchen, and I have misinterpreted what Mahasi says.

What is left then is the lineage of Ajahn Mun where they don't apply abhidhamma but a different way. What do you say of that?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Jnana said:

Well, the Thai forest lineage is a bit more diverse and idiosyncratic with regard to view. But the purpose of insight meditation here too (for a yogi following the śrāvaka path of liberation) is to recognize impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness, and thereby induce dispassion and the cessation of the fetters.

Astus wrote:

Well, OK then. Classic Theravada is unlike Dzogchen. Thanks for the correction.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2012 at 11:55 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

emptiness isnt considered dharmadhatu in tathagatagarbha,(the nirvana sutra/Lotus

sutra) states it was teachings to help one end tainted individual self(false self) not the actual goal.

Astus wrote:

Consider these passages from the Nirvana Sutra. Page number is according to the common PDF edition.

"The Truth is the Tathagata. The Tathagata is the True; the True is the Void; the Void is the True; the True is the Buddha-Nature; the Buddha-Nature is the True."

(p. 159)

"O good man! All that is made is not eternal. The Void is not anything made. So, it is eternal. The Buddha-Nature is not what is made. So, it is eternal. "The Void is the Buddha-Nature; the Buddha-Nature is the Tathagata; the Tathagata is not what has been made. What has not been made is Eternal."

(p. 162)

"How does the Bodhisattva meditate on the Void of nature ["prakrti-shunyata" - Emptiness of primordial matter]? This Bodhisattva-mahasattva sees that the original nature of all elements is all void. These are the five skandhas, the 18 realms, the 12 spheres, the Eternal, the non-Eternal, suffering, Bliss, the Pure, the impure, Self, and non-Self. In all such things, he sees no nature of their own. This is how the Bodhisattva-mahasattva meditates on the Void of nature."

(p. 194)

"When the Bodhisattva-mahasattva practises Great Nirvana, he knows and sees the universe and he realises that the real state is all-void and that there is nothing that one possesses, and that there is nothing that has any mode of harmonisation or perception. And what he gains is such a phase [state of realisation] as the unbreakable [i.e. undefiled], non-doing, the phantomic, the burning flame of the hot season, and the all-empty phase of a gandharvan castle."

(p. 257)

"He practises "Paramartha-satya" [Ultimate Reality] and the Ultimate Void. Why? Because all Bodhisattvas always thoroughly practise the natures and characteristics of the Void. By practising the Void, he can now know what he did not know in the past. What does he know? He knows that there is no self and what one possesses. All beings have the Buddha-Nature. He knows that by reason of the Buddha-Nature, even the icchantika, when he abandons the mind that he possesses, can indeed attain unsurpassed Enlightenment. Such is not what sravakas and pratyekabuddhas can know."

(p. 282)

"Now, hearing Dharma relates to the 11 shunyatās. Due to these voids, we see no form in anything. Now, hearing Dharma begins with the first aspiration and proceeds up to the ultimate unsurpassed Bodhi Mind. By gaining the first aspiration, one gains Great Nirvana. Through hearing, one does not gain Great Nirvana; by practising, one attains

Great Nirvana."

(p. 293)

"What is the True? One knows well the phases of Nirvana, the Buddha-Nature, the Tathagata, Dharma, the priest, the Real State, and the Void. This is what is True."

(p. 296)

"The Buddha-Nature is none other than the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya" [Ultimate Truth]. The All-Void of "Paramartha-satya" is Wisdom. We say "All-Void".

(p. 318)

"The Middle Path is the Buddha-Nature. For this reason, the Buddha-Nature is Eternal and there is no change. As ignorance overspreads [them], all beings are unable to see. The sravaka and pratyekabuddha see the All-Void of all things. But they do not see the non-Void. Or they see the non-Self of all things, but they do not see the Self. Because of this, they are unable to gain the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya". Since they fail to gain the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya", they fail to enact the Middle Path. Since there is no Middle Path, there is no seeing of the Buddha- Nature."

(p. 319)

"The samadhi resultant from right thinking is right meditation. One abiding in right meditation sees all things as Void. This is right Wisdom. One perfect in right Wisdom segregates his self from all the bonds of defilement. This is Emancipation. "The person who has gained Emancipation praises it to all beings and says that this Emancipation is Eternal and Unchanging. This is the correct praising of Emancipation. This is unsurpassed Mahaparinirvana."

(p. 327)

"The Buddha-Nature of beings is not-one and not-two. The equality spoken of regarding all Buddhas is like the Void. All beings possess it. Anybody who indeed practises the Noble Eightfold Path gains - one should know - a bright view."

(p. 352)

"The Eternal of the Tathagata is the Self. The Dharmakaya "[Dharma-Body]" of the Tathagata is unboundedness, unobstructedness, birthlessness, undyingness, and the eight unmolestednesses. This is the Self. The beings, truth to tell, do not have such a Self and what the Self possesses. Only because of the fact that a person absolutely attains the absolute Void of "Paramartha-satya" do we say the Buddha-Nature."

(p. 389)

"The Buddha-Nature of the being is like the Void. The Void is not past, not future, and not present. it is not in, nor out; it is not within the boundaries of colour, sound, taste, and touch. It is the same with the Buddha-Nature."

(p. 414)

"If there is nothing, this is the Void. The same is the case with the Buddha-Nature, too. O good man! As the Void is empty, it does not fall into the category of the Three Times. As

the Buddha-Nature is Eternal, it is not within the category of the Three Times."
(p. 440)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Malcolm,

I'm not doubting Hodge's expertise at all. However, the quotes I collected are from different parts of the sutra. In fact, at the final part it has explanations on the differentiation between what is void and what is non-void. Also, the Nirvana Sutra played an important role in Tiantai and to some extent in Chan. Neither of them had problem matching it with the teachings of Prajnaparamita and Mind Only. As for those who specialised in the Nirvana Sutra before Tiantai, I don't know about them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Malcolm,

I find that last section part quite in line with the eternalist idea, even if it is something added later. I don't see that in East Asia they had a problem with this. In fact, although this did not really exist in India, the whole East Asian branch - or rather as it evolved - can be called tathagatagarbha-vada. They had no Hindus around to debate on the atman-anatman issue, so names like the True Self is still alive, and the four attributes of buddha-nature as stated in the Nirvana Sutra is taught.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: The Great Cloud Mountain Temple Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Your consciousness presents Awareness to Itself energetically as sensory reality."

Is there consciousness and Awareness? What is presenting energetically?

"Is there a reason for this happening? No, there is no "reason.""

Do you mean that things just appear without cause?

"How could things exist without concepts such as time and space, self and other..."

Are you proposing that there is an order of concepts from fundamental to advanced?

"Because there are illusory things there seems to be Karma"

So first there are illusory things, then there is karma? Are they separate, or hierarchical?
What about karma causing illusory things?

"By regaining original mind in a flash"

How exactly? And why does it dissolve things and karma?

"all things appear as no-things"

What is the difference?

"To live more or less constantly in this Non Abiding No-State (Mu Ju Shin) is the goal of Zen."

More or less constantly? Either it is constant or not. Why more or less?

"The direct way to Great Enlightenment is via letting go of names and forms for intense, sometimes rapturous but always inexplicable physical sensations."

What does this enlighten one about? Getting intense and rapturous sensations without any sense, sounds more like some drug induced state. And if all is Awareness, why is the emphasis on physical?

"Do some Zen!"

What is doing Zen?

"Great Enlightenment cannot be experienced -- it is the direct way of experiencing."

Aren't all experiences direct? If it is not immediate, it is not an experience, is it?

"This headless Zen way is purely physical (mystical)"

Do you mean that out of the six sensory faculties one is lost?

"Doing Zen makes talk and writing seem crazy and superfluous."

Then it is stupid Zen. Nobody should do such a thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 2:58 PM

Title: Re: Do Theravadins have anything similar to Dzogchen?

Content:

Anders said:

An open-minded Theravadin studying descriptions of trekcho would probably equate it with the opening of the Dhamma Eye experienced by stream-entrants. At least those whose depictions of Nirvana are similar such as much of the thai forest tradition and such.

Astus wrote:

That's what I was talking about when connecting self-liberation with the rise and fall of dhamma. I guess I did it poorly.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the Nirvana Sutra uses the word "Void" in different contexts with different meanings. Just as you said, there is a list for 11 kinds, but there can be more depending on context. But let's take a different turn on this. Can you give a definition of buddha-nature? In everyday terms possibly. Then we can match it with whatever meaning of emptiness, or we can't.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 6th, 2012 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Wish List - Real Dharma Free for All

Content:

Astus wrote:

Great ideas, although little to do with this forum. You should perhaps find someone with the necessary programming skills to create the structure, then upload and maintain all the data.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 7th, 2012 at 2:50 AM

Title: Re: Baloney! and Jundo Cohen

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see anything strange about this. He is in agreement with the classic Zen style of iconoclasm, of internalisation and pointing to the mind as the only real buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 7th, 2012 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: Baloney! and Jundo Cohen

Content:

shel said:

No one said it was strange. In fact I've suggested that it's common.

Astus wrote:

So, what I said that it is in agreement with a style. If by common you mean that there are Zen teachers who talk ill of the Mahayana sutras, that is not a usual practice at all, and never was. It's equivalent of slandering the Dharma. The result of this is that his followers will not study the teachings and so fail to understand it. The idea that "Buddha was only human" - what is called "secular Buddhism" - is failing to understand the complexity and the meaning of Mahayana teachings about buddhahood. But, considering the audience, this sentiment is what they probably like to hear from their teacher. Also, the whole Dogen Sangha seems to be like this.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 7th, 2012 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

So, let's look at that definition then, if you say it covers all there is to cover.

Unknown said:

"O good man! The Buddha-Nature is none other than the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya" [Ultimate Truth]. The All-Void of "Paramartha-satya" is Wisdom. We say "All-Void". This does not refer to no Void [any Voidness], nor non-Void. Knowledge ["jnana"] sees the Void and the non-Void, the Eternal and the non-Eternal, Suffering and Bliss, the Self and the non-Self. The Void refers to all births and deaths. The Non-Void refers to Great Nirvana. And the non-Self is nothing but birth and death. The Self refers to Great Nirvana. "If one sees the All-Void, but does not see the non-Void, we do not speak of this as the Middle Path. Or if one sees the non-Self of all things, but does not see the Self, we do not call this the Middle Path.

"The Middle Path is the Buddha-Nature. For this reason, the Buddha-Nature is Eternal and there is no change. As ignorance overspreads [them], all beings are unable to see. The sravaka and pratyekabuddha see the All-Void of all things. But they do not see the non-Void. Or they see the non-Self of all things, but they do not see the Self. Because of this, they are unable to gain the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya". Since they fail to gain the All-Void of "Paramartha-satya", they fail to enact the Middle Path. Since there is no Middle Path, there is no seeing of the Buddha-Nature."

"O good man! There are three seeings of the Middle Path [i.e. constituting the Middle Path]. The one is the definitely blissful action; the second is the definitely sorrowful action; the third is the sorrow-bliss action.

Astus wrote:

Summing it up:

All-Void is the Void of all things, the non-Self of all things AND the non-Void of Buddha-Nature, the Self of Buddha-Nature.

So, there are all things, the five aggregates and the six faculties, and they are selfless, empty. And there is buddha-nature which is Self, non-Void. But, if we look at ourselves, our present experience, what else is there beyond the five aggregates and six faculties? And I mean right now. Can you point at it?

My take on this is that since there can't be anything else besides all things (five aggregates, six faculties), buddha-nature is actually the non-attachment to things, just as in Yogacara's three nature teaching. And that non-attachment is the basic nature, the eternal self, which is equivalent to emptiness. But, if you say this is not so, please explain what then is buddha-nature outside of all things.

The <http://www.fodian.net/world/1666.htm> says,

1. Truly Empty

Suchness is empty because from the beginning it has never been related to any defiled states of existence, it is free from all marks of individual distinction of things, and it has nothing to do with thoughts conceived by a deluded mind. It should be understood that the essential nature of Suchness is neither with marks nor without marks; neither not with marks nor not without marks; nor is it both with and without marks simultaneously; it is neither with a single mark nor with different marks; neither not with a single mark nor not with different marks; nor is it both with a single and with different marks simultaneously. In short, since all unenlightened men discriminate with their deluded minds from moment to moment, they are alienated from Suchness; hence, the definition "empty"; but once they are free from their deluded minds, they will find that there is nothing to be negated.

2. Truly Nonempty

Since it has been made clear that the essence of all things is empty, i.e., devoid of illusions, the true Mind is eternal, permanent, immutable, pure, and self-sufficient; therefore, it is called "nonempty." And also there is no trace of particular marks to be noted in it, as it is the sphere that transcends thoughts and is in harmony with enlightenment alone.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

yea the jivitaka principle itself(spelled that wrong I think simple meaning is life force)
you dont need the 5 aggregates or 6 tainted faculties to exist.I wouldnt say it is BEYOND those things but their is life in the formless realms which doesn't

contain, sight, smell, touch, hearing, the only thing present is awareness of existence (like being in darkness) to me it's a scary place to exist in.

This shows that you don't need the 5 aggregates to exist. Next what is beyond it is the rupa/dharmakaya of the Buddha chapter 5 on the Adamantine Body this is what is BEYOND our 5 aggregate.

Astus wrote:

Identifying buddha-nature with the life force (jīvitendriya or simply jīva) is a strange idea, since believing that the life force is the self is among the four mistaken identifications as you can read in the Diamond Sutra (jīvagrāha) and others. It is still part of samsara, and a common mistaken view of Hindus (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiva>).

As for the formless realms, four of the five aggregates are only mental, and they are present there. What in chapter five the Buddha says regarding the aggregates and faculties is, "He is no skandha, sphere or realm, and yet he is the skandha, sphere, and realm." What can we make of this?

Nagarjuna says (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, tr. from "Ocean of Reasoning"):

"If the aggregates were the self,
It would have to arise and cease.
If it were different from the aggregates,
It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates."
(18.1)

So, if the self is same as the aggregates, that means the self is impermanent. How could then it be truly a self? But, if it is different from the aggregates, such a self would have no ability to sense, perceive, comprehend or experience anything at all. Certainly such a self would be useless and meaningless. So in the same chapter we also find this:

"The Buddhas have designated a self;
And have taught that there is no self;
And also have taught that
There is neither self nor selflessness."

So, as we know from the Nirvana Sutra too, there is the self-view of ordinary people, the teaching of selflessness of the śrāvakas, and the teaching of true self of the buddha-nature. And that true self is neither the self of ordinary people nor the selflessness of śrāvakas. What is the true self then? Nagarjuna also says there:

"Through the elimination of karma and affliction there is nirvana.
Karma and affliction come from conceptual thought.
These come from mental fabrication.
Fabrication ceases through emptiness."

The chapter on the Adamantine Body sums up succinctly, saying: "We cannot express."

and also "It is the All-Wonderful, the one Eternal, and the one not presumable." This one the Samdhinirmocana Sutra (ch. 2, tr. Keenan) explains clearly:

"Good son, the term 'conditioned' is a provisional word invented by the First Teacher. Now, if it is a provisional word invented by the First Teacher, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the conditioned does not exist. Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also invented from language [and it also validates nothing real].
"Furthermore, besides the conditioned and the unconditioned, any other expression that exists in language is the same. But, it might be objected, is it not true that there are no expressions without some [corresponding] reality? What, then, is the reality here? I would reply that it is that reality apart from language and realized in the perfect awakening of the saints through their holy wisdom and insight apart from all names and words. It is because they desire to lead others to realize perfect awakening that they provisionally establish [such expressions] as 'the conditioned' as verbal descriptions.
"Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also a word provisionally invented by the First Teacher. Now, if the First Teacher provisionally invented this word, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And, if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the unconditioned does not exist. Good son, the term 'conditioned' is also invented from language [and it validates nothing real].
"Besides 'the unconditioned' and 'the conditioned,' any other expression that exists in language is the same. But [some may object], is it not true that there are no expressions without some [corresponding] reality? What then is that reality here? I would reply that it is that reality apart from language and realized in the perfect awakening of the saints through their wisdom and insight apart from all names and words. It is because they desire to lead others to realize perfect awakening that they establish [such expressions] as 'the unconditioned' as verbal descriptions."

Thus both self and selflessness are verbal fabrications, nothing more. True Self is beyond language constructs, it is the very understanding that everything there is is simply conceptual imagination.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Kensho and Satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Yes it is amazing if we can take a perspective since we are not used to it in daily events, but that has nothing to do with satori...

Astus wrote:

Let's say that it's a start, to see that like and dislike are created by the mind. Identifying a neutral, non-interested state as satori is limited, sure. What the nature of mind is does not depend on different states of mind and it is present regardless of them. Whether

something looks beautiful, ugly or uninteresting, these are just emotional states. Awareness itself is found in each of them, but it's not the same as any of them. Not abiding, not grasping, not identifying with any of them is being free. Clinging to neutrality therefore is mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Kensho and Satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Self understanding is pretty misleading in zen, specially when it comes to satori or kensho.

Astus wrote:

Just a small note: any kind of understanding is misleading. If it's my view, or another's view, they are still a view. The correct view therefore is no view. How to be free from views? Discipline, study, practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Anyone else bored to tears with this Dzogchen forum lately?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that as long as it is taboo to talk about Dzogchen itself, all there is to talk about is X related to (whatever meaning you attribute to) Dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 7:43 PM

Title: Re: Kensho and Satori

Content:

Matylda said:

wow, still no view is a view. if no view is considered one has to know also no-discipline, no-study, and no-practice. There is nothing wrong with dsp, as far as they help. Look at the famous verses in Tangyo, when the 6th patriarch Daikan Eno wrote in response to the head monk verse. Anyway Yuimakyo, or Vimalakirti nirdesha sutra is good source to have some idea about it. To point unconditioned and support it by conditioned is sort of illogical. But the final point is beyond all of these. Master Torei's teaching in his Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp is also helpful.

Astus wrote:

No view is a view if one fails to understand no view and makes it a view. Reification of emptiness is simply a wrong view.

That's what discipline, study and practice is for, to help. It is not illogical at all to follow

"conditioned" methods (in fact, there are no other methods) in order to assist in reaching the unconditioned. Even when it is reduced to the simplest mindfulness practice, it is still a technique, just like Huineng's no-thought is a method.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Anyone else bored to tears with this Dzogchen forum lately?

Content:

Simon E. said:

I dont think "taboo" is quite right Astus. It is simply not possible to do more than talk AROUND Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

When you say "around Dzogchen", you must already have an idea what Dzogchen is. If you have no idea, then there is nothing to talk around either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Kensho and Satori

Content:

Matylda said:

If we talk about general mahayana that can be true. What about zen? "Method" in Daikan's teaching is basically what could be easily misunderstood. He pointed it over and over again. Look again at his verse. It clears away all misconceptions.

Astus wrote:

I assume you mean this poem,

"Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing—
Where could any dust be attracted?"

Now, here there is no method described, it is simply a statement that the nature is originally pure, therefore it doesn't have to be purified. That means the simplest method there is is to realise the nature of mind. The way to do that is what Huineng calls no-thought (Platform Sutra, ch. 4), that is, "to be without thought while in the midst of thought" and "the non-defilement of the mind in all states". And this is what I mentioned before.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 8th, 2012 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Anyone else bored to tears with this Dzogchen forum lately?

Content:

Simon E. said:

No...I am not just being contrary. Ideas about Dzogchen do not help at all...
All we can do is to point to our experiences. And risk being misunderstood.
Which means in my case my input into the forum will be self limited. You can only describe your own experiences so many times before they induce even in yourself a state of ennui.

Astus wrote:

Ideas about Dzogchen can't help? They are all the words ever uttered and written down.
How could they be useless?

As for the risk of being misunderstood, everyone takes that risk all the time, whether here on the forum or in other communication forms. But, unlike in case of a video or book, people here can ask back.

It's not only your experience you can describe. There are teachings one has heard and studied but not yet mastered oneself. They can still be told to others, either by quote or link.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Anyone else bored to tears with this Dzogchen forum lately?

Content:

Simon E. said:

Actually many of them cant Astus. Not without breaking samaya.

Astus wrote:

And so we get to my first post here, that it is taboo.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: How can Buddhists be so sure of themselves?

Content:

Anders said:

Then over time you begin to confirm the truths of all this through your own practise. This is the only proof Buddhism offers - finding out for yourself. If that's not working for you, Buddhism is probably not for you.

gregkavarnos said:

You mean I can't just pay somebody to practice for me and bring me the fruits of the practice? Damn!

Astus wrote:

Actually, you can. It's called merit transference. Oh, and the payment for it is called donation.

As for the original question - although this has already been said - Buddhism is not about proving this or that, it is about relieving suffering. Taking and especially upholding the precepts is the first big step on the path to complete liberation from pain, sorrow and discontentment.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: Is 'Wholesome Conduct' in Sex a good Karma?

Content:

Huifeng said:

Though others would argue that sex itself involves some degree of craving for sensory experience, either a defiled or at least not a wholesome mental state.

Astus wrote:

Just to add a little more to this. Why people have sex? There can be a few reasons, sure, but the most common cause is the desire for sensual pleasure. Desire for sensual pleasure (kāmatṛṣṇā) is the very cause of birth in this realm of sensuality (kāmaloka) where we are now. This is true in all vehicles of Buddhism, just as dependent origination is true. Also, why people like to think that sex is not a hindrance to enlightenment? Because they are very much attached to it. Rhetoric excuses make no difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: How can Buddhists be so sure of themselves?

Content:

Ikkyu said:

Again, this whole "merit" business seems dubious at best. How does one "transfer" something immaterial that is probably non-existent -- and more likely a philosophical abstraction -- to someone else? How does this make sense in the context of reality, which Buddha-dharma claims to be so well acquainted with?

Rebirth is another thing that is paradoxical to the enth degree. If consciousness is destroyed upon the moment of death, as we know it is, how do some "aggregates" recreate it from non-existence? If there is no self that is reborn, then where does the consciousness/awareness come from? The concept of skandhas such as "mental formation" and "consciousness" being everlasting, transferable principles seems silly. We know why consciousness exists: it's called brain function. When the brain and the network of neurons in it die so does consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Merit transference sounds mystical, but really it isn't. It means that one recognises another's act and agrees with it, thus generating identical mental factors as if he had done it.

As for rebirth, the paradox you state is for this view that everything ends at the time of death. This extreme view in Buddhism is called annihilationism. As you also mentioned, there is no eternal self in the Buddha's teaching, and that is the other extreme view of eternalism. But Buddhism is not the same as materialism, it does not say that the mind is just some specific biological functions of the body. In fact, the existence of mind does not depend on the body. Thoughts are what generate further thoughts. We see, hear, smell, taste and feel based on the body's faculties, but what we see is identified by thoughts, and once one knows what one sees one has further thoughts about it based on that concept. You don't need any special education to understand this, just see it for yourself in your own experience. And since what at death stops functioning is only the body, the mind does not end with it. That's how there is rebirth eventually.

You see, if you want Buddhism to conform to the education you have received previously, you will struggle a lot with it, and either succeed in understanding the teaching of the Buddha or believe that it is nonsense and thus fail. Put aside your current opinions and look at Buddhism with fresh eyes and open mind. It is like learning a new language. If you start learning Japanese, but you want it to have the same grammatical structure as English, you will inevitably fail to comprehend the way the Japanese language works. So, as long as you want Buddhism to conform to your existing concepts, you are unable to actually see it for what it is.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: How can Buddhists be so sure of themselves?

Content:

Ikkyu said:

You make a good point. But in this case, is it OK for me to take precepts and tread the Buddhist path even if I have some serious doubts about it?

Astus wrote:

Absolutely. Doubts about the teachings remain until one has truly experienced the depths of the Dharma. It is a gradual process. One step at a time is perfectly enough. Just keep walking.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: Is 'Wholesome Conduct' in Sex a good Karma?

Content:

Dechen Norbu said:

But if you feel desire, this is a form of attachment, Vajrayana or not.

Lucjan said:

Desire is not really a form of attachment, even though the former commonly results in the latter. Desire is our playing field, the actual cause of our human dimension. Attachment is our ignorant reaction to desire. It is possible, and liberating, to

experience desire devoid of attachment.

Astus wrote:

This is a nice argument actually, that there can be desire without attachment. What is desire without attachment? It means that desire appears, but one does not grasp it, so desire goes away. If there is no attachment to desire, there is no action that emerges from it, and that way the chain of the origination of suffering is cut. However, in order to have sex, one necessarily holds on to the desire and believes that it will result in happiness and satisfaction. It is a great example of distorted view and not applying the four noble truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Definition of Mahamudra according to CNR

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is this some fixed set of instructions? Even in the book Crystal Cave they follow each other.

I find that this short poem of the 16th Karmapa rhymes well with http://www.kagyu-asia.com/l_mila_t_illuminating_wisdom.html: http://www.kagyu-asia.com/t_heart_mahamudra.html

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 9th, 2012 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here I show how in the Lotus Sutra it is the realisation of emptiness, prajnaparamita, that is the true teaching of the Buddha and the path for the bodhisattvas, the single vehicle. I also show the difference between the attached view of emptiness of the sravakas and the complete view of the bodhisattvas. The difference lies in bodhicitta, the will to buddhahood to liberate all beings.

In chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra those five thousand monks left because of their arrogance. In the next chapter Shariputra says,

"Formerly, I was attached to false views
And was a teacher of brahmans.
The Bhagavat, knowing my mind,
Removed the false views and taught nirvana.
I got rid of false views completely
And attained the teaching of emptiness.
At that time I considered myself
To have attained nirvana.

But now I have become aware
That this was not the real nirvana.
When I become a buddha
I shall be endowed with the thirty-two marks,
And be honored by devas, humans, yakṣas, and nāgas.
Only then can it be said that I have
Permanently attained nirvana without residue."

The first wrong view he had was the teaching of Hindus, the teaching of eternal self. That was removed by the teaching of emptiness of self. But attachment to emptiness is still wrong, and so he finally realised that the path of the bodhisattva is the one that leads to perfect enlightenment.

In chapter four we hear a similar statement from the elder disciples of the Buddha,

"Now we sit with weary bodies and only contemplate emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. Neither the bodhisattva teaching, nor the carefree sporting with transcendent powers, nor the pure buddha worlds, nor helping sentient beings attain enlightenment produced any eager desire in us."

What they did not have was bodhicitta. So, the essential difference between a śrāvaka and a bodhisattva is bodhicitta. And what is the difference in their paths? In chapter one the Lotus Sutra says,

"To those seeking for the śrāvaka vehicle he taught the Dharma with respect to the Four Noble Truths, causing them to overcome birth, old age, illness, and death and to attain nirvana. He taught the Dharma with respect to dependent origination to the pratyekabuddhas; and to the bodhisattvas he taught the Dharma with respect to the six perfections (pāramitās), causing them to attain highest, complete enlightenment and perfect all-knowledge (sarva jñātā)."

It is the four noble truths, dependent origination and the six paramitas that are the paths of the three vehicles. And the meaning of the one vehicle is made clear in the second chapter,

"Even though the buddhas of the future
Will teach hundreds of thousands of koṭis
Of innumerable paths to the Dharma,
Their teachings will actually be
For the sake of the single vehicle.
All the buddhas, the Best of Humans,
Know that all dharmas are ever without substance
And that the buddha-seeds germinate
Through dependent origination.
That is why they will teach the single vehicle.
Having realized on the terrace of enlightenment
That the state of the Dharma

Is permanent and unchangeable in this world,
The Leaders will teach with skillful means."

The dharmas are without substance, without essence, and the buddhas teach many methods (the three vehicles) to help beings realise this. That there is a difference between the limited view of emptiness of the sravakas and the complete view of Mahayana is shown in the twelfth chapter,

"Those who were originally śrāvakas explained the śrāvaka practices in the air; and now they all practice to understand the meaning of emptiness of the Mahayana."

This emptiness of the Mahayana is the single vehicle itself, stated in the same chapter,

"You have expounded the essential character of dharmas
And revealed the teaching of the single vehicle."

And that is what bodhisattvas practice, as said in the first chapter,

"There are also bodhisattvas
Who are teaching innumerable sentient beings
The Dharma of tranquility
In various ways.
Furthermore, I see bodhisattvas
Who have perceived the essential character
Of all dharmas (phenomena) to be without duality,
Just like empty space.
I also see heirs of the buddhas
Who are seeking the highest path
Through this subtle wisdom,
Their minds free of attachment."

And the instruction on this practice with clarification is given in the fourteenth chapter,

"Furthermore, the bodhisattva mahāsattvas perceive the emptiness of all dharmas in their true aspect. All things are unerring, unmoving, nonreturning, irreversible, and like empty space which lacks substance. They are beyond all language. They are not produced, nor do they emerge, nor do they arise. They do not have any name or mark, and in reality they have no substance. They are immeasurable, limitless, without obstacles or obstructions. They exist only through dependent origination, arising through error. That is why I teach the permanent joy of perceiving the aspects of all existent things in this way. This is what is known as the second sphere of relationships of a bodhisattva mahāsattva."

And again, to show that this realisation of emptiness is equal to the omniscience of the buddhas, chapter five shows how it is also the single vehicle,

"Just like the great cloud that rains upon all the grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs, whose

seeds are watered and which grow according to their capacities, the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma of one aspect and character; that is to say, the character of liberation, dispassion, and cessation which ultimately leads to omniscience.

...

It is just like the grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs that do not know their own natures, whether they are superior, mediocre, or inferior. Yet the Tathāgata knows the teachings of one aspect and character, the character of liberation, dispassion, cessation, complete nirvana, and eternal tranquility which ultimately leads to emptiness."

With this understanding should the Lotus Sutra itself be taught, as the tenth chapter instructs,

"The Tathāgata's chamber is nothing but the great compassion toward all sentient beings. The Tathāgata's garments are the thoughts of gentleness and perseverance, and the Tathāgata's seat is the very emptiness of all existing things."

This is a combination of compassion and emptiness, which is the true realisation of a bodhisattva and the buddhas. It is compassion itself that gives the primary difference between the sravakas and bodhisattvas. It is bodhicitta. So it is said by the Buddha in chapter fourteen,

"He should not acquire, comprehend,
Or perceive any phenomenon.
This is what is known
As the sphere of the
Bodhisattva practice.
All dharmas are empty and without substance,
Impermanent, without origination or cessation.
This is known as the sphere
Of the relationships of the wise.
Through the error of discrimination
One sees all existent things
As existing or nonexisting,
Real or unreal,
Produced or unproduced.
Being in a quiet place, the bodhisattva
Carries out practices to control his mind
And remains as firm and unmoved
As Mount Sumeru.
He should regard all dharmas
As being without substance,
Like empty space
Which has no firmness.
All dharmas are neither produced
Nor do they emerge;
They are immovable, nonreturning,
And always remain in their single character."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 10th, 2012 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Baloney! and Jundo Cohen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hi Jundo,

You teach as you please of course, and you are not alone in that kind of symbolic interpretation of the teachings. And not alone I mean among the contemporary teachers who grew up within a materialist culture. Naturally, that kind of teaching appeals to a certain audience. And as long as it brings people the decrease of unwholesome states and the increase of the wholesome ones, it is wonderful. What lies beyond that, the ending of afflictions and the awakening of bodhicitta, is another matter. What are your goals in teaching? Zen is said to be the sudden path to buddhahood. Is that what you teach?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: Defintion of Mahamudra according to CNR

Content:

Astus wrote:

The 3rd Karmapa was a master not only of Mahamudra but also Dzogchen and Kalachakra. Still, he says in the Single Word of Heart advice, "I swear there is not a more profound and ultimate instruction from all the holy and realized masters of the enlightened lineage that is more profound and more vital than this single word of my heart-advice."

Adeu Rinpoche (in Quintessential Dzogchen, p. 213) also finds correlation between the four yogas and the four visions as the gradual stages of training in the natural state of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Some Notes on Mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks for your notes. It's the first time I hear about Lama Phurbu Tashi but he is already sympathetic. I hope there will be more transcripts on their homepage in the future.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: Master Seung Sahn's Enlightenment & Poem

Content:

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment by sound, a common Zen theme. But, the Shurangama Sutra's teaching on Avalokitesvara's method is not exactly the same. As for the Zen part, enlightenment by a sudden noise or other experience, it means the cutting of conceptual thinking while at the same time being aware. This is called enlightenment, an initial experience to allow oneself to do actual practice. Why is it then that while everyone has been startled now and then by a sound or other impressions, few has become enlightened? That's because they didn't know what to see. Now, you are trying to get a sense of some Zen story, but this is again just conceptual manipulation. If you want to conduct a proper analysis, you have to first study the teachings. And by teachings I don't mean Zen stories and lectures, but sutras, treatises, commentaries, and teachings about them. All Zen teachers were educated in Buddhist doctrines, as it is an essential part of the monastic training. Look at this from the Record of Linji (tr. Sasaki),

"Followers of the Way, he who is a renouncer of home must needs study the Way. Take me, for example—I started out devoting myself to the vinaya and also delved into the sutras and śāstras. Later, when I realized that they were only remedies to help the world and displays of opinion, I threw them all away, and, searching for the Way, I practiced meditation. Still later I met a great teacher. Then, indeed, my dharma-eye became clear and for the first time I was able to understand all the old teachers of the world and to tell the true from the false. It is not that I understood from the moment I was born of my mother, but that, after exhaustive investigation and grinding practice, in one instant I knew for myself."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: Master Seung Sahn's Enlightenment & Poem

Content:

mujushinkyo said:

I understand what you're saying, but it's not completely so. Layman Pang, for example, didn't take ordination or study Buddhist doctrines. I have studied sutras, treatises, commentaries and teachings, yet there is still the basic question : What is this?

Astus wrote:

Layman Pang was a literati, a very well educated person, just as less famous lay Zen followers in later times. As for the basic question, Seung Sahn's reply was always, "only don't know".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra (妙法蓮華經, Kumarajiva translation) does not contain words like

buddha-nature (佛性), or tathagatagarbha (如来藏), or self-nature (自性), or true suchness (真如). While the actual words "not void" (不空) does appear in chapter 25, it simply means "not in vain" and not the technical term non-empty.

The Prajnaparamita sutras describe the bodhisattva path and they were generally not accepted by sravakas. So what makes you think that they have anything to do with it?

In China it was Zhiyi of Tiantai who elevated the Lotus Sutra as the final teaching and added the Nirvana Sutra to that. However, he also heavily relied on the Mahaprajnaparamitaupadesha, a major work by Nagarjuna. And if you check his Threefold Truth (三諦), the central doctrine of Tiantai, it says that the Middle Way is "Phenomena are both empty of existence and exist provisionally at once", which agrees perfectly with what I have already said.

As for your emphasis on that the buddha-nature is not empty but everything else is empty, what does that mean? It means that it is not empty of the buddha qualities (powers, marks, wisdoms, etc.). In this then there is no difficulty, since the teaching of the three buddha bodies also cover this, but it's still not in disagreement with the other teachings. That's how the dharmakaya is empty and the rupakaya manifests everywhere. In prajnaparamita terms, if a bodhisattva masters one paramita, he has mastered them all. If one realises emptiness completely, the buddha qualities appear naturally. Neither the Lotus Sutra nor the Nirvana Sutra has any other path for bodhisattvas than the six paramitas, just as in the prajnaparamita sutras. So how could there be a disagreement?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Becoming a Monk

Content:

tracefleeman said:

I don't have any money :/

Astus wrote:

Travelling requires money, so if you don't have a monastery that accepts you for a few weeks, you should consider other options. For instance, doing a home retreat following a proper daily schedule. The book <http://www.ymba.org/monkey/monkeyfrm.htm> has advices on retreats, but you can find other sources too, like the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra, or perhaps ask assistance from a monk/teacher through e-mail or phone.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Is 'Wholesome Conduct' in Sex a good Karma?

Content:

Simon E. said:

You accurately sum up the Buddhist view. However this is not the View in Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

AFAIK, neither dependent origination nor karma is missing from Dzogchen, just as Dzogchen ngondro (Longchen Nyingtig, Dudjom Tersar) contains the four thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Matylda said:

SHIKAN TAZA 只管打坐

只 - SHI - only; free

管 - KAN - pipe; tube; wind instrument; drunken talk; control; jurisdiction

打 - TA - strike; hit; knock; pound;

坐 - ZA - sit

Astus wrote:

If you don't mind, it's made of two words only, and the reading exists both in Japanese and Chinese.

只管 -

Chinese: zhǐguǎn : solely engrossed in one thing / just (one thing, no need to worry about the rest) / simply / by all means / please feel free / do not hesitate (to ask for sth)

Japanese: hitasura / shikan : nothing but; earnest; intent; determined; set on (something)

打坐 -

Chinese: dǎzuò : sit in meditation / to meditate

Japanese: taza : to sit for meditation

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

I don't know that much about kanjis to be able to comprehend it fully when the character is broken down to elements, but I have seen that kind of explanation, although not yet for shikantaza itself. As for the "taza", yes, it was a Buddhist dictionary that came up with a meaning on its own, but in Chinese they still have it within everyday language, if a non-specialised dictionary is any indication.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 11th, 2012 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jundo,

So much complication about sitting. Everybody in an office sits about 8 hours a day or more. That's why personally this idea that sitting has to be done in a ritual way, including a special posture, is not appealing as the central meaning of Zen. Sure, sitting in the right way has its benefits, that's why they use it everywhere in Buddhism and outside of it. For some reason Dogen's way of presenting simple sitting meditation is similar to Shinran's manipulation with the nenbutsu that is basically just reciting the name.

Daehaeng Sunim's approach is a lot more sensible to me:

"When some people first hear about letting go, it seems too ambiguous or difficult. They feel uncertain about what to do when they hear about letting go, because no method or detailed instruction is given. You may feel that you have to use sitting meditation in order to practice. However, your mind doesn't sit just because your body does. Meditation is done through mind, not through the body. You have to begin by taking care of problems through mind. You're doing things backward if you're trying to use your body to grasp your mind."

(No River to Cross, p. 54)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 12th, 2012 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jundo,

I follow you. But you're right, Dogen's style of teaching did not touch me. Keizan is closer to me, although I have read only one work from him. Beyond that, I think only Anzan Hoshin's way of instructing I like of those few I know from Japanese Soto Zen. Chinese Caodong is a different matter. But this is really a matter of style.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 12th, 2012 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: Signs of progress

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Mahamudra you find the four yogas and each yoga's three levels. They describe the gradual path. You can find an extended explanation on it in Tashi Namgyal's "Mahamudra: the Moonlight".

Some online sources:

<http://luminousemptiness.blogspot.hu/2008/07/song-of-distinguishing-four-yogas.html> by Milarepa

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=100&t=4999> by Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_5TvB4lXfw - a video lecture by the Venerable Khenpo Rinpoches

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 12th, 2012 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan, Pali and Chinese canons: differences?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are several editions of the East Asian Tripitaka. The commonly used Taisho Tripitaka was assembled in the 20th century and it has 100 volumes. Here is the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Shinsh%C5%AB_Daiz%C5%8Dky%C5%8D. Additionally there is the Zokuzokyo canon that has 88 volumes and contains texts not found in the Taisho Canon. Additionally to that there is the Jiaxing Canon that contains further texts from the Ming and Qing dynasty not contained in the other two, and is somewhat larger than the Taisho Canon. These are all modern collections.

There are also older editions, like the

<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B9%BE%E9%9A%86%E8%97%8F> (1733), the <http://baike.baidu.com/view/111081.htm> (1372), and others before them. The oldest complete collection that still exists in woodblocks is the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripit%E1%B9%ADaka_Koreana (1251).

As for which one is the biggest canon, that requires a definition of canon. If canonical works are strictly of Indian origin, then it might be the Tibetan because of the tantras - although the Chinese also have a large collection of them - as Jnana said. If a canon is not restricted to Indian origin - since it is common in East Asian canons to have all sorts of commonly accepted works being included - it is the Chinese (by which I mean a language, not a nation).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 12th, 2012 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

By Chinese Caodong I meant the Song dynasty tradition. Ven. Shengyan reintroduced somewhat the practice of silent illumination in Taiwan, but it's modern as you said. Regarding practice with koans, just as you said, it was part of Japanese Soto too. As for distinguishing Linji and Caodong, it makes practically no difference in China, just as you

can't make a difference between one monk and another by the practices they do. It seems to me that while sitting meditation is a common practice, reducing the whole teachings to that is quite another matter. It's like what Honen did with reducing everything to buddha-remembrance, something that never really happened anywhere else. It would appear that this kind of emphasis on a single method in Japan is a unique historical phenomenon, especially as they could survive to this day.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 13th, 2012 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Master Seung Sahn's Enlightenment & Poem

Content:

mujushinkyo said:

Of course. "Don't-know." I don't-know every day. I'm educated, but it doesn't matter. I don't believe studying sutras leads anywhere. At least not for me. What about for you?

Astus wrote:

For me, sutras are the primary authority within Buddhism, all teachings are derived from them. The words of Shakyamuni are the Dharma, all the other works are only commentaries. Therefore, the guidance for the path is found in the sutras first. That's why they are important to me. To give a Zen example, Bodhidharma handed the Lankavatara Sutra to Huike to give an authentic basis for what he taught.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 13th, 2012 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the Prajnaparamita sutras do describe the Bodhisattva path, BUT the Lotus makes it clear the 6 paramitas are not the law, and the emptiness that was taught before the Lotus sutra was not emancipation."

What you say is based on the idea that there is a hierarchy among sutras, and your hierarchy is based on the Tiantai interpretation that the Lotus and Nirvana sutras are the highest, or on some Tibetan idea that the tathagatagarbha is the highest teaching. As for the first one of the Tiantai idea of the five periods, schools outside of Tiantai don't necessarily accept it. And the idea of the third turning of the wheel, that is not accepted by all schools either, nor is it interpreted in the same way in each school that accepts it. Beyond the ideas and interpretations of specific schools, the categorisation of sutras is arbitrary and not based on the texts themselves. Why? Because almost every sutra claims superiority above all other teachings, and neither the Lotus nor the Nirvana sutra is special in that. As the Diamond Sutra (ch. 8, tr. C. Muller) says, "all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra." So, where does the Lotus Sutra say explicitly that the six paramitas are superseded by a different path?

"I would need more detail or explanation for this quote, are you saying it is empty of tainted defilements and samsara existence? I would agree? I also wouldn't say it exists provisionally at once, the Nirvana sutra speaks of that which is empty of false self and tainted ego defilements, then states the Tathagatagarbha isn't empty of itself and is permanent, so it wouldn't exist "provisionally" it would exist as the reality of all phenomena."

It means that things exist provisionally (conventional truth) but does not exist ultimately as self-existent things (ultimate truth). This is the middle way, the non-dual view. This is the correct understanding of emptiness in the Prajnaparamita sutras, Madhyamaka and Yogacara.

When you say that the buddha-nature is not empty of itself, what is itself?

"which would mean empty of everything even itself, which means everything including the Buddha is subject to dependant origination"

That's absurd. The point of being enlightened is that one becomes free of karma, free of rebirth, free of dependent origination. It is exactly because there is no self that there is freedom. If there was a self, it would be either deluded or enlightened, making any path of liberation impossible or unnecessary.

"the Best view I have come across that describes the Emptiness that is empty of all defilements but is not empty of its ultimate reality would be the view of shentong,"

Emptiness is not a thing, it means that appearances are without an independent self-nature, thus they are dependently originated.

As for Shentong, Taranatha says (in "Essence of Zhentong"

http://www.jonangfoundation.org/files/jf_snying%20po_final.pdf),

"Naturally radiant self-cognizant pristine awareness that is not divided from the expanse is known as ultimate reality, the unconditional actuality of phenomena."

"Because of this, the essence of the tathāgatas and the nondual pristine awareness that pervades the nature of phenomena are equally adorned with all of the ultimate enlightened qualities of buddhahood. Just this great and invariable perfected nature is endowed with every aspect of pristine awareness while remaining free from all fabrications. This is the only unmistakable abiding reality. Because it is established as real, it is the object of experience for the undistorted pristine awareness of the exalted ones. Because it is invariable, it is constant, stable, and everlasting."

"To relinquish your subtle fixations on the discursive thinking of the relative, meditatively subsume yourself non-conceptually within the expanse. Through this process, you will then gradually come to encounter the non-conceptual enlightened essence directly." As was discussed already, the realisation of emptiness is non-conceptuality, and it is exactly the way to realise buddha-nature. That's why Taranatha says, "So, those who assert rangtong unerringly, and those who definitively assert that there is no essence

are both proponents of zhentong." This awareness is prajnaparamita, that's why it's also called the mother of buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 14th, 2012 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: restricted texts question

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've just found this one, another translation of the 9th Karmapa's instructions by a disciple of Gendun Rinpoche:

Henrik Havlat: Mahamudra - The Ocean of True Meaning
(also available in German)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 14th, 2012 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Baloney! and Jundo Cohen

Content:

shel said:

Why Jundo's personal crusade against the Buddhist doctrine that he cannot believe? Perhaps I'm afraid he will turn away people interested in Buddhism. Is that a good enough reason?

Astus wrote:

Jundo's crusade against the Buddhist doctrine? Where? He actively teaches Zen, he even has a unique form of online training that in my opinion is magnificent to have. He even gives ordination so others can start/lead communities in a more official-looking way.

True, has has a not so traditional view of the sutras. But there's nothing strange or new about that. Just look at Brad Warner and compare the two styles of teaching. Or there is Sanbo Kyodan, the largest lineage in the West, that even has Catholic priests as Zen teachers. I'm not defending Jundo's interpretation of the sutras, but calling it a crusade against Buddhism? That's hardly the case.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 14th, 2012 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Master Seung Sahn's Enlightenment & Poem

Content:

seeker242 said:

Does he still study the scriptures after he has entered the "exhaustive investigation and grinding practice" stage? Or does he actually throw them away?

Astus wrote:

Consider these stories.

Once, when Daopi was reading a sutra he saw a monk coming for instruction. Daopi lifted his arm and covered his head with his sleeve. The monk came up to him and affected a sympathetic demeanor.

Daopi pulled his sleeve from his head, picked up the sutra, and said, "Do you understand?"

The monk then covered his own head with his sleeve.

Daopi said, "Blue heavens! Blue heavens!"

Once while the master [Zhaozhou] was reading the Vajracchedika Sutra a monk asked, "All the Buddhas and the Perfect Wisdom of all the Buddhas can all be attained from this sutra.' What is this sutra?"

The master said, "'Diamond Prajna-paramita Sutra. Thus I have heard. Once the Buddha was in Sravasti..."

The monk said, "That's not right."

The master said, "I can't amend the scriptures on my own."

When the Master (Mu-chou) was reading the sutras, the Minister Chen Tsao asked him, "Master, what sutra are you reading?" The Master said, "The Diamond sutra!" The Minister said, "The Diamond sutra was translated in the Sixth Dynasty; which edition are you using?" The Master lifted up the book and said, "All things produced by causation are simply an illusive dream and the shadow of a bubble."

When the Master (Mu-chou) was reading the Nirvana sutra, a monk asked him what sutra he was reading. The Master picked up the book and said, "This is the last one for cremation."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 14th, 2012 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I'm missing from your response is the quote showing what other path the Lotus Sutra gives that is different what we find in other sutras. Also, the Lotus Sutra doesn't mention any sutra by title that would be inferior to it, it only talks about the inferiority of sravakas, but not bodhisattvas.

In the first chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

"At that time the Bhagavat was respectfully surrounded by the fourfold assembly (i.e., monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen), paid homage, honored, and praised. He then taught the bodhisattvas the Mahayana sutra called Immeasurable Meanings (Mahānirdeśa), the instruction for the bodhisattvas and the treasured lore of the buddhas."

From the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra20.html>:

“World-Honored One, what is this Dharma Door called? What is its meaning? How should Bodhisattvas train themselves?”

The Buddha replied, “Good men, this one Dharma Door is called Immeasurable Meaning. Bodhisattvas who wish to study and learn the immeasurable meaning should observe that dharmas have always been empty in nature and in appearance. With neither birth nor death, dharmas are neither large nor small, neither moving nor standing still, neither advancing nor retreating. Like space, they are non-dual.”

“The immeasurable meanings are born from one dharma. This one dharma is no appearance, which is not apart from appearance. The truth that appearance and no appearance are not apart from each other is called true reality. As Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas abide in this true reality, the lovingkindness and compassion they exude are genuine, not false. They can truly end sentient beings’ suffering. Having rescued them from suffering, Bodhisattvas pronounce the Dharma to them, enabling them to experience happiness.

“Good men, if Bodhisattvas can train in this one Dharma Door of Immeasurable Meaning, they will quickly attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Good men, this profound, unexcelled Mahāyāna Sūtra of Immeasurable Meaning is true in its principle and supreme in its dignity. It is protected by all Buddhas of the past, present, and future. No māras or non-Buddhists can enter it, nor can it be corrupted by the wrong views that perpetuate birth and death. Therefore, good men, Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who wish to attain the unsurpassed bodhi should study and learn this profound, unexcelled Mahāyāna Sūtra of Immeasurable Meaning.”

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 16th, 2012 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Sutra of the secret Essential Method of Dhyana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is the Chinese on CBETA: <http://www.cbeta.org/result/T15/T15n0613.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 16th, 2012 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

The other two nirvanas the Lotus Sutra talks about is the nirvana of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, and the only true liberation is buddhahood that the bodhisattvas attain. That is what the one vehicle means, that both sravakas and pratyekabuddhas will become bodhisattvas and attain buddhahood. The idea that the Lotus Sutra points to the Nirvana Sutra is not mentioned in the sutra itself, and the connection between them is not established in any of them. What the Lotus Sutra calls the previous sutras are the teachings taught to the sravakas, since they say that they have not heard about it before, but not the teachings of Mahayana. Also, the connection you make between the Lotus

and the Nirvana Sutra are your interpretation and not stated in them. Explaining one with the other is possible, but not necessary at all. The Lankavatara Sutra is a teaching that actually talks about the buddha-nature, and it also says that (XXVIII): "the reason why the Tathagatas who are Arhats and Fully-Enlightened Ones, teach the doctrine pointing to the Tathagata-garbha is to make the ignorant cast aside their fear when they listen to the teaching of egolessness and to have them realise the state of non-discrimination and imagelessness." As Ven. Yinshun, a modern master, sums it up (The Way to Buddhahood, §182, p. 315), "Some may think that the law of arising and extinction/Cannot be the foundation of being bound and being liberated/Because they are afraid of the phrase "the nonexistence of the self."/Therefore, the Buddha again embraced them with skillful means." This way the Nirvana Sutra can be rendered into another of the skilful teachings of the Buddha. And that's what the Lotus Sutra actually says, that all and every teaching of the Buddha is a means to liberation. The teaching is not the liberation itself but only something that points to it. Whether one can be helped by this or that method is not important as long as it works. And that is what ultimately makes Buddhism a single vehicle.

So, the question then is, what actual method is taught in the Nirvana Sutra? With what can one attain liberation according to the Nirvana Sutra? Simply the statement that there is a buddha-nature is not a path, not a technique, but a concept. How can we work with that idea? What brings us to liberation in that?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 16th, 2012 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Copyrighted Dharma books

Content:

Astus wrote:

You can teach a group of people from any book you like, and spread the understanding you gained from books. But, you are not allowed to sell the books under your name for instance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 17th, 2012 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Copyrighted Dharma books

Content:

LastLegend said:

But what is wrong with letting people copying the work? Are they not generating merits for writers, compilers, editors, etc by spreading the understanding or teaching? Strictly speaking of Dharma books.

Astus wrote:

There are always costs involved in any kind of work. For religious books you pay in donation to the church, for writers, editors, publishers, retail shops and government/state services you pay for the book. There are free editions online of course, but even then somebody has to pay for the servers and donate work for editing and

programming. For example, there are many sutras available online for free, and the different Buddhist canons are also published. If you speak Chinese for example, you have access to a huge number of Buddhist works and teachings for free and you can copy them as you like.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 17th, 2012 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's Chengguan's (4th patriarch of the Huayan school) view on the influence of Taoism on Buddhism.

豈言象之能至。故云迴出。又借斯亡絕以遣言思。(T36n1736, p2 b19)

Words may resemble very much. But the cause (behind it) is very different. We borrow the words but not accept their meaning.

言有濫同釋教者。皆是佛法之餘。(T35n1735, p521 b15-16)

Those who go too far and equate [false teachings] with Buddhism are all outside of the Buddhadharma.

無得求一時之小名。渾三教之一致。習邪見之毒種。為地獄之深因。開無明之源流。遏種智之玄路。誠之誠之。(T36n1736, p107 a11-13)

Do not seek after the trivial reputation of a single age and confuse the three teachings as one. Studying the poisonous seeds of false views is a deep cause for being born in hell, opens up the wellspring of ignorance, and blocks of the road to omniscience. Take heed! Take heed!

And his disciple, Zongmi says regarding Confucianism and Taoism, that is, the outer teachings:

由於時命；故死後卻歸天地，復其虛無。然外教宗旨，但在乎依身立行，不在究竟身之元由。所說萬物不論象外，雖指大道為本，而不備明順逆起滅染淨因緣，故習者不知是權，執之為了。(T45n1886, p708 a27-b4)

the essential meaning of the outer teachings merely lies in establishing [virtuous] conduct based on this bodily existence and does not lie in thoroughly investigating the ultimate source of this bodily existence. The myriad things that they talk about do not have to do with that which is beyond tangible form. Even though they point to the great Way as the origin, they still do not fully illuminate the pure and impure causes and conditions of conforming to and going against [the flow] of origination and extinction. Thus, those who study [the outer teachings] do not realize that they are provisional and cling to them as ultimate.

(Translations from Peter N. Gregory's "Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity")

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 17th, 2012 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I recommend you first read this:

http://www.daoistcenter.org/Daoism_Misconceptions.pdf (PDF) by Louis Komjathy, Ph.D. It gives a nice list of incorrect ideas. The

<http://www.daoistcenter.org/homepage.html> is also a valuable source of information.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 17th, 2012 at 7:52 AM

Title: Re: Sutra of the secret Essential Method of Dhyana

Content:

Matticus said:

Wow, this is fantastic, thanks again you guys. I don't understand a word of it, but the first leg of the journey is complete! Time to start bothering people I know that can read Chinese..... Or learn it myself??!! DUN DUN DUN

Astus wrote:

Just make sure that those people can read classic Chinese with Buddhist terminology.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 17th, 2012 at 3:37 PM

Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?

Content:

Ikkyu said:

I read your .pdf, and I personally found it lacking. While this individual asserts that there is no such things as Philosophical Taoism (Daojia), this is of course not true. It follows logic that between the periods in which the Tao Te Ching and Zhuangzi were written in the 4th century BCE and Religious Taoism came about in the 2nd century CE that there had to be some philosophical following of Taoism outside of ancestor and Heaven worship and the veneration of the Immortals or Shens.

See <http://www.reformtaoism.org/>.

Astus wrote:

Ancestor worship, rituals, magic, etc. are older than any writing, they are universal in almost every human culture. Organised Taoism, a Taoist self-awareness appeared after Buddhism reached and spread in China. There were philosophers, of course, just as there are New Age thinkers today without making it a single philosophy with fixed axioms.

You can of course interpret Laozi and Zhuangzi in a way that harmonises with Buddhism. Many did so before in East Asia. You can even find Buddhist commentaries. But then, it is not the same what those who are considered Taoists believe. It is also possible to read the Bible or the Bhagavad Gita, or practically any kind of book, with a Buddhist eye. Still, just because one likes to believe that Krsna was a bodhisattva, it won't make him a Hindu. In the same way, Buddhist teachings can be interpreted in a non-Buddhist way. What all this boils down to is a philosophical and theological debate on orthodoxy.

By the way, there is no such thing as philosophical Buddhism either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 18th, 2012 at 5:35 AM

Title: Dzogchen Resources

Content:

Astus wrote:

Teachers and Communities

<http://www.dzogchen.it/> of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche

<http://www.rigpa.org/> of Sogyal Rinpoche

<http://www.dzogchen.org/> of Lama Surya Das

<https://www.ligmincha.org/> of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

<http://www.vajranatha.com/> of John Myrdhin Reynolds

<http://www.nalandabodhi.org/> of Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

http://www.simplybeing.co.uk/simply/Simply_Being_Dzogchen.html of James Low

Teachings

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/x/nav/n.html_1870389411.html

<http://www.keithdowman.net/dzogchen/>

<http://www.zangthal.co.uk/files.html>

<http://www.nitartha.org/home.html>

Local Topics of Interest

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=8880>

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=8239>

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=4052>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 18th, 2012 at 5:35 AM

Title: Dzogchen Resources

Content:

Astus wrote:

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<http://www.dzogchen.it/> of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche
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<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=8239>
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=4052>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 18th, 2012 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Karma in Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks for the post. It was a good teaching, and good to see Dan Lusthaus.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 18th, 2012 at 9:01 PM

Title: Re: Taoism in general, specifically it's connections with Ch'an

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

seems VERY Daoist. It seems too fluid to be purely Confucian.

... I was more throwing it out there as an example of the cross-fertilisation between indigenous Chinese culture and (Indian) Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

That's the point, it is just Chinese, old Chinese. A tarot deck is not Kabbalistic, Thelemic or Christian just because it shows some connection to each of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 19th, 2012 at 3:01 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

MY REPLY:the answer is chapter 19 to chapter 46 from pg 134 to 477,the first 18 chapters are concept the rest are practice.read this then look for commentary on the empty of taint and not empty of itself emptiness and this will help.

Astus wrote:

Could you sum up the practical points?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 19th, 2012 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: The Healthy State of Buddhism, In Japan and Elsewhere

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know much about the current state of Japanese Buddhism, but it seems to me that just as in other areas of life, it is not simply black or white. I remember from the "Marathon Monks" film that they mention that those Tendai monks eat strictly vegetarian food. And in the Myoshinji line of Rinzai Zen the actual masters (from the rank "shike" 師家 and above) have to live in celibacy (Jørn Borup: Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism, p. 60). So there are those who live according to the old ideals of a home-leaver.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 19th, 2012 at 10:41 PM

Title: Single Self-Sufficient Path

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Jewel Ornament of Liberation (chapter on prajnaparamita, p. 251-255) Gampopa writes,

If the meaning of emptiness does not dwell within the mind, we cannot attain liberation by means of the other virtues.

When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path.

Cultivation of bodhicitta is also included. Visualization of the deity and the recitation of mantras are also said

to be complete when this [the realization of emptiness] exists. Performing fire-offering rituals is also included in this. Even the path—the six perfections—is complete in this. Doing prostrations is also included in this. It is also offering if one has this. Again, if one is endowed with this, it is also the very purification of evil deeds. The guarding of moral ethics and samaya is also included in this meaning. Listening, reflecting, and meditating are also encompassed in this meaning. Torma cakes and daily Dharma rituals are also included in this meaning.

In that case, if all these are included in meditating on only the essence or the mind-as-

such, why do there appear teachings on so many graduated methods? It is for the purpose of leading all those sentient beings of little fortune, who are ignorant in the ultimate nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2012 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Vegetarianism in Zen, Chan, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

[quote="Matylda" What matters after all for me is the quality of teaching, quality of experience and realization. If it does not work then nothing really works. Regardless of celibacy, non-celibacy etc..[/quote]

Sherlock said:

what is more important is the state of Buddhadharma in Japan currently and its prospects for long-term survival.

Astus wrote:

And I can only agree with both of you. Many great masters in Japan taught lay people with the intention to enlighten them to the Dharma and liberate them all. Since I'm sure that people benefited greatly from Buddhism regardless of their ordination and social status, what we should be concerned about is our own wisdom and the happiness of everyone. It is easy to find bad things anywhere in the world, including monasteries. But if our mind is occupied by only this negative attitude it's hard to see the goodness and beauty. And even if we encounter something awful, the best thing to do is to understand it and learn how to avoid it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2012 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: 'Rarity' of Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find it the same kind of motivational teaching as saying that human birth is rare, meeting the Dharma is rare, etc. The point is to go study and practise, otherwise you're just wasting your time.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2012 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jinul teaches both many methods and one method. Buswell writes in the introduction (Collected Works, p. 62)

"As his biographer, Kim Kun-su, first noted, Chinul tailored three main styles of Son practice which show the direct influences of his three enlightenment experiences: the balanced cultivation of samadhi and prajna, deriving from the Platform Sutra; faith and understanding according to the complete and sudden teachings of the Hwaom school, from Li T'ung-hsuan's Exposition of the Avatamsaka Sutra; and, finally, the shortcut approach of hwadu investigation, from the Records of Ta-hui. These styles were intended to instruct people of inferior, average, and superior spiritual capacities respectively. To supplement these three basic methods, Chinul taught two additional techniques for people of highest and lowest capacity: the approach of no-mind (thoughtlessness) and the recollection of the Buddha's name.²³⁰ He explained that each method could be followed exclusively or a progression from the simpler techniques to the more difficult could be cultivated."

As for the essential path, Jinul writes (Collected Works, p. 266),

"Consequently, even though we cultivate the manifold supplementary practices, they all have thoughtlessness as their core," If we can only maintain thoughtlessness, liking and disliking will naturally fade away, and compassion and wisdom will naturally grow in brightness; wrong actions will naturally be halted, and meritorious deeds will naturally be augmented. As far as our understanding is concerned, we will perceive that all signs are signless; as far as practice is concerned, it will be called the cultivation whereby nothing is cultivated. When the defilements are finally extirpated, birth and death will be cut off, As arising and ceasing have ended, a calm radiance will manifest and our responsiveness will be unlimited." This is called Buddhahood."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2012 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: 'Rarity' of Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sherlock,

Shakyamuni in the early texts taught people to attain arhatship, not buddhahood. In fact, I have not heard or met any early scripture where Gautama advised people to become buddhas. On the other hand, he did say that there isn't much difference between an arhat and a buddha. Now, that's for "Theravada".

In Mahayana there is sudden enlightenment, even buddhahood in this life. For instance, it is a basic point of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 21st, 2012 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: are the jhanas taught in zen/chan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, many different practices. From yeombul to hwadu they could all be named Zen methods. If compared to what we find in other schools, then only hwadu remains as a Zen style practice, and the others are what practically everyone has. However, hwadu was the invention of Dahui, so we can't really say that it is a technique that Bodhidharma brought to China. What is it that remains? No-thought, or in Budwell's translation, thoughtlessness.

As for the dhyanas, I think in Jinul's system it'd fit in all right to the samadhi practice of the gradual path. And that's what it is of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 5:36 PM

Title: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Alayavijnana is used to explain how karma is carried on from moment to moment, life to life, and also it is a basis for the continuation of a being. Here are some problems I have:

If alayavijnana is a part/mode of consciousness, why are we not aware of it?

If we can't be aware of it, what makes it part of the consciousness? / If there can be a part of consciousness one is not aware of, what makes it consciousness?

If only buddhas are aware of it, since they have it already purified, even they can't see the defiled seeds, and so it's only an assumption.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

Do you have any reference for that? I mean, I haven't yet read anywhere that when abiding in the nature of mind, you see all the seeds that are present in the alayavijnana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Huifeng said:

In particular, the ramifications and indeed requirements once alaya is established as a vijnana, as opposed to the collection of bijas.

Astus wrote:

As a background info, I've been reading the Cheng Weishi Lun when these questions

came up.

Even if we talk about seeds only, they are mental phenomena, and the questions remain. How can a mental phenomenon exist without the mind being conscious of it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 8:53 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Aaaahhh... here is a reference for you: Dispelling misconceptions about the True Nature, Lesson 62 from Mahamudra - The Ocean of True Meaning

Astus wrote:

That part talks only about how the buddha-mind is full of good qualities. Doesn't even mention karmic seeds or alayavijnana. Are you sure that's your reference?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg, yes, that's it. Where does it say that with realising Mahamudra you can observe karmic seeds?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

What you are dealing with here is the problem of avidya. How can anger arise without your being conscious of it? Once it's full blown, you are conscious of it. But it comes on to you unawares. As soon as the circumstances align, it jumps out. This is the meaning of seed. Eye organ contacts object, pleasant or painful, generates eye-consciousness, aroused by memory and then anger can arise. This is the seed. In a sense Alaya-vijnana is memory stored deep in the "unconscious."

So the "seeds" are dependent originations. Buddhas don't see them because of that. So turning your attention to the process, seeing nothing, they disappear, slowly never to reappear. That's how it goes.

Astus wrote:

You just say that there is alayavijnana, but you don't answer how can there be mental phenomena without being aware of them. It is a problem because if there is no need of

consciousness for a mental phenomena, then there are thoughts without being thought, and even a stone could have mental phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2012 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

I can turn it into a quite simple problem:

If we are not aware of seeds, how can they be mental phenomena? If we are aware of seeds, how could they be latent?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anjali,

We suppose an unconscious mind, but since we are never aware of it, it is only a supposition, an explanation without experiential basis. We could as well think that latencies abide on the other side of the universe, or whatever we like. And I'm not bringing in any Madhyamaka arguments, like from the Madhyamakavatara.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

What is the source of the aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings?

You are missing the forest for the trees my dear Astus. Looking to find specific words instead of seeing the meaning.

Astus wrote:

OK. It says, "The aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings have all from the beginning the true nature of awakened male and female buddhas and deities."

That's almost like saying that the aggregates, etc. are selfless, empty. It confirms the original purity of all phenomena. And so I ask how that relates to karmic seeds.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

There are numerous mental phenomena occurring that I am not aware of. Take anger for example. You can be angry and so caught up in the feeling that you not aware of your anger. I can be aware of my capacity for anger yet not be currently expressing or feeling anger.

Astus wrote:

Does one feel angry when one is angry? Of course. Without feeling anger one can't be angry. The feeling itself is the consciousness in this case. What you say by not recognising on another level that one is angry, not identifying in a verbal-conceptual way with the idea of anger, is another thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Yes, but at the same time "The aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings..." are the products of karma. Realising ones true nature allows one to see ones karmic seeds since they are the source of the aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings and at the same time the aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings are part of ones Buddha Nature.

Astus wrote:

Anyone who followed the pointing out instructions of Mahamudra has seen the nature of mind. But who has seen thousands of seeds? Also, there is another problem with this. They are called seeds because of their latency.

Vasubandhu writes, "What is consciousness? It is awareness of an object. ... Primarily, thought is the storehouse consciousness, because that is where the seeds of all the formations are collected." (Pancaskandhaprakarana in "The Inner Science of Buddhist Practice", p. 239)

So, even if there is talk about gross and subtle consciousness, all the seeds present in a single moment should be observable.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

You keep changing the goal posts. A minute ago you were talking about awareness and now you are talking about feeling. So what are we talking about? Awareness or feeling?

One can be angry and not be aware that they are angry. It happens all the time.

Astus wrote:

Because feeling is a form of awareness I don't see any change of topic here. Seeing something and hearing something both have awareness. If I'm not aware of seeing or hearing something, then I don't see or hear it. Same with feeling.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 6:56 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

How come emotion can arise even if one doesn't want it to? There is clearly some process going on that one is not aware of and it is happening in your conscious mind. You are ignoring it. What you are ignoring is the alaya-vijnana. This is the meaning of avidya. Once you become aware of the alaya, these habits cannot arise.

Astus wrote:

How do you define ignorance in this case? Being ignorant of what? The alayavijnana itself? And how do you become aware of it? Or rather the ignorance in this case should be not realising that all is consciousness. But I'd still like to find a reference from actually being aware of seeds in a treatise.

Another problem is that the seeds are meant to be latent, they are defined as such. And when one is enlightened, the seeds are gone.

"The support is then converted. When that support is entirely converted, then the container consciousness with all its seeds is entirely eliminated together with all those seeds." (Asanga: Summary of the Great Vehicle, 1.48)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Huifeng said:

anusaya

Astus wrote:

How does that make the issue simpler? Latent defilements or seeds are both supposed to be mental phenomena that we are unaware of, and by definition they are meant to be latent. Which is OK, but then why are they mental? Or should we say that consciousness is not the essence of mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

You become aware of it by practicing the 5 paths. You probably want to see Maitreya's treatises.

Astus wrote:

Can you give some closer reference, like which treatise, which chapter, where it talks about becoming aware of alayavijnana and the seeds?

deepbluehum said:

They can only function so long as the alaya-vijnana has not been perceived. Once it is perceived, they cease to function.

Astus wrote:

In that case, there are no seeds left to become aware of. And this is what I mentioned as the problem, that in the end nobody ever sees any seed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sudden enlightenment is directly seeing the nature of mind. That can result in permanent liberation in rare cases, but most of the times it is insight into truth, but then one has to keep working with that to stabilise the realisation.

BTW, Huineng's true enlightenment occurred when he had a secret meeting with Hongren.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

There's no problem. You are toiling with the idea of a dependently originated object. The seed is a contingent remainder of the three prior consciousnesses working together. It can only operate so long as you are caught unawares. As soon as you see this operation, it stops.

Astus wrote:

And my issue is with the seed as mental phenomenon. Here it makes no difference that it is a contingent remainder or whatever else. The question is regarding it's nature of existence. For instance, you say, "It can only operate so long as you are caught unawares", but how can a consciousness operate without being conscious?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greg,

By awareness I did not mean any particular function, but simply consciousness. Or I can also say that except for rupaskandha all the others belong to nama; also, they are within the sixth ayatana, where the dharmas are the objects of manas. And from the Vijnaptimatra view, whatever experience there is, it is a mental phenomenon anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2012 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

LastLegend said:

Memories for example only come when there is a trigger be an event or a thought.

I don't really see what you are getting at here. I rather you outright state what your beliefs than beating around the bush.

Astus wrote:

There is no belief in the back. But we can apply the question to memory too. If memories are in the mind, and mind is being conscious, why aren't we conscious of our memories?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 30th, 2012 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

LastLegend said:

Well can we be conscious of everything at the same time? The mind can only focus on one object at the time.

Astus wrote:

Seeds exist only momentarily, so there are thousands of them in the mind at the same time. How can it manage that then?

LastLegend said:

It is not there when there is no trigger or association, it arises when there is. So is it there?

Astus wrote:

Alayavijnana is supposed to store everything, including memories.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 30th, 2012 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

LastLegend said:

P.S. Alaya is not physical so does it have a limited storage capacity?

Astus wrote:

It doesn't. Since it is not physical, it does not occupy any space.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 30th, 2012 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Now you shifted the posts again, you went from awareness to feeling to consciousness. I cannot play the game if you keep changing the rules.

Yes, well... but even nama is broken up into citta, vijnana, mano vijnana, manas and alaya vijnana, so... Again, you need to define your question more accurately: You can't get an answer if you don't know the question. This was Ven. Huifeng's point right from page 1. And from the Vijnaptimatra view, whatever experience there is, it is a mental phenomenon anyway.

Again, yes, well, I mean, really, what exactly does this have to do with anything? Know what I mean?

Anyway, within the confines of Abhidhamma I think I have answered your original question, so if you have a new question, otherwise... Arivederci from me!

Astus wrote:

I have not changed the subject for even a tiny bit. Consciousness, awareness, etc. they all mean the fact of experiencing something. And when I say experience it is something that appears in a consciousness, and one is conscious, i.e. aware of something. This was the very definition of consciousness I have quoted from Vasubandhu in the previous page, "What is consciousness? It is awareness of an object." It is simply the dharmadhatu-manodhatu-manovijnana in the 18 dhatus system, it is the sixth sensory faculty, that includes all possible mental functions in the Abhidharma system, that is defined by being aware of an object. Putting it in the Yogacara context, the basic consciousness, alayavijnana, is also defined by awareness. That's why I said that since the very essence of consciousness in general - no matter which of the 6/8

consciousness one talks about - is the fact of awareness of something. And that's what the question comes from, that if consciousness - including alayavijnana - is necessarily being conscious of something, how is it that one is not, and actually cannot be, conscious of the seeds.

And so the Mahayanasamgraha (1.26) puts a difference between the alayavijnana and the other seven,

"The other consciousnesses are different from the container consciousness. They are the active consciousnesses that are present in all births and destinies. Know that they are also called the experiential consciousnesses, as taught in a verse from the Analysis of the Middle and the Extremes:

The first is termed causal consciousness
And the second experiential consciousness
Wherein the mental states of sense experience,
Discrimination of names, and activity take place."

This could very well be interpreted as that although it is called container consciousness, it is not conscious at all. Then why called consciousness?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 30th, 2012 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

BTW, seed is just a metaphor. There's no actual seed. It is the operation of three faculties of the mind carrying on habitual actions.

Astus wrote:

I don't think it is important whether you call it habit, defilement, imprint, seed, etc. In all cases what is meant is latent mental phenomenon not experienced in the present, it is a so called potential. And so my question, why is it a mental phenomenon when there is no awareness of it?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 30th, 2012 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

deepbluehum said:

Are you aware of all your memories this moment? Normally we don't pay any attention to how we operate so we respond to phenomena conditioned by our memories. When we practice the path, we become aware that a given situation always generates a certain feeling, then we come to recognize the feeling has no real nature, that no feeler can be found, etc., and the conditioned response is subverted. Yet, the remaining awareness that is beyond subject and object is present, and that is the alaya-vijnana.

Astus wrote:

Of course I am not aware of all my memories, and even if I wanted I could not recall everything. Still, it is said that the alayavijnana retains all the imprints not just from this life but all the previous ones, and that's how a karmic effect can occur kalpas later. My question, however, is not about how it happens in our lives, but how can those be reserved moment to moment in the consciousness while one is not conscious of them. Because if it is indeed in the consciousness, and consciousness means being conscious of something, there should be consciousness of all the imprints. So either it is not in the consciousness, or consciousness doesn't mean being conscious of something. What is the third option?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 2nd, 2012 at 4:39 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure which one is the case, but it seems the question is either said incorrectly by me, or I don't see the answers' relevance to it, or its meaning has eluded those who have kindly replied. So now I try from a slightly different perspective.

Let's say that the alayavijnana is simply a theoretical supposition, a convenient explanation about how memory, mind and karma works. The seeds are simply our unquestioned views we follow all the time. Once seen through, it's all gone. Unfortunately, this makes the whole argument for alayavijnana quite weak.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 2nd, 2012 at 3:35 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a couple of Mahayana traditions where they take the Nirvana Sutra as an important scripture, like in Tiantai and Chan. However, if you say they have no meditation like the one you say exists in the sutra itself, it is either that there has never been such a meditation, or there was but disappeared, or the meditation exists in the traditions but not the way you understand the sutra.

For instance, Hongren's (5th patriarch of Chan) Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle (quotes from T. Cleary: Minding Mind) refers to the Nirvana Sutra three times (quite a lot in a small work) says simply,

"If you can just keep the mind still so that errant thought does not arise, the reality of nirvana will naturally appear. This is how we know the inherent mind is originally pure."

And also,

"When errant imagining ceases, you are accurately aware. By virtue of accurate awareness, dispassionately perceptive knowledge arises. By dispassionately perceptive knowledge, one finds out the nature of reality. By finding out the nature of reality, one attains nirvana. This is how we know that preserving the fundamental true mind is the basis of nirvana."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 2nd, 2012 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Ask a Transgender Buddhist

Content:

Astus wrote:

How do you balance the teaching on identification causing suffering and the gender identity that seems a core value for you?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 3rd, 2012 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza.....

Content:

Astus wrote:

Vipassana is indeed a Pali word, and just as any Theravada teaching, it has little relevance to Japanese Zen. The vipasyana (kan) practice of the Tendai school has some relevance, but not direct relationship. Shikantaza is not a path, not a method to apply, but just (shikan) sitting (taza).

BTW, the practice of vipassana is not specifically related to the Thai forest tradition. In fact, the modern vipassana groups (bearing this name) are from Burma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 3rd, 2012 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Karma in Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hm. I never actually watched the video here but went to Youtube. So what I've seen was already linked, the 40 mins film.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 5th, 2012 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Questions regardin God and Nirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nirvana means extinction. It is the extinction of the cause of suffering, it is the end of attachment. As an example, A is in love with B, then eventually A becomes bored with B,

then A feels that B is getting rather annoying, and finally A happily leaves B. Simple story. When A finally gives up on B, that is the nirvana, the total extinction of A's infatuation with B. All beings are very much attached to the sensual impressions, their emotions and their ideas. But when one learns that it is this grasping of phenomena that is causing all the trouble, one gradually becomes disinterested in them, and turns away from them. And that is nirvana, when one has left behind all attachment for good. The bonfire of passion is now a pile of cold ash. The love story is over. Does this sound like a mystical experience? Or a divine presence?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 5th, 2012 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: Questions regardin God and Nirvana

Content:

asunthatneversets said:

Nirvana does sever the allure of attachment, and true nirvana surely is the end of attachment, but the cause of suffering isn't necessarily attachment itself. The cause, is the erroneous notion that there was ever an A to be attached to B in the first place. So perhaps we're saying the same thing and I'm misreading what you wrote, but for me nirvana is a bit more than merely turning away, or leaving behind attachment, it's true extinction and total exhaustion of that which attachment is predicated on.

Astus wrote:

I merely talked about the third noble truth, the ending of suffering, which is nirvana. Of course, adding to that the whole 12 links of dependent origination, and its reverse (see: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.023.than.html> is absolutely fine. The final steps are:

concentration -> knowledge & vision of things as they actually are -> disenchantment -> dispassion -> release -> knowledge of ending

Now there is another thing regarding views and ignorance, that are called the four perversions/inverted views

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.049.than.html>). It is seeing what is impermanent as permanent, suffering as pleasure, not-self as self, impure as pure. This shows simply how confused we are and what kind of confusion is to be removed. Attachment is ultimately based on ignorance, and ignorance is not realising the four noble truths, how suffering dependently arises and disappears.

I emphasise this very basic explanation of nirvana in order to avoid difficult terminology like ending all views, insight into non-arising, realising all appearances as consciousness, etc. Isn't it clear just to say that as long as there is attachment to impermanent things one necessarily experiences the different forms of suffering? Of course, once one actually sees that things are impermanent, there is the way to be free from them. Again, I don't see it as anything mystical, but quite sensible.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, July 5th, 2012 at 4:01 PM
Title: Re: Questions regardin God and Nirvana
Content:
jeeprs said:
No. It sounds like nihilism.

Astus wrote:
It is the end of suffering, not the end of everything.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, July 9th, 2012 at 4:16 PM
Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?
Content:
Ikkyu said:
I would say you are mistaken. A number of books have been published over the years such as "Buddhism Without Beliefs"... taking the ritualistic and religious element out of Buddhism in order to convey it purely as a philosophy.

Astus wrote:
Those are philosophising about Buddhism, just as anyone can use bits and pieces from the Buddha's teachings. Taoist and Neo-Confucian works also contain elements from Buddhist teachings, and it doesn't make them Buddhists either.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, July 10th, 2012 at 5:16 PM
Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?
Content:
Ikkyu said:
The Tao has no character or components. It cannot be named or described. It is changeless, formless, outside of ordinary existence and yet intimately connected with all. Similarly, Nibbana has no characteristics. If it did it would be subject to no-self and thus be suffering, which it is not. It exists beyond duality, just as the Tao is beyond duality. They are both beyond being and non-being. The purpose of Taoism is to be one with -- essentially to attain -- Tao... to be one with existence and understand things as they are (c.f. dharmata/thathata). The purpose of Buddhism is to attain Nibbana, quite similar.

Astus wrote:
Such a description of nirvana makes it a metaphysical, abstract thing. That way people can match it with any such similar notion of God/Truth/Heaven/Soul/etc. as they like. First of all, nirvana is not a thing, a state, or a realm, but the final end of the causes of suffering. Like, if you quit smoking, being a non-smoker is not some special realisation, it is simply that you don't want any more tobacco. And not wanting more is just the lack of desire, not aversion or anything else. Nirvana is the lack of identifying with the five

aggregates, no more "I, me, mine". Or, using emptiness, it is the lack of grasping at views, not reifying things any more. But neither emptiness, nor selflessness are new states or things. That's why it is also called seeing things as they really are (yathā-bhūta-jñāna-darśana), or simply suchness (tathatā). It is also seeing dependent origination, as dependent origination is emptiness itself, they are not separate. That's how on a single blade of grass there are infinite buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 10th, 2012 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: Four Dharmas of Longchenpa

Content:

Astus wrote:

How about this one?

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/dzogchen/basic_points/four_themed_precious_garland.html

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 12th, 2012 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is a good indicator of understanding whether a teacher accepts rebirth or not. It's because one needs to comprehend dependent origination, the way the aggregates function, and avoid the extreme views of permanence and annihilation. That is also why "correct view" is first of all defined as accepting the work of karma and rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 12th, 2012 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for Soto Zen, here's the Dedication of Merit verse from the daily practice booklet (<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/pdf/Scriptures.pdf>):

"With the good karma gathered in this practice, we repay the virtuous toils of our fathers and mothers, that the living may be blessed with joy and long life without distress, and the deceased freed from suffering and born in the pure land. May the four benefactors, sentient beings in the three classes of existence, and those born in the three evil destinies and eight difficulties all be able to repent their transgressions, purify their defects, entirely escape the round of rebirth, and be born in the pure land."

And there are quite a few other rituals and ceremonies (like funerals) present in Soto Zen that would have no meaning at all without rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 13th, 2012 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Brad just blogged about this topic again yesterday -

<http://suicidegirlsblog.com/blog/brad-warners-hardcore-zen-what-happens-after-you-die/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

Using the teaching of no-self to deny rebirth? That is not understanding the relationship between dependent origination and emptiness, thus falling into the nihilist interpretation. Not to mention that in Mahayana rebirth could not be any more obvious as the bodhisattva path itself goes through immeasurable number of lives.

Using the SotoZen-Net's glossary (underlines added),

<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=bodhisattva>
S. bodhisattva, literally "awakening" (bodhi) "being" (sattva). 1. An epithet for the Buddha Shakamuni in his former lives, before becoming a buddha. 2. Any sentient being on the path to buddhahood, which is described in Mahayana sutras as beginning with a vow to attain awakening for the sake of all living beings and not to pass into nirvana while any beings remain suffering in the round of birth and death. 3. Exalted beings who have advanced so far on the path to awakening as to be virtually equal to buddhas in their wisdom, compassion, and ability to help ordinary beings. High level bodhisattvas such as Kannon, Fugen, Miroku, and Jizō are worshipped and prayed to as savior deities.

http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=birth_and_death
S. sasāra. 1. The round (rinne 輪廻) of repeated deaths and births in different modes of sentient existence, conditioned by karma (actions and their results). 2. A continuous process of change taking place every instant, that is, "momentary birth and death" (setsuna shōji 刹那生死), conditioned by karma. 3. The entire life-span of a sentient being, from birth until death (ichigo shōji 一期生死).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 13th, 2012 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Shin and "Bhakti Devotion"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no point in worshipping Amita Buddha. True faith means believing completely in the primal vow, that our birth in the Pure Land is guaranteed. And the reason of achieving birth there is to swiftly attain enlightenment and liberate all beings. One is thankful for Amita Buddha's great compassion, just as we feel gratitude toward

someone who gave us something of immense worth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 13th, 2012 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Saying that what the Buddha and Dogen taught are not what they believed and realised is saying that they were speaking lies.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 13th, 2012 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

dharmagoat said:

Just to be clear, I am challenging the claim that we can know what the Buddha and Dogen believed based on what they taught.

The Buddha taught different things to different people depending on their needs and understanding. Sometimes his teachings were contradictory. Was he lying to some and not to others, or was he exercising skillful means in each case?

Astus wrote:

Skillful means doesn't mean it is not true, but that it is not the final teaching. The path is a gradual one, so one should not stop on level one. And just because there are further levels, the higher ones don't invalidate the lowers, but rather give them context and further meaning. Also, if the Buddha spoke anything that was not true, he failed to uphold the basic precepts, and that is impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 13th, 2012 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Simon E. said:

There is also the point that although we know what Dogen taught the Interpretation of that teaching has been a matter of debate and division ever since, and that continues.

...

And some of them representing large numbers of adherents deny that Dogen taught literal post mortem Rebirth AT ALL.. Me, I have no idea who is right.

In the case of the Buddha I remain completely unconvinced that we have any idea at all what he taught.

Astus wrote:

What debate and division do you mean? Sotoshu is actually quite unified.

What large number of adherents? Do you mean in the West or in Japan? Just because Western Zen followers is still a minority anyway.

As for not being sure about the Buddha's teaching, that is something you have to sort out for yourself. Faith is something that comes with learning and experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 14th, 2012 at 6:37 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

dharmagoat said:

So the original question remains. Can we know what the Buddha believed based on what he taught?

If all teachings but the final teaching lack context and are limited in meaning, can they be used to gauge what the Buddha actually believed?

What is the final teaching, and does anyone fully understand it?

Astus wrote:

The teaching is confirmed by proper reasoning and personal insight, the tradition of that is preserved by the community of the noble beings, the third jewel of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 14th, 2012 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

dharmagoat said:

The community of noble beings preserve the understanding of the final teaching of the Buddha, and are therefore the ones that know what the Buddha actually believed?

Astus wrote:

The buddha-nature, the eye of awakening, is present in all, but only those who have actually opened it realise the way things truly are. And that is the correct faith of a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2012 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: I have a good karma question, please answer.

Content:

Astus wrote:

An action has internal and external results. The internal result becomes the basis of karma, the moral causality that is carried on within the mind stream. The external result is not a moral matter, as it is not personal, therefore not karma. That way the karma of

giving is completed once the money is handed over in this case.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2012 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Using buddhism to sell stuff

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://vajrasecrets.com/books/english-books/gurus-for-hire-enlightenment-for-sale.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2012 at 5:44 PM

Title: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Accusations, slander, attributions of guilt, alleged misconduct, even threats and persecution will not disturb [the Zen Master] in his practice. Defending himself would mean participating again in a dualistic game that he has moved beyond."

- Dr. Klaus Zernickow

"It is unfair to conclude that my silence implies that I must be what the letters say I am. Indeed, in Japan, to protest too much against an accusation is considered a sign of guilt."

- Eido T. Shimano

Short description of the paper and link to the paper itself at the bottom:

<http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=70,10983,0,0,1,0>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2012 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

However, when you are the enlightened Zen master, even your blinking is a Dharma teaching, not to mention alcoholism, abusing students and using all the money for your comfort.

From the paper: "In conclusion, I therefore concur with the aforementioned critics that the structure and teachings of Zen Buddhism itself lie at the root of the problem, and that the many cases of sexual or other teacher misconduct are merely symptoms thereof."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 17th, 2012 at 4:02 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Sara H said:

It means that people are human, and that people who are practicing Zen are human and make mistakes. It doesn't mean that they are immoral. Making a mistake and being immoral are vastly different things.

Astus wrote:

The point of the paper is that Zen teachers are not seen as simply humans, but as enlightened super-beings. Also that's the reason they could keep their teacher position after decades of "mistakes". And that's why it is some fundamental (Western) ideas about Zen that is one source of the problem, namely the myth of Dharma transmission and the position it gives one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 1:17 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Samsaric_Spiral said:

I am a Soto Zen practitioner, and I believe this stuff is not important to the practice. Rather, living in the moment and dropping the subject/object dichotomy in all activities takes priority. Whether rebirth is true or not has little to no impact on my life at the moment; if it were either true or false, a practitioner would still go about his daily tasks without intent, goal, or an "I"-barrier. Soto Zen is more concerned with daily living, hence why it is a great school for non-monastic people. I believe in almost all Zen schools, all ideology is treated as non-absolute and provisional, so attaching oneself to ideology could serve as a barrier to sustaining Beginner's Mind/Mindfulness.

Astus wrote:

I agree, if one is interested only in sustaining a selfless awareness, no issues of past and future are relevant, not even the present. But then, why is selfless awareness important? Why sustain a beginner's mind? Sports, dating, computer games, etc. are all fun, aren't they? Doing daily tasks without intent sounds interesting. But what are those daily tasks? A butcher's daily tasks are Zen practice if done with mindfulness? Stealing the tax payer's money is just fine if done as a beginner? How about cheating on one's spouse or beating the kids? And these are just simple ethical issues that one can actually face. If Soto Zen is concerned about daily living, how is it addressed with the single idea of acting without a goal? And if one has truly no purpose in life, why get out of bed at all? These are real questions of daily life, where causes and conditions matter. Actions have consequences, and behind all action there is intention. Which intention is right, which is wrong? And so we arrive at the teaching of karma and dependent origination, and from that to rebirth, the matter of life and death.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 2:25 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

ghost01 said:

Questions like these don't have any real answer, and really only cause suffering by contemplating them.. so the purpose of acting without a goal may be to escape a pointless and mindless circle of thinking that only harms you.

Astus wrote:

Thinking is tiring, so better stop it? Consider Dogen's works for a little here then. He produced a few manuals for sitting meditation, yes. He also gave hundreds of teachings on a large variety of Buddhist doctrines in the Shobogenzo, the Shobogenzo Zuimonki and the Eihei Koroku. He established rules for the entire management of monastic life in the Eihei Shingi from cooking to administrative tasks. And there are some other works, like the Mana Shobogenzo, his collection of 300 koans. So if we look at Dogen as the exemplary Soto Zen practitioner, there is a lot more than just sitting with a beginner's mind. Dogen was familiar with the important Buddhist teachings and so could rely on a tradition that was more than 1500 years old by then with a great number of texts from India, Central Asia, China, Korea and Japan that he had access to. Again, the Soto Zen school in Japan is about 800 years old, a living tradition with a massive textual corpus of its own. True, for lay people, this is all not important. They can feel content with sitting a little in silence. However, that also means one is not ready to transform one's entire life and continue the bodhisattva's work in every aspect of daily living. That's what being a lay person actually means.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: The allure of Zen...

Content:

Astus wrote:

First important thing to understand about Zen is that there are Zen stories and there is actual life. Stories are fiction, they are there to entertain and to educate. Life, well, that's a lot more complex thing.

In the book "Zen Wisdom" <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheng-yen> is asked, "How does an ordinary practitioner recognize a false master?" To what he answers,

"The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters.

Of course, this presupposes that the person making the judgment has some understanding of correct Dharma. Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.

Beyond this, there are some basic criteria that can be used in assessing masters. First, consider their causes and conditions. In other words, their actions should be based on a foundation of emptiness; there should be no attachment in what they do. Second, consider their causes and consequences, or karma. The sense of emptiness that guides the actions of virtuous masters (causes and conditions) should accord with their karma (causes and consequences). That is to say, their actions need to be guided by a sense of responsibility. They should, at all times, be clearly aware of the consequences of their actions. Thus, there is an intimate relationship between responsibility and non-attachment.

These, then, are the marks of virtuous masters: they have a correct view of the Dharma, their actions reveal no attachment and they have a clear sense of responsibility."

So, the first thing you should do, is to study Mahayana. You should be clear about the basics, like bodhicitta, the six paramitas, compassion, dependent origination and emptiness. Although it is not used in East Asia, Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara (The Way of the Bodhisattva) is an inspiring introduction to the fundamental teachings. Also, as an introduction to Zen, you should study the so called Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

ghost01 said:

So not being content sitting in silence makes you a Bodhisattva?

Astus wrote:

What I'm saying is not reducing everything to a single idea. As for bodhisattvas, they use infinite skilful means in order to remove suffering from the whole world.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Samsaric_Spiral said:

There are still precepts that one must practice with, like a raft, but eventually they become second-nature and the raft may be put behind.

Soto Zen also acknowledges actions have consequences. The accumulation and effects of these are what's referred to Karma in Zen.

Astus wrote:

There are precepts and there is karma, just like in any other Buddhist tradition. How come that rebirth is not understood to be a basic idea?

Samsaric_Spiral said:

Siddhartha's Cūḷa-māluṅkya Sutra alludes to how we will never have an absolute answer to whether the Tathagata exists after death. What's important aren't the intellectual answers to such questions, but how we live our lives right now.

Astus wrote:

The existence of a buddha after death is quite a different issue than the existence of ordinary beings after death, about whom we find lot of teachings regarding the different places of birth and consequences of actions.

Life is not lived "right now". Moving, action requires all three times. And just as this day is the result of all the previous days and the cause of all the following days, this life is the result of previous lives and the cause of future lives. Not a difficult concept at all. And why is it important? Because life is short and people die every day. We can die at any moment. How will we reach buddhahood and liberate all beings then?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Samsaric_Spiral said:

I understand what you're getting at now. In Soto Zen tradition rebirth is understood to occur moment-by-moment. To use an example, 10 years ago 'I' was essentially a different being; even the molecular components that make me up now have changed. Since in emptiness there is no defining quality that can be used to rigidly define another, there is only constant change. Rebirth is essentially occurring right now, like beads attached to a string. In acknowledging constant change and no fixed beingness, the rigid distinction between living and death can vanish, for death and birth are happening moment-by-moment.

Astus wrote:

Momentariness (a very old Buddhist idea) is one important thing. Rebirth is another important teaching. One is continuous change on the micro level, the other on the macro level. They complement each other perfectly. The body changes on the cellular level rapidly, but we can still grow old. The mind changes every moment, but the continuity is not interrupted even by death.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Samsaric_Spiral said:

I don't think we're in disagreement then. Just Soto Zen Buddhists don't really discuss what happens after death, even though it is generally agreed the idea of a pure vacuum is nonsensical. It's not like "we" fall into a nothingness, but rather the "we" is already empty of self-existence and there is nothing but constant change (i.e., lack of fixed

beingness).

Also, I will get off-topic a bit by mentioning something that's related my friend recently brought: there was a German philosopher Bahnsen who's views on death sort of agree with both Theravada notion of reincarnation and Mahayana emptiness. It also acknowledges constant change.

Astus wrote:

The difference between Theravada and Mahayana in interpreting rebirth is that Theravada Abhidhamma does not accept the intermediate state (bardo) between births while all Mahayana school does. There is no real self in any Buddhist system, and all teach karmic causality, dependent origination and even momentariness. Also, since Mahayana is the path of the bodhisattva, it is impossible not to have rebirth, without which the bodhisattva path itself couldn't exist. Another few specialties of Mahayana is the immanence of bodhisattvas and buddhas, and the accessibility of buddha-lands. Soto Zen temples include altars for worship, shrines for ancestors, bodhisattvas and buddhas, and other practices of worship.

The point is, seeing the unity of emptiness and dependent origination, the oneness of essence and function, is the middle way in view, meditation and conduct. And just as on an everyday level - although it's all momentary and insubstantial - we go here and there, live like people with lifespan, on a larger scale beings die again and again, worlds collapse and reappear, etc. There is not a "fixed being", but we can tell without thinking whose toe was stepped on.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Tibet : Monks below 18 forced to disrobe

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, so those kids who were sent to monasteries are now sent back to home. Then they need approval from a government office to become monastics. The first one looks like protecting children - like, if somebody in a Western country forced their children into a Christian monastery, it would not be outrageous at all if the government sent them back home or to some child care home. As for the need of official permission to become a monastic, it's been like that in China for very long now (I mean, hundreds of years).

News of arrest of monks who have written against the government, what is strange about this? It is still a dictatorship, there is no free speech. The monks could have been well aware of the consequences.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

seeker242 said:

I have never heard of ANY zen tradition teaching that zen masters are enlightened super beings. So why do some people view them as super beings when it's not an actual zen teaching? What is the source of that belief? It seems to me that the source is not any zen teaching but rather the ignorant mind of practitioners. So the ignorant mind of practitioners is really the problem.

Astus wrote:

What is the definition of dharma-transmission? "acknowledgement of awakening itself [which] remained separate from monastic leadership"

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma_transmission#Contemporary_use_in_the_Zen-traditions)

And that's what the legend tells us. Buddha approved Kasyapa, Kasyapa approved Ananda, etc. And all the students wait for the approval of their teacher that they actually got it right. That is the power of the teacher, that is spiritual authority. And just like any power, it can and it will be abused. Add to this the idea that people can learn Zen ONLY from teachers within a lineage. This is again enforcing the position of Zen teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 18th, 2012 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: Soto-zen, Dogen and reincarnation

Content:

Simon E. said:

I have never heard anyone reply that way . And I have heard the question put to many lamas including the Dalai Lama. They include... Situ Rinpoche, Thrangu Rinpoche, Chime Rinpoche, Ato Rinpoche, Sogyal Rinpoche and my first teacher Trungpa Rinpoche. All of them (and it is a question lamas get asked a lot) said they had no memory of previous lives.

I have also heard the same question put to Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho...who just wouldn't go there.

So we have a remarkable situation where advanced meditators have no memory of past lives...but random children apparently do...

Astus wrote:

That is indeed an interesting point. Do you have their testimonies that they have no memories at all?

BTW, a couple of people I know say they have memories of past lives, including my mother.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

kirtu said:

There is an issue with Dharma transmission definitely. But there is also an issue with Zen awakening and enlightenment. I have said before that people who perpetrate this behavior have either no or very shallow awakening.

Astus wrote:

Problem is, while in Japan in Sotoshu and Rinzaishu receiving Dharma-transmission does not allow people in and of itself to train monks, or necessarily mean that the person is enlightened. In the West, however, this was all messed up. So we see the results.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: The goal/stages/results of Zen meditation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are stages described from early on. Things about Zen are confusing because it is not a unified method and teachers say so many different things, and so on and on.

It is wonderful you got to a very calm state. That is samatha as you know. Unfortunately, even samatha requires awareness. That you fall asleep, it's normal. However, to look for proper instructions in Zen books about this is a lost cause, you won't really find it. Why? Because Zen comes later, it deals with high class vipasyana. So, your choice of switching to Theravada was appropriate, if you managed to get the right training. If you want to use what the Zen trainees used, you should study the meditation manuals of Zhiyi. You can find great translations of two important works of him on <http://kalavinka.org/> and you can also order them as books.

Other sources you can use besides Theravada ones that you are probably already familiar with (e.g. Ajahn Brahm's books), you can use Tibetan manuals that are mainly based on Indian works, like Gen Lamrimpa: Calming the Mind, Lati Rinpoche: Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism and Khenchen Thrangu: The Practice of Tranquility and Insight.

If you are looking for Zen's stages of realisations, there are some, but it's nothing unified. So, like there are three steps described by Baizhang Huaihai (alleged teacher of Linji Yixuan) as (1) don't grasp appearances, (2) don't attach to not grasping, (3) don't make a concept of not attaching. And there are others like this. However, these are not really meditation stages but wisdom. It is the realisation of the middle way, the unity of samadhi and prajna, emptiness and dependent origination, essence and function, etc. Since the nature of mind is already empty and aware, there is nothing to develop or attain, only to realise this fact for yourself. That's how Zen has no real stages. But, it is still possible to devise some levels, like using the 10 bodhisattva stages, or the whole 52 stages system, or as Ven. Shengyan summarised it as (1) calm mind, (2) unified mind, (3) and no mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara H,

Unlike a PhD, that requires a whole institution with a faculty to earn it and has clear rules about the expectations, Dharma-transmission is given on a personal basis based on a single individual's assessment. So they are not very similar.

Insight into the nature of mind has been interpreted as different levels of realisations by different teachers. For Mazu Daoyi, it is buddhahood right there. For Jinul it is the first stage of faith. And there are others in between, like 1st bhumi bodhisattva, or 8th bhumi bodhisattva. Nevertheless, it is meant to be the correct and direct realisation of things as they are, of suchness, emptiness, dependent origination, buddha-nature.

If it is without clear consequences even to such basic things as ethical conduct, that attainment is meaningless. One of the definition of a sravaka stream-entrant is that it keeps the five precepts. While bodhisattva morals are little different, the awakening of bodhicitta includes unbound compassion towards all beings. Such compassion means that one has no intention to harm any being but to help them become free from all suffering. If you read the paper this topic has started with, you can see that such level of power abuse is far from compassionate conduct.

And as for what interpretation we are talking about regarding Dharma-transmission, it is the general one among Zen followers who believe that Zen teachers are enlightened - just as you say too, that they have kensho - and therefore they are the living source of the Dharma and the judge of the student's realisation. That you don't connect this to ethical behaviour is another thing, since ethics come before meditation and wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

dharmagoat said:

Does the idea that a lineage master is necessarily a "super being" come from the Tibetan tradition?

Astus wrote:

Zen precedes the arrival of Buddhism to Tibet.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

seeker242,

I understand that, but even that transmission does not make that person a "super being". Where does the idea of "super being" come from, just from dharma transmission? Don't you know all the stories of transmission, that the Buddha gave the True Dharma Eye to Kashyapa? Aren't you familiar with Zen stories of enlightened masters that are then used in meditation? One who receives transmission is counted as an heir to the Buddha and all the great patriarchs. And they emphasises this too, by for instance showing the whole lineage, talking about the importance of lineage, praising their own master and their master's master.

Unknown said:

The answer is simple really, because the students were not being intelligent or reasonable, to begin with. A reasonable and intelligent student would have left those teachers behind in a heartbeat, without even thinking twice about it.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. People who go to study under a teacher do that exactly because they don't know themselves what to do and expect the teacher to tell them. This is also pushed by the idea that you need a teacher and that you should obey your master. Being a student then is a little like being a child, where it doesn't really matter if you are intelligent or not. In fact, in Zen they like to say that one should put aside all cleverness, that Zen itself is beyond one's understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?

Content:

Ikkyu said:

If a very important Zen abbot is saying that Taoism has had this much influence, isn't there at least a little room to suggest this may be in some sense true?

Astus wrote:

If said Zen abbot were also a scholar in the relevant field then yes. Otherwise, it has no relevance that he was a famous Zen teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 19th, 2012 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

seeker242 said:

Which zen scriptures say a student is required to have blind faith in a teacher and do whatever they say? Even if what they say and do is completely contrary to the precepts? That doesn't exist! You put aside cleverness, but you don't put aside reasonableness. For example, if a teacher shows up drunk to give a dharma talk, it's not "cleverness" to say "Hmm, there is something wrong with this guy." It's just being reasonable.

Astus wrote:

Maezumi Roshi, who is not discussed in the original paper, was an alcoholic, just to give you an example. At the same time, we have <http://www.kwanumzen.org/1976/100-crazy/> as the "drunken master", or the entire life story of Ikkyu.

It is not the point that scriptures don't say this, because people don't even read the sutras. The picture you have as your avatar is an example of the idea that in Zen the scriptures are not important, therefore the only form of authority that remains is the teacher. And that leaves the position of master in the special position of spiritual judge and even king over unenlightened students. Since Zen is not something unenlightened people can understand, whatever happens is beyond mortal comprehension.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 20th, 2012 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Accumulating Merit by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interesting thing, this recitation-meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 21st, 2012 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: The Tao of Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ikkyu,

Seung Sahn was a religious authority within his own school and made a significant impact in the Western Buddhist community. That doesn't make him a historian or a scholar of East Asian studies. Just because someone is a bishop of a diocese it doesn't mean he is necessarily proficient in the historic development of Christianity, or a general of military history, or a surgeon of medical history. In fact, because they all have their own specific understanding there is a good chance their interpretation will be biased and not based on verifiable research.

And that is an important point here, research. To say that Zen was influenced by Taoism, it is the very first task to define what constitutes Zen and what Taoism, and then show how the influenced has happened and in what area. Zen defines itself as a Buddhist school, uses Buddhist sources and claims Indian Buddhist origins. Whatever teachings are there in Zen, they can be traced back to Buddhist sutras and treatises. So, what is

Taoist in it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 24th, 2012 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: The Buddhism trend in decline.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I doubt Google trends is representative of real life situation.

Just look at the word "mahamudra": <https://www.google.com/trends/?q=mahamudra> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

It is up and down.

Perhaps checking existing community centres, monasteries, publications would be a better indication.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2012 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: The Buddhism trend in decline.

Content:

conebeckham said:

I'd venture a guess that the vast majority of lay Buddhists don't google anything.

Astus wrote:

That sounds very true.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2012 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Peixiu pronunciation

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://talkbank.org/pinyin/Trad_chart_IPA.php: p^hei-ɕjou

Further info here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin#Rules_given_in_terms_of_English_pronunciation

Note, however, that this is modern Mandarin. Pronunciation changed a lot and there are several dialects in China. Using Japanese (Hai-kyuu) or Korean (Pay-hyu) can be actually closer to the original.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2012 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: What actually makes someone a Buddhist?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhist is someone who believes that ultimate liberation is taught by the Buddha as his Dharma and upheld by the Sangha. This is actually taking refuge in the three jewels. As for how deeply one understands the middle way, how well that person can practise ethical discipline and meditation, these are secondary matters, that can qualify a Buddhist.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 26th, 2012 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Zen masters from Shaolin?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Xueting Fuyu (1203-1275) established in Shaolin both its martial side and the Caodong lineage, and even today in China the Caodong lineage comes through him.

Zhanran Yuancheng (1561-1626), revived the Caodong lineage in the Ming dynasty, and his master, Cizhou Fangnian (?-1594), was from Shaolin.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Practicing martial arts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a thread on <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=3945> you may visit.

From the <http://www.ymba.org/bns/bnsframe.htm>, the moral code of bodhisattvas in East Asian Buddhism, the 10th minor precept says,

10. On Storing Deadly Weapons

A disciple of the Buddha should not store weapons such as knives, clubs, bows, arrows, spears, axes or any other weapons, nor may he keep nets, traps or any such devices used in destroying life. (53)

As a disciple of the Buddha, he must not even avenge the death of his parents -- let alone kill sentient beings! (54) He should not store any weapons or devices that can be used to kill sentient beings. If he deliberately does so, he commits a secondary offense.

Regarding committing aggressive acts, see the 1st and 9th major precept.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 5:18 AM

Title: Re: Sex and the Lama

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not against law or lay precept to have sex with a student. Lying about the nature of the relationship, however, is deceitful and harmful. If the woman was not cheated by tales of spiritual benefits or promise of love, then there is simply the case of either casual sex or an emotionally balanced relationship.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Practicing martial arts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The one I quoted is a minor precept and it is about storing weapons, it is not about their use, but the fact that one possesses such tools. That makes it clear how even the potential of aggression should be removed. Regarding the acts of any form of aggression, it is covered by the major precepts. The acts of anger by the ninth, acts of harming and killing by the very first.

If one wants to do training for fitness, there are many forms of sports. It is true that what matters is intention, so theoretically practising martial arts is no problem. Problem is, however, that as we easily identify with our body and acts have deep impact on our mentality, martial training generates a martial attitude. By learning defensive techniques you also learn to expect attack, you learn feeling insecure and afraid. Of course, if you can put that all down and maintain a peaceful and compassionate mind, there can be no problem. But then, why practice self defence?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why do you need a teacher? Because people are lazy and careless, they don't make the effort to fully comprehend the teachings and be able to apply it in their practice and then their life. Having a teacher is similar to calling the plumber to fix the toilet. You could fix it yourself, if you cared to learn how. Or, an even closer example is learning a language or profession. Anyone can learn a foreign language simply from books and podcasts, but without regular classes people tend to postpone learning and eventually give up. Also, just as a Zen teacher, the language teacher can point out your mistakes immediately, while to do it yourself you have to do tests and such.

Can one learn Zen without a teacher? Of course you can. Can you learn from books? Sure. Are you up to the task of actually doing it?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 9:12 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huineng gives the answers in the Platform Sutra,

Need of teacher,

"If you are one who enlightens himself, you need not seek a teacher outside. If you insist that it is necessary to seek a Good Knowing Advisor in the hope of obtaining liberation, you are mistaken. Why? Within your own mind there is self-enlightenment which is a Knowing Advisor. But if you give rise to deviant confusion, false thoughts, and perversions, although a Good Knowing Advisor external to you instructs you, he cannot save you."

(ch. 2)

Learning from books,

"Those who grasp at emptiness slander the Sutras by maintaining that written words have no use. Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

(ch. 10)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 28th, 2012 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's look at it from another perspective. What is it one should learn in Zen? Saying that it's a "thing" or "art" is not a definition. What is Zen about? It is about seeing the nature of mind. What is the nature of mind? It is non-abiding awareness. How do you experience it? You don't attach to ideas and emotions. How can you not attach to them? You see them for what they are, impermanent mental phenomena. And it can go on with an extensive description of the many teachings of Mahayana. A teacher can help you clarify all the teachings in a way that can make sense to you. You may also find a book by a teacher that answers whatever question you have at that time. The Buddhist canon and auxiliary works contain thousands of years of experience. A living teacher has a few decades of experience. However, unlike books, a teacher can know you and speak in a way that matches your way of understanding. Of course, if you can find the right teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 28th, 2012 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

[quote="/johnny\""]can you explain progression in meditation specifically?[/quote]

It depends on the person who practises. The general stages are explained in several texts, covering the levels of calming and insight. The Zen part is at the final stages of insight with the realisation of the middle way, the unity of emptiness and dependent origination. The point where one sees not just that all phenomena are mind but also that the mind is unreal as well. But you already

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=9351> on that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2012 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Matt J said:

How did you come to the conclusion that Zen teaches that the mind is non-abiding awareness?

Astus wrote:

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations."

(Platform Sutra, ch. 2)

"Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental."

(Platform Sutra, ch. 4)

"Q: Where does the mind dwell in its real abode?

A: Dwelling nowhere is its real abode.

Q: What is dwelling nowhere?

A: It is the mind not dwelling anywhere or on anything.

Q: What does "not dwelling anywhere or on anything" mean?

A: Not to dwell anywhere or on anything means not to dwell on good or evil, existence or non-existence, within or without or on the middle, nor on concentration nor dispersion, and neither to dwell on the void nor on the non-void. This is the meaning of "not dwelling anywhere or on anything". Just this alone is real abiding. This stage of achievement is also the non-abiding Mind, and the non-abiding Mind is the Buddha Mind.

Q: What is the non-abiding Mind like?

A: The non-abiding Mind is not green, yellow, red or white. It is not long or short, nor does it come or go. It is not pure or impure, nor does it have birth or death. It is only

deep and permanent stillness. This is the non-abiding Mind, which is also called the Original Body. The Original Body is the Buddha's Body, which is also called the Dharmakaya."

(Ta-Chu Hui-Hai: <http://www.ymba.org/TaChu/tachu2.htm>)

"Now we are getting towards the end of the third period of five hundred years since the time of the Buddha, and most students of zen cling to all sorts of sounds and forms. Why do they not copy me by letting each thought gas as though it were nothing, or as though it were a piece of rotten wood, a stone, or the cold ashes of a dead fire? Or else, by just making whatever slight response is suited to each occasion? If you do not act thus, when you reach the end of your days here, you will be tortured by Yama. You must get away from the doctrines of existence and non-existence, for Mind is like the sun, forever in the void, shining spontaneously, shining without intending to shine. This is not something which you can accomplish without effort, but when you reach the point of clinging to nothing whatever, you will be acting as the Buddhas act. This will indeed be acting in accordance with the saying: 'Develop a mind which rests on no thing whatever.' For this is your pure Dharmakaya, which is called supreme perfect Enlightenment. If you cannot understand this, though you gain profound knowledge from your studies, though you make the most painful efforts and practise the most stringent austerities, you will still fail to know your own mind. All your effort will have been misdirected and you will certainly join the family of Mara. What advantage can you gain from this sort of practice?"

(The Chün Chou Record in "The Zen Teachings of Huang Po", p. 61-62)

"Therefore, being with no place to dwell is the way of all Buddha activity. The Mind that does not abide anywhere is the Perfect Awakening, without understanding the Unconditioned Truth, even with much learning and diligent practice, one still does not recognize one's own Mind."

(The Chung-Ling Record in " <http://www.ymba.org/transmission/content.html> ")

"The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. This calm Knowing of voidness and calm is precisely the mind of voidness and calm that Bodhidharma formerly transmitted. ... Knowing is no mindfulness and no form. Who is characterized as self, and who is characterized as other? When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices."

(Chan Letter in "Zongmi on Chan", p. 89)

"This awareness is true awareness, the same as empty tranquil awareness. It is also called "awareness of no-thought." If one has thought and awareness, one is in the state of common people; if one has no-thought and non-knowing, one is in the state of the two vehicles; if one has no-thought, but with awareness, one is in the state of the Buddhas.

No-thought is empty and tranquil [awareness], and is also called "non-abiding awareness." Because if one abides in something, it is comparable to a person entering into a dark room and not being to see anything. But, if one does not abide in anything, it is like sunlight and moonlight illuminating and making visible all varieties of things." (Yongming Yanshou: Profound Pivot of the Contemplation of Mind in "Integrating Chinese Buddhism", p. 177)

"People who cultivate nowadays belong to the Buddha's spiritual family. They rely upon the direct approach of the sudden school and, having developed firm faith, they straightaway understand that their own minds are perpetually calm and ever alert. Since they rely on this realization when they begin cultivation, even though they cultivate the manifold supplementary practices, they only regard thoughtlessness as their core and nonactivity as their foundation. Due to this thoughtlessness and nonaction, their practice is independent of sequence in either time or space and free of any element of discrimination between the absolute dharma and its phenomenal aspects [that is, immanent suchness]. Since their cultivation is complete, approaches to dharma as numerous as dust motes and the meritorious qualities developed on all the bhavis are also complete in the essence of their sublime mind, which is, accordingly, like the wish-fulfilling gem." (Encouragement to Practice in "Collected Works of Chinul", p. 109)

"Think of not thinking. Not thinking-what kind of thinking is that? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of zazen." (Dogen: http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

"Right at this moment, this single thought is itself unborn! Everything that manifests before you now are illusory and insubstantial - all of which are reflections projected from the true mind. Work in such a manner to crush away [all your deluded thoughts]. You should fixate [your mind] to observe where the thoughts arise from and where they cease. If you practice like this, no matter what kinds of deluded thoughts arise, one smash and they will all be crushed to pieces. All will dissolve and vanish away. You should never follow or perpetuate deluded thoughts. Master Yongjia has admonished, "One must sever the mind [that desires] continuation." This is because the illusory mind of delusion is originally rootless. You should never take a deluded thought as real and try to hold on to it in your heart. As soon as it arises notice it right away. Once you notice it, it will vanish. Never try to suppress thoughts but allow thoughts to be as you watch a gourd floating on water." (Hanshan Deqing: <http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2012 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matt,

Identifying "present awareness" as the final meaning, as the true self is still grasping, abiding and the view of self. As Wuzhu of the Baotang school often said, "At the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not." Also, clinging to a pure consciousness as reality creates the duality of pure and non-pure, thought and no thought. Non-abiding is not abiding in some blank mind but not grasping appearances. That's what emptiness means, and that's why emptiness and dependent origination are not different. Referring to the Heart Sutra, the problem is not that there are aggregates, but identifying with any of them as real is the delusion creating suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 31st, 2012 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: Zen schools that involve qigong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think you can find quite easily a Chinese monk who also knows qigong. But that doesn't mean Buddhism or specifically Zen/Chan is connected to it in doctrine or praxis. You can find Western Zen teachers who are also psychotherapists or engineers, but neither of those professions are Buddhist methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 31st, 2012 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Ask a Transgender Buddhist

Content:

Sara H said:

Are you talking about Anatta or the concept of no "sepperate-self".
Or the second Noble Truth being that clinging/craving/insisting/the "I must have" being the cause of suffering. ? Or something else?

Astus wrote:

Yes, I am referring to selflessness and the second noble truth, as they are related very closely. Identifying with something is grasping a self, and that causes suffering. More to the point of gender, here is what Soma bhikkhuni said in reply to Mara,

"What difference does being a woman make when the mind's well-centered, when knowledge is progressing, seeing clearly, rightly, into the Dhamma. Anyone who thinks 'I'm a woman' or 'a man' or 'Am I anything at all?' — that's who Mara's fit to address."
(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn05/sn05.002.than.html>

There is also a longer sutta on the subject:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.048.than.html>. Furthermore, in chapter seven of the Vimalakirti Sutra (tr. Charles Luk) it is said,

"all women are the same and though they appear in female form, they are fundamentally not women. Hence the Buddha said: 'All things are neither male nor female'. ... The form of a woman neither exists nor is non-existent."

So, it is a part of Buddhism that one should remove identification with one's gender, as part of getting rid of sensual desire.

Sara H said:

I view it as an "aspect" of me, in the same way that my hair color or eye color is.

Astus wrote:

Since you identified yourself in this thread as a transgender Buddhist, my question occurred because it seems to me that being a transgender is a very important thing for you. Or, if you don't mind me saying, being a woman is important for you.

Therefore I ask how you manage these two views to be helpful for you in your life.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 1st, 2012 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Zen schools that involve qigong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The majority of Zen teachings is written in Chinese language. Does that mean Zen involves Chinese? No, Zen is not connected to the language that is used as its medium, and the language itself does not become Zen just because it is used to convey Zen teachings.

As for the concept of "Zen school", it is not an easy one to define. Traditionally speaking, there are only two schools of Zen since the Song dynasty, and that is the Linji and the Caodong. However, they exist in theory only.

So, if we changed the question, asking if there are Buddhist monastic/lay communities in East Asia where they practise qigong/gongfu/etc., the answer can be easily yes. And regarding their specific views on Buddhist doctrine and praxis one can find a large variety, while at the same time they all do qigong or other forms of body training. In fact, we can just say that there are often some form of body training involved, since even in qigong there are different styles.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 1st, 2012 at 3:35 PM

Title: Re: Zen schools that involve qigong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

johnny,

All I'm talking about here is the relationship between Chinese forms of body training and Zen Buddhism. I define Zen as a set of doctrines and methods. Taoism and history, I've said nothing about those. Now, when comparing or matching Zen with something else, what I consider are the doctrines and methods taught within the Zen canon. As you have found nothing related to qigong in it, so I say the same that they are not related. We can also consider that actually there are people who practise both Zen and qigong. There is no contradiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 1st, 2012 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Ask a Transgender Buddhist

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see your point. My question is not relevant then.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 1st, 2012 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Baizhang's three gates are fine indeed. What difference do you find between those who talk of awareness and the Buddhist teachers you mentioned?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 2nd, 2012 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Andrew,

What else is there to realise besides emptiness? That is the quintessence of wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 3rd, 2012 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: Soto is the same as Caodong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The only difference in practical terms between Caodong and Linji in China was the brief period when Dahui came up with the huatou practice and it was in the process of spreading. But in a short time everyone embraced it. Dogen was in China when kanhua practice was still relatively new. So what he brought back to Japan was mainly general Song dynasty Buddhism where Chan philosophy was prevalent.

A couple of factors should be noted. First, individual monasteries were independent and it was up to the abbot and the elder monks what kind of teachings were available and practised in the daily routine. Being a Caodong monastery meant that the abbot associated himself with that lineage, but the teachings provided in the entire monastery was not defined by that. As a modern example, both Fo Guang Shan and Chung Tai Shan are Linji lineage, just as Kwan Um Zen and Hanmaum Seon are Linji, but the only group among them that shows some "Zen style" is really the Kwan Um Zen that was influenced by Japanese Buddhism and established in the West. My point is, these "schools" are just names that tell little about what actually goes on.

The Japanese Soto school went through many changes until it reached its current centralised form. Comparing Soto with Caodong raises the problems of identifying what these names stand for. Steven Heine has a study about Dogen's sources and life that might give you the answers you are after: "Did Dōgen Go to China? - What He Wrote and When He Wrote It". For Caodong in China, the only study I know of is Morten Schlütter's "How Zen Became Zen".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 3rd, 2012 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Soto is the same as Caodong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

Can you specify where and what difference your friend experienced regarding koans?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2012 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Whats the difference

Content:

Astus wrote:

Can you describe in brief what you understand as "mindfulness of mind" in vipassana?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2012 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: The board and its direction (if any)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not really sure what evil and New Age invasion this is about. If I look around in the Buddhist forums, I don't see it happening. Am I missing something? Sure, I don't read everything, not even the half of it, but checking recent topics, titles here and there, it seems all according to the dedicated Buddhist section. There are some strange ones in Dharma Free for All and the Lounge, but that's what they are for anyway. Everyone has the great opportunity to discuss the wonderful Mahayana teachings in its myriad

aspects. So, it's better to ask yourself what were the last three topics you posted in and those that you started. Were they about the Buddhadharma? Were they a reflection of bodhicitta?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 7th, 2012 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Analysis of 'presence'

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is this 'presence' vegetarian or omnivore? Does this 'presence' sleep at night? Is it heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, or asexual? And if these are irrelevant questions, what is 'presence' good for?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 8th, 2012 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Issues with going on retreat.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Pure Land is precisely the sublime method enabling the practitioner to turn his back on worldly dusts to merge with Enlightenment and return to the source (the Mind). Laymen bound up in mundane affairs cannot easily find the time to attend retreats, practice meditation and recite the sutras. This method is, therefore, very suitable for persons such as yourself. Each one can pay respect to the Buddhas and recite sutras or Buddha Amitabha's name according to individual circumstances and capacities, dedicating the merits thus accrued to rebirth in the Pure Land."

(Yin Kuang: Pure-Land Zen, Zen Pure-Land, p. 24)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 8th, 2012 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: Analysis of 'presence'

Content:

Astus wrote:

So, how can one perceive personally this 'presence'?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 8th, 2012 at 6:33 AM

Title: Re: Analysis of 'presence'

Content:

Andrew108 said:

It's more like the fact of perception rather than an object of perception. It's not an object to be perceived.

Astus wrote:

How come then that someone called 'teacher' can point it out for another?

Would you say that it's the presence of perception? The fact of being conscious? It is basic to all living beings. If there is nothing to be perceived about it, what do you call an analysis here?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 8th, 2012 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Analysis of 'presence'

Content:

Andrew108 said:

Conventionally it seems that there is a teacher but really there is just the natural state and that's what we are exposed to.

Astus wrote:

Exposed to how? How do you make the shift from non-presence to presence?

Andrew108 said:

So....no words I'm afraid can get to it. Also whilst we experience everything with our body and mind both of these are not separate from 'presence' whilst at the same time 'presence' is not caused by body and mind. When we look at karmic experiences in this way then they are always super fresh and in actuality 'unborn' in that they are not separate from 'presence'.

Astus wrote:

Body and mind are not separate from presence, but presence is not cause by either body nor mind. So, are body and mind same as or different from presence? Or both? Perhaps neither? Do you see that any if these will result in contradiction, just as in Nagarjuna's analysis of the relationship between the aggregates and the self?

And no words can get to it. What do you mean words can't get to it? There is no way to give instructions on presence, or how to attain presence? Then all those teachings are really a waste of paper and bytes.

Andrew108 said:

Right. It's not an object or even something to be reified like a type of emptiness. It's just what it is. There isn't really any analysis that needs to be done. The natural state brings with it all the knowledge we need. Actually right now we have all the knowledge we need.

Astus wrote:

It is not an object of perception, OK. Is it the subject then? If neither subject nor object, what else is there? And how can anyone ever know about it? If there is no analysis, what is the source of knowledge? If it is some special instruction, see my questions above.

Just to be clear, the reason I'm asking these questions is simply to get your perspective

on what you happened to start a discussion on.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 8th, 2012 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Analysis of 'presence'

Content:

Andrew108 said:

If we want to think about this in a more down to earth way then it's like knowing or seeing what anger is as an actuality. So we can have two ways to know anger. We can know it dualistically as something unpleasant and threatening to us (intellectually by looking with effort) or we can understand it from it's own side as being a display without basis (seeing without effort). This knowing so-called 'anger' from it's own side is similar to talking about knowing 'presence'. Recognizing 'presence' is also effortless seeing that knows itself.

Astus wrote:

So if we view anger just as an emotion without pushing it away, just being present with it, then it is the presence? And we can do the same with any other emotion or thought, right? That is, just being present with it without adding or taking away anything, without reacting to its presence. Isn't that just passivity?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 9th, 2012 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen/Chan Offer an Opinion Regarding Shentong/Rangtong?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen is not about philosophical opinions but going beyond ideas and concepts. Whether one emphasises buddha-mind or emptiness, they are just expedient means. And there are examples for both cases.

This story sums it up nicely:

A monk asked, "Master, Why do you say that Mind is Buddha?"

Mazu said, "To stop babies from crying."

The monk said, "What do you say when they stop crying?"

Mazu said, "Neither Mind, nor Buddha."

The monk asked, "Without using either of these statements, how would you instruct someone?"

Mazu said, "I would say to him that it's not a thing."

The monk asked, "If suddenly you met someone who was in the midst of it, then what?"

Mazu said, "I would teach them to realize the great Way."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 9th, 2012 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen/Chan Offer an Opinion Regarding Shentong/Rangtong?

Content:

My Socks Smell said:

I was not aware that Japanese Zen contains a strong element of Yogachara idealism. That worries me. Therefore, may I ask you (or anyone who would care to answer), could you give a brief analysis of exactly what differentiates Yogachara idealism found in Zen from the concept of the "One Without A Second" found in Advaita Vedanta? Thanks.

Astus wrote:

Yogachara is not Advaita, never was. Look into the works of Asanga and Vasubandhu, or some basic summary of Yogachara, like this one:

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro-uni.htm>. However, Zen is not Yogachara, and in East Asia it is a secondary teaching behind those of Tientai/Tendai and Huayan/Kegon. But again, Zen is neither of them.

As for East Asian Yogachara - if you're interested - see this nice intro by Tagawa Shun'ei: [Living Yogacara: An Introduction to Consciousness-Only Buddhism](#)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 10th, 2012 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on Homosexuality

Content:

Astus wrote:

As far as I know, Ven. Hsuan Hua did not speak English and his primary audience was ethnic Chinese people. Since Buddhism in Asian countries is as conservative and traditional as Christianity in Western cultures, these views are not that strange then. Of course, this is not an excuse, but simply a possible explanation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 10th, 2012 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on Homosexuality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interpretations of marriage, sexual life and many other social customs are not relevant to the path of liberation. They are just ideas of a culture in an era.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 11th, 2012 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: Realized teachers - their mundane errors and misconducts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding bodhisattvas, on the 2nd bhumi they attain purity in the ten virtuous conducts.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 12th, 2012 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on Homosexuality

Content:

Astus wrote:

If we look at the question from a scriptural point of view, there is no statement regarding homosexual acts as acceptable within the third precept. On the other hand, there are quite a few works on the contrary. As a sexual misconduct then, it can lead to lower birth.

Now, this doesn't mean that such a view is definitive. But some may believe so. Just because they think so, it doesn't mean they are against the Buddhist teachings.

Let me give another example of Hsuan Hua's interpretation of precepts,

"People who smoke will fall into the hell of Flames after they die. The hell of Flames is especially prepared for smokers. Whoever likes to smoke has the chance to go down there." (http://www.gbm-online.com/online/dharma/5_precepts3.html)

In his view, smoking is covered under the fifth precept against intoxicants. Can we find statements against smoking tobacco? No, as tobacco did not exist in Asia. So what is his interpretation based on?

Regarding homosexuality he refers to Chinese philosophical interpretations, like the yin-yang system. That is not Buddhist. He talks about the end of humanity, which is an argument commonly used against celibacy and not homosexuality.

What can be learnt from all this is not that Hsuan Hua was a false teacher and such, but the old teaching about not relying on the person but on the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 12th, 2012 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Hsuan Hua on Homosexuality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Abhidharma and commentaries are in the Buddhist canon. However, Hsuan Hua does not quote them. It seems he just presents his interpretations as orthodox, and people accept it because he said so.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 20th, 2012 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

How can you tell if somebody is enlightened? Because if that is the primary criterion of a teacher, a student should be able to tell that a person is awakened or not. If the student is unable to tell, how to choose? Lineage is said to be a proof, but even in Dogen's time he met teachers of different lineages but could not follow them and rejected them as fakes. So lineage is no proof.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 20th, 2012 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

You gave a list about the qualities of a good student and that such a student should serve the teacher and behave well. But, as for deciding who is an enlightened teacher you did not give any observable characteristics.

How about Dogen's critique of Dahui - the greatest reformer of Chan in Song China - in Jisho Zanmai? From the Shasta Abbey translation, "Even though 'Meditation Master' Sōkō did the training for a rather long time, he did not succeed in getting hold of his Master's Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow, much less did he even know that there is an Eye amidst the dust motes of defiling passions."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 21st, 2012 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

So regarding teachers the only important thing is that they are enlightened but nobody can actually tell if someone is enlightened or not. That makes it a matter of pure luck/coincidence/karma to find the right Zen teacher. On this basis it can be questioned whether any historical teacher was enlightened. And such a view doesn't sound good to me. On the other hand, in the nikayas one finds clear guidance on investigating (AN 4.192) and identifying (MN 95) the proper teacher. In Mahayana sutras one also finds guidance on this matter (e.g. Complete Enlightenment Sutra, ch. 10). There are also shastras giving lists of qualities a teacher should possess (e.g. Ratnagotravibhaga 93.3-9 (T1611, 844b 6-12) and Mahayanasutralamkara 17.10). How come that Zen is so lost in this matter that is said to be so important for it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 21st, 2012 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Why follow one tradition of Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you look into what are called traditions you find that they are combinations and systematisations of other traditions of teachings and practices. And within a single tradition there are smaller and greater differences among individual teachers. So, if we go on with our analysis of the concept of tradition, we find that it is indeed not a single thing but a manifold, constructed and dependently arisen phenomenon. Practitioners have always tried to benefit from whatever they had at hand and as teachers they transmitted those that were the most helpful on their path. It is only natural that since in English we have teachings from several sources we make use of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 21st, 2012 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

And what is the point? You say that it only matters if a teacher "realises it". But the fact of realisation can't be discerned by others, and not even the object of realisation is defined. So it is like not saying anything. You claim that neither ethics nor wisdom matters in a teacher. This way there is no meaning of the title "Zen teacher". Considering this non-defined concept, anyone could just be called Zen teacher and there would be no way to debate its validity.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 22nd, 2012 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Why follow one tradition of Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is new not because of the availability of information - in fact, the majority of Buddhist canonical and extra-canonical works are still untranslated - but because of this idea of "tradition". To give an example, in Chan they talk about lineage, and Chan teachers are thought of in terms of being members of this or that lineage. So we can say that there are different traditions. What people forget here is that the whole lineage issue exists only for abbots. All the other monks and the laity are simply Buddhists who study and practise various things. This reductionist view that if somebody prefers Chan (note, even Chan can mean many different things) then studying Yogacara and visualising Avalokitesvara are excluded is simply mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 22nd, 2012 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: Power of Vows of Buddha Amitabha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

First, buddhas throughout the ten directions are real beings. Zen followers also pray to buddhas, bodhisattvas, Dharma protectors and even to local deities at some places. Saying that buddhas and all appearances are mind doesn't mean you just imagine yourself a big house and you then live in a big house. Where you live right now is a mental phenomenon simply because it is your experience. Contemplating on this is the path of wisdom. The path of Pure Land - if we use such a distinction - is focusing on attaining birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss. Within this you may also find different approaches and methods, you can choose whichever you like. The vows of Amita Buddha define his specialities as a buddha. The power of the vows means that those who have faith in them and rely on them are assisted by Amita Buddha. This is not a matter of imagination. Although people can imagine a dragon, but nobody is afraid of them because dragons are not real. However, if you think about the dangers of crossing a street, you don't think it's all just a fantasy. This is quite an important difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 22nd, 2012 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Affliction is Bodhi?

Content:

Astus wrote:

All thoughts and emotions, whether positive, negative or neutral, are empty. Seeing that they are unborn, empty, etc. is bodhi. Thus afflictions are not different from bodhi, bodhi is not found anywhere else. Bodhi is not the elimination of all thoughts and emotions but the realisation of their emptiness, i.e. not grasping them, not identifying with them.

This is not specifically a Chan teaching but common Mahayana actually. So you can even read about it in the sutras. What makes it Chan is the view that people can simply realise this without special preparatory training. That's because the mind is originally pure and it needs no development. Just realise that the mind is so and that is all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 22nd, 2012 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Vows in Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm no monk, but actually anyone can check on the numbers, and those who have some interest in these matters, know them.

So, Theravada Patimokkha contains 227 rules for bhikkhus (and 311 for bhikkhunis). Dharmaguptaka Pratimoksha (China, Korea, Vietnam) has 250 rules for bhikshus and 348 for bhikshunis. Mulasarvastivadin Pratimoksha (Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia) has 253 rules for bhikshus (and 346 for bhikshunis).

Beyond those above in East Asia there are the bodhisattva vows of the Brahma Net Sutra (10+48 precepts), and Vajrayana followers in Tibet, etc., take a different set of bodhisattva precepts (18+46) and there are further Tantric commitments (usually 14

common root vows and further more depending on one's practice).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 23rd, 2012 at 3:57 PM

Title: Re: Power of Vows of Buddha Amitabha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If Amita Buddha were only a symbol then aspiration to be born in the Pure Land is meaningless and useless. It is also questioning the whole bodhisattva path. The result is then a simple calming practice of reciting the name that can bring some inner peace while one focuses on recitation, but nothing more. It is certainly not a path to liberation in a Buddhist sense.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 23rd, 2012 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Why follow one tradition of Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The goal is to be free from suffering. The means to that is realising emptiness. Whether you get to realisation by vipassana, koan or deity meditation, how could it matter? It's just personal preferences, karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 24th, 2012 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: How do mind-streams interact?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is the teaching of three natures (trisvabhava) in Yogacara that you should consider here. On the imaginary level it is just like for everyone else. On the dependent level all is interrelated, phenomena are dependent on perception. Being dependent on perception doesn't mean that nothing exists beyond that, it just means that mind defines and interprets what one perceives. And on the ultimate level ideas of perception and perceiver are understood to be interpretations and ideas only. In the end, there is not even a mind one can conceive.

The problem raised, the interaction of mind-streams, is based on the assumption that there are physically-spatially distinct minds. But minds are not bound by space or time, they are immaterial. Another problem here is the idea that Yogacara - or Buddhism generally - should give a comprehensive philosophy. But it doesn't have anything like that. It is the path of liberation, all teachings are meant to assist in getting rid of grasping at thoughts and emotions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 24th, 2012 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: How do mind-streams interact?

Content:

mirage said:

Not spatially - just separate. Our minds are clearly separate in some way, otherwise our experience would be the same.

Astus wrote:

What separates them? If you mean that they are not the same experiences, yes, that is true. But how is that a problem?

mirage said:

That would be a bit disappointing.

Astus wrote:

Explanations have limited value. Explanations of the world are only as good as their efficacy in creating peace and wisdom. Buddhist teachings are not meant to be used as philosophical statements or scientific observations. They are practical guidelines. They are like recipes - they tell you what and how to cook, you can't eat the paper. On the other hand, the understanding that all views are conventional, relative and mind made, is quite a coherent teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 25th, 2012 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: How do mind-streams interact?

Content:

mirage said:

Well, the question is the same: if both of us see an apple, that means I have experience of apple, and you have a (different) experience of apple. Then I eat the apple, and your experience of it changes (disappears). What made your experience change?

Astus wrote:

When we talk about me, you and apple, that is the imagined reality. There is no understanding of consciousness-only here. If it is understood in terms of consciousness-only, the ideas of an external apple and you, and an internal me, they are all just ideas and not distinct entities. So, if you don't mix up these two, there is no problem at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 25th, 2012 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: How do mind-streams interact?

Content:

mirage said:

I feel like I almost understand you here, but in fact I probably do not. Do you mean that

there is a deeper "level" beneath eight individual consciousnesses, on which mind-streams cease to be distinct?

Astus wrote:

No, there's no hidden consciousness. What I'm saying is that consciousness-only does not mean that there are only floating minds in this world without a physical realms, that's a different view, not a Buddhist one. Consciousness-only means that there is neither object nor subject.

Vasubandhu says at the end of the Trimsika (tr. KOCHUMUTTOM):

"One does not abide in the realization
Of mere representations of consciousness
Just on account of the [theoretical] perception
That all this is mere representation of consciousness,
If one places [= sees] something before oneself.
One does abide in the realization
Of mere [representation of] consciousness
When one does not perceive also a supporting
consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that,
[Namely, the grasping of the supporting consciousness].
That indeed is the supramundane knowledge
When one has no mind that knows,
And no object for its support;"

And in the Lankavatara Sutra (tr. Suzuki):

"The personal soul, continuity, the Skandhas, causation, atoms, the supreme spirit, the ruler, the creator, —[they are] discriminations in the Mind-only."
(XXIX)

"clinging to the memory (vasana) of erroneous speculations and doctrines since beginningless time, they hold fast to ideas such as oneness and otherness, being and non-being, and their thoughts are not at all clear about what is seen of Mind-only."
(XXXV)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 26th, 2012 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: How can Zen be considered it's own thing...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen sickness refers to false understandings, attachments to wrong views and meditation experiences. It is not some common disease, insanity, obsession, or any of the kind that ordinary people suffer from. In fact, those who cling to some view

regarding their realisation usually feel that it is the correct attainment. This can be remedied by a clear eyed teacher, or sufficient study and practice, or both at the same time.

"In my school, there are only two kinds of sickness. One is to go looking for a donkey riding on the donkey. The other is to be unwilling to dismount once having mounted the donkey."

(Foyan in Instant Zen, p. 4)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 28th, 2012 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Odd Sensation

Content:

Astus wrote:

By breathless you mean you feel choking or that you don't recognise the breath? If it's the second one, no problem, just leave it as it is, it is a sign of calmness. If the first one, observe what changes, what makes you feel in need of air, try to breathe through the mouth.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2012 at 3:19 AM

Title: Re: Doing zazen but drawn to Pure Land,

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pure Land and Chan are simply two styles of practice. They are not incompatible at all, as one can see in China, Korea and Vietnam. In Tiantai teachings one can find both forms. The only point where they seem to be separate is when people think of them as exclusive methods. The first person in Buddhism who came up with the very idea of an exclusive practice was Honen. But even in his view exclusivity didn't mean invalidating or rejecting other methods, it was about focusing initially on the single practice of reciting the name and that in itself was sufficient to attain birth in Honen's view.

Doing zazen only can be a path to the Pure Land as long as you dedicate all the merits gained to attaining birth there. Adding to it the nenbutsu is also fine. Also, you can simply do the nenbutsu and it can be both a Zen practice and a way to the Pure Land. As far as the Pure Land path is concerned, what matters is your faith and dedication to it. As for Zen practice, what matters is the living wisdom. Since both are methods on the bodhisattva path with the aim of complete enlightenment, there is no contradiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2012 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: Odd Sensation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Then no need to worry about it or think too much of it. Of course, you may also make this situation a subject of your meditation, and look at it whether there is really a difference between breath and no breath.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2012 at 5:35 AM

Title: Re: Doing zazen but drawn to Pure Land,

Content:

Astus wrote:

The book <http://www.ymba.org/monkey/monkeyfrm.htm> is very brief and gives a good list of buddha remembrance practices. It shows how all the different methods can be found in a single practice. It says, "In alert, focused Buddha recitation there is samatha, vipassana, samadhi, wisdom - each recitation is perfect. Where else can Zen be found if not here?" This refers to the same practice that is mentioned in Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith under Real Mark Buddha Recitation (5.29.1).

Another work related to both Zen and Pure Land practice is "Doubts and Questions about Pure Land Practice" that you find in http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2012 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Will Buddhism become redundant?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Science deals with understanding and manipulating matter. Buddhism is about becoming free from suffering. Science can help in alleviating physical problems and even some mental disorders. Buddhism touches upon the subject of matter in refuting materialism/physicalism and in pointing to its basic qualities as impermanent, suffering, selfless and emptiness. Beyond those, natural science and Buddhism are separate fields of knowledge and practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2012 at 3:28 PM

Title: Re: Panendharmism, anyone ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is sad to see that people who fail to study Buddhist sutras and shastras start coming up with strange ideas to fill in the gap in their understanding. Naturally, where they end up is confusion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2012 at 10:40 PM

Title: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some twisted concepts I'd like to discuss.

1. Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka and Mahamudra

As Karl Brunnhölzl explains (Straight from the Heart, p. 132f; and The Center of the Sunlit Sky, p. 52f) the meaning of the prajnaparamita teachings, of madhyamaka and what was later known as sutra mahamudra is identical in realisation. Same can be seen from Gampopa (Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p. 247f) equating them.

2. Inferential and Direct Method

Thrangu Rinpoche says (e.g. Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p. 56; Essentials of Mahamudra, p. 46) that the sutra path takes long time because it applies inferential methods to realise emptiness while mahamudra is direct. However, a conceptual understanding of emptiness has never been accepted by the prajnaparamita sutras or madhyamika teachers as the true wisdom, that is also clear from point 1. Even in terms of method, as we can see in Kamalashila's meditation instruction (Stages of Meditation, p. 130-133), the analysis of mind itself is part of sutra vipashyana just as resting in suchness. To this we can also add that Chan is a direct method too that is in harmony with prajnaparamita sutras.

3. Emptiness of One is Emptiness of All

Tashi Namgyal states and backs it up with quotes (Mahamudra: The Moonlight, p. 199-200) that realising the emptiness of mind is realising the emptiness of all things. Since true realisation is not a conceptual idea of the emptiness of this and that, but awareness without abiding on any referential point, differentiations of emptiness from two to twenty are only for the sake of explanation. Therefore, whether one sees the emptiness of self or any phenomenon, the result is the same wisdom.

4. Unity of Emptiness and Compassion

In truth, emptiness and compassion cannot be separated from each other (e.g. King of Samadhi, p. 91; and Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p. 269f), therefore with the realisation of one both are attained. From this comes that with attainment of insight into the emptiness of self unbound compassion is also achieved.

5. Arhat, Buddha, Bodhisattva

Adding all the above up, it turns out that with the single realisation of emptiness of self there is all that can be realised and attained. Then the differentiations between paths and results are rendered provisional.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 1st, 2012 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Such a distinction between the emptiness of self and phenomena is everywhere, and used as an explanation about the elimination of emotional and cognitive hindrances. And that's why I quoted the view of seeing one is seeing all.

Regarding the special qualities of buddhas, as you can see in both Chan and Vajrayana, and in the doctrine of buddha-nature, all of them have been internalised as qualities of the mind one can discover with realising the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2012 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Comments regarding well known ideas how arhats are inferior to bodhisattvas, bodhisattvas to buddhas, sutrayana to vajrayana, well, those are just repetitions but not arguments. They are statements that you don't agree with the conclusion, which is fine, but it fails to consider all the points that led to the conclusion. Therefore, it does not address the issue raised.

Those who raised issues about different realisations, please consider points 1 and 3 in the OP first. To put it briefly, there is only one suchness to be realised and there can't be more than that. Not grasping a single view can't be diversified into different forms of non-attachment. At the same time, if there is any clinging, there is still suffering and no liberation of any kind.

There is the difference made between emptiness of person and emptiness of phenomena. This is then related to removing emotional and cognitive obscurations. The first means seeing that there is no self but only the five aggregates, the second is that the five aggregates are also without identity. This, however, is a methodical difference only. Why? Not grasping a self means not being attached to any of the aggregates. Not clinging to aggregates is their emptiness realised. Regarding this see Mulamadhyamakakarika, chapter 18, and the Khandhavagga (SN 22; or just suttas 1, 47, 95 in that section).

DarwidHalim said:

If we see the understanding of emptiness, there are 2 things:

1. Understanding the nature as what it is.
2. Understanding how the nature can appear as such.

Astus wrote:

This is separating emptiness and appearances, impermanence and dependent

origination, essence and function. Such a separation is valid for gradual intellectual understanding and faults of grasping emptiness as a thing and falling into carelessness. Not valid for genuine insight that is referred to here.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2012 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

All three doors of liberation are known to arhats, and that includes signlessness (SN 40.9). As a sutta (AN 6.13) says, "Don't misrepresent the Blessed One, for it's not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn't say that. It's impossible, there is no way that — when the signless has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release — consciousness would follow the drift of signs. That possibility doesn't exist, for this is the escape from all signs: the signless as an awareness-release."

I agree that Mahayana scriptures and treatises say that sravakas realise only the emptiness of self. The definition I have referred to already, so I'm not debating it at all. What I say is that this is only a methodical difference, because the early texts, especially abhidharma works, teach insight meditation primarily by analysing seemingly simple phenomena into parts to highlight their constructed nature. Like for your example of flower, it is not really a flower but only form elements. And then phenomenal emptiness means that even form elements are constructed, they are unreal, only nominal. This is, however, is confirmed in the early works by agreeing that the form elements are constructed, and that they cease in nirvana. Otherwise we would have to say that an arhat, instead of thinking that the body is the self, thinks that the elements are the self, which is nonsense. More on the point that arhats realise the selflessness of phenomena see Wangchuk Dorje's reasonings and quotations in his commentary on the Madhyamakavatara, chapter on the first bhumi (The Karmapa's Middle Way, p. 107-112).

Clinging to any of the four extreme views means having a wrong view and being bound to samsara. If arhats were attached to the view of non-existence, they would be annihilationists, which excludes even ordinary men from correct understanding, not to mention noble ones.

As for the rejection of Mahayana sutras, it is a questionable statement. First of all, in the agamas and nikayas there is no mention of Mahayana works, so rejection of them is not possible. Beyond that, how many arhats do you know who refuted Mahayana sutras? As for doctrinal debates, you have plenty of them within Mahayana itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2012 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jnana,

So did Yinshun emphasise the early Mahayana view of a long path and criticised all the later ideas of instant methods. If I take this a little further - while I'm not very familiar with Yinshun's teachings - it is as he quotes Taixu in Human Centered Buddhism (p. 48) that "Chinese Buddhism has been speaking the Mahayana doctrines and yet practicing the Hinayana way.", this applies to all who say there is liberation close at hand. In fact, if we can say that many Mahayana ideas were already present in mainstream schools like the Dharmaguptaka, Mahasanghika, etc., then it is the sravakayana everywhere in shiny buddha robes. But this is just a side note here. Unlike Yinshun, I prefer the idea of a single vehicle, where the paths are not separate or hierarchical, but provisional in form and one in nature.

DarwidHalim,

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche's book is wonderful. And if you think about sravakas in such texts not as some followers of this or that school, but as clearly wrong interpretations of people, it turns out that such criticisms have meaning and they are meant for the present audience.

Do you mean that an arhat sees that ultimately flowers are empty, it's just that he still thinks there is a real relative flower? If so, that's a faulty interpretation of emptiness, or rather a linguistic sophistry. You know the Zen story of Shakyamuni raising the flower and not saying anything. Did he or did he not grasp the flower? If he grasped it, do you think it was because of seeing characters? If he did not grasp it, how was it possible for him to raise the flower? To hold on to the idea that every experience are just illusion, that is indeed wrong. But if arhats are attached to such a concept, it means their failure to see the emptiness of concepts, and that means attachment to mental aggregates. Thus liberation is not possible for them.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2012 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

In brief, it goes like this. The nikayas describe that both arhat and buddha attain the same liberation, but there are differences between arhats in terms of other abilities and the buddha is perfect in all the different abilities. Then, as understood by the early schools and early Mahayana, the special qualities of a buddha are developed on the

aeons of practising the paramitas as a bodhisattva, but that attainment in terms of liberation are still the same. Then in later Mahayana with the idea of a single vehicle they created a hierarchy of liberations, at which point arhats eventually become bodhisattvas. With further development of buddha-nature concept occurred the option of a short cut path to buddhahood, thus appeared Chan and later Vajrayana. With this we come to a full circle in that the desired attainment is available in a single lifetime but now with all the special abilities.

It is on the basis of the buddha-nature teaching that it becomes possible to say that with becoming free from attachment simply by realising the nature of mind all the buddha qualities are present. This is the fundamental idea of all sudden teachings that are believed to be the ultimate and supreme methods by the majority of Mahayana followers. From this it is just one more step to say that since an arhat is free from attachment there is complete enlightenment. And this is what I did here. With this one can argue saying that arhats are not free from all attachments, practically making arhats not free from samsara but stuck in the illusion of liberation; or say that tathagatagarbha teachings are only provisional, turning sudden paths into illusory baits.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Malcolm said:

All we are left with is empty appearances: they are not real because no existence, etc., can be ascertained regarding them; they are not unreal since they appear. All we can say about them is that they arise in dependence.

Astus wrote:

The very same idea is in the early texts, where the below section is followed by the teaching of dependent arising.

"By & large, Kaccayana, this world is supported by (takes as its object) a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, 'non-existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, 'existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one" (SN 12.15)

Same thing in the <http://www.buddhanet-de.net/ancient-buddhist-texts/English-Texts/Short-Pieces-in-Sanskrit/Fourth-Discourse.htm>,

"The processes arise and the processes cease, they arise with causes and conditions, and they cease with causes and conditions. There is the view about causes, and the view about continuity in existence, 'with causes processes arise', monks, seeing this with right wisdom as it really is there will be no existence-view or eternity-view; 'with causes processes cease', monks, seeing this with right wisdom as it really is there will be no extinction view, or annihilation view. So not having approached either of these two

extremes, monks, the Realised One teaches the Dhamma which is a middle practice"

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

SSJ3Gogeta said:

Um, I accept Allan Wallace is a great practitioner. But like Malcolm pointed out, he is wrong on some stuff.

Astus wrote:

"However defined, the essence of enlightenment corresponds to what in tantra is called "actuality" or the "causal continuum" (rgyu'i rgyud, hetu tantra), the original ground of being to be recognized as enlightenment itself. Thus, when we consider the above three aspects of tantra, it becomes apparent that tantra is based primarily on the theory of the essence of enlightenment or tath·gatagarbha. Although ancient practices of pre Buddhist origin were absorbed into the Buddhist tantric systems, it is this theory of Buddhist origin—the essence of enlightenment—that may be said to be the fundamental basis, or core teaching, from which tantra developed."

(Jamgön Kongtrul: Systems of Buddhist Tantra, p. 18)

"The most essential point in the Vajrayana is the buddha nature, and all Vajrayana practices are based on understanding this."

(Ringu Tulku: Confusion Arises As Wisdom, p. 97)

"The sole subject of the Vajrayana teachings is to show us how to awaken and realize this buddha-nature. There is nothing more than that."

(Ringu Tulku: Daring Steps, p. 21)

"Directly realising mind's nature and removing the afflictions generated in mind is the Vajrayana approach."

(Kalu Rinpoche: Luminous Mind, p. 174)

"Among the vehicles taught by the Buddha, both the mahayana and vajrayana lead to enlightenment; the main difference is that the mahayana is a more gradual path, whereas the vajrayana directly reveals the nature of mind."

(Khenchen Sherab: The Buddhist Path, p. 79)

"The view that buddha nature is the essential nature of each and every being is common to the Mahayana as the sutras, or Paramitayana, and to the Vajrayana, or Tantrayana. The Vajrayana goes into detail about what this means. Vajrayana explains that buddha nature is the innate presence of the source of all the realms and bodies of all buddhas and that these are innate within us. It talks about the presence of this as dakas and dakinis and so on. The Vajrayana explanation is essentially saying the same thing as the sutras. It is just saying it in a little bit more detail."

(Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche: Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma, vol 1, p. 65)

"In essence, the secret-mantra vajrayana can be understood in terms of ground, path, and fruition. Regarding the ground, the minds of all sentient beings are pervaded by the tathagatagarbha."

(Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: Pure Appearance, p. 1)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

DarwidHalim said:

FOr example, you can say that you don't have any attachment to a piece of paper. But, you always see this white stuff as paper. WHen you see that white stuff, immediately the idea of paper appear in you, and you again think yes this is paper, so it against imprint in you. There is no attachment there. But, there is something like assertion.

They are indeed this word of "With this one can argue saying that arhats are not free from all attachments, practically making arhats not free from samsara but stuck in the illusion of liberation; or say that tathagatagarbha teachings are only provisional, turning sudden paths into illusory baits."

But if you see the teaching like Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, they don't say something like that. Those sentences are more to personal view.

Astus wrote:

You say that there is attachment to the concept of paper. Again, that is attachment to the mental aggregates, since the concept and even the visual impression occurs within the aggregates. But such attachment is not possible, or it is not liberation. Assertion, as they say in madhyamaka, is the extreme of existence, and negation is the extreme of non-existence. These are the basics of mistaken views, and views exist in the aggregates.

Nagarjuna is early mahayana, and Chandrakirti did not follow the tathagatagarbha teachings either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 1:39 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Jnana said:

A pragmatic approach is, well, practical.... But it seems that a bodhisattva is still required to develop a number of capabilities that aren't necessary for an arhat liberated through discernment. For example, the first five of the six higher knowledges and samyaksambodhi. These differences are also accepted by Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, etc.

Astus wrote:

There are differences explained in all traditions all right. However, in order to be inclusive, looking at the existing and the disappeared traditions, what actual practices are prescribed and followed don't show different ways. One important idea, however, is an exception. And that is post-enlightenment practices. For an arhat, that's the end of the story, and there are no further instructions. For a bodhisattva, it is the beginning of accumulating infinite merits. So what mahayana adds is a programme for enlightened ones. Or, it is not a prescription but a description. That is, those who have attained liberation are still active as we can see both from old texts and among today's teachers. A third option is that the bodhisattva teaching is a cure for those who failed to apply the teachings to social life. Fourth option is that it's a later technique to bring more people to the Dharma. All of these and more can be said and put together - i.e. all can be true at the same time - as a natural development of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

viniketa said:

but the hierarchical rankings come primarily from commentarial literature, do they not?

There is probably something I am missing, here...

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra is the number one source of the hierarchical structure of liberation, where sravakas attain only a fake nirvana before they turn to the bodhisattva path.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

SSJ3Gogeta said:

This is probably the stupidest thing I ever read on this forum.

You should read "Center of the Sunlit Sky" by Karl B.

Madhyamaka is the foundation of Vajrayana and Mahamudra.

Astus wrote:

Karl Brunnhölzl presents the Kagyü interpretation of madhyamaka, where there is also an "emptiness endowed with the supreme of all aspects." (p. 115f). Also, regarding Mahamudra, "Gampopa, Pamo Truba (1110–1170), Jigden Sumgön (1143–1217), and many others have said that "the treatise of our Mahamudra is this Treatise of the Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle composed by the Blessed One Maitreya."" (p. 57), which is also called Ratnagotravibhaga, the classical shastra on tathagatagarbha doctrine. Gampopa starts his Jewel Ornament of Liberation with stating the existence of buddha-nature. Brunnhölzl's teacher, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche is famous for

his teaching of Zhentong, that is again takes buddha-nature as a fundamental doctrine, and he confirms it as the basis of Vajrayana in his commentary on the Uttarat Tantra Shastra (Buddha Nature, p. 305-306).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 3:43 AM

Title: Re: Chinese language and Buddhism

Content:

mutsuk said:

The point is that the chinese language lacks subtleties for carrying the teachings.

Astus wrote:

I don't really see how that can happen. I mean, on one hand, languages are different and there's nothing new about that. There are things impossible to translate because of such differences, but explanation is still possible. On the other, languages work perfectly well for all human cultures to express whatever is experienced, felt, thought. I haven't yet heard that translating from Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, or any other language to English is not possible to be done accurately, despite the huge differences. So what makes Chinese language itself inferior? What subtlety exists in Sanskrit and English that is missing from Chinese?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

SSJ3Gogeta said:

How is this the Ratnagotravibhaga? I'm reading the footnote 191. I don't get it.

Astus wrote:

Check the Bibliography on page 835.

"The Sublime Continuum. (Ratnagotravibhagamahayanottaratanttrasastra. Theg pa chen po'i rgyud bla ma) Sanskrit edition by Edward H. Johnston. Patna, India: The Bihar Research Society, 1950 (includes the Ratnagotravibhagavyakhya). P5525. ACIP TD4024."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

The usual metaphors for what you're saying is the sun at dawn and the sun at noon, the

view from the bottom of a well and the whole view of the sky, the light of firefly and the light of the sun, the space in a mustard seed and the space of the whole sky.

What is the problem with that? You can't quantify ultimate reality. How can the simile still work? If it is not understood as insight into the nature of things but as gradual removal of hindrances, the way the ten fetters are used to differentiate between sravaka aryas. However, in this case the argument is the one on the gradual path, making sudden techniques (primarily Chan and Tantra) skilful baits at best, fake at worst. And I'm not saying this is good or bad, it just makes later developments based on tathagatagarbha doctrine superficial.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

Let me then clarify what sudden path is as I see it. The first thing is to realise the nature of mind. The mind is buddha, there is no further thing to develop or remove, it's originally pure. Therefore, the path is to keep the buddha-mind. No practices, no techniques. And the attainment is the very same buddha-mind, nothing more or less. Even in Jinul's teachings, where seeing nature is only the 1st stage of 52 stages, the only thing to do is to maintain the clear view. No further practices. Why? Because the initial realisation is already complete. If one had to apply methods then it would not be any different from the common gradual teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2012 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

Practice is based on theory. Now, as you say, people can and do misunderstand the teachings. That doesn't make the teachings any different. Some realise it easily, others slowly. It makes no difference in that everybody has to go through the no gate. It is about this that Huangbo says (Chung-Ling Record, tr. Lok To):

"Some students attain the state of liberated Mind quickly, some slowly. After listening to a Dharma talk, some reach "no mind" directly. In contrast, some must first pass gradually through the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith, the Dasabhumi of Bodhisattva development, and the ten stages before attaining the Perfectly Awakened Mind. Whether one takes a long or a short time, however, once attained, "no mind" can never be lost."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 4th, 2012 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment by Huihai (tr. Lok To) explains the meaning,

"No thought means no mind grasping anything whatsoever. It is being without any view whatever, not even the thought of seeking something or not seeking anything. Having no thought means that in the face of any object or form, not even a single thought arises. This being-without-thought is called Real Mind. However, if one grasps the thought that this being-without-thought is the Real Mind, then it is not right thought but merely the wrong view."

This is perfectly in agreement with Nagarjuna's explanation of emptiness as being free of views. How do you make differences here? Is there a higher and lower freedom from views, higher and lower non-attachment?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 4th, 2012 at 2:59 AM

Title: Re: Panendharmism, anyone ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's put into simpler terms. Amita Buddha is available to everyone because any human is capable of faith. He is also available in meditation, as it is described in the Visualisation Sutra. In fact, the very name in recitation is the presence of Amita Buddha, as that is what appears in one's perception. The fact that the Buddha's light reaches everywhere means that all are embraced and there is no hindrance formed by any karma. It doesn't mean that Amita Buddha is present everywhere, since he is in the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 4th, 2012 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

The quote from the Tao of Sudden Enlightenment is a text written by Dazhu Huihai who was a disciple of Mazu and so a contemporary of Baizhang, master of Huangbo, in the same Hongzhou school. It's nothing to do with Taoism. That's why I've chosen that as a

good source of explaining the teaching of no mind.

As for your explanation with statue, you successfully made up several levels of reification. Fortunately, madhyamaka uses only two truths, even if Jizang (Chinese reformer of madhyamaka) created a 4×2 truths system. One is stuck in ignorance as long as there is grasping a concept. Without abiding in any idea, there is freedom. Even if you create a hundred levels of larger and smaller areas of conceptual attachment, it's still mental proliferation. Without proliferation there is nirvana (MMK 18.5), it is the buddha (MMK 22.15). The ending of objectification, proliferation is within the scope of arhats too (DN 21, MN 18, SN 22.53).

By the way. prasanga is just a method, and those who apply that to teach people are the prasangika. Other forms of teaching, like mind only and even abhidharma, are used to bring people to liberation, freedom from attachment to ideas, and not just an idea of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 4th, 2012 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Unorthodox Ideas

Content:

Astus wrote:

DarwidHalim,

Theravada recognises the difference between a buddha and an arhat, in terms of certain qualities and abilities, but not in liberation. The reason of their difference, just as in early Mahayana, is that a bodhisattva accumulates immeasurable merits through aeons of practice. Sudden teachings say that there is no need for such a long process, that they have a superior teaching, therefore buddhahood is accessible (in this life, in the intermediate state, or the next life) because of the inherent buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 6th, 2012 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In that area I'd rather recommend the <http://mro.org/> of the late Daido roshi. There is also the <http://www.dharmadrumretreat.org/> you could consider. They are both established communities with strong monastic lines.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: Buddha nature misunderstood as atman.

Content:

Astus wrote:

First, buddha-nature is meant to be misunderstood as a real permanent self. Why else would it be appealing to those who have not yet taken refuge in the Three Jewels? Second, buddha-nature is a convenient explanation of the unborn nature of the qualities of a buddha. Third, buddha-nature points to the fact that the path is about removing the obscurations and not about generating some imagined enlightenment. Fourth, buddha-nature requires neither purification nor realisation, therefore resting the mind without contriving anything is all that is needed.

"[And finally] by two reasons the Supreme Eternity is to be known: 1) Because he does not fall into the Nihilistic Extremity through his not diminishing, neglecting the non-eternal Phenomenal Life; 2) nor does he fall into the Eternalistic Extremity through his not intensifying the eternal Nirvāṇa.

It is said as follows: "If someone would perceive that all the Phenomenal Worlds are non-eternal, O Lord, this view would be a Nihilistic Perception. It would never be the true perception at all. If someone would perceive that the Nirvāṇa is eternal, O Lord, this view would be an Eternalistic Perception. And it would never be the True Perception at all."

(Ratnagotravibhaga, v. 38, tr. Jikido Takasaki)

"Thinking that permanent and blissful nirvana is transformed into the characteristics of suffering, they rush seeking after it all the time. Taking pity on such [people], the Buddha indicated the true blissfulness of nirvana: if [even] for an instant there is no characteristic of generation and if [even] for an instant there is no characteristic of extinction, then there will be no generation and extinction that can be extinguished. This is to have quiescence right there. But if when it is right there, one does not have the thought of it being right there, this is called permanent and blissful. This bliss is not experienced and it is not not experienced. How can there be the categories of one essence and five functions? And how could one possibly speak of nirvana contravening the myriad dharmas and rendering them permanently ungenerated? This is to revile the Buddha and destroy the Dharma."

(Platform Sutra, ch. 7, tr. John R. McRae)

"I expound the dharma of mind-ground, which enters the secular and the sacred, the pure and the defiled, the real and the temporal. But your 'real and temporal,' your 'secular and sacred,' cannot attach labels to all that is real and temporal, secular and sacred. The real and the temporal, the secular and the sacred, cannot attach a name to this person. Followers of the Way, grasp and use, but never name this is called the 'mysterious principle'."

(Record of Linji, ch. 11, tr. Ruth Fuller Sasaki)

"Therefore, that the grasses, trees, thickets and groves are impermanent is the buddha nature; that humans and things, body and mind are impermanent — this is because they are the buddha nature. That the lands, mountains, and rivers are impermanent — this is the buddha nature. Annuttara-samyak-sambodhi, because it is the buddha nature, is impermanent; the great parinirvāṇa, because it is impermanent, is the buddha nature."

(Shobogenzo, Buddha Nature, tr. Carl Bielefeldt)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Learning to recite the nenbutsu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thank you for sharing. Any more?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 4:10 PM

Title: Re: Political angle to the Chan Vs Dzogchen debate

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good question. However, it's good to remember that the times when Chan was popular on a larger level - i.e. outside of monasteries - was primarily because of connections to the secular elite. Rituals and ceremonies are abundant in Chinese Buddhism, and Chinese culture, even without any Vajrayana ideology, so it doesn't sound the right argument here for the reasons of Tantric teachings not being popular.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Can someone definitively explain to me the differences...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Samatha - meditation with the aim to calm the mind, usually by focusing on a single object

Vipassana - meditation with the aim to gain wisdom, usually by different methods of analysis of different subjects

Zazen - it means sitting meditation, doesn't qualify anything beyond that in and of itself

Anapanasati - it means awareness of breathing in and out, there are different forms of this practice in both Theravada and Mahayana

Shikantaza - a practice specific to Soto Zen where there is no object maintained nor analysis performed

Samadhi - it basically means the state of concentrated mind, can also mean a specific attainment within meditation depending on context

There are some glossaries you can use to look up basic words, like this one:

<http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/glossary.html>, and on Wikipedia that has links to further articles: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Political angle to the Chan Vs Dzogchen debate

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are many esoteric texts translated to Chinese, including late tantras like Hevajra and Cakrasamvara. As Tiger mentioned, the imperial court had connection with Tibetan teachers from the 13th century on.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 7th, 2012 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: Can someone definitively explain to me the differences...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anapanasati is a Pali word, and as such, it has its own complete practice in Theravada that covers both samatha and vipassana. In East Asia mindfulness of breath is mostly used only for samatha practice, and as such, it is only for calming the mind.

Zazen means sitting meditation, literally (za - sit; zen - meditate). Meditating in the sitting position can mean any kind of mental training. You can count your breath, just watch it, or be mindful of your body, your thoughts, visualise a buddha, etc.

What people do within the Japanese Rinzai school depends on the lineage and the teacher's instructions. Breath practice is common, sure. It's a kind of preliminary to koan practice. But shikantaza is a different approach, and it's not the same as just objectless meditation. Of course, we can say that ultimately koan practice leads to shikantaza. Or we can also say that shikantaza is mistaken and koan practice is correct. It depends on who you ask.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 11th, 2012 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you can find in Mahamudra handbooks, regular checks by a teacher is how the effectiveness of instructions are assured. So, if you have a teacher who you can attend for a longer period, like within a retreat environment, make use of it. Otherwise, study the teachings, not only in Mahamudra manuals, but also works on madhyamaka, sutras, etc. When understanding, realisation and conduct matches what is taught, you see for yourself that the words of the Buddha and the masters are true.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 11th, 2012 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

I think the key difference in interpretation is that you say "If I follow the master I follow his teaching.", while many follow not the teachings but rather the teacher. This is of course failing the instruction of the
http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_reliances. And when they follow the person, his acts become great concern. It also opens the door to all sorts of abuses of power.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 12th, 2012 at 2:24 AM

Title: Re: Dalai Lama on Science

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's been a nice little post on James Ford's blog yesterday:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2012/09/science-buddhism.html>

Also, science is all right with Buddhism as long as it is not equated with materialism. Lokayatikas have been refuted already.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 12th, 2012 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

Abuse of social status (i.e. power) is not a matter of being a Buddhist, Hindu, political or any other group. Within a personality cult one individual gains immense influence on others' lives, and such a person then uses his position to his personal advantage while at the same time harming others. And the harm done is not necessarily against the law, but mental and emotional scars can take even longer to heal than physical ones. It is like being cheated by one's friend or spouse. In fact, comparing such a teacher to a bad parent seems quite appropriate. The difference here is that adult men reduce themselves to ignorant children and raise the teacher to the status of a heavenly father.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 12th, 2012 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Is there a difference between Shin and pure land buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jodo Shinshu is an offshoot of Honen's teachings, and instead of emphasising the practice of nenbutsu it points to faith, shinjin, as the essential requirement of birth in the Pure Land. I don't see that there is a big difference otherwise. As for other practices, they are not important at all, although not forbidden either as long as they strengthen

one's faith.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 12th, 2012 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the end it is always you who decide what to do. So, you better clarify your motivation when you decide on this or that teaching and practice. Is it because it sounds good, or it fits your previous ideas, or the lama says so, or it works, etc.?

The important thing in calming meditation is to be calm and aware. What tool you use for that is secondary. If you feel it is all contrived, that's fine. Then just let it go. But the more subtle the object the easier it is to lose mindfulness of it and slip into daydreaming. This is something you have to clarify for yourself. Big words and ideas or of little help.

If you are wondering about the things to be discovered in insight meditation, you should rely on the instructions first and then on actual experience. Instructions are your guide but not the experience. Ideas about the instructions are easily misleading. See for yourself, drop the explanations and just look. And if you have doubts, bring them to your teacher. Not to argue about theories, but only to help you find the present truth. You may also just recognise that doubts and the rest are all based on ideas, ideas on thoughts, thoughts just come and go without any problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 16th, 2012 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

In calming meditation you have to avoid disturbances, you have to concentrate not to be disturbed. If merged with vipashyana, resting without abiding on anything, there is no effort made not to be disturbed, because all is seen without being hung up on them. Example: normally one is disgusted by a pile of fresh dung, with concentration one blocks either the object or the feeling, with insight one does not reify the object nor identifies with the feeling and so there is self-liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 17th, 2012 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Dharma and Magic: is the latter necessary?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some thoughts I've gathered on the subject while I was unable to access the site:
<https://eubuddhist.blogspot.com/2012/09/buddhist-magic.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 17th, 2012 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Dharma and Magic: is the latter necessary?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From Ven. Sheng-yen (in " <http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/> "):
"Practicing Chan depending solely on one's own efforts without believing in the power of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and Dharma-protecting deities cannot be considered practicing Buddhism at all."

Issue raised previously here: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=3435>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 18th, 2012 at 2:50 AM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

The division to subject-object comes in when there is the thought/feeling that something is out there and I'm in here. But that thought/feeling (mental content, dharma) is an added quality to simple presence. Even if you recognise that there is this idea of duality, don't worry about it, it is just there. The important point is not to grasp phenomena, not to believe them, not to rely on them (which is not the same as rejecting them, or maintaining a thought of disbelief).

The meaning of the mind being empty is just that there is nothing to rely on, that there is no ultimate nature of mind/self. Doubt appears because there is the idea that one should find some optimal point to hold on to. But as you know, there is nothing to find as the real thing, as the true attainment. Not attaining anything is the real attainment. When the seeking stops it is found, because it is the seeking itself that contains the error. So they say: rest.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 18th, 2012 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the important point about this kind of non-meditation is to not slip into not meditating at all. To remedy that, Gampopa's "thoughts are the dharmakaya" idea is a useful one, that is, in face of everyday events and mental appearances we can work with wisdom and compassion. To manage, we need mindfulness of what goes on. Gradually it becomes effortless and expands to every moment - this is the subject of the four yogas. Pointing out, investigation, study - this is all needed first in order to be clear about what the practice is. But then, once you got it, the only thing left is using it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 18th, 2012 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Dharma and Magic: is the latter necessary?

Content:

catmoon said:

The reason for the demise of magick was a fiendish invention called the controlled experiment. For some reason people decided that to be considered real, a phenomenon should be observable, reproducible, behave consistently and be quantitatively predictable. This style of thinking is responsible for our technological world, where we are surrounded by devices that would have been deemed impossible just a couple of centuries ago. In the same centuries, the competing style of thinking has advanced not one inch. The casters-out of demons of today are indistinguishable from those of centuries gone by, or of millenia gone by, and are no better at their craft or any wiser today than they were before. And one really should ask why.

Astus wrote:

There is another modern idea here to answer why. The idea of progress, of evolving. Does the Dharma require progress, to be better than it was before? No. Neither does magic. In fact, it is generally believed that the ancients knew better. The older the more authentic it is. And this is also reflected in cosmology very well. In science the universe evolved from simple to very complex. In Buddhism, there is just the rebirth of the whole world again and again.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 19th, 2012 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Exploring Tibetan Buddhism through a foreign language?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Russian seems like a good choice to have access to materials less known among Western scholars. On the other hand, the traditionally Buddhist people in the Russian Federation speak different languages, although they also know Russian. But if your goal is to have access to a large amount of Buddhist academic works, Chinese or Japanese sounds like a better choice, but perhaps less exotic in the area of Buddhist studies.

Check out this Russian language Buddhist forum:

<http://dharma.org.ru/board/index.php> (you can even find Buddhist books in Russian there).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 20th, 2012 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

Matylda said:

One has to see for oneself. In zen.

Astus wrote:

Indeed. Same thing the Buddha said.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 21st, 2012 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

floating_abu said:

Sorry, Astus, the Buddha was talking about the Dharma teachings -- not places of sexual abuse, manipulation and financial irresponsibility.

Astus wrote:

My agreement was with the point of personal investigation. And I referred to this teaching: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.192.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 22nd, 2012 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out / Systematic Instruction

Content:

monktastic said:

My hang-up before (e.g., in my last few posts) was: why do the Mahamudra masters insist you recognize mind as empty cognizance before attempting to undistractedly nonmeditate? The answer, I suppose, is that it removes two particularly troublesome graspings (that there is something to find and/or something to do). But as long as I understand that all hang-ups are to be released, I don't need to tie myself up in knots worrying about each individual instruction.

Astus wrote:

Kamalashila's (3rd Bhavanakrama, tr. Martin T. Adam) brief explanation of the reason for the necessity of proper discernment in insight meditation:

"Therefore, that which is described in the highest teachings as nonmindfulness and nonattention is to be seen as preceded by the discernment of reality. On account of which, nonmindfulness and nonattention are to be undertaken by way of the discernment of reality, not otherwise. Which is to say that when a yogin observing with perfect wisdom does not see even a single dharma in the three times as ultimately originated, then how in that context could he be mindful and pay attention? For how could that which is ultimately not experienced in the three times he noticed or attended to? Thus this one would have entered into the nonconceptual knowledge in which all conceptual proliferation has been calmed. And on the basis of that entrance one penetrates emptiness. And on the basis of that penetration there is the abandonment of the net of all false views. And one who is possessed of method, on the basis of adhering to wisdom, is perfectly skilled in conventional and ultimate reality.

Thus it is on the basis of obtaining unobscured knowledge that one understands every single teaching of the Buddha. Hence without the discernment of reality there is no arising of perfect knowledge, nor also the abandonment of the afflictive obscurations."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 23rd, 2012 at 1:23 AM

Title: Re: Is Eido Tai Shimano's lineage legitimate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since the discussion is beyond the original topic, it is now closed.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 24th, 2012 at 1:57 AM

Title: Re: jhana vs silent illumination or other zen methods

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is not something you maintain, rather it is not maintaining our delusions. Just sitting is a way to express the basic Zen method of no-thought (in the following translations of Dogen's works put as "before thinking"). As you can see yourself, Dogen explicitly denied that shikantaza is some sort of absorption or gradual technique. That way he subscribed to pure sudden enlightenment teaching, as it is the hallmark of Zen.

Dogen says (Zazengi, all translations from <http://www.wwzc.org/book/translations-anzan-hoshin-roshi-and-others>),

"Having aligned body and mind, exhale deeply. Sitting in balance and stillness like a mountain, think of "not-thinking." How? Be "Before Thinking."

This is the essence of zazen. Zazen is not meditation. It is the Dharma Gate of great ease and joy. It is stainless realized-practice."

Saying the same with more words (Fukanzazengi),

"Once you have found your posture, breathe in and out deeply, sway left and right and then settle firmly and steadily. Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Be Before Thinking. These are the basics of zazen.

What I call zazen is not developing concentration by stages and so on. It is simply the Awakened One's own easy and joyful practice, it is realized-practice within already manifest enlightenment. It is the display of complete reality. Traps and cages spring open. Grasping the heart of this, you are the dragon who has reached his waters, the tiger resting in her mountains. Understand that right here is the display of Vast Reality and then dullness and mental wandering have no place to arise."

He also said (Zanmai-O-Zanmai),

"Sit in the full lotus posture with the body. Sit in the full lotus posture with the mind.

Free of "body" and "mind", sit in the full lotus posture.

My late Master, the Old Buddha, said, "Practising Zen is dropping through the bodymind. Just sitting is primordial realization. Offering incense and worshipping the images of the Awakened Ones, chanting the names of the Awakened Ones, repentance, reciting the Discourses and other religious rituals are not necessary."

At another place (Sankon Zazen Setsu),

"No practice whatsoever can be measured against zazen. ... In perfect ease go, stay, sit and lie down. Seeing, hearing, understanding and knowing are all the natural display of the Actual Nature."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 24th, 2012 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: Neurological science and buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've never seen any Buddhist teaching that agrees with materialism/physicalism, and those few teachers who do appeared only recently. It's little to do with magical abilities, however.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 25th, 2012 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Neurological science and buddhism

Content:

steveb1 said:

I suppose the central question to Buddhism and other non-materialist systems is: "If consciousness does not arise from neural processes, then what exactly is the role of such processes, what is the role of the brain?" Is there anything in Buddhism that addresses the obviously profound connection between mental phenomena and neural events ... ?

Astus wrote:

The debate exists if the problem is the classical issue of mind and body. Buddhism does not have such a duality. On one hand, it is one of the unanswered questions. On the other, they are not answered because they have incorrect presuppositions of existence and non-existence. The Buddha taught the five aggregates as the middle view. In modern terms, it is a phenomenological approach.

Aemilius said:

The teaching that I quoted is given by Nagarjuna in Mula-madhyamaka-karika and by Vasubandhu in his shorter works. Nagarjuna in many ways denies the apriori existence of matter. Matter has no independent existence in madhyamaka buddhism, it certainly isn't a cause for mind and mental states. Their point is that neither has mind an independent existence.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna invalidates the independent existence of all phenomena, it does not prove any non-material existence of mind. Vasubandhu teaches mind-only, but since it's very much philosophical, his proof is relevant only for Buddhists. For instance, Vasubandhu uses magic as an argument at one point. It's hardly persuasive today.

The problem with supernatural abilities generally, is that even in Buddhism they are not sufficiently explained, but simply taken for granted. There is no reasoning how one person could read another's mind, or hear distant events, or fly in the sky. To explain it, that would need getting into the laws of physics, a topic that Buddhism does not really involve itself. And even on the level of Abhidharma, no detailed mechanism for superpowers either.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 27th, 2012 at 9:32 PM

Title: Re: Sūtra, Tantra, & Essence Mahāmudrā

Content:

Astus wrote:

gnas lugs (place + method) = way of abiding -> natural state

gnas lugs kyi phyag rgya chen po = Mahamudra of the natural state

http://www.nitartha.org/dictionary_search04.html doesn't mention any Sanskrit equivalent.

(I don't know Tibetan, just looked it up)

Equating alayavijnana with tathagatagarbha is another matter.

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/buddhanature.htm>,

"Again, first there is the ground of ignorance and from that there is the subtle movement arising from conceptualisations, which in turn gives rise to the movements that stimulate the mind. When a practitioner realizes the ground, then there is the wisdom, the power, and the great compassion of a Buddha. As long as somebody does not recognize the ground, there is delusion and all that follows. The ground of both delusion and liberation is called alaya, the Sanskrit term for "universal ground." The Tibetan translation for alaya is kun-gzhi, "basis of all."

You can find a lot more in "A Direct Path to the Buddha Within" on the subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 28th, 2012 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: How do gay Buddhists explain this one?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's unlikely to be meant for monks, since the very first precept of the pratimoksha

already covers all kinds of genital-orifice contact (including even animals), and genital-manual contact is also covered in another rule.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 1st, 2012 at 12:44 AM

Title: Re: BBC Radio Programme on Osel Hita Torres

Content:

Astus wrote:

Non-UK members can listen as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 1st, 2012 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Akshobhya and Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddha-lands are different depending on the individual vows of the buddha who resides there. And just because it is a buddha-land - i.e. has a resident buddha - it doesn't mean it is necessarily out of samsara. When Shakyamuni was in this world it didn't mean that there were no hells or any evil things.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: Why is Tibetan Buddhism more popular?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What originally made Zen famous in the West was its anti-intellectualism, anti-structuralism, iconoclasm, minimalism, etc. That is, the way DT Suzuki painted it. There was also a fascination with Japanese culture. But it seems that while that idea of Zen is still alive and well, it leaves too much out. That means that people are mostly free to fill out the huge gaps with their own ideas - thus the many Zen of this and Zen of that - but that results in Zen being little more than a catchword. It takes enormous dedication/fanaticism to stick with a formless and aimless seated meditation as the centre of one's faith. Generally it just turns into some relax time. My hope is that Korean Buddhism can establish itself in the West as a comprehensive practice and doctrine, since there are apparent intentions to do so by the Jogye Order (largest Buddhist organisation in Korea).

I can second Dzoki in that in Central Europe it is Tibetan Buddhism that rules the land, Diamond Way being the number one by miles. In Hungary's case there are a couple of historical reasons too, for instance

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A1ndor_K%C5%91r%C3%B6si_Csoma. Another example, the last time the Dalai Lama was in Budapest (2010) he had an audience of more than 10,000 people (that is 0.1% of the entire population of the country) in a stadium. Of course that doesn't mean all were Buddhists.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: Why is Tibetan Buddhism more popular?

Content:

Astus wrote:

While I can only agree regarding publications with JKhedrup, there is another thing I'd like to add here. And that is the difference in the source material itself. Most of the texts translated from Chinese are either Chan works or sutras. Both are difficult to understand for any beginner, or even not so beginner readers. Without a firm knowledge of essential Mahayana doctrines it is only natural that there will be serious misunderstandings. But to get the knowledge of basic Mahayana one has to start reading either academic translations from Sanskrit or works from the Tibetan tradition. And here I'm talking about classical works, not introductory books.

Here is an example of a classical Chinese Buddhist text that was later often referred to in Chan,

"In entering there is transcendence and in emerging there is subtlety. The entering of wisdom is transcendent, [since] the outer defilements have no support. The emergence of wisdom is subtle, [since] the inner mind is devoid of activity. When inwardly the mind is free of intentional activity, one is no longer moved by various views. When outer defilements have no support, one is no longer bound by manifold existence. Free from the bonds of manifold existence, discursive thought no longer charges about. Unmoved by various views, there is inconceivable quiescence and cessation. This can be called originally pure and intrinsic transcendence and subtlety."

(Treasure Store Treatise, ch. 2, in "Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism", p. 204)

It is not a matter of bad translation but mainly a foreign terminology. And Dogen - whose works are almost completely translated to English - is a whole different level.

Longchenpa's Precious Treasury series are like children's books compared to that in terms of language.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 6:49 AM

Title: Re: Thamal gyi shepa vs. baby rigpa vs. rigpa (etc.)

Content:

Astus wrote:

"in what way does an experience of "baby rigpa" differ from a "complete" recognition of rigpa?"

The difference is made in order to show that there is a difference between a practitioner and a non-practitioner (i.e. a buddha). The practice is abiding in the natural state, and the natural state is the result, so this way the result is the path. But we can translate it to make it clearer: it is about practising with the correct view in order to attain complete

realisation. The correct view conceptually is emptiness, experientially it is not grasping anything as real. It is practice because one works with habitual tendencies that are gradually removed.

"Much of my time is spent in what I could call "thought-free wakefulness," or what feels like a self-aware presence. There is no sense of some concrete thing doing the watching, but there continues to be a sense that objects are being watched."

As Nagarjuna and many other masters have pointed out, there is no ultimate truth beyond conditioned reality. The term "ordinary mind" is usually explained as being ordinary in the sense of simple, uncomplicated, not proliferating views. There is another sense I like to add, and that is the expression's literal sense, our everyday mind that thinks, feels, remembers, wants, hurts, etc. If there is the idea that the true nature of mind is without all the usual content, that is a reification of an abstract self, it is an imagined nothingness, it is annihilationism. Whatever appears in the mind is just natural. Thoughts, etc. come and go. If you fuss about it, there is a problem. Whether you want to grasp or reject, pull or push, there is trouble. If you don't mess around, all is perfect as it is.

Milarepa taught,

"If you are happy practicing with mind,
Thoughts are the mind's magical creations.
Be mind itself."

Read the full poem: <http://www.unfetteredmind.org/milarepas-song-to-lady-paldarboom>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 7:48 AM

Title: Re: Thamal gyi shepa vs. baby rigpa vs. rigpa (etc.)

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two defining characteristics: awareness, no characteristics. Well, it's actually one signless awareness. Attaching to any specific feeling, form, thought, impression, vision, etc., is identifying with something, taking an impermanent appearance as eternal. Why is it said to be difficult? Because it is our very basic habit to cling to thoughts and other things. Therefore one fails to differentiate between the content of the mind and mind itself. And when there is differentiation, the mistake happens again by thinking of "mind itself" as a thing, as a state.

Ajahn Sumedho taught a very easy method to see the gap between thoughts. First create a clear and strong thought, for instance saying in your mind "Om mani padme hung". Note how you start to say it in your mind, how you are saying it, and how it goes away. Then a break. A gap. Then you say it again in your mind.

The correct understanding of emptiness is a practice itself. Just consider the fact that karma ultimately comes from thoughts. If you change your thought-patterns you change your karma. Emptiness teaches oneself that there is nothing really to attach to, nothing to identify with, nothing to rely on. So when there is nothing real found, nothing concrete attained, one can let go of it. Without clearly seeing that appearances are empty of self, one may enforce on oneself some calm and peace, but then after meditation everything starts again as before. So understanding helps to let go. When all is let go of, there are no reference points, it is just non-conceptual awareness, it is resting meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Thamal gyi shepa vs. baby rigpa vs. rigpa (etc.)

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I don't experience appearances as themselves being awareness"

If I think about this sentence literally, even imagining it feels absurd. Awareness is being conscious of something. If that thing is the consciousness that is aware of it, the whole thing collapses. I mean, logically. So that's not what is meant. The other end, that awareness and objects are separate is also ruled out, otherwise they had no connection to each other. In terms of practice, it is to be determined by looking for the gap or border between object and subject in the sensory fields. Of course there is no such thing. Another method is to search for the mind and the object if it's inside, outside or in between. Teachings on this are found in Wangchuk Dorje's Ocean of Definitive Meaning and commentaries. What it comes down to is that there is just the flow of experience, as in the examples of the mirror and the lake. Because everything is an experience, everything is mind. And since all experience are ungraspable and inconceivable, they are empty. When you relax and let sights, sounds, etc. appear and disappear as they are without fixating on any of them, you just open yourself completely, the idea of any viewer and viewed, hearer and heard becomes meaningless. Try to meditate on a single sensory gate, first perhaps using a fixed visual object. Then investigate what you experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Why is Tibetan Buddhism more popular?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another thing is that here if you mention Buddhism, people think it exists in India - Buddha was Indian, right? - and then the Dalai Lama and Tibet. That Buddhism is a major religion in China, that's not common knowledge at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2012 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: YinYana Creed - based on Nicene Creed

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nice work.

Look at these titles:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/btg/index.htm> (1894)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tbc/index.htm> (1908)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/pos/index.htm> (1909)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/busc/index.htm> (1913)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/cob/index.htm> (1919)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bups/index.htm> (1921)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bb/index.htm> (1932)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: Ven Master Dr Heng Sure on Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Unless the mentioned economic collapse happens a hundred years later, by which time Buddhism could have spread widely enough among Westerners, there is little chance for Ven. Heng Sure's prediction about turning to faith in Amita Buddha can happen. Christianity is still strong in the US. and it has deep enough roots in Europe to regain its followers. Rather it seems to me that those who have already tried some sort of more popular form of Buddhism can turn to the Pure Land, because in their belief in the Dharma is already there.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is how samatha relates to vipasyana. In samatha the mind settles on an object (including itself), and in vipasyana one investigates the object the mind is settled on and the mind itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kaji,

A time when there were no buddha-lands is not really possible. There is no beginning of life in Buddhism, there is no beginning of buddhas either. But being born in a buddha-land as a part of one's progress on the bodhisattva path is not a requirement, although since bodhisattvas start their career under a buddha and are guided by buddhas, buddha-lands and bodhisattvas go together quite well.

The Tusita is a heaven in the realm of desire, not a buddha-land/pure land (the words are synonyms generally).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Isn't it a Buddhist belief that there exist so called Demons

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are demon-like beings in Buddhism. Mostly they are in the realm of hungry spirits and the lower heavens. These are for example the naga (aquatic serpent demons), yaksha (nature spirits), rakshasa (man-eating demons), pishacha (flesh-eating demons), kimnara (centaurs), asura (warrior gods), mahoraga (subterranean serpent demons).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Why is Tibetan Buddhism more popular?

Content:

Astus wrote:

" here we are in 2012 and in Soto Zen, 22% of the respondents to a recent survey of dharma successors were over 70 years old. Almost 50% were between 60-69. Only 7% were in their 40s.

Now I like old people as much as the next person. I'll be one soon myself. So I'm not hating old people here, just saying that when you've got 70% of your denomination's priests over 60 years old (aka, Boomers and beyond), then you might have a problem."

Read the full article: <http://sweepingzen.com/zen-is-going-to-hell-and-its-the-boomers-fault>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: What's the meaning of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

You should read some history and other basic things about Zen. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: Whats the meaning of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you want an even shorter introduction to Zen, but still something conceptual, here is this four line poem attributed to Bodhidharma that is usually used as a definition of Zen.

教外別傳

不立文字

直指人心

見性成佛

Outside doctrines a separate transmission

Doesn't rely on letters and words,

Directly points to human mind

To see nature and become buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: Being in the Present

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you quoted text says, in a deeper sense. A calm mind and an insightful mind unites in the final practice. Strictly speaking, samatha is just calming the mind, which in Mahamudra results in simply resting it in its natural state. Vipasyana is insight into the mind itself, seeing the mind that rests, seeing its nature. Vipasyana in its analytical form is looking here and there, checking and probing, asking questions and following steps of enquiry. Vipasyana in its resting form means that the investigation has finished, nothing conceivable has been found, there is awareness and emptiness without the minutest distinction. This whole process is actually also found in Kamalasila's manuals, so it's neither secret nor very specific to Mahamudra.

Another difference that can be said between samatha and vipasyana is that while in samatha you gradually move inside and you reach a stable mental state which you leave when you finish meditation, in vipasyana you open your awareness to everything that occurs and realise that the nature of mind is always unaffected by appearances, that phenomena are already empty as they are, and there is not a single state of mind you need to revert to in order to be free from suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land and Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Does that sutra state anywhere specifically that it's a pure land or buddha land?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: Japanese Buddhist Traditions 'reality show'

Content:

Astus wrote:

It looks more like a song contest to me. The order in the video actually is:

- 10: Rinzai, singing: Hakuin's Song of Zazen
- 9: Soto, singing: Great Compassion Dharani
- 8: Tendai/Nichiren (in Tendai temple), singing: 14th chapter of Lotus Sutra
- 7: Shingon, singing: Rishu-kyo (Adhyardhaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā Sutra)
- 6: Nichiren/Soto/Tendai (in Nichiren temple), singing: 16th chapter of Lotus Sutra
- 5: together singing the Heart Sutra
- 4: Shin, singing: Shoshin Nenbutsu Ge (Hymn of the Nembutsu and True Faith)
- 3: Soto Zen: Kannon-gyo (section of Lotus Sutra, ch. 25)
- 2: Jodo/Shin, singing: Infinite Life Sutra (Larger Amitabha Sutra)
- 1: Jodo/Shin/Tendai, singing: Amida-kyo (Shorter Amitabha Sutra)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Maitreya's Pure Land?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are some points regarding aspiration to be born in the Tusita to meet Maitreya. In Zhiyi's Ten Doubts about the Pure Land it says that there are two main differences. First is that only by upholding the ten virtues and other practices can one attain birth there, and even then there is no guarantee one will succeed, while birth in Amita's land is easily accessible simply by reciting his name. The second point is that the Tusita is still in the realm of desire, there are many distractions from the path and retrogression is still possible, unlike in the Western Land of Peace and Bliss where perfect liberation is guaranteed. The text goes on with further problems, like that just meeting Maitreya in itself does not make sure one actually achieves enlightenment. It also mentions that besides Asanga and Vasubandhu there was also Simhabhadra who aspired to be born in Maitreya's court but he was eventually stuck in the outer section in Tusita and got entangled by the five desires.

Of course, the above is from the perspective of those who propagate birth in Amita's land. But based on the quote from Ven. Yinshun it seems to me that the requirements of birth are more difficult for Maitreya than Amita Buddha, although this again may depend on whom you ask.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Akshobhya and Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nothing has intrinsic reality in Mahayana. But everything exists dependently. So, the hells are as real as anything else.

Jan Nattier in her "The Indian Roots of Pure Land Buddhism" explains that initially Akshobhya's land was popular, but as it reflected an older version of the concept of the bodhisattva path, Amita's land gradually took over in popularity because of its accessibility and guaranteed liberation for ordinary people.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2012 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Maitreya's Pure Land?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Could you then also participate in the assembly at his ascension to buddhahood?"

On one hand, the point of all the teachings there are is to guide people onto the path. If somebody likes Maitreya then go for that. If it's Amitabha, Vairocana, Avalokita, etc., then choose that. In this sense all these teachings are equal in their function. On the other hand, if we want to choose based on doctrinal and practical details instead of emotional preference, the Pure Land teaching of Amita Buddha is the best. And then it doesn't matter if you can be there at Maitreya's descent, since you find yourself in the company of many bodhisattvas and buddhas, and you too are about to reach buddhahood.

Talking about Maitreya, Vimalakirti had a great conversation with him. Just look at how this layman starts his conversation with the next buddha:

"Maitreya, the World-honored One has bestowed on your noble person the prediction that you will achieve anuttarā samyak sambodhi in a single lifetime. What lifetime will you use to experience this prediction, past, future, or present? If a past life, then the past life is already extinguished. If a future life, then the future life has not arrived. If the present life, then the present life is nonabiding. It is as the Buddha has explained, "O bhikṣus, you are in this immediate present born, aged, and extinguished.""

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 6th, 2012 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Can I only use a Zen Buddha/Bodhisattva statue?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen as a school within Mahayana is not bound to any particular buddha. So, there is no

such thing as a "Zen buddha".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2012 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Akshobhya and Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What does actually change the the vasanas? How does the hell cease to manifest?
How does the human world cease to manifest?"

Ingrained habits are changed by new habits or the Buddhist path. As for the cessation of the different realms, do you mean liberation from such births or in a cosmological sense? In the first case, it is by realisation on the path. In the second one, it is a matter of cyclical contraction and expansion of the realms.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2012 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oushi,

If you say that moral conduct, goodness, is inherent in humans, that contradicts the fact of unethical behaviour and evil deeds. If you say that from the buddha-nature comes buddha acts, that is not argued, but then it requires first attaining enlightenment. To reach such a realisation there is a path, and the first part of that path is ethical discipline. Without teaching that very first step the further levels are not available.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2012 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oushi,

Direct realisation of buddha mind is fine. In theory. In real life hardly anyone teaches it (I've heard of only one teacher like that in this century: Daehaeng Sunim, although there might be others). Therefore there is a need for a gradual path, as it has been devised by the Buddha. It is also true that a bodhisattva on the second bhumi perfects ethical discipline, but that is already a high level compared to all the other 41 levels on the path before that. And if we consider Jinul's teaching, sudden enlightenment is just level 1 of 52. When the precepts are not taught by a teacher but instead the teacher himself is raised beyond all moral concerns, we can see the results as in the original essay posted at the beginning of this thread.

There isn't much on ethics in the Record of Linji. You should look at Baizhang's Regulations as a prime example of added ethical discipline in the Zen tradition besides the Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2012 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Who is your favorite Buddha/Bodhisattva?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Seevoice" is the best.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2012 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oushi,

If teachers don't usually instruct in the direct way, the reason is either that they don't think people will understand it or they don't know it. In either case it shows that the direct method is for those who are already well prepared.

Rinzai Zen (Japanese) has a clear systematic training programme that actually culminates in the contemplation of the bodhisattva precepts.

Baizhang was Linji's teacher, Chinese. The regulations were written in China, not Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

we should talk about how things are.

Astus wrote:

And that's why ethics are important to be mentioned, because without it Zen sounds like some abstract idea of a detached mind where there is no cause and effect. From that comes all the actual cases already mentioned.

oushi said:

And how different it is from the founders (Linji) approach...

Astus wrote:

The Linji school was founded hundreds of years after Yixuan himself and his Record was rewritten repeatedly. If you want a glimpse of something closer to Linji it is the teachings of the Hongzhou school. There is also an interesting work about his Yulu:
<https://books.google.com/books?id=JkGTSWEUCeUC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

What is morality, how is it developed, why people defend it so furiously?

Astus wrote:

Morality in Buddhism is defined by the correct behaviour in body and speech. What correct behaviour consists of is given in the ten virtuous deeds and others. It is part of both the noble eightfold path and the six paramitas, therefore they lead to both temporary and ultimate liberation from suffering. This answers your three questions.

oushi said:

It is conditioned and relative. You won't find two people sharing the same moral conduct.

Astus wrote:

It is exactly because of being conditioned that it has effect. If by relative you mean that people have different ideas of what is good and bad, you are right. However, Buddhism is not based on the opinion of ordinary people and has a set of moral principles. Also, karma is infallible regardless of what someone believes about right and wrong. The difference between a layman, a novice, a monk and a bodhisattva primarily depends on their respective precepts, the precepts are what give the fundamental cohesion and structure of the community. It is not a question of individual opinions, even when in the daily application of precepts there is some relative freedom.

oushi said:

Buddhism is not about fitting into a model, it's about ending craving. It does not matter what is the object of desire, it still will create suffering.

Astus wrote:

How do you end craving? With the practice of morality, meditation and wisdom. Desire is indeed the cause of suffering. The desire to be free from desire, however, is the cause of liberation. That's how there is also a path and not just a goal.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Who is your favorite Buddha/Bodhisattva?

Content:

Red Faced Buddha said:

Never heard of her. My favorite is probably Manjushri, next to Amitabha Buddha and Avalokiteśvara.

Astus wrote:

Guanyin (observe+sound) = Avalokitesvara

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

Karma is not a magical force behind the scenes. You won't accumulate bad karma from actions that you see as right.

Astus wrote:

Karma is not magical, only natural. There are situations where people say it is all right to kill, steal, cheat, etc., and one can actually be in situations when it feels acceptable to kill, steal, cheat, and so on. Does that make it ethical? In fact, people necessarily choose what they think is the best choice. And yes, there can be conflict between what they believe is morally right and what is right at the moment. But if such a relativist attitude were true, then only those could experience any negative karma who have an internal moral conflict. That is, not many people. And that makes the whole teaching of karma useless. It's rather the opposite in Buddhism. Karma is a teaching about how the mind functions, how different attitudes and actions create imprints in the mind, and then how those imprints change one's experience. The twelve links of dependent origination is an easy example for this. It is not some made up religious phantasm to scare little children but something that is based on meditative observation of the mind. On the night of his enlightenment Siddhartha saw first his previous lives and then saw how beings are reborn according to their actions, and then realised the ending of all defilements. This is understanding the second noble truth, the origin of suffering, and the realisation of the third truth, the end of suffering. Not understanding the cause of the problem can only result in being unable to solve it. That's why the four noble truths are the core teachings of the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Whats the difference

Content:

Astus wrote:

There can be other interpretations, but the different levels of absorption (dhyana) simply describe a more and more calm mind. For instance, on the first level we still have thoughts and pondering about things. The fourth level is what a stable, calm, pristine, limpid mind is without thoughts or feelings of elation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oushi,

"Far better it is to have nothing further to seek, to be simple and plain."

That's good, no disagreement with that. Question really is, if it were so simple and easy, how on earth could supposedly enlightened Zen teachers commit such misconducts?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

How do you measure enlightenment? You used "supposedly" because you don't know. You think I will? Buddha is not found in appearances. If you believe in morality as a measure of enlightenment, you will be driven by assumptions.

Astus wrote:

If buddha-nature contains perfect morality, by enlightenment it should naturally manifest in all one's actions as buddha activity.

oushi said:

Go for direct meaning, don't waste your time for local gossips. Only because people are looking for the Buddha outside, they fall prey to charlatans.

Astus wrote:

Was it your idea to choose direct over gradual? Was it you who invented what direct is? If no, then you have already relied on others.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Whats the difference

Content:

Astus wrote:

As mentioned before by puer aeternus, samadhi originally meant meditation and usually of the samatha type, mostly synonymous with dhyana. The meaning of samadhi was gradually changed in Mahayana to encompass different sorts of realisations, like in the Samadhiraja Sutra which is relevant in Mahamudra. At the same time, the meaning of dhyana was also gradually modified into different sorts of deep absorptions to the level

that it was taught to be avoided in Mahayana. As with many terms in Buddhism, they eventually become the victims of over-conceptualisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

What is perfect morality? Can you describe it?

Astus wrote:

Mentioned before, the 10 virtuous acts and others describe it fine. In brief, it is harmlessness and compassion.

oushi said:

1. Gradual, from definition, is an approach of those that don't know.
2. My direct approach came from inquiry. Scriptures came later. It is great fun to read them. Before that, you need to see, that is why I ask questions. There is no point of just repeating after masters.
3. All relies on the teacher.

Astus wrote:

1. Those who already know need no instructions.
2. Inquiry is needed when one is without knowledge, and by inquiring one goes through a gradual investigation.
3. In that case, it is not based on one's own buddha-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Bodhidharma quote was about false visions of buddhas, not ethical conduct.

Ideas of self and owner are rejected and refuted by all Buddhist schools under the teaching of selflessness. How is that subject relevant here? Or, as Wumen asks, "Why should you ask whether you recognize him or not?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

oushi said:

And what is the true Buddha?

Astus wrote:
Lu Sheng-yen?

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, October 10th, 2012 at 1:32 AM
Title: Re: Whats the difference
Content:
viniketa said:

This does seem to be the case. Not sure how or why dhyana got "demoted", as the distinctions between levels was pretty close to the "eight consciousnesses". Hum, maybe I just answered my own question...

Astus wrote:
I think the reason is that the dhyanas were first elevated to a very high position and accordingly their definitions changed. Even today there are a variety of teachers with different views regarding what the dhyanas actually stand for (especially among Theravada masters). Since it became so removed from actual practice, it was for the better that later teachers simply dismissed them as unnecessary or even misguided.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, October 10th, 2012 at 4:31 AM
Title: Re: Whats the difference
Content:
Astus wrote:

Here is a summary from Tsele Natsok's Heart Lamp (p. 31-33) on the nine dhyanas. Interestingly, it is not under the section discussing shamatha but the chapter about "Faults and Qualities", sub-chapter "Clearing Away Specific Errors and Mistakes". The reason given is the fault of attaching to bliss, clarity and nonthought. What he originally defines as the proper practice of shamatha in Mahamudra is resting naturally without fixating on thoughts or appearances. So, his description of the dhyanas:
When resting evenly in shamatha, then, to be free from gross thoughts of perceiver and perceived, but still to be fettered by the concept of meditator and meditation object is called the "samadhi of the First Dhyana." Why is that? Because this is what is being meditated upon in all the abodes of the gods of the First Dhyana. Meditating in this way creates the cause for being reborn there as a god at the level of the First Dhyana.
Likewise, the second dhyana is to be free from the state of mind of concept and discernment, but still to experience the taste of the samadhi of joy and bliss.
The third dhyana is to be free from mental movement, but supported merely by the inhalation and exhalation of breath.
The fourth dhyana is to be free from all kinds of thoughts, a state of samadhi which is unobstructed clarity, like space.
Supreme among all the mundane samadhis, these are the foundation for vipashyana. If meditated upon with attachment, however, they become a deviation from Mahamudra causing rebirth as gods in the abodes of those dhyanas.

Furthermore, thinking "All phenomena are infinite like space!" or "This consciousness, free from partiality and nonexistent, is infinite!" or "Perception, being neither existent nor nonexistent, is not an action of mind!" or "This mind is voidness, which is nothing whatsoever!" Dwelling in the states of these four levels has the defect of straying into the four formless spheres of finality; called the Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Neither Presence nor Absence, and Nothing Whatsoever.

The shravaka's samadhi of peace is the state of mind that has abandoned these four thoughts in which involvement in objects has been blocked, and in which you abide having interrupted the movements of the wind-mind. Although such a state is taught to be the ultimate shamatha, in this context it is not a faultless meditation unless embraced by vipashyana.

Each of these nine dhyanas of absorption has some temporary qualities, such as accomplishment of superknowledges and miraculous powers. Here, however, you should attain the ultimate result of complete enlightenment and not merely relative or superficial qualities. Thus, if these are accomplished naturally and you then cling to them or feel arrogant, know that to be a direct obstacle for enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 10th, 2012 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Whats the difference

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding not fully focusing on the object:

"The importance of not focusing on the meditative object too intently should be emphasized here. You need to restrain your mind from wandering away from the meditation object, but you should also maintain a sense of relaxation. ... The function of the meditative object is to enhance your concentration. Simply be aware of the object, rather than grasping onto it or trying to focus on it too intently. An element of relaxation is extremely important here. You should not mistake the object of meditation for the function of meditation. The function of meditation is not to concentrate on a piece of wood or any other object."

(Traleg Kyabgon: Ocean of Certainty, p. 80)

"What is very important, the masters always advise, is not to fixate while practising the concentration of calm abiding. That's why they recommend you place only twenty five percent of the attention on mindfulness of the breath. But then, as you may have noticed, mindfulness alone is not enough. While you are supposed to be watching the breath, after a few minutes you may find yourself playing in a football match or starring in your own film. So another twenty five percent should be devoted to a continuous and watchful awareness, one that oversees and checks whether you are being mindful of the breath. The remaining fifty percent of your attention is left abiding, spaciously. Of course the exact percentages are not as important as the fact that all three of these elements-mindfulness, awareness and spaciousness are present."

(Sögyal Rinpoche: Natural Great Peace, p. 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 10th, 2012 at 3:01 PM

Title: Re: Whats the difference

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've seen that order before, can't remember where. But it is somewhat logical.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 11th, 2012 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matt,

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=114310#p114310> was my final conclusion on the matter.

viniketa,

The alayavijnana is unconscious because we are not conscious of it. Seeds are latent tendencies, and there are myriads of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 11th, 2012 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: The possibility of subforums for Rinzai and Soto Zen.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Tibetan Buddhism has its subforums, just as East Asian Buddhism. Based on the number of topics in the Zen subforum it does not seem necessary to further divide it. Plus, such a distinction exists only in Japanese Zen, and in the West, because of the majority Sanbo Kyodan groups, they are not really separate. Nevertheless, if you feel the need for a special section for a specific tradition for some reasons it can be arranged without problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 11th, 2012 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Change Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Originally it was Vajrayana forum, but it was changed because on one hand Tibetan Buddhism includes its own Mahayana interpretations. On the other hand, Shingon is different in many aspects from Tibetan Vajrayana (for instance it's heavily influenced by

Huayan teachings). Also, Vajrayana in Bhutan and Mongolia are derivatives of Tibetan traditions and they still have close connections.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 11th, 2012 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding the hidden nature of the alayavijnana, my point was that as we are not aware of it right now, we are not conscious of it at this moment, then based on what reason can it be called a consciousness? What you don't think of is not your thought, and if you don't know you think of something it is not thought of at all. Same with a feeling that you don't feel, or a sight that you don't see. This is the same problem I have raised <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=113784#p113784>, and some added explanation <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=113830#p113830> and even more <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=113967#p113967> if it's not yet clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 1:26 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

One way to think about it: Is your anger at x always manifest or does it just manifest on certain occasions? What happens to your anger at x when it is not manifest.

Astus wrote:

This is practically saying that anger has an permanent nature and a physical existence that has to be kept hidden until it occurs again.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Anjali,

The problem making alayavijnana something other than consciousness clearly violates the core idea of Vijnaptimatra, that is, that all phenomena are mental phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: What is the difference between an Arhat and Bodhisattva?

Content:

Astus wrote:

First of all, there is a variety of interpretations about how arhats differ from bodhisattvas. Generally we can say that arhats are permanently free from samsara, while bodhisattvas have chosen to remain within samsara in order to help beings and accumulate merit to become buddhas. Because bodhisattvas eventually can become buddhas, it is said that because of their wish to become buddhas, they are superior to arhats in the sense that they have greater aspiration based on greater compassion, and that compassion and aspiration is what bodhicitta is.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that if the whole alayavijnana idea is based only on logic it remains a convenient explanation of karma on a superficial level, but it falls apart quite fast under analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 3:40 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between an Arhat and Bodhisattva?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just to add to this plethora of interpretations and ideas, in East Asian Buddhism - based primarily on the Lotus Sutra - arhats attain only a seeming nirvana and once they're awoken from it by the buddhas they continue their path to liberation as high level (8th bhumi) bodhisattvas. So, according to this view, there is only one kind of nirvana, that of the buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: The possibility of subforums for Rinzai and Soto Zen.

Content:

Astus wrote:

As a trial subforums have been created under Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 12th, 2012 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Akshobhya and Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you are in the realm of humans your mind is human. It may have strong tendencies for another realm but it changes to that only at becoming (bhava). Disappearing from a realm is called death.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 14th, 2012 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Ch'an groups in the West.

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the UK (and affiliated centres in other European countries) there is the <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/>, it is within the Dharma Drum lineage but a separate organisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 14th, 2012 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Question about Korean Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

As mentioned, Korean Zen is diverse. There is the Jogye Order, the largest Buddhist organisation, but there are also other ones, like the Taego Order or the Kwan Um Zen School that are not part of Jogye. Within the Jogye Order there are different vocations monastics can take (meditation, scripture, ritual) as their primary field of study before full ordination. That means that while Zen may seem the main form of Buddhist tradition, in fact all monastics are required to be proficient to some extent in the essential Mahayana doctrines as it is defined in Korea based on outstanding teachers like Wonhyo, Uisang and Jinul. And when we look into a narrower subject like the hwadu practice, different teachers instruct it in their own unique ways, if they use hwadu at all (mostly the Hanmaum School to which Chonggo sunim belongs where they don't use hwadu meditation).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 14th, 2012 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

"After 8 pages on this topic do you believe anyone directly addressed the issues of your original post?"

Except for these last posts after my summary of the problem, no.

"It's object and form are undeterminate [aparacchinna]. Why? Because..."

I think it just explains that the alayavijnana is not bound to any specific form of perception, therefore everything can be within it.

Now I address your kind responses using Xuanzang's Cheng weishi lun (all quotes from "Three Texts on Consciousness Only"). He writes,

"THAT WHICH IT GRASPS is twofold: the seeds and the body provided with organs. "Seeds" refer to images, names [or words], and the perfuming of imagination. "Body provided with organs" refers to physical organs and the support of the organs. These two are what is grasped by consciousness" (p. 60)

"The term PERCEPTION means that the eighth consciousness as retribution has the function of perceiving its objects. The function of perceiving is the seeing part of this consciousness." (p. 61)

""Seeds" refers to all the impure seeds held by the consciousness that is retribution. They are included in the nature of this consciousness and are therefore its object of perception. Although pure seeds are connected with this consciousness, they are not included in its nature, and therefore they are not its perceptual object." (p. 65)

"The term IMPERCEPTIBLE [in Vasubandhu's verses] means that the mode of activity of this consciousness is extremely subtle and fine and therefore difficult to know thoroughly. Or, we may say that it is hard to know because the internal objects that it grasps and holds are extremely subtle, while the extent of the external world is hard to fathom. Why are the objects it grasps and the mode of activity of this consciousness difficult to know, [and how do we therefore know that it even exists!? Like consciousness that does not depart the body during the samadhi of cessation [of perception], it must be trusted to exist. You must admit that during this samádhi there is a consciousness, because the meditator is still classified as a sentient being, just as when the mind is functioning in a normal way. It is the same even at the final stages of the cessation of thought [in samádhi]. (p. 67-68)

So, in effect what Xuanzang says is that while the alayavijnana necessarily works as a consciousness with subject and object, it is actually imperceptible. The reason the alayavijnana is posited is simply to explain states where the normal six consciousnesses cease. This is also the same reason the bhavanga-sota/citta is put in to abhidhamma works and most likely copied from Yogacara.

"How do we know that apart from visual consciousness, etc., the eighth consciousness has a separate, independent substance? Through holy teaching and proper reasoning." (p. 83)

There is no experience of the alayavijnana, no pointing to the seeds, simply texts and arguments. While in his explanation Xuanzang repeatedly says that the alayavijnana is the true object of belief in self - i.e. there should be something any ordinary people experience about it to mistake it for a self - his reason for its existence is mostly a tautology: it must exist "because without this consciousness there is no mind to hold the seeds." (p. 90) Also,

"It must be granted that there is a real mind as retribution that repays projected karma, that is found in the three realms, is not interrupted, that changes into the body and world receptacle, and acts as a support for sentient beings. I We argue this I because (1)

apart from mind, body and world receptacle are in fact nonexistent; (2) dharmas not associated with mind have no real substance; and (3) the evolving consciousnesses, etc., do not always exist. Without this consciousness, what changes into a body and world receptacle? Based on what dharmas can sentience be always established [in samadhi, etc.]" (p. 94-95)

That is, there must be a continuous eighth consciousness otherwise we have no explanation of the continuity of mind/being. What shows well how the alayavijnana is an unconscious consciousness is that Xuanzang brings up nirodhasamapatti, cessation samadhi, where there is no conscious activity as an argument for alayavijnana.

"Apart from this [eighth] consciousness, no consciousness that does not leave the body would exist in someone in this samādhi. ... If you do not admit the existence of a consciousness that is subtle, homogeneous, constant, and omnipresent and sustains life, [heat,] etc., how can [the scripture] speak of a consciousness that does not desert the body?" (p. 104)

And that's why I say that the alayavijnana is nothing more than a provisional explanation of the working of karma, because in the Yogacara's own system it is admitted that it is a consciousness without anyone being aware of the functions it performs. And an unconscious consciousness is a contradiction in my view.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2012 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: Hindu defense against Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

To add one more thing besides the position of Buddha in the Hindu pantheon, Advaita Vedanta is believed to be the highest philosophy only by those who follow that specific school. There are other forms of Vedanta philosophies, and beyond that there are also other Hindu teachings. Hinduism is truly just a blanket term that covers lot of contradictory interpretations and even more religious practices. Just compare a vegetarian Vaishnava group like the ISKCON with a Shaivite movement like the aghoris where they eat human flesh.

As for the Hindu defence against Buddhism, the most famous apologist I am aware of is Adi Shankara. But I suppose there were others too who could be reviewed here. So, who has the knowledge to bring them here?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2012 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, there was this point about the nature of mind or ground-mind I have not replied to.

While theoretically we can say that alayavijnana is the same as tathagatagarbha, but as we can see in the descriptions, they don't actually match. One reason is that, just as Daniel Brown says, it is realising the dharmakaya, it is enlightenment, and not the experience of the storehouse-consciousness but in fact becoming free from karma. Another reason can be that not all Yogacara traditions teach universal buddha-nature, it is not essential to the Yogacara teaching, although it is true that in many cases there is a fusion of these two ideas, like in Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Essential Chan Buddhism: Heart of Chan - NYC Nov 7th, 2012

Content:

Astus wrote:

I wonder what kind of transmission is there in Huayan and Faxiang...

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Essential Chan Buddhism: Heart of Chan - NYC Nov 7th, 2012

Content:

Astus wrote:

I doubt that there is any lineage from the Tang dynasty or from as late as the Qing. Even in Chan they had to reinvent the lineage several times and fill in the gaps of missing generations.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

As said before, the first and most important thing is to recognise the unborn. What is the unborn mind? Using Bankei's explanation, it is this mind that while you are reading hears the background noises, sees things around the monitor, feels the chair, and all of that happens without intentionally trying to perceive them. It is the awareness without fixing on a single object of attention, the naturally present knowing that does not require grasping anything in order to be aware and be able to interact. Once this is clear just keep it. Nothing else needs to be done. This is genuine and direct Zen, not <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=5105>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

anjali said:

I believe Xuanzang's analysis of the alaya-vijnana is faulty. The alaya-vijnana is non-dual--subject/object duality haven't popped up yet. That comes at the next level. There is no perceiver and perception of separate objects. There is no grasper-grasping. Let me offer up a quote from Gampopa. I was reading from Gampopa Teaches Essence Mahamudra by Tony Duff a couple of days ago, and came across something that confirmed a suspicion I had.

Astus wrote:

Xuanzang teaches Yogacara and he gives a detailed analysis of the alayavijnana. Gampopa teaches Mahamudra and how the alayavijnana as a general teaching fits into it without giving the step by step details of it. The way the two present and interpret is different in that for Xuanzang the alayavijnana is basically ignorant, while for Gampopa it is just the obscured version of buddha-mind. Nevertheless, the problem of latent, unseen, unconscious mental phenomena still stands. Also, when there are many seeds we can't call it non-dual which would exclude both one and many.

anjali said:

At the level of alaya-vijnana both consciousness and karma are in a non-active state. They are both latent.

Astus wrote:

As you said, "an unconscious consciousness is a contradiction."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Esoteric practices in Hwa Yen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The first classic on Huayan is Dushun's meditation manual. Nothing esoteric in that, although it contains a Huayan-styled meditation. Chengguan studied first under a Chan teacher, while Zongmi, the so called fifth patriarch, was explicitly a Chan advocate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another thing about Bankei is that he taught openly to everyone. No special requirements, no secret techniques. The teaching of the buddha-mind includes everyone because all beings have the unborn without exception.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land location

Content:

Astus wrote:

Your questions are perfectly valid, no need to worry about that. The first problem is that Buddhism hasn't had the modern cosmology with what people understand the universe today. It is said that Sukhavati is 10,000 buddha-lands away to the West. It basically means: far away. One buddha-land covers a great trichiliocosm (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_cosmology#Sahasra_cosmology), which is based on the single unit of a world system with mount Meru, the continents and the six realms. This does not convert to planets, solar systems or even galaxies. But if you want to, you may think that it's 10,000 galaxies away. Or you can also say that it's a separate dimension. And while we cannot reach another buddha-land by any known vehicle, in meditation it is possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 22nd, 2012 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land location

Content:

Nighthawk said:

What's your opinion about it? Do you see it as 10,000 galaxies away or as something in a separate dimension?

Astus wrote:

If I want to use today's cosmology I say it's galaxies. Another dimension is also fine, although then the meaning of distance and direction is lost. However, direction on galactic level is also problematic. And that's why classic Buddhist cosmology doesn't translate well to modern terms.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 5:49 AM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are many lost and revived teachings in Buddhism. Since how and when teachings survive or are reborn is a complex religious and social matter, I don't consider it as an accurate measurement of the quality of any doctrine. The variety of teachings is also not a problem nor an issue of superiority, just as the Buddha gave many methods in order to lead everyone to liberation so are there many ways one can choose from freely even today.

As for instructions of abiding in the unborn, it can be put into modern everyday terms to make it clear to anyone. Abiding in the unborn means not giving birth to fixed ideas about whatever we experience. It is called unborn because it is without any concrete view, concept or feeling. Once a label that we believe to be real is attached to something there will be emotions and from emotions deeds, habits and new births. But if we understand that only the unborn is our true nature and not any thing that the mind

gives birth to, there is no reason from then on to identify with passing experiences. Of course, the teachings of emptiness and selflessness are the same as this, there is nothing new invented, only the format changes.

In Bankei's words:

"That you do see and hear and smell in this way without giving rise to the thought that you will is the proof that this in-herent Buddha-mind is unborn and possessed of a wonderful illuminative wisdom. The Unborn manifests itself in the thought "I want to see" or "I want to hear" not being born. When a dog howls, even if ten million people said in chorus that it was the sound of a crow cawing, I doubt if you'd be convinced. It's highly unlikely there would be any way they could delude you into believing what they said. That's owing to the marvelous awareness and unbornness of your Buddha-mind. The reason I say it's in the "Unborn" that you see and hear in this way is because the mind doesn't give "birth" to any thought or inclination to see or hear. Therefore it is unborn. Being unborn, it's also undying: It's not possible for what is not born to perish. This is the sense in which I say that all people have an unborn Buddha-mind."
(Waddell: The Unborn, p. 88)

Regarding Bankei's arduous practice, he explains:

"You can gather from what I've told you that my practice lasted many long years and that I came to realize my Buddha-mind only after great hardship. But you can grasp your Buddha-minds very easily, right where you sit, without that long, punishing practice. That shows the relation that links you to Buddhahood is stronger than mine was. You're all very fortunate indeed."
(p. 90)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land location

Content:

Astus wrote:

If there is analysis to be applied to the Pure Land teaching, it has to follow the teachings of the Buddha to make sense. First of all, whatever realm is experienced by a sentient being is because of its karma, its mental habits. It is not that there is some independent external world that people just fall in or go to. The external is a result and reflection of internal factors. Buddha-lands are the results of each buddha's merit accumulated and vows made through their bodhisattva path over many kalpas. Being born in a land where there is a living buddha is also a matter of karma for beings, that is, their mental status. Different lands have their own conditions for beings to get there, and that's how going to the Western Land of Amita Buddha is relatively easy compared to many other buddha-lands.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matt,

Bankei has the answer for those questions. In short, the buddha-mind is without delusions, once found and one abides by it there is no hindrance or obstacle. If there is still identification with habits it is not the unborn.

Haskel: Bankei Zen, p. 82-84 said:

A monk who had come from Sendai in Oshu said: "Somewhere I seem to recall there being the expression, The mind enslaved to physical form.' I'm anxious to accord with original mind at all times, but how should I practice in order to do this? Please instruct me."

The Master replied: "In my school, there's no special form of instruction; and as for religious practice, there's no particular way for doing that either. People fail to realize that right within themselves they're fully endowed with the Buddha Mind they have from their parents innately, so they lose their freedom and talk about wanting to 'accord with original mind.' When you've realized that the Buddha Mind you have from your parents is unborn and marvelously illuminating, your hands and feet will function freely, and that's the working of the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind which is unborn.

"As proof that your Buddha Mind is unborn and freely functioning: When you came from Sendai having heard about Bankei, you traveled a long way; but as you stopped for the night here and there along the road, you weren't thinking continuously about me. In the daytime, you looked around at all the sights, and if you had traveling companions, you talked to them. But even though you didn't walk along thinking about our meeting and deliberately keeping it in mind at every step of the way, in the end you arrived here at my place. This is what's meant by the Buddha Mind being unborn and perfectly managing things.

"Now, the herons you see in Sendai are white, without having to be dyed that way; and the crows, without being dyed, are black. And right here too, even though when you see them you're not deliberately trying to distinguish between the two, as soon as they appear before you, you know the white one's a heron and the black one's a crow.

Without rousing a single thought, it's all smoothly managed, isn't it?"

Then, the monk asked: "I find it impossible to control all my passions and delusions. What should I do? It's simply proved too much for me, and I wish to receive your instruction."

The Master replied: "Your idea of wanting to control your passions and delusions is itself delusion, changing the Buddha Mind for delusion! Delusions don't have any actual substance when they arise. In fact, they're nothing but shadow figures, things you've seen and heard that pop up sporadically in response to circumstances."

Again, the monk questioned the Master: "What is enlightenment?"

The Master replied: "There's no such thing as enlightenment. It's a completely extraneous pursuit. To realize conclusively that the Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately is unborn and marvelously illuminating— that's enlightenment. Not

realizing this makes you deluded. Since the Original Buddha Mind is unborn, it functions without thoughts of delusion or thoughts of wanting to be enlightened. As soon as you think of wanting to be enlightened, you leave the place of the Unborn and go counter to it. Because the Buddha Mind is unborn, it has no thoughts at all. Thoughts are the source of delusion. When thoughts are gone, delusion vanishes too. And once you've stopped being deluded, talking about wanting to attain 'enlightenment' certainly is useless, don't you agree?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: Essential Chan Buddhism: Heart of Chan - NYC Nov 7th, 2012

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some studies on Chan lineage history:

* highly recommended

*John R. McRae: Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism

Albert Welter: Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism

John R. McRae: The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism

Wendi Leigh Adamek: The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts

*Morten Schlütter: How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China

Elizabeth A. Morrison: The Power of Patriarchs: Qisong and Lineage in Chinese Buddhism

*Jiang Wu: Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China

And two extras not strictly on lineage:

Robert H. Sharf: Coming to Terms With Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise

Albert Welter: The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

A <http://www.dharmanet.org/Bankei.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Akshobhya and Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

One can follow the idea of different gotras, sure. I personally believe in the universal potentiality of complete liberation, aka tathagatagarbha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2012 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Time and re-incarnation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since causes are followed by consequences, this is quite linear and makes it impossible to return to a previous state that was the cause of the present state, since the previous causes are already gone.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 3:20 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bankei gives a very simple method, the Unborn. The buddha-mind is the object of meditation, the basis, the method and the goal of the meditation. That's why clarifying first on the level of experience what the buddha-mind is is the most important thing in Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: Questioning Alayavijnana

Content:

Astus wrote:

anjali,

The idea that there is no subject-object in the alayavijnana is problematic already. The very definition of consciousness is that there is a subject consciousness being conscious of a mental object. If there were a stand alone, independent consciousness it would make it a substance, an eternal thing, an atman. Also, if the basis were pure there is no reason for impurity to arise. Pure mixing with impure to make a single consciousness is another problem, because it lacks the explanation for the connection between the two. By the way, in your quote it just gives an example but not an explanation of latent seeds, failing to address the problem of unconscious mental factors. Also, the seeds are not one but many mental factors, each with its own causal continuum of momentary existence and disappearance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 4:15 PM

Title: Re: Time to reform Buddhism entirely.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The only reform Buddhism always needs is more realised beings and less traditionalism-ritualism. But it is happening anyway.

"You are all already perfect buddhas."

"I'm not."

"OK, you're not."

(á la Life of Brian)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 6:45 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Western Buddhists can be theists, atheists and anything else they want, because they generally lack both a traditional and an educated view of Buddhism. This is just individualism in use. And that's how people can't clearly define what Buddhism is or how it relates to other concepts. On the other hand, it is a great event to see the process of changing Buddhism to fit a new culture.

This is also an opportunity to reflect on our own ingrained assumptions and expectations, habitual views that we want things to match. Some prefer colourful gods and buddhas, some want scientific materialism. In my understanding the path to liberation is about recognising and overcoming such attachments. But Buddhism has many facets and gives something to people with all kinds of motivation to satisfy their grasping mind while at the same time teaching something good. That's why belief in God, gods or no god is generally not a problem. Even historically the Buddha left the laity to their own local faiths.

This is a fine article regarding the concept of God in Buddhism:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/jackson.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interesting. She said God, but didn't mean God. She said Eternal, but didn't mean Eternal. Zen is very confusing. Nevertheless, it is now at least clear that there is neither

God nor Eternal in Buddhism according to Rev. Jiyu.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 9:32 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

oushi said:

The problem of God lies not in religions, but in narrow minded people who, trying to grasp the teachings, objectified God.

I don't believe that there is anyone here (or even out there) that can refute Sasaki Roshi.

Astus wrote:

What male and female gods? And why even mention any god if it can't be even thought of? Also, Sasaki Roshi is neither the Buddha nor a sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

oushi said:

Male and female gods are two fundamental functions of the mind. Male god makes objects out of female god, like you are doing it here. If you think you can find an object that is God, you will fail, also from the Christian point of view. God is the union of those two. There is a perfect reason why mention about this union. When you talk about the Buddha, you are talking about the same. Why do you talk about Buddha, when you are not talking about a historical person? Sasaki Roshi is neither the Buddha nor a sutra I asked you before, "what is Buddha?", and you didn't seem to know. Sasaki is not a Buddha, and nothing but the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Gods and mental functions generally define quite different things. This is again a confusion of terminology. Not to mention the use of male and female for non-biological non-beings is also problematic. If I talk about "the Buddha" I mean Siddhartha Gautama. If I say "a buddha" it is any being who achieved perfect enlightenment. I don't consider Sasaki roshi any of the two.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Why not Theravada

Content:

Astus wrote:

Theravada is a lot smaller in terms of variety of teachings and texts. Mahayana includes everything there is in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 3:27 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

Jnana said:

Well, right view is important. Without it non-conceptual jñāna doesn't occur. And without non-conceptual jñāna liberation can't be realized.

Astus wrote:

But very few Buddhists care about liberation, or believe that it is possible in this life for them. And even when some say it is important for them they lack the motivation to relinquish their own views. That's how stream entry and the first bhumi became traditionally high level goals when they were meant to be the entrance originally. Those who believe that buddhahood is just a single realisation away (sudden paths) tend to use it as an excuse for disparaging every other teaching while they themselves wait for some sort of miraculous enlightenment without knowing the path leading to it. Therefore accumulating merit and developing familiarity with the Dharma has to be regarded as an auspicious sign that the person will eventually conform with the teaching sometime in the future.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bankei teaches what has always been the main doctrine of Zen. It is the reverse of saying that one should see how things are empty, instead he points to this mind that thinks and feels as originally perfect. That is, it's not about letting go our attachments but realising that the mind is already without attachments. Because of that there is no development or gradual training involved here. The only source of problem, as he says, is exchanging the buddha-mind to all sorts of ideas and emotions. Why do we do that? Because we don't know yet that this mind is already unborn and functions perfectly. Seeing that it functions just fine means that we don't need to struggle, we don't need to come up with different solutions to our situation where we become motivated by craving and anger. We give birth to many attachments because we don't trust in the buddha-mind, we want to handle everything ourselves. That's why Bankei teaches about the unborn by showing how the mind recognises the sounds of dogs and birds, how the mind manages to direct our steps without effort or trouble. Those are immediate proofs of the buddha-mind's natural functions that we all know about already. This is not complicated at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Alex123 said:

Thank you for your reply. The point of difficulty is what to do, or how to stop states such as anger, anxiety, fear, lust, etc from arising at the future date? I understand that they occur spontaneously " on their own " and without having to make up conscious decision for such a state to arise.

Astus wrote:

Anger, anxiety, fear, lust, etc. don't arise spontaneously, we give rise to them by first identifying with our thoughts and making judgements about things being attractive, repulsive or uninteresting, then again holding the emotion generated by our thoughts thus eventually giving rise to action. When it seems that emotions or actions appear by themselves it is the case that we don't recognise our thought processes, which is ignorance, unawareness. That's why abiding in the unborn means that no ideas and impulses take over the control.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: Bankei's "method" of abiding in the unborn

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matt,

Whatever appears, see that it is something born, not your real nature, and let it return to the unborn, let it dissolve on its own. You have to maintain grasping at an emotion or thought to make it stay, and grasping happens because you regard it as your real nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Oushi,

Materialism - believing that everything is ultimately matter - is not a Buddhist view. In Buddhism the mind is not material.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2012 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism without a teacher

Content:

Astus wrote:

No need to worry about having or not having a teacher. You can learn the Dharma from

the right books (there are many wrong books too) and online from the right sources (and not bad sources). How to tell the difference between right and wrong? Through studying and understanding the sutras and shastras. You can also ask many questions on this forum. There are teachers you can send e-mail to, if you you want. Even without personally meeting anyone the information you can get is enormous. And if you reach a point where you find that you could really use someone experienced to talk to you will be able to find the ways to travel.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 26th, 2012 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Do you think Non-Buddhist can become enlightened?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is even a special term for those who are enlightened without following the teaching of a buddha and without starting a new era of teachings: pratyekabuddha.

Also, the Buddha only said that enlightenment requires following the noble eightfold path. He didn't say that people should follow him personally.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 26th, 2012 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: What takes rebirth: body or mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is said: "The samsaric body circles."

The actual nature of mind is free of elaborations,

This sounds like separating buddha-mind from deluded mind, a simple dualism. But it's nothing to do with materialism, as he says that it relies on the samsarik material and mental body. As for his reference to prana, I leave that to those who believe in Tantra.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 28th, 2012 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: Sri Simha in Zen/Chan lineage

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Indian lineage of Chan is taken from non-Chan sources and have nothing to do with Chan beyond the lineage concept that was created to legitimise Chinese teachers. I don't know who and when made up the Dzogchen lineage of the early teachers, but even the legends of the two Simhas don't match. Besides this accidental choice of name I see no connection here.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 29th, 2012 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Sri Simha in Zen/Chan lineage

Content:

Yudron said:

I don't think the received history of the early Dzogchen lineage is "made up." It is incomplete, however... and quite possibly was reconstructed based on oral history after the fact.

Astus wrote:

In any case, the two Simhas show know connection.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 29th, 2012 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhists Are Atheists

Content:

Astus wrote:

To me it seems that in Buddhism the common Indian deities/gods were gradually changed to bodhisattvas and buddhas in Mahayana, and naturally practices related to them developed from simple considering the buddha's and gods' good qualities into visualisations, prayers and rituals. If we drop the intellectual-philosophical explanation about the difference between buddhas and gods, and how everything is mind made and empty, on the everyday practical level in religious practice whether one prays to Tara, Guanyin or Virgin Mary for a son it makes no difference. Why is it not important if the being one prays to is a god or a buddha? Because the beings are easily exchangeable without affecting the content and the nature of the prayer and the ritual. Buddhism could incorporate Indian deities into its pantheon even as buddhas, like Tara, or in Japan they could reinterpret Shinto gods as bodhisattvas and buddhas. The latest example is Jesus as a bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 31st, 2012 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: what's the fundamental difference?

Content:

Astus wrote:

First it should be clarified what they are that you want to see the difference between. Theravada is a specific school that is based on Pali language canonical and extra-canonical works with several regional varieties in South Asia. Mahayana and Vajrayana are not schools, they don't have their own organisation or any fixed canon, they are rather types of teachings and practices. However, what people usually mean by Mahayana is every other existing Buddhist schools besides Theravada, and by Vajrayana it is usually Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, for practical and historical reasons, Buddhism is divided to regional areas, that is: South (mainly Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand; source is Sri Lanka), East (mainly China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan; source is China), North (mainly Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia; source is Tibet). These

three regions first of all use different canonical languages, developed on their own mostly without connection to the other two, and also represent distinct cultural areas. One more important thing is that they use slightly different monastic regulations, and since Buddhism's primary upholders are the monastics, the lineages are first of all defined by ordination type.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 1st, 2012 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Can a Buddha intervene with our karma?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If buddhas could change the karma of beings, then it follows that all beings would be enlightened, and there would be no need for personal effort of any kind, since the buddhas want to save everyone. However, when there is a teaching that says that some buddha or bodhisattva purifies one's karma, it is because one's own connection to the buddha that is generated through a specific practice. In the Lotus Sutra it is taught that Avalokitesvara can save one from practically anything starting with mundane troubles up to the root afflictions of the mind, but only if one correctly keeps in mind the bodhisattva. In the sutras about Amitabha buddha we learn that birth in his Land of Bliss is easily attainable even for one who committed the gravest crimes, if one remembers Amitabha with faith. In order to be purified by Vajrasattva there is a quite elaborate practice that includes visualisation, recitation and repentance. So it is not that buddhas just intervene in any being's karma. It is exactly because doing the proper practices (i.e. generating karma) that one can negate other karmic effects.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 1st, 2012 at 8:20 AM

Title: Re: Sri Simha in Zen/Chan lineage

Content:

Astus wrote:

Transmission in Zen is not really a historical matter. It is mind to mind, not hand to hand. If we focus on historical facts and religious legends the true intention is already lost.

"According to tradition, Master Chih died in the year 514, while Bodhidharma came to Liang in 520; since there is a seven year discrepancy, why is it said that the two met? This must be a mistake in the tradition. As to what is recorded in tradition, I will not discuss this matter now. All that's important is to understand the gist of the matter." (Yuanwu's commentary on the case of Bodhidharma meeting the emperor, in *The Blue Cliff Record*, tr. T. Cleary, p. 5)

"We learn that Shakyamuni Buddha inherited the Dharma from Kashō Buddha, and we learn that Kashō Buddha inherited the Dharma from Shakyamuni Buddha. When we learn the matter in this way, it will be the true succession of Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor."

(Dogen: Shisho in *Shobogenzo*, tr. H. Nearman, p. 171)

"Hōen of Tōzan said, "Even Shakyā and Maitreya are servants of another. I want to ask you, who is he?"

(Gateless Gate, case 45, tr. K. Sekida)

"all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra."

(Diamond Sutra, ch. 8, tr. C. Muller)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 1st, 2012 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Can a Buddha intervene with our karma?

Content:

Astus wrote:

lucidaromulus,

In chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra it is told how Guanyin helps anyone who thinks of her. But as I said before, there is the condition of remembrance, actually making it a form of practice. However, if Guanyin were able to help people of her own free will nobody would have any trouble in life.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 2nd, 2012 at 9:12 PM

Title: Hsiu-hsiu-an Discourse on Sitting Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is said to be a 14th century Chan text that is used in Won Buddhism. Ryuei's blog has some commentary on it.

Translation by <http://fraughtwithperil.com/ryuei/2011/09/13/hsiu-hsiu-an-discourse-on-sitting-meditation/>:

Hsiu-hsiu-an Discourse on Sitting Meditation

Generally, to practice sitting meditation one must reach the highest excellence and ought to be naturally alert.

Cutting off thinking and yet not falling into dullness is called "sitting." Remaining without passion in a passionate situation and without defilement when dwelling amidst defilement is called "meditation."

Allowing nothing external to enter and nothing internal to leave is called "sitting." Having no abode and depending on nothing while constantly lighting the way before one is called "meditation."

Remaining unmoved when the outside world is moving and staying quiet and free from

agitation in the middle of it all is called “sitting.” Turning the light back within to illuminate and discern the root source of all phenomena is called “meditation.”

Refraining from acting on the favorable and unfavorable circumstances one is faced with and likewise not being turned aside by the distractions of forms and sounds is called “sitting.” Illuminating the darkness so that the brightness exceeds that of the sun and moon and transforming matters so that virtue overcomes heaven and earth is called “meditation.”

Entering the samadhi free of distinctions when surrounded by distinctions is called “sitting.” Displaying the wisdom which discerns distinctions even when there are no distinctions is called “meditation.”

In summary, the blazing work of the function in accord with the correct substance of the absolute is called “sitting”; while attaining the sublime throughout one’s length and breadth and thereby finding no obstructions when dealing with any matter is called “meditation.” These words are just a summary because no amount of paper or ink can thoroughly exhaust [the real meaning of sitting meditation].

The Naga’s great samadhi is neither quiet nor moved. It is the true thusness of the wondrous substance, which has no appearance and no disappearance. It cannot be seen when looked upon nor heard when listened to. It is empty yet not empty; being yet not being. It is vast enough to encompass what has no boundaries yet so minute that it can enter what has no inside. It is the universal spirit of knowledge and wisdom, radiant light, longevity, the great moving power, the great function, unexcelled and inexhaustible.

Someone with an aspiration [to be enlightened] should examine this fully in order to act in accord with the great enlightenment. After the single voiced roar [of awakening] the multitudes of subtle powers will all be complete in oneself. How can this be compared with the powers of darkness outside the Way transmitted by those claiming to be teachers who take what they have gained to be the final goal?

Translation from

<http://www.wonbuddhism.org/doc/4.buddhist.sutra%28english%29/8.Hsiu.Hsiu.Am.Di%20course.on.Meditation.pdf>:

Hsiu-Hsiu Am Discourse on Za-Zen

Generally, to practice Za(sitting)-Zen(meditation) is to reach the mental state of highest excellence and to be in the state of complete alertness.

When the mind is devoid of any thought and yet no drowsiness takes place, it is called Za; if there is no passion in a condition which fans it and if one transcends defilements in which one is, it is called zen.

When neither external sense-object enters the mind, nor the mind goes out towards external things, it is called Za. If the mind is neither attached to anything nor depends on anything so that the constant light illuminates, it is called Zen.

If the mind is not moved when the external conditions shake it and if the mind is quiet and free from agitation, it is called Zen. If the light going out is turned inward so that the source of the self-nature is reflected, it is called Zen.

If the mind is not agitated either by favorable or adverse conditions, nor is it rolled over

by color or sound, it is called Za; if the light surpasses the sun and the moon when it illuminates the dark area, and if virtue surpasses heaven and earth when transforming things, it is called Zen.

To enter the state of samadhi in a condition of discrimination is called Za; to have the discerning Prajna in the condition of no discrimination is called Zen.

In conclusion: to keep the true nature of samadhi serene while the mind works like a blazing fire is called Za; to attain boundless wisdom and thereby to do things without any obstruction is called Zen.

Za-zen can be summarized briefly as this. However no amount of ink and paper would be sufficient for a detailed illustration.

The great Samdahi of Naga is neither quiet nor moved; the wondrous nature of True Thusness is neither born nor annihilated. Neither can it be seen when looked at, nor can it be heard when listened to. It is empty and yet it is not; it exists and yet it does not. It is as vast as to envelop what has no boundary and it is as minute as to enter what has no inside. The magic power, light, longevity, great moving power and the application of the one who is enlightened to it are inexhaustible and limitless.

If one with an aspiration to be enlightened practices Za-Zen in a proper way until one attains the great enlightenment, one will be filled with various powers of wondrous spirit at the roar of awakening. How could this be compared with the wicked heretics who, with their instructions, claim to be teachers, and who take what they gain to be the final goal?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 3rd, 2012 at 12:40 AM

Title: The Source of What: Who Transmits What?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Without fully and finally letting go one's self-with-form, there can be no transmission — even if one has received innumerable transmission certificates from various lineages. The basis and source of transmission in Zen is the awakening to one's selfless self. And this emerges precisely from the dropping away of self, once and for all. Remember the character I wrote on the board? That's it. No one transmits anything to anyone; in other words, shin or kokoro transmits kokoro to kokoro by way of kokoro. That's all."

<http://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/sourceofzenwhotransmitswhat.pdf> by Jeff Shore is a wonderful summary of the issue that combines both the Zen and the scholarly view.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 4th, 2012 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: Why academics value Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Talking about monasticism and academics, for instance Robert E. Buswell is both a scholar and ex-monk. He also wrote a book "The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist

Practice in Contemporary Korea". Even today, the general system in Korea is that monks and nuns stay in a monastery for 2×3 months and then wander for 2×3 months.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 4th, 2012 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: Zen has No Morals

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is something interesting from the wonderful Bankei,

Bankei Zen, tr. P. Haskel, p. 7 said:

A certain master of the Precepts School asked: "Doesn't your Reverence observe the precepts?"

The Master said: "Originally, what people call the precepts were all for wicked monks who broke the rules; for the man who abides in the Unborn Buddha Mind, there's no need for precepts. The precepts were taught to help sentient beings—they weren't taught to help buddhas! What everyone has from his parents innately is the Unborn Buddha Mind alone, so abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind. When you abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind, you're a living buddha here today, and that living buddha certainly isn't going to concoct anything like taking the precepts, so there aren't any precepts for him to take. To concoct anything like taking the precepts is not what's meant by the Unborn Buddha Mind. When you abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind, there's no way you can violate the precepts. From the standpoint of the Unborn, the precepts too are secondary, peripheral concerns; in the place of the Unborn, there's really no such thing as precepts. . . ."

Astus wrote:

So, there is no need for the precepts, because they don't violate it anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 8th, 2012 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Why isn't Tendai popular in the West?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I'm missing from Tendai are translations. Zen has most of the major sutras and masters translated to English, and there are many studies on the history and teachings. As for Tendai, there's not much one can study.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 9th, 2012 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems that the founders and members found Zen presented in America lacking in

certain aspects, thus created this newer format. I consider it a natural evolution of modern (non-Buddhist) Zen.

Look at this bibliography: http://www.mondozen.org/resource_library/reading_list.htm "onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 10th, 2012 at 8:36 AM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I'm really missing is the description of the actual methods and teachings. There are all these praises about the teacher and the method, but no real information.

However, by a simple search I've found their

http://www.mondozen.org/_literature_104890/Mondo_Zen_Training_Manual_April_2012 that describes the whole process. It seems to me like a very interesting application of Rinzai Zen koan process transformed into a modern training. So, before any further critiques, I recommend everyone to read it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 10th, 2012 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Thus-gone said:

I'm sure it's helpful on a psychological level, and may even trigger some kind of opening experience, but I see no place for the deepening and integration of awakening that is the very essence of the Zen school.

Astus wrote:

What makes you say so? In their koan training they seem to really work on making people realise the essentials of Zen, and after that they also have a 60-day follow up programme to deepen the realisation. And depending on personal choice one could still continue practising with or without a group.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 10th, 2012 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've read the manual and besides its language and using some psychological terms and ideas it is within the limits of a Zen Buddhist training. In fact, to me it looks very good as a modern application of classical techniques. It is to the point, step by step and helpful.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, November 11th, 2012 at 8:07 AM
Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)
Content:
Astus wrote:
BuddhaSoup,

Yes, I've recognised that too. However, it might as well be viewed as a working technique. It doesn't determine anything about the cost of training and the way it is run. Instead of jumping to conclusions the facts should be checked first.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, November 11th, 2012 at 8:35 PM
Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)
Content:
Astus wrote:
Jinzang,

People who are not already in Buddhism must have a reason to engage in Zen or any other form of Buddhist practice. It is not by accident that the Dalai Lama propagates the scientific research on meditation, it actually validates Buddhism and makes it more appealing to people than just a strange eastern religion. Self-help (pseudo-)psychology is a common entry point to the Dharma.

Why is it wrong? What is confirmed is how the practice should be done. Especially at the beginning it is important to have a clear understanding of what the method is about and to develop faith and aspiration. Otherwise, if people are left in the darkness and just told to sit silently it will hardly bring any good result. In the case of Zen in order to do it correctly one must first become experientially established in buddha-mind, or it is not Zen.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, November 11th, 2012 at 9:58 PM
Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)
Content:
Astus wrote:

How they manage their organisation is a different area than their doctrinal and practical teachings. If a commercial model works better than the one based on donations I don't see it as an error. Profit oriented spiritual enterprises are a problem when the money is not used for the welfare of the people but turned into the private wealth of the owners of the organisation. In fact, the Buddhist form of community is that there are no owners or leaders but only members. In practice, however, throughout the history of Buddhism the system produced strong managers and head teachers who had overwhelming influence over spiritual and financial matters. Is Mondo Zen about benefiting only those few at the top or is it about bringing the Dharma to more and more people?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 11th, 2012 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: Question about Korean Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I've said here before, Korean Zen should not be reduced to a single entity. It shows a great diversity in terms of how Zen and Buddhism in general is approached and taught. Within the Jogye Order there are different groups with their own ideas and methods. Hwadu practice is the prevalent technique, but there are teachers who instead of that emphasise yeombul (buddha-remembrance), kongan or something else. The ganhwa method itself can be used in different ways. It shouldn't be forgot that calling it "Korean" Buddhism defines only its geographical and cultural situation, not its content.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 11th, 2012 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Recommended reading on Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for East Asian Buddhism, the Kuroda Institute has two series:

<http://uhpress.wordpress.com/books-in-series/kuroda-institute/>, they contain many good works. Orthodox Chinese Buddhism by Ven. Shengyan is a good introduction to general Chinese Buddhism. Specifically about Zen, Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright edited a series published by Oxford University Press. Works by John R. McRae, Jan Nattier, Robert H. Sharp, Bernard Faure, Albert Welter, Robert E. Buswell Jr., Charles A. Muller, Taigen Dan Leighton and others are also recommended.

For the Abhidharmakosa, this is a useful blog: <http://abhidharmakosa.wordpress.com/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 12th, 2012 at 2:23 AM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Astus wrote:

The question is whether there is an option to just participate in whatever programme for free. Usually in any European country people can go in to a Christian church and just listen to the priest or minister. There are temples that are open for the public all day and they don't ask for anything. However, the major Christian organisations receive state support in many countries. That means that the buildings and the priests are paid indirectly by everyone. Buddhist organisations have that only in Asia. However, regardless if it's Christian or Buddhist, if there is a special programme, like a retreat, people are asked to pay. The system of donation works only when there are enough people willing to pay for those who can't pay, or rather when the people supported receive sufficient funds to run the organisation. Ultimately it is up to the people who pay,

not those who ask for the money. So if the question is what we can do as individuals, it is choosing an organisation that we are happy to support regularly.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 12th, 2012 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks Lance for sharing your experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 14th, 2012 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Where is Mount Sumeru?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I remember reading somewhere that Sumeru can be identified as the Himalayas, and the spatial cosmology is mostly India, the southern continent of Jambudvipa.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 14th, 2012 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: How to get rid of clinging to self

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Buddha's basic remedy is the contemplation on the five aggregates and the 6-12-18 sensory fields. To see that whatever you call the I must be an aggregate, and all aggregates bear the three characteristics (impermanent, suffering, selfless) results in comprehending and even realising that there is no such thing as an I.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 19th, 2012 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: Mondo Zen, Integral Zen (tm)

Content:

Jinzang said:

If the goal of Zen is to see through delusion, how is a modernized Zen going to see through the delusions of modernism? The truth is neither tradition or modernism is going to save us, but it easier for a modern person to see the faults of tradition and resist them than to see the faults of modernism.

Astus wrote:

The delusion to be seen through is the attachment to identity. Modernism, traditionalism, and any other form of presentation are only meant to make the realisation accessible. As long as a teaching leads to correct view it is an authentic method. The important question is the efficiency of the way, not the embellishment

used to attract people.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 19th, 2012 at 7:47 PM

Title: Holmes Welch the Chan Transmitter

Content:

Astus wrote:

The <http://www.pragmaticbuddhism.org/node/12> and the <http://www.cloudwater.org/index.php/ch-an-zen/our-lineage>, practically the same lineage, claims that http://buddhistinformatics.ddbc.edu.tw/dmcb/Holmes_Welch_%E5%A8%81%E7%88%BE%E5%A5%87 transmitted the Linji Chan lineage of the http://buddhistinformatics.ddbc.edu.tw/dmcb/Jiangtian_chan_si_%E6%B1%9F%E5%A4%A9%E7%A6%AA%E5%AF%BA. Holmes Welch had Ven. T'ai-ts'ang in his book "The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900-1950" as an important source of information on Chan history. In the same book Welch describes how Dharma transmission was a common practice of ensuring the succession of abbots in a monastery. He quotes from an account of the practice in the Kiangsu area: "In actuality this kind of "dharma transmission" has become a formality in the Ch'an sect. It is a million miles away from the dharma transmission by the direct imprint of mind on mind. This kind of dharma transmission is simply a traditional formality of genealogical succession." (p. 165) Stuart Lachs (<http://www.hsuyun.org/docs/english/pdf/DressingTheDonkey.pdf>) quotes from another work of Welch: "Dharma transmission is only an institutional sanctioning of a teacher bestowing membership in a teaching lineage and may be no more than, as Buddhist scholar Holmes Welch said "like [getting] a Flash Gordon pin.""

While Welch was interested in both Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, I can see no sign that he was also a Dharma teacher. And compared to his scholarly reports it appears to me strange to give him the position of a Chan master. Any other information on the subject is welcome.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 19th, 2012 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Online Philosophy & Buddhology Resources

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae

(multilingual presentation of Buddhist literature sentence by sentence in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, English, etc.)

<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Database of Modern Chinese Buddhism

http://buddhistinformatics.ddbc.edu.tw/dmcb/Main_Page "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 19th, 2012 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Online Philosophy & Buddhology Resources

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae

(multilingual presentation of Buddhist literature sentence by sentence in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, English, etc.)

<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Database of Modern Chinese Buddhism

http://buddhistinformatics.ddbc.edu.tw/dmcb/Main_Page "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 20th, 2012 at 7:47 AM

Title: Asian Classics Institute

Content:

Astus wrote:

It has an organised set of study materials online:

<http://www.acidharma.org/aci/index.html> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 20th, 2012 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think what should be differentiated is that outside of Anuttarayogatantra the bodily practices, if used in any community or tradition, are not part of the path to enlightenment but are simply exercises for health. But even in AYT I'm not sure what could be considered actual body trainings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 20th, 2012 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Jikan said:

Would you say that prostrations are primarily a meditative practice, or a practice for health? How about circumambulation or pilgrimage?

Astus wrote:

They are not meant to train your body but to train your mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 20th, 2012 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I understand "cultivating body" as a practice used to attain liberation by training the body. Prostrations, etc. are bodily activities - just as reading, listening, reciting, etc. - meant to assist the mind, and by training the mind one reaches enlightenment. Therefore, there is no cultivation of body in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 at 7:39 AM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

The "Mushindokai" page refers to a Tantric form of practice. Others also refer to Tantric body practices. And the question in the OP was if there is any kind of body training in non-Tantric Buddhism. That's how my answer is no. Even the concept of the system of channels, winds and drops is unknown outside of Tantra, if they can be viewed as body related practices or explanations for such yogas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

As mentioned, in Zen there are body and breath practices predicated on an understanding of subtle energetics, energy centers, and their utility for the integration or embodiment of realization. These are of course not practiced with reference to tantric texts.

Even basic meditation in Rinzai practice is concerned primarily with unifying a specific breathing method (involving a sealing of the pelvic floor and gathering of energy into the navel center) with one's bodily posture. In other words, the mental "method" of practice is understood, established and deepened through a specific use of the body, not

separately from it or even alongside it.

Astus wrote:

Let's add that that kind of Rinzai Zen technique started with Hakuin and used to strengthen the body to avoid illness generated by extensive asceticism. It does not lead to realising the nature of mind, nor is it used in any other Zen school outside of Hakuin's followers. There are of course others who do different forms of yoga, qigong, etc., but again, not for liberation itself but as supportive methods to maintain health. As such, they are not much different from a healthy diet and proper clothing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Raksha,

The Shaolin monastery was first associated with Bodhidharma around the beginning of the 8th century by the Northern School's lineage story. But connecting Bodhidharma with martial arts happened almost a thousand years later in 1642 (see Faure: Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context, p. 91 and McRae: Seeing Through Zen, p. 26).

For me to see connection with body cultivation and the path of liberation would require instructions given in the sutras and the writings of the masters. So far I have not encountered any sutra or manual in Mahayana Buddhism that teaches such techniques, unlike in Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

lobster said:

The Buddha himself said, "There is one thing that when cultivated and regularly practiced, leads to deep spiritual intention, to peace, to mindfulness and clear comprehension, to vision and knowledge, to a happy life here and now and to the culmination of wisdom and awakening. And what is that one thing? It is mindfulness centered on the body."

Elsewhere, Buddha said, "If the body is not cultivated, the mind cannot be cultivated. If the body is cultivated then the mind can be cultivated."

<http://mettarefuge.wordpress.com/2011/04/11/why-buddhist-practice-is-deeply-rooted-in-mindfulness-of-the-body/>

Astus wrote:

That is the first section of the fourfold basis of mindfulness (satipatthana), called mindfulness of body (kayanupassana). It is not by training the body but by training the

mind that one uses that technique, otherwise we could say that Buddhism also has such methods as cultivating water, earth, space, etc. that can all be objects of meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Raksha said:

nothing truly secret or precious has EVER been written down in texts.

Astus wrote:

I guess you have not read this in the Buddhist canon.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Five Mountain Zen Order & Paul Lynch

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yudron,

In Buddhism, generally speaking, there are no special rules for establishing yourself as a teacher. Technically, a small group of monks can establish a separate community without problem. In fact, even a single influential monk or nun with substantial followers can start a new monastery or even a new tradition. Lay people are free to do as they want. Nobody owns the Dharma and nobody rules the Sangha. What really matters in the end is whether one can get the necessary support, either from the general laity or from political power, that will provide the material basis of Dharma centres, monasteries, publishing, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 6:14 AM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meido,

What reason does Hakuin give that those practices result in realisation?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meido,

So, according to your quotes, focus on the belly and the feet helps calm the mind at the initial stages of meditation. Did I miss anything?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Raksha said:

I meant 'truly secret and precious' since obviously all the Buddhist canon is precious. Equally obviously none of it is secret. What is not written down are the instructions from a teacher to his student. The things of the greatest value cannot be obtained for money, nor are they displayed openly. If I remember correctly Tibetans believe that Buddhist texts have little value unless they are accompanied by a textual transmission given by a qualified teacher. What do you suppose this transmission actually involves, why can't it be written down or bought at the local bookstore?

Astus wrote:

There are many texts considered that kind of oral instructions, upadesha, written down by students. And in these days you have not only books but video records too. What would be the purpose of such special secret teachings anyway? Throughout the history of Buddhism there were groups that claimed to possess such secret instructions. What "secret instruction" actually meant is that they could not prove that it's from a traditional source so they called it hidden. This has happened with the Mahayana sutras, the Tantras, the Zen transmission, and all the rest. What is also common about them is that today you have it all written down. And even if there were some special secret instructions, nobody could use it as a reason in a discussion like this, because of its secret nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Hidden Truths and Secrets in Buddhism

Content:

Raksha said:

Likewise in Buddhism, what you can read in books is only the tip of the iceberg.

Astus wrote:

What do you base this view on?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Cultivating both Body and Mind in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Split topic: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=10896>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2012 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: Hidden Truths and Secrets in Buddhism

Content:

Raksha said:

Buddhism was not to be found in books, and that what was truly precious was never even spoken, never mind sold in bookstores.

Astus wrote:

This idea is found already in the earliest Prajnaparamita sutras, expressing that emptiness is the absence of conceptual proliferation. And then on the same is stated in later traditions like Zen with the same intention.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 23rd, 2012 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Hidden Truths and Secrets in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Anguttara Nikaya (3.131 / PTS: 1.282 / 3.129) the Paṭicchanna sutta says,

"Monks, there are these three things which are practiced in secret, not openly. What are they? The ways of womenfolk are secret, not open. Brahmins practice their chants in secret, not openly. Those of perverse views hold their views secretly, not openly. These are the three things. Monks, there are these three things which shine forth for all to see, which are not hidden. Which three? The disc of the moon shines for all to see; it is not hidden. The disc of the sun does likewise. The Dhamma-Discipline of a Tathagata shines for all to see; it is not hidden. These are the three things."

(<http://www.fakebuddhaquotes.com/three-things-cannot-be-long-hidden-the-sun-the-moon-and-the-truth-buddha/>)

"Bhikkhus, these three are carried away covered, not openly. What three? Women are carried away covered not openly. Brahmanical mutterings are done under cover and Wrong view is covered not made manifest. Bhikkhus, these three when made manifest shine. What three? Bhikkhus, the moon shines when manifest, the sun shines when manifest and the Teaching and Discipline declared by the Thus Gone One shines when manifest and not when covered. These three shine when manifest and not when covered."

(<http://metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/4Anguttara-Nikaya/Anguttara1/3-tikanipata/013-bharanduvaggo-e.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 24th, 2012 at 2:15 AM

Title: Re: Are Tibetan Buddhism and Tantric Buddhism the same thing?

Content:

pueraeternus said:

I get the impression that in Nalandabodhi (Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche's organization), they do cater for those who only practice in the sutra tradition. Which is interesting, since I also had the impression that all the Tibetan schools lead their students to tantra, with sutra only as preliminary training.

Astus wrote:

The <http://www.bodhipath.org/> of the Shamarpa is also mostly sutra teachings, i.e. Lojong.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 24th, 2012 at 8:43 PM

Title: Re: Is modernity bad for practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that the current era is more conducive to practice than it was in the past. In pre-modern Europe (approx. before 16th century, although we can say that since the middle of the 20th century it is post-modern) people took the Christian world view as evident and everything else was simply wrong. Buddhism could spread in the West exactly because of the loss of faith after World War 2 in both religion and science. Explicit atheism in Europe is below 20% and even in the most atheist countries it doesn't go above 35%, while there are countries where organised religion is accepted by more than 90% (based on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Europe). It is misleading to say that people are generally materialist just because state education consists mostly of non-religious subjects. But if you mean by materialist that people are greedy, there is nothing new about it. At the same time, with modernity came education and the accessibility of information. Again something that Buddhism greatly benefits of. In the pre-modern era the general population not just couldn't read but books were also a rarity.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 25th, 2012 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Sex, Death And The Meaning Of Life

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interesting show. It makes me ask how it could have happened that while Buddhism have had these ideas about exchanging oneself with another, empathy, removing the concept of identity, that Dawkins gives as sources of making life better, never really became the norm in any Buddhist country or region.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 25th, 2012 at 1:06 AM

Title: Re: Is modernity bad for practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is misleading to say that people are generally materialist just because state education consists mostly of non-religious subjects.

Huseng said:

No, I'm saying state education teaches materialism (without calling it materialism) as the default worldview. If you got educated in pre-modern Tibet your worldview would be thoroughly Buddhist with the whole cosmology, karma and rebirth taught as explicitly real and realistic, whereas now there is an alternative worldview.

This is why so many people (not just in the west, but in Asia too) have problems with the idea of rebirth and karma.

Astus wrote:

Should rebirth be part of education? One could as well make it a theistic view. It is the very idea of removing all religious ideas from public education that helped pushing back religions from the front. Teaching or studying science is not the same as materialism. I'm not a science fan and I've never really been interested in it. But bringing religion back into education sounds like a very bad move to me. Buddhism should be ready for the challenge and prove its teachings instead of expecting people to just follow because the Buddha said so. The Dalai Lama is very clever in emphasising that kind of attitude, returning to the Indian teachers where they had to argue and defend their views in face of others who followed many different kinds of world views. Buddhism started its career in the West first by donning the robe of a rational philosophy. Today it is studied and spread by its meditation methods of helping people. Buddhism must stay humanistic in the sense of something tangible and close to everyday life. That way it might have a chance of staying alive. I trust and believe in Buddhism because I know it works and I find it logical. If I had just followed my culturally ingrained instincts about spirituality I would have left Buddhism long ago for a nice Christian church or some other Western philosophy, because that's where my inclinations were.

As for practice, I don't see any special hindrances created by technology. Is it really more difficult today to become a renunciate than before? What is it that stops anyone from ordaining? The government is not a problem, nor is travel, unlike before. There are monasteries now even in Europe, America and Australia where one can go. Food is not a problem in any developed country. In fact, if one really wanted to imitate the early Buddhist community, being a homeless beggar is less risky today than in ancient India, and one can still access public libraries and internet, not to mention healthcare, soup kitchens and shelters.

Are people in general more exposed to sensual pleasures today? Sure, because the society can afford it. And that is what the majority is interested in. Not surprising at all in the realm of desire, is it? But nobody forces anyone to watch TV, play games and go to

parties. People have enough wealth and free time to support the industries based on entertainment, beauty products, travelling, etc. At the same time, one can put that time and money into spiritual endeavours as well. And many do. In developed countries more people live in better conditions today than the lesser nobility and burghers/bourgeoisie did a few hundred years ago.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 26th, 2012 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Gregory,

How is the concept of One Vehicle an important one here? I mean, even the Prajnaparamita Sutra in 8000 Verses says right in the first chapter that prajnaparamita is required by both sravakas and bodhisattvas. So, we can say that there is actually only one path and one goal taught in different ways for different audiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 26th, 2012 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Is modernity bad for practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Putting aside whether this is true or not, what if modernity is bad for practice? The idea of a Dharma ending age is not a new one, and it's not stopped any school to continue with whatever they had been doing. There are some emphasising the difficulty of the times for hundreds of years now, mainly the Pure Land schools. In Zen they emphasise that regardless of the circumstances every being has buddha-nature and the possibility to attain enlightenment right now. Vajrayana has both concepts and claims that it is the most appropriate method especially for this dark age. All three schools embrace householders and say that being busy in everyday life is not a problem. And there is Vimalakirti and the idea of the householder bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 26th, 2012 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Huifeng said:

But the Prajnaparamita does not say that there is one path and one goal...

Astus wrote:

True.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 28th, 2012 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

No its not,tathagatagarbha is not eternalism,when Buddha spoke of eternalists in was never in relation to enlightenemnt/Tathagatgarbha but was in relation to the false self not being eternal.

nilhism and eternalism in Buddhist sutras are in realation to the tainted self(5 aggregates/Skandalas)

Buddhism teaches that nhilism is wrong view so Enlightenment doesnt cease(if it did cease then it would annihilate=nhilism

eternalism in Buddhism was in realation to the 5 Skandalas tainted self(as the Brahmas beleived the 5 Skandala self was eternal)the Buddha taught this eternalism was wrong view.

Astus wrote:

This idea that there is a true eternal self beyond the five aggregates is exactly the atman of outsiders and the teaching refuted by the doctrine of the five aggregates itself. If the buddha-nature were like that it would be indeed nothing but false teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 30th, 2012 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

If there were a self beyond the aggregates, one could not touch it, feel it, think of it, or experience it in any way, because those are all within the aggregates. Something beyond the aggregates is beyond perception, beyond reality, therefore unreal and only a mental fabrication, an idea only. Realisation of such a self would also be impossible, as such a permanent self would either be already realised or never realised, since realisation is change and experience. A self beyond the aggregates has no function, therefore no existence.

"If the aggregates were self, it would be possessed of arising and decaying. If it were other than the aggregates, it would not have the characteristics of the aggregates."

(<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20Self%20and%20Things>)

Commentary from the Zhonglun:

"If the soul existed apart from the five skandhas, the soul would not have the characteristics of the five skandhas. As it says in the verse: 'if the soul is different from the five skandhas, then it will not have the characteristics of the five skandhas'. Yet no other dharma exists apart from the five skandhas. If there were any such dharma apart

from the five skandhas, by virtue of what characteristics, or what dharmas, would it exist?"

Commentary from the Prasannapada:

"And so, in the first place, the Self is not the aggregates; but it is also not reasonable for the Self to be different from the aggregates. For if the Self were something other than the aggregates, then the aggregates would not be its defining characteristics. For example, a horse, which is different from a cow, does not have a cow as its defining characteristic. In the same manner, the Self, when it is conceived as different from the aggregates, would not have the aggregates as its defining characteristics. Here, because they are conditioned (*saṃskṛta*), the aggregates arise from causes and conditions and their defining characteristics are occurrence, perdurance and decay. Therefore, if the Self does not have the aggregates as its defining characteristics, as you maintain, then the Self would not have occurrence, perdurance and decay as its defining characteristics. And in that case, the Self would either be like a sky flower, because it does not exist, or it would be like *nirvāṇa*, because it is unconditioned. As such, it would not be called the "Self," nor would it be reasonable for it to be the object of the habitual sense of 'I.' Therefore, it is also not reasonable for the Self to be different from the aggregates. Alternatively, here is another meaning of the statement, "If the Self were different from the aggregates, the aggregates would not be its defining characteristics." These are the defining characteristics of the five aggregates: (1) malleability, (2) experience, (3) the apprehension of an object's sign, (4) conditioning, and (5) representation of an object. If, just as consciousness is asserted to be different from material form, the Self were asserted to be different from the aggregates, then the Self would be established with a distinct defining characteristic. As such, it would be apprehended as being established with a distinct defining characteristic, just as consciousness is apprehended as established with a defining characteristic distinct from material form. The Self is not, however, apprehended in that fashion; hence, there is no Self distinct from the aggregates.

Someone objects, «The Tīrthikas know of a Self separate from the aggregates, and they thus speak of its defining characteristics. Hence, this way of refuting the Self does not refute them. And the way that the Tīrthikas speak of a separate defining characteristic for the Self is stated in the following verse from Encountering Madhyamaka:

The Tīrthikas conceive of a Self that is by nature eternal; it is an experiencer without being an agent; it is devoid of qualities and inactive. The Tīrthikas' system has come to be further divided in terms of this or that distinction in the qualities predicated of the Self.» (MAV 6.142)

We respond as follows. It is true that the Tīrthikas state a defining characteristic of the Self separate from the aggregates, but they do not state its defining characteristic after having perceived the Self in its actuality. Rather, through not properly understanding dependent designation, they do not realize, due to their fear, that the Self is merely nominal. Not realizing this, they depart even from conventional reality, and due to their false concepts, they become confused by what is merely spurious inference. Thus confused, they conceptually construct a Self due to their confusion, and they then state its defining characteristic. In the "Analysis of Factors in Action and their Object" (MMK 8), Nāgārjuna says that the Self and its substratum are established in mutual dependence

on each other; and by saying this, he refutes the above notion of Self in even conventional terms."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 30th, 2012 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: a true flame? a true jewel?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the article Batchelor discusses how the organisational structure - basically, the idea of a superior teacher - can be a major factor in the abuses in Zen and Tibetan Buddhism:

<http://sweepingzen.com/buddhism-and-sex-the-bigger-picture/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 1st, 2012 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: a true flame? a true jewel?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it goes like this. From the lowest level of a noble disciple (<http://www.accesstinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.179.than.html>) enlightened beings follow a clear ethical conduct. A bodhisattva may go out of the boundaries of ethics driven by compassion, however, neither compassion nor the idea of skilful means are an excuse for misbehaviour in any situation (in the story of the ship captain bodhisattva he willingly took upon himself birth in hell as a consequence of murder). Therefore, either the teacher is truly realised and needs no special rules from the community, or the teacher is not enlightened and needs regulations and overview. There is no such thing as a naughty bodhisattva. Enlightened madness is what it is called, madness, therefore it should be treated as such.

The problem with the above traditionalist presentation is its extremity of pure-impure. Keeping up this division in general is useful to some extent, and that's how Buddhism operates in its established form, similarly to any organised religion. There is also the option to leave the whole enlightened-unenlightened question out of the business and see humans as humans. Spiritual attainments should not be organisational factors. In fact, they never are in the monastic structure. It is a Western mistake, a confusion, to think that teachers are necessarily enlightened. There is also a general misunderstanding about what enlightenment is. Abuses will continue as long as good willing teachers and writers fail to reform their presentation of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2012 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Karmic Debt and Pure land?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If I understand your question right, you are asking whether it is possible or advisable not to do something bad. Karma is action, volitional action. You have to want to do it. There is also habit - the effect of past karma, i.e. previous acts - that makes doing certain things feel more natural than others. Having the habitual impulse to do something is not what is called "karmic debt" usually. Karmic debt is an informal expression for the results of our past deeds, like our birth. And to answer the question, we always have a choice about what we do, even if that is reduced to doing or not doing. It is always recommended to avoid doing harm to others. There are situations when we feel virtually incapable to resist a negative emotion burning in our heart and it seems easier to act on it than not to. However, if we can recognise the presence of such an impulse before doing anything, that is already half way to evade reaction to the feeling. When we have become aware of an emotion and we want to become free from it, what needs to be done is to use the recitation of the name and that way offer the whole problem to Amita Buddha. This way we avoid both acting on the impulse and suppressing the emotion.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2012 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: Mindful of what in Buddhanusmriti?

Content:

Astus wrote:

With the recitation one is aware of the name in sound and thought. Reciting with a distracted mind is still recitation, but this time one only recites with the mouth but not the mind, i.e. one is not really conscious of the name in thought and the sound moves to the background of one's awareness. There are several techniques of buddha-remembrance that one can use, but the commonest form of recitation is just about intentionally and consciously reciting the name.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2012 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: If lust is desire...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's first remove all the stories and ideas connected to sex and relationships. Then we're left with a fairly simple act that in and of itself is not more pleasurable than a dinner in the evening. Going directly to the opposite and of how sex is filthy and relationships are suffering, it goes nowhere but to frustration and anger. Also, creating a Buddhist myth of sex and relationships is as a romantic idea as the rest.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2012 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: Women can tell when you cheat

Content:

Astus wrote:

Based on the article there are a few problems with the research.

“More masculine-looking men (were) rated as more probable to be unfaithful and having a sexual history of being more unfaithful.”

"Men, on the other hand, seemed to have no clue. They tended to perceive attractive, feminine women to be unfaithful, when there was no evidence that they were, the scientists noted."

So, if someone matches the stereotypical idea of man/woman it's more likely to be also unfaithful according to both sexes. And while men confessed their unfaithfulness to a greater extent, women did not, the reason being the social view of adultery that this article strengthens and follows.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2012 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: If lust is desire...

Content:

Astus wrote:

One more thing about celibacy is how it is present in the Western world. The Catholic Church clergy is (supposed to be) celibate. And I suppose I don't need to repeat all those incidents that made it to the news about the different forms of abuse, and there are many less known too. Not a positive image of celibate people at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 7th, 2012 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Women can tell when you cheat

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't believe that one's mental abilities depend on one's physical sex, and have not yet found any opposing reason or evidence to it. Otherwise we are stating that one sex is better in certain things than the other simply by birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 7th, 2012 at 6:49 AM

Title: Re: If lust is desire...

Content:

Yudron said:

Exactly. In my experience in a woman's body, it's not sex that is any kind of problem for my practice, it would be dwelling on thoughts about sex, and then getting in to relationships with non-practitioners which ends up with a lot of wasted time doing things to please someone whose priorities are different than a practitioners time are. Sex itself is no big deal, it's what we make of it.

I don't know if loosing semen creates all the problems some texts say they do, but in my body sex for me does not leave me depleted at all... I just feel a little healthier and

happier afterwards... as I recall.

Astus wrote:

Loss of semen as loss of "vital energy", I leave this to those who follow such esoteric paths. If you look at it on the biological level there is no basis for such a belief (i.e. semen is continually reproduced anyway, with or without having sex).

In the Bloodstream Sermon of Bodhidharma it is written,

"But since married laymen don't give up sex, how can they become Buddhas? I only talk about seeing your nature. I don't talk about sex simply because you don't see your nature. Once you see your nature, sex is basically immaterial. It ends along with your delight in it. Even if some habits remain, they can't harm you, because your nature is essentially pure. Despite dwelling in a material body of four elements, your nature is basically pure. It can't be corrupted."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 7th, 2012 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Is modernity bad for practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some nice word from Keizan Jokin,
Monks these days are not stable in their conduct and do not thoroughly learn the major and minor forms of deportment and the internal and external mental arts, so it looks as if there is no monastic deportment. Even if mental states and physical deportment are like those of antiquity, if you have not clarified the realm of Mind, these are no more than the defiled state of humans and celestials. How much more do people who do not clarify the realm of Mind or control physical deportment receive the offerings of the faithful in vain and fall into the hells!

Thus, a former worthy said, "The world has deteriorated and people are lax. Even if one's mental states and physical deportment are not like those of the ancient holy ones, if one is able to clarify the one great matter thoroughly and intimately, perhaps one will not differ from all the Buddhas of the three times. He will become a brother of all the patriarchs and ancient worthies in history. From the beginning, there has been no triple world to escape, much less six paths to be traveled." Therefore, investigate thoroughly and study meticulously. Clarify the business beneath the patch robe. This one great matter has nothing to do with the three periods of the Dharma or differences between India, China, and Japan. Do not be sad about living in the evil time of the last days of the Dharma or hate being a resident of a peripheral land far away [from India and China].

Of course, even if any number of Buddhas came and tried to offer this one great matter, even their power would not suffice in the end. Therefore, this is not a path you can pass on to your children or a path you can receive from your father. You have to do it yourself, awaken to it yourself and acquire it yourself. Even though you practice for infinite eons, self-authentication and self-awakening happen in an instant. Once you rouse yourself, not so much as a hair in all of heaven and earth will get in the way. Once you reach this realm, nothing is hidden in the whole of eternity. How can there be anything to receive

from Buddhas?

If you want to reach this realm completely, you must first abandon everything. You must not even seek the realm of Buddhas and patriarchs. Much less can there be any love or loathing of self or others. Just look directly within, without a hair of intellectualizing. There is without doubt something that has no skin or flesh. Its body is like space, without any specific form. It is like pure water, which is clear to the bottom. Completely clear and bright, you just have to know it thoroughly.

Now, how can I reveal this principle?

The water is clear to the very bottom;
The pearly gleams naturally, without need of cutting and polishing.

(Keizan Jokin: The Record of Transmitting the Light, on "Liangshan Yanguan", p. 215-216, tr. Francis Cook)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 8th, 2012 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism just as irrational as other beliefs?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides the encyclopaedic abhidharma, the psychological yogacara and the epistemological pramana teachings, there is a writing of the madhyamaka founder Nagarjuna (c. 2nd century CE), the Vigrahavyavartani ("The Dispeller of Disputes"), where you can see how the bases of rationality - logic and epistemology - is questioned and shown to be without any substantial foundation to rely on. So the question really is: what are rationality and irrationality if not simply conceptual constructs? The Buddha taught that grasping at such fixed views, believing them to be the exclusive truths, is the very source of all pain and dissatisfaction in life. Realising them to be what they really are, i.e. mental products, leads to freedom, compassion and wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 9th, 2012 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: the Four Mountains (Big Monasteries) of Taiwan

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd say Chung Tai for its Chan approach and DDM for its scholarly approach.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 9th, 2012 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: What is "meditation"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The two categories used are calming (samatha) and insight (vipasyana) to define

meditation (bhavana). It is like this in Theravada and both Eastern and Northern Mahayana. The so called special forms like shikantaza and mahamudra are presented either as vipasyana or as the union of samatha and vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 10th, 2012 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: What is "meditation"?

Content:

Rakshasa said:

Is mindfulness a form of calming (shamatha) or insight (vipassana)? Interesting that you say Shamatha is a form of calming the mind, I like allowing all the thoughts and mental activity to calm down just by sitting in lotus posture with erect spine and trying to relax every muscle of my body so I must be practicing Shamatha.

Where would you categorize "focusing" in the Buddhist scheme of meditation?

Someone once told me that if you practice to stare at a candle light with complete focus for long time, you may develop psychic abilities. Since there is effort and mental focus required I don't think this could be classified as "Shamatha" (calming), right?

Astus wrote:

Mindfulness is the guardian of meditation, it keeps us on the object, and when the object is lost, we recognise that it is lost because of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a quality necessary for meditation, but it is not meditation in and of itself, since one has to be mindful when doing all sorts of things.

Focusing, being concentrated on a single object, can be used for calming the mind. However, focus alone is not meditation, because it can also result in a very agitated and narrow mind.

To be clear about the different qualities required for progressing on the path to liberation, I recommend you study the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhipakkhiy%C4%81dhamm%C4%81>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 11th, 2012 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: East Asian Buddhist Schools?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Right now it shows that the service is temporarily unavailable, but this is a very good summary of Chinese Buddhist schools:

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/index.htm>

This is a summary of the ten Chinese schools: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/b3schchn.htm>

Traditional view of karma and rebirth is practically identical in all schools.

One more important thing to know about Chinese Buddhism is that "schools" exist only in theory, they are simply philosophical and practical categories of different types of teachings, but monasteries and communities seldom if ever specialise in only one or two of the schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 11th, 2012 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: the Four Mountains (Big Monasteries) of Taiwan

Content:

Huseng said:

Orthodoxy in this sense reflects a kind of Buddhism with many subtle Christian influences. I've often sensed in Taiwanese Buddhism a strong sense of appreciation for Catholicism. A lot of major Chinese Buddhist authors of the 20th century studied Christianity and even had a degree of contact with institutions like the Catholic Church. These exchanges still occur and are widely advertised as quite positive.

Astus wrote:

I didn't hear about that but it certainly explains a few things.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 11th, 2012 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: East Asian Buddhist Schools?

Content:

icylake said:

in fact after 8-9th centuries, in Chinese buddhism, the "school" lost it's importance. only chan and pure land remained as distictive schools. and even those two schools were assimilated each other.

Astus wrote:

Chan as a school with its own organisation did not exist before the Song dynasty, but even then it just meant that a "Chan monastery" is a public monastery led by an abbot who is affiliated to the Chan lineage, but beyond that the monks' lives were as in any other monastery in the kingdom. Pure Land never had its own organisation, except for certain lay devotional communities. Tiantai was the major rival lineage, but again, it is an administrative issue rather than actual difference in daily monastic life. Strong distinct schools as in Japan never existed in China, because of the difference in regional and imperial government.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 12th, 2012 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: How smart do you have to be to get it?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Being clever or not so clever is not an issue. The question is whether one has the dedication to the path or not. With the correct guidance - of course, what constitutes "correct" for someone depends on affinity - eventually anyone can attain liberation. With bodhicitta there is buddhahood, without bodhicitta there is no escape.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 12th, 2012 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Do Zen Buddhists fully accept rebirth as a truth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are people who disregard the teachings on rebirth and anything else they deem supernatural. Anyone can freely study and practice Buddhism without fully agreeing to every words of the Buddha before checking everything personally. It is actually a level of attainment within Buddhism when one has gained assurance via study and practice that the teachings of the Buddha are true. So you should not worry about your scepticism regarding rebirth. However, it should also be clear to you that rebirth is a fundamental teaching within Buddhism on which the entire path of liberation is based (i.e. without something to be free from there is no point in working for enlightenment).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 13th, 2012 at 6:51 AM

Title: Re: Formal English Training

Content:

Astus wrote:

The <http://onedropzen.org/> is an international Rinzai organisation with a training monastery in Japan where they speak English. The <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/> has several temples in Europe and America, plus all the Soto communities that are not members of the Japanese church. As for those who want to train in Japan, it seems only natural that one should first learn the language.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 13th, 2012 at 6:56 AM

Title: Re: Zen, doctrines and sutras

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is said that Zen is not based on written or oral teachings. On one hand, that means that the nature of mind is beyond concepts. On the other, Zen accepts the entire Buddhist Canon as authentic and does not make a single sutra or a set of sutras as their primary source. Nevertheless, there are certain sutras favoured by the tradition, mostly the popular scriptures in East Asia.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 13th, 2012 at 9:41 AM

Title: Re: Formal English Training

Content:

Astus wrote:

By training centres do you mean monasteries specifically designated as shugyou dera/doujou (修行寺/道場) by one of the official Zen churches? Because of those, all Rinzai sects combined have only 33 in Japan, of which 20 belong to the Myoushinji tradition.

Here is a training temple of the Sanbo Kyodan group:

<http://www.tetsugyuji.com/index.html>

However, if you extend this definition to all Zen centres (not necessarily Japanese) where one can regularly practice meditation and participate in retreat, there are quite a few in the West of those. Or if you mean monasteries where monks live, there are some of them too.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 13th, 2012 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: How smart do you have to be to get it?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What I get all comes from my own mind - how could I be using some other power? It depends on whether or not the person in question is willing. If they themselves actually agree to develop the mind of enlightenment, even very ignorant people, who just know to drink when thirsty, eat when hungry, and feel attracted to the opposite sex - once they achieve the willing mind, then they can use this to discover that body does not exist and mind is only a name. When we are liberated in respect to body and mind, adverse and favorable situations and all the myriad differences all emit the light of our own mind. At this point, there is no place to put 'wisdom' much less 'ignorance'!"

(Zibo Zhenke: Discipline That Liberates, in "Zibo: The Last Great Zen Master of China" by J. C. Cleary, p. 112)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 14th, 2012 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: Harrowing of Hell & Karandavyuha Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

When you have a compassionate supernatural being and a place where others suffer, it follows that such a being could as well travel to the underworld and help those poor sinners down there. Kshitigarbha is specifically the bodhisattva liberating hell beings.

Also see the mytheme https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descent_to_the_underworld.

There is the Chinese https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_Festival based on the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ullambana_Sutra where it is Mulian (Maudgalyayana, the arhat with magic powers) who saves his mother from hell.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 14th, 2012 at 8:07 AM

Title: Re: How smart do you have to be to get it?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is the will to attain enlightenment, the decision to walk the path of liberation, giving birth to bodhicitta, the determination to become a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 14th, 2012 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Thich Nhat Hahn

Content:

Astus wrote:

When you ask "Is it Zen?", what you may have in mind is a story of Linji shouting or Dogen sitting all day. In fact, Zen is just a short word for Buddhism. Does TNH teach Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 14th, 2012 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: How smart do you have to be to get it?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning. There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself. ... Even if those who believe in the nembutsu study the teaching which Shakyamuni taught his whole life, they should not put on any airs and should sincerely practice the nembutsu, just as an illiterate fool, a nun or one who is ignorant of Buddhism."

(<http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 15th, 2012 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Falling asleep

Content:

Astus wrote:

You should check your surroundings if they are optimal. You should also consider what kind of meditation you are actually doing. There are traditional methods used against drowsiness in meditation.

From the <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/zzyk.shtml>:

If dullness or sleepiness overcome your sitting, move to the body and open the eyes wider, or place attention above the hairline or between your eyebrows. If you are still not fresh, rub the eyes or the body. If that still doesn't wake you, stand up and walk, always clockwise. Once you've gone about a hundred steps you probably won't be sleepy any longer. The way to walk is to take a half step with each breath. Walk without walking, silent and unmoving.

If you still don't feel fresh after doing kinhin, wash your eyes and forehead with cold water. Or chant the "Three Pure Precepts of the Bodhisattvas". Do something; don't just fall asleep. You should be aware of the great matter of birth and death and the swiftness of impermanence. What are you doing sleeping when your eye of the way is still clouded? If dullness and sinking arise repeatedly you should chant, "Habituality is deeply rooted and so I am wrapped in dullness. When will dullness disperse? May the compassion of the buddhas and patriarchs lift this darkness and misery."

From the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn46/sn46.053.than.html>:

"Now, monks, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to make a small fire blaze up, were to place wet grass in it, wet cow dung, & wet sticks; were to give it a spray of water and smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would make the small fire blaze up?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, monks, on any occasion the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities.

From the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.058.than.html>:

"Well then, Moggallana, whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don't attend to that perception, don't pursue it. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then recall to your awareness the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it, re-examine it & ponder it over in your mind. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then repeat aloud in detail the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then pull both your earlobes and rub your limbs with your hands. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then get up from your seat and, after washing your eyes out with water, look around in all directions and upward to the major stars & constellations. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then attend to the perception of light, resolve on the perception of daytime, [dwelling] by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, develop a brightened mind. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then — percipient of what lies in front & behind — set a distance to meditate walking back & forth, your senses inwardly immersed, your mind not straying outwards. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then — reclining on your right side — take up the lion's posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with your mind set on getting up. As soon as you wake up, get up quickly, with the thought, 'I won't stay indulging in the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of reclining, the pleasure of drowsiness.' That is how you should train yourself.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 15th, 2012 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: How smart do you have to be to get it?

Content:

undefineable said:

On a level deeper than 'Buddhist' concepts, how do you see this? Could it begin from a desire to be free of self and no-self?

Astus wrote:

I don't know what depths you refer to. The will for enlightenment usually comes from understanding suffering and its causes.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 16th, 2012 at 7:09 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism in the Twenty First Century - Dr Alex Berzin

Content:

Astus wrote:

If "abandoning their heritage" is wrong for Asians, what about Westerners?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 18th, 2012 at 4:01 PM

Title: Re: Moral discipline is the central practical teaching..?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Before getting to Mahayana teachings, I recommend you go through these summaries of the Buddha's teachings based on the suttas, then you will see how detailed they actually are.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html>

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/index.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 20th, 2012 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Zen - Principles and Practices

Content:

Astus wrote:

Interesting introductory film of the myth of Zen. The first half shows the rohatsu sesshin, a single event in an entire year of a monastery, as if Christianity were all about Lent. The second half shows different traditional Japanese arts associated to some extent with Zen, although that is debatable, since they are generally Chinese arts exported to Japan. Comparisons made between medieval Japanese and European culture sounded to me far fetched, especially when it connects a tea house (chashitsu) with a Gothic cathedral.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 20th, 2012 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: Why was E-Sangha controversial?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If anyone is interested, the major trouble in the Zen section of eSangha was about rebirth, a subject that was put into the TOS in order to avoid further debates. Both Jundo and Nonin got banned in the course of that issue, and of course personal heated debates with mods. The interpretation of buddhahood was never a subject of regulation as far as I remember.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 20th, 2012 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Zen - Principles and Practices

Content:

Astus wrote:

True, as it was produced by the <http://firstzen.org/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 22nd, 2012 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: When was the first exclusively Mahayana ordination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Exclusively Mahayana ordination, that was invented by Saicho of the Tendai school, who used only the Brahmajala Sutra and not the usual pratimoksha. In China the ordination has always been based on one or another set of Vinaya, eventually developing into using only the Dharmagupta Vinaya and the threefold ordination (novice + monk + bodhisattva).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 22nd, 2012 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: When was the first exclusively Mahayana ordination?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bhikkhu Sujato has a study: <https://sites.google.com/site/sectsandsectarianism/home>, that shows how different sects developed, not because of some doctrinal schism but natural evolution, as a result of historical circumstances. As he writes in the conclusion, "We cannot find any evidence anywhere for the formation of schools due to schisms in the narrow Vinaya sense."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 25th, 2012 at 6:48 AM

Title: Re: "No Seeking" teaching of Linchi (Rinzai)

Content:

Astus wrote:

To answer the original question, the Extensive Record of Baizhang starts with these words,

"In language you must distinguish the esoteric and the exoteric; you must distinguish generalizing and particularizing language, and you must distinguish the language of the complete teaching and the incomplete teaching.

The complete teaching discusses purity; the incomplete teaching discusses impurity. Explaining the defilement in impure things is to weed out the profane; explaining the defilement in pure things is to weed out the holy.

Before the nine-part teaching had been expounded, living beings had no eyes; it was necessary to depend on someone to refine them. If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. You should not speak this way to a worldling beyond measure, someone like Vimalakirti or the great hero Fu."

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p. 29, tr. T. Cleary)

From the Record of Guishan,

"There was a monk who asked the Master, "Does a person who has had sudden awakening still need to continue with cultivation?" The Master said, "If one has true awakening and attains to the fundamental, then at that time that person knows for himself that cultivation and noncultivation are just dualistic opposites. Like now, though the initial inspiration is dependent on conditions, if within a single thought one awakens to one's own reality, there are still certain habitual tendencies that have accumulated over numberless kalpas which cannot be purified in a single instant. That person should certainly be taught how to gradually remove the karmic tendencies and mental habits: this is cultivation. There is no other method of cultivation that needs to be taught to that person."

(Sun-Face Buddha, p. 24-25, tr. M. Poceski)

Hanshan Deqing <http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>,

"This state of actualized-enlightenment can be further divided into shallow and profound realizations. If you exert your efforts at the root [of your existence], smashing away the cave of the eighth consciousness, and instantaneously overturn the den of fundamental ignorance, with one leap directly enter [the realm of enlightenment], then there is nothing further for you to learn. This is having supreme karmic roots. Your actualization will be profound indeed. The depth of actualization for those who practice gradually, [on the other hand,] will be shallow.

...

So called sudden enlightenment and gradual practice refers to one who has experienced a thorough enlightenment but, still has remnant habit tendencies that are not instantaneously purified. For these people, they must, implement the principles from their enlightenment that they have realized to face all circumstances of life and, bring forth the strength from their contemplation and illumination to experience their minds in difficult situations."

I think that saying "no seeking" requires loads of practices is contrary to Linji's approach to the matter.

"Bring to rest the thoughts of the ceaselessly seeking mind, and you will not differ from the patriarch-buddha. Do you want to know the patriarch-buddha? He is none other than you who stand before me listening to my discourse. But because you students lack faith in yourselves, you run around seeking something outside. Even if, through your seeking, you did find something, that something would be nothing more than fancy descriptions in written words; never would you gain the mind of the living patriarch. Make no mistake, worthy Chan men! If you don't find it here and now, you'll go on transmigrating through the three realms for myriads of kalpas and thousands of lives, and, held in the clutch of captivating circumstances, be born in the wombs of asses or cows."

(Record of Linji, p. 8, tr. Sasaki)

"This threefold body is you, listening to my discourse right now before my very eyes. It is precisely because you don't run around seeking outside that you have such meritorious activities."

(p. 9)

"What is my purpose in speaking this way? I do so only because you followers of the Way cannot stop your mind from running around everywhere seeking, because you go clambering after the worthless contrivances of the men of old."

...

"Virtuous monks, time is precious. And yet, hurrying hither and thither, you try to learn meditation, to study the Way, to accept names, to accept phrases, to seek buddha, to seek a patriarch, to seek a good teacher, to think and speculate.

Make no mistake, followers of the Way! After all, you have a father and a mother—what more do you seek? Turn your own light inward upon yourselves! A man of old said:

Yajñadatta [thought he had] lost his head,

But when his seeking mind came to rest, he was at ease."

(p. 10)

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma. You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma."

...

"There are a bunch of blind shavepates who, having stuffed themselves with food, sit down to meditate and practice contemplation. Arresting the flow of thought they don't let it rise; they hate noise and seek stillness. This is the method of the heretics. A patriarch said, 'If you stop the mind to look at stillness, arouse the mind to illumine outside, control the mind to clarify inside, concentrate the mind to enter samādhi—all such [practices] as these are artificial striving.'"

(p. 17)

"Followers of the Way, true buddha has no figure, true dharma has no form. All you're doing is devising models and patterns out of phantoms. Anything you may find through seeking will be nothing more than a wild fox-spirit; it certainly won't be the true buddha. It will be the understanding of a heretic."

(p. 20)

"I say to you there is no buddha, no dharma, nothing to practice, nothing to enlighten to. Just what are you seeking in the highways and byways? Blind men! You're putting a head on top of the one you already have. What do you yourselves lack? Followers of the Way, your own present activities do not differ from those of the patriarch-buddhas. You just don't believe this and keep on seeking outside. Make no mistake! Outside there is no dharma; inside, there is nothing to be obtained. Better than grasp at the words from my mouth, take it easy and do nothing. Don't continue [thoughts] that have already arisen and don't let those that haven't yet arisen be aroused. Just this will be worth far more to you than a ten years' pilgrimage."

(p. 22)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 25th, 2012 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: "No Seeking" teaching of Linchi (Rinzai)

Content:

Astus wrote:

When the Buddha talked about those with little dust in their eyes, it was about people who are capable of understanding the Dharma. That is, any Buddhist.

Enlightenment is not about gaining or getting rid of something. It is realising for oneself that there is nothing to gain or lose, which is the same as saying that there is nothing to seek, that the mind is originally perfect. The one reading this is without form or substance and there is no hindrance to its all encompassing activities. Isn't this true?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 25th, 2012 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: "No Seeking" teaching of Linchi (Rinzai)

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, It maybe premature to say that I am without form or substanceeven though the scriptures may say it's true.

Astus wrote:

Is there a thought, a feeling or any experience that you constantly perceive? If not, it can't be said there is a substantial thing anywhere. Nevertheless, you can still perform your daily tasks, interact with people and decide what you want to do next. Isn't that how it appears to you? That's why there is no need to seek anything beyond this mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 26th, 2012 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: "No Seeking" teaching of Linchi (Rinzai)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Although this is from Menzan Zuiho's Jijuyu Zanmai, the sentiment is the same:

"If Zen indicated nothing but doing dhyana, it would be the dhyana of the six paramita, or the samadhi of the three studies. All bodhisattvas practice these, and since they all practice zazen, they would not select just one of those practices and give it the special name of marvelous mind of nirvana a, the eye of the storehouse of true dharma, and pass it down.

Even though there are many people who are said to be doing zazen, all of them are apparently doing the practice of the ordinary deluded followers of the two vehicles or following the provisional bodhisattva [way]. Those who know the Buddha Samadhi, the

realm of the original awakening of the Buddhas, are rare. Because of this [misunderstanding] people concentrate on a koan to hasten awakening. They labor the mind to find the subject who sees and hears [kenmon no shujinko]. They sweep clear the distracted mind [monen] and think that no-mind [munen] is good."
(Zen Classics, p. 257-258)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 26th, 2012 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: "No Seeking" teaching of Linchi (Rinzai)

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, I think it's best to stay with what I know. I know I exist..... more than that I can't be sure of!

Astus wrote:

That knowledge is already enough. There is nothing else to be discussed in Buddhism.

"I know I exist" - this is the starting point. Then one has to look at what is it that exists. That's the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha#The_five_skandhas and the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha#Eighteen_Dh.C4.81tus. They are two ways of categorising our everyday experience.

There is nothing else that we can consider existing beyond those. Forms, sounds, feelings and ideas are all covered. And this is where one has to investigate, look at how they exist. This is called insight meditation, vipasyana. This is level one. Zen comes a couple of steps later.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 26th, 2012 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Template of the Mahayana sutras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahayana Sutras were written texts from the beginning, unlike the agamas as we can see in the Pali Canon. The statement about the importance of a given sutra is like a self-advertisement in order to have the sutra be spread and preserved.

There are sutras describing meditation techniques and wisdom teachings besides moral subjects. Here are some popular ones: Vimalakirti Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Surangamasamadhi Sutra, Amitabha Sutra, Prajnaparamita in 8000 Verses Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Samdhinirmocana Sutra.

See some collections of Mahayana scriptures here:

<http://fodian.net/world/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
<http://www4.bayarea.net/~mtlee/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
<http://lirs.ru/lib/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;
<http://www.bdkamerica.org/default.aspx?MPID=81> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 27th, 2012 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: The Commodification of Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

It is an interesting mixture of socialist and romantic ideas. Because there is exploitation of the working class and the natural resources, Buddhists should return to a pre-modern state. Should Buddhists live like the Amish? That is quitting society and not liberating beings. Isn't there a bodhisattva in the marketplace as the perfect embodiment of Mahayana? The "dirt of the world" is not something outside to avoid. Commodification can be another term for skilful means. Buddhism must be meaningful in order to reach the people.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 28th, 2012 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: What else to do. Waiting for Rainbow Body.

Content:

Inge said:

I find it strange that on a buddhist board, one of the worst things you can do, is to claim that buddhist methods actually works.

Astus wrote:

Strange indeed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 28th, 2012 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: The Commodification of Buddhism

Content:

Huseng said:

Why is it always one perceived extreme to another?

I'm saying recognize the dirty money for what it is and be open about it.

Recognizing one's own necessary evils does not necessitate taking extreme measures.

Astus wrote:

I see. Well, it'd be nice to see every person and organisation within capitalist economic systems saying that money comes from the exploitation of the working class and financial tricks. That would practically mean becoming Socialists. However, there is more than one point of view, thus money is not necessarily dirty, exploitation can be renamed opportunity and natural evolution, etc. As long as people can live in peace and security there is little need for political and economical questions. Alas, we don't live in Paradise. And if we think about it, there is nothing accomplished without work. Although if people were not so greedy we could manage providing the basics of food and clothing without much problem to everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 29th, 2012 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Remaining confirmed Enlightened Masters.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Within Buddhism the English word "enlightenment" can mean several things, depending on context and tradition. Outside of Buddhism it is even more complicated, and just because there is one word used it does not mean that it has the same meaning.

Since it seems to me that you are new to Buddhism, I recommend you start here: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/index.html>. This covers the basics. Once finished you can go to other topics, like the different Indian schools and how Buddhism developed in other cultures throughout Asia.

There are many teachers within Buddhism who can teach people the path to enlightenment. If there were none or just a few, Buddhism would be already dead or dying. Fortunately the Buddha's teaching and the Buddhist community is well and alive. And you are free to choose from the many available resources it has.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 1st, 2013 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Hua tou, mind on breath, reciting etc, which one and why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you are interested in Chan, you can start with these:

<http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/index.html>

<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/reading/articles-for-newcomers-to-chan-and-zen-meditation/>

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 3rd, 2013 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Online Philosophy & Buddhology Resources

Content:

Huseng said:

The THESAURUS LITERATURAE BUDDHICAE (TLB) is a multilingual presentation of Buddhist literature sentence by sentence in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, English, etc.

<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Astus wrote:

You should read the topic more often:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=138169#p138169> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 3rd, 2013 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Online Philosophy & Buddhology Resources

Content:

Huseng said:

The THESAURUS LITERATURAE BUDDHICAE (TLB) is a multilingual presentation of Buddhist literature sentence by sentence in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, English, etc.

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Astus wrote:

You should read the topic more often:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=138169#p138169> "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 4th, 2013 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

lowlydog said:

What is the truth about Christmas?

In the history of Christianity, if you believe you are the sole possessor of the truth then that belief has the power to corrupt your actions, even to the point of insanity – whether it's the Catholic Inquisition or a big shopping spree. The Truth is inseparable from who you are. If you look for it in ideas, beliefs, or even gifts from the store, you will be

deceived every time.

The true meaning of Christmas is that the very Being that you are is Truth. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Jesus speaks of the inner essence identity of every human being. Some Christian writers call this the "Christ within". The real meaning of Christmas is to find that essential self that is universally experienced as the Christ within no matter what your cultural or religious upbringing is. As we approach the ceremonial date of the birth of Christ and as many of you gather with friends and family, perhaps standing in the silence of the Christ within can keep bringing you back to Being - the eternal life that Christ promised human kind.

Astus wrote:

How does this match with the Buddha's teachings?

"if you believe you are the sole possessor of the truth then that belief has the power to corrupt your actions, even to the point of insanity"

"Those who dispute, taking hold of a view, saying, "This, and this only, is true," those you can talk to. Here there is nothing — no confrontation at the birth of disputes." (Snp 4.8)

"The Truth is inseparable from who you are."

What "Truth"?

"the very Being that you are is Truth"

"If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva." (Diamond Sutra, ch. 3)

"the inner essence identity of every human being. Some Christian writers call this the "Christ within"."

"the assertion of philosophical views which are non-existent [i. e., not true], is meant that in the Skandhas, Dhatus, and Ayatanas, [some philosophers] assume the existence of an ego, a being, a soul, a living being, a nourisher, or a spirit. This is said, Mahamati, to be the assertion of some philosophical views which are nonexistent [i. e., not true]." (Lankavatara Sutra 2.XXV)

"the eternal life that Christ promised human kind"

"Regard heaven and earth and consider their impermanence. Regard the world and consider its impermanence." (The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections Spoken by the Buddha, section 19)

What Tolle does in this short quote is first denying that there is a person or organisation

in sole possession of the Truth, claims that there are many religions and spiritual traditions in possession of the Truth, to eventually say that what he calls the Truth is the Truth of everyone else, practically making himself the representative of everyone else and denying their own definition of their own truth. But as we can see, his teachings don't agree with the Buddha's, and it's also unlikely that mainstream Christians would accept his interpretation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 4th, 2013 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: "Zen is Going to Hell and It's the Boomers' Fault!"

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's natural selection. Species that are incapable of reproduction die out. In Buddhism the minimal requirement is transmitting the form. In Zen it should be the substance that is passed on, but when the teachers don't have it how could the students?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 4th, 2013 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Every-minute Meditation.

Content:

Astus wrote:

A story about "doing one thing at a time".

Unknown said:

Seung Sahn would say, "When you eat, just eat. When you read the newspaper, just read the newspaper. Don't do anything other than what you are doing."

One day a student saw him reading the newspaper while he was eating. The student asked if this did not contradict his teaching. Seung Sahn said, "When you eat and read the newspaper, just eat and read the newspaper."
(Essential Zen, p. 15)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 4th, 2013 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

lowlydog said:

Hi Astus, I'm hoping that this clip from his book will answer your questions.

Astus wrote:

Says the same thing as the short quote.

1. Those who believe that their truth is the real truth are wrong.
2. The truth is universal.

3. The universal truth is what Tolle thinks is the truth.
4. Tolle's truth is some sort of essentialism that has not been specified in the quotes.

What is obvious, however, is that Tolle believes that the Hindu's atman is the same as buddha-nature, something that is not accepted in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 4th, 2013 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

Astus wrote:

greentara,

Buddha-nature as a self is a skilful means. How can we tell? The five aggregates are not the self and there is no self possessing them outside of the skandhas either. Besides that there is no possibility for any self. This is the teaching of no-self in Buddhism since the beginning. Misinterpreting the buddha-nature as an ultimate self is as wrong as taking emptiness to be nothingness, the extremes that are the clear marks of wrong views. The correct view, dependent origination, refutes both eternalism and annihilationism.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 12:19 AM

Title: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

"If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone."

(Zongmi on Chan, p. 123)

"Do not think of any good or evil whatsoever. Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified. This is the essential art of tso-ch'an.

Honestly speaking, tso'ch'an is the dharma gate of ease and joy."

(Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation, p. 181)

"One must not delve into thoughts that arise, whether good or bad. As soon as a thought arises, he must become aware of it. He must always be aware of what arises in the sphere of consciousness without losing clear discrimination, and without becoming dull or scattered. A myriad of years is nothing but one moment of thought, which is neither discontinuous nor continuous. This is the essential Way (or method) of Zen practice. Zazen is in itself the doctrinal gateway of "comfort and ease."

(The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, p. 256)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

songhill said:

Where does it say in the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra that Buddha-nature is upaya or skillful means? MPN says, in fact:

"Again good sons! Just as all rivers flow to the sea, all Sutras and all forms of meditation lead ultimately to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra. Why? Because it expounds in the most excellent manner [the doctrine that all sentient beings] possess the Buddha-nature."

For the person who has realized and experienced this nature it is certainly not upaya. It's what makes a Buddha a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say it is stated in the MPNS.

Can you define what the buddha-nature is and what is its relation to the five skandhas and eighteen dhatus?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

songhill said:

Strictly speaking, BN is not, satisfactorily, definable because it is inconceivable. But this may help.

O good man! Buddha-Nature is birthlessness and deathlessness; it is not going, not coming. It is not past, not future, and not present. It is not something that arises out of a cause; it is not the making of any cause. It is not something made; it is not a maker. It is not any outer form, nor is it not any form; it is not something with a name, nor is it something with no name; it is no name and no matter. It is not long, not short. It is not something that has come out [arisen] in the five skandhas, the 18 realms, and the 12 spheres. Hence, we say eternal.

Astus wrote:

There's another word for that definition in Buddhism: emptiness. The very lack of any substance, self, essence, being.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Empty of other not empty of itself.

Astus wrote:
What is itself?

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 4:59 AM
Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas
Content:
Son of Buddha said:
Empty of other not empty of itself.

Astus wrote:
What is itself?

PadmaVonSamba said:
itself means, if you reduce something down to its core, there is some single element of which something ultimately is.

Astus wrote:
Then what is the single element called buddha-nature?

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 5:16 AM
Title: Re: Mind versus Self?
Content:
Astus wrote:

If buddha-nature is simply the lack of defilements then it is no different from how nirvana is defined in the four noble truths and other basic teachings. However, it is meaningless to say that "nirvana is hidden in every being", unless we are using a metaphoric or poetic language, or all we mean is the ability of beings to attain nirvana, which has not been denied in the first place, therefore the statement's sole function is to give some motivation to those lacking confidence.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 5:26 AM
Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas
Content:
songhill said:

This nature, as in Buddha-nature, is not a sheer vacuum:
The atman is the Tathagatagarbha. All beings possess a Buddha Nature: this is what the atman is. This atman, from the start, is always covered by innumerable passions (klesha): this is why beings are unable to see it. — Mahaparinirvana-sutra

Astus wrote:

Then give the definition of what buddha-nature is and not what it is not.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Astus wrote:

However, it is meaningless to say that "nirvana is hidden in every being", unless we are using a metaphoric or poetic language

PadmaVonSamba said:

Yeah, that's pretty much what it is.

Astus wrote:

And that's why I said buddha-nature is a skilful means.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, I know you are very sincere.... but can you please put in in your own words without overly using 'buddhist talk' I would feel you're speaking from some sort of direct experience no matter if it were just the merest hint or inkling.

Astus wrote:

Direct experience is what is right in front of us. What is that? The physical and mental impressions experienced by us, There are sights, sounds, odours, tastes, tactile sensations and thoughts. Is there anything permanent of them? No. Some believe that awareness/consciousness is permanent, based on the idea that behind all experiences there is a single thing experiencing them all. But is there an awareness independent of something to be aware of? Not possible. If there is not something to be aware of we can't say that there is an awareness of it, just like if we don't see blue we don't say that nevertheless there is the seer of the blue. And in general, without seeing anything, when there is no visual perception at all, the act of seeing is not present either. That's why an independent awareness is not possible. Could there be anything else beyond our present experiences? Even if there were it would be nothing else but our imagination of such a thing as we have no other experience of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 7:09 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Luckily in the Mahamudra tradition we have direct introduction (I do believe something of the sort exists in some Zen schools too?), if the student has the karma vipakka to successfully receive the introduction, this whole discussion disappears up its own...

Astus wrote:

I don't think there is any need for special tricks. The dialectical teachings of abhidharma, madhyamaka and yogacara should suffice perfectly.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

And what is that right practice in your opinion?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

songhill said:

What it is is through realization; not through verbal expressions or concepts.

Astus wrote:

That means you are arguing for something that you cannot explain or describe. You could as well argue for the Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Invisible Pink Unicorn.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, Does that mean I think the sky is blue. I go up in a plane and don't see blueness anywhere. I return to earth and look up and again the sky is blue. Is this all illusion or can this 'small' insight wake us up?

Astus wrote:

Even physically the blue sky is an illusion, a result of the coming together of light, aerial conditions, the human eye and language. Not too long ago, before aeroplanes and such, in certain cultures people believed there is an ocean above our heads or a heavenly structure. From the personal perspective, even when you are looking at the sky you don't see it uninterruptedly in a continuity but there are moments of perception following each other, both physically and mentally. You don't keep the thought "blue sky" constantly in mind and you can't really keep your eyes open for long. There are further topics one can go through, like whether the sky is inside or outside, whether it is

one or many, etc., as you can find in traditional Buddhist works. The result is that the "blue sky" is simply a dependently originated conceptual phenomenon.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

lowlydog said:

1. At the ultimate level Truth cannot be believed only experienced.
2. Truth is God, the law of nature is truth.
3. Tolle experiences truth, one cannot think truth.
4. Read his books.

Depends on how you interpret words, words have different meanings to different people.

Astus wrote:

2. Buddhism has no God nor does it consider any natural law ultimate.

Based on point 1 it follows that:

3. Since you cannot believe in truth you cannot tell what truth is, neither can one know what some other people experience, making truth completely incommunicable and subjective.
4. Since truth cannot be told it can't be written either.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

So this was a lie then? If Dharma is dharma and we need to look past words to see the truth, then even false words, if we look past them, contain the truth.

Astus wrote:

So the New Age sentiment of anything goes as long as you agree that anything goes.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

lowlydog said:

That depends on your definition of the word God. <https://youtu.be/2MSaVFuc3EI> "onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;"

3. You cannot believe the truth at the ultimate level, nor can you satisfy your hunger by watching others eat, making truth at the ultimate level indescribable.

4. Exactly, words cannot describe the ultimate level of truth.

Astus wrote:

Do you know of a sutra where the Buddha talks about God?

As I said, if that ultimate level cannot be told or described there is nothing to talk about.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 5th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

songhill said:

I am arguing for something that is ineffable and non-conceptual which transcends the mundane whirl, and is realizable—but is not like the hairs of a tortoise. Our Buddha-nature is truly real, the secular world that runs away from the teaching of Buddha-nature is not.

Astus wrote:

If it is beyond the six senses it is irrelevant to our life, it does not solve the problem of suffering, and no being can experience it. If it is within the six senses it is necessarily impermanent and empty. There is no third option.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you want to know what direct, non-conceptual experience is, just wait until the next time you accidentally hit your thumb with a hammer. You will immediately know without knowing.

Astus wrote:

All the five physical senses are non-conceptual, states like coma, swoon and deep sleep are without concepts, and meditative absorptions beyond the first level are without concepts too. A non-conceptual experience is not an "eternal self" or anything full of miraculous abilities. Not grasping on concepts, realising emptiness, prajnaparamita, that is also not a "pure being".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Eckhart Tolle on christmas

Content:

songhill said:

The five aggregates are the noble or ariyan truth of suffering (S.v.425) subject to clinging consisting of material shape, feeling, perception, habitual tendencies and consciousness. As long as we cling to them (the aggregates) we doom ourselves to endless suffering. We have to transcend them. In addition, besides being suffering the origin of suffering concerns the five aggregates.

"The desire, indulgence, inclination, and holding based on these five aggregates affected by clinging is the origination of suffering " (M.i.191). (Emphasis added.)

Astus wrote:

Clinging is the cause of suffering, not the aggregates. Removing clinging doesn't mean the elimination of the aggregates. It is understanding that there is no permanent thing, there is no self but only dependent aggregates that is the knowledge removing clinging. Imagining there is a real self inside or outside the aggregates is the ignorance causing clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zazen is not a matter of body posture, nor is it a method to achieve something. This is what the Platform Sutra (ch. 5) and later generations say.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Exactly.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

songhill said:

In Caodong (Soto) posture is very important. For Dogen Zenji, zazen appears to be enlightenment. For example, "Sitting is itself the treasury of the eye of true Dharma and the mystic mind of nirvana" (Carl Bielefeldt, Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation, p. 169). Dogen Zenji seemed to believe that one is already a Buddha so that zazen is not practiced to become a Buddha. When the adept can sit in zazen with no desire his Buddha-ness will begin to reveal itself.

"For Dogen, zazen is not waiting for enlightenment, but simply the practice of buddhas. This practice is not to acquire something in some other times or in another state of consciousness or being. It is actually the practice of enlightenment or realization right now. And this enlightenment or realization for Dogen is naturally expressed in practice" (Steven Heine, Dale Stuart Wright, Zen Ritual, p. 177).

Astus wrote:

Sitting meditation is just a small part of a Zen monastery's programme, initially assuming a sitting posture is helpful for beginners. But not even Dogen or Keizan regarded sitting itself as the only form of Zen.

"Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha. How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?"
(http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

"Zazen means to clarify the mind-ground and dwell comfortably in your actual nature. This is called revealing yourself and manifesting the original-ground. In zazen both body and mind drop off. Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down."
(<http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/zzyk.shtml>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 6th, 2013 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Not self is a skillfull means to get too True self
not self tells us what is not enlightenment and leads us to what is.

Astus wrote:

If the teaching of no-self tells us what is not enlightenment, then the true self should tell what enlightenment is. However, I am still looking for a clear description of what that actually is. Yes, it is said that it is "permanent, joy, self and purity", but those are just qualities without telling the thing that has those qualities.

Just to give an example of what I'm looking for from those emphasising "true self", here is an explanation from Sallie B. King's book "Buddha Nature" that is a study of the Buddha Nature Treatise (Foxinglun):

"The essential point here is that the new teaching of atmaparamita is not in conflict with the old anatman teaching, but on the contrary is the fulfillment of it. The very anatman itself, when taken to its extreme (i.e., when perfected) is the atmaparamita. This teaching is logically parallel to the sunyavada teaching that emptiness or sunya is the characteristic or the own-being (svabhava) of all things. ... Though the language is new, the content of this message is not. What we have here is a variation on the theme

enunciated previously, "Buddha nature is the Thusness revealed by the dual emptiness of person and things ... If one does not speak of Buddha nature, then one does not understand emptiness" (787b). Non-Buddhists are as wrong as ever in seeing a self in the changing phenomena of worldly flux." (p. 89)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

songhill said:

Looking for the self using the nets of the five aggregates is an impossible task. It isn't a particular shape or a pleasant feeling. It isn't a percept. It isn't a formation or consciousness. In addition, the five aggregates are produced by worldlings (S. iii. 152). The aggregates also belong to Mara the Buddhist devil (S.iii.189). From passage after passage, for example in the Khandhavagga of the Samyutta-Nikaya we learn that aggregates are not the self or not my self (na meso attâ). From this we can surmise that the self is most intrinsic. It doesn't have to be made or produced. In a manner of speaking it finds itself by putting away desire for what is not itself (S.iii.78). But as we know, worldlings produce and crave the five aggregates which are suffering; which are not the self.

Astus wrote:

You think that because it is taught that the five aggregates are not self that there must be a self somewhere else. However, if there were a self outside of the five aggregates that self would be without any sensory ability or even consciousness. Who believes in an unconscious, inactive self, and what would be the point of such a self anyway? On the other hand, the Buddha teaches that people think something to be a self or a possession of the self among the five aggregates, and that's why he teaches again and again that the five aggregates are not the self. But imagining a self beyond the five aggregates makes no sense even in everyday terms, not to mention Buddhism. Nevertheless, if you find a self appealing that is without thoughts, feelings and sense faculties, go on. It's just I don't see what Buddhism has to do with that idea of a non-functional self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is an important difference between the five aggregates and the five clinging aggregates (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.048.than.html>), namely clinging itself. This clinging is not from outside the aggregates, it is not the same as the aggregates, but the attachment, desire toward them (<http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/3Samyutta-Nikaya/Samyutta3/21-Khandha-Samyutta/02-03-Khajjanivaggo-e.html>). There are ways people assume a

self related to the aggregates, but even when it is believe to be beyond them is refuted (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html#feelings3>). As it is clear from the definition of the four noble truths, the five clinging aggregates is considered the fundamental source of suffering, while the abandonment of clinging - not the aggregates - is the liberation from suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is interesting that you bring up Dogen again while none of the three original quotes are from Dogen or even a Caodong teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Two opposing states cannot coexist without... (Dharmakirti)

Content:

Astus wrote:

I haven't really studied Dharmakirti, but I think if you look into abhidharma materials they discuss mental states, for instance that in a single moment there can be only one mental factor present.

Here is one good source on the classical Abhidharma Kosa:

<http://abhidharmakosa.wordpress.com/> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 9:17 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

The True Self is the Dharmakaya,Buddha,Enlightenment,Pristine wisdom,clear light.
The Buddha is the "thing" that has these qualities(treasure storehouse)

If you had a cup of water,you would say the cup has water in it.

If you had a cup that had nothing in it you would say the cup is Empty,so what is the cup empty of?

It is empty of everything but itself.this is known as Other-Emptiness.

Would you say the cup is empty of Cup also?no you can say it is empty of water or anything you put into the cup,but the cup will still be the cup.

Like wise so is Enlightenment it is empty of everything but itself.

If you say all of Samsara,defilements,suffering are all impermanent and empty,then turn around and say the Buddha is empty also,you are putting the Buddha in the category of the created,conditioned and impermanent along with all of Samsara.doing this is

known as Empty-Empty.

Astus wrote:

"The Buddha is the "thing" that has these qualities"

A buddha means a person without defilements.

What is a person?

The five aggregates.

What are the defilements?

Desire, anger, ignorance.

Do we reach a "true self" by removing clinging?

No.

Do we annihilate everything?

No.

Could this person without defilements be called free from all suffering and full of wisdom and compassion?

Yes.

Are the defilements permanently eliminated?

Yes.

Could this be called a permanent state of liberation?

Yes.

Is there really an actual thing or entity that is permanently free from defilements?

No.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

greentara said:

The great Master Dogen said, "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, and to forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things." To be enlightened by the ten thousand things is to recognize the unity of the self and the ten thousand things.

Astus wrote:

Dogen says "forget the self" from which you make "unity of the self and the ten thousand things". How so? Without self what do you unify? But if you have self to unify it is not forgotten.

On the other hand, Dogen continues with these words:

"To be confirmed by all dharmas is to cast off one's body and mind and the bodies and minds of others as well. All trace of enlightenment disappears, and this traceless enlightenment continues on without end."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Dogen_Teachings/GenjoKoan8.htm#wab4)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Satta Sutta (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn23/sn23.002.than.html>) says that one should "Practice for the ending of craving for form. ... feeling. etc.", and while it says that "smash, scatter, & demolish form ... feeling. etc.", the point is to remove craving toward form, etc., and not to remove form itself. Removing form would mean that immediately one would become incorporeal, something that did not happen to the Buddha and his disciples.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Songhill,

What do you say for this? "Removing form would mean that immediately one would become incorporeal, something that did not happen to the Buddha and his disciples."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

songhill said:

This is not something the Buddha said. The Buddha might say that form is not my self (ditto with the rest of the aggregates). We are already incorporeal but clinging to the aggregates and believing that we consist of aggregates (sakkaya) has made it seem otherwise for us. In a way, we have to give up the illusion of being particulate (khandha).

Astus wrote:

You interpret the Buddha's teaching on the aggregates in a way that it becomes eliminating the aggregates themselves, it is not something the Buddha himself said. And he could have never said it anyway. Why? Because speaking requires functioning aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

catmoon said:

Its an odd thing - suddenly threads all over the board are converging on a single topic - the nature of the self.

What does everyone think of the idea of locking them all and starting a new thread that would get everyone under one roof?

Astus wrote:

If you are happy to bring all raised issues under one thread without making the OP a huge one it sounds fine.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

A person is an individual personality "i" ego that which clings to the 5 aggregates
Donna sutta the Buddha is not a person.

You stated earlier the Buddha was a "person" so you have already labeled the Buddha an actual thing(person) and entity.you say the Buddha the person is free from defilement then you turn around and say No actual thing is permanently free from defilement.

Astus wrote:

If you look at what I said, "person" is a superficial designation of the five aggregates and not some ego/I. That is "person = five aggregates", nothing more, nothing less. The five aggregates are not permanent. Defilement is believing that there is something permanent in the five aggregates, that is, imputing a self based on momentary experiences. For instance, believing that there is an ultimate essence is such a mistaken imputation, it is ignorance, the very cause of samsara. Such a belief includes thinking that buddha-nature means an ultimate essence/self. And that is, in other words, the "five clinging aggregates". So, the difference between ignorance and knowledge, suffering and liberation, is whether there is or there is not any clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

oushi said:

I wouldn't oppose ignorance to knowledge, this is a misunderstanding. They often go hand in hand. Maybe you meant wisdom?

To see that there is no clinging is to see objects that can cling to each other, but are separate. Without objectifying, this problem does not arise, as objects and relations dissolve. This way, even knowledge(wisdom?), or liberation won't follow. You don't have

to cut the world into two, and take the better half into nirvana.

Astus wrote:

Call it objectification or clinging, in terms of the path one has to make a difference between the starting point and the goal. The point is, however, that the problem is not with the object but the approach/attitude toward it (i.e. aggregates and clinging), and there is no hidden substratum of some eternal self/soul/nature/etc. behind it all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

oushi said:

Must he?

There is a profound problem with such a statements. You cannot know, that there isn't. You can only "not know" if there is. Opposite of "knowing" is "not knowing", not a different type of knowing. Hidden substratum is there, as soon as you name it (make it "Bliss"). If you won't name it, there certainly won't be any "eternal self/soul/nature/etc". This way, nirvana is not a nihilistic black nothingness even if there is no such thing as "eternal self/soul/nature/etc". The problem lies in conceptualization, not in the nature of reality. There is no world to escape and no need to escape it.

Astus wrote:

What other description can you give for a path then a way between two points?

I don't see what problem you mean. You first say that one cannot know about an ultimate self, then you make its existent dependent on naming. Naturally, if something exists only nominally it is not something ultimate. How that helps with mistaking nirvana for annihilation is not clear to me. Reality is conceptual (nominal), and mistaking concepts for substances is indeed the problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 9th, 2013 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

No the person is an identity or personality.

it is that identity/personality which is clung to the 5 aggregates that makes a worldly person

Astus wrote:

That is your interpretation, not mine. If there were a self beyond the aggregates it had nothing to do with the aggregates themselves, could not even cling to them. That is because such a self would exist separately from the aggregates and wouldn't need them

for its existence at all, nor have the attributes of the aggregates. That includes attachment itself, which is a function of the fourth aggregate (samskara).

Son of Buddha said:

really so believing that there is an ultimate essence is ignorance and the very cause of Samsara. I could of swore anything that was dependently arisen/dependent origination was ignorance and the very cause of Samsara.the 12 links of dependent origination has as its root and source ignorance,everything that is dependently arisen is rooted and produced in ignorance

so in your view if the Buddha/Emptiness is dependently arisen then he is produced from ignorance.

Astus wrote:

There are the twelve links of dependent origination but it is only a specific instance of dependent origination/interdependency. The Buddhist path itself is based on causes and effects, however, it leads to liberation and not suffering. The cause of enlightenment is the path of morality, meditation and wisdom, the direct cause is the very realisation of dependent origination.

Son of Buddha said:

also the "self" you speak of that clings to the 5 aggregates is the worldly "i" personality/identity that thinks Astus will always be permanent,everlasting and unchanging this is called the super ego where one views his SELF as "I" have attained the highest.

this is the false self

it is not the True Self I speak of which is the Dharmakaya the body of attributes that which is NOT dependently arisen from Ignorance.

Astus wrote:

Again, I don't speak of any self that clings to the aggregates, it is something you do. Perhaps it is not clear for you what the aggregates actually are. They cover all the physical and mental functions that exist. That is, the five sensory faculties of the body, and every mental phenomenon from basic feelings and thoughts through complex ideas up to consciousness. There is in fact nothing else in this whole world. But if you think there is, well, let me know. Personally I have no knowledge of anything that is either not a physical object, a mental object or consciousness. Of course, if it is something else, nobody can see it, hear it, feel it or know about it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 9th, 2013 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

undefineable said:

If you're saying that reality is made up of concepts, then how is there any reality for a being who has moved beyond concepts, i.e. an enlightened being, given that he or she

cannot logically exist in any way whatsoever without one?

Astus wrote:

The problem is not in having or not having concepts. Suffering comes from believing that concepts are not just concepts but real things, because we are always happy to relate to things in a positive, negative or neutral ways, to identify with them, to attach to them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 9th, 2013 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Two opposing states cannot coexist without... (Dharmakirti)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Excluding impossible realities with reasoning uses the laws of logic, that is, that something is either true or false, no third option possible (excluded middle).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2013 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Canon and doctrines, precepts.

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two things one should pay attention for: harmlessness and compassion. These two are what essentially the bodhisattva's actions are guided by. Fused with wisdom it becomes the sila-paramita.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2013 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Impoverished Western Practitioners

Content:

Astus wrote:

As long as Buddhism is about having a teacher it remains a clerical system, like Brahmanism. When emphasis is put on study, practice and community, then it is possible to rely on each other instead of some figurehead. A bhikshu/ni is supposed to be sustained by begging and charity. Homeless people can manage that. How come that life as a renunciate today would be too expensive?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2013 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Italy and Teachers?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are some Soto Zen temples in Northern Italy: http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/temples/outside_jp/index.html#page "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Further information on Italian Buddhist centres:

http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/country.php?country_id=66 "
onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2013 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Yes a True Self that exists beyond the aggregates.

clinging to aggregates is listed as apart of dependent origination which is rooted in ignorance.

the aggregates themselves are apart of dependent origination the 5 aggregates have as their source ignorance, ignorance as their origin, they are born and produced from ignorance.

so if the 5 aggregates are actually sourced, originate, and are born and produced from ignorance how does that fit into your views?

Astus wrote:

You believe in a true self beyond the aggregates, that is fine for a Hindu or some other religion, but in Buddhism there is no such thing. See the explanation in Nagarjuna's main work:

<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20Self%20and%20Things>.

Also, from Mipham:

"If there were an independent self distinct from the five aggregates, it should be observable, but since no such self can be observed, we must deny its existence. Were there a self transcending the conditioned aggregates, it would not have the characteristics required to perform actions or to experience happiness and suffering, and so on; rather, it would be unconditioned, like space, beyond either benefit or harm." (<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/individual-selflessness>)

Son of Buddha said:

So WHO is the one that is realising dependent origination?

YOU STATED:(down below) "Again, I don't speak of any self that clings to the aggregates, it is something you do"

you rely more on this tainted self than I do my friend, "I" cannot realise Dependent origination, "I" cannot realise enlightenment for the "I" itself IS the property of Samsara. your view is of a self that is realising something as if the "I" truly is real.

Astus wrote:

Speaking in English without using personal pronouns is possible, although weird. The difference is whether one takes "I" as something eternal, substantial, independent and real or just as a conventional word.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 12th, 2013 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

songhill said:

This comes across to me as somewhat of put down. For those of us who have read reputable Buddhist scholars such as Pande and Hajime Nakamura, to name just a few, the doctrine of no-self was not in the original canon. It is part of postmortem Buddhism. Of the discourses I have read in the Samyutta-Nikaya, for example, the Buddha makes a clearcut distinction between the aggregates and his self. Self has nothing to do with the aggregates. In this sense the Buddha's self is beyond the reach and range of the aggregates. This also comports with the general English definition of "transcendent" of going beyond or exceeding usual limits. In this case, the limit would be the five aggregates which the Buddha says are "not my self."

Astus wrote:

I don't know what original canon you mean. Mahayana has a few large collections of canonical works and a number of generally accepted masters like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga and Vasubandhu. A self beyond the aggregates is accepted by none of them, nor even by Theravada.

There are the four seals of Dharma that define the minimum requirements of a doctrine to be considered in harmony with the Buddha's teachings. Here's a little explanation of it by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche:

<http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1814>. And here's a short sutra summing it up: <http://www.fodian.net/world/0599.html>.

You may insist on an ultimate self, but it contradicts the very basics of Buddhism. And to quote <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/individual-selflessness>:

"If the self existed, the path to liberation would be impossible, because any system that professes belief in a self can not include a path for eliminating attachment to the self. If our attachment to self is not eliminated, our attachment to 'mine' will ensure that we never part from our clinging to the three realms, and it will therefore be impossible for us to find a means to gain freedom from samsara."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 12th, 2013 at 7:25 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Another attempt to deflect the question, another round of dancing around the subject, another four pages without receiving a straight answer.

Astus wrote:

So it is. Since I have presented both logical and canonical sources that literally state that there is no "true self" in Buddhism I see no need to keep repeating it. Let me know once someone has come up with a clear answer to what that self is they claim to exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 16th, 2013 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

rachmiel said:

Are Advaita and Buddhism talking about the same thing here -- i.e. does pure awareness = vijñāna -- but interpreting this thing radically differently?

Is there a Buddhist equivalent to Advaita's pure awareness / brahman?

Is there any ultimate substrate/reality in Buddhism? Or does Buddhism see "what is" as just a buncha ever-changing impermanent stuff in a grand web of inter-dependence?

Astus wrote:

1, Advaita thinks consciousness (vijñāna) is/has an eternal part. Buddhism refutes it.

2. No, otherwise they'd be the same doctrine using different words.

3. Buddhism teaches interdependence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

rachmiel said:

I'm not sure what you mean. Advaita does not think *anything* ultimately is/has parts.

There is only brahman ... which, depending on frame of reference, is called Self (atman), God (Ishvara), pure awareness, etc. So what exactly does Buddhism refute?

So there is no ultimate substrate/reality in Buddhism? Awareness -- pure (object-less) or impure (subject/object) -- is just a skandha, hence empty (no independent existence)?

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that Advaita believes that there is an ultimate consciousness, but it is actually mistaking consciousness, certain forms of consciousness, to be something ultimate. For instance, in the Brahmajala Sutta

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.01.0.bodh.html>) the Buddha explains several forms of mistaking different meditative experiences as the ultimate reality.

An objectless consciousness is not possible (what is it conscious of without an object?).

And yes, consciousness is an aggregate. Aggregate simply means a category of phenomena, not a unitary thing. Consciousness is always momentary (see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Jeff said:

Advaita teaches "oneness" which can be described as interdependence.

Astus wrote:

Oneness means that everything has the same substance. Buddhism teaches that everything is without substance (nihsvabhava = empty) and dependently originated.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 12:41 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

lowlydog said:

Consciousness is permanent/eternal and Buddhism does not refute this. Advaita and Buddhism are the same teachings when understood(practically experienced) correctly.

Astus wrote:

Something eternal cannot change. A consciousness that cannot be conscious of anything new means a frozen consciousness. What is the use of such a thing?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

lowlydog said:

You are not taking into consideration the ultimate reality and how this statement rings true in the unmanifested(formless).

Astus wrote:

The ultimate truth in Buddhism is emptiness. The formless realms are just samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 2:13 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

lowlydog said:

something cannot be eternal. no-thing is eternal.

Astus wrote:

"No-thing"? Not a thing, nothing. If it is not something what does it matter if we call it eternal, impermanent, big, small, red or yellow? Talk about non-existent things is pointless.

lowlydog said:

I didn't just say the formless, did I. I said the unmanifested. Let try not to twist words shall we.

Astus wrote:

Unmanifested means what? Is it something that nobody sees, hears or perceives in any way? There is a word for it: speculation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

rachmiel said:

Perhaps the simplest and most direct way to get at what I'm trying to get at is to ask which of these is true.

1. Buddhism says there definitely is not brahman (ultimate real oneness/ground).
2. Buddhism says that there definitely is brahman.
3. Buddhism says sorry, dude, I'm not tawkin' about no brahman, because it is of no use to try to conceive the inconceivable.

If 3 is true, is there a hint of subtext of: I'm only saying this because to reveal the ultimate truth would confuse you (but in fact brahman *is* real).

Astus wrote:

The idea of an ultimate ground is refuted by various Buddhist teachers. From Kamalasila's *Madhyamakaloka* (Ryusei Keira: *Madhyamika and Epistemology*, p. 181-182; 184-185), the refutation of concepts like God, soul and others that are held by different Hindu sects to be the ultimate:

"first of all, those who imagine Isvara (i.e., "God") and so forth as having permanence and oneness acknowledge that [Isvara and so forth] have the property of influencing results produced successively, and therefore they also in fact acknowledge the absence of oneness by implication. This is because given that something which is one in nature is no different [later] from what it was [earlier] when it did not produce [results], then it could not produce [results] later, just as [it did not produce results] earlier. If, on the other hand, it did in fact produce [results], then because of the difference of character from its former state, its oneness would be undermined.

It is not correct either that this [Isvara] really has manyness. This is because it has been already proved earlier that simultaneously or otherwise [i.e., serially], there could not really be any connection between his continuum and that of the other things [that he creates].

...

Time (kala), Spirit (purusa), primordial matter (pradhana), Brahman and so forth, which are imagined by some people to be the causes establishing the various worlds, all the while being permanent and one in nature, are also acknowledged by those [same people] to possess, successively or simultaneously, the [manifold] natures of the various real or deceptive collections of entities [that constitute the different worlds]. Hence, the absence of oneness is in fact acknowledged by implication. Indeed, it is not correct that things which are one in nature could possess in this way the [manifold] natures of the various worlds.

If they [i.e., time etc.] are not established as being ones, they cannot logically be many either, for the latter [i.e., manyness] consists in being a collection of the former [i.e., ones]."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

lowlydog said:

Wisdom is not a thing.

Astus wrote:

There are a few pages on prajnaparamita, as the primary form of wisdom in Mahayana. Short definitions are also available.

lowlydog said:

Quite frankly, that question cannot be answered. Even in asking the question, there is an implication that the unmanifested is a "thing" – and hence can be explained with words and understood by thinking. Understanding the unmanifested happens at a deeper level than thought.

Astus wrote:

That is, you don't mean anything by "unmanifested", since nobody can conceive such a thing, in which case it cannot be used in an argument.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: chan/seon/rinzai/soto differences

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is your question about their differences in doctrines, practices, ceremonies, scriptures, language, history, arts, organisation or something else?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: chan/seon/rinzai/soto differences

Content:

Astus wrote:

What makes them different first of all is that Chan is Chinese, Seon is Korean, while Rinzai and Soto are Japanese. This affects their history, their style, their language. In terms of doctrines all of them are East Asian Mahayana.

Chan is not very organised, therefore the specifics in terms of favoured sutras depend mostly on the teacher, and since Chan is almost synonymous with Chinese Buddhism, its uniqueness lies mainly in those that represent Chinese Buddhism in general. If there is anything Chan specific in practices, it is the use of huatou. Because Chan is a loose term in China there is no conflict with using teachings and methods from any school.

Seon re-emerged in Korea in the 19th century and today its major organisation is the Jogye Order, the largest Buddhist church in the Republic. They have a basic curriculum for novice monastics that emphasises the combined study of Hwaeom and Seon, according to the tradition of Weonhyo, Jinul and Hyujeong. The primary Seon method is the hwadu, similarly to Chan.

Rinzai today follows the teachings of Hakuin who created a special koan curriculum for practitioners. Soto today follows the teachings of Dogen, as a result of 18th century changes (similarly to Rinzai), and in practice they focus on shikantaza. Like other Japanese schools, they lack full monastic ordination, and were influenced by Tendai doctrines.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

lowlydog,

Consciousness is momentary. "But what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another." (SN 12.61). Also, there are six consciousnesses and not just one, and those six are not single units either, as there are innumerable moments of consciousness going on a day, plus the sixth consciousness is the four aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Akanistha

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Avatamsaka Sutra the Buddha's enlightenment happens in different places simultaneously. This is not the answer to the question, but maybe some useful

information.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 18th, 2013 at 6:56 AM

Title: Re: Akanistha

Content:

Astus wrote:

I have looked a bit around, but besides that the Akanistha is the place for non-returns, some general books on Buddhism indicate that regarding Maitreya there were different views about his place of eventual enlightenment, however, they don't give the sources. Also, the Avatamsaka Sutra follows the general pattern of descending from Tusita and does not involve the Akanistha as a place of enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 18th, 2013 at 6:58 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

So everything is without substance it is empty and dependently originated.

Is Enlightenment empty without substance and dependently originated?

(that is your definition of empty everything that is dependently originated correct?)

Astus wrote:

Indeed, as Greg said. Just look at the four noble truths. The first two tells about samsara and its cause, the second two about nirvana and its cause. Very simple.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 18th, 2013 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

songhill said:

Putting nirvana under the category of dependently originated thingees [sic] is not something the Buddha taught.

Astus wrote:

True, because nirvana is not a permanent or impermanent thingee but the end of suffering, just as when a fire is extinguished we can't say that non-fire is some new thing, it's just the end of burning. If there were a new thing coming out of the end of suffering or appearing because of the elimination of ignorance it would be a dependently originated phenomenon.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 18th, 2013 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Jainarayan said:

At a very basic and simplistic level, Advaita says nothing exists of itself. Everything depends on Brahman, created by Brahman. What we see is the effect and result of māyā. Under the veil of māyā everything is interdependent and keeps us from seeing that Brahman is hidden. If Brahman does not create, nothing exists. We are Brahman: aham brahmasmi: "I am Brahman". To realize that is to attain enlightenment and moksha (not an easy thing). A tree does not exist, it is ultimately dependent on Brahman (via the earth, the soil, the water, the sun), so the tree is empty. Thich Nhat Hahn says that without a cloud paper does not exist; without the cloud the paper is empty. Why does Brahman create? It's fun, it's the recreation of Brahman. Shankara says it is Brahman's nature to create, just as it is man's nature to breathe.

Astus wrote:

The idea of a creator god is refuted in Buddhism under the reasoning used in Madhyamaka against "production from other". There are problems with a creator god like "Who created the creator?", and "If the creator is eternal the creation must go on eternally", and "If creator and created are different how could one come from the other?", etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 19th, 2013 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

songhill said:

I would recommend that you take a look at the Sautrantikas. They generally believed in the negative character of nirvana (it is the one Sankara criticizes according to Pande). In other words, nothing essentially survives — it is abhāva all the way down. As you probably know Buddhaghosa was no fan-boy of the Sautrantikas. He attacked them without mercy. For Buddhaghosa nirvana was positive, it brought peace of mind (santi), it was imperishable (accuti), and brought solace (assāswkarana). The list goes on of positives. One argument Buddhaghosa posed to the Sautrantikas that if the existence of nirvana is denied, the various Buddhist practices become fruitless. My own opinion of the Sautrantikas is they are nihilists.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna explains clearly that such interpretations of Nirvana are mistaken, illogical, unreasonable and doesn't agree with the Buddha's teachings:

<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20Nirvana>. See also:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.072.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.044.than.html#beyond> and

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.174.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 19th, 2013 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Jainarayan said:

Yes, I know that's the prevailing belief. If I'm not mistaken however, and I could be, there are schools of Buddhism that are either silent on it or do not reject the idea of a "ground of all existence" as Brahman is called

Astus wrote:

There is no such ultimate root of existence in the Buddha's teachings. See this sutta: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.058.than.html>. Do you know of any Buddhist tradition that teaches an ultimate "ground of existence"?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 19th, 2013 at 8:06 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Yes ultimate/true/real/ existence is taught in the third turning Buddha Nature sutras, so this view is upheld by the Sutras. This view is upheld by Zhentong practitioners And Buddhists all across Taiwan and China. Look on the Yogacara vs Dzogchen thread on this forum, you will see a Yogacara practitioner from Taiwan upholding this view.

Any tradition that upholds the Third Turning as definite upholds this teaching in their traditions.

Astus wrote:

Can you show me a living Buddhist tradition where the view of an ultimate ground, a creator source is taught? It is neither Yogacara nor Zhentong.

Here it is from the Cheng weishi lun by Xuanzang, the primary work of East Asian Yogacara, refuting such erroneous views:

According to one doctrine, there is a great, self-existent deity whose substance is real and who is all-pervading, eternal, and the producer of all dharmas. This doctrine is unreasonable. If something produces something, it is not eternal, the noneternal is not all-pervading, and what is not all-pervading is not real. If the deity's substance is all-pervading and eternal, it must contain all powers and be able to produce all dharmas everywhere, at all times, and simultaneously. If he produces dharmas when a desire arises, or according to conditions, this contradicts the doctrine of a single cause. Or else, desires and conditions would arise spontaneously, since the cause [i.e., the deity] is eternal.

Other doctrines claim that there is a great Brahma, a Time, a Space, a Starting Point, a

Nature, an Ether, a Self, etc., that is eternal and really exists, is endowed with all powers, and is able to produce all dharmas. We refute all these in the same way we did the concept of a Great Lord.

(Three Texts on Consciousness Only, p. 20-21)

And from the Mahayanasutralamkara (ch. 6, v. 2, 4) by Maitreya, a cardinal work in Yogacara and Zhentong:

The self-notion itself does not have the identity of a self, nor does the (selfish being's) deforming habit; their natures are different. Apart from these two there is no other (self), so it arises only as an error; liberation is therefore the termination of a mere error.

How is it that beings, directly aware of the relativistic origin of things, still resort to some other creator? What kind of darkness is this through which the existent goes unseen and the nonexistent is observed?

(The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature, p. 50)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 20th, 2013 at 7:42 AM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

songhill said:

It is much easier for us if you would provide the Sanskrit for your term "ultimate ground" and also the Sanskrit for "creator source." In addition, I don't think you should link ultimate ground & creator source. There can be absolute monism sans a supreme creator god. I refer you to the excellent work The Kunjed Gyalpo otherwise available on Amazon as The Supreme Source: The Fundamental Tantra of Dzogchen Semde which has been translated into English by Andrew Lukianowicz.

Astus wrote:

Brahman is taught to be a creator, the source of all, in Advaita. Such an idea is rejected in Buddhism. I'm not the one claiming that Buddhism agrees with Advaita. Any kind of monism is also rejected, whether it is a material or spiritual substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 20th, 2013 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Advaitin vs. Buddhist takes on awareness/reality

Content:

Matt J said:

This is a lower, provisional teaching for beginners. And Brahman is not the creator--- Brahman is one without a second--- what is there to create? Advaita also teaches Ajati Vada, depending on the context.

Astus wrote:

Where is the Illusion from then, if not from Brahman?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 21st, 2013 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: So many schools

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you have trouble with faith in buddhas and bodhisattvas then Theravada is an easier choice here. You don't have to aim for becoming a monastic in the next life, rather you should work for attaining stream-entry, the first level of a noble disciple who is stable on the path to nirvana. As a stream-entrant one will never again be born in the lower realms and reaches liberation within 7 lives either as a human or as a god.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 21st, 2013 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

So are you saying the Buddha was clinging to the skandhas when he told us to "give them up"?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha taught to give up attachment, give up desire, anger and ignorance. Those are the causes of suffering. The skandhas are not, that's why there is nothing to give up about them. What sane person would want to give up their hearing, rationality, etc.? This misunderstanding that the skandhas must be eliminated makes people think there must be a superego, a higher self and a heavenly nirvana. This mistake has nothing to do with shentong, yogacara or buddha-nature, but simply not comprehending the basics, the very essentials of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 21st, 2013 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Self?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Apparently you didnt read the top of the page(32) before you commented.

The very quote I posted states to give up the 5 skandhas

Even gives an analogy of burning then and not caring cause they are not our self.

You do know the 5 skandhas themselves are produced from ignorance dont you?(do you need the sutra?)

Do you even know what Zhentong teaches? I think the true mistake is trying change The Buddha Nature sutras and Zhentong into something they are not.

Astus wrote:

It says that skandhas are neither I nor mine, that's what is to be given up, namely identification. Eliminating, destroying the skandhas would mean destroying your body and your mind, complete annihilation of all living functions. Apparently both the Buddha and his disciples were alive and well after their enlightenment, and they didn't lack their body or their mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 22nd, 2013 at 6:18 AM

Title: Re: We can, we cannot, we may, we may not.... arghhh!

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find that the worst type of discussions are about posturing. Either in the form of promoting yourself or promoting your teacher/tradition. They generate either pointless debates or ridicule. Asking for advice on your practice is risky but still OK, just be prepared for a wide range of opinions. Discussing Buddhist teachings for the sake of clarification or debate is fine as long as it doesn't degrade into personal attacks. And the important things to always keep in mind here are to remain calm, be kind, be clear and never make it or view it as personal.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 22nd, 2013 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Look at what Gangshar says,

"At that time, there is no thought of, "Sights and sounds are out there!" Everything appears without obstruction. There is also no thought of, "The perceiver, the six types of consciousness, is within!" Clear and nonconceptual naked awareness is unceasing. ... When you rest your mind in unfabricated naturalness, no matter what thought may arise, good or evil, happy or sad, the mind-essence which is free from concerns about joy or sorrow is clear and empty, naked and awake."

It's not about focusing on something, it is relaxing, i.e. not grasping at whatever appears. It is called being in the present because you are naturally with whatever occurs without obstructing or upholding, taking or rejecting anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 23rd, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

I'm not so much focusing on these "snapshots," more just taking note of them as they flash by, then dropping each when the next appears. At least that's what it feels like ...

So is Gangshar instructing us not to even take note of the impressions that arise, as one does in Vipassana?

Astus wrote:

Correct. Noting things that appear is not relaxing, it's not natural. If you want to follow that style of Vipassana, it's fine, but that's a different path. Here what matters is that you don't fabricate anything. A thought, an emotion or a sense-impression appears, but you leave it alone. Don't hang on to it by generating further thoughts, etc., and don't repress it by trying to stop its presence. The vividness of awareness comes from not creating any reference point, you just take in the vista of appearances just as they are.

You might want to make use of a more detailed instruction, like this one:

<http://www.chagchen.com/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 23rd, 2013 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Jinzang advised, it's all about being aware instead of getting lost in thoughts and emotions. Vivid awareness is nothing more than that, so don't try to find any state or feeling that you consider "vivid awareness". Anchoring your attention to a simple object like breath or mantra makes easier to see when you are aware of what is going on and when you are lost in daydreaming. That's why generally the sequence of training is first samatha, then vipasyana, and finally resting (sometimes called the union of samatha and vipasyana).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 24th, 2013 at 8:08 AM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

deepbluehum said:

No one taught shamatha in Kagyu. The entrance into the mahamudra is aspiration and action bodhichitta. Pure Mahayana dharma. Leave Hinayana aside.

Astus wrote:

Check Jewel Ornament of Liberation, chapter 16: The Perfection of Meditative Concentration. Gampopa gives you ample reasons to practise shamatha. It is "Pure Kagyü Dharma".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 24th, 2013 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Causal closure & naturalism

Content:

Huseng said:

There indeed is with Dharmakīrti, though in the general Buddhist context when not dealing with materialists, it seems such a dichotomy is less of an issue. The idea of wheat seeds producing wheat and not oats as an analogy for mental causes causing mind rather than physical causes isn't so much about a mind-body dichotomy, but just identifying homogenous causes and effects.

Astus wrote:

A common reasoning in Buddhism is that thoughts don't come from matter because the cause of a thought must be a previous thought. The difference between Buddhism and dualist views is that Buddhism considers all things phenomenological and not separate substances.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 25th, 2013 at 8:46 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm a great fan of the Linjilu, however, it is not a stand-alone teaching and can't be actually used for a complete path. I also don't see any contradiction between the Linjilu and Mahayana.

This is a recommended work: <https://books.google.com/books?id=sNhj17-DNNgC>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 25th, 2013 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

Astus wrote:

Training to realise emptiness, then training to integrate that realisation is the path of the bodhisattva. Linji says nothing else but urges people not to get lost in wrong ideas. However, telling people that there is no self and so there is nothing to attach to in itself doesn't help. That's why there are methods and teachings, to explain and to show to all sorts of people what the Dharma is about. Of course, when one talks to advanced students it's a different speech than when talking to beginners. Linji gives advanced teachings, not for beginners.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 26th, 2013 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Not only does Linji stay away from "no self", but most of his message affirms "True man of no status".

Astus wrote:

Well, the expression "true man without rank" (無位真人) occurs in the Linjilu only in one story and used three times there. And that's it. Hardly a central teaching, although it is true that commentators and exegetes made the expression famous. Statements about how the things are empty appearances and names, however, comes up several times.

"All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty." (Record of Linji, p. 19, tr. Sasaki)

And that's why, because appearances are indeed empty, dependently originated and mind made, there's nothing to hold on to, but rather to learn to let go of attachments.

"As for myself, I haven't a single dharma to give to people. All I can do is to cure illnesses and untie bonds." (p. 22)

oushi said:

Certainly he does not talk to a farmer walking by, nor is his teaching directed only to advanced students.

Astus wrote:

The entire text makes several references to common Buddhist teachings and scriptures, something that a person new to East Asian Mahayana can make little sense of. There is no explanation of ethics, nor meditation methods, nor clarification of how to become free from delusions, or why. Linji himself admits,

"It is not that I understood from the moment I was born of my mother, but that, after exhaustive investigation and grinding practice, in one instant I knew for myself." (p. 22)

Although he talks about direct and sudden enlightenment, just like many other Zen teachers before and after him, he was not without extensive knowledge of Mahayana. Teaching the essential meaning of Buddhism is not difficult for one who realised it personally, but it doesn't mean that the audience can make an immediate step into profound emptiness. Even those who exclusively focus on the Zen teachings under the guidance of a teacher spend years or even decades fully comprehending it. That is clear proof how even the most direct and sudden teaching fails to deliver immediate awakening. Just consider a very basic Buddhist teaching, impermanence. It is seemingly very easy to understand, everybody knows that nothing lasts forever. But a true insight into impermanence is liberation, something that just doesn't happen to

everyone hearing about the fact that all things die. And that's why I say that the Linjilu presents an advanced view of Mahayana. I don't mean that it is or should be restricted, no way. But it takes a certain level of familiarity with the Buddhist path to have an actual impact on a practitioner.

The Linjilu, which is not an actual record of verbal teachings but a literary work of the highly developed Chinese Buddhist community from the Song era, was meant for educated Chinese monks and literati. This distance a modern reader has to overcome first. A living teacher can express the Dharma in a way that is fitting for the cultural and linguistic environment of the students. And I'm not saying that Zen requires a teacher to be practised. Zen is, however, only found in the living realisation of the Buddhadharma. That is the difference between dead words and live words. The Linjilu must come alive first to the reader in order to be understood. And this is not a simple obstacle. Nevertheless, as long as one feels the affinity, it is the right path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 26th, 2013 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let me ask then, taking a simple approach to Linji, what is his teaching in today's practical terms?

"Man of the Way" is simply an expression for "practitioner".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 26th, 2013 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Then draw further conclusions, as "independent Man of the Way lacks nothing at all", practitioner lacks nothing at all. That is a starting point, and you can easily start from here. Just apply it.

Astus wrote:

And that is where I ask you, how to apply? Linji says "kill", but how do you "kill"? If practitioners don't lack anything what is there to do? If there is nothing to do then nothing changes and it all remains just as before: samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2013 at 8:48 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Relax, and drop the desire to perceive meaning.

Astus wrote:

I look at the monitor, drop all desire to perceive any meaning, and it is just colours. How does reducing one's mind to that of a butterfly attracted by light help? Sure, it doesn't ask questions. But on the other hand, a butterfly is not very wise either. I doubt Linji had this in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2013 at 9:07 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

pueraeternus said:

I wonder if we can pinpoint more or less when in Buddhism does the primacy of the guru comes into play? Would that be the early stages of esoteric or vajrayana Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

Chan was never bound to having a teacher overlooking one's progress, although naturally most monks had elders to guide them. The abbot/master is an authority figure but not a guru, since he was the head of the entire monastery. The idea of a lineage - that gives the authority to the master - started in the 8th century when first (at least according to the earliest historical sources) a disciple of Shenxiu claimed primacy among fellow Chan teachers, and then Shenhui's claim to being the true heir and Huineng the real heir of Hongren (instead of Shenxiu).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2013 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

If it is just colours, it's still meaning. But above all, desire to gain something through this act, which is also meaningless. It's not about being dumb, not at all. It's about dropping all, which requires great bravery, because it is not desired at all, to see oneself as meaningless. One's acts and ideas, as meaningless... Ego will rebel. Still, it is meaningless struggle. "Buddha is an idle person".

Linji said:

But if you can stop your heart(mind) from its ceaseless running after wisps of the will, you will not be different from the Buddha and patriarchs.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying that one should turn into a piece of stone by dropping all? No perception, no acts. Or is it still perceiving and acting but like a lunatic who can't understand anything that happens?

In my opinion Linji simply talks about not making a fuss, not attaching unnecessary

sentiments to ordinary events. Life goes on just as before but we have to take it easy, to see clearly because one is without attachment, identification to emotions and ideas. There are thoughts, there are feelings, one can understand perfectly what goes on, but they are all illusory, all momentary appearances in the infinite sequence of causality.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2013 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: What text(s) do you feel make a convincing case for Maha

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the Vimalakirti Sutra is the best to make a point about what Mahayana is about. It is funny, easygoing, imaginative, philosophically deep and flexible, open to all sorts of inclinations.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Looks quite contrary to what you said.

Astus wrote:

I said ordinary events, nothing about being ordinary or not ordinary. What does "being ordinary" mean? As you quoted "Just be your ordinary selves with nothing further to seek, relieving nature, wearing robes and eating." Now, where is the difference here between common people and enlightened people doing the same thing? Attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Are you attached to relieving nature? Hmmm...

People are attached to things they perceive as extraordinary. Meaning give rise to importance, which is proportional to desire, which results in attachment. People are not attached to things they see as meaningless, unimportant and ordinary.

Astus wrote:

I don't know what you mean by "relieving nature".

Primary attachment lies in the five desires: food, sex, sleep, wealth, fame. Everyday things. Only religious Buddhists are infatuated by nirvana, buddhas, etc. (which is of course appropriate for Linji to talk about to monks). So, when Linji says, one should just

go on eating and sleeping however one pleases, it is not the same as in the five desires. Although we can say that those are very ordinary things. But, as you said, they are very important to people and they give meaning to their lives. Still, who can live without food and sleep?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

Take away meaning and everything is "wonderfully the same", because differentiation must be based on meaning. Without it, there is no way to differentiate.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by differentiation? A monk, like Linji, has to be able to uphold 250 precepts. That involves a lot of discerning about what to do and what not to do. He also criticises monks who don't have wisdom,

"And then there're a bunch of shavepates who, not knowing good from bad, point to the east and point to the west, delight in fair weather, delight in rain, and delight in lanterns and pillars." (p. 21, Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 2:50 AM

Title: Re: basic Zen questions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Many Zen groups provide instructions for newcomers. If they didn't you should just ask, or maybe it's on their website. Otherwise you can read online and in books.

Here is a good one from the Soto teacher Shohaku Okumura: <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/okumura-zazen.shtml>

This is a classic teaching by the great Hanshan Deqing:

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>

You should also familiarise yourself with Zhiyi's shorter meditation instruction for a more in depth knowledge: http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 3:30 AM

Title: Re: basic Zen questions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen can utilise any meditation technique. Shikantaza is just one of them, while at the same time there are others too. So, if your question is about Shikantaza, then look at the first link by Okamura roshi.

The "mental technique" of Shikantaza is what is called no-thought (wunian/munen) in other Chan texts, the central method of sudden enlightenment since Heze Shenhui (or Huineng in traditional Zen history, see the Platform Sutra), otherwise called prajnaparamita in the sutras. It simply means not attaching to anything but being aware of everything at the same time. Just as Okamura writes, "In zazen we simply allow any thought, feeling or emotion to come up and then we simply let them go away; we actually do nothing." This is not shamatha nor is it vipashyana, if anything it is both at the same time. You don't block anything (shamatha - imperturbable), and you don't drop anything (vipashyana - aware).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Linjis teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

"Good" is "no differentiation" and it's not about wisdom in the sense of knowing.

Teaching are always provisional, that is why they can be used freely. Zen teachings are full of paradoxes because language itself is limited, that is why masters often regret they said anything, as they had to use false tool. It is greatly used in Diamond sutra for example. It is because you cannot say anything about non-differentiation, as each and every words comes from differentiation.

Astus wrote:

Paradoxes in a teaching means contradiction, that means illogical, and that is nonsense. I see no use of nonsense teachings. Some teachings may seem contradictory in Buddhism, but only as long as one makes a mistake about their meaning. I find both Zen and the Diamond Sutra perfectly sensible.

Teachings are meant to guide people to liberation, to the ultimate. The way to guide should be understandable and reasonable so that people can comprehend and follow it. Using gibberish or confusing sentences have the contrary effect.

As Nagarjuna (MMK 24:8-10, tr. Samten & Garfield) writes,

"The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma

Is based on two truths:

A truth of worldly convention,

And an ultimate truth.

Those who do not understand

The distinction between these two truths

Do not understand

The Buddha's profound teaching.
Without depending on the conventional truth,
The meaning of the ultimate cannot be taught.
Without understanding the meaning of the ultimate,
Nirvana is not achieved."

The Samdhinirmocana Sutra (ch. 2, tr. Keenan) says,

"ultimate meaning is realized internally by each saint, while reasoning is attained in the give and take [of joint discussion] among common worldlings."

and

"the saints, being freed from language through their holy wisdom and insight in this regard, realize the perfect awakening that reality is truly apart from language. It is because they desire to lead others to realize perfect awakening that they provisionally establish names and concepts and call things conditioned or unconditioned."

In the commentary to the chapter by Asanga (Powers, p. 36):

"Moreover, [Buddha] clarifies and opens up [the meaning of the ultimate]. With respect to that, [Buddha] "clarifies"s by way of clarifying well [the meaning of the ultimate] due to presenting designations of doctrines. He "opens up" [the meaning of the ultimate] by way of teaching the meaning."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

That is where his explanations ended, in not clinging to any thesis, any meaning.

Astus wrote:

That's where it's ended, not where it started. To reduce Linji's teachings to "do nothing" or "cling to nothing" is missing the most important message: the way to do it. Madhyamaka presents its own methods. And Chan does too. Although TNH's commentary to the Linjilu is titled "Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go", it doesn't end with those six words on the cover.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 6:36 AM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

oushi said:

"Do nothing" sounds totally missed, as it is just opposite of doing something. "Nothing

to do" is correct, as it is open for doing and non-doing.

Astus wrote:

There is "nothing to do" when one has finished with something. When there is nothing to do from the beginning, it means that everything is already fine. Unfortunately, most of us sentient beings are in samsara and it is not fine. So, there is something to do. How does it help in your view if we just tell ourselves that it is OK as it is? What changes? And if nothing changes, well, it is useless, it is not liberating, it is not the Buddha's teaching. Although Nagarjuna says that there is no difference between samsara and nirvana, but he also explains how and why that realisation is actually liberating. Linji too talks about realising that all phenomena are nothing but conceptual creations, illusions, and when one can actually see it that way, then there is nothing left to do. As you have quoted before, Linji sees the differences between practitioners and unties their mental knots accordingly. It's not that he just sits there telling everyone that everything is already perfect and they just shouldn't do anything. You say that "nothing to do" is where doing and not doing something are both possible, where one has the freedom. That is good. Still, how do you achieve that? That's what I'm asking.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: What if transmission of Buddhism was egalitarian....

Content:

Astus wrote:

Transmission of Buddhism happened through people and texts. Today you might include audio and video recordings. What is being transmitted are the teachings, in one way or another. It is only natural for Buddhism to be egalitarian in receiving people to accept the teaching since it is the very goal of the teachers and texts to be spread far and wide. What might not be (and often isn't) egalitarian is the way religious power are given to certain people, how things are organised in different communities. On the other hand, people are free to create new communities.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Linji's teachings overlooked

Content:

Astus wrote:

Greentara,

I was talking generally about someone "who can't understand anything that happens", and not about any specific mental illness or such, as it was used only as an example.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Mandarin and English speaking Buddhists?

Content:
Astus wrote:
Earth Dragon,

I can only congratulate you for the website. Great stuff! I hope you find Mandarin speaking members here who are willing to assist in this great project. You should know, however, that there are already lot of freely available info in Chinese on the web.

JKhedrup,

<http://www.unfetteredmind.org/> is surely an interesting teacher.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 5:06 PM
Title: Re: Linjis teachings overlooked
Content:
Astus wrote:
Thanks for your recommendation.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 7:45 PM
Title: Re: Linjis teachings overlooked
Content:
greentara said:
Astus, 'Who can't understand anything that happens', I don't wish to labour the point but what I'm trying to say is 'who can't understand anything?' There is no such person. A 'lunatic' may only understand part of what you say or only have an inkling but to say a person can't understand anything....is very harsh and shuts the door to all communication.

Astus wrote:
As you say, there is no such person because I used it as an example, not as describing or addressing anyone particularly.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, January 28th, 2013 at 9:43 PM
Title: Thich Thanh Tu
Content:
Astus wrote:
Ven. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thich_Thanh_Tu (1924-) is a modern Vietnamese Zen teacher of the Truc Lam tradition with monasteries in Vietnam, Australia, USA and Canada.

Sources for his teachings and more:

<http://www.truclamvietzen.net/Intro.htm>

http://dieunhan.net/DN_English.html

An introductory work by him:

<http://dieunhan.net/EnglishBook%5CKeysToBuddhism.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 29th, 2013 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: Nuns in Thailand ... cause a stir!

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let there be nuns!

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 30th, 2013 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: chan/seon/rinzai/soto differences

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

I said that Japanese schools don't have full monastic ordination (i.e. according to the Vinaya) and not that there are no monasteries. Does the OBC observe the Dharmagupta Vinaya or another one?

No Caodong school exists in China as an individual organisation, although there is the Caodong lineage, however, that is only nominal and has no influence on daily monastic life.

The Meiji government only removed the punishment for breaking monastic regulations. They didn't force anyone to have families and live like a layman. It was a decision the Buddhist churches made themselves to allow people give up the previous rules. But this is a different subject and off topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 31st, 2013 at 8:53 PM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

Apologies for getting a bit analytical. I'm trying to avoid doing something that feels like vivid awareness, but is not. To do this, I need to know if I'm on the right track.

Let's say there are two main types of awareness: awareness of objects (physical and mental) and pure awareness (no objects).

Awareness of objects can be very obvious: I see a tree, name it (tree/maple), and think about that time as a kid when I climbed a maple tree and found a bird nest in it. Or it can be subtler: I see a tree, name it (tree), but I don't go beyond that in interpretation/storytelling. Or it can be even subtler: I see colors and shapes, but don't name them.

Pure awareness is awareness with no objects, no subject/object division. One simply IS awareness.

My question: Which of these types of awareness is vivid awareness? Specifically, is it the subtlest form of awareness of objects, in which one perceives sensations without naming them? Or is it pure awareness, in which there are no objects, just awareness itself?

Thanks!

Astus wrote:

First of all, an awareness without object is a fiction, it is only a theory, a false concept of self. When there is no duality of subject and object it means that one does not reify a self and a thing, and by grasping on one there is always the other, that's why Buddhism is not a monism nor a dualism. The emptiness of self and appearances means that there is no clinging to an inherently existing essence. But, it doesn't negate any ordinary phenomenon, the six faculties work perfectly well, but one knows and sees that all are dependently arisen and without substance. That's why in Dzogchen you don't create any special state, don't make any effort in achieving something, but simply let things come and go without attaching to them any importance. You are aware of everything but don't get stuck by anything. So, if you are wondering about what pure awareness, vivid awareness or anything like that is, just see how the thought appears, stays and goes, but don't try to hold on to it, solve it, respond to it or remove it. Also, look at the preliminaries given by Gangshar on how to analyse appearances, since that can help you clarify some difficult points.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 31st, 2013 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

Thanks, very clear.

How does awareness of awareness fit into the above? The friend of mine who suggested I try Gangshar's vivid awareness said that this is what Gangshar is talking about: to be aware of awareness itself. Which doesn't negate objects, but doesn't attend to them either. One attends to the awareness that enables these phenomena to arise in the first

place.

Astus wrote:

Awareness of awareness is simply being aware of whatever appears without attaching to them. There are numerous similar terms depending on the tradition and the scripture. There is a possible misunderstanding of taking it literally as if there was a singular awareness that can be aware of itself, which is not possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 1st, 2013 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Question about Khenpo Gangshar's vivid awareness

Content:

deepbluehum said:

This might be your personal position or that of Mahayana scholars. But it's not the position of the Drikung Kagyu lineage. Or any Kagyu or Dzogchen lineage for that matter. Awareness of awareness is beyond the mind.

Astus wrote:

Here are a few quotes from you from Dzogchen instructions.

"For a person of best capability, mind is mind when it is still, and it is mind when it moves. Once you are convinced that mind is empty, there is no difference at all between stillness and movement. Whatever thoughts arise, whatever appears, is all the play of pristine wisdom. It is the profound perspective of all victorious ones: emptiness. Without adulterating it in any way, rest within that itself. Although occasionally there are regular thoughts, since they are liberated automatically within that state, it is only meditative absorption (samadhi). It is dharmakaya. It is innately occurring pristine wisdom. It is the Great Seal (mahamudra). It is the perfection of transcendent intelligence (prajnaparamita). It is like a burned rope: it cannot tie you up because it is empty of essence. The thought-like occurrence is actually the shining radiance of emptiness. There is no difference between thought and emptiness. So the Great Orgyen said: Since the essence of thought is empty, know it as dharmakaya." (Za Patrul Rinpoche: The Clear Elucidation of the True Nature - An Esoteric Instruction on the Sublime Approach of Ati)

"When it happens that you do get involved in thoughts that recollect the past or entertain the future, then let be directly in awareness. If a thought pattern continues, there is no need for a separate antidote since whatever takes place is liberated by itself. What occurs spontaneously is the radiance of your own mind. To see it with vivid clarity is the essential instruction!

It is your mind's natural disposition to spontaneously reflect. Consequently, spend your life within this state of carefree and pervasive openness, of undistracted nonmeditation, of knowing one thing that liberates all - in which all that appears and exists is dharmakaya, samsara and nirvana are indivisible, and arising and liberation are simultaneous. If you spend your entire life in spiritual activities within this kind of state, in which the thinker and the object of thought are an undivided unity, there is not a

single doubt that you will capture the 'stronghold of nonregression' in this very life." (The Final Words of Tsele Natsok Rangdrö)

"All we have to do now is maintain our awareness. As a thought arises from the state of stillness, if we simply recognize it with that awareness, it will dissolve back into the nature of mind. Thoughts and emotions become like the waves on the ocean, rising and sinking back into its expanse, and we become like the ocean itself, vast, spacious and placid. Nothing remains for us to do apart from maintaining that awareness." (Sogyal Rinpoche: Natural Great Peace)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Have you read portions of the Pali canon?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Digha, Majjhima and Samyutta Nikaya were among my first Buddhist books in English, and I'm working on obtaining the Anguttara. I haven't read them from beginning to end as I usually read suttas by topic. The Satipatthana Sutta (in "Heart of Buddhist Meditation" by Nyanaponika) was a teaching that helped me in the beginning decide on to further investigate Buddhism. ATI and metta.lk are sites I regularly use for references. Like Greg, I've also made some translations, only in my case to Hungarian.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: List your favourite top 3 Mahayana Sutras

Content:

Astus wrote:

Complete Enlightenment Sutra

Vimalakirti Sutra

Diamond Sutra

(are you making statistics?)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Definitive versus Interpretable Sutras across Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Chan there is no categorisation of definitive and interpretable sutras, however, there are a couple of scriptures that are used to represent the common view of Mahayana according to their position. Although Tiantai claims the Lotus and the Nirvana Sutras as the final teachings of the Buddha, I've seen no problem using other texts in explaining

their doctrines. Huayan focuses on the Avatamsaka Sutra naturally as the primary source of their teachings, while Pure Land has the three main sutras and portions of other scriptures.

So, if we use the definitive-interpretable categories, it is simply a question whether a scripture expresses explicitly what a given tradition holds as its doctrine or not. And if not then the exegete has to work until it does. As an example, in Chan it was first https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuquan_Shenxiu who explained every sutra in a way to teach Chan, i.e. seeing the nature of mind. It is a feature of Chan that has been followed ever since.

On the other hand, in Japanese Pure Land Honen simply put aside all other sutras not directly relevant to birth in Amita Buddha's world without rejecting their content, but rendering them useless for anyone following the Pure Land path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: List your favourite top 3 Mahayana Sutras

Content:

JKhedrup said:

LOL If we're ever going to propose a Mahayana Sutra translation project to sponsors we need to figure out people's favourites, right?

Astus wrote:

Since people here can read English but only very few knows canonical languages there is a big chance that all the favourite sutras are already translated, perhaps even more than once. So, instead of favourites, those that are not yet translated but are still considered important by the majority of the traditions should be published in English. Of course there are some sutras that could use a new translation (e.g. Lankavatara and the bigger Prajnaparamita Sutras).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Lack of good translations of many Mahayana Sutras in Eng

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to be that while Tibetan Buddhism followers tend to focus on shastras in translation, from Chinese most of the important Mahayana sutras have been translated already. For instance, all the sutras used in Korean novice training are available in English, although not the commentaries. There are individual translators who make most of the work, like Thomas Cleary, and there are a few groups like the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai and the Buddhist Text Translation Society publishing different scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Definitive versus Interpretable Sutras across Mahayana

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Who was the main formulator of the Tian Tai system, and where can I read about him in English?

Astus wrote:

He was <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhiyi>. There isn't much you can read in English unfortunately, and the "Buddhism in a Nutshell" series on BuddhistDoor.com has been removed and I can't find any copy of it (it had a nice intro to all Chinese schools).

Wikipedia has a few words on the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiantai#Classification_of_teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: Lack of good translations of many Mahayana Sutras in Eng

Content:

JKhedrup said:

While the most favoured Sutras have been translated already, as you mentioned, I can't help but thinking it would be a tremendous resource to have the complete Mahayana Canon available in English.

Perhaps once translated Sutras seen as obscure long ago will have a new relevance in the modern period.

Astus wrote:

I think it's simply a matter of people who know the canonical language taking the initiative and publishing translations online. <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/intro.html> is a good example. I like what D. T. Suzuki wrote in his preface to the Lankavatara Sutra:

"As regards the English translation of the Sutra, I have decided after much hesitation to send it out to the public with all its many imperfections. It is a bold attempt on the part of the translator to try to render some of the deepest thoughts that have been nourished in the East into a language to which he was not born. But his idea is that if somebody did not make a first attempt, however poor and defective, the precious stones may remain buried unknown except to a few scholars, and this perhaps longer than necessary. And then things develop. As it is illustrated in the long history of the Chinese translations of the Buddhist texts, there must be several attempts before the work assumes something of finality."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Lack of good translations of many Mahayana Sutras in Eng

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you mean is how to produce high quality translations that contain the necessary references and such to make understanding easier. I assume that those who can read any canonical language also have at least a basic knowledge of their contents, so the translations made are acceptable. As an example, Blofeld studied Buddhist Chinese for decades before he published *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, and still Wright could write a book about how much it shows the influence of non-Buddhist ideas, i.e. Blofeld's own cultural background. So, is it a good or a bad translation? If all translators had to do as much study as Blofeld we could be quite short on Buddhist books in English. And just as Blofeld's work, there must be first something to make people interested. Like the Bible, classical works have to be re-translated regularly anyway to make them up to date with the current language, lest they sink into obscurity. I'm not against quality in translation, what I'm saying is that quantity has its benefits too. Also, while scholars can make a wonderful job, it relies mostly on Buddhists to spread their religion.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: Definitive versus Interpretable Sutras across Mahayana

Content:

zangskar said:

Buddhistdoor's Buddhism in a nutshell is here:

<http://wfcs.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/index.htm>

Best wishes, Lars

Astus wrote:

Big thanks to you!

Here's the link to the Tiantai panjiao system:

<http://wfcs.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach70.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 3rd, 2013 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: Can you Renew Precepts on your own in Zen / Chan Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What precepts do you mean? Lay precepts are for life, bodhisattva precepts are until buddhahood, monastic precepts are for life. What you can give back are the monastic (Vinaya) precepts, but to be re-ordained it takes the community to approve it. Otherwise you don't lose the other vows. You can do repentance on your own of course, and remind yourself of the vows you took.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 3rd, 2013 at 7:15 PM

Title: Precepts in China and Japan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

What I meant is that in Japan the full Vinaya ordination does not exist among indigenous Buddhist schools. It is another thing that married clergy is a common practice, but Zen traditions also have training monasteries where celibacy is upheld. However, celibacy (brahmacharya) in itself doesn't make one a monk in Buddhism, ordination (upasampada) does. And that's what I meant.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 3rd, 2013 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Advice

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you consider Tantra your primary interest you can find Tibetan Vajrayana sources plenty in English. Shingon is a different matter and to pursue it you would soon find the need to learn Japanese because of the lack of English resources, not to mention ordination in Japan. Learning to read the canonical works is the next level. But it's not impossible, there is at least one Westerner who went through with it and he is a Shingon master living in Japan. Tibetan Buddhism is a lot easier path. In terms of ordination, however, if you were serious about becoming a monk, the easiest way is going for Theravada, second best is Taiwan and Korea.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 3rd, 2013 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: chan/seon/rinzai/soto differences

Content:

Astus wrote:

Discussion regarding the differences in ordination and precepts:

<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=11532>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 4th, 2013 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Precepts in China and Japan

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Jiang Wu's "Enlightenment in Dispute" there is a brief discussion of the situation of ordination in Ming times. Since the 14th century it's been under control by the central government, restricting full ordination to 40 by county and 20 by town. In the early 16th century the ordination platforms in Beijing and Nanjing were closed by imperial decree, then at the beginning of the 17th century the triple ordination was started and spread by the new Chan movement, and only in the mid-18th century was the government control

over ordination removed. It gives the example of the famous Chan master Hanyue Fazang who had been a member of the monastic community since he was a child, but because of the ban on ordination he got the complete precepts only at the age of 37.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 4th, 2013 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Advice

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is only one type of inferior tradition in Buddhism and that is what another tradition imagines to be so. Buddhism per definition is the path to liberation, no matter what tradition. Shingon (and Tendai, another Japanese school that maintains an esoteric tradition) are different from Tibetan Vajrayana in several ways, especially because it is East Asian Mahayana and therefore contains teachings unique to that cultural-religious sphere.

It is an important doctrine of Shingon that one can attain buddhahood in this body (<http://www.shingon.org/teachings/ShingonMikkyo/sokushin.html>), and you can also read Kukai's short work on it, the <http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/sokushingi.htm>. (As a cultural footnote (not to be confused with Kukai's teaching) look at what <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sokushinbutsu> means.) So, as I said, it is only from the biased interpretation of another tradition that a school is inferior.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 4th, 2013 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Rhetoric of a Marginalized Yāna

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think there are different stages. In "Nagarjuna in Context" (p.23) it says that the earliest known sutras (translated by Lokaksema) rarely refer to mahayana, hinayana and bodhisattvayana, it is more about doctrinal-practical differences rather than sectarian.

I can't remember where I read this, but the MMK seems to try to be an argument for general acceptance by all Buddhists and does not quote Mahayana sources or the bodhisattva idea. In terms of karma it strangely accepts certain abhidharmic ideas (MMK 17.14).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 4th, 2013 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Rhetoric of a Marginalized Yāna

Content:

Jnana said:

What I'm interested in exploring is how and why these strident criticisms developed. And also, if this kind of rhetoric is sustainable or even acceptable in the modern,

pluralistic Buddhist world.

Astus wrote:

I can't say much about the origins, but regarding the second part we just have to look at what Mahayana have become. They maintain (most of them) the monastic rules, they promise liberation in this life (Zen, Tantra, etc.) or the next (Pure Land), and the laity is busy with devotional and merit making activities. Sectarian arguments against ancient Indian schools are rarely used, and only to point to some errors on the path. However, arguments come back are among Western Buddhists (like on this forum) where people get busy denigrating everything else but their own tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 5th, 2013 at 1:09 AM

Title: Re: Rhetoric of a Marginalized Yāna

Content:

pueraeternus said:

I always wondered if the sudden enlightenment and full enlightenment in one life paradigm is just a mirror of Sravakayana soteriology. From an exceedingly difficult path that only mahasattvas can brave through for eons upon eons, we now have fast-track programs that promise liberation in 1 to a dozen or so lifetimes. Reminds me so much of good old boring stream-entry.

Astus wrote:

Another interesting thing about the sudden enlightenment in this life idea is how it dismisses and belittles the gradualist bodhisattva path. I'd say that the long-term bodhisattva teaching was not a very successful one in the end.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 5th, 2013 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: The significance of empowerments

Content:

Astus wrote:

To me it seems that the empowerments are teachings compressed into visual and verbal symbols in order to give an impression on the level of imagination, something that one can use for the practice once the meaning is known. It is somewhat like the short verses attached to longer teachings as memory aids, however, empowerment also has the elements of ritual giving emotional assurance that the practitioner can achieve high realisations and sets up a bond between teacher and disciple.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 6th, 2013 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Shopping for a tradition

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see anything new about this "shopping for a tradition" except that it is compared to consumerism. True, poor farmers had little chance to spend time off the field pursuing spiritual goals, and those who did had to become monks. On the other hand, the nobility and the literati had enough freedom to pick and choose as they liked. In the imperial courts all sorts of religions were present and all of them were vying for support from the ruling class and especially the emperor. The development of the Zen school is closely connected to political powers from the very beginning, from the initial strengthening of Shenxiu's so called "Northern School", through Shenhui gaining support for his "Southern School", the rising of Mazu's "Hongzhou School" because of the newly gained freedom of local lords, and so on. Monasteries require the support of the wealthy and powerful. The more support you get the bigger the monastery becomes, plus all the benefits that comes with it. Lose that support and you can lose everything in no time. It was always in the interest of Buddhism, just as any organised religion, to gain legitimacy and financial aid from the lords of the land. To give a European example, the survival of Christianity and its becoming the dominant religion depended first on the Roman emperors and then the kings, and when later Luther got the support of Frederick III of Saxony he managed for the first time to secure the survival of a heretic sect (although others have tried before). So, it is not just that people are shopping for a tradition, but every religion must sell themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 6th, 2013 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Precepts in China and Japan

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

I don't see the connection between the legal equality of sexes and the practice of a monastic order. Yesterday the House of Commons approved same-sex marriage in England and Wales, but it does not force any religious organisation to perform such a ceremony. Why? Because there is freedom of religion. Also, legal equality of the sexes does not force religious organisations to accept women into their clergy. So in actual practice I don't see why you connect secular legal concepts to religious institutions. Bringing up contraceptive methods as relevant to a celibate order is another strange thing. And if by birth control you also mean abortion, that is clearly against the precept of not taking life.

The Vinaya has proven its validity in several different cultures over a long time. What makes it dysfunctional today? It is still practised by humans just like before. How does the material wealth of a country change the daily life of a mendicant group that upholds poverty as a defining practice? Just as before, people still have sexual desires, and many rules in the Vinaya are meant to help avoid improper actions or being accused of such. How is that a bad thing?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 7th, 2013 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Precepts in China and Japan

Content:

Astus wrote:

How does this discussion of gender roles have a relevance to following the Vinaya or other sets of precepts? The OBC follows the Japanese version of bodhisattva precepts, or a combination of different regulations. This is one thing. In Buddhism being a bhikshu/ni is defined by the Vinaya, that is another thing. Since the OBC does not follow the Vinaya calling their clergy bhikshu/nis is incorrect from the Vinaya perspective. From a different perspective than the Vinaya it is a different matter. But since the Vinaya is one of the three baskets it is regarded as the definitive source of monastic regulations by the majority of Buddhists. As we all know, Japan is the one main exception where the Vinaya ordination has long disappeared. OBC, following the Japanese practice, don't have Vinaya ordination either. Arguing that a non-Vinaya system is better than the Vinaya system is again a different subject. However, expecting those who regard the Vinaya as the definitive source of monastic regulations to agree calling non-Vinaya ordained people bhikshu/nis is unrealistic.

Anyway, why the need to be called a bhikshu/ni when it is acceptable to abandon the Vinaya system?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 7th, 2013 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: Lack of good translations of many Mahayana Sutras in Eng

Content:

Astus wrote:

I doubt that it's possible to give a clear definition of what makes a translation good. I've heard that there are better works than Kumarajiva's, however, since his have the prestige and sounds good in Chinese other translations are not used that often. It is the natural selection of translations. Which means that it's better to have more than less, and what is good for one can be bad for another. For a translation to become the definitive version requires either central force (like in Tibet and Theravada countries), or just trends that can change in different eras (like in East Asia).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 8th, 2013 at 1:05 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist themed products

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think I'd change my mug to another that has Guan Yin on it.

And T-shirts with bodhisattvas and such are also cool.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 9th, 2013 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Thich Thanh Tu

Content:

Astus wrote:

I can't really tell, but it seems there are Western disciples if you look at their websites, the different community locations and the photos where you can see white lay people.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 9th, 2013 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Process Philosophy and Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

At college I studied some Process Philosophy and Process Theology. But it couldn't come alive for me, unlike Buddhism, so it just remained philosophy (i.e. "words talking about words"). But it doesn't mean that it can't work for others, since I know the teacher really loved it. Stoic and Cynic philosophy are different for me.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 10th, 2013 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: How is Mahayana Buddhism faring in Viet Nam nowadays?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just because a country's government is dictatorial it doesn't mean that people can't practise their religion at all, it's just that it is under a certain amount of control. Even in North Korea there is a sort of Buddhist union organising things, South Asian Buddhist countries are also mostly dictatorships, etc. Buddhism lived fine under all sorts of kings and emperors. Democracy is a very new thing even in Western countries while religions can be thousands of years old.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 11th, 2013 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: Ratnasambhava Buddha and pureland

Content:

Astus wrote:

The general method for meditation on any buddha is practically identical. You can do visualisation, you can recite his name, you may also find some mantras, you can contemplate his and his lands virtues, and of course have the wish to be born in his presence and his land.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 12th, 2013 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since astrology has its own tradition in the Western culture it'd be difficult to show how a Buddhist version is in any way more sensible.

"Career interests are advanced through clear, logical thinking and the sound application of good business sense. Financial interests look especially promising now, Virgo, so seize any opportunities for advancement that come your way. Working with others is likely to prove profitable, and could bring you closer to them, too. Roll up your sleeves and go to it. The results could surprise you." (<http://my.horoscope.com/astrology/free-daily-horoscope-virgo.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 12th, 2013 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma Dorje,

It's not just that. Astrology is considered pseudo-science, because it wants to look like a rational system but it is not. There are many other areas of Buddhism that are clearly at odds with the modern world view, especially in areas that natural science covers (cosmology, elements, laws of physics, etc.) Since the greatest appeal of Buddhism in the West is its use of reasoning instead of relying on pure faith propagating astrology is against that. On the other hand, for those who are fine with supernatural things might be attracted to use Buddhist astrology, like other fortune telling systems.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

Nobody ever actually proved that. A bunch of scientists signed some paper which said they denounced it as unscientific without any experimentation or evidence to prove it as irrational pseudoscience. It just doesn't jive with their theoretical framework, so they chucked it.

Astus wrote:

You can see for yourself some resources refuting astrology in the footnotes:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology#Scientific_appraisal

By the way, when was there any proof of the relationship between planets and personality traits and everyday events? What kind of energy influences humans? How is it measured or perceived? etc.

Huseng said:

I don't think you can really escape the fact that Buddhism has a lot of magical thinking (in the sense of affecting reality by way of one's thoughts primarily), but at the same time there is what we would call a rational approach to certain things (like logic). Even the basic practices like merit dedication are essentially magic.

Astus wrote:

Sure, there are some magical aspects. The meaning of merit dedication, however, is not necessarily anything magical, as it's simply about relinquishing one's attachment to positive results and also sharing the joy of one's achievements. No magic in that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

Like I said, I met one PhD who studied the effect of celestial phenomena on organisms to demonstrate that what goes on in the skies has an effect on beings down below, and demonstratively so. He didn't get so far in academia with such ideas by the sounds of it.

Really? When you dedicate merit you're hoping your karma ripens in a way that directly benefits other beings. That's magical thinking (I'm not saying that as pejoratively because magic is essentially creating a willed change in consciousness which sets patterns in motion to some desired end).

Astus wrote:

One PhD student, that's not exactly the same as actual research, is it?

Have you checked in the scriptures how dedication of merit works? The one explanation I remember from Theravada sources (e.g.

<http://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbelieve/307.htm>) is that the person one dedicates the merit to must know about it in order for it to be transferred. And the reason for wishing all beings good is simply a personal practice and has no actual effect on others. If one could simply wish the merit to be transferred without the other's knowledge it'd result in the problem that buddhas could make all beings enlightened or at least free from ordinary suffering in no time.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

How the "transference of merit" happens? To quote from

<http://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbelieve/307.htm> I have already referred to:

"When the beneficiary is aware of the act or wish, then a mutual 'rejoicing in' merit takes place. Here the beneficiary becomes a participant of the original deed by associating himself with the deed done. If the beneficiary identifies himself with both the deed and the doer, he can sometimes acquire even greater merit than the original doer, either because his elation is greater or because his appreciation of the value of the deed is based on his understanding of Dhamma and, hence, more meritorious, Buddhist texts contain several stories of such instances.

The 'joy of transference of merits' can also take place with or without the knowledge of the doer of the meritorious act. All that is necessary is for the beneficiary to feel gladness in his heart when he becomes aware of the good deed. If he wishes, he can express his joy by saying 'sadhu' which means 'well done'. What he is doing is creating a kind of mental or verbal applause. In order to share the good deed done by another, what is important is that there must be actual approval of the deed and joy arising in the beneficiary's heart.

Even if he so desires, the doer of a good deed cannot prevent another's 'rejoicing in the merit' because he has no power over another's thoughts. According to the Buddha, in all actions, thought is what really matters. Transference is primarily an act of the mind."

For more discussion of this see this thread on DWT:

<http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=1068>

To use a Mahayana explanation, it is practically the same. In Nagarjuna's MMK (17.4-5) there are seven types of action (karma) defined:

Speech and physical action:

Unobservable unrejected actions, and

Unobservable rejected actions;

As well as . . .

Virtuous and nonvirtuous actions

Derived from enjoyment;

As well as intention: All are maintained to be similar.

These seven phenomena are the kinds of action.

The transference of merit, just as explained above in the Theravada teachings, here is called "virtuous and nonvirtuous actions derived from enjoyment" (paribhogānvayaṃ puṇyaṃ apuṇyaṃ ca tathāvidham / 從用生福德 罪生亦如是). Candrakīrti explains this type of action (paribhogānvaya):

"So too, there is [karma that has] continuity with use; this means the merit—the virtue—that is continuous with use. 'Use' (paribhoga) is the employment (upabhoga) on the part of the Saṅgha and such of an item that has been given away (pariyakṭa). [With that employment this karma has] continuity (anvaya)—in other words, there is a continuation (anugama) arisen in the continuum (santāna) of the giver, [and that continuation] is an accumulating of virtue. And [there is] the non-merit of that type—i.e., that has continuity with use. An example is the construction of a temple where beings

are killed. From the use of that temple in such ways that beings are killed there, there arises in the continuum of those who built it the non-merit continuous with use. In this way, there is also nonmerit of that kind."

Why is it that it is impossible to transfer merit (or demerit) to another being without the other's knowing? Because that would mean that karma arises without intention, that one person's karma bears fruit for another individual, and that is contrary to the law of cause and effect in Buddhism. The continuum or series (samтана, defined in the Abhidharmasamuccaya (p. 69, and the Kosa on p. 1353) as "the momentary continuation of the aggregates, elements and spheres at each moment") of each person could take over another being, making the entire system of karma and the path to liberation chaotic and meaningless.

And it is because of the system of action and results that if constellations could define the events of one's life then good and bad things would not be the fruits of previous deeds, unless we can somehow establish that the stars and planets reflect one's karmic seeds.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

First the text clearly defines that transference happens when the receiver knows about it. Then it advises people to do good things that actually make merit. It actually follows what the Milindapanha says (http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/milinda.pdf, p. 149), the section explained a bit by Dhammanando Bhikkhu <http://www.abhidhamma.org/forums/lofiversion/index.php?t118.html>. This also explains the Tirokudda Kanda Sutta, that offerings can be made to certain hungry spirits, but not just generally to anyone.

"According to the Theravada understanding of the Law of Kamma, we are the makers and heirs of our own kamma. Therefore, there is no question of "sharing/transferring" meritorious kamma to another. The concept of transference of merits contradicts this understanding." (<http://sasanarakkha.org/dhamma/2007/03/merits-can-they-be-transferred.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

PorkChop said:

The link does qualify that saying that transfer of merit is only possible in certain

situations; where the deceased is in an unhappy destination and waiting for offerings.

Astus wrote:

And that is because only certain pretas can hang around to know about the offering.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 7:54 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

So is there a "self" or isn't there? What exactly constitutes the boundary between persons?

Astus wrote:

The whole merit transference topic came in to show that it is not magical thinking.

Getting into another subject on the nature of continuum could be dealt with in another topic if you want to pursue it. I promise I answer there.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 8:03 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

First of all, in the West Zen has its strongest basis in America. There are so many good translations, studies and teachings already and more coming. To give my personal favourites: <http://beingwithoutself.org/jeff/>, <http://www.wwzc.org/book/ven-anzan-hoshin-roshi> and <http://sanshinji.org/teachers/> (who is Japanese but has a community in Indiana and speaks English).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

No, I just find it ironic that astrology gets questioned as fictitious in the same thread where the wholly fictitious entity called "an individual person" is used as some sort of substantial basis.

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination is how the world works. To say that emptiness equals nothingness, that is, the disappearance of everything, is an annihilationist approach. Interdependence is emptiness and there is no emptiness outside of phenomena. A person is a mistaken idea as long as one doesn't understand that it is actually the functioning of the five aggregates, and the aggregates are mistaken as long as they are

viewed as independent entities. The law of causality is dependent origination and it is the clear proof that all appearances are without an inherent nature. To say that there is no causality either as the function of things is to say that by eliminating all appearances one gains liberation, and not by realisation of emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 10:25 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

My response is based on another of your replies here where you explain your original point regarding the illusoriness of a person.

Karma Dorje said:

Neither is a person. Neither is a cause nor a condition. In fact, no tangible "thing" can be found at all. Treating persons as if they are anything more than a designation and that there is some sort of fixed line between them is incoherent. I agree with your points that a being will experience the results of the causes they have accumulated. However, those causes require particular secondary conditions to manifest, and it is to these conditions that dedication of merit and the four magical activities are directed.

Astus wrote:

Saying that there are no actual persons and then equating it with magical influence to me does not add up, unless you deny causality and say that anything works.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

Are you saying that there are actual persons? You do not agree that imagining that there are persons (viz. discrete entities) in the first place is simply delusion?

I haven't said a thing about magical influence. I have only discussed astrology.

Astus wrote:

There is a distinct stream of causal factors, the series of the aggregates, that can be simply called a person. One continuum cannot be confused by another.

Astrology is the magical influence of constellations on people.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

Please tell me how you distinguish one stream of causal factors from another. Where is the boundary that makes each distinct?

Astrology is most certainly not the magical influence of constellations on people. No jyotish has ever said it is. Rather one can take the seemingly external mandala of the time of birth as an indication of the karmic continuum of the seeming individual. Constellations are a signpost, not a causal factor.

Astus wrote:

From one apple seed one apple tree grows, and not another one nor a pear tree or a dolphin. That is, it is a distinct causal continuum. What I do, say and think comes from my mind and leaves impression on my mind. Mixing the continuum would mean that what I think is what you remember, etc.

What causes the stars to reflect a person's karmic seeds? What makes one set of stars more important than others?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 1:26 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

We see time and again throughout the Buddhist teachings where Buddha and his followers like Maudgalyayana are able to read the minds of others. How do you propose this is possible if everything is distinct?

The stars don't reflect anything. The constellations merely indicate the gestalt at the time of birth, and no star is any more important than any other (aside from the Sun, for obvious reasons).

Astus wrote:

Mind reading is only one of the many magical elements of stories, an embellishment for entertainment. If the Buddha could have read others' minds then for instance the monks who got themselves killed would not have received instruction on corpse meditation. Also, one mind connecting directly to another mind would allow the possibility of telepathy and thus transferring enlightenment without saying a word, or the whole system would have to collapse into a single consciousness.

What is indicating the gestalt?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 7:33 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

So all of the common siddhis are all just more made up stuff? Well, if you are just going to dismiss anything in the teachings that doesn't accord with your current worldview and you think that conventional reality is actual, there's not much chance of common ground for us in this discussion.

Astus wrote:

Here is my view about it: <http://eubuddhist.blogspot.hu/2012/09/buddhist-magic.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

That's a pretty bold statement.

You're basically saying that plenty of adepts, many living today, who have spent their life practising and who some believe actually do read minds to some extent, are just superstitious believing in such embellished entertainment.

Astus wrote:

Basically, yes, although I wouldn't say it's purely superstition. You might be interested in this one, from Ven. Analayo: <http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/BuddhaOmniscience.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

jeeprs said:

The <http://www.tricycle.com/editors-view/buddha-stain> discusses the Joshu Sasaki matter (may require subscription).

Astus wrote:

Just as in everyday life, the solution for ignorance is education. If those students knew even the basics of Buddhism they would have been aware that sex is not part of Zen training. So, while the teacher is guilty of sexual misconduct and power abuse, the disciples are guilty of being ignorants.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2013 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

So, quite early on astrology was a component of Mahāyāna, long before esoteric practices.

Astus wrote:

While many esoteric practices promise only worldly benefits it's developed into a path to liberation. Has astrology ever had anything more to offer then good days for insuring a male heir and such?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

... the disciples are guilty of being ignorants.

dzogchungpa said:

<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/guilty>

Astus wrote:

"deserving of blame"

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

@Astus Your post seemed to imply that there is a kind of symmetry as far as guilt or blame is concerned between the teacher and his disciples in this case.

Is that what you meant?

Astus wrote:

That was my intention, yes. Although we can say that the teacher is the one who misbehaved and took advantage of his students, the students were also at fault in neglecting the study of the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 7:20 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

I can certainly agree with that. I guess 'guilty' just sounded somewhat harsh to my ear.

However, I do feel that Sasaki's fault is really of a different order of magnitude than that of the women he abused.

Astus wrote:

Agreed. However, to avoid future incidents, studying the actual teachings of the Buddha and the masters should be emphasised. It is really saddening that only a handful of Zen teachers tell people more than how to put their buttocks on the cushion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you said, the scandal is not about sex itself, it is about abuse where a teacher lie about the nature of the relationship and with that causes harm to the person and to the sangha. A teacher marrying a student is fine, that is not about using one's higher status to cheat people into fake relationships. And it's never been about sex itself. So I find connecting the problem to some Christian puritanism is exaggerated.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

PorkChop said:

The first point is that Quantum Physics has shown that electrons with related orbits will continue to have related orbits even after being spread across vast differences.

The second point is that Astrophysics & Chemistry show us that all elements on the periodic table heavier than helium likely came from an exploding star some where, also when stars explode they scatter debris all across the cosmos.

Who's to say that the heavier elements that make up our bodies are not in some way linked to planets & stars in far off cosmoses, and that those elements don't somehow influence our behavior here on a periodic basis? mind bottling

Astus wrote:

Can someone identify the quantum connections in people's body? Can someone show how molecular things in one's blood influence traffic? No. But it always sounds good to say something about quantum physics.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2013 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

tigerdown said:

Do these largely rare cases among a handful of Buddhist monks mean that there is some systemic problem with ethics in Theradan, Tibetan, Taiwanese and other Buddhism? Of course not, and at least, no more than it would mean so in the American

Zen world or Japanese Buddhism in general.

Astus wrote:

School shootings are also rare things, and it's not every day you find a dictator as the head of the state. Since we live outside of a war zone rape and murder are uncommon things too. Does low frequency mean there's nothing to worry about, nothing to watch out for? Also, the number of reported cases don't tell us the number of unknown issues, but it shows that people can get away with these things for decades, and it takes lot of effort for students to uncover the abuses to the public.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 5:20 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Sara H said:

Since when is somebody abused by an orgasm?

Astus wrote:

If all was innocent and friendly sex why are people hurt? Who would complain about pleasure?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

PorkChop said:

Second question: Yes, what are feelings of anger but a molecular compound in the blood stream?

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism samskara are not rupa, i.e. anger, etc. are not molecular compounds.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Hyon Gak Sunim interviews Robert Thurman

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thank you, it was a great interview and Thurman has some very good ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Sara H said:

That's what's interesting about this. "Sex Scandals"
Not "Lying Scandal".

It's the sex aspect that people are being sensationalist about.

Astus wrote:

As I said before, "the scandal is not about sex itself, it is about abuse where a teacher lie about the nature of the relationship and with that causes harm to the person and to the sangha." And this is what matches the idea of "sexual misconduct", so calling it a "sex scandal" is quite appropriate. You say that the big issue for many is the sex, however, I don't see people surprised that lay Zen teachers have sex or even talk about it. Also, it wasn't simply about lying either, although in Baker's case for instance there was also money involved. So, considering the basic five precepts, the one unbroken precept not yet on the list is actual murder. And this is not about secular law but Buddhist ethics that teachers are supposed to be examples of. Since you say that sex naturally creates drama then why is it only normal in a Buddhist context that supposedly enlightened teachers fall into such a base error? The answer is that it is not normal for a Buddhist teacher, it is not acceptable but harmful for the people involved and the community in general.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:51 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

do you find that those of us discussing these matters here are falling for a common tabloid-style trick? Are there people here that say the problem is with the sex in these cases and not the power abuse? Neither Buddhism in general nor Zen in particular is popular enough to make it to the headlines of newspapers read by millions. All in all, Buddhism in the West is still a minor community made of educated middle class people mostly who don't really follow any Christian or conservative ideas but rather they tend to be quite liberal. So, let me ask you, where do you see the sort of puritan attitude towards Buddhist teachers?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 8:37 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's follow then the idea of chemically influenced/generated emotions that can be then be controlled to some extent by constellations. The body of an arhat should change its chemical elements or even the body since a liberated person has neither anger nor

desire. And that means a medically definable nirvana. One might even find a pill to gain enlightenment. Of course, you said that not all anger is a corporeal product. Do you mean there are bodily and mental anger at the same time or they are different kinds of anger? I'm no doctor but I think higher blood pressure and heavier breathing can show anything between overwhelming desire and burning hate, or even just good acting.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

Are you saying that expecting a Zen teacher to follow common moral standards of a culture is beyond human abilities? An interesting idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

The mutual influence between mind and matter is quite obvious even on the everyday level, since people are mostly attached to and moved by stimuli in the five physical senses. At the same time one can also learn to be free from them. Related to this is that different people cling to different things, and even medication has to be adjusted to the individual. Considering that level of complexity in body chemistry and the large variety of responses to pills and such, astrology appears overly simplistic. And as already mentioned, the astrological systems are based on pre-modern cosmologies that don't exactly match the current state of astronomical knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2013 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

The Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya states, "The collective force of the actions of beings produces the winds which create (nirmā) the moon, the sun and the stars in heaven."

The cosmos are a reflection of beings' actions in this sense rather than a causative force.

Astus wrote:

I'm OK with the principle that realms appear because of karma. On the other hand, the

Kosha's cosmological view of the world is very much outdated, and I think even the Chinese knew that early on.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 17th, 2013 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

Christianized thinking strikes again: <http://sweepingzen.com/sex-in-a-sacred-space/>!

Astus wrote:

The Kosha (p. 652) says that one of the four forms of illicit sex is: "in an unsuitable place: an uncovered spot, a caitya, an aranya". Same definition is repeated in other works. So, "sex in a sacred place" as misconduct is not a Christian idea.

Here's another thing from the Kosha (p. 604) that says some very relevant point (highlights from me).

"Sexual misconduct is much censured in the world because it is the corruption of another's wife, and because it leads to retribution in a painful realm of rebirth. It is easy for householders to abstain from it, but it is difficult for them to abstain from all sexual activity: householders do not leave the world because they are not capable of difficult things.

The Aryans possess akaranasāhvara with regard to sexual misconduct, that is, they have obtained definite abstention from it; in fact, in their future existence, they will be incapable of violating this precept. Such is not the case concerning all sexual activity. As a consequence, the rules of discipline of the Upasaka contain only the renunciation of sexual misconduct: it is inadmissible in fact that the Aryans, in a subsequent existence, would be capable of violating the discipline of an Upasaka which could happen if this contained the renunciation of all sexual activity. Akaranasāhvara means akriyāniyama, (that is akriyāyam ekantata, the certain abstention from one action)."

In brief: it is easy not to commit sexual misconduct for anyone, but aryanas are definitely free from it. And just to clarify, a noble being (aryana) is someone who has attained at least the first level of enlightenment, in case of bodhisattvas the path of seeing. Therefore, if someone commits a sexual misconduct that is a clear and obvious sign that the person has no insight into emptiness, has no enlightenment whatsoever, and should be viewed as an ignorant human being (prthagjana).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 17th, 2013 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Huseng said:

Even so, the idea is that you can look into the cosmos to see a reflection of present

events and things to come. It isn't so much that the night sky acts as a causal mechanism.

I'm neither for nor against astrology for the record. I'm exploring how it worked in various Buddhist traditions. I can't deny, however, that many masters used and still use it.

Astus wrote:

And there are other popular methods too, like

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=3igRAAAAYAAJ> and

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=c6Z8KqdF6LoC>. I think that they are all very interesting as long as one doesn't try to explain how they can actually work because then it just falls apart.

Another way to rationalise divination techniques is to see them as tools to bring out one's intuition, something that they all heavily rely on. And if we can allow the mind to have a mystical insight into the fabric of the causal relations then on some level fortune telling might actually work, or perhaps they can be used to better understand ourselves similarly to dream interpretation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2013 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Does astrology matter to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Something I recommend for all: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idVxRE8uM-A>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2013 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra in chapter 14 says,

"Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas must not regard women's bodies as objects of desire and speak Dharma for them. They do not take delight in looking at women. If they enter the homes of others, they do not speak with young girls, maidens, widows, and so forth. ... If they speak the Dharma for women, they do not smile or laugh and let their teeth show, nor do they expose their chests. Even for the sake of the Dharma, they do not become familiar with them, much less for the sake of other matters!"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2013 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Matylda said:

Well so now we have to remove all women from buddhist centers... there are plenty of teachers on YT speaking to the mixed audience very often mostly women who smile, and make jokes and so on, both Western and Asian teachers... what to do with that???

Astus wrote:

My point is that it's not a Christian, not a Hinayana, nor a modern idea to warn teachers about the dangers of having any kind of affair with women. It is also not acceptable to call such affairs a Dharma teaching, according to the Lotus Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2013 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Matylda said:

yes according to Lotus sutra yes... but it is not final exposition in zen... moreover I hope you know how the bodhisattva is viewed in zen. I cannot quote but one can find in Sogenji writings as far as I know...

Astus wrote:

"Monetary and sexual matters are a far more serious cause of misfortunes than poisonous snakes. One should most carefully stay away from them."

(Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, fol. 5, ch. 7, §6; p. 219. tr. Ichimura)

"Thus, [pure] conduct and observance [of precepts] is Dharma that is not to be neglected even for an instant."

(Dogen: SBGZ: Gyoji; vol. 2, ch. 30; p. 165. tr. Nishijima & Cross)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2013 at 5:18 AM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

Matylda said:

of course, and now, does it apply to buddha as well???

Astus wrote:

Shakyamuni Buddha lived as an example to all a renunciate life, perfectly celibate. Do you know of any Mahayana sutra where a buddha engages in sexual activity (outside of anuttarayogatantra texts)?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 20th, 2013 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen's antinomian/iconoclast nature is no truer than its egalitarian attitude. Both are literary topics but without relevance to actual life where monastic life was highly ritualised and regulated, and Zen was the rhetoric only of the elite monks and lay aristocrats. That actually makes American Zen quite special as it is connected to the Beat culture and a serious re-interpretation of Zen texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 21st, 2013 at 11:44 PM

Title: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

I now present ten questions in order to form a framework [to test your understanding].

[1] Do you thoroughly understand seeing [one's] nature, as if delineating and contemplating phenomenal forms similar to someone like Mañjuśrī?

[2] In everything you do—whether encountering situations or dealing with externals, seeing phenomenal forms or listening to sounds, raising a foot or lowering a foot, opening the eyes or closing the eyes—do you illuminate the implicit truth [zong] and comply with Buddhism?

[3] Do you read the teachings of each age and the statements of former patriarchs and masters, listening deeply and unafraid, completely understanding the truth in all of their teachings and not doubting it?

[4] In response to different [types of] difficult questions and all manner of trivial queries, are you able to provide [answers] according to the four kinds of eloquent responses and completely resolve the doubts that others have?

[5] At all times and in all situations, does wisdom shine forth unhindered and does thought after thought pass perfectly, without encountering a single dharma that is able to cause obstruction, or being interrupted for even a single instant?

[6] In all the occasions that present themselves to you in the external realm, whether contrary or agreeable, good or bad, do you resist [the desire to] elude them [on the one hand] and are you always conscious of destroying [any attachment to] them [on the other]?

[7] Within the realm of the mind and its objects comprised of a series of one hundred dharmas, do you get to see the extremely subtle essence-nature and the original point of rising of each and every [dharma], without confusing them with the circumstances of birth and death and the organs of sense and their objects?

[8] Regarding the four types of behavior—walking, standing, sitting, and lying—do you address others respectfully and exercise restraint when replying? And when wearing

clothes and eating food, performing and carrying out [tasks], do you understand the true reality of each and every grade [in rank]?

[9] When listening to claims that there are Buddhas or there are no Buddhas, there are sentient beings or there are no sentient beings, do you sometimes applaud them and sometimes refute them, sometimes agree and sometime disagree, with a firm unwavering mind?

[10] When you hear about how all the different kinds of wisdom are able to clearly fathom how nature and form complement each other, how li and shi are unhindered, how nonexistence and existence are one and the same phenomena and do not reflect the origin [of phenomena] itself, and how the thousand sages appear in the world, can you avoid doubting it?

(Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu, p. 273-274, tr. A. Welter)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 22nd, 2013 at 8:07 AM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

kirtu said:

I see your wordy Yanshou and raise you just sitting.

Astus wrote:

They say that just sitting is practice-enlightenment and there's nothing beyond that, nothing to achieve at all. On the other hand, you sit silently till the end of your life. And if we scratch the rhetoric of just sitting a little bit we find that there's a lot more going on. So it can be that it is not Yanshou who talks too much but certain teachers say too little about what Buddhism is about. Mystifying enlightenment is of no use.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 23rd, 2013 at 7:46 AM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

seeker242 said:

Touche! Even funnier though would be if someone were to post on here and answer yes to every question, they would probably still be accused of being egocentric! "I got enlightenment" posts on Buddhist forums never seem to go over well.

Astus wrote:

Then Subhuti asked these monks, "Elders, have you ever achieved or realized anything?" The monks replied, "Only presumptuous persons will claim they have achieved and realized something. To a humble religious devotee, nothing is achieved or realized. How, then, would such a person think of saying to himself, 'This I have achieved; this I have realized'? If such an idea occurs to him, then it is a demon's deed."

(The Demonstration of the Inconceivable State of Buddhahood in "A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras", p. 33)

Resolute Mind asked, "Have you, sir, attained the Surangama Samadhi?"

The Indra king replied, "Could the characteristics of 'attain' and 'not attain' exist within this samadhi?"

Resolute Mind said, "No."

The Indra king said, "Good youth, you should understand that when a Bodhisattva practices this samadhi, there is nothing that is attained in any of the dharmas."

Resolute Mind said, "Since your understanding is like this, you must have already attained the Surangama Samadhi."

The king said, "Good youth, I do not perceive that the dharmas have any place of residence. He who has no residence in all the dharmas has attained the Surangama Samadhi. Good youth, to reside in this samadhi is to be completely without residence in all the dharmas. If one is without residence, then one is without grasping. If one is without grasping, one is also without preaching."

(Surangama Samadhi Sutra, p. 32. tr. McRae)

The Buddha asked Mañjuśrī, "When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, does he attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, he does not attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Why not? Because the appearance of bodhi is true suchness. Not finding a speck of dharma to capture is called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

...

If there are those who say that they see bodhi and have attained it, we should know that they are the ones with exceeding arrogance."

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 23rd, 2013 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: Is the idea of "needing" a teacher just a control system

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rob,

There are a lot of things involved in the idea of a teacher. In general a teacher is just a person who teaches something. In Buddhism there are all sorts of teachers, that is, people who you can learn from different things. There are also specialists, people who know certain areas of Buddhism in depth. Let's say you want to study Yogacara. There are only a handful of English speakers who have thorough knowledge of Vijnaptimatra but a lot more who have some level of familiarity with it. If all you want is a basic understanding of Yogacara you can learn it in English and ask questions about points

you find difficult from many teachers. However, if you aspire to become a specialist, you have to learn Chinese or Tibetan and because the problems you encounter become very technical you might have trouble finding the right person to consult with. So, do you need a personal teacher to know Yogacara? You don't. But because of your interest you might contact those who share your fascination with it and that way they become your spiritual friends (kalyanamitra).

A teacher can be an expert as I said above, but can also be a guide. People have different capacities - what usually means different levels of interest - and since the majority who study Buddhism don't have the inclination to go through the sutras and treatises, especially at the beginning, they rather rely on a single person they trust to present the Dharma in a simple and straightforward manner. But that's the case with almost everything and people usually prefer live talks and discussions rather than reading a book.

For those who only want to learn only on their own without any involvement in an actual community, well, I think it is very rare. Almost everybody wants to be with like minded people. And when it is not possible to meet in the physical space there are virtual groups like this forum.

Finally, there is the special case of the personal teacher where one follows a person to receive intensive education. It's like hiring a language teacher or a fitness trainer who you meet regularly and you get personalised instructions. Because true specialists are on high demand in a community only in specific situations is it possible to have such a tutor. Ideally a teacher knows the disciple very well, they have a close relationship, and that makes it possible to provide individual guidance. This is possible mostly in monastic and eremitic environments, or if you have a teacher living nearby whom you can visit any time you want. That's why only a few Buddhists have such a teacher. Even in a bigger monastery you see the abbot only once in a while, and becoming a personal disciple is a privilege.

In the Platform Sutra (ch. 2, tr. McRae) Huineng says,

"Because some people are stupid and some are wise, the stupid being the small and the wise being the great, the stupid ask questions of the wise and the wise preach the Dharma for the stupid. When a stupid person suddenly becomes enlightened, his mind opening forth, he is no different from a wise person.

...

If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking— don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself. This is not the case! Why? Within your own minds there is a spiritual compatriot [who will help you] become enlightened by yourself! If you activate the false and deluded, you will become all mixed up with false thoughts. Although some external spiritual compatriots may be teachers, they cannot save you."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2013 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

It is actually quite easy to connect Yongming's Buddhism with Dogen's, although their general appearance is quite different, partly because Yongming lived just before the Song dynasty changes in Chan. Chinul for instance combines the teachings of Yongming and Dahui quite well.

Just sitting (只管打坐) is a combination of no-thought (無念, i.e. 非思量) with sitting meditation (坐禪). No-thought for Yanshou is the zong (宗), just as it is awareness/knowing (知) for Zongmi and ordinary mind (平常心) for Mazu. Yongming compares the two approaches and says (Integrating Chinese Buddhism, p. 191; end of the second question in the Guanxin Xuanshu) that the Hongzhou (Mazu) method works for those of the highest faculties while the Heze (Zongmi) path fits different capacities.

If it is true that just sitting equals seeing the nature (見性) then giving positive answers to all ten questions should be fairly simple. Let's see how it goes.

- [1] Seeing nature is knowing that thoughts come and go.
- [2] When there is no proliferation of ideas there is no attachment.
- [3] There is no other meaning of the Buddhadharma but seeing nature.
- [4] Not relying on preconceptions one sees and acts according to circumstances.
- [5] Thoughts cannot stay even for a moment.
- [6] Hope and fear, love and hate are only thoughts.
- [7] Confusion and clarity are both without substance, one moment of consciousness is followed by another.
- [8] Compassion comes with seeing nature, they are not two.
- [9] Seeing how one's mind works shows how all minds work.
- [10] Having or not having a thought is still clinging to a thought.

This kind of reductionist approach that is undoubtedly the Zen style can easily appear as a negation of the complexities of the path. In fact, it was one of Yanshou's primary goal to show that the teachings (教) harmonise with Zen (宗). That's why Albert Welter gave the title to his book "A Special Transmission within the Scriptures".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2013 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Is the idea of "needing" a teacher just a control system

Content:

Astus wrote:

One interesting idea I see coming up again and again that is supposed to prove that people need a teacher is that we ordinary humans are incapable of seeing what is

actually going on in our mind, therefore we need another person to tell us and correct it. I think this is a popular belief influenced by the scientific idea of objective observation and psychological views originating from that. But as Chekawa's mind training (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lojong>) text says: "Of the two witnesses uphold the principle one", i.e. you know best what goes on in your mind. It doesn't mean we can't cheat ourselves, but part of the practice is learning to see clearly.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2013 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: Is the idea of "needing" a teacher just a control system

Content:

Jikan said:

That's an important point. One of the characteristics of beginners especially is that they don't see clearly. Can someone who does not see clearly learn how to do so without an external agent arranging the situation?

Astus wrote:

Unless you are living together 24/7 no person can give a better assessment of your behaviour than yourself, not to mention all the emotions and thoughts that don't show on one's face. It is usually when we are with others that strong and weak feelings surface, that's why Dharma friendship is very useful. On the other hand, people can be perfect critics of themselves up to the level of self-loathing and narcissism, and the problem comes from using the wrong list of critical psychological attributes. So Buddhism gives many descriptions of the good (kusala) and bad (akusala) qualities (dharma). The Shakyamuni himself, before his awakening, practised with dividing thoughts to these two kinds (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.019.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2013 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

kirtu said:

Why did Yanshou feel a need to show that the teaching harmonize with Zen exactly?

Astus wrote:

There was a trend at the time of calling Zen a "special transmission outside the teaching" to separate it from other schools and to make it look superior. This naturally resulted in people rejecting studying the canon. As we know, eventually the idea of special transmission won and the mature Zen of the Song dynasty followed, and that was brought to Japan and eventually to the West.

kirtu said:

Seeing nature is beyond thoughts coming and going but that is a start.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi writes (Zongmi on Chan, p. 88; same quoted by Chinul in Collected Works, p. 290):

"If you find a good friend to show you [the path], you will all-at-once awaken to the Knowing of voidness and calm. Knowing is no mindfulness and no form. Who is characterized as self, and who is characterized as other? When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices. With respect to understanding, it is to see that all characteristics are non-characteristics. With respect to practice, it is called the practice of nonpractice. When the depravities are exhausted, the rebirth process will cease; once arising and disappearing has extinguished, calmness and illumination will become manifest, and responsive functions will be without limit. It is called becoming a buddha."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2013 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

kirtu said:

Right, this is the classic reversing the 12 links. But jumping (seeing) the Tathagata nature directly is faster and better (IMHO). Combining the two is Zen's own above and below practice/realization.

Did Zongmi or Yanshou teach about this? Chinul of course did.

Kirt

Astus wrote:

Zongmi writes in the Chan Prolegomenon (Zongmi on Chan, p. 123):

"All dharmas are like a dream. All the noble ones have said the same thing. Thus, thought of the unreal from the outset is calm. Sense objects are from the outset void. The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. It is precisely this Knowing of Voidness and calm that is your true nature. No matter whether you are deluded or awakened, mind from the outset is spontaneously Knowing. [Knowing] is not produced by conditions, nor does it arise in dependence on any sense object. The one word "Knowing" is the gate of all excellence. Because of beginningless delusion about it, you have falsely grasped body and mind as a self and produced such thoughts as passion and anger."

And then continues with the same as quoted already, identifying the essential practice of no mindfulness, i.e. no thought. Zongmi claims that only this teaching of the Knowing (or awareness) is the explicit method that covers both the essence and the function, while other schools (Hongzhou, Niutou, etc.) fail to achieve this completely. Yanshou directly quotes Guifeng to show the different interpretations of the nature of mind found in the Chan lineages at the beginning of the Guanxin Xuanshu, therefore both Zongmi and Yongming hold the Heze Chan as the most authentic. Yanshou writes (Integrating Chinese Buddhism, p. 175):

"This awareness is the essence of mind for all the sentient beings. "Mind" is its name and awareness is its essence. It is comparable to "water" being the name and wetness being its essence. This awareness is neither the awareness that distinguishes subject and object nor the awareness of illuminating wisdom that realizes enlightenment. Rather, it is natural and spontaneous awareness. It acts freely without intention. It follows conditions but does not change; and though it does not change, it follows conditions. That is why it is called empty tranquil awareness. "Empty and tranquil" means to be without characteristics. Because it has a powerful ability to understand, yet is without form, it is called numinous awareness without confusion. Thus it is also called tranquil awareness, tranquil illumination, formless awareness, or non-knowing awareness."

Then he quotes from the Zhaolun, thus showing how the teaching of emptiness is in agreement with this, what is followed by another explanation (p. 177):

"This awareness is true awareness, the same as empty tranquil awareness. It is also called "awareness of no-thought." If one has no thought and awareness, one is in the state of common people; if one has no-thought and non-knowing, one is in the state of the two vehicles; if one has no-thought, but with awareness, one is in the state of the Buddhas. No-thought is empty and tranquil [awareness], and is also called "non-abiding awareness." Because if one abides in something, it is comparable to a person entering into a dark room and not being to see anything. But, if one does not abide in anything, it is like sunlight and moonlight illuminating and making visible all varieties of things."

Why did I say that seeing nature is knowing that thoughts come and go?

"But the essence of Suchness itself cannot be put an end to, for all things [in their Absolute aspect] are real; nor is there anything which needs to be pointed out as real, for all things are equally in the state of Suchness. It should be understood that all things are incapable of being verbally explained or thought of; hence, the name Suchness. Question: If such is the meaning [of the principle of Mahayana], how is it possible for men to conform themselves to and enter into it?

Answer: If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it. And when they are freed from their thoughts, they are said to have entered into it."

(The Awakening of Faith - Attributed to Ashvaghosha, p. 40)

"The Way needs no cultivation, just not defiling it. What is defilement? When you have a mind of birth and death and an intention of creation and action, all these are defilement. If you want to know the Way directly, then ordinary mind is the Way. What is an ordinary mind? It means no intentional creation or action, no right or wrong, no grasping or rejecting, no terminable or permanent, no profane or holy."

...

"Grasping good and rejecting evil, contemplating emptiness and entering concentration—all these belong to intentional creation and action. If one seeks further outside, he strays farther away. Just put an end to all mental calculations of the triple world. If one originates a single deluded thought, this is the root of birth and death in the triple world. If one simply lacks a single thought, then he excises the root of birth and death and obtains the supreme treasure of the dharma-king. Since countless kalpas, the deluded thoughts of ordinary man—flattery, deception, self-intoxication, and arrogance—have formed the one body. Therefore, the *su-ṭra* says, 'It is only by many dharmas that this body is aggregated. When arising, it is only dharmas arising; when extinguishing, it is only dharmas extinguishing.' When the dharma arises, it does not say 'I arise'; when the dharma extinguishes, it does not say 'I extinguish.' The former thought, the later thought, and the present thought—all successive moments of thought do not wait for one another, and all successive moments of thought are quiescent and extinct. This is called the ocean-seal *sama-dhi*, which contains all dharmas."

(Mazu Daoyi in "The Hongzhou School", p. 123, 126)

"If someone can suddenly awaken to the correct cause, then he is at the stage of leaving defilement behind. He then shatters the three worlds and twentyfive forms of existence. Such a person knows that all phenomena, internal and external, are not real—arising from mind's transformations, they are all provisional designations. There is no need to anchor the mind anywhere. When feelings merely do not attach to things, then how can things hinder anyone? Let the nature of other things flow freely, without [interfering by] trying to break apart or extend anything. The sounds that one hears and the forms that one sees are all ordinary; whether being here or there, one freely responds to circumstances without any fault."

(Guishan's Admonitions in "Zen Classics", p. 30)

"The One Mind alone is the Buddha, and there is no distinction between the Buddha and sentient beings, but that sentient beings are attached to forms and so seek externally for Buddhahood. By their very seeking they lose it, for that is using the Buddha to seek for the Buddha and using mind to grasp Mind. Even though they do their utmost for a full aeon, they will not be able to attain to it- They do not know that, if they put a stop to conceptual thought and forget their anxiety, the Buddha will appear before them, for this Mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is all living beings."

(Zen Teaching of Huang Po, p. 29-30)

"If within a single moment deluded thinking suddenly ceases, [you will] thoroughly perceive your own mind and realize that it is vast and open, bright and luminous - intrinsically perfect and complete. This state, being originally pure, devoid of a single

thing, is called enlightenment. Apart from this mind, there is no such thing as cultivation or enlightenment.

...

the illusory mind of delusion is originally rootless. You should never take a deluded thought as real and try to hold on to it in your heart. As soon as it arises notice it right away. Once you notice it, it will vanish. Never try to suppress thoughts but allow thoughts to be as you watch a gourd floating on water."

(<http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>)

These are just a few works to show that enlightenment simply depends on grasping or not grasping a thought, just as the Platform Sutra says about moments of buddhahood. The idea of "jumping directly" to see that the nature of mind is empty and aware is in fact not that immediate, it rather serves as a background for letting go of thoughts. That's why it is the first step in Baizhang's three steps system. Not clinging to phenomena is also in perfect agreement with the teachings on selflessness, emptiness, mind only and the rest. Talking about an inherent buddha-nature can sound like a special teaching, but when it comes down to practice it is no different from the rest.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2013 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

oushi said:

Is there one person that thinks that thoughts come and stay? This very nature of thoughts is the cause of the problem. Because thoughts come and go, people do all they can to initiate them and sustain them. The main influence society does on a person is "you have to know!" and "you have to remember!". "We all know that thoughts come and go, that is why we have to deal with it".

Astus wrote:

Impermanence and causality are easily understood and accepted by everyone, and at the same time they are the fundamental teachings that lead to enlightenment. The error we can make with thoughts is to regard them as real, as meaningful, as true and thus identify with them and create attachments. Another way to say this is the false belief in a thinker, a being that thinks and creates the thoughts, or an entity that is behind/beyond/above thoughts, i.e. the belief in a self.

"Even when all sorts of thoughts do crop up, it's only for the time being while they arise. So, just like little children of three or four who are busy at play, when you don't continue holding onto those thoughts and don't cling to any [particular] thoughts, whether they're happy or sad, not thinking about whether to stop or not to stop them — why, that's nothing else but abiding in the Unborn Buddha Mind. So keep the one mind as one mind. If you always have your mind like this, then, whether it's good things or bad, even though you're neither trying not to think them nor to stop them, they can't help but just stop of themselves."

(Bankei Zen, p. 50. tr. Haskel)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2013 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

catmoon said:

It's a trap.

Astus wrote:

The appropriate word is: upaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2013 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: Test Your Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the

http://koreanbuddhism.net/master/dharma_talk_view.asp?cat_seq=32&content_seq=127&priest_seq=0&page=1:

"Empty your mind and reflect with clarity. You must have faith in the fact that the causal arising of each thought is actually non-arising." (32)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2013 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: African Americans & people of Color, & Buddhism in the W

Content:

Huseng said:

Is this a western problem, or really just America?

kirtu said:

It's a western problem. How many Gypsies are in the practice centers in German, Polish, Czech, Slovak place? How many North Africans are welcome in French centers, etc? I don't know the answers because I no longer live in Europe and haven't for a while but on trips to Austria and Germany for Kalachakra in 2006 and 2007 there were no minorities per se aside from Asian's. Are there any First Nation people's in practice center's in Canada? I've heard of some but is there a story there? How about Black Canadians (I forgot to ask my African-American-Canadian relatives in Toronto what they call themselves but I only met them once)?

Kirt

Astus wrote:

Gypsies are often considered people who cannot integrate into the larger society. It's not simply a matter of skin colour but they are often considered a separate nation/ethnicity. Nevertheless, in Hungary there is a Buddhist community specialising in gypsies: <http://www.jaibhim.hu/> Note that this group works among very poor people. So I'd say that it's not really a matter of colour but social status that decides how much one can relate to Buddhism at its current status. It is not the religion for working class. SGI provides a simple teaching with simple goals and active evangelising, so it works (at least in America).

Another unfortunate factor, at least in Hungary, is that the form of Buddhism that is popular among lower class people is often mixed with nationalistic ideals, something that gypsies can hardly relate to.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 26th, 2013 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Is the idea of "needing" a teacher just a control system

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thanks for sharing that Anders.

The vows of Samantabhadra (http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/samantabhadra.pdf) represent the attitude one should have in order to obtain the mind set of a disciple and be able to learn the Dharma. And that is crucial to find the teacher in every situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 26th, 2013 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Is the idea of "needing" a teacher just a control system

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Sorry if I was not clear, I was not rofl about having Amitabha as a teacher, in Vajrayana we also have primordial teachers (like Vajradhara for example) but with the way it was presented: you don't need a teacher, have Amitabha as a teacher. It struck me as oxymoronic.

Astus wrote:

"If one wishes to see the Buddha then one sees him. If one sees him then one asks questions. If one asks then one is answered, one hears the sutras and rejoices greatly." (Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, ch. 2. tr. Harrison)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 27th, 2013 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: African Americans & people of Color, & Buddhism in the W

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is elite Buddhism and there is popular Buddhism, just as in other religions. You don't expect a Sunday churchgoer to be able to understand a theological work, and you don't expect a priest to do regular retreats like a monk. Buddhism could spread among the people by simple rituals, recitations and basic moral rules. But currently in the West even the Buddhists themselves have doubts about rebirth and karma, so how could merit making and ethical discipline establish a larger community? Zazen and deity visualisation, aren't those monastic practices? Recitation of Amita Buddha's name, prayer wheels, lighting incense, and most importantly community activities. As I see it, those who want some usual religious environment go to Christian groups. Buddhism could be popular among liberal minded and spiritual (New Age) people if its image were transformed into something colourful, lively and more open than conservative religions where contraception is a sin.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 27th, 2013 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Sex Taboo's & applying Christianized thinking in Western

Content:

shel said:

A poem by Chizuko Karen Joy Tasaka, published today on SweepingZen.com

(<http://sweepingzen.com/to-joshu-sasaki-roshi-roshi-you-are-a-sexual-abuser/>) ...

Roshi, you are a sexual abuser

“Come” you say as you pull me from a handshake onto your lap

“Open” you say as you push your hands between my knees, up my thighs

fondle my breasts

rub my genitals

french kiss me

you put my hand on your genitals

stroke your penis

jack you off?

this is sanzen?

my friend—she was inji

sex with roshi

she tried to say no

you demanded, demanded, demanded

demon demand the force of a tornado

sex with roshi

for whose best interest?

I told you I don't like it.

I asked you why you do this?

You said, “nonattachment, nonattachment, you nonattachment”

I told you as shoji, "women very angry, very upset"
I asked you why you do this.
You said: "Be good daughter to roshi, and good wife to G. [her husband].
Roshi, that is incest So many women trying to shake the shame from their voices of
Sex with roshi

We came to you with the trust of a student
You were our teacher
You betrayed us
You violated our bodies
You rape our souls

You betrayed our previous student-teacher relationship
You abuse us as women
You emasculate our husbands and boyfriends

Roshi, you are a sexual abuser
Your nuns you make your sexual servants
Your monks and oshos are crippled with denial
Roshi, Sexual Abuser.

–By Chizuko Karen Joy Tasaka (1951-2010)

(My bold above)

Astus wrote:
Thanks for bringing it here.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, February 27th, 2013 at 7:15 PM
Title: Re: Buddhism and the Warrior
Content:

Astus wrote:
I think what feels difficult to accept for many is that not every human is fit to be a Buddhist. Those who defend, support or commit violence are such, just like many others who believe that happiness comes from samsaric gains. That is taking refuge not in the Three Jewels but in other philosophies and faiths. Violence comes from anger, anger comes from fear, fear is based on ignorance. How could such a thing mean liberation, or even something wholesome?

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, February 27th, 2013 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and the Warrior

Content:

Nighthawk said:

So then what is the solution to invasion, tyranny, islamic terrorism, crime etc?

Astus wrote:

Don't do it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 28th, 2013 at 9:01 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and the Warrior

Content:

Nighthawk said:

How is a society to be run without the use of violence? I'm not talking about myself.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is not a political philosophy and it was not meant to be such. Look at the <http://www.ymba.org/bns/bnsframe.htm> 11 (on politics), 21 (on violence and vengeance), 30 (handling worldly affairs) and 32 (harming beings in any way). In the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/bmc1/bmc1.ch05.html> rule includes prohibition against "running messages and errands for kings, ministers of state, householders, etc. A modern example would be participating in political campaigns."

Same thing mentioned in the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.01.0.bodh.html> in the Intermediate Section on Virtue: "'Or he might say: 'Whereas some recluses and brahmins, while living on the food offered by the faithful, engage in running messages and errands for kings, ministers of state, khattiyas, brahmins, householders, or youths, (who command them): "Go here, go there, take this, bring that from there" — the recluse Gotama abstains from running such messages and errands.'"

So when the question is about the relationship of Buddhism with being a warrior, it makes sense only on the personal level, because Buddhism is the path of liberation for the individual, just as karma is always personal. That's why my answer is: don't do it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 1st, 2013 at 4:21 AM

Title: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Foyan's teachings on meditation, much like those of the ancient masters, are quite different from the obsessive compulsive attitudes inherited by Western Zen cultists from Japanese sectarians automatically following late feudal and neo-imperial models of Zen organization and discipline. Foyan's teachings were evidently different from those of obsessive cultists of his own time too. Xutang (pronounced Syw-tahng), whose student Jomyo imported Zen to Japan in the thirteenth century, is on record as teaching,

"It is essential not to become attached to the form of sitting; when you sit, you should do so in a suitably convenient manner. If you lack inner direction, you will uselessly weary your spirit." Under the military authoritarian regimes that actually controlled most of the Zen establishments in feudal Japan, this original flexibility tended to give way to extreme disciplinarian rigidity."

(Instant Zen, p. 130)

"The irony in the obscurity of koans is that it derives mainly from linguistic and contextual gaps between sectarian Zen in Korea and Japan on the one hand and comprehensive classical Chinese Zen on the other. Offshoots of Korean and Japanese sects, not understanding the structure of the koans, have tended to make this aspect of Zen into a cult of secrecy, mystery, and/or simple mystification.

Imported to the West, this type of cult has given rise to the new coinage koanophobia, "fear of koans," evidently on account of their exploitation for bafflement value. Added to the premise of koanic secrets of overwhelming importance held authoritatively by an autocratic potentate and an elite circle, in a cultural environment where self-esteem is considered a central value, the mystery-cult approach to koans has had the effect of intimidating and yet alluring those who are naive or inwardly uncommitted but nevertheless wish to think well of themselves."

(Kensho, p. xi)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 1st, 2013 at 7:39 AM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The sources were given, they are both Thomas Cleary's books (as the title of the thread suggests) and their titles are also given with the page number. But if anyone wants more, like ISBN or date of publication I can also give that. Or, yes, you can search for it online.

How is it important?

The first quote is about zazen, in the book itself a note to Foyan's poem on sitting meditation. It is relevant to the idea that Zen is to be realised/accomplished/performed in proper sitting posture.

Three examples (not meant to be a critique of the individuals being quoted):

"You should be sitting straight up as if you were supporting the sky with your head. This is not just form or breathing. It expresses the key point of Buddhism. It is a perfect expression of your Buddha nature. If you want true understanding of Buddhism, you should practice this way. These forms are not a means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture itself is the purpose of our practice." (S. Suzuki: Zen Mind, Beginners Mind; p. 26)

"Zazen is a physical practice. To sit in a chair and call it zazen is incorrect."

(<http://hardcorezen.blogspot.hu/2011/11/sitting-in-chairs-is-not-zazen-part-one.html>)

"During zazen, we have satori, we are Buddha, God. Without zazen, we have no such thing. So zazen is the holy posture, the highest. During zazen, the noblest holy mind manifests itself. What is holy in the world? Only the posture of zazen."

(http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Modern%20Teachers/Deshimaru%20Roshi/The%20Teachings%20of%20Master%20Deshimaru/teachings_of_master_deshimaru.htm)

The second quote is about how koans are viewed incorrectly as irrational and something that only an enlightened being can comprehend.

Quotes about koans:

"a paradox to be meditated upon that is used to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon ultimate dependence on reason and to force them into gaining sudden intuitive enlightenment" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/koan>)

"An important part of kong-an practice is the private exchange between teacher and student wherein the teacher checks the student's grasp of the point of the kong-an. Kong-ans are probably best known for the unusual, seemingly non-rational quality of their language and dialogues, and are not meant to be studied, analyzed or approached conceptually. The kong-an is an experiential tool that helps us cut through our thinking so that we can just perceive and function clearly." (<http://www.kwanumzen.org/about-zen/zen-practice/kong-an-practice/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 1st, 2013 at 6:17 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

Zazen shows you your own Buddhanature directly.

With zazen you can see your Buddhanature.

Astus wrote:

Although the proper posture is heavily emphasised, even to the level where for instance Nishijima explains the effects of zazen with the nervous system, but it is also acknowledged that "zazen" is not bound to any posture. Obviously, assuming a meditative posture is not restricted to Zen or even to Buddhism, so it could hardly be the direct realisation of anything. Focusing on the body is a simple way to give a focus of the meditation and allow the mind to settle. But that's nothing more than shamatha, a good way to begin practising meditation. On the other hand, the mental attitude is what matters, like what they call mushotoku (無所特), hishiryō (非思量) and shinjin datsuraku (身心脱落), all equal to shikantaza. Of course, those who maintain that Zen is about the correct posture will say these are wrong interpretations.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 1st, 2013 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

Taisen Deshimaru (and presumably others) talk about correct posture as a start, not an end.

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't saying such a thing compromise the idea of zazen equals enlightenment?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 1st, 2013 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

Not at all. Actual zazen (seated meditation) is the essential element for kensho and satori. But we take our zazen with us off the cushion - we don't leave it there. Zazen is the start of enlightenment and is practice/enlightenment. But until we see that, it's just practice. But we take that with us no matter what we do.

Astus wrote:

If you can take zazen off the cushion then why is sitting, and in a specific posture, important at all? For instance, one can recite the nenbutsu or work on a koan anywhere in any posture.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2013 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

These American "Zen masters" are just too subtle for me:

<http://sweepingzen.com/unethical-practices/>

Astus wrote:

What Nonin says in that article basically denies liberation and fails to use the teaching to the two truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2013 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

Sitting is important because it reveals your own Buddhanature to you. Zazen is a more intensive and direct practice than nembutsu for example although one can awaken to their Buddhanature through nembutsu as well.

Astus wrote:

I'm talking about sitting as a physical posture. People sit a lot every day in the office, at home, in a restaurant, in the car, etc. They sit because it is convenient. As Zhiyi writes (The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation, ch. 6, tr. Ven. Dharmamitra): "although it is true that this can be accomplished in any of the four deportments, still, for the study of the path, sitting is the superior posture." However, Huineng says (Platform Sutra, ch. 9, tr. McRae): "One is enlightened to the Way through the mind. How could it depend on sitting?" Even Dogen asks in the

http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html: "How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?" And in the Bendowa (<http://www.wwzc.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>): "This is not only practised while sitting, it is like a hammer striking emptiness; before and after, its ringing pervades everywhere. How can it be limited to a place?"

What makes sitting more intensive and direct? How does intensity and directness depend on sitting? This is asked not because sitting is wrong but because this single posture is emphasised as if it had some special meaning or quality. Thich Nhat Hanh likes to teach walking meditation, and once a Chan monk told me that doing prostrations is the best. Many simply say that posture is not that important. Dogen likes to refer to Shakyamuni's sitting for six years (which is not true) and Bodhidharma's nine years of wall gazing (rarely interpreted as seated meditation, as discussed in Broughton: Bodhidharma Anthology, p. 66-68) as proof of elevating the sitting posture to the level of ultimate accomplishment. If that is just a poetic way of talking about meditation there is no need to think too much about it, however, just as you said, when it is equated with enlightenment itself, some explanations for that would be good.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2013 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

It is important, it's just not absolutely critical as meditation is done with the mind. But there is no other posture that facilitates long term deep concentration.

Astus wrote:

But concentration, attaining various levels of absorption, is neither the method nor the goal of Zen. I'm not questioning the yogic qualities of the posture, but they're not discussed in Zen works (except for Hakuin's tradition where it comes from outside of Buddhism), and they don't equal realising buddha-nature.

kirtu said:
For purification/Buddha repentance practice.

Astus wrote:
Not necessarily. It's Chan in motion.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2013 at 11:07 PM
Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen
Content:
Matt J said:

This is like saying, if you can swim in the ocean, why swim in a pool at all?

Sitting is important because it allows us to leave off everything else and collect ourselves. Sitting in a proper posture is important because a proper posture facilitates relaxation and concentration.

Every teacher I've had, Zen, Theravada, and other, have started with sitting and then at some point say "now take your practice with you." In my experience, zazen is the hardest to get but the easiest to take into daily life.

Astus wrote:
Then we are talking about a gradual development, just as in any other school, except that in Zen they forgot to provide the description of the stages.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2013 at 11:57 PM
Title: Re: American "Zen"
Content:
Matt J said:

I don't see that at all. Nonin writes (in my opinion) controversial things at times but this article is not one of them.

Are you a part of a formal Zen tradition? There may be a disconnect between different teachings.

Astus wrote:
"We need to remember, however, that awakening is not a permanent event, that all of us, even those who have deeply awakened to our true nature and the nature of our relationship to the rest of the universe can fall into delusion in an instant and act badly, causing harm to ourselves and others."

"The law of cause and effect governs all our actions. No one can escape it, even the Zen Buddhist master who foolishly thinks that he or she is beyond it."

The impossibility of becoming free from karma, from samsara, sounds to me like denying nirvana. Saying that one is never permanently liberated means that the chain of dependent origination cannot be broken.

Would you say that Nonin's Zen is a teaching that promises no freedom, unlike other forms of Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2013 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kirt,

Yes, they teach counting the breath, focusing on the lower belly and sometimes even other things. How does that make the sitting posture identical to buddhahood?

"Only the posture of zazen is the true living Buddha. It is the only posture which inspires true respect in everyone. Through it, I will be able to face anything."

([http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-](http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Modern%20Teachers/Deshimaru%20Roshi/The%20Teachings%20of%20Master%20Deshimaru/teachings_of_master_deshimaru.htm)

[%20Zen/Modern%20Teachers/Deshimaru%20Roshi/The%20Teachings%20of%20Master%20Deshimaru/teachings_of_master_deshimaru.htm](http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Modern%20Teachers/Deshimaru%20Roshi/The%20Teachings%20of%20Master%20Deshimaru/teachings_of_master_deshimaru.htm))

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2013 at 8:36 AM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

The sitting posture itself is not identical to Buddhahood. Deshimaru didn't mean that literally. However sitting is needed to accomplish zazen (unless one has a handicap , in which case it would be difficult but not impossible). But zazen is practice/enlightenment. From the beginning. In Zen, zazen is the gateway to directly discovering one's Buddhahood for oneself.

Astus wrote:

As I read it, you say that (1) sitting is required (unless not) for zazen, (2) zazen is practice-enlightenment, (3) zazen leads to the discovery of buddhahood. So, sitting is an ideal preparation for practice-enlightenment but it's not the same. And although it is called practice-enlightenment, there is a further step to find buddhahood - or you meant probably that practice-enlightenment is buddhahood, or rather the realisation of buddha-nature, but not the same as ultimate enlightenment. That way we have 3 or 4 stages of Zen practice, although if I remember correctly Dogen didn't agree with Dongshan's five ranks. Nevertheless, it is now clarified that sitting itself is not actually liberation but only the first step on the path. Or am I distorting your point?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2013 at 8:48 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nonin may not have meant it the way it appears to me, that's possible. Maybe "deeply awakened to our true nature" is just a superficial understanding of causality, or anything before the arya levels (i.e. actual insight into emptiness). And "No one can escape it" is not a doctrinal statement but rather a warning to the common people who may delude themselves with thoughts of transcendent enlightenment. I'm not excluding anything, it was simply strange at first.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2013 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Huseng said:

Not everyone agrees with this. In some strains of Mahāyāna thought, particularly the ekayāna, arhats are reborn outside the three realms and eventually must attain buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

But those who talk about the inconceivable rebirth of an arhat (and bodhisattvas) add that there is still conceptual obscuration.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2013 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen in both the Zazengi and Fukanzazengi uses Yueshan's story, saying (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazengi/zazengi.translation.html>): "Sitting fixedly, think of not thinking. How do you think of not thinking? Nonthinking. This is the art of zazen." (普勸坐禪儀 (T2580_.82.0001 a27-b01): 兀兀坐定。思量箇不思量底。不思量底如何思量。非思量此乃坐禪之要術也。 / 正法眼藏坐禪儀 (T2582_.82.0217c08-11): 兀兀ト坐定シテ。思量箇不思量底ナリ。不思量底。如何思量。コレ非思量ナリ。コレスナハチ坐禪ノ法術ナリ。)

So zazen is hishiryō (非 - non, 思量 - thinking), sometimes translated as "

<http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/zgi.shtml> " or "

<http://www.wwzc.org/translations/zazengi.htm> ". As Bielefeldt

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazengi/zazengi.suppl.notes.html#anchor4>, in the older version of Dogen's manual he simply

quotes Zhanglu Zongze's Zuochanyi as the explanation of the actual mental practice: "Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified. The is the essential of art of zazen.", and it is an instruction that has a longer history in Zen (see Bielefeldt's book on this: Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation). Practically it is the same as the <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=153955#p153955> and <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=154743#p154743>.

Dogen's zazen is actually not as harsh as other Zen teachers like Shishuang Qingzhu where people never laid down (a practice criticised in the Platform Sutra). A difficulty is that in Soto Zen the word zazen is often used as a synonym of hishiryō, the enlightened view that should be practised regardless of one's activities. The problem is only when a practitioner believes that Zen is only for the time on the cushion, while in fact sitting comfortably is only training, preparation, an artificial environment to become strong. But since the only thing to be mastered is hishiryō by hishiryō, essentially there is nothing new developed or attained.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2013 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Matt J said:

Baizhang's Wild Fox koan suggests that it is not so simple as yes or no.

Astus wrote:

I wouldn't rely on a single story to understand the relationship between karma and enlightenment. There are, after all, quite a few extensive treatises on the matter, and the sutras of course.

The bodhisattva career doesn't start at the 7th and 8th bhūmis but way before that. A 1st bhūmi bodhisattva is already on the 41st level in the usual 52 stages model and has very strong compassion, not to mention the wisdom with what the illusoriness of samsara is seen through. Such an enlightened noble being is capable of becoming an arhat, but doesn't do so in order to attain buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2013 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is actually something to do, which is not generating samsara. In other words, although the nature of mind is already perfect, it is covered up by defilements. Cleaning the mind means not grasping at phenomena, not creating further trouble. The practice of letting go of appearances is itself stopping samsara and abiding in the buddha-mind by not abiding anywhere. This is what is done in zazen and this is the non-thought. Linji

explains it very well:

The problem:

"If you engage in any seeking, it will all be pain. Much better to do nothing." (Record of Linji, tr. Sasaki, p. 19)

"Seeking buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do." (p. 17)

The solution:

"Bring to rest the thoughts of the ceaselessly seeking mind, and you will not differ from the patriarch-buddha." (p. 8)

"Followers of the Way, your own present activities do not differ from those of the patriarch-buddhas. You just don't believe this and keep on seeking outside. Make no mistake! Outside there is no dharma; inside, there is nothing to be obtained. Better than grasp at the words from my mouth, take it easy and do nothing. Don't continue [thoughts] that have already arisen and don't let those that haven't yet arisen be aroused." (p. 22)

In summary:

"It is because you cannot stop your mind which runs on seeking everywhere that a patriarch said, 'Bah, superior men! Searching for your heads with your heads!' When at these words you turn your own light in upon yourselves and never seek elsewhere, then you'll know that your body and mind are not different from those of the patriarch-buddhas and on the instant have nothing to do—this is called 'obtaining the dharma.'" (p. 28)

Dogen says in the

http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html:

"Therefore, put aside the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing phrases, and learn to take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward. Body and mind of themselves will drop away, and your original face will manifest. If you want to realize such, get to work on such right now."

To emphasise the central point of the last two quotes above:

"An often-used Chinese expression, consisting of only four characters, describes the essence of Zen practice very accurately and very simply: "Turn the light and illuminate back." This expression is found in the records of Rinzai as well as Dogen, and many other Zen masters from early Zen to the present. It was an important term for Chinul,

the father of Korean Son or Zen, and it is a kind of motto today for the university where I teach, a Zen-affiliated institution in Kyoto." (Jeff Shore:
<http://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/principles.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2013 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

oushi said:

All true, but the question is, how to stop the "ceaselessly seeking mind"?

Astus wrote:

That's fairly simple. You don't stop it, you just don't continue/create it. It's stated in the quotes from Linji, but the same is found in other instructions.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2013 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: Cleary on Cultish Zen

Content:

oushi said:

The problem is that you are not the one who creates it (karma does).

Astus wrote:

That is denying personal responsibility for one's thoughts. Karma is one's own action, not some external force.

oushi said:

Koans are supposed to develop a break in reasoning chain through bombarding it with unsolvable problem. In this break, one is introduced to the Buddha Nature.

Astus wrote:

That's one way to use koans, and it's criticised by Cleary right in the OP.

oushi said:

I don't know how just sitting can be used to develop such an insight. It is rather contemplating the mind until one sees his nature, then it is just sitting.

Astus wrote:

Zazen is done with the understanding that one doesn't do anything with coming and going appearances. That's as simple as possible. Of course, it is possible to add various teachings, like momentariness of dharmas, the three characteristics of phenomena, emptiness, mind only, buddha-nature, etc., just to show that there is no point grasping at things, and that attachment is the very source of all problems.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 7:34 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Consider this a little (Record of Linji, p. 17-18, tr. Sasaki):

Trembling with fright, like donkeys on an icy path, [you say to yourselves,] 'I don't dare disparage these good teachers for fear of making karma with my mouth!'

Followers of the Way, it is only a great teacher who dares to disparage the buddhas, dares to disparage the patriarchs, to determine the right and the wrong of the world, to reject the teachings of the Tripiṭaka, to revile all infantile fellows, and to look for a Person amidst fortunate and unfortunate circumstances.

Therefore, when I look back over the past twelve years for a single thing having the nature of karma, I can't find anything even the size of a mustard seed. The Chan master who is like a new bride will fear lest he be thrown out of his temple, be given no food to eat, and have no contentment and ease. From olden days our predecessors never had people anywhere who believed in them. Only after they had been driven out was their worth recognized. If they had been fully accepted by people everywhere, what would they have been good for? Therefore it is said, 'The lion's single roar splits the jackals' skulls.'

Of course, the 7th major <http://www.ymba.org/bns/bnsframe.htm> says: "A disciple of the Buddha shall not praise himself and speak ill of others, or encourage others to do so. He must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of praising himself and disparaging others." But if it's not about praising yourself at the expense of others, that's a different matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sitting still is only a small part of the Buddhist path. It is like a test environment where you have the opportunity to investigate how things are, where you have a short break from the everyday events to spend time with your study.

As for gaining insight from learning, it can work fine, if you have the right teachings and the correct motivation. Based on the words found in the books and heard from the teachers one can confirm it in personal experience. That's why the process is described as: listening, contemplating and realising. You hear/read about it, you understand it, and then check it in real life. This third part is what meditation is mostly used for at the beginning, to develop mental calmness and precision.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 7:21 PM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

oushi said:

Outline of Practice Many roads lead to the Path, but basically there are only two: reason and practice.

Astus wrote:

Note that "reason" is not rational mind but what is nowadays translated as principle (理).

See the

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the measure of success on the path is the decrease of suffering, desire, anger, jealousy, and the rest of the unwholesome qualities in one's life. Sitting through days without moving, that's a different programme and usually a test of willpower ("I can do it!").

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Awakening removed from everyday activity is of no value. The first paramita is giving, the second is ethical conduct. Lacking those two means that wisdom is still far away. In other words, harming others is not the functioning of the buddha-nature, nor is showing the wrong example for beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 7th, 2013 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jikan, you are not alone. The celestial buddhas are also scratching their bald heads.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 8th, 2013 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra manuals are usually easy to read and understand in my experience (like those from the 9th Karmapa and Dakpo Tashi). Thrangu Rinpoche is also a very plain speaking teacher. Look at this short instruction from <http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/4dharmas.pdf>:

"Now we experience mind, yet if we try to find it, we can't. It cannot be found. The reason it can not be found is that it has no inherent existence. It is empty. Does this mean the mind is nothing whatsoever? No, it is not mere nothingness, for the continuity of mind is unsevered; it goes on. It is mind that knows various phenomena. It is mind that illuminates various phenomena. Thus, we talk about the mind as being empty and luminous, or empty and clear. What one needs to do is to identify this union of emptiness and clarity and to practice meditation in terms of this union."

This is practically the same as it's taught in Madhyamaka meditation when one investigates mind. The point of it is to drop all sorts of reference points, all clinging to any identity, and open one's perception to all appearances without attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 8th, 2013 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: American "Zen"

Content:

Astus wrote:

The deviations you see in Zen today happened before in China and other countries too. You just have to read the laments of the masters of the era.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 8th, 2013 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Matylda said:

Here teaching is wrongly pointed to be sutras and shastras.. however in the end of the clause text says 更不隨文教 which means it is not about written teaching and in the first part it starts from 謂藉教悟宗 which points to oral teaching, i.e. oral instruction as a means, so note 6 is wrong since 更不隨文教 undermines it...

Astus wrote:

Regarding that note 15 says: " Scriptures are important as they provide guidance to enlightenment, but they can be misinterpreted or taken too literally. Also to study them as philosophy without practice will not lead to true understanding."

On the other hand, there is no mention of any oral teaching at all. Written texts are nothing but words on paper, and oral teachings are words by voice. Why would voice be a superior conveyor of words than paper?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 8th, 2013 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: What's all this nonsense about sitting still?

Content:

Matylda said:

Well voice is superior to the written text in this sense that it comes from an enlightened master who can use words according to conditions and capacities, which text by its nature cannot... as for spoken word by living buddha what plays a role is 時所位, which is also crucial for skillful usage of the words of teachings... and 謂藉教悟宗 clearly suggests it.

Astus wrote:

How does 謂藉教悟宗 clearly suggest it for you? Just because it starts with 謂? It's simply explanatory (i.e. the meaning of it is "meaning" and not "saying") exactly as in the next section: 行入謂四行, that's why it was translated as that to English.

The sutras come from the Buddha himself, the treatises are written by enlightened masters, therefore in terms of source the written teachings are at least equal, if not superior, to oral instructions. The sutras and treatises address the different conditions and capacities, they can even have lists of them, unless you are proposing that the human mind today is somehow different in its workings from those of the past, in which case we need a whole new Buddhism. Is there anything a teacher can say that has not been already said before and written down several times? For someone transmitting the Buddhadharma, there can't be any difference between the spoken words and the canonical scriptures. It is true, however, that a teacher can give answers and instructions immediately while studying the Tripitaka takes time.

The Platform Sutra (http://www.fodian.net/world/2008_10.html) says: "Those who grasp at emptiness slander the Sutras by maintaining that written words have no use. Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 8th, 2013 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Astus wrote:

Although these are from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dahui_Zonggao, they sound appropriate here:

"But people set up views of delusion and enlightenment and hold to interpretations of turning towards and turning away, wanting to understand this mind and see this inherent nature; thus this mind and this nature immediately flow into wrong paths, following the person's inversions, errors, and confusion. Hence enlightenment is not

distinguished from delusion, nor the wrong separated from the correct. Because they do not fully understand the dreamlike illusion of "this mind" and "this nature," they falsely establish pairs of terms: they consider turning towards and turning away, delusion and enlightenment, as real, and accept this mind and this nature as true. They are far from realizing that whether true or not true, false or not false, worldly or world-transcending, these are merely provisional statements."

(Swampland Flowers, p. 83)

"You say that you have dull faculties. Try to reflect back like this: see if the one who can recognise the dullness is dull too or not. If you don't turn the light around and reflect back, you're just keeping to your dull faculties and adding more affliction. That would be adding illusory falsehood to illusory falsehood, laying on optical illusion on top of optical illusion. Just listen: the one who can know that sense faculties are inherently dull is definitely not dull. Though you shouldn't hold to this dull one, you shouldn't abandon it to study, either; grasping and rejecting, sharp and dull---these have to do with people, not with Mind. This Mind is one substance with all the buddhas of the three worlds: there is no duality.

If there were duality, the Dharma would not be of even sameness. "Receiving the teaching" and "transmitting Mind" are both empty falsehoods. Looking for truth and seeking reality seem even further off."

(p. 69)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 11th, 2013 at 1:12 AM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness, because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way."

(<http://www.dalailamainaustralia.org/pages/?ParentPageID=176&PageID=211>)

Since vipashyana is the key method to attain certainty in the true nature of mind and phenomena, if you have trouble applying instructions found in Mahamudra, you can also try Madhyamaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 11th, 2013 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

monktastic said:

- When you are in the natural state, your experience will be like [...timeless, duality-

free, ...]

Astus wrote:

That is to refute wrong ideas about the nature of mind, but the same terms are used for emptiness. In fact, there is nothing more than the unity of emptiness and appearances (non-abiding awareness). So the problem seems to be your looking for something special.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 11th, 2013 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Anders said:

Not entirely. Without being certain, what I understand from the claims is that the view of Madhyamika and the prajnaparamita sutras is equivalent to Mahamudra - however, the methods for entering such realisation are not.

Astus wrote:

I think that where vipashyana is used in Mahamudra, in the tradition of Gampopa, the methods used are not different from what they teach in Madhyamaka. It's put together as analytical and resting meditation, the same way it was written in Kamalashila's and Atisha's meditation works. A difference here is that while in Madhyamaka first the appearances are analysed and then the mind, in Mahamudra the mind comes first and appearances later. This has some consequences of course and that's why Mahamudra is not exactly Madhyamaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 13th, 2013 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

monktastic said:

What are some specific signs that one is in "the natural state"? What does it mean, experientially? Other than being free of acceptance and rejection, hope and fear -- which we've covered thoroughly, and which I deeply appreciate.

Astus wrote:

There are no signs. From early on signlessness (animitta) has been one of the characteristics of ultimate reality.

"What is the samadhi of signlessness apart from the samadhi of emptiness? If there is a remaining samadhi taking part in nirvana as its objective representation, this is called animitta samadhi. Again, animitta samadhi: The conditioned world has signs. Nirvana is signless. The conditioned world has three signs: arising, staying and passing away. Nirvana has three signs. Not arising, not staying, and not passing away. Thus the conditioned world has signs and nirvana is signless."

(Sariputrabbhidharmasastra in "Nagarjuna in Context", p. 162)

From a practical advice:

"If you identify by thinking "It's emptiness,"
or thinking "It is signless and aspirationless:·
thinking "It is unidentifiable," thinking "It is completely pure,"
thinking "It is birthless," thinking "It is unperceivable,"
thinking "It has no nature:' thinking "It is without elaboration,"
thinking "It is not an object for analysis by speech or mind;"
thinking "It is uncreated and naturally present;' and so on,
however profound these thoughts, our recognition of emptiness
will not transcend the conceptualization of an arrogant mind.
Attachment to concepts leads to a fall into inferior states
and a continuous ripening of karma from inferior actions."
(Lama Shang: The Ultimate Supreme Path of Mahamudra in "Mahamudra and Related
Instructions", p. 86)

And just to show again what the essential nature of mind is:

"To realize that mind is empty of all empirical characteristics and devoid of any enduring essence is to realize the nature of mind. This insight will help you to understand the nature of the self as well. If you can realize this, you will also realize the nature of physical things to be empty of enduring essence. The result of understanding that emptiness is the nature of both the mental and physical realms is that you will no longer generate conflicting emotions in response to situations."
(Traleg Kyabgon: Ocean of Certainty, p. 110)

Just that short quote tells that emptiness has to be realised, which is the simple fact of the lack of anything graspable (i.e. any sign), from what comes freedom from (but not elimination of) emotions and ideas. Whatever concept you want to hold on to, that is mistaking illusion for reality, that is the root cause of ignorance. The nature of mind is that it is incomprehensible, that there is nothing at all to hold on to, to identify with, to discover, to realise; because suffering comes from attachment to something, and attachment is also the view that there is something to attach to. Thus the essential instruction is: relax. Relaxing means letting go of attachment. And that's it. Nothing more, nothing less. You can find proof of this any time. Just see what happens when you follow a thought and when you don't.

"Basic wakefulness is the very essence of the mind that fixates or thinks of something. Yet our dualistic fixation and thinking is like a veil that covers and obscures this luminosity.

In short, what is recognized is not a thing. What, then, do we recognize? We must experience naked wakefulness directly, and this occurs the instant that our mind is stripped bare of conceptual thinking. That experience, therefore, is not a product of our fabrication. It simply is. The problem is that it is too near to us, just like something held so close to your eyes that it is difficult to see. Moreover, it is too easy. We would prefer

something more difficult. Simply remaining free from concepts is extremely easy. The only difficulty is that it goes against our tendencies—we enjoy conceptual activity, we like to have something to take hold of. So, although it is easy to remain freely, our habitual tendencies pull us away from that state."

(Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche: Three Words in "Quintessential Dzogchen", p. 185-186)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 13th, 2013 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

monktastic said:

But if this is so, why all the brouhaha about the difficulty of recognizing it? This is what I cannot reconcile.

Astus wrote:

It's difficult because we always want something to be something, something to exist or not exist. But the main part is not about getting it right, this is the first step. You must not forget it either. As Wuxiang (aka Kim Heshang, 684–762) once taught in his three phrases: no recollection (of past/externals), no thought (of future/internals), do not forget (to maintain that) (無憶無念莫忘). Similarly to Garab Dorje's three statements.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 13th, 2013 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

monktastic said:

I still don't see why these books are phrased so confusingly, but who am I to question TUR?

Astus wrote:

Confusion comes from fixating on specific words. That's why abhidharma, madhyamaka and yogacara have their own terminology. Sutras and individual teachers don't necessarily follow a strict philosophically clarified tradition and so they use words more loosely. Another reason why one of the four reliances emphasises meaning over words. If you understand the meaning the words are not confusing any more.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 15th, 2013 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Pureland study group anyone?

Content:

Astus wrote:

BDK translation (Inagaki & Stewart) in one book:

http://www.bdkamerica.org/digital/dBET_ThreePureLandSutras_2003.pdf "target="_blank

Inagaki's Dharma Treasury that has the sutras (translation from both Kumarajiva and Xuanzang of the shorter sutra): <http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/dharma-treasury-index.htm> " target="_blank

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2013 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is momentary. Karma and dependent origination works on the basis of causal relationship between moments of consciousness. Splitting the stream of consciousness into multiple causal chains would mean that at the beginning there would be three identical beings, however, three of the same thing is just one thing, as at the time of one stream splitting into three new streams all three would have the same causal past making them identical. That's why I don't think one being becoming a multiple being is logical. This does not apply to emanations and magical multiplication since in those cases there are no multiple beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2013 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Selflessness doesn't mean "anything goes". There is also dependent origination, strict causality, the actual explanation of the lack of any permanent self. Saying that from a single karmic stream multiple streams can emerge is illogical because there would have to be a moment where three consciousness are exactly the same because they have the same causes. The same cause creating three different results at the same time is a violation of causality. Again, I'm not talking about any one of the three being the real self or all three being the real self, but simple causal relations.

The example of monozygotic twins don't fully match for it takes time for the cell to split and then develop different bodies, therefore there is not a single moment when from one thing two different things occur, unlike in moments of consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2013 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea that feminism is the source of undisciplined youth in Canada sounds very

strange. I haven't been to many places but in the EU, where the equality of sexes is a core value, I haven't heard of any country where public transport is unsafe or that travellers are harassed by unruly people. There are incidents, sure, but it's not normal.

Blaming women for not staying home for a larger social problem sounds to me very prejudiced and misogynistic.

The society in general should accept responsibility for children who are all taught at schools. Schools could teach correct behaviour. Films and other media could teach it too. In fact, we could say that since mostly men are the writers of TV programmes and computers games they cause the trouble.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2013 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huseng,

We may have different understanding of what feminism is about. I see it as the equality of sexes and not the superiority of women. Parenting is a job for fathers and mothers alike. It is in fact the disregard of the idea of equality that you can say mothers should stay at home. Why not the fathers? Why not try to find a system that is actually beneficial for the children and parents as well? Women are not better parents than men. Taking care of children is not a matter of which reproductive organ one has.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 12:57 AM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

I understand that there are people who are against men. I believe that is a minority since every major nation in the world is still patriarchal, including North America.

While men can't breastfeed, it is only important in the first year of a baby's life, and there are many other things with a baby parents have to do. There are women soldiers and police officers, so I don't think they are necessarily excluded from those professions.

Unknown said:

feminism as it is understood and promoted in North America sees men as disposable and quite often undesirable

Astus wrote:

That's a very radical form of feminism, hardly the mainstream.

Unknown said:

It gives free license to women to behave in any way they wish

Astus wrote:

What special rules should apply to women that are not equally required of men? And why?

Unknown said:

In reality, it is an ideology catering to passions and ill-will, rather than concern for the collective well-being of society. The needs of the few are placed in the forefront ahead of the long-term well-being of the greater whole. One might cry on about inequalities, but if you want to talk about inequalities how about all the men who die in wars, or work dangerous construction jobs? How many men were drafted in WWII in comparison to women?

Astus wrote:

As I said, feminism generally is the idea of the equality of sexes. How is that an elitist view? And yes, men are also victims of gender bias.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Unknown said:

Men can waste money on stuff as well, but putting women to work in an industrial economy instead of letting them raise their children and maintain a household in order to pay for senseless industries and inflated housing prices was a bad trade.

Astus wrote:

That has a lot more to tell about the whole social economics and expectations than individual women. Did you know that men had make up and fancy dress before the Enlightenment?

Unknown said:

There is no equality in that sense. Men and women are not equal in various ways.

Astus wrote:

There is no complete equality now, that is true, never said there is. The point of feminist movements was and still is to work on achieving equality. Plus, in a developed country very few men ever go to wars or work in hazardous environments.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think this comparison of different feminisms are somewhat like different socialist ideas. There was the Soviet Socialist system, never really worked and eventually the whole ideology has disappeared. On the other hand, Western European social democracies are alive and they benefit many people. A radical https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separatist_feminism philosophy is only one smaller group, like the anarchists in left-wing politics or dhutanga practitioners among all the monks.

From a feminist point of view we could highlight how people are happy to blame here women for social problems without considering the fact that the majority of politicians and influential people are men, that the nations are led and controlled mostly by men, and even here the members are also mainly men. How come that it's still the woman's fault? Of course, the true sinner is Eve and the Almighty Lord has nothing to do with creating evil...

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is an article on Swedish preschool childcare system:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21784716>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

Schizophrenia is not about more than one being existing in the same body, and multiple beings don't exist within the same mind. Even the name of the illness that you meant is Dissociative Identity Disorder, defined as "a disorder characterized by identity fragmentation rather than a proliferation of separate personalities" (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder>).

Analysis to the level of emptiness does not refute dependent origination on the phenomenal level. If you say that causality is not a fundamental law then anything can come from anything and reason(ing) has no meaning at all. Causation means there must always be a cause for an effect. If there is no cause there is no causality and we are back at the previous point about anything coming from anything/nothing. Will, intention, is at the heart of dependent origination as the defining factor of karma, very much within the law of cause and effect. An intention that is free from all causes would mean something coming out of nothing, plus it'd have the problem of becoming

permanent and ineffective. Thus "free will" cannot be the cause for a split in the karmic stream.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2013 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

Aemilius said:

There logically has to be a moment when one zygote actually splits in two!

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin>

Astus wrote:

A cell is not a constant thing but a living organism that has its own metabolism. For a cell to split into two it needs to gain mass, etc. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitosis>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2013 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Modern Education

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pAHEcYnaAE>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2013 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Not arising, not ceasing

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20Birth,%20Abiding%20and%20Perishing>

"all Dharmas are empty of characteristics. They are not produced, not destroyed, not defiled, not pure; and they neither increase nor diminish."

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0251.html>

"Though the person exists in the dream, when [the dreamer] awakens, there is nothing that can be grasped. Like an [illusory] flower in the sky that vanishes into empty space, one cannot say that there is a fixed place from which it vanishes. Why? Because there is no place from which it arises! Amidst the unarisen, all sentient beings deludedly perceive birth and extinction. Hence this is called the turning wheel of birth and death."
http://www.fodian.net/world/0842/01_manju.htm

"Good son, the nature of the Tathaagata is really without any birth or death. It is for the

sake of transforming sentient beings that he makes a show of being born or dying."

http://www.fodian.net/world/0375_15.html

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 22nd, 2013 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

Aemilius said:

If for example in one life you practice and study music, and you also work as an engineer, and you then you develop both careers to a high degree. Or you develop any number of different careers in a single life, or you develop them in two or more consecutive lives. Is it not now possible or even likely that this will act as a cause for the splitting of a single stream of existence into two or more parallel streams of existence?

gregkavarnos said:

No more than it is a cause for the splitting of a single stream of existence in this lifetime (ie not at all).

Astus wrote:

As Greg says.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 23rd, 2013 at 12:57 AM

Title: Re: Logic vs Common sense.. .

Content:

Astus wrote:

Logic is about correct reasoning and not about deciding what is true or false, good or bad.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2013 at 10:00 PM

Title: Mahayana and Traditions

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see people struggling with what lineage or tradition to choose from in Buddhism. There are debates about the superiority and appropriateness of different methods and teachings. I believe that the Mahayana is truly the Great Vehicle, the path of the bodhisattva, not limited by geographical, cultural or historic factors.

One of the Four Great Vows is: Dharma-gates are measureless, I vow to learn them. Or: I vow to learn all the teachings. A bodhisattva masters any and all methods. The specific teachings are always skilful means, that is, they are valid only within a specific context and appropriate for a limited number of people. The wisdom of the bodhisattvas, however, is universal.

So, if you want to liberate all beings and attain the supreme enlightenment there can be no teaching that is unworthy of your attention. There is no fixed method you should attach to besides bodhicitta itself.

"The Lord speaks of the 'great vehicle'. Surpassing the world with its Gods, beings and Asuras, such a vehicle goes forth. It is the same as space, and exceedingly great. As in space, so in this vehicle is room for immeasurable and incalculable beings. Such is this great vehicle of the Bodhisattvas, these great beings. One neither sees its coming, nor going, and its abiding as such, does not exist. Thus one cannot get at any beginning of this great vehicle, nor at any end, nor at any middle. Yet, such is self-identical everywhere. Thus, hereof one speaks of a 'great vehicle'."

(http://fodian.net/world/0228_01.html)

"A man or woman setting out on the Great Vehicle imbued with ten indefatigable determinations will enter the stage of realization of Thusness, to say nothing of the stage of enlightening beings. What are the ten? The indefatigable resolution to see, attend, and serve all buddhas; to build up all roots of goodness without retreating; to seek all truths; to practice all the transcendent ways of enlightening beings; to fully accomplish all concentrations of enlightening beings; to enter successively into all ages; to thoroughly purify all oceans of buddha-lands in the ten directions; to lead all realms of sentient beings to perfect development; to carry out the practices of enlightening beings in all lands and ages; to fully attain each power of buddhas by maturing all beings through the process of practicing as many transcendent ways as atoms in all buddha-lands to mature each being. Men or women with faith who are imbued with these ten indefatigable determinations grow in all roots of goodness, leave all compulsive, routine mundane tendencies, drop out of all social castes, go beyond all stages of individual emancipation, are born in the family of all buddhas, fulfill the vows of enlightening beings, become pure with the attainment of all qualities of the enlightened, become clarified in all the practices of enlightening beings, develop all the powers of buddhas, overcome all demons and challengers, progress through all the stages of enlightening beings, and reach buddhahood." (Avatamsaka Sutra, ch. 39, p. 1171)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2013 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana and Traditions

Content:

seeker242 said:

This is "Ekayana"?

Astus wrote:

It depends on how you interpret Ekayana. It is generally understood to mean that sravakas eventually enter the bodhisattva path, thus negating the validity of sravaka realisation (arhat) as ultimate on its own right. Outside of the Faxiang/Hosso school this is usually accepted as the orthodox view. My point here, however, is that while there are

many Mahayana schools, the bodhisattva path is not restricted to any of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2013 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Sutras by Length

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Great Prajnaparamita Sutra (大般若波羅蜜多經) is the longest in the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka, 600 fascicles (卷), although it is a collection of many sutras just like the Ratnakuta. The Avatamsaka Sutra (大方廣佛華嚴經) translated by T. Cleary is 80 fascicles.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2013 at 6:43 PM

Title: New Moderator: Kirtu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Please welcome him among our Global Moderators.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2013 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Astus wrote:

Andrew108

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 27th, 2013 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: On the difficulty of recognizing the natural state

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What is it like to do nothing? I mean, really do nothing, nothing at all — no recalling what has happened, no imagining what might happen, no reflecting on what is happening, no analyzing or explaining or controlling what you experience. Nothing!" (<http://www.unfetteredmind.org/a-way-of-freedom>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 27th, 2013 at 7:18 AM

Title: Re: Nonregression of Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

The question is regression to what. When it is taught that bodhisattvas on the 8th bhumi

don't fall back, it means leaving behind the possibility of becoming an arhat. Non-regression on the 1st bhumi means guaranteed liberation, either as a sravaka or as a buddha. Not falling back from the initial awakening of bodhicitta means maintaining the determination to enlightenment and not leaving behind the path of liberation completely by rejecting the Three Jewels. This is probably different from how Kongtrul understood the issue.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 30th, 2013 at 7:46 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me you are describing a specific training a Zen teacher would require. However, that is characteristic of a highly organised church, like Soto Zen, but not of traditions in other countries, where being a teacher is more about general recognition of fellow monastics and the laity rather than going through certain trainings and obtaining papers.

A big problem I see with the idea of measuring another's enlightenment is that there is no clear and transparent way to measure it. Then, calling it an esoteric and mystical thing that only a "fellow enlightened being" can validate leaves the disciples and the community blind and alienated from a central aspect of Zen. And this can be and is easily abused. Although there is the story of the unbroken transmission to back up this, clearly we see the lineage is only a myth.

Mahayanasutralamkara (17.10) writes:

One should serve a (spiritual) friend who is disciplined, tranquil, serene, outstanding in good qualities, energetic, rich in (knowledge of) scripture, awakened to reality, skilled in speech, compassionate, and indefatigable.

A friend with these qualities is the ground of service. "Disciplined" means that the senses are restrained due to moral discipline. "Tranquil" means that the mind is internally quieted by discipline in meditative concentration. "Serene" means the instinctual addictions are eradicated by the discipline of wisdom. "Outstanding in good qualities" means that he is unequalled and non-deficient. "Energetic" means that he is not indifferent to the welfare of others. "Rich in scripture" means that his learning is not inferior. "Awakened to reality" means that he understands reality. "Skilled in speech" means that he is skilled in the techniques of speaking. "Compassionate" means that his mind is free from the desire for material possessions. "Indefatigable" means that he teaches the Dharma continuously and reverently.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some clarifications from the Soto Zen side:

Authorization as Zen master?

Dharma transmission does not make you a zen master (what is that anyway? We will see soon...). It does not make you an osho (Japanese for "teacher") either. It is the first of three steps (shiho, ten-e and zuise), at the end of which you will officially be promoted to the rank of osho. In Japanese Soto-Zen, there more than 15.000 people with this rank. It is not as special as you might believe. If you have only shiho but not performed zuise yet, you are not regarded as a teacher of Zen. That, of course, does not mean that you can not share your practice with others. Even if you are not a teacher, you can and should share your practice with others.

And what is a Zen master in the first place?

A Zen master, in Japanese, is a zenji. This title is reserved for the founder Dogen Zenji and all the abbots of the two main temples, Eiheiji and Sojiji. So at each time, there is usually only two zenjis alive, unless there is a zenji living somewhere in retirement (like Itabashi Zenji, who is the third zenji alive right now). So, to become a zenji is not impossible, but it is a long way and shiho alone is certainly not enough. Calling yourself a Zen master just because you have shiho is a joke.

Here is a detailed description of <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/adult45.shtml> in 10 chapters.

A picture that sums up the path:

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a list of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_ranks_and_hierarchy in both Soto and Rinzai for Japanese Zen. In other countries, since there are no actual Zen schools (i.e. restricted to Zen), there is no specific system like those either. Generally the abbot of a monastery is considered the main teacher, otherwise the teacher of the meditation hall is the meditation master (chan teacher). None of them implies any connection with specific Zen methods or teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Staying with Soto Zen, I don't see how "kensho" is a relevant concept. There is no enlightenment to be found outside of shikantaza. From the beginning it is enlightenment-practice inseparably. It is enlightenment because no-thought is buddha-mind, and it is practice because one has to familiarise oneself with no-thought. A teacher then is anyone who is more familiar with shikantaza than you, otherwise there is a complex hierarchical structure within the Soto church based mainly on study and practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Jikan said:

Is it conventional to discuss kensho in public?

Astus wrote:

Depends on who you ask and what kensho you mean.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 3rd, 2013 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Huseng said:

I follow the line of thought of early Mahāyāna where you need to cultivate mental stamina through long-term meditative practices coupled with wisdom gained through scripture. If you combine the study of philosophy and scripture with long-term cultivation of samadhi and a moral lifestyle, then your three trainings are covered and you'll see progress.

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinul> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanshan_Deqing did the same and both are regarded as major Zen teachers. It is not an unknown path even today.

Huseng said:

At that point what's the point of receiving transmission, or thinking someone is wiser than the flock just by virtue of having "received transmission"? It is all performance and largely a reflection of institutional, not spiritual, concerns.

Astus wrote:

I think most of us could give a list of a number of teachers we have received help from on our path. Among those teachers, good friends, there are some who were more influential in our progress than others. Depending on our inclinations we could say that we stand closest to this or that style of teaching, or perhaps a mixture of a handful of

methods learnt here and there. This is how it worked before and how it works today for the majority. The idea of a Zen lineage is partially based on that natural phenomenon in the Buddhist community, it also contains a strong influence from ancestor worship and the aristocratic system, eventually transformed into a politically motivated structure (first the fight between Shenxiu's heirs, then between the "Northern" and "Southern" school, and so on, culminating in the superiority of the Linji lineage promoted in the Tiansheng Guandeng Lu (published in 1039) that was also the first to explicitly put down the so called five houses system). Debates surrounding the transmissions were never doctrinal but rather political, establishing claims to authority. Eventually it served as a unifying scheme within Chinese Buddhism and practically any aspiring monk or nun could present a transmission document as Holmes Welch reported. That is no different from how it happens in the Soto Zen church today where temple priests all possess a lineage chart as part of their position, thus its spiritual value is only nominal.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 3rd, 2013 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Huseng said:

Best to get back to the basics: sūtra, śāstra, abhidharma and dhyāna.

Astus wrote:

Actually Zen itself has a huge literature that can be used just like other sutras and treatises. So we could say that instead of transmission a Zen teacher is someone who follows in the footsteps of previous teachers in terms of doctrine and praxis. For instance Thich Nhat Hanh, Xuanhua and Xingyun are all considered Zen teachers, but in fact it is not a central part of their teachings. Another example is Ting Chen's "The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice"

(http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chanmed1.pdf) that is described on BuddhaNet as Chan while in fact it is mostly Tiantai. Then defining who is a Zen teacher becomes more of a matter of identifying what constitutes Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2013 at 12:56 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Huseng said:

The Indic literature, however, is far more consistent and coherent.

Astus wrote:

Zen literature is not just short stories and poems full of metaphors. There are many completely understandable teachings too from the Tang, Song and later eras. Zen has its own scriptures like the Shurangama and the Vajrasamadhi that form the basis of many other teachings, and generally most of the Zen teachers (and the audience) were familiar with the Mahayana corpus, thus many Zen works presuppose that knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2013 at 7:02 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

randomseb said:

the texts left by the patriarchs are not that confusing, once you understand that they are making references to the "thisness" of situations.

Astus wrote:

The teaching of "thisness" (tathatā) is quite an old one and it is explained extensively by various sutras and treatises. For instance, Vasubandhu's short definition is "the [true] nature of entities and the insubstantiality of entities" (Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p. 241). Asanga discusses three types of tathatā in the Abhidharmasamuccaya (favourable, unfavourable, neutral), and matches it with other terms like selfless, emptiness and signless. So, when you say that Zen texts are only referring to a well established Buddhist teaching - instead of saying it directly - it just proves how much they lack clarity.

randomseb said:

Chan/Zen is not something that can be understood by intellectualism, unfortunately, but such can point out the way, right. This is not some westernism, this comes straight from the likes of Bodhidharma and the various early Masters. If you think you've understood via intellectual analysis, you are mistaken. This is clearly stated by those people.

Astus wrote:

Understanding is intellectual. Comprehending words is intellectual. Understanding a teaching without intellect is not understanding it at all. A thoughtless state is also quite useless and it is not wisdom. Mystifying it that it's impossible to understand only makes it ambiguous and something that is left to everyone's imagination. How could any of that be called "directly pointing to mind"?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2013 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

muni said:

"Even existing dharmas must be discarded,
So how can we cling to Dharmas which don't exist!
Ah ha! Futilely the Ancients busily pursued
enlightenment, then departed.
The countenance, existing of its own accord
I wonder who named it buddha or sentient being?
Even one true Dharma cannot survive.

Outside the window, the cherry tree
is singing this news".

<http://naturalmind.wordpress.com/2008/12/08/the-miraculous-awakening-of-zen/>

Astus wrote:

Diamond sutra, chapter 6

(http://www.fodian.net/world/Vajra_Prajna_Paramita_Sutra.html): "You must let go of dharmas. Even more so let go of non-dharmas." (法尚應捨、何況非法)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2013 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Sara H said:

It's not meant to be understood by the head.

There is more than one way to understand something actually.

Most of what is written in Zen texts is meant to be understood from what has been referred to as "the mind of meditation"

In other words, if you've had a kensho, you get it, because you've experienced directly what they are talking about.

It then makes perfect sense. If you try to understand it from a logical or rational point of view, it doesn't work.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, either one understands something, comprehends how something works in a rational way, or not. Direct experience is where one does not use concepts. Thus, directly experiencing the nature of mind is what is called kensho. It's not a negation of understanding, nor something beyond understanding, it's simply not an explanation but an experience. However, once there is talk about something, it is intellectual. A teaching is necessarily bound to concepts. Following a teaching requires understanding of those concepts. Then the result can be the direct experience of emptiness.

Zen is a method where one doesn't go through a series of teachings and techniques but directly goes to insight into the nature of mind. How is that? By resting one's attention instead of pursuing phenomena. That's why neither explanations nor methods are needed. But usually without proper knowledge of Buddhism this direct style is insufficient to help people, so even in Zen they talk about watching the breath and pondering sayings.

As for the irrationality of Zen stories, please look at the second quote here:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=154654#p154654>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2013 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Sara H said:

Yes, Huseng, I do think there should be some institutional authority or credentialing in Buddhism.

I don't think that anybody should just be able to pick up a Buddhist book and call themselves a holy man.

I don't agree with that.

Astus wrote:

However, the title of Zen teacher in the West is given based on a single person's decision. If you have seen how it works in the Soto Zen school in Japan, there it's a bit more complicated. But even that is not exactly like a peer reviewed qualification that they do in academia and in many Buddhist schools (e.g. Jogye, Gelug). So, if you want institutional control then Western Zen is a poor choice in my opinion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2013 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

You call for control of who claims what title but then you reject the idea of transparency and rigorous examination. It is true that regarding Dharma-transmission it was always a single person deciding on who to give it to. On the other hand, accepting such a transmission had bonding effects and the receiver then on was recruited into and joined to the giver's family line. And since it was more about collecting the best men under your banner the question was not whether you find someone to give it to you but whose offer you accept. This is quite different in the West where, as you say, receivers of transmission are free to do as they like and have no obligations toward the giver. Teachers here are not held responsible for the actions of their disciples, and the actions of the teacher are not reflected on their disciples, making transmission lack social value and responsibility.

On the other hand, because a teacher is believed to possess some special mystical knowledge and only a teacher can confirm a disciples knowledge he possesses immense and absolute religious authority. This spiritual power attracts people who lack understanding of the Dharma and desire someone else to tell them what to do (which is not bad in itself but is a fertile soil to empower charlatans and misguided gurus). When instead of rational enquiry and analysis only transcendental and otherworldly realisation is emphasised, there is no tool left in the hands of the disciples to measure the worth of a teacher. Again, this generates the opportunity for abuse.

If I understand correctly, your intention with this thread was to point out that a Zen

teacher is not superhuman and therefore subject to common passions and errors, and you want to point this out to confront the ideas that generate guru-worship. I think this is not the best approach to solve the problem. The problem lies in how people think about Zen itself and the relevance of Dharma-transmission. This difference in opinion is what created the ongoing debate here.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2013 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Sepparate category for Zen rather than under E Asia Budd

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Zen forum is the general section for the topic. It is in the East Asian category because it is a form of Mahayana developed in East Asia. If there were a form of Buddhism that has not appeared in the Tibetan or East Asian cultural area it could have its own section.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2013 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

In both China and Japan the Zen school first struggled to take over the Buddhist monasteries and establish itself as the mainstream tradition. They used Dharma-transmission as a way to connect communities via the abbot and lay claim to higher authority. Then, once it was established, different groups within Zen worked for supremacy, again using Dharma-transmission.

You can look all this up in the various stages of the history of Zen in China (or just read the last one as it's short and online):

<https://books.google.com/books?id=7A1NF9yR-U4C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=5M4KAAAYAAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=WQXs14Qc8p4C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Y7sueo8jsYwC>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/101923012/H-Welch-Dharma-Scrolls-and-the-Succession-of-Abbots-in-Chinese-Monasteries>

I wrote "You call for control of who claims what title"

because you wrote

"We have credentials in Zen for a reason, for safety and to ensure people are actually being taught Buddhism, and not just somebody's impressions that they read from a book."

and I wrote

"you reject the idea of transparency and rigorous examination"

because you wrote

"Zen is a decentralized system. Once a person becomes transmitted, they are not necessarily required to be dependent upon an institutional authority any more. They have become a new institutional authority in and of themselves. That's the way Zen works. That's the way our system is. The reasons it's done that way is to foster diversity, like spreading different seeds to the wind, so that the teaching has the most likely chance of catching hold somewhere and taking root and being passed on. Each teacher has their own personality, opinions, experience, and way of looking at things and doing things."

You said:

"They are not above criticism. This is not a "guru" thing here, you are supposed to trust your own gut and intuition. That, is what they are teaching you to do."

but before that you compared the Zen teacher's authority to gurus:

"It's more like each Transmitted Master becomes a Dalai Lama in and of themselves, with the authority to have their own disciples."

Making each Zen teacher the local Pope instead of a parish priest. Naturally, attitudes toward a local vicar and the direct representative of the Eternal is quite different. On the other hand, Buddhism in general presents a logical teaching that can be comprehended freely by any intelligent person, it is open to scrutiny and rational debate. In fact, it is a point the Dalai Lama regularly emphasises. And this system that is supported by the idea of transmission from teacher to disciple is problematic.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 6th, 2013 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

The common idea of Dharma-transmission is that an enlightened teacher confirms the enlightenment of a student. This has been passed down from Shakyamuni himself, making all person in the lineage equal to the Buddha. That is, a Zen teacher is a living buddha (活佛 - the Chinese term used for tulkus, whereas tulku means nirmanakaya, i.e. an emanation of a buddha; just to show how the Zen idea of transmission gives a similar (actually higher) level of importance as being a tulku in Vajrayana). What is being transmitted is the buddha-mind, in other words the level of enlightenment confirmed is the realisation of the dharmakaya, something that only perfectly enlightened buddhas know.

This concept of the Zen teacher comes down to actual practice in the form of absolute authority of the master in all religious issues where students are completely dependent on a teacher to achieve liberation. It is a control system where no one can claim enlightenment unless verified by the master, and receiving such verification is in itself a

declaration of buddhahood. There are of course attempts to degrade the meaning of a Zen teacher, saying that he is only an ordinary fallible person, it's just that it doesn't agree with the otherwise upheld idea of the transmission of the enlightened mind. Every Zen student aspires to buddhahood and relies on the teacher to tell them when they are there or not, therefore the master is the sole judge about a student's progress, and since all disciples want to receive that confirmation they will constantly try to please the teacher. Because a student is stripped of all independent understanding, whatever the master says is correct or incorrect must be so.

If you say that transmission is not about enlightenment, the patriarchs are not at all equal to buddhas, it is not the realisation of buddha-mind that is confirmed, then what is the point of Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 7th, 2013 at 8:59 PM

Title: Karma Purification

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma is intentional act and it is repeated by habit. Habit is a conviction that doing something is correct. Getting rid of a habit starts with reviewing that conviction, proving it false to oneself, and then mindfully re-educating the mind according to the new understanding. This is taught in the Noble Eightfold Path as <http://www.vipassana.com/resources/8fp5.php> where one learns to avoid evil (akusala) and cultivate good (kusala). Other two important factors are http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_23.html of doing evil that strengthens the will not to repeat former errors nor create new ones.

In terms of practice, the above two (right effort, shame and fear) are encompassed in what is called <http://kongmu.wordpress.com/2011/10/09/88-buddhas/> (懺悔) that is part of the daily liturgical practice in Chinese Buddhism and it is also prominent in the <http://www.lamayeshe.com/?sect=article&id=394> of Vajrayana. There are also sutras about repentance, like the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra29.html>.

While formal practice helps reminding and indoctrinating ourselves the correct view, it is at the actual arising of an unwholesome intention when we can actually learn to let go of bad habits and stop repeating past mistakes. That is, purification doesn't mean that attachments are magically removed but through maintaining the right attitude one becomes mindful of good and bad thoughts. Seeing how wrong ideas lead to pain and suffering one can put an end to following and acting on them. This is purification on the relative level that brings about merit. The absolute purification is the complete practice of the Dharma whereby one attains liberation from samsara, and neither bad nor good thoughts are attached to.

"Ordinary people are stupid and only know they should repent for their past licentiousness—they do not know they should feel remorse for future errors. Because they do not have such remorse, their previous licentiousness is not extinguished and

future errors continue to be generated. With previous licentiousness not extinguished and future errors continuing to be generated, how can this be called repentance?" (Platform Sutra, ch. 6, tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 7th, 2013 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Has this been your own experience?

Astus wrote:

My experience is very limited as I have only participated in the life of a couple of Zen communities and visited some others. That's why I also rely on other people's reports and even more on how the different groups and teachers describe their Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2013 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

It is about enlightenment. There is more than one stage of enlightenment before becoming Buddha's. A Zen Master is only guaranteed to be of the first step. Not complete Buddhahood.

Which stage of enlightenment is kensho, the first step? Is it the first of the Ten Faiths (十信), faith (信心)? Is it the first bhumi, i.e. the path of seeing? Or something else?

By the way, once there are stages, it is not the path of sudden but of gradual enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

There are various ways in Buddhism to categorise the different stages on the path. Various Zen teachers say different things about what level of enlightenment is attained at seeing the nature of mind. So, what interpretation is yours, or your teacher's, in this case? On what stage of the bodhisattva path a Zen master needs to be on?

The Ten Oxherding Picture doesn't really answer the above question as it is used only

within the Zen tradition and doesn't specify its relationship to the bodhisattva path.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

As far as I know, all Buddhist schools (including Theravada) consider a bodhisattva to be a person aspiring for buddhahood. Mahayana is also called the bodhisattvayana because it considers the path of the bodhisattva as the definitive and superior way. This is reflected in the four major bodhisattva vows that in most Zen communities people recite regularly. Also, someone who has already reached the level of a buddha is a buddha and not a bodhisattva.

As shel said, the first bhumi is considered the first actual insight into emptiness by most schools. However, for instance Jinul says that the initial insight is the first stage of Faith (i.e. the 1st of the 52 stages, where the 1st bhumi is equivalent to stage 41), while others say that initial enlightenment (seeing nature) is equal to the 1st, or the 7th bhumi, or buddhahood. There was a discussion about it in this thread:
<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=5102>.

Since you say that kensho is not buddhahood it must be something below that level. Because you also say that Zen teachers are ordinary beings (pudgala), it can't be the 1st bhumi either (as that's where the path of the arya/noble bodhisattvas start). That leaves us the question what you actually mean by kensho. What is realised there? Is it the emptiness of self, the emptiness of the dharmas, the emptiness of the mind, or something else?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The first bhumi includes a number of qualities, the definition is usually derived from the Avatamsaka Sutra's chapter on the Ten Stages. Among other things, an arya bodhisattva has great compassion and doesn't fail in upholding the precepts bodily and verbally (mental perfection comes on the 2nd bhumi). He is also free from the suffering of mundane troubles.

"The bodhisattva naturally helps sentient beings without distinction or discrimination, but there is still a subject and object involved. This applies to a bodhisattva on the first through seventh bhumi."

(Sheng-yen: Complete Enlightenment, p. 202)

"At the first bhumi, a bodhisattva has transformed the sixth consciousness into the 'wisdom of non-arising'—where afflictions no longer manifest outwardly, or arise."
(Sheng-yen: There is No Suffering, p. 30)

Other qualities described:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bh%C5%ABmi_%28Buddhism%29#The_first_bh.C5.ABmi.2C_the_Very_Joyous; <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/stages-and-path>;
http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level2_lamrim/initial_scope/safe_direction/qualities_arya_sangha.html

Considering the above, it would be impossible for an enlightened teacher to steal others' money or harass female disciples.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 7:04 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

I would not go so far as to say that. Unless you consider killing him, and the Buddha and the patriarchs, to be an achievement. The zen teachers that I have met say things like "nothing I can say can help you", "I can't save you", etc, etc. That does not sound like dependence to me. It sounds like the opposite.

Astus wrote:

What need is there for a Zen teacher then? And what is authorisation about?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

I think it depends on which scripture you read. Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra describes Avalokitesvara as a bodhisattva who can manifest in a Buddha body, pratyekabuddha's body, or any kind of body, if needed to help the world, etc.

Astus wrote:

That's just one of the many inconceivable qualities of a bodhisattva, as the Vimalakirti and other sutras explain. It doesn't make them buddhas. Even Mara can appear as a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

Avalokiteśvara is not a Buddha, even though he is already "saved from all suffering and distress"? How can one who is already saved from all suffering and distress, not be a Buddha?

Astus wrote:

Arhats are free from suffering and they are not buddhas either. Even a stream-enterer is free from the suffering of the three lower births. I recommend you look into this short summary: <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/stages-and-path>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 9th, 2013 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Jikan said:

Is a Zen Master a bodhisattva? someone on the first bhumi?

Is a Zen Master an arhat?

A Buddha?

???

Astus wrote:

From my perspective, a Zen teacher is anyone who teaches Zen. Since there are many forms and styles of Zen there are also many kinds of teachers. The fact of teaching Zen is no indication of one's attainment, neither is any sort of authorisation from any teacher. This is a minimalist approach based on the term itself "Zen teacher", similarly to "English teacher" or "Maths teacher". The idea of a "Zen Master" who knows things beyond comprehension and sees through the student, while there might be individuals like that, it is mostly a myth and pious imagination.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

Thanks! So what do you call someone who has completed all of the above?

Astus wrote:

One who has gone through the bodhisattva path is called a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

If we want to look for an ancient source that still has a clear explanation on the subject, it is Fayan Wenyi's "Ten Guidelines for Zen Schools"

(http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/X63/1226_001.htm) that was translated by Thomas Cleary in "The Five Houses of Zen" book. It describes the requirements of a teacher and how in his time most of the Zen communities and teachers fail to uphold the correct way.

His ten points (from Cleary's translation):

1. On false assumption of teacherhood without having cleared one's own mind ground
2. On factional sectarianism and failure to penetrate controversies
3. On teaching and preaching without knowing the bloodline
4. On giving answers without observing time and situation and not having the eye of the source
5. On discrepancy between principle and fact, and failure to distinguish defilement and purity
6. On subjective judgement of ancient and contemporary sayings without going through clarification
7. On memorizing slogans without being capable of subtle function meeting the needs of the time
8. On failure to master the scriptures and adducing proofs wrongly
9. On indulging in making up songs and verses without regard for meter and without having arrived at reality
10. On defending one's own shortcomings and indulging in contention

Thus, Fayan's criteria of a Zen teacher is that he should (1) be enlightened to the nature of mind, (2) don't attach to specific methods, (3) teach direct insight, (4) teach according to the situation, (5) clarify the two truths in teaching, (6) have appropriate training in the Dharma, (7) teach with insight and not just words, (8) know the scriptures, (9) don't write non-sense but clear and pleasant words, (10) don't disparage the Triple Jewels, the scriptures and the vehicles, and don't fail in upholding morality.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

What you describe as kensho, that is the initial certainty arising about the Dharma, and that is the level of Faith. It is important, very much. But the first bhumi, as you could see, is a lot more than that, where such external issues that you describe are not problems and internally it is a lot more peaceful and free.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 3:57 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

Nice list. Do you think that if a person meets all of the above criteria, they can then rightly be given dharma transmission and called a official "zen master"?

Astus wrote:

There is no mention of any transmission. It is a guideline for those who are or plan to be teachers. There is no such thing as "official Zen master" in Buddhism, only in specific organisations. That is, if you set up a Buddhist community, you can create such a title, and that will be official there, but not necessarily for others.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kensho can mean so many things that, as I see it, it requires a definition if we are to understand each other. Now that we have it, it is quite easy to see what you mean when you say that Zen teachers are ordinary people.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

To avoid such confusion there are quite elaborate descriptions and terms in Buddhism. The problem can be is that Zen is generally viewed as the path of sudden enlightenment. Now that is resolved by teachers like Zongmi and Jinul who established the system of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice, but that is not used in Japanese Zen and so Western heirs of that tradition have this trouble of not being clear about the nature of enlightenment and the actual stages. Since apparently very few Zen master teach actual sudden liberation there is a great need for a proper description of the gradual process, something that is readily found in Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sara,

What kind of Soto Zen do you mean to be gradual? Shikantaza is enlightenment from the very beginning and there is nothing to improve about it. On the other hand, in Hakuin's system people go through several stages in practice and they recognise various levels of attainment. Of the two it is in fact Rinzai that is gradual.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 10th, 2013 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

MalaBeads,

You define Zen as "outside words and letters" and "an experiential school" and then say how erroneous it is to define Zen. What do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 12th, 2013 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Zen and daimoku

Content:

Astus wrote:

Might be interesting: <http://nichirenscoffehouse.net/library/Hakuin.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 12th, 2013 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Zen and daimoku

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.sgilibrary.org/view.php?page=3&m=0&q=>:

"unless one perceives the nature of one's life, one's practice will become an endless, painful austerity. Therefore, such students of Buddhism are condemned as non-Buddhist."

and

"Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith. The Vimalakirti Sutra states that, when one seeks the Buddhas' emancipation in the minds of ordinary beings, one finds that ordinary beings are the entities of enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana. It also states that, if the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds. What then does myo signify? It is simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment

to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. When we look into our own mind at any moment, we perceive neither color nor form to verify that it exists. Yet we still cannot say it does not exist, for many differing thoughts continually occur. The mind cannot be considered either to exist or not to exist. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality. Myo is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and ho, to its manifestations. Renge, which means lotus flower, is used to symbolize the wonder of this Law. If we understand that our life at this moment is myo, then we will also understand that our life at other moments is the Mystic Law.⁴ This realization is the mystic kyo, or sutra. The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our life, which manifests either good or evil at each moment, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law. If you chant myohorenge-kyo with deep faith in this principle, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 13th, 2013 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: 52 Stages of the Boddhisattva

Content:

Astus wrote:

Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, that is the Lotus Sutra. Quite a few translations are available online. http://www.cttbusa.org/lotus/lotus_contents.asp.

The 52 stages system is based on the Gandavyuha Sutra, which is also the last chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra.

Here are the stages in brief: <http://sgforums.com/forums/1728/topics/158325>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 14th, 2013 at 1:39 AM

Title: Re: 52 Stages of the Boddhisattva

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, It's a very exacting list. If you look at the life of the doctor Jack Preger, you see a Boddhisattva in action. Working for decades on the streets of Calcutta (Kolkata) with the poorest of the poor. Tending people, not asking for money and no strings attached. A really good man and a great healer, reaching out a helping hand to all.

Astus wrote:

Being a good and caring person is not exclusive to Buddhism or bodhisattvas. Also, the bodhisattva path is not simply about being good and caring but bringing ultimate liberation to others and oneself.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 14th, 2013 at 1:57 AM

Title: Re: 52 Stages of the Bodhisattva

Content:

Astus wrote:

The reason I said it is the Gandavyuha Sutra is because in T. Cleary's translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra, in Appendix 3 he introduces and translates Li Tongxuan's commentary to it which in fact outlines the 52 stages, and also the same commentary is referred to in Buswell's "Collected Works of Chinul" summing up the bodhisattva path. I did not hear of Zhiyi's work before.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 14th, 2013 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Mantras in Zen Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is common to recite the names of buddhas (e.g. Amitabha) and bodhisattvas (e.g. Avalokitesvara), and there are dharanis (e.g. Great Compassion Dharani) that are usually part of the liturgy. The "Ten Shorter Dharanis" (十小咒) are part of the daily ceremony in Chinese Buddhism and you may consider them mantras because of their brevity. Mantras from specific sutras may be used by some practitioners. Here is an introduction: <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/mantra0.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 15th, 2013 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Emotion and Reason

Content:

Astus wrote:

Both emotion and reason are thoughts, mental phenomena. Relying on either an emotion or a reason are attachment. In fact, emotions go away in a short time but people can hang on their reasoning for a lifetime. An emotion gets its meaning from reasoning, and one considers a reason true because of an emotion. There is no ultimate logical truth, there is no obstructive emotion. Reasoning is believing in a series of concepts. Emotion is believing in a feeling. The problem is not with the concept or the feeling, but with believing them to be true and real.

Some thoughts to consider:

"That, Manjusri, is the way a sick bodhisattva should concentrate his mind; he should live neither in control of his mind, nor in indulgence of his mind. Why? To live by indulging the mind is proper for fools and to live in control of the mind is proper for the disciples. Therefore, the bodhisattva should live neither in control nor in indulgence of his mind. Not living in either of the two extremes is the domain of the bodhisattva." (Vimalakirti Sutra, ch. 5, tr. Thurman)

"Noble sir, one who stays in the fixed determination of the vision of the uncreated is not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment. However, one who lives among created things, in the mines of passions, without seeing any truth, is indeed capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment."
(ch. 8)

"Noble sons, there is a liberation of bodhisattvas called 'destructible and indestructible.' You must train yourselves in this liberation. What is it? 'Destructible' refers to compounded things. 'Indestructible' refers to the uncompounded. But the bodhisattva should neither destroy the compounded nor rest in the uncompounded."
(ch. 11)

There are of course other sutras that talk about how "passions are enlightenment" (煩惱即菩提).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2013 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Mantras in Zen Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Hanshan's (1546–1623) time (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ming_Dynasty, mostly the reign of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wanli_Emperor) there were strong financial, political, cultural and especially religious connection with Tibet (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet_during_the_Ming_Dynasty). When Hanshan refers to mantras (in his <http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>) it reflects the presence of Vajrayana, but not because it is something inherent to Chan. Note that Hanshan mentions the mantras as one of the last techniques (i.e. for more troubled people) to use and something that is especially good for removing obstacles.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2013 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Emotion and Reason

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Sabbasava Sutta

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.002.than.html>) the relevant passages for emotions are §2 (restraining the 6 senses) and §6 (destroying sensuality, ill will, cruelty, unskilful mental qualities). Still, that's not the same as eliminating all emotions. In fact, there are the seven factors of enlightenment (§7) one has to develop what includes persistence (viriya), rapture (piti) and serenity (passaddhi).

And then there is a teaching like

<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&vid=30&view=fulltext> where you are taught not to abandon anything but simply realise the non-arising of

phenomena.

Unknown said:

One should speak like this – do not give up your passion (rāga), do not fight your aversion (dveṣa), do not clear away your bewilderment (moha), do not liberate (uccal-) yourself from your body (kāya), practise (car-) the bad things (akuśala), do not hold back (nigrah-) your views (drṣṭi), do not be conscious of the bonds [to the worldly things] (sāyojana), grasp for (parigrah-) the parts of the personality (skandha), amass (piṇḍikr-) the spheres of sense-perception (dhātu), move about (car-) among the fields of sense-perception (āyatana), do not leave (atī-) the stage of fools (bālabhūmi), frequent (āgam-) the bad (akuśala), give up the good (kuśala), do not think of (manaskr-) the Buddha, do not reflect (cint-) on religious teachings (dharma), do not give offerings to (pūj-) the congregation of monks (sāgha), do not take the training (śikṣā) upon yourself (samādā-), do not seek (prārthaya-) the peacefulness of existence (bhavaśamana), do not cross over (uttr-) the river [of existence] (ogha). This kind of instructions one should teach and give to the bodhisattva in the beginning of his development (ādikarmika).

Why? Because this state of the moments of existence and nothing else is their [true] state (iyaṃ dharmāṇāṃ dharmasthitir shitir eva).

Foolish people (bāla) explain things (vyākṛ-) in accordance with moments of existence of arising (utpādadharma) and moments of existence of disappearance (nirodhadharma). But this sphere of all moments of existence distinguishes itself by being beyond thought-constructions (sa tu dharmadhātur nirvikalpaprabhāvitah), and understanding the essential character of all these moments of existence in this way is awakening (ya eṣāṃ dharmāṇāṃ svabhāvasyaivamanubodhaḥ sā bodhir iti).

If he is taught in this way and does not become afraid, scared or terrified, then he is a bodhisattva not turning back in his development, one who has a part in the stage of never turning back (yady evam upadiṣṭo nottrasen na sātrasyen na sātrāsam āpadyeta sa vatāvaivartiko bodhisattvo 'vaivairtikabhūmibhāgiya iti jñātavyah).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I have skipped most of the discussion, so I don't know if this has been mentioned before.

In today's Chinese Buddhism the Ven. Xuyun is the most outstanding teacher of Zen from whom many living teachers derive their lineage. It is said that Xuyun transmitted all five schools of Zen, and there are indeed monks who claim affiliation with one or more of those. What should be noted, however, is that the five school system is only a fabrication from the Song era that they came up with to categorise different groups of Zen teachers. On one hand, there were more than just five, on the other, the Fayan school (one of the five) never even existed. There are two descendants of Xuyun famous in the West: Ven. Xuanhua and Ven. Shengyan. Xuanhua belongs to the Weiyang lineage, a school that vanished long ago, and one can actually see a large gap in the transmission chart. This is a case of "remote succession" (yaosi 遙嗣), that is, one can

claim transmission based on personal sympathy toward a dead teacher. Shengyan belongs to the Linji lineage coming from Xuyun, however, there are two problems with that and both because of having Zibo Zhenke in his chart. First, Zibo himself never claimed any succession and criticised those of his time who wanted to revive Zen based on the stories. Second, the dates of birth and death show that Zibo died years before his predecessor three generations back could even get a full ordination. So, the lineages of both Xuanhua and Shengyan show that it is not an unbroken transmission from generation to generation.

The reformer of modern Korean Zen was Gyeongheo from whom practically every living Zen teacher derives his lineage. However, Gyeongheo himself never received a Dharma transmission from anyone and even said that such a transmission has been long dead by his time. Another example from Korea is the Ven. Daehaeng Sunim, who was a well known teacher and who established a major organisation within the Jogye order, however, she has no lineage affiliation, no teacher, still she is regarded as an outstanding Zen master.

In Vietnam one of the most successful Buddhist organisations is the Truc Lam Zen that has the biggest training monastery in the country. It is a revival of the only Vietnamese founded Zen lineage that existed in the 13th and 14th century. The current reformer Thich Thanh Tu is of course not the direct descendent of any of the former patriarchs and has no Dharma transmission from anyone. Still, he is a major Zen teacher.

These are all modern examples of how lineage is not that definitive in Zen and people are perfectly capable of becoming outstanding teachers without an unbroken lineage.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

As mentioned briefly earlier, some writings even present themselves as a kind of transmission in places with things like "may this writing confer the blessings of such and such...".

Astus wrote:

"Good friends, you should all recite this. If you practice according to it, you will see the nature through hearing these words. Although you may be a thousand li away from me, it will be as if you are constantly by my side. If you do not become enlightened through these words, then why have you gone to the trouble of coming a thousand li to see me?" (Platform Sutra, ch. 6, tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the question is whether it is acceptable to be a Zen teacher without being a member of a lineage. If yes, the argument over having or not having transmission is irrelevant. If no, then history shows that there were and are respected teachers without lineage, plus historical data proves the idea of unbroken lineage as fictional. Then we should ask why Western Zen followers are obsessed with lineage. And I think the reason is that many fail to see the actual teaching of Zen, so instead go for the superficial story of transmission. They look at a record of Zen stories and understand only as far as the presence of a teacher and a student but fail to comprehend the actual interaction that happens. It is similar to those who believe that the most important thing about zazen is the posture and fail to see the mind as the true place of meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

I am not very familiar with situation in Zen, but maybe because it one of the precious few ways to deal with numerous charlatans and crazies who appear out of nowhere proclaiming themselves to be enlightened teachers? Who can judge if a particular person is qualified to teach? His own teacher. How do we know this teacher is qualified himself? Supposedly because it was confirmed by his own teacher, and so on back to Buddha. I find this idea very attractive, even though it might not always work exactly that way in practice. But it is at least some insurance.

Astus wrote:

Since the lineage of confirming and authorising a teacher is broken, the transmission is given based on several reasons and not always connected to the receiver's inner realisation, and there are several examples of correctly transmitted teachers abusing the naive belief in transmission itself, it does not work as an guarantee for quality. Yes, people want to feel safe, but it's a false belief based on an illusion. On the other hand, if instead of blindly accepting the myth of transmission, they would take the time to actually study and contemplate the teachings and assess a teacher by his knowledge and behaviour, that could be a lot safer. In fact, both knowledge and behaviour are relatively easy to measure. As for those who believe that "enlightenment" is the single qualifying factor, that's a very narrow and simple view, especially when they have no idea what enlightenment is.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

There are negative examples for everything, since it is samsara we are dealing with, and

there are no perfect sure-fire solutions for anything. I, for one, would never follow a guru whose qualification was not confirmed by his teacher, who in turn belongs to a recognised lineage.

Astus wrote:

How do you confirm a lineage? I show you three lineage tables, full of Chinese names. Can you tell which one is genuine and which one is fake? By the way, are you saying that you'd never study under any of <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=161830#p161830>, or the Deshimaru followers?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

Let us say that If I can trace the lineage reliably to one of the "big name" masters that are universally respected within the tradition as highly realized beings, then I will be content enough not to dig further.

Astus wrote:

That is, you would never study under for example Tsongkhapa, who had several teachers, but eventually established his own version of Buddhism for what he couldn't provide any predecessors? And any teacher who have received only visionary-mental transmissions or claimed reincarnation of a once famous person are all out of question (e.g. Asanga, Tilopa, Jigme Lingpa)? Not that there were no other orthodox teachers of the time within established communities, still, many outstanding masters were special because they came up with a new way of teaching and did not follow the existing methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

there are several examples of correctly transmitted teachers abusing the naive belief in transmission itself

PadmaVonSamba said:

Please identify five.

- .
- .
- .

Astus wrote:

Known major cases (note that these are all outstanding teachers with large number of followers):

Taizan Maezumi, founder of Zen Center of Los Angeles and others

Seung Sahn, founder of Kwan Um Zen School

Joshu Sasaki, founder of Mount Baldy Zen Center

Daining Katagiri, founder of Minnesota Zen Meditation Center

Eido Shimano, founder of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji and New York Zendo Shobo-Ji

Richard Baker, heir of Shunryu Suzuki

Dennis Merzel, heir of Bernard Glassman

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the topic: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=10684>

Unknown said:

"Without fully and finally letting go one's self-with-form, there can be no transmission — even if one has received innumerable transmission certificates from various lineages. The basis and source of transmission in Zen is the awakening to one's selfless self. And this emerges precisely from the dropping away of self, once and for all. Remember the character I wrote on the board? That's it. No one transmits anything to anyone; in other words, shin or kokoro transmits kokoro to kokoro by way of kokoro. That's all."

<http://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/sourceofzenwhotransmitswhat.pdf> by Jeff Shore is a wonderful summary of the issue that combines both the Zen and the scholarly view.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: Zen and different Pure Land views

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is one for you: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=5650>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Should secular Buddhism be tolerated?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I assume by secular Buddhist what is meant is a person who is materialist and/or

agnostic toward non-materialist assertions. It is a position where one doesn't have faith in teachings that are apparently without proof and contradict one's original view of the world. There are generally two types of secular Buddhists. Those who only focus on meditation and those who study Buddhist teachings. Both group expects results within this life and find Buddhism beneficial. The support scientific research and that way help spreading the teachings among those who are doubtful about the usefulness of the Dharma. Secular Buddhism should not only be tolerated but embraced, because that is a natural first step on the path for an educated modern person. In places where Buddhism is a traditional religion the majority of Buddhists look for material gain and a better next life, while secular Buddhists find the teachings about meditation and reality intriguing and good. The former is the simple believer with little knowledge, while the latter is someone with personal interest and enthusiasm. Since the lowest aspiration within Buddhism is the path of men and gods, both the simple believer and the secular Buddhist can be accepted as Buddhists.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 12:32 AM

Title: Re: Zen and different Pure Land views

Content:

Astus wrote:

In order to be able to accept buddha-lands, buddhas, deities and rebirth, one has to switch from objectivist-materialist to a subjectivist-phenomenologist view where appearances are experiential data. Then see how mental phenomena are definitive regarding all experience. Then it makes perfect sense that one can be born in the Pure Land just as one is born here because of karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

It's a person's qualification/degree of realization that need verifying, not the exact content of their teaching.

Astus wrote:

And this is where I disagree. As one of the

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_reliances states: "Rely on the message of the teacher, not on his personality"

And Ven. Shengyan says (Zen Wisdom, p. 27-28),

QUESTION:

How does an ordinary practitioner recognize a false master?

SHIH-FU:

The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters.

Of course, this presupposes that the person making the judgment has some understanding of correct Dharma. Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.

Beyond this, there are some basic criteria that can be used in assessing masters. First, consider their causes and conditions. In other words, their actions should be based on a foundation of emptiness; there should be no attachment in what they do. Second, consider their causes and consequences, or karma. The sense of emptiness that guides the actions of virtuous masters (causes and conditions) should accord with their karma (causes and consequences). That is to say, their actions need to be guided by a sense of responsibility. They should, at all times, be clearly aware of the consequences of their actions. Thus, there is an intimate relationship between responsibility and non-attachment.

These, then, are the marks of virtuous masters: they have a correct view of the Dharma, their actions reveal no attachment and they have a clear sense of responsibility.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: Zen and different Pure Land views

Content:

zamotcr said:

Then, would it be correct to say that maybe science will never find a Pure Land, because the observer perception, senses or mind is not pure, or something like this? So if someone is on a spaceship would not see the Pure Land because of his perception?

Astus wrote:

Correct. Not to mention that it's said Sukhavati is 10,000 buddha-lands away, i.e. farther than Captain Picard ever managed to go.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: Should secular Buddhism be tolerated?

Content:

Samanthabhadra said:

First of all its not a fundamentalist approach, someone who goes with evidence is not a fundamentalist, stating that the earth is not flat is not a fundamentalist position. That's how silly your question is.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhist cosmology https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jambudvīpa#In_Buddhism is flat, surrounded by ocean, has Sumeru at its northern end and a huge tree in its centre. How does that match our modern understanding of a round Earth? It doesn't.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: Zen and different Pure Land views

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a Zen way of showing the Pure Land (teaching of Huineng from the Platform Sutra):

“I will move the Western [Paradise] for you in an instant, so you will be able to see it right in front of you. Do you all want to see it or not?”

Those in the assembly all bowed their heads to the ground and said, “If we could see it here, how could we then want to be reborn there? We ask that in Your Reverence’s compassion you manifest the Western [Paradise] for us all to see!”

The master said, “[All of you in this] great assembly, [understand that] the very form-bodies of people in this world are the city walls [of the Pure Land]. Your eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates [of the Pure Land]. Externally, you have five gates, and within is the gate of the sensory mind. The mind is the ground, and the nature is the king. The king resides on the mind-ground, and the nature exists just as a king exists. When the nature goes, the king is absent. When the nature is present, the body and mind continue. When the nature departs, the body disintegrates. ‘Buddha’ acts within the nature—don’t look for it outside your bodies! When one is deluded as to the self-nature, one is a sentient being, but when one realizes the self-nature, one is a buddha.

“Compassion is Avalokiteśvara, joy and equanimity are Mahāsthāmaprāpta, the ability to purify is Śākyamuni, and universal directness is Amitābha. The self is Sumeru, desire is the ocean’s water, and the afflictions are the waves. The poisons are the evil dragons, the falsenesses are the ghosts and spirits, the enervating defilements are the fishes, lust and anger are the hells, and stupidity is the animals.

In the Pure Land school, however, the method is visualisation (teaching from the Visualisation Sutra):

I, the Tathāgata, shall now teach you, Vaidehī, and all sentient beings of the future how to visualize the Western Land of Utmost Bliss. By the power of the Buddha all will be able to see the Pure Land as clearly as if one were looking at one’s own reflection in a bright mirror. Seeing the utmost beauty and bliss of that land, they will rejoice and immediately attain insight into the non-arising of all dharmas.

Also, by using only the recitation of the name of Amitabha one may have visions of the Pure Land as did Honen, founder of the Japanese Pure Land school.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 3:01 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Konchog1 said:

Hmm, I'm not quite sure I agree with you here. There is a lineage in the Gelug. It's just very complex. In Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand it says that the lineage starts with Shakyamuni and splits into lineages headed by Maitreya and Manjushri. These lineages are combined by Atisha and after Dromtonpa, splits into three headed by Gampopa, Potowa and Chaen Ngawa. These lineages are combined by Lord Tsongkhapa and continue in a straight line from there.

Astus wrote:

Practically any Buddhist who studied from different teachers can come up with a lineage, and all monks have an ordination lineage plus the Dharma lineage of their upadhyaya. In this sense there is nothing special about a lineage except for one difference. The nobility keeps record of their ancestors while ordinary people don't, however, everyone equally have ancestors going back to the unknown past. Similarly, in Buddhism there are those who claim to belong the a lineage - something that actually copies royal bloodlines, at least in Zen - and there are those who don't have such a record of their teachers' teachers. And what is the reason for showing a special ancestry? Not to insure the validity of their teachings but simply to raise themselves above the rest.

Can we say that only those with a lineage are enlightened? If so, Buddhism works only for a very few people, it is not an efficient teaching. However, if we say that there are many people who truly benefit from the teachings, distinguishing a few by a lineage is not about realisation or greatness but a claim for superiority (at least in the case of Zen).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

It is relatively easy to give correct-sounding teachings, especially if people assume you know what you are talking about (which is generally the case). Of course if what a teacher is saying clearly contradicts Dharma, then it is reasonable to be suspicious. But this alone is not enough to distinguish a real teacher from a fraud. I certainly don't mean that lineage is the only criterion for me. It is one of several necessary criteria.

Astus wrote:

Correct sounding and correct are not exactly the same. A teacher who teaches correct Dharma is a proper teacher. And besides giving correct teachings what else can a teacher do? They obviously don't make people magically enlightened because they have received magic powers from their own teachers. The only thing anyone can get from a teacher is a teaching. So, what difference does a lineage make?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Should secular Buddhism be tolerated?

Content:

Samanthabhadra said:

This empirical reality, the earth, the sun, the solar system, the trees, the buildings do not exist out there in the physical world. It is all inside your mind and it is only a state of mind. Vajrayana is not concerned with this world at all.

Astus wrote:

In that case what does it matter what kind of imaginary world one lives in? A round planet, a flat peninsula, or a disc resting on the backs of four huge elephants which are in turn standing on the back of an enormous turtle as it slowly swims through space.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

Simple: I do not consider my ability to distinguish a correct teaching from a correct sounding teaching to be infallible. If it was infallible, I probably wouldn't need any teachings at all.

Furthermore, the very act of receiving a teaching personally is important. There is a common saying that repeating a mantra without having received it personally from a teacher is like trying to squeeze some oil out of a handful of sand.

Astus wrote:

The correct teachings are defined in the Buddhist canon, the Buddha himself taught them.

Zongmi wrote (Zongmi on Chan, p. 112):

"The sutras are like an inked marking string, serving as a model by which to establish the false and the correct. The inked marking string is not the skill itself; a skillful craftsman must use the string as a standard. The sutras and treatises are not Chan; one who transmits Chan must use the sutras and treatises as a norm."

And Yongming wrote (Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu, p. 248, 258):

"People develop understanding through texts. When people forget about the Buddha's message, one safeguards the minds of beginners on the basis of [texts]. Whoever understands the teaching through the corpus of Buddhist writings will not create a mind and realm of objects in opposition to each other, but will realize the mind of the Buddha directly. What error is there in this?"

"Moreover, if one wants to investigate the Buddha-vehicle, one will read extensively from the treasure storehouse [i.e., Buddhist scriptures]. Each and every [scripture] forces

one to understand the truth about one's own self; utterance after utterance causes one to mysteriously unite with true mind. One simply should not grasp onto written texts as the highest meaning, forming [artificial] views according to the words. One should directly seek out the message written down in the corpus of Buddhist scriptures, tacitly uniting with the truth that is inherently implicit. At that point, the wisdom that does not depend on any teacher reveals itself, and the way of heavenly truth is no longer obscure."

Now, I'm not saying that teachers are unnecessary. There is a great value of someone who has studied, contemplated and practised the teachings, who has experience in the Dharma and compassion to teach it. However, there is nothing new a Buddhist teacher can say that are not already in the sutras. He can rephrase it for the student, give examples, etc., but the content is the same, just as the intention and the effect. A maths or a language teacher can't come up with new rules, he can only explain again and again until the student understands. A Dharma teacher has to do the same. In fact, even the sutras repeat the same things over and over.

So, what difference does it make if I hear a mantra from a teacher, from a friend, from a stranger or from the radio? The words are the same. What else is a mantra other than words? And I can ask the same about all the teachings there are in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Zen and different Pure Land views

Content:

zamotcr said:

So, according to the point of view, Pure Land can be seen as own Buddha's Nature, and also as a place, visible to "pure sentient beings", right?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what one wants to teach. Both are true, as it is explained by Seosan (see my first post here).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

According to the understanding of Vajrayana, mantra is an intention and a energetic pattern that is transmitted from the guru to the student. it has nothing to do with ordinary language and can't be "learned" from books.

Astus wrote:

Can you explain what intention and energetic patter is in this case and how it is transmitted? And can you raise the same problem with non-Tantric teachings giving a

reason for the requirement of a lineage?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Japanese:

<http://jisho.org/words?jap=%E5%B8%AB&eng=&dict=edict>

1: teacher; master; one's mentor;

2: () religious leader;

3: (Suffix) specialist;

4: (Noun) (Archaism) five-battalion brigade comprising 2500 men (Zhou-dynasty Chinese army)

examples:

医師 【いし】 (n,adj-no) doctor; physician

印刻師 【いんこくし】 (n) seal engraver

画師; 絵師 【えし; がし (画師)】 (n) painter; artist; painter supported by patron

思惑師 【おもわくし】 (n) speculator

楽師 【がくし】 (n) master musician

教師 【きょうし】 (n,adj-no) teacher (classroom)

技師 【ぎし】 (n) engineer; technician;

写真師 【しやしんし】 (n) photographer

花火師 【はなびし】 (n) pyrotechnist; pyrotechnician

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jeeprs,

I think it's the opposite, people want a superior being to guide them and show the way, someone they can completely trust. And for that trust one has to believe in the purity and goodness of the other person, to appear someone like Jesus. And if you believe that the other person is a living saint and an omniscient buddha it is quite easy to surrender yourself to him in every aspect. This is the easy way. The more difficult path is when you have your own confidence and the teacher is there to help, to assist you, but not to overtake the control of your (spiritual) life. However, such confidence comes from one's own study and experience, from the personal faith in the Triple Jewel. Therefore it is up to the system to show the correct way to beginners that will teach them how to gain that confidence and not to give up yourself to a seemingly superior being.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

The transmission occurs through sympathetic influence-- the samadhi of the master creates an opportunity for the student to participate.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean telepathy? Or in what way is another person's state of mind a factor for another's state of mind? Wouldn't that be a violation of karma (if one can influence another's mind directly)?

Although the topic deals mainly with the Zen lineage, since it's generally about myths in Buddhism, a little trip into Vajrayana is permissible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2013 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

I have no clue what telepathy is. One's state of mind is easily and commonly affected by the state of mind of others-- spend an hour in a room with a manic person or an extremely angry person and observe your own mental state. I am not particularly concerned with some materialist explanation; it's empirically observable. I don't believe that mind is an epiphenomena of matter. There aren't any walls between one sentient being and another, only labels on percepts.

I don't know what you mean by violating karma... do you mean one person experiencing the karmic results of another? This is clearly not what I have described.

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that if it is possible to directly influence another's mind - one can transfer thoughts, feelings, ideas, concepts, anything - then one can make another do or feel whatever one wants, basically violating the law of karma, because karma depends on what one chooses and defines how one experiences. Being in the same room with others, seeing and hearing how they behave, is not a direct mental influence. So, if there is anything communicated by a teacher to a student beyond what the five sensory faculties record, then there is a direct mental influence. If there isn't, the mentioned intention and energy pattern is either in a physically perceivable act or it doesn't exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

But how is it a problem? Even if it is possible to directly influence another mind, it can only result in providing supporting conditions for that mind. A teacher won't be able to create a new substantial cause in the student's mind, but he'll be able to support some existing causes, allowing them to actualize. This is no different from a physical interaction.

Astus wrote:

What would such a supporting condition be? Is it a thought, is it a feeling, is it a mental representation of a physical input?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

I don't share your epistemological premises. One person in samadhi can certainly impact others. Much of the action to help others in Vajrayana is through this.

Can you please give me some sources for your ideas about karma that explain how samadhi has no impact on the environment and the surroundings of the meditator?

Astus wrote:

This <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/karma.htm> should suffice. I can also cite further explanations from the Kosha or Yogacara sources if required. That is, karma is intentional action, nothing more, nothing less. Every individual experiences the effects of their own actions and not the actions of others. If one could experience the result of another's karma, that would mean that I suffer or enjoy the fruits of someone else's actions. One kills a man and another goes to hell for it. One practices the path and another attains enlightenment. Etc. So, what you are saying is that when one meditates another experiences the benefits of that meditation. Or, if in meditation someone can generate an intention in another's mind, that is taking control over another person's karma, which is again the case that one man's karma bears fruit for another (since the one influenced had no intention to do something but was made to do it by someone else's will). Not to mention the case that although the Buddha himself had superb samadhis, he couldn't make anyone neither liberated nor even a little better (and then consider infinite number of buddhas bringing everyone enlightenment just by meditation). And that's why I say direct mental influence is a violation of karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

This is a strange point of view that seems to imply that people are unable to interact with each other at all. You cannot hit me in the face because that would mean that I suffer the result of your own action.

As I understand it, I can be hit by you because I have some karma to be hit (cause) and you have karma to hit me (supporting condition). Without any of these, the result would not happen. The seed cannot grow without water, and it is pointless to pour water if there is no seed.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say people are unable to interact, I specified direct mental influence. We can communicate and experience others via the five bodily sensory faculties, but we can't do it directly from mind to mind.

Good and bad experiences are the result of karma. Meeting the Dharma is a result of karma. Being able to practice is a result of karma. This subject is covered in Vajrayana preliminary practices, isn't it?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

Maybe I am missing something? Naturally these things are the result of karma. However, doesn't the karmic seed require supporting conditions to bring the appropriate result? I distinctly remember that it does.

Regarding direct mental influence - how, then, can we account for things like mind terma? While transmitting esoteric teachings to his realized disciples in Tibet, Guru Padmasambhava concealed many teachings with the blessings of his enlightened mind stream in the nature of the intrinsic awareness of the minds of his disciples through the power of "mind-mandated transmission" (gtad rgya); thereby the master and disciple became united as one in the teachings and realization. Here, the master has concealed the teachings and blessings, the esoteric attainments, as ter in the pure nature of the minds of his disciples through his enlightened power, and he has made aspirations that the ter may be discovered for the sake of beings when the appropriate time comes

Astus wrote:

We may separate karma (the person's mental habits) and non-karmic conditions (external phenomena, i.e. things perceived by the five senses). This still maintains the impossibility of direct mental influence.

As for explaining mind terma, I can ask the same question. Or, to turn it around, I may say that such thing is not possible. And to give it another turn, such teachings are based on insight into the nature of mind, so it is true that they are from Padmasambhava (or

any chosen enlightened being), since, as we can see in guruyoga, the mind of the teacher and the student are ultimately the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 5:16 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

If we take as a starting premise that ultimately there is no me and you, then the problem of how can I influence/share/transmit to you really becomes redundant.

We all agree that conventional reality, as we perceive it, is not the way things actually are. If somebody is acting intentionally within the sphere of the ultimate...

Some go as far as to say that there is no ultimate and relative reality/truth anyway, or that the perception of the duality of the two truths is an illusion.

Astus wrote:

In ultimate reality there is no coming or going, no birth or death. Transmission is meaningless where there is no you and me. Receiving the four empowerments requires that the disciple follows the steps, does the visualisations, etc., without what he doesn't experience anything (I'm talking practically here). Intentional action in ultimate reality does not exist. As for the unity of the two truths, it is seeing that conventional phenomena are indeed conventional, and there is no separate ultimate beyond the conventional.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2013 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mirage,

I do not see why you insist so much on the impossibility of direct mental influence. I see this as dualistic thinking. In my opinion, direct mental contact no more contradicts karma than a physical contact does. Both are made possible and effectual by the presence of appropriate karma on both sides.

I insist on it because as I said I see it as contradicting karma. How is that an objection that it's dualistic thinking? You don't confuse your right hand with your left, and you don't quench your thirst by someone else drinking. Physical contact is not the same as intention, while thinking is intention. If one person can put thoughts into another's mind then the buddhas can make everyone enlightened.

As it says in your quote, Padmasambhava communicated teachings to disciples by words and deeds, and then those disciples remembered the teachings in a future life. It's not the same as Padmasambhava putting memories into another's consciousness.

The ability (abhijña) to read another's mind, i.e. telepathy, is not unique to a buddha. In the Visuddhimagga there is also a method given how to attain it (XII.3), and the Kosha (VII.56) mentions - but doesn't explain - three ways of doing it: by reading signs, by mantra, by meditation. In the usual enumeration (DN 2) of the mental states one can know by telepathy there are only general qualities and not specific thoughts.

Consciousness is apparently momentary, so the question is if a single moment of consciousness can be the same for two beings, practically a "mind meld", where two streams of consciousness become one. It is like two objects occupying exactly the same space, which means that it's just one object. Since they have different causal background meaning that the effects should be different - we arrive at the problem of different causes creating the same result and then we also have to explain how a single mind can continue on two separate streams. Another option is what Dharmakīrti mentions in his Samtanantara-siddhi (Wood: Mind Only, p. 217-218) that there is only a similar form appearing in one's mind that somewhat reflects another's consciousness. However, this is not a direct mental contact.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 21st, 2013 at 2:16 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mirage,

The problem with the idea that buddhas can put thoughts into people's mind based on the person's receptiveness is that all buddhas continually work on liberating all beings. Therefore what happens is that only the individual's openness determines everything making the influence of buddhas meaningless. That is, buddhas have nothing to do and can't actually do anything, they are a meaningless extra with no actual relevance to anyone's life. Also, here we just simply skip the problem of a single moment of consciousness for multiple beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 21st, 2013 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma Dorje,

The problem is about direct mental influence as was raised regarding the transmission of mantras. The same problem stands with any other sort of idea that involves such consciousness to consciousness contact. Only if this can be clarified it is possible to move on to the specifics like the termas, empowerments and the rest.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 21st, 2013 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

I am still waiting for specific sources that preclude direct mental influence. It is a given that direct mental influence is possible in just about every form of Buddhism I know about so I was hoping for you to spell out your argument against it in specific quotes rather than just a link to a general article on karma.

Astus wrote:

In Xuanzang's *Demonstration of Consciousness Only* (ch. 7, in *Three Texts on Consciousness Only*, p. 239; tr. Francis H. Cook) it is explained that immediate perception of another's mind is impossible:

[Objection:] External form is really nonexistent and presumably not the object of internal consciousness. The minds of others really exist, so why are they not also one's own objects [of consciousness]?

[We reply,] who says that the minds of others are not the objects of one's own consciousness? We just do not say that they are its immediate objects. That is, when a consciousness is born, it is devoid of real function, unlike hands, etc., that immediately grasp external things, or the sun, etc., that spreads its light and immediately illuminates external objects. [Consciousness] is only said to perceive the minds of others because it is like a mirror in which appear seemingly external objects. It cannot immediately perceive [others' minds]. What it immediately perceives are its own transformations. Therefore, a scripture says, "There is not the slightest dharma that is capable of seizing other dharmas. It is just that when consciousness is born, it appears resembling images and is said to seize things." As with having the minds of others as objects, so with form, etc.

Further explanation is found from Dan Lusthaus in *Buddhist Phenomenology*, p. 490-491.

It should be understood simply by considering that consciousness is a subjective experience. Making consciousness objective is not consciousness any more. Experiencing the same therefore requires an identical consciousness, and so on as I have already said.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 21st, 2013 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

mirage said:

So, what matters for us is that blessings and teachings can be conferred in this manner - by causing through the power of yogic concentration the forms in one mind to be represented in another by their close copies. Doesn't it suffice for the purpose

discussed in this thread?

Astus wrote:

Non-direct contact between minds, that includes all sorts of communication (like this forum). The point of bringing up the distinction is to find what else could there be transmitted between teacher and student other than words. If we exclude direct interference we need a representation, something that conveys the message, something that creates a causal link. In case of merit transference, for instance, it is not that someone simply sends out merit to another person who then automatically receives it, but by informing the other person of one's merits and that other individual agreeing with the action that generated the merit, they share the merit, one because of the action, the other because of agreeing with the action. So, there is no "merit-energy transfer" in any literal sense. A teacher giving blessings has to announce the act of blessing and the receiver has to acknowledge it. That acknowledgement is the receiving, or accepting. That's why people can receive a guru's blessing who is not even in their presence, simply by guruyoga. Same at the time of empowerment, the recipients have to actively participate in it by visualising this and that. I'm not denying here the efficiency of any of those practices, I'm debating the idea that there is something mystical (prana, blessing, the seed of enlightenment, etc.) sent from teacher to the student, because it would entail interfering directly with another's mind-stream that skips the usual process of perceiving and comprehending.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 2:18 AM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mirage,

People have six senses. The five physical senses deliver impressions from what we call the outer world. The sixth sense is our thoughts and emotions. It is this sixth sense, consciousness, that is capable of many magical and supernatural things. For instance, among the five eyes the first one is the physical and the rest are mental. The divine eye is capable of seeing heavens and hells, things far and close, and this is what an experienced meditator (of any religion or tradition) can use to see another's mind. This is not so unusual if we think about it a little, since dreams, visions, hallucinations and everyday imagination show us the virtually infinite abilities of the mind. The question is if what we see with the divine eye is not just imagination. The difference between what we call real and imagined is that we can't change real things by wishing so.

Conventional reality has its rules. So, while I accept the existence of the six realms, its specifics (names of places and gods, etc.) as given in Buddhism is not definitive. There are many people who can travel to other worlds/realms by meditation (here using it as a very general term of spiritual techniques), but they experience more or less different things and they can't communicate with each other there. So, if a teacher transmits something not on the level of the five physical senses, in what realm does that happen and how can it be assured that anyone perceives it? What mental dharms can be sent

from mind to mind and what transmits them? Although both the teacher and the student are given specific instructions regarding visualisations and attitudes at the time of empowerment, it is not explained how blessings, etc. go from one person to another, if it is indeed a phenomenon transferred. Rather it seems that it is a matter of imagination, wishing so, just like in the case of the divine eye. However, if there is a way to establish the specifics of giving blessings, etc., I'm happy to hear about it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: Mushin and Chuang Tzu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mushin, that is, no-mind is a Zen term for prajnaparamita, and means non-abiding in any phenomenon, what is seeing their emptiness. And yes, it is the central idea of Zen, just as Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 2:53 AM

Title: Re: Transgendered kids

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that having a male or female genitalia is one thing, identifying with culturally defined gender roles is another.

If a child wants to identify with the opposite gender I see no problem, but he has to be aware of the difficulties (and will face them anyway). But under 18 no surgical or chemical modifications should be allowed.

Regarding Quite Heart's story, I say that people should stop mutilating (circumcision) children.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Mushin and Chuang Tzu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. Zhangzi talks about following the natural appearance of things without contrivance. Zen talks about not attaching to ideas, seeing things clearly and acting compassionately. In Zen there is no natural order to follow or submit to.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Mushin and Chuang Tzu

Content:

Astus wrote:

It does indeed. And it shows how mushin in martial arts is not Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mirage,

What I'm looking for is a coherent explanation for rddhis and the rest. It is easy to say that it's just magic and you don't have to fit it into the larger Buddhist system. Alas, I don't want to do that.

I can see the practical value of Tantric/yogic methods, they are fine as skilful means. My problem is that the way they explain the reason for its functioning (energy channels, magic) does not hold up to analysis. I mean, nobody can visibly perform the mundane super-knowledges (moving through walls, walking on water, etc.), but one can in meditation with a mind-made body. So I say that it's an internal practice and not something observable in our shared (physical) world. From this comes the impossibility of mind to mind communication and such.

How is prana defined? What is it made of? What are its properties? What faculty perceives it? What kind of dharma is it? I have yet to see answers to these questions. As in your quote from Wangyal Rinpoche, there are different bodily feelings and an imagined system one works with and then believes that it's all because an unseen, unknown phenomenon called prana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mirage,

Now we have arrived at the point then that all the unusual features cannot be explained or established and remains in the realm of personal belief. Similarly to the Zen transmission story, where this topic has started, there is nothing that could prove the existence of such phenomena besides relying on tradition and faith. Unlike the Zen lineages that can be shown to be historically inaccurate, but nonetheless existent to some level, supernatural abilities and events simply lack evidence and logical explanation. Another difference is that while there are living people who are members of different Zen lineages, there is yet to be someone who claims to have special abilities. On the other hand, it is said, and that's where we have started, that in the transmission

of mantras there is something else besides mere words. And this claim cannot be verified, practically making it a myth.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Jikan said:

Another way of making the same claim would be to say that Buddhism is a religion, no?

Astus wrote:

Partially. But even in a religion, that has a "theology" (i.e. a logical-philosophical system), it is a reasonable requirement that it is coherent. Even in Buddhist terms the way prana, etc. functions and exists can't be explained, it is an anomaly. Of course, we can say that higher Tantra cannot be connected to other teachings. But then there is no reason why we couldn't say that it is a teaching without valid basis within Buddhism itself. For instance, Tendai, Kegon and Hosso are different schools, but their teachings can be verified by different teachings and connected to each other. Also, none of them have a teaching that is taught beyond words (I mean, you don't need special transmissions to be able to read and study the Lotus Sutra and to benefit from it). In Zen they talk about the wordless transmission, but they also clarify there is nothing actually transmitted. So, if Mantrayana includes something else beyond verbal mantras, it seems logical to me to ask what that is.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Mushin and Chuang Tzu

Content:

Astus wrote:

It does indeed. And it shows how mushin in martial arts is not Zen.

Luke said:

Then do you think that the quote by Takuan Soho which I posted in my OP is also "not Zen"?

I guess the first question in my OP really should have been "Is using the state of mind of mushin to improve one's performance of a martial art or another skill a Zen Buddhist idea or not?"

Astus wrote:

When it says, "is ready only to follow the dictates of the subconscious", either it's a bad translation or a very non-Buddhist idea. Using Zen to be a proficient killer, that's a perversion of the teachings. Zen is about becoming a buddha, it is about the perfection of bodhisattva action. Thinking that Zen is good for learning this or that skill is lacking the correct motivation, bodhicitta. It is mistaking Zen for some technique or therapeutic

method. Zen is direct insight into the nature of mind. No insight, no Zen. One can use a calm mind to be more efficient in many things, yes. But that's just a calm mind, not Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2013 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

dude said:

"In Zen they talk about the wordless transmission, but they also clarify there is nothing actually transmitted."

That can't mean what it literally says.

Astus wrote:

What has been transmitted from Buddha to Kashyapa then?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 23rd, 2013 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Mushin and Chuang Tzu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meido, thanks. I've enjoyed Takuan's work, a lucid presentation indeed, but the quote is very misleading.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 23rd, 2013 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Myth in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just as the majority of the Zen stories, the "Flower Sermon" is fictional. The reason I mentioned is that it shows that what is transmitted is nothing but the direct understanding of the nature of mind. When one sees the nature of mind, that is receiving the transmission from mind to mind. That's why it is said that there is nothing actually transmitted. In fact, there is nothing actually realised either. Not seeing is true seeing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 24th, 2013 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Caodong lineage in China survived via the Shaolin monastery, where https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xueting_Fuyu established its lineage and it was the source

of the 17th century revival of the Caodong line. Even today the Shaolin monastery belongs to the Caodong lineage. Ven. Shengyan also has the Caodong transmission, you can see his lineage chart <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/about-the-western-chan-fellowship/lineage-of-the-teachers/lineage-chart/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 24th, 2013 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: Great Soto masters after Dogen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keizan> is regarded as the second founder of Soto Zen. Menzan Zuiho (1683-1769) made Dogen and his writings the central source of doctrine in Soto, and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gento_Sokuchu de-emphasised the use of koans in Soto. In the modern era the most famous is probably https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodo_Sawaki.

You may also look at this: <http://terebess.hu/english/zenschool.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Maybe, but they have obviously not established any lasting community. In China the Linji school practically took over the Chan scene, just as in Korea and Vietnam. The Japanese who travelled to China and returned, or the Chinese who went to Japan during the 13th century belonged to the Linji school, Dogen seems to be an exception. It should be also noted that belonging to this or that lineage in China had little or no relevance to the everyday monastic life.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

plwk said:

Funny Astus, that DDM chart didn't mentioned

http://www.tallahasseechan.com/guogu_bio.html amongst the five lay Dharma heirs listed or was his 'inka' unconnected to being a 'Dharma heir'?

Astus wrote:

It lists only Western heirs.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Talking About Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I see it, kensho is personally verifying the truth of the Buddha's teaching that all phenomena are empty. Since this is a central teaching I don't see a reason why it couldn't be discussed.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: Has anyone else left Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I know someone who originally studied Vajrayana and Dzogchen in particular, but then read a book from Ajahn Sumedho and thought that since it's the same as Dzogchen why take all the fuss that it involves so switched to Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Mulamadhyamakakarika and more

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are quite a few.

MMK:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=38WJRwP3nLgC> (annotated translation)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=FL4KAAAAYAAJ> (selections from Candrakirti's commentary)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=QpO5ykqRHJEC> (Tsongkhapa's commentary)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=54kV38QYrvoC> (Jay Garfield's commentary)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=0czByWU0US8C> (Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso's commentary)

Alamkara:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=hOb6M6Uo948C> (Mipham's commentary)

And there are lot of teachings in Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: What a Zen Master is, and what a Zen Master isn't.

Content:

seeker242 said:

And how can this be done without having a hierarchy of people maintaining control over other people, telling them what to do? Who is going to be in charge of "the system"?

Astus wrote:

By recognising the qualities of others, their experience, knowledge, kindness and wisdom, there are people who one considers good friends from whom one can learn. Usually lay people learn from monastics, and in the monastery there is a seniority system. Buddhism doesn't work like the Catholic Church, there is no strict hierarchy, no <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magisterium>. Whatever one teacher says is not compulsory for anyone else to accept it. The Zen tradition itself is diverse. And there is no need for any control over others. By "system" I mean the way people are taught about the Dharma. And either one accepts the idea that people are capable of comprehending and practising the teaching (one of the meanings of universal buddha-nature), or doesn't accept it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Talking About Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

There are people who charge big money for seminars on it, and so on. So it does not hurt to be reticent about the subject. It is a very subtle thing. It is very easily exploited and misunderstood as I'm sure we would all agree.

Astus wrote:

But if you make it open and clear there's nothing left to misunderstand and exploit. Although even if it were part of the primary school's curriculum there would be a few people falling for charlatans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Has anyone else left Vajrayana?

Content:

anjali said:

The most compatible with Zen teaching in the Tibetan tradition I've found is Mahamudra. There are some excellent manuals on Mahamudra meditation that can easily compliment a zen approach. Best wishes on simplifying your practice.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.wwzc.org/book/ven-anzan-hoshin-roshi> translated "The Practice of the Co-Emergent Mahamudra", and the late

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Crook_%28ethologist%29 led Mahamudra retreats.

Since only a few meditation manuals have been translated so far to English from

Chinese, Mahamudra is the closest in view one can find as a complement to Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 27th, 2013 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ronald M. Davidson writes in *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*:

Buddhist hermeneutics in service of the siddha-related literature had to accomplish several arduous goals. First, under the rubric of secrecy, it had to explain why the new literature diametrically contradicted the fundamental Buddhist values of virtuous restraint, since restraint and discipline (vinaya, sila) were the starting points to Buddhist institutional life. Second, siddha hermeneutics needed to generate a systematic interpretation of difficult passages, especially those tying erotic behavior to the Buddha himself. Finally, the exegesis needed to be sufficiently flexible both to reassure the conservative monastic community, while continuing to incorporate new developments in Indian religious life.

(p. 239-240)

Most Buddhist Mahayanist and esoteric scriptures explicitly acknowledge the question of reception with the introductory chapters (nidana) affording scenarios in which different communities are assembled, followed by their haggling over the meaning of the Buddha's message. The hermeneutics of reception, in fact, contributed to one of the great paradoxes of Indian esoteric Buddhism: the employment of secrecy for the purpose of propagating extensively the esoteric practices within multiple communities and subcultures. The esoteric method is arguably the most successful Indian Buddhist ritual system to market itself throughout both the traditional and modern worlds. Given the extraordinary spread and viability of the esoteric persuasion, it appears that one aspect of its popularity is exactly its claims to superiority by virtue of selectivity. Few themes fan the flames of desire like restricted access and an aura of incomparability. In their emphasis on secrecy, esoteric Buddhists shared systems of transmission with other institutions that required secrecy in the pursuit of hegemonic status: governments, trade societies, criminal conspiracies, and ritual specialists.

In recognition of these requirements, the rhetoric of esoterism directed that new material typically be introduced through the agency of a scriptural pronouncement that is presented as a challenge to the status quo. The language of the introductory chapters (nidana), introductory sections of threatening chapters, and sections on coded language (sandhyabhasa) often represent their content as causing grave doubts, sometimes about their referents, sometimes about the nature of the Buddha's message itself. Many of the literary techniques had already been introduced in Mahayana sutras, especially the *Saddharmapundarika*, but were used now to justify decidedly different content.

(p. 245-246)

At home, esoteric Buddhism demonstrated tenacious success in India for more than five centuries at a time when the dynamics of the subcontinent were rapidly changing, and Buddhist institutions were in retreat in the Krsna River valley and elsewhere. It assisted the maintenance of the great monasteries and stemmed the Saiva tide sweeping up from the south. It sponsored the development of aesthetic and artistic forms in other countries such as Tibet, China, Japan, Nan-chao, and Burma—and formulated models of a hierarchical sacred community that survive to the present. It developed some of the most popular rituals ever employed in Buddhist centers and propagated them with a rhetoric of intimacy and secrecy. Indeed, the overwhelming success of the Secret Path has propelled it into a position where it has become perhaps the least secret of all the Buddhist meditative systems.

(p. 339)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 12:20 AM

Title: Zen is No Secret

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bojo Jinul's seminal work, the Secrets on Cultivating the Mind (Susimkyeol), contains the essential teachings of Zen that everyone eager to liberate all beings should study carefully. It answers many questions that people who learn about Zen find difficult to answer. It shows the actual nature of mind and advises on how to go on from the initial enlightenment.

http://www.buddhism.org/board/read.cgi?board=Dharma_Talks&y_number=19

<http://www.wonbuddhism.org/doc/4.buddhist.sutra%28english%29/6.2.Secrets.of.Cultivating.the.Mind.by.Dr.T.Cleary.pdf> (PDF)

"Since all dharmas are like dreams or conjuring tricks, deluded thoughts are originally calm and the dusty sense-spheres are originally empty. At the point where all dharmas are empty, the numinous awareness is unobscured. That is, this mind of void and calm, numinous awareness is your original face. It is also the dharma-seal transmitted without a break by all the buddhas of the three time-periods, the successive generations of patriarchs and teachers, and the spiritual advisors of this world. If you awaken to this mind, then this is truly what is called not climbing the rungs of a ladder: you ascend straight to the stage of buddhahood and each step transcends the three realms of existence. Returning home, your doubts will be instantly resolved, and you will become the teacher of humans and divinities. Endowed with both compassion and wisdom and fully endowed with the twofold benefit, you will be worthy of receiving the offerings of humans and divinities. Each day you can use ten-thousand taels of gold. If you can do this, you will be a great man who will have indeed finished the tasks of this life."

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 2, p. 219)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: What does it mean to practice seriously?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it depends on intention. What is the goal of practice? Worldly benefits, future life benefits, personal liberation or liberating others.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If the reason for secrecy were the personal nature of practice, it'd be true for every Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) teaching. If the reason were to keep it holy, the same would apply for all religion. Rather, as Davidson says, the idea of secrecy was and still is used primarily as an attractive element, to make it look special and people who are initiated feel they are the chosen ones. Secrecy is also used to explain why Tantra was unknown to other Buddhist schools, the same excuse used by Mahayana. Western esoteric teachings are also meant to be secret, however, it is obvious that practically anyone who wants to know about it can get all the information. Same applies for Vajrayana that is arguably the most widespread form of Buddhism in the West with perhaps the largest number of publications and other media coverage from documentary films to Hollywood movies. It is a lot easier to learn about the Six Yogas, one of the highest and most secret practices, than to find information on such common practices as (East Asian) Pure Land funerary rituals.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If the reason for secrecy were the personal nature of practice, it'd be true for every Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) teaching.

Pero said:

And who says it isn't?

Astus wrote:

However, Vajrayana as a teaching is not personal, it is very formalised and structural. Therefore, there is no reason for certain texts to be called hidden or secret that could harm an uninitiated person. One could misinterpret any Buddhist teaching. Also, since Tantra has been accepted as part of the orthodox monastic training, it rarely involves practices that are as extreme as it might have been once. Generally an empowerment doesn't involve actually swallowing "bodhicitta" and generating bliss by union,

everything that was contrary to Buddhist ethics has been reinterpreted as only symbolic. Since tantras are included in both the Tibetan and Chinese canons, practically anyone has free access to them. So calling it secret does not mean that it is hidden or unknown. I'd say the names Secret Mantra, Secret School (Mi Zong 密宗), or Secret Teaching (Mikkyo 密教) is more like a style, an aesthetic value.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: What does it mean to practice seriously?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Once Zen Master To An was visiting another temple. He was not wearing his Zen Master clothes, but just the clothes of a wandering monk. He began a conversation with one of the monks at the temple, who did not recognize him. Soon the monk began to talk about his Master. "Everyday he does one thousand prostrations. He eats only one meal a day. He hasn't left the temple for thirty years. He is always sitting Zen. He is the greatest Zen Master in all of China."

To An replied, "Well, well, he sounds like an extraordinary man. I can't do any of these things. I can't bow a thousand times a day; but my mind is never lazy. I can't eat only once a day; but I never desire food. I can't stay in a temple for more than a short time; but wherever I go I have no hindrance. I can't sit Zen for very long; but I never give rise to thinking."

The monk said, "I don't understand." "Then go ask your Master," To An replied. The monk bowed and went into the temple.

Soon the Zen Master of the temple came running out to To An and prostrated himself three times in front of him. "You are a great Zen Master," he said. "Please let me become your disciple. I have been very attached to hard training. But now that I have heard your words, my mind is clear."

To An laughed and said, "No, I can't be your teacher. You are already a great Zen Master. All you need to do is to keep the mind you had when you were bowing to me. Already you are a free man. Before, you were bowing, sitting and eating only for yourself. Now it is for all people."

At these words, the Zen Master began to weep with joy. He bowed again to To An and said, simply, "Thank you."

(Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p. 112-113)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Pero said:

True, but I think the danger of doing so is greater in Vajrayana. And for example, stuff like tsa lung without some instructions from someone experienced can lead to serious problems.

Astus wrote:

There are all sorts of physical and energy exercises people do without any problem. Sure, having a proper martial arts or yoga instructor decreases the chances of injury. And while it is uncommon that people learn any of them only from a book, it is not impossible (especially when one already has some experience in that area). Also, what kinds of serious problems do you mean here?

Pero said:

But there is a difference between the path and a practitioner on that path. I guess you could say that the former is not personal while the latter is.

Astus wrote:

The personal application of a path is unique regardless of the path followed. In this there is no difference between any teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two things should be clarified.

1.

In China association with any particular lineage is mostly irrelevant in terms of doctrine and practices. At certain times in Buddhist history such lineages meant association with certain groups of elite monastics, but those times were rather exceptional. Normally life in a monastery goes on just as it did before, following similar rituals and daily routine. Individual monks can specialise in the area of their choice and do the practices they prefer. And when there is an outstanding (usually old and experienced) monk, younger monks go and study from him.

2.

Dogen didn't actually transmit a specific style of Zen to Japan but rather what he saw as the common form of Buddhist practice. It is Zen just before the reforms of Dahui - i.e. kanhua chan, using Zen stories for meditation - spread everywhere. Shikantaza is not an exclusively Caodong/Soto method but ordinary sitting meditation in the Zen way.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2013 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Luke said:

For example, if a person never ate in public and only ate when he was in private with no one to observe him, only would eat using a silver spoon with a Buddha on the end of it,

and if someone who was not part of his "eating with Buddha spoons group" asked him "Do you ever eat?", he would avoid answering the question, even though all people know about eating already; then the act of eating in such a ritualized way would take on a new intensity for him mentally.

Astus wrote:

Just a side note for eating privately: <http://en.memory-alpha.org/wiki/Kreetassan>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Luke said:

Ah, so all Chan monks receive shikantaza instruction and can practice it whenever they wish?

Astus wrote:

Monks may receive a lot of instructions or almost nothing, depending on their ordination teacher and the community they live in. There is no such thing as a "Chan monk", there are only monks and nuns. Nowadays in Taiwan the major Buddhist churches have seminars for those who ordain and they study a curriculum. Same goes for Korea and Japan. But a hundred years ago you learnt what and from whoever you could. I don't know what is the situation in mainland China these days regarding monastic education.

Luke said:

Hmm, but didn't Rujing have his own "style" of Chan? If his style wasn't unique then why is it given its own special name (Caodong)?

Astus wrote:

Caodong is simply a lineage, a virtual system of relationships among elite monastics (primarily abbots). Theoretically the Caodong school's teaching style involved the Five Ranks of Dongshan, and (as mentioned in Fayan's Guidelines for the Zen Schools) "knocking and calling out" (whatever that means), and the five positions of prince and minister (mentioned in the Blue Cliff Record, case 7), and if I recall correctly they also liked to use the Yijing to illustrate teachings. Dogen apparently didn't follow any of that. As for the practice of "shikantaza", on the one hand every Buddhist monk knows sitting meditation, on the other hand the expression itself "just sitting" was most likely created by Dogen himself.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 5:36 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Pero said:

Health problems. I'm not totally clear on the details as I haven't so far seen anything

elaborating on it. As far as I remember my teacher just says one can become abnormal.

Astus wrote:

I've heard a few stories myself about people flipping out on meditation retreats, although there was no Tantra involved. Some Christians also believe that meditation makes you susceptible to demonic possession. And there are all sorts of mental and emotional problems one may face in meditation, although the worst I've seen was a few people crying or be frightened of some experiences. I'm not saying that one can't do harm with practices, but it sounds more like empty threats. As I see it, the worst thing that can happen when one is without an experienced guide is believing in things that are not there. Alas, without detailed and reliable information this is not a topic that can be explored.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are the four major Taiwanese Buddhist organisations' description of their aims and programmes:

<http://www.fgs.org.tw/english/orgainzations/objectives/objectives.html>

<http://www.ctworld.org/english-96/html/a7Threefold-SANGHA.htm>

<http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about2.aspx?sn=52>

http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=281&Itemid=289&lang=en

Or you may look into the free e-books to see what topics they cover and how they present Buddhism:

<http://blpusa.com/category/buddhism-in-every-step>

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/>

An interesting fact is for instance that while Ven. Shengyan is called "Chan master" in English, he is "Dharma teacher" (fashi - common title of all monks) in Chinese. Another thing is that while Ven. Shengyan was known in Taiwan primarily as a scholarly monk, in the West his organisation is mostly about promoting a newer style of Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: In Search of a Teacher

Content:

Astus wrote:

Are you looking specifically for a Zen teacher or just any Buddhist teacher? For a start, you may check what Buddhist communities are available in your area.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

yegyal said:

"Believing in things that aren't there"

Doesn't that describe most of the "things" people believe in?

As for health problems, the most widespread issue that Buddhist practitioners face are lung/wind problems, which covers a variety of nervous conditions. I think is what they refer to in Japan as "Zen sickness," and it's pretty much caused by those that either push themselves or practice in a very forceful or tight way. But this has much less to do with secrecy, than it does the need for the guidance of a teacher who can notice and help you correct these kinds of deviations.

Astus wrote:

I meant by things that are not there the misinterpretation of the teachings. Zen sickness is mistaking quiet and peace for enlightenment, or any other special experience one may have in meditation. It is like taking "bliss, clarity and non-thought" to be the nature of mind.

Can you specify "wind problems"?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

yegyal,

You say nervous conditions. Is that a reference to actual bodily problems, or only to energetic issues? I mean, can you describe probable health related dangers in modern medical terms, or does it only exist in the old Indo-Tibetan view of the human body? I think this is a relevant question as far as the reason for secrecy goes, because if it can be shown that certain practices cause actual physical and/or mental damage to people, it'd require stricter control (similarly to psychotherapists and doctors).

After reading the <http://meditatorswindimbalance.org/about-meditators-wind-imbalance-lung/> section on that site, I'd say such problems with trying too hard and doing the meditation wrong can occur with any type of practice. That is, Vajrayana doesn't require any special treatment in this case.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 9:34 PM

Title: Re: Achieving Epistemic Certainty

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides the advice to look into

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pram%C4%81%E1%B9%87a#In_Tibetan_Buddhism and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_logic, the way to gain certainty about the Buddha's teaching is https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_in_Buddhism. Wisdom includes the studying and understanding of the teachings, and then confirming them in meditation by direct experience. While epistemology and logic are subjects studied mainly in Tibetan Buddhism, wisdom is an essential part of the path to liberation in every school. Obtaining certainty in the Dharma is the first stage of enlightenment, so every practitioner has to work towards this in the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 30th, 2013 at 7:04 PM

Title: Re: Dzog Chen and Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A related post: <http://earlytibet.com/2011/11/22/tibetan-chen-v/>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 30th, 2013 at 11:43 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Luke said:

So in reality, in modern China and Taiwan, there is little difference between a Chan monk who is a Linji lineage holder and a Chan monk who is a Caodong lineage holder? (Both Chan monks have probably studied mostly the same things.) Is this correct?

Astus wrote:

There are just monks (and nuns, in fact, a lot more nuns than monks in Taiwan). Whether they say they belong to this or that lineage (that includes even Tiantai, Huayan or anything else) is usually not relevant, because it is often defined by what monastery they were ordained or live in. For instance, Ven. Xingyun of Fo Guang Shan is Linji lineage but there isn't anything Linji (or even Chan) specific in his teachings. And while Ven. Shengyan has created the Dharma Drum lineage (combination of Linji and Caodong), his teachings are a mixture of Tiantai, Humanistic Buddhism and a bit of Japanese Zen (but mostly his own system), while at the same time in the Western Chan Fellowship (followers of Ven. Shengyan) they teach a mixture of Soto Zen, huatou practice and some sort of therapeutic techniques (just to show how Western perception and presentation can be quite different even if there is a direct relationship). Korea is another good example here, since the majority of monks belong to a single church, the Jogye Order, that actually promotes Ganhwa Seon (i.e. Linji style Chan), but individual

monasteries and teachers can transmit very different things (even rejecting Ganhwa practice).

The sort of "objectless meditation" is called mozhao (silent illumination, mokusho in Japanese), just as Ven. Shengyan uses it. Interestingly, it was originally a derogatory term used by Dahui. That is, mozhao used in the Caodong context. Otherwise it can have many other names, like no-thought, no-mind, prajnaparamita, one act samadhi, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 30th, 2013 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

oldbob said:

Recognizing this, perhaps it is more responsible to explain, and put in context, all secret teaching and then expect common sense and peer pressure to control and limit harmful, or crazy making, behavior.

Astus wrote:

I can only agree with this. And just as in any Buddhist path, the majority wants to join a community and learn from teachers and experienced members. It is not easy to assume the correct meditation posture without some guidance, and that's even truer for the rest of the practices, although there are some very good meditation manuals too.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Jnana said:

Two reasons for maintaining secrecy in the Vajrayāna that are applicable across historical periods and cultures:

- (1) because it is undertaken as a commitment on the part of the student, and
- (2) because there are certain vajrayāna practices that can have negative karmic consequences if incorrectly engaged in.

Astus wrote:

Point one is actually saying that "it is secret because it is secret". Point two may be applied to non-vajrayana practices too.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that Caodong as a distinct form of teaching in China has disappeared around the 13th century, if it ever really existed at all. As for anyone interested in Dogen's teachings, I have no information, maybe there are a few.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 5:18 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Jnana said:

The potential risk of serious negative karmic consequences increases significantly when venturing outside of exoteric orthopraxy.

Astus wrote:

How so? Can you give some examples?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Jnana said:

Drinking alcohol would be one example. Sexual yogas would be another. The potential for negative consequences are far greater than if one maintains the lay precepts or the monastic discipline without engaging in such activities.

Astus wrote:

I see your point. Still, there are a few Mahayana sutras that give complete freedom to bodhisattvas in the name of emptiness and compassion, and there are Zen stories for instance that are as transgressive as those from Vajrayana. Although none of them constitutes a part of actual training.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Caodong lineage in China after Rujing?

Content:

Luke said:

Did any of these "more significant masters" teach ideas from the Caodong tradition?

Astus wrote:

The mentioned Hongzhi Zhengjue is the most famous person. The "founders" of the Caodong lineage are also well known: Dongshan Liangjie and Caoshan Benji. Then there are Touzi Yiqing, Furong Daokai (Furong being the actual reviver of the Caodong school in the Song era and inventor of "silent illumination"), Zhenxie Qingliao and others of the Song era. But there's very little from any of them in English.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Good practices for a householder

Content:

Astus wrote:

Originally the huatou method propagated by Dahui Zonggao was meant for lay people. Read the book *Swampland Flowers*, most of the letters in it from Dahui are sent to lay people. You may also study the teachings of Bankei Yotaku and Daehaeng Sunim, both of them taught very direct Zen and they had a large lay audience.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Learning about Tendai

Content:

Jikan said:

To me this opens onto another question that I would like to discuss in another thread sometime: I've been told but I haven't confirmed it that Tendai training contains within it a Zen transmission, but not the "northern" or "southern" transmissions that have become so well known as Soto and Rinzai: the "Ox Head" school (Gozu) line. I know next to nothing about this except for some comments made in passing by my teacher, and the little bits I've read in Dumoulin's book on Zen.

Astus wrote:

You can read a little about the Niutou/Gozu school here:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-JOCP/henrik.htm>.

The poem in another translation with some modern commentary:

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1307&Itemid=0

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2013 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Good practices for a householder

Content:

shaunc said:

Pureland. I got into it for similar reasons.

kirtu said:

This is one reason we need something like Obaku Zen. DT Suzuki said something similar in the intro to his *Pure Land* book.

Astus wrote:

No need to rely on the very little information available in English on the Obaku school.

Just look at the teachings of practically any teacher from Chinese or Vietnamese Mahayana. Pure Land and Chan practices easily go together.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Pero said:

Anyway, in the end, none of you seem to be able to give any good reason against secrecy.

Astus wrote:

Against? We could explore that area too, although so far it was about examining the reasons for the secrecy, as that is one of the things that makes Vajrayana different from all the other methods in Buddhism that are not secret at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Separate topic: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=12611>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

Konchog1 said:

If you try to do [Completion Stage practices] without proper preparation-which means a thorough grounding in the graduated path-and without a stable deity practice, you will lose your mind. I mean that quite literally. You really need to know what you are doing; otherwise all sorts of things can start to happen. If the energies move into a wrong area, moving them back again is incredibly difficult. There are many mediators who have gone completely crazy because that have not followed the practices correctly or tried to take shortcuts.

-Tantra by Geshe Tashi Tsering pg. 117

Astus wrote:

All types of Mahamudra and Dzogchen are completion stage practices, still they are taught very openly and I doubt there were many who have lost their minds because of that. Or perhaps what was meant are specific wind related techniques? In that case, we're back to the subject discussed a few pages back.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

yegyal said:

Again, I think it's a mistake to assume that you would even know about the things that are actually kept secret.

Astus wrote:

In that case, everything that can be learnt about Vajrayana without sitting at the feet of a guru are not secret at all. I wonder what could be left to teach to the actual disciples in secret...

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Good practices for a householder

Content:

greentara said:

'again, you don't need to sit and do anything. You just need to sit. Give up the obsessive human need to do something all the time and just be still. Let Silence teach you as you sit.

Astus wrote:

And why sit? What if you don't have time to just sit around? There are things to take care of, people to talk to, meals to cook, work to do, etc. How do you manage that?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism in Singapore?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a virtual tour of a monastery, as an example of traditional Chinese Buddhist structure, in Singapore: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/temple/temple.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Historical reasons for secrecy in Vajrayana?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Shitloads of stuff. You cannot even begin to imagine how much more there is.

Astus wrote:

That's good, because it seems the entire path is well described in several versions, plus all the open teachings and empowerments, consequently none of them are secret or

restricted.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 3rd, 2013 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Good practices for a householder

Content:

Astus wrote:

ShaunC,

There are different levels of Buddhists, and everybody takes and uses as much of the Dharma as they want. The first thing is to take refuge in the Three Jewels, then on you are a Buddhist, no matter what. If you can keep, or aspire to keep, some precepts and vows, that's already part of the practice. And when I say practice, it means practising the Dharma in one's life, and not in a narrow sense of sitting on a cushion.

From a fundamental perspective, here is a collection of teachings addressed to lay people: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/index-subject.html#lay>. This discourse is highly recommended: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>

And if we are talking about Mahayana, the six paramitas are easily applicable to lay life. It includes methods to relate to others (giving, discipline), central qualities to nurture (patience, effort), and inner methods (meditation, wisdom). If that sounds too much, it can be reduced to a single practice: compassion. Devotion is another important part of Buddhism, and you can see its tangible presence in any Buddhist country. One part of that devotion is "mindfulness of Buddha", that is practised in the form of recitation and prostration. The central method of the Pure Land school is being mindful of Amitabha Buddha, and it is the most popular among both the laity and the monastics. But if you feel more connected to another buddha or bodhisattva, that's fine too.

If you are more drawn to Vajrayana, it has a lot to offer too. As an example: <http://www.dzogchenmeditation.com/about-us/what-is-dzogchen/13-teachings/16-the-pointing-out-instruction-to-the-old-lady.html>

I think that even for a busy lay person like you there are many many options. You just have to choose.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2013 at 2:13 AM

Title: Re: How did Dogen present karma & rebirth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen talks directly and indirectly about karma and rebirth. Some examples:

In the Shobogenzo (tr. Nishijima-Cross, Numata edition):

vol 1

ch9, Keisei-sanshiki (p. 118), on the power of confession cleansing past karma

ch10, Shoaku-makusa, the entire chapter about retribution and precepts

ch12, Kesa-kudoku (p. 159), on the power of kesa/kashaya cleansing karma

ch14, Sansuigyo (p. 221), different beings see in different ways

vol 4

ch90, Shizen-biku (p. 272), criticises Kongzi and Laozi for their ignorance of past lives

ch84, Sanji-no-go, the whole chapter is about the karma in three times

In the Eihei Koroku (tr. Leighton-Okumura):

4.275 (p264); 5.383 (p340) fruit of past lives

5.386 (p344) "If people who study Buddha Dharma have no genuine faith or true mindfulness, they will certainly dispense with and ignore [the law of] causality."

6.437 (p392) denying karma is wrong view, zazen with wrong view is useless

7.485 (p430); 7.517 (p460) 3 kinds of karma

7.504 (p450) "Tathagatas never go beyond clarifying cause and effect"

7.510 (p454) "Students of the way cannot dismiss cause and effect. If you discard cause and effect, you will ultimately deviate from practice-realization."

7.524 (p466) rebirth of relatives by the merit of one's leaving home

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2013 at 2:47 AM

Title: Re: Jewel Ornament - Question about Dharmakaya

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is a word for the emptiness of the mind. For the emptiness of everything in general the word is dharmadhatu. While both mean emptiness, the difference is regarding to the emptiness of what.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2013 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Jewel Ornament - Question about Dharmakaya

Content:

Konchog1 said:

So if the Dharmakaya is of the mind then what is meant by "Dharmakaya is all-pervading emptiness"?

Astus wrote:

As Cone said, all things are mind, and mind is empty. Don't forget that emptiness is not something in and of itself but the quality, the nature of phenomena. Dharmakaya is used in the context of the trikaya teaching (the term dharmakaya has other uses too, but they are not important here). So in order to say that the nature of the mind of every sentient being is the same as the mind of buddhas they use the term dharmakaya. Emptiness is a universal quality, so we can say that dharmakaya is the same as the

emptiness of everything else, because the mind being empty is no different from other things being empty.

In the JOL (p. 289) all-pervading emptiness is explained under the 4th category: "Oneness. It is indivisible because the Dharmadhatu and primordial wisdom cannot be differentiated." That is, non-conceptuality includes not making differences between this and that, not grasping the extremes of sameness and difference, therefore it is all-pervading.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2013 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Rinzai views on rebirth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the majority of Zen practitioners and teachers in the West are agnostic on this subject, leaning one way or the other. I, for instance, am agnostic on the subject, but lean toward nonbelief..."

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2008/09/some-questions-answered-regarding-soto-zen-in-north-america.html>

"It is not taught any place in the sutras that we will have a next life; these six realms are not something that we will experience when we are reborn in another life. They could apply to different parts of society; they could apply to different aspects of our current life; they could apply to our various states of mind."

<http://onedropzen.org/uploads/freshlyfallensnow.pdf>

"Whenever I've had the opportunity, I've asked the Zen masters I've encountered about rebirth. My first teacher, Sochu Roshi, said, "It's a nice story." I asked another teacher, Eido Roshi, about the same thing and he thought for a moment then he said, "It's better to say, 'Could be' than to say, 'No.'" When I asked Maezumi Roshi about it, he never answered me except with thunderous silence. Nonetheless, I overheard him telling others, "Yes, definitely, there's rebirth!" Rather than talk about it, they wanted me to find out for myself."

(Gerry Shishin Wick: The Book of Equanimity, p. 29)

"Another fundamental principle of Buddhism is the doctrine of the continuity of life and death. There is no sharp dividing line between this life and the next. ... Death does not disturb the continuity of life; for karma and rebirth are continuous, the one implying and being inseparable from the other. As sin and suffering bring death, so does death bring rebirth."

(Nyogen Senzaki: Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy p. 89)

"The Chan and Zen views of Rebirth are not the same. These schools make no assumptions or hold beliefs as to what happens after one dies. Because of this, rebirth is seen as being born into each moment, dying and being reborn into the next moment. This isn't something to be taken on faith, but to understood through your own practice."

<http://www.zen-georgia.org/ZenFaq.html#11> (a Rinzai Zen group)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2013 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Soto views on rebirth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"In Zen we talk about rebirth in this lifetime. ... Karma is a word that expresses the process of how the way you live in this moment affects what happens in the next moment, or the next year, or the next decade."

http://www.dharma-rain.org/?p=about_faq#rebirth

<http://suicidegirlsblog.com/blog/the-myth-of-rebirth/>

<http://hardcorezen.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/literal-rebirth.html>

"Heaven is a human supposition and Hell is also a human supposition. But when our autonomic nervous system is balanced, it is just Heaven, and when our autonomic nervous system is not balanced, it is just Hell."

<http://www.dogensangha.org/questions.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2013 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: Are Satipatthana, Shamatha and Vipashyana interrelated?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Satipatthana (smṛtyupasthāna) is a complete method in itself that includes both calming (samatha) and insight (vipassana/vipasyana). Although it is not necessary to master several stages of absorption (jhāna/dhyāna), some level of mental peace is always required by every meditation system in Buddhism that I know of (including modern Burmese vipassana). The method of calming doesn't lead to liberation because it is simply a temporary tranquillity one gains and without insight there is no turning away from grasping at phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2013 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

Content:

Astus wrote:

Getting started with the text is probably the most difficult part, but if you can understand the way it gives its reasons in the first two chapters then I think you will have little problem with the rest. I recommend you just start reading and if you have questions start a topic for it in the Mahayana or Academic section.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2013 at 10:07 PM

Title: Bankei on Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kosho Uchiyama wrote about "sesshin without toys" and how zazen is not playing with anything.

"It seems to me that we spend all our lives playing with toys. ... Doing zazen means to actualize the reality of life. zazen is the self which is only the self of the universe, without any playing with toys. Zazen is like the time just before our death when all the toys have been taken away. Yet, even then we look around for something to play with, if only for an instant."

(Opening the Hand of Thought, p. 62)

"Among all the human activities in the world, there is nothing in which we can live out our own life without amusing ourselves with toys. Only sitting zazen is free from self-amusement with toys. This is the point where zazen is wondrous."

(The Wholehearted Way, p. 127)

What I find missing is to say that zazen itself is a toy, a device, that they keep playing with, to the exclusion of other tools (recitation, repentance, etc.). While reducing Zen to zazen seems minimalist, there is one more step. See what Bankei says:

"If the Buddha-mind is clearly realized, that's enough. You need do nothing else — no practice, no precepts, no zazen or koan study. Nothing like that. You'll be free from care, everything will be taken care of, just by being as you are."

(The Unborn, p. 116, tr. Waddell)

"The only way any of you can become unborn and realize the Buddha-mind is to confirm what I'm telling you in your own mind. I won't tell you that you have to practice such and such, that you have to uphold certain rules or precepts or read certain sutras or other Zen writings, or that you have to do zazen. I'm not going to try to give you the Buddha-mind either — you already have it. If you listen carefully to me, and grasp the Buddha-mind that's already yours, then you become a genuine living Buddha. Wherever you are standing, that place is the Unborn. Whatever you want to do, you can do it. If you want to recite sutras or do zazen, observe precepts, recite the Nembutsu or the Daimoku, you should do it.⁵⁹ If you're a farmer or a tradesman and you want to work your farm or your business, then go ahead, do it; whatever it is, that will be your personal samadhi. My part in this is simply to tell you about it and to try to get you to confirm the Buddha-minds you were all given when you were born."

(The Unborn, p. 120, tr. Waddell)

"To exert yourselves in religious practice, trying to produce enlightenment by doing religious practices and zazen, is all wrong too. There's no difference between the mind of all the buddhas and the Buddha Mind of each one of you. But by wanting to realize enlightenment, you create a duality between the one who realizes enlightenment and

what it is that's being realized. When you cherish even the smallest desire to realize enlightenment, right away you leave behind the realm of the Unborn and go against the Buddha Mind. This Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately is one alone—not two, not three!"

(Bankei Zen, p. 76, tr. Haskel)

"Now, you may be doing zazen and reading the sutras, but abide in the Buddha Mind that you have from your parents innately, just as it is, and realize the Unborn. If you practice zazen or read the sutras with some deliberate aim in mind, hoping to accumulate merit, or whatever, you'll only be changing the Buddha Mind for merit, or changing it for zazen and sutras! That's how it is, so all you've got to do is acknowledge with profound faith and realization that, without your producing a single thought or resorting to any cleverness or shrewdness, everything is individually recognized and distinguished of itself. And all because the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind is unborn and smoothly manages each and every thing."

(Bankei Zen, p. 85, tr. Haskel)

"All of you should realize the vital, functioning, living Buddha Mind! For several hundred years now, [people in] both China and Japan have misunderstood the Zen teaching, trying to attain enlightenment by doing zazen or trying to find 'the one who sees and hears,' all of which is a great mistake. Zazen is just another name for original mind, and means to sit in tranquility with a tranquil mind. When you do sitting meditation, you're simply sitting, just as you are; when you do walking meditation, you're walking, just as you are."

(Bankei Zen, p. 96, tr. Haskel)

"Mind accords with all circumstances, yet doesn't arise or cease
The sages of old praised this, calling it zazen
Blind people wear out their cushions waiting for enlightenment
Just like trying to make a mirror by polishing a brick"

(Bankei Zen, p. 123, tr. Haskel)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 8th, 2013 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Cryonic Preservation and Rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm no expert in medicine or biology, however, as I've heard, frozen dead bodies can never be reanimated because by freezing the cells they are practically destroyed (just as freezing water can break the bottle).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 8th, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Sokushinbutsu - What do you guys think of this?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no limit to what people can do once they have grasped on an idea.

Misunderstanding the Dharma is very easy. Understanding correctly the Dharma is also very easy. What you choose is what matters, that is your karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 8th, 2013 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Pureland study group anyone?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to add Ouyi's <http://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas> among the commentaries. It is a good representative of inclusive interpretation.

Just for the first section of the part describing the buddha-land itself (in Ouyi's commentary this is still the introductory part).

Unknown said:

At that time Buddha said to the Elder Shariputra: "West of here, past a hundred billion Buddha-lands, there exists a world called "Ultimate Bliss". In this land there exists a Buddha called Amitabha, who is expounding the Dharma right now.

The Pure Land method takes in all people, whether they are of low, medium, or high capacity. It is beyond all relativities, in perfect fusion. It is inconceivable: it is perfectly all-encompassing, and goes completely beyond all other Buddhist methods. It is very profound and hard to believe in. Therefore it is specially announced to those of great wisdom: without the highest level of wisdom, you cannot arrive directly at the stage where you have no doubts about the Pure Land teaching.

"West" signifies the place where the Pure Land appears, which is west of here. A "Buddha-land" is a whole great galaxy of worlds that are all taught by one Buddha. In terms of our world, there is a central polar mountain, and four continents to the east, west, south, and north of it, illuminated by the same sun and moon, surrounded by a circular range of iron mountains: this is one world. A thousand of these makes a small world system, a thousand small world-systems makes a medium world system, and a thousand medium world-systems makes a great galaxy of worlds. West of a hundred billion of such Buddha-lands is the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Question: Why is the Land of Ultimate Bliss in the west?

Answer: This is not a good question. If the Land of Ultimate Bliss were in the east, you would be asking why it is in the east. Isn't this just playing with words? What's more, if you look at the Land of Ultimate Bliss from the point of view of the hundred billion Buddha-lands, it is in the east. What is worth creating doubts about?

"There exists a world called Ultimate Bliss." This introduces us to the name of Amitabha's environment, to his domain. In the temporal dimension, its time is

reckoned in terms of past, present, and future. In the spatial dimension, its boundaries are reckoned in terms of the ten directions [the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions, the nadir and the zenith].

The Sanskrit name for the Land of Ultimate Bliss is "Sukhavati". It is also called the Land of Peaceful Nurturing, the Land of Peace and Bliss, the Land of Pure Equanimity, and so on. The basic meaning is that it is utterly peaceful and secure, and forever removed from all forms of pain and suffering. This is explained at length below.

There are four kinds of Pure Land, and each category is in turn subdivided in terms of purity or defilement [see glossary, "Four Pure Lands"].

Buddhas have three bodies, which are discussed in terms of singularity and multiplicity [see glossary: "Three Bodies of the Buddhas"].

When the sutra says "there exists a world called Ultimate Bliss" and "there exists a Buddha called Amitabha," it is saying that both that world and that Buddha do actually exist. There are four meanings here.

It indicates that there is a real Pure Land, and makes us happy to seek it.

It gives us truthful instructions, to make us concentrate on the Pure Land.

It states that the Pure Land is not a figment of the imagination or a mirage, that it is not a provisional manifestation or a roundabout teaching not to be taken literally, that it is not an empty falsity, that it is not a land reached via the Theravada vehicle.[13]

It demonstrates perfectly that the Pure Land is part of our true nature, to enable us to have a profound realization of it and penetrate into the truth of Real Mark (the Mind).

"Buddha expounding the Dharma" on this occasion shows that both the Pure Land and Amitabha exist -- this is not a case of "the past is already gone, and the future has not yet taken shape." We must make a vow to be born in the Pure Land, and to personally hear Amitabha's teaching, so that we may quickly achieve true enlightenment.

The fact that the Pure Land and Amitabha Buddha are here in the present encourages us to have faith. The fact that Amitabha's world is called the Land of Ultimate Bliss encourages us to vow to be born there. The fact that the Buddha in the Pure Land is called Amitabha encourages us to engage in the wondrous practice of invoking his name.

The words of the sutra are concise, but the meaning is very profound.

This concludes my commentary on the introductory portion of the sutra.

[ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY: According to the contemporary Vietnamese Master To Lien: "If we are discussing the different manifestations of the universe, the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha is indeed ten billion Buddha lands away. However, if we are speaking of the Pure Land of the Mind, then the ten billion Buddha lands are not outside the narrow confines of our own minds. If we recite the Buddha's name singlemindedly, the

Pure Land can be found in every recitation -- the Pure Land is here and now."]

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 8th, 2013 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: Soto views on rebirth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Matylda,

People use the teaching of momentary rebirth as an exchange for life to life rebirth about what they are at least agnostic. You can read Brad Warner's two articles where he is explicit about his position.

"When people questioned Nishijima about this during talks, he always explained that these references were meant metaphorically, not literally."

"Rebirth is a myth that some Buddhists believe in. It might be loosely based on fact. But it might just be a fantasy."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: Bankei on Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Of course, the practice is staying with the unborn, which is simply like Uchiyama's opening the hand of thought without the sitting posture. That is, Bankei doesn't give (nor exclude) anything besides the unborn.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Bankei on Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jeeprs,

As I see it, Bankei returned to the central point of Zen. He didn't say people shouldn't do usual Buddhist practices, in fact, in some cases he advises people to recite sutras and do zazen. As for those who only need confirmation to their delusions, they are obviously misunderstanding it, since the very meaning of "unborn" is not giving rise to ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

If my memories are correct, the term "Zen school" appeared rather late, around the 11th century, when a group of people wanted to strengthen their position in the Chinese Buddhist scene against the "others", namely the "teaching schools". And by Zen they never meant actual meditation, but rather the inexpressible experience of the true nature (while the "teachings" are the expressed side).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Practicing Zen without a teacher

Content:

Astus wrote:

Whether you need a teacher or not is up to you. Most people need some level of instruction before they can get started on the path. As for what and where you learn from is again a question you have to answer. I think that unless you have serious obstacles you should visit one (or more) Zen (or at least Buddhist) communities to familiarise with the teachings and practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

oushi said:

And what is the difference between those two? There may be many methods and techniques, but isn't meditation an inexpressible experience of the true nature?

Astus wrote:

The gradual path of meditation (going through preliminaries, shamatha and vipashyana) culminates in the direct realisation of the true nature. So what counts as meditation is not actually that realisation but the path toward it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Dzog Chen and Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Personally I find ChNN's work (or perhaps better to say Nubchen's) misleading regarding Zen, partially because it is outdated. As Jinzang said, the primary method of Zen is practically no different from those of Dzogchen and Mahamudra (and we could add Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka and even Yogacara). The difference lies in almost all the other things. Guruyoga is one good example, and of course all the other ideas that are based on Tantra. On the other hand, Zen has koan practice, something that is unique to that school.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

oushi said:

What do you think about this?

Astus wrote:

It is a quote from a Zen text.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2013 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

oushi said:

What do you think Zen is, according to this Zen text?

Astus wrote:

A sudden path to realising the nature of mind. That is, not a gradual method that goes through stages, but simply the insight into emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

Holybla said:

Zen and nonmeditation are not meditation. Meditation is using the mind to concentrate on something. Your nature is beyond the mind.

Astus wrote:

Or rather there is nothing beyond mind. The true nature is no nature.

"There is a koan that asks, "What is your original face before your parents were born?" One might naturally assume that there is some special thing called "original face," but that is not the right approach. When we open the hand of thought, letting go, the original self is already there. It's not some special mystical state. Don't seek it somewhere else. When we open the hand of thought, what is there, in that moment, is our original face." (Kosho Uchiyama: Opening the Hand of Thought, p. 154)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 5:58 AM

Title: Re: Artificial Intelligence & Sentience

Content:
Astus wrote:
Vinodh,

As I see it, true AI is not possible. Programming is based on mathematical principles, however, intelligence is not bound by such rules of logic.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 6:16 AM
Title: Re: Dzogchen, karma and ultimate truth
Content:

Holybla said:
Modernly, Rupert Sheldrake has theorized about laws of the universe as just habits rather than causal interactions. This is a philosophical doorway into the nonexistence of agents, objects and actions. Nagarjuna's whole spiels are all about This then that... It's cool to go from there into Dzogchen.

Jnana said:
It is. And Sheldrake is an interesting fellow.

Astus wrote:
Habits instead of causality is Hume's idea, further investigated by Kant (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-hume-causality/>), then on influenced Husserl's phenomenology and through Hegel the process philosophy of Whitehead. As for Sheldrake, I'm not familiar with his thoughts, just wanted to add how in Western philosophy the idea of causality can come close to a Buddhist understanding while at the same time it is - being philosophy - a lot more complex.

Sorry for being

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 4:45 PM
Title: Re: Artificial Intelligence & Sentience
Content:

Hickersonia said:
This sparked an odd vision in my mind of a bunch of supercomputers talking to eachother, arguing "...a biochemical processor, that is not possible..."

I agree that artificial intelligence is unlikely, but I won't use words like "impossible."

Astus wrote:
I say it's not possible because that would mean the mind is actually made of insentient elements and bound to a fixed causality. Intelligence requires the ability of reflection, to be able to review, modify and adapt. In short, this is called self-awareness. The mind is not bound to any fixed idea or system, that's why it is basically free, open, empty. If you

program something, it means there is a fixed system and that sets its boundaries, it is not open.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

jeeprs said:

Right. So why bother getting up before dawn to meditate or taking the trouble to study sutras? Surely just better to open the hand of thought and just go about your daily routine. After all there's nothing special to attain and no 'special state'.

Astus wrote:

Hungry, eat.

Sleepy, close your eyes.

Fools laugh at me but the wise understand.

Followers of the Way, don't seek in words and letters. When mind is stirred, you will be exhausted. Even inhaling chilly air won't help you. It's better for you to realize with one thought that the world of causal relations is birthless, and go beyond the bodhisattva who surpasses the Three Vehicles.

(The Sayings of Zen Master Linji Yixuan, Shimano version, p. 47)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

jeeprs said:

But in our cick-driven pleasure-seeking instantly distractable social milieu, what it will usually be taken to mean is, Zen is easy, I don't have to do anything.

Astus wrote:

I can only agree with you. For instance, if one cares to read on after the quoted section Linji talks about his efforts to study and practice, and urges the audience not to waste their time. Still, since the topic is about non-meditation, I think it deserves to be answered. I personally prefer Zen to be truly a sudden path. But, as Hunagbo says, "Because one lacks the capacity for sudden Awakening, one must study the Tao of Dhyana for 3, 5, or 10 years." It is really up to the individual what path is fitting.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2013 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Zen, dhyana, and non-meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jeeprs,

I think it depends on which Zen community you go to. Not all of them are "samurai style", and the keisaku isn't used everywhere either. As for being easy or difficult, I can say that Zen is the easiest of them all. That's because there's nothing you need to do, you can "practise" anywhere and everywhere. At the same time, one can freely use any formal practice one prefers, from sitting meditation to prostration. It is very open and simple.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 11th, 2013 at 12:42 AM

Title: Re: Artificial Intelligence & Sentience

Content:

Jesse said:

In an AI, this would be accomplished by giving it access to it's own source code.

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't it still be a code to overwrite another code? That is, all possible actions are predetermined.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 11th, 2013 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Artificial Intelligence & Sentience

Content:

Jesse said:

In some ways yes, some ways no. AI works using learning algorithms, Their decisions are based on what they learn, and integrate. They are not based on hard-coded "mandates". These of course are loosely based on our own brains, and minds.

For example:

<https://io9.com/5820624/computer-teaches-itself-english-so-that-it-can-play-civilization>

Astus wrote:

Being able to adapt to some level is not the same as being free from codes. The difference I'm talking about is like this: a computer may be able to handle an artificial language (regular grammar, no phrases and other difficulties), and operates within the boundaries of that language. Human mind, however, is capable of learning several languages and reflecting on language, moving beyond grammar and words. That is, intelligence is more than just codes and rules.

The linked example is too brief a description (e.g. I doubt it could actually read the manual as you or I can) and I think we would need to be able to comprehend all the details to take it into account.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 11th, 2013 at 7:05 AM

Title: Re: Artificial Intelligence & Sentience

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jesse,

I don't equate the mind with the brain. If I believed that intelligence is simply a biochemical process I might as well agree with the idea that AI is possible. However, according to my understanding, mind is basically immaterial, therefore it's not possible to build an intelligent machine. Being a mechanic device is in itself contrary to intelligence, to sentience. And that's where I see the impossibility of achieving AI. Even if they could build a robot that has a human body - quite necessary to replicate ordinary experience - and add to that a set of very complex processors, it would still have to follow strict deterministic rules. Intelligence, on the other hand, has no rules, it is not bound by any thought, feeling or sensory impression.

Unknown said:

If you forget "code", and simply say that by the process of observation and reflection, it can learn, change it's views, and adapt to new situations, does it sound so different from any other living being?

Astus wrote:

To be able to observe and reflect you require consciousness, the very ability of knowing. But that knowing, that consciousness of the mind is open, not fixed. So it is not possible to build from fixed structures an unbound awareness. That is, mind is not simply a causality bound process, while a machine necessarily is.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2013 at 3:38 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and tantra

Content:

lama tsewang said:

originally there was just one practice of just sitting. later they developed koans, the original zen practice is done by the soto zen lineage.

Astus wrote:

Says so the Soto Zen people. But it is true that kanna zen (practice with koans) is a 12th century development. Although, so is the idea of emphasising zazen. However, this is not the forum for this topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2013 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Both sequential and simultaneous cause and effect are mistaken, this has been shown by Nagarjuna and even the Lankavatara Sutra has a small chapter for it. As I see it, Dogen follows the general view of Zen as sudden enlightenment, just as in the Platform Sutra and others, with the exception of some special emphasis on seated meditation. Practice is enlightenment because the only practice is not grasping phenomena, what is the same as enlightenment. This is the "essential zen practice" stated in the OP.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2013 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: Questions and Comments

Content:

rachmiel said:

Which is Buddhism closer to?

Astus wrote:

Neither of that. Buddhism is not about giving clever answers to difficult ontological-epistemological questions. Madhyamaka is about understanding that suffering comes from the reification of concepts, from the ignorance of imagining things to have self-nature. To see that all appearances are without essence, to see them insubstantial and fabricated, is the liberating wisdom of emptiness, i.e. the end of conceptual proliferation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2013 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: short batchelor Critique

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Every major religion's teachings involve tensions, paradoxes, and apparent contradictions. They demand coexistence alongside our contemporary culture of individualism, liberal values, secularism, and scientific scepticism.[/b] We might find notions of no-self and rebirth or Dependent Origination irreconcilable with our personal worldview. But we will have to decide whether grappling with these doctrinal tensions is worth the authentic spiritual fulfilment offered by the progenitor of these tensions, the Triple Gem.

Astus wrote:

For me this argument sounds very weak. It is basically a "take it or leave it" statement that advocates pure faith while at the same time claims that it is only natural for Buddhism to be irrational and contradictory. Certainly there is space for religious sentiments in Buddhism where you can get "spiritual fulfilment" and all sorts of uplifting experiences. It is something common in religions. At the same time, one of the strong points of Buddhism is in its intellectual sanity, its logical system. Of course, trying to fit it into a scientific or any other world view is the wrong way to grasp the snake of Dharma. Buddhism is about eliminating suffering and not anything else. Also, the only big step

required to establish rebirth is to apply the internal-subjective way of direct investigation of our own minds instead of the external-objective based proliferation of theories to confirm the mind-stream as non-material.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2013 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: Questions and Comments

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rachmiel,

1. It is possible to come up with different answers based on Buddhism. For the majority of Mahayana teachings, the answer is that there is nothing real outside, it is only the product of karma and ignorance, the conceptualisation of mind.

2. All teachings are only skilful means, they are not reified. So, when it is said that everything is mind made, the reason behind the teaching is to liberate beings from suffering. If it is used for something else, that is simply misunderstanding Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 14th, 2013 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Beatzen said:

That's kind of incredible to me... Can you give us a quote [preferably Nagarjuna] elucidating how effective and formal causality are "mistaken?" Also, what is the name of that Sutra chapter so that I can look into this?

Astus wrote:

Chapter 20 of the Middle treatise (MMK) analyses sequential and simultaneous causality. Similar reasoning occurs in other chapters, like chapter 11, 14, 16. It is also taught by later masters, like Candrakirti, reasoning like this:

"If it is something existent, what need is there for its production? But if it does not exist, what could be done to it?

If it is both [existent and non-existent], what can be done? And if neither, what can be done?" (<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>)

Lankavatara Sutra, 2.31 (tr. Suzuki):

"there is no gradual nor simultaneous rising of existence. Why? Because, Mahamati, if there is a simultaneous rising of existence, there would be no distinction between cause and effect, and there would be nothing to characterise a cause as such. If a gradual rising is admitted, there is no substance that holds together individual signs, which makes gradual rising impossible."

However, none of the above is the denial of everyday common reality where we see causes generating results. I have mentioned this because you said that Dogen believed in simultaneous cause and result, which doesn't actually match normal reality where the cause must always precede the result.

Beatzen said:

"general view" is a strange way to put whatever you're talking about to me, as I have never actually seen a Dogen citation emphasizing "sudden enlightenment" above "gradual" or even a 'special emphasis' on Zazen over other forms of practice. If someone could cite those sources for me, i would greatly appreciate it.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.wwzc.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>:

"The Buddhas and Thus Come Ones have all simply Transmitted an unfabricated wonderous means of realizing complete and utter Awakening, the Teaching of Wonder. In Transmitting it from a Buddha to a Buddha, its standard is self-enjoyment harmonization. To enter this through sitting up straight in zazen is the main gate."

"The person of zazen unmistakably drops through body and mind, cutting through the myriad distorted views of the past, and realizes essential Buddha Dharma. You thus raise up the work of the Buddhas at numberless practice places of the Buddhas and Thus Come Ones everywhere, causing everyone to have the opportunity of ongoing Awakening, and vigorously uplift the ongoing Buddha Dharma."

"Each moment of zazen is equally wholeness of practice, equally wholeness of realization for this and for that."

"Why do you urge only zazen?"

Answer: Because it is the main gate to the Buddha Dharma - this is my answer to them."

"You just sit idle and do nothing. How can this be a means to Awakening?"

...

Just understand that if sincere students and realized Masters correctly Transmit and receive the subtle Dharma of the Seven Buddhas, its essence manifests, and can be experienced. Those who teach only the words of the Discourses know nothing of this. So stop this doubt and delusion and follow a true Teacher and, through zazen, actualize the self- enjoyment harmonization of the Buddhas."

Beatzen said:

It is not true in Zen that non-grasping is "the only practice." That is a gross oversimplification and comes nowhere near explaining the practices of Shikantaza, or Kinhin.

Neither is it true that simple "non-grasping" constitutes "enlightenment" from a zen perspective.

Astus wrote:

"If you recognize your fundamental mind, this is the fundamental emancipation. And if you attain emancipation, this is the samādhi of prajñā, this is nonthought.

...

Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch. 2; tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 14th, 2013 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: The ego and self-esteem

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you let go on the path are the bad things, unwholesome emotions. They are like: greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt (about the Dharma), envy, deceit, harmfulness, etc. Here is one list from the Theravada tradition:

<http://www.thisismyanmar.com/nibbana/mtinmon3.htm>. Another list under klesa (Mental Disturbances) and upaklesa (Secondary Mental Disturbances) that is used in Mahayana: <http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/outlines/100dharmas-big5.htm>.

At the same time, you cultivate all the good qualities:

http://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/abhidhamma-in-daily-life_2/d/doc3113.html. Similar list under kusala (Advantageous) in the 100 dharmas collection.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 14th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: Questions and Comments

Content:

Astus wrote:

Just a side note: Tsongkhapa's madhyamaka is quite unique and differs from the others, usually (a lot) more complicated than madhyamaka is otherwise. As Jnana already did, I also recommend The Center of the Sunlit Sky as a thorough introduction. Other works by Brunnhölzl are also great.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2013 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Bankei on Zen Practice

Content:

Fu Ri Shin said:

Benkei's realization of the Unborn was sudden and preceded by great exertion. Is he telling us that his own breakthrough was unnecessarily dramatic? Or is the near-death

awakening story about him dubious in its historicity?

Astus wrote:

Bankei went through his troubles as he found no teacher who could actually help him, or you can say he had some negative karma he had to get rid of first. As for the veracity of the story, I'm unaware of any studies that investigated it, although I think it doesn't sound like anything unusual or unbelievable.

"All of you are extremely fortunate. When I was a young man, it was different. I couldn't find a good teacher, and being headstrong, I devoted myself from an early age to exceptionally difficult training, experiencing suffering others couldn't imagine. I expended an awful lot of useless effort. The experience of that needless ordeal is deeply engrained in me. It's something I can never forget.

That's why I come here like this day after day, urging you to profit from my own painful example, so you can attain the Dharma easily, while you're seated comfortably on the tatami mats, without all that unnecessary work. You should consider yourselves extremely fortunate, because you won't find a teaching like this anywhere else.

Just as I was foolish and bullheaded when I was young, sure enough, if I tell you about my experiences, some of the young fellows among you will take it into their heads that they can't achieve the Dharma unless they exert themselves as I did. And that would be my fault. But I do want to tell you about them, so let's make this point perfectly clear to the young men. You can attain the Dharma without putting your-self through the arduous struggle I did. I want you to remember that carefully as you listen to what I say." (The Unborn, p. 48, tr. Waddell)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2013 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

andyn said:

I just wish I could see if this whole idea was a fraud made up by someone then I can get this monkey off my back, but...

Astus wrote:

Hasn't it been clarified for you already in this thread that multiplication of mind-stream is impossible?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2013 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: Purification of Karmic Obscurations Thread

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea is summed up in the sayings like "klesa is bodhi" (煩惱即菩提) and "samsara is nirvana" (生死即涅槃). It is to see the emptiness of all, in this case applied to afflictive emotions. Among the four (in Vajrayana five) knowledges/wisdoms it is the knowledge of

equality (samatā-jñāna).

In the Samantabhadra Contemplation Sutra the great repentance is taught:

"Because you have now read and recited the Great-vehicle sutras, the buddhas in all directions will preach the law of repentance. The bodhisattva practice is not to cut off binding and driving nor to abide in the ocean of driving. In meditating on one's mind, there is no mind one can seize, except the mind that comes from one's perverted thought. The mind presenting such a form rises from one's false imagination like the wind in the sky, which has no foothold. Such a form of the law neither appears nor disappears. What is sin? What is blessedness? As one's own mind is void of itself, sin and blessedness have no existence. In like manner all the laws are neither fixed nor going toward destruction. If one repents like this, meditating on his mind, there is no mind he can seize. The law also does not dwell in the law. All the laws are emancipation, the truth of extinction, and quiescence. Such an aspect is called the great repentance, the greatly adorned repentance, the repentance of the non-sin aspect, and the destruction of discrimination. He who practices this repentance has the purity of body and mind not fixed in the law [but free] as flowing water. Through each reflection, he will be able to see the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue and the buddhas in all directions." (Threefold Lotus Sutra, p. 223)

There is also the teaching (or more like lecture) Vimalakirti gave to Upali in the 3rd chapter of the Vimalakirti Sutra regarding breaking the precepts and afflictions. From another sutra about instructing bodhisattvas:

"One should speak like this – do not give up your passion, do not fight your aversion, do not clear away your bewilderment, do not liberate yourself from your body, practise the bad things, do not hold back your views, do not be conscious of the bonds [to the worldly things], grasp for the parts of the personality, amass the spheres of sense-perception, move about among the fields of sense-perception, do not leave the stage of fools, frequent the bad, give up the good, do not think of the Buddha, do not reflect on religious teachings, do not give offerings to the congregation of monks, do not take the training upon yourself, do not seek the peacefulness of existence, do not cross over the river [of existence]. This kind of instructions one should teach and give to the bodhisattva in the beginning of his development.

Why? Because this state of the moments of existence and nothing else is their [true] state.

Foolish people explain things in accordance with moments of existence of arising and moments of existence of disappearance. But this sphere of all moments of existence distinguishes itself by being beyond thought-constructions, and understanding the essential character of all these moments of existence in this way is awakening."

(<http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&vid=30&view=fulltext>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2013 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: A question on Mahayana philosophical schools

Content:

Astus wrote:

In India there was only Madhyamaka and Yogacara as distinct branches of Mahayana thought, although we could say that they were not too separate. Tathagatagarbha didn't have its own philosophical system there. In East Asian Buddhism there are two other "philosophical" schools, Tiantai and Huayan, and they are strongly connected to the Tathagatagarbha teachings.

Although it is questionable what can be categorised as a "philosophical school". All Buddhist traditions have their own teachings, and all teachings are connected to practices. There is no such thing as a purely theoretical Buddhism, nor is there a purely pragmatic path.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2013 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Essential Zen Practice

Content:

Beatzen said:

My argument is based on the fact that Dogen really believed that all there really "is" is this moment. period.

That implies, as he said, that causes and their corresponding effects emerge simultaneously in one moment. which is the only time they can emerge (right now). He is saying that causes and effects are immediate and co-emergent. It is actually quite logical. I mention this because it has bearing on why Dogen was so praxis-oriented. He utilizes these kind of thoughts to bolster arguments he makes about "making emptiness" and committing to a truly soteriologically-effective practice.

Astus wrote:

The problem is that if we restrict causality to a single moment there is nothing that can happen in a moment. Happening, movement, change, they all need time, need a sequence. A moment is fixed, it is still and motionless, nothing can emerge or disappear. (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeno%27s_paradoxes#Arrow_paradox; also chapter 2 of MMK) Thus not only past and future are empty but the present moment too. Both time and causality are illusions, mental fabrications. However, if we are talking about cause and effect it must needs include time, simply because that's what we all experience in this everyday world.

Beatzen said:

But your citation doesn't make me think that there is any doctrinal, set-in-stone, or else logically-sound emphasis on sudden enlightenment. Like I said, "gradually sudden."

Astus wrote:

Zazen is enlightenment itself. What could be more sudden than that? It is directly becoming/being buddha. Some quotes from Dogen and Keizan:

Bendowa:

"When we sit in zazen, through the virtue of the Buddha mudra we release all things, and move beyond limited views of delusion and enlightenment, sages and usual people, and can receive and enjoy great wisdom.

...

Even bodhi and nirvana are nothing but this nature of Awareness. All things and appearances without exception are totally and only this single Awareness and are embraced without disarray. The various Dharma Gates are all equally this single Awareness. This is how the nature of mind is understood in the Buddha Dharma."

Zazen-yojinki:

"Vow to cut off all delusions and realize enlightenment. Just sit without doing anything. This is the essence of the practice of zazen.

...

Although we speak of realization, this realization does not hold to itself as being "realization". This is practice of the supreme samadhi which is the knowing of unborn, unobstructed, and spontaneously arising awareness. It is the door of luminosity which opens out onto the realization of the Buddha, born through the practice of the great ease. This goes beyond the patterns of holy and profane, goes beyond confusion and wisdom. This is the realization of unsurpassed enlightenment as our own nature."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2013 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Contemporary Soto criticism of Yogacara (and Taoism)

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you want to trace back Zen to India, I recommend the following route:

Song Dynasty Chan (this is where everything got a final mature form with all the lineages, transmission texts, rhetoric, etc.) - Yongming Yanshou, who fought against the arising (and winning) Chan style and taught a combined approach, influenced Korean and Tangut Chan, eventually became prominent in China as a Pure Land patriarch and so in Chinese Buddhism in general - the Hongzhou school of Mazu and the Heze school of Zongmi (the sources of mature Song Chan and Yongming's Chan, respectively) - Shenxiu and Shenhui, the so called northern-southern debate

That is for Chan history in big steps. You can find that for Zongmi and Yongming the Huayan teachings had great influence, while for Shenxiu and the Northern School it was more Tiantai influenced in terms of meditation. Shenhui made the radical turn, basically reducing Shenxiu's teachings to sudden enlightenment and focusing on the Diamond Sutra and prajnaparamita teachings in general. However, Shenxiu was first in teaching a new style of Buddhism, which could be called a transformation of Tiantai sudden teachings. So, to eventually get back to India, one should look into the Tiantai school that was influenced by Sanlun, Kumarajiva and early Yogacara texts (but in its tathagatagarbha/dharmadhatu-oriented interpretation); so generally early Chinese

Buddhism and prominent texts like Awakening Mahayana Faith.

If you want to skip all of the above then just look at the sutras usually referred to in Chan texts. On the one hand there are "apocryphal" works that already have a "Chan flavour" (e.g. Surangama, Vajrasamadhi, Perfect Enlightenment), and there are Indian works (e.g. Lankavatara, Mahaparinirvana, Vajracchedika, Vimalakirti). Instead of trying to identify some "philosophical school" as the source of Chan, the sutras themselves can serve as a good basis to find the roots. In the pre-Song Chan works there are often some level of apologetics preset where they try to prove how Chan is truly the essence of Mahayana. And there are people like Yongming Yanshou who try to prove to Chan people that the sutras already contain all the teachings they think are "beyond words and letters".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2013 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Soul split into multiple mosquitoes?

Content:

undefineable said:

Buddhist texts already accept the possibility of the simultaneous experience of multiple first-person perspectives in the case of higher-level Bodhisattvas, though I can't see why this would happen to beings with just a basic level of awareness {It sounds as if it would be more confusing than painful in this case!}

Astus wrote:

There is no mention of simultaneous subjective perspective anywhere as far as I know. The multiplication of body is a basic magical power that practically any being can achieve, however, there is no discussion of the actual details of how that looks like from the personal point of view. Rather, those are all illusory bodies, tricks, not actual beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2013 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Contemporary Soto criticism of Yogacara (and Taoism)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Beatzen,

Dogen is an heir to Song Buddhism (there's little need to specify as "Caodong Chan" as it's not much different from Buddhism in general) and Japanese Tendai. But both are quite far from the Indian sources. There are a couple of Dogen studies you can look into, if you are interested.

Steven Heine: Did Dogen Go to China?: What He Wrote and When He Wrote It

Steven Heine (ed): Dogen: Textual and Historical Studies

Taigen Dan Leighton: Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra

other related studies:

William M. Bodiford: Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan

Jacqueline I. Stone: Original enlightenment and the transformation of medieval Japanese Buddhism

Robert E. Morrell: Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report

About the early times of Chan, these two works by John R. McRae are very good:

Seeing through Zen: encounter, transformation, and genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism

The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism

If you want a better understanding of Chan and its connection to Chinese (and Indian) Buddhism you may look into these books:

Song era:

Peter N. Gregory, Daniel A. Getz, Jr.: Buddhism in the Sung

Morten Schlütter: How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China

Early times:

Robert H Sharf: Coming to Terms With Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise

Peter N. Gregory: Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought

Peter Gregory: Traditions of meditation in Chinese Buddhism

Robert E. Buswell: Paths to liberation: the Mārga and its transformations in Buddhist thought

Robert M. Gimello, Peter Nielsen Gregory: Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen

On language you might like this:

Youru Wang: Linguistic Strategies in Daoist Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism: The Other Way of Speaking

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 17th, 2013 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Question on a line from a Tibetan passage regarding Tant

Content:

Astus wrote:

This topic is somewhat related to the passage in question (repentance and emptiness): <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=41&t=12740>.

Regarding the consort statement - sorry for bringing Mahamudra here -, Tilopa's poem says that in case one fails to follow the Mahamudra instructions, one can do the other anuttarayoga practices of breath and karmamudra. In

<http://www.keithdowman.net/mahamudra/tilopa.htm>:

"If the mind is dull and you are unable to practice these instructions,
Retaining essential breath and expelling the sap of awareness,
Practising fixed gazes - methods of focussing the mind,
Discipline yourself until the state of total awareness abides.

When serving a karmamudra, the pure awareness
of bliss and emptiness will arise:
Composed in a blessed union of insight and means,
Slowly send down, retain and draw back up the bodhichitta,
And conducting it to the source, saturate the entire body.
But only if lust and attachment are absent will that awareness arise."

On the other hand there is <http://www.keithdownman.net/mahamudra/saraha.htm>:

"Obsessed with the joys of sexual embrace
The fool believes he knows ultimate truth;
He is like someone who stands at his door
And, flirting, talks about sex."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 17th, 2013 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: Question on a line from a Tibetan passage regarding Tant

Content:

Konchog1 said:

I don't understand his metaphor...

Astus wrote:

Sexual embrace is as close to the ultimate truth as talking about sex to actually doing it.

The same passage in Guenther's translation:

"For the delights of kissing the deluded crave
Declaring it to be the ultimately real--
Like a man who leaves his house and standing at the door
Asks a woman for reports of sensual delights."

In the Dohakosha he writes:

"For those unaware of the nature of everything,
Great bliss is attained in sexual union;
As if thirst-ridden, chasing after water in mirage,
They die from thirst, and do they ever drink the sky-water?
Whoever frolics in this bliss,
Living between vajra and lotus,
What for? This has no capacity for truth,
So {where} in the three worlds will you be complete?"

(Dreaming the Great Brahmin, p. 166)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 17th, 2013 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhist "Sunya" the same as Hindu "Nirguna" ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness (sunyata) in Buddhism means that things don't have a self-nature (svabhava). Emptiness is not a thing or being, it is the fact that things themselves are dependently arisen without a substance. So, it is not like Nirguna Brahman and/or the Tao at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 17th, 2013 at 11:15 PM

Title: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance.

...

I have emphasized the main point of the enlightenment--man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage--primarily in religious matters... Above all, nonage in religion is not only the most harmful but the most dishonorable."

(<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>)

Questions:

How do the ideas of Enlightenment affect our attitude toward Buddhism?

Are we prone to submission to authority or to independent thinking?

How much freedom is there for a Buddhist practitioner in the matters of Dharma?

Is Buddhism already Enlightened or does it need to be reformed?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 19th, 2013 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

How do the ideas of Enlightenment affect our attitude toward Buddhism?

While there is no clear definition of what those ideas are, I use Kant's short essay as a

convenient reference here. The idea of freedom from sacred/traditional dogma, the superiority of reason, the individual as a capable thinker - these are among the outstanding novelties of the Enlightened view. The world we now live in reflects in many ways the manifestation of those ideas, like universal education, freedom of speech and religion and the general use of scientific methods. Buddhism in the West appeared as a rational philosophy - even its status as a religion is debated - and something that is in harmony with modern democratic, humanistic and scientific values.

The religious, magical and ritual elements of Buddhism are usually neglected by Westerners, instead Buddhism is taught as a personal path that emphasises inner reflection, peace, rational investigation and meditation.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu writes in the section on iddhipada (in <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/part2.html#part2-d>),

Because of their association with supranormal powers, the bases of power have generally been slighted in Western writings on Buddhism. If we count the five strengths as identical with the five faculties, the bases of power are the only set in the Wings to Awakening that has not yet been the subject of a book in the English language. The situation in Asia, however, is very different. There, the bases of power have been extrapolated from their specific context and are frequently cited as guides to success in general.

If you look through the topics on this forum it is hard to find any thread where the magical powers are discussed, especially not as actual attainments of the ordinary practitioners. Even the values of different actions in terms of merit and demerit are rarely talked about, not to mention the possible retribution in future lives. It may be that many accept the possibility of supernormal powers and other worlds, these things are not considered the core aspects of Buddhism. At the same time, especially Mahayana and Vajrayana texts, are full of extraordinary and wondrous events where buddhas appear in the sky and simple laymen conjure visions of other worlds.

Are we prone to submission to authority or to independent thinking?

Although it is a common enough response to "ask a teacher" (i.e. neither you nor me are good enough to even guess), the majority of Western Buddhist communities are independent from any Asian institution, however, it is actually normal in Buddhism that traditionally lacks a central hierarchy. Western Buddhist teachers who lack "correct transmission" are often disregarded as incompetent or even as charlatans. Besides the issue of authorisation, there is also the idea of a gap between "scholars" (pandita) and "practitioners" (yogin). Since Buddhism is understood as an inner path, an experiential enterprise, there is little use of books and studies on such a path. If people want enlightenment they shouldn't just go to the library (or a website) and study, but rather they should visit an enlightened teacher and do lot of meditation practice. This attitude defines what kind of Buddhism is popular in the West. People go to a Dharma centre to meditate and not to be instructed about the finer points of the sutras and shastras. They rather spend \$600 for a five-day retreat with a well known guru than to buy the four-

volume translation of the Abhisamayalamkara with commentaries for \$345.

From an Enlightenment perspective, everybody should be able to study the Buddha's teachings and arrive at correct conclusions. The tendency is, however, more Romantic, where reason has almost no role, and one should follow ancient traditions.

How much freedom is there for a Buddhist practitioner in the matters of Dharma?

Can we accept that an ordinary human being can understand the Dharma? And can he do that on his own? What if his interpretation doesn't agree with another's? If the Sakyapa view disagrees with the Gelugpa, that's all right, since they are both respected traditions. If Mr Jones disagrees with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, well, who is this Mr Jones? Because the emphasis is on the person, the teachings are valued by the reputation of the teacher instead of the actual content presented. Although we can say that everybody is free to believe whatever they like, without the proper pedigree they are not taken seriously. Teachers are assessed not by what they teach but by who they are, in fact, you can't even measure a teacher since you are not a master yourself.

Is Buddhism already Enlightened or does it need to be reformed?

Since it is already accepted that Buddhism is in harmony with the modern ideas of rationality there is no need to question that. Buddhism is as good as it is. That is, as we have transformed it to our expectations. No magic, no philosophy, but only the inner realisation taught by proper masters. Because the thought that it is Enlightened is taken for granted, we are free to be Romantics. Thus, there is the illusion of freedom of thought, of individuality and science-friendliness, and with that the opposite is happily embraced.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 19th, 2013 at 8:13 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jeeprs,

Your arguments against positivism are fine, however, it came after Enlightenment, as a possible consequence, but definitely not the only one. The majority of the Enlightenment thinkers were at least believers in God and some devout Christians. And just as you wrote about finding a unity in religions, some of them, like Leibniz and Voltaire, imagined a unified and universal religion. So, just to be clear, Enlightenment ideas are generally not materialists.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 19th, 2013 at 8:18 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

tobes said:

I think it was Thurman who made the argument that without Kant, westerners would not be able to 'get' Madhyamika - and I agree.

There are of course enormous tensions particularly in the Varjayana, between the Kantian injunction to saphere aude with the injunction to follow whatever the guru says. Does one go with ones own understanding or does one forsake it on faith that the guru knows more?

Astus wrote:

Or perhaps it is because of using Kant and other Western philosophers to interpret teachings like Madhyamaka that people - at least those who are somewhat philosophically educated - misunderstand Nagarjuna.

Yes, that tension is one of the big issues I'm trying to look into here.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 19th, 2013 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

tobes said:

I took Thurman's point to be: not that one needs to explicitly adopt a Kantian epistemology to get Madhyamika, but rather, that before Kant 'the west' per se would not be able to understand the middle way.

I think he's quite right.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna could be interpreted quite well in the context of Plato and Aristotle. Madhyamaka is a good criticism of both abhidharma and the idealist-substantialist philosophies.

Madhyamaka might be popular among Western philosophers because it is viewed as logic and linguistics, a methodology instead of an actual statement, a counter-metaphysics. It another thing about Buddhism that many like to think of the Buddha as someone who labelled metaphysical questions meaningless/unanswerable, so it leaves our precious presumptions about the world intact.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 19th, 2013 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Is the attainment of Buddhahood the end of subjectivity?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Based on how Shakyamuni appears in the scriptures, he was not only aware of his life

after his birth but also all the previous lives he lived. Apparently he did not cease to be a person.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 20th, 2013 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Is Zazen described in Sutras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a list of early meditation sutras that existed in China:

<http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=13357>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 20th, 2013 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea of "parinirvana" is generally not upheld by any Mahayana school but only as a skilful means, since buddhas remain helping sentient beings till the end of samsara. This is true for both the Jodoshu and Jodoshinshu as far as I know. Also note that one of the names of Amida is Infinite Life, i.e. he doesn't just "nirvana away" any time soon.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 21st, 2013 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

tobes said:

The obvious objection might be something like this: if true wisdom requires advanced meditative insight, doesn't that insight naturally have more epistemic truth and authority than someone who stays true to their own understanding, but lacks that insight? In that case, might sticking with ones own understanding be nothing more than sticking with ones own lack of insight?

Astus wrote:

How can you verify another's insight? By their teachings and conversing with them (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.192.than.html>). The teaching should be matched with the canonical texts

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html#fnt-37>) and should bear the eight qualities

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.053.than.html>; also: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/recognizing.html>). That is, the only thing one can rely on is our understanding of the Dharma.

The above is of course what an intellectual person can agree with, something that is in harmony with the "Kantian injunction". In fact, however, people simply rely on faith

based on temporary emotional moods most of the times. This results in statements about what they felt in the presence of the teacher, how they have a special connection, how the teacher inspires them, etc. Another thing that is likely thought of as a reliable source is reputation and hearsay. If they are told that such and such a teacher is magnificent, authentic, real, enlightened, then naturally that's how one starts to view that teacher.

While there is the idea that Buddhism is rational and not at all like other religions, there are many methods Buddhism has to emotionally convince people about its usefulness and superiority. The very claim that Buddhism is rational is such a tool to attract followers.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 21st, 2013 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jodoshinshu.

From <http://www.amidanet.com/kgss-f.htm>:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, my life-span should be limited, even to the extent of a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. (The 13th Vow - the Vow of Immeasurable Life)

The life of the Buddha of Infinite Life is so long that it is impossible for anyone to calculate it. To give an illustration, let us suppose that all the innumerable sentient beings in the worlds of the ten quarters were reborn in human form and that every one became a shravaka or pratyekabuddha. Even if they assembled in one place, concentrated their thoughts, and exercised the power of their wisdom to the utmost to reckon the length of the Buddha's life, even after a thousand million kalpas they still would not reach its limit.

(Fulfillment of the 13th Vows - the Larger Sutra)

Since Amida attained Buddhahood, ten kalpas have passed;

His life-span is indeed beyond measure.

(T'an-luan's Hymns in Praise of Amida Buddha)

From <http://www.scribd.com/doc/134106836/The-48th-Vows-of-Amida-Buddha>:

(<https://amida-ji-retreat-temple-romania.blogspot.com/2012/04/short-explanation-of-13th-vow-infinite.html>)

This vow simply means that his transcendent manifestation(Sambhogakaya body or Dharmakaya as compassionate means) will last forever for the benefit of all beings.

...

Amida Buddha as an Enlightened Person with his transcendent body, will last eternally

as the 13th Vow promises. Even “a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas” is still limited time when measuring the life span of Amida, so this symbolical number is mentioned again to suggest the infinite and impossible to calculate life of this Buddha’s body.

Jodoshu.

From Honen's Commentary on the Three Sutras of Pure Land Buddhism (Promise of Amida Buddha, p. 77):

Moreover, in order to provide eternal deliverance for sentient beings through the essential vow, Amida Buddha vowed that his lifespan will be immeasurable. This is the thirteenth vow. To summarize, while the vow of immeasurable light was designed to reach all sentient beings throughout space; the vow of infinite life was designed to benefit all sentient beings throughout time.

Chinese Pure Land.

From <http://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/explanation-text/main-portion/description-wonders-amitabha>:

infinite life extends through time and reaches through past, present, and future ... Because sentient beings and Buddhas are inherently equal, those who invoke the name of Amitabha will be no different from him either in their light or in their life span. ... Given the truth of infinite life, the people in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are in the position that they are certain of attaining complete enlightenment in a single lifetime, and will not be reborn in different forms.

...

The life span of Amitabha Buddha is infinite, and here when the sutra just speaks of ten eons, this is just a provisional way of teaching. In fact Amitabha's time has been endless, and he has urged, is urging, and will urge all the sentient beings of the past, present, and future to quickly seek birth in the Pure Land, share in the infinite life of the Buddhas, and accomplish this all in one lifetime.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

sinweiy said:

measureless, limitless Asankhyeya kalpas are actually number units of Buddhism.

1 Asankhyeya = 10^{59}

so we see, Asankhyeya, measureless, limitless is only the first three! "cannot be said, cannot be said" is last.

Astus wrote:

"even after a thousand million kalpas they still would not reach its limit"

If there were actual numbers that could be given in measurable time as you just did, it wouldn't take long at all to count it. By the way, what gives you these numbers, what is your source? Even in the Abhidharmakosha there is no actual number given for a kalpa that could be reduced to human years.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

Jnana said:

I think if we look at the sūtras and śāstras it's quite clear that they place significant emphasis on relying on the instructions of a learned and wise spiritual friend.

Astus wrote:

It should also be noted that the definition of such a good friend lies in that he is a learnt and experienced person who happily shares the Dharma. Like an older monastic (upadhyaya), or any sangha member who fits the criteria. The point is, being a teacher is defined by apparent achievements and not on recognition by a lineage or tradition. This is somewhat contrary to the prevalent notion in the West about teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: Mind and appearances

Content:

Astus wrote:

The point I wanted to make there is that as long as we try to understand Buddhism from a materialist-objectivist perspective (as used in science and taught in schools) there is little chance of a comprehensive knowledge. The source of information in Buddhism is meditative investigation and experiences. It is not unlike other religious and spiritual traditions in this sense. You will never see supernormal phenomena with the fleshly eyes. The divine eye is needed for all the "special effects" to appear. Practically that means one has to develop one's meditation and have faith in the teachings about other realms. Then it is possible to see gods, spirits and even buddhas.

Also, even one's everyday experience is defined by the mind that perceives it. It is common knowledge that different people experience the seemingly same event in different ways. We have a lot in common as humans, especially when we speak the same language and live in the same culture. But there's still enough difference among individuals to make understanding each other a difficult task. Our differences lies in our attachments, in what we like and what we dislike. Attachments are the habitual energy, the karma. Thus karma creates our daily experiences and it is what defines every birth too.

If we look at what we are, we can immediately see that thoughts and emotions are not the same as "thoughts out there" that we perceive by the five bodily sense-faculties. Mind is immaterial. It's impossible to confirm the immateriality of the mind by objective investigation, looking out there for a mind. In our subjective experience it is obvious. So, this is the first important step in understanding Buddhism. If we believe that mind is simply matter then the Dharma makes no sense. Once we can change our perspective it becomes quite easy to understand.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Apratishtita Nirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I theorise it, non-abiding nirvana is based on nirvana with residue with the difference in emphasising that such residue (i.e. the aggregates) are empty so there is no need to get rid of them, and that's why the Mahayana criticism of the "sravaka nirvana" as nihilism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Precious Human Birth

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to add that, although less likely, gods can also attain different levels of enlightenment as shown in both the Nikayas and Mahayana sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Jikan said:

Does anyone have evidence of an intact transmission of esoteric Buddhism strictly within China's borders?

Astus wrote:

Depends on how you define "esoteric Buddhism". If as an independent school, it's probably never existed. If as certain practices, there are quite a few that are part of the yearly and even daily ceremonies in Buddhist monasteries.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Enlightenment

Content:

Jnana said:

There are likely a number of reasons for this, not the least of which is that many of them have received significant education and training in these matters.

Astus wrote:

I think probably because they have the living lamrim system, unlike East Asian Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 23rd, 2013 at 6:13 AM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Mahamudra experiences

Content:

Astus wrote:

An interesting question, to give the practical differences. As for all the theoretical things, there is already a thread: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=100&t=6459>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 23rd, 2013 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

sinweiy,

On one hand, neither kalpa nor the modifying "numbers" are fixed. Here is a very nice summary with a chart at the end:

<http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/publish/462/vbs462p042.pdf>. On the other hand, both the sutras and the commentaries state that Amita's lifespan is not limited by any temporal measurement. He is there as long as there are sentient beings to save, this is the essence of the 13th vow. While there are different interpretations of Sukhavati and Amitabha Buddha, several Pure Land teachers - including the Jodo and Jodoshin schools - view his life as literally unbound and infinite. Xing Guang in "The Concept of the Buddha" (p 168) explains briefly how this idea of infinity (of life and light) is very much based on Buddhist teachings (from Mahasamghika in this case) and not other sources as some thought (from Zoroastrian mainly). Ven. Xuanhua connects <http://www.cttbusa.org/amitabhacommentary/amitabha13.htm> the infinite lifespan to the permanent quality of nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 23rd, 2013 at 10:25 PM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not knowing the location of the mind means that if you search in your personal experience for something that is your mind you don't find such a thing. This is first hand

experience.

The scientific theories about how the brain functions and what is its relation to the mind is irrelevant here. Still, if you want to go into that area in the proper way, you should look at what is called the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind%E2%80%93body_problem in Western philosophy. No final answers are promised.

You should also know that the mind-body problem doesn't actually exist in Buddhism because it is resolved from the beginning by the Buddha teaching the five aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 23rd, 2013 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

Astus wrote:

You are trying to fit a meditation instruction into a scientific idea. If you put aside your previous concepts about human biology and follow the steps as given, it works just fine. On the other hand, if you first want to engage in an intellectual investigation of the nature of mind, that's also possible, but not through Dzogchen teachings. Supposing that you want to stay in the Tibetan Buddhist structure, you should start with studying a lamrim text as an introduction and then go for learning pramana (epistemology). You may also just visit any qualified lama and debate about the matter.

For example, Shantarakshita's Tattvasamgraha deals with the problem of mind and matter to some extent. One of his reasoning is that unless direct correlation can be shown between physical and mental phenomena it cannot be established that mind is based on matter. Since the scientific research of the brain has not established that, there is no actual proof for the brain being the same as the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 24th, 2013 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

Astus wrote:

To show that the problem of mind being the body and the body producing the mind has been known before, here are some stanzas from the Tattvasangraha, ch. 22 (tr. Ganganatha Jha). Of course, the reasoning might seem strange, because on one hand it is Indian, and on the other because it was written in the 8th century.

Some arguments of the Lokayatikas (i.e. materialists):

The body, the cognition, the sense-organs and the rest being destroyed every moment, they could not pertain to the other world ; and there is nothing else that is admitted (by you, Buddhists). Hence consciousness must be regarded as produced from, or manifested by, certain material substances, just like fermented acids, liquors and such things.

The names 'body', 'sense-organ' and so on are applied to particular combinations of earth and other material substances; there is no other reality than these.

...

From this it follows that the right view is that consciousness proceeds from the body itself which is equipped with the five life-breaths prana, apana and the rest; as has been declared by Kambalashvatara.

To assert that consciousness resides in the foetus, etc. Is sheer audacity; nothing can be cognised at that stage, as the sense-organs are not there ; and consciousness can have no form other than the cognition of things ; it is for this same reason that there is no consciousness in the state of swoon, nor can consciousness exist there in the form of a latent potency ; because no potencies can exist without a substratum; and as there is no soul that could be that substratum of consciousness, the body is the only substratum possible for it. So that at the end, when the body has ceased to exist, wherein could the consciousness subsist ?

Some refutations from the Buddhist point of view:

The idea of the body being the cause (of cognition) has been already discarded, on the ground of its involving the possibility of all cognitions appearing simultaneously, on account of there being no other (contributory) causes. As a matter of fact, it is found that cognition in the form of remembrance, affection and so forth (which are cognitions) actually proceeds from pleasurable experiences and pleasant reminiscences of the same [which also are cognitions] ; and this cannot be denied. Then again, it is also seen that deterioration and improvement in one's later cognitions are brought about by deterioration and improvement in the practice of the learning and arts. It is also seen that when the functioning of the mind is defective, there is no apprehension of other things. On account of all these facts, the idea of cognition proceeding from cognition cannot be objected to.

...

If the cognition is of the same nature as the body, then why is not the consciousness (cognition) of love, hatred, etc. Not perceived by others as clearly as the body is ? In fact, cognition is cognised by the cogniser himself alone, while the body is cognised by himself as well as by others. Things that are so cognised are always distinct, e.G. Colic pain and the dramatic actor.

This reason is not admissible against the doctrine that * cognition (consciousness) alone exists ' ; as (under that view) what is cognised (by the cognition) is the appearance of itself ; as in the case of the man with defective vision. Further, cognition is always found to be destroyed immediately after appearance ; if then, the body with the cognition is of the same nature as the cognition, why is it not regarded as momentary ?

...

There is no audacity in asserting that there is consciousness in the foetus ; even though the sense-organs have not appeared in it, why cannot cognition be there in fact the assertion that does involve audacity is that all cognition proceeds from sense-organs and objects; because the contrary is found to be the case during dreams. In reality, cognition is apprehended also in a form which is distinct from that of the object, as is found in the case of swoon. From this it is clear that consciousness can be there in the foetus.

Consciousness is not present in the foetus merely in the form of a potency ; the view held is that consciousnesses are present there in their actual form. Whence do you derive the idea that there is no consciousness during sleep and swoon and such other conditions ? If it be argued that " the idea is obtained from the absence of consciousness ", then, the question is how has this absence been cognised ? In case your idea proceeds thus " we do not cognise any consciousness at the time ", then that itself proves the presence of consciousness at the time. It might be argued that " if consciousness is present during the said states, then why is there no remembrance of it on awakening, etc. ? " this fact (of non-remembrance) is not effective (in refuting our view) j the absence of remembrance is due to the absence of vividness and other conditions (in the consciousness) as in the case of the consciousness of the newborn infant.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 24th, 2013 at 6:14 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

jeeprs said:

I agree with the statements in the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad about http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/brdup/brhad_III-04.html. Briefly this is that you cannot know the knower of knowing, you cannot see the seer of seeing. The hand cannot grasp itself nor the eye see itself.

Astus wrote:

Unless you are putting this argument forward as a skilful means to ease the frantic search, stating that the mind cannot be known is contrary to both Zen and Dzogchen. There is a form of self-awareness that is denied in Buddhism, but there is another kind that is affirmed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 24th, 2013 at 7:05 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zhihua Yao: The Buddhist Theory of Self-Cognition - discusses self-awareness (svasamvedana) from the early schools up to yogacara.

Paul Williams: The Reflexive Nature of Awareness - looks into Shantarakshita's and

Mipham's arguments

Also, Brunnhölzl's "In Praise of Dharmadhatu" contains good sources and explanations about the different ways self-awareness is used.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 24th, 2013 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

jeeprs said:

So I don't know why you're taking issue with what I have said here, as far as I am concerned it is totally orthodox.

Astus wrote:

Jnana has kindly answered the issue, so here I just add a little. The only reason I took up your post is because you stated that the mind cannot be known. It is actually a part of the instructions that not finding anything doesn't mean that one is incapable of knowing, rather it is the fact of not finding that shows its emptiness. This kind of instruction is not only Dzogchen and Mahamudra but also found in Madhyamaka and the sutras (Dogen also has a chapter in the Shobogenzo on it (at least on the term "unfindable", usually translated to English as "unobtainable", like in the Heart Sutra): Shin fukatoku 心不可得).

From Thrangu Rinopche's "A Guide to Mahamudra Meditation" (p. 33;

<http://s151421314.onlinehome.us/nbp/docs/PDF/7.%20Guide%20to%20Mahamudra.pdf>):

"Not finding anything, you initially think that you have somehow failed. Either you misunderstood how to look, or you just haven't looked enough. But in fact this is not true. The reason you didn't find anything is that the nature of your mind is utter insubstantiality, which is why, according to the Buddha, it is empty. To thoroughly comprehend this emptiness, we need to experience this directly in meditation."

Also, in chapter 7 of Thrangu Rinpoche's commentary on the 9th Karmapa's Ocean of Definitive Meaning the fact of not finding anything is discussed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 24th, 2013 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

rachmiel said:

Advaitans argue (passionately, unyieldingly!) that brahman cannot be refuted. Christians have thousands of pages of scripture explaining why their God/Truth is the only true God/Truth. Ditto for every religion and most (all?) scientific disciplines. Why should I -- anyone? -- believe any of these assertions? (I don't.) I see them all as metaphors, stories. Some no doubt come closer to modelling reality than others, but

stories are just ... stories. Mind, awareness, consciousness, enlightenment ... compelling metaphors, not the real thing. But I digress ...

Astus wrote:

Very true. Buddhism has volumes of arguments to prove how the Buddhadharma is true and the others are wrong. If you go that way, it is called the path of the pandita. Those who already possess some faith but lack intellectual interest can go on the path of the yogi, following the instructions of a teacher. However, Buddhism is not that black and white. Everybody studies some scriptures and everybody does some meditation. Study and meditation has to strengthen and confirm each other. It's like the two ways of understanding something: by inference and by direct perception. So, the teachers say that it is very important to gain personal verification of the Dharma through one's own experience. It means that you can put the teachings to the test in your own life. And the proof is found in the decreasing of suffering and the increasing of wholesome qualities. That is, there is a clear benefit one can derive from the teachings of the Buddha on every level. And that benefit, that blessing is what makes Buddhism a worthwhile endeavour.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 25th, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

rachmiel said:

I'm much more of a theorist than a practitioner. But I'm challenging that, am close to establishing a daily practice, on the cushion (actually, cross-legged on a straight-back armchair). It's not easy! Pondering comes very naturally for me, direct experience (meditation) not.

Astus wrote:

If you allow me, I'd like to recommend that instead of jumping for non-conceptual methods (i.e. Dzogchen), start with a more systematic approach. I say that because vipashyana as analytical meditation can very effectively remove conceptual attachments.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 26th, 2013 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

rachmiel said:

Which would you recommend: vipassana (which I did regularly a few years back) or kusulu-type "resting in being" meditation? I'm more keen on the latter, because it's new to me. But I'm still not sure, after all this time, what exactly "resting in being" means. Maybe I should mix it up, vipassana followed by kusulu 10-20 minutes each kind of thing?

Astus wrote:

You have to find it out for yourself, because only you can tell what works and what

doesn't. First of all, in order to be able to do proper vipashyana, you have to practise yourself in shamata first, otherwise the whole thing is not meditation just thinking about this and that. There are many good manuals you can follow, more detailed than Vivid Awareness, or you go to a Dharma centre and follow their programme. Analytical meditation is meant to ease your mind, to help you get over your doubts about the truth of the Dharma. So the second thing to do is to learn the relevant teachings that you use for your investigation in meditation. Although the important points are covered in most manuals, it is useful to comprehend the details of such things as the five aggregates, the eighteen dhatus and the various forms of reasoning applied (as in Madhyamaka). Then if you are through with the analytical part in a session you finish by resting in the conclusion that is emptiness, thus the final result is no different from directly going for non-conceptual resting, except that this time you sorted out your doubts instead of just putting them aside for a short time.

If you don't know where to look for meditation instructions, here are some options (based on Madhyamaka):

Kamalashila: Bhavanakrama (commentaries are also available by HHDL, Thrangu Rinpoche, etc.)

Tsongkhapa: Lamrim chenmo

Gen Lamrimpa: How to Practice Shamatha Meditation; How to Realize Emptiness

Thrangu Rinpoche: The Middle-way Meditation Instructions

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 26th, 2013 at 7:39 AM

Title: Re: Question about "location of mind"

Content:

rachmiel said:

Please help me understand the Buddhist takes on these key terms. I'm hoping they can be "defined" in just a few words, i.e. the essence sans ornamentation ... ?

mind: ...

consciousness: ...

awareness: ...

Astus wrote:

Definitions are usually found in abhidharma works. That's what they were written for.

Generally, consciousness means the six sensory consciousnesses and the four mental aggregates. The below one has a Yogacara take on it. (the sanskrit is a bit garbled because of copy-paste)

What is the definition of the aggregate of consciousness (vijñānaskandhavyavasthāna)? It is the mind (citta), the mental organ (manas) and also consciousness (Vijñāna).

And now, what is the mind (citta)? It is the store consciousness of all the seeds (sarvabījakaṃ alayavijñānaṃ) impregnated by the residues (vasanāparibhāvita) of the aggregates (skandha), elements (dhatu) and spheres (āyatana). The result-

consciousness (vipakavijnana) and the appropriating consciousness (adanavijnana) are the same thing also, because of the accumulation of those residues (tad vasanacitata).

What is the mental organ (manas)? It is the object of the store-consciousness (alayavijnanalambana) which always participates in the nature of self-notion {manyanatmaka} associated with the four defilements, viz. the view of "self" (atmadrsti), love of "self" (atmasneba), pride of "I am" {asmimana} and ignorance (avidya). And this is present everywhere (sawatraga), in favorable (kusala), unfavorable (akusala) and neutral {avyakrta} states, except in the case of one facing the Path {margasammukhlbhava}, the attainment of cessation (nirodbasamapatti), the stage of the learned (asaiksabbumiV5 and also the consciousness that has just this instant ceased among the six kinds of consciousness.

What is consciousness (Vijnana)? It consists of six groups of consciousness: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental consciousnesses.

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p. 21-22; tr. Boin-Webb)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 26th, 2013 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

plwk said:

Now you do...

Astus wrote:

That is, sutras propagating Amitabha say he lives indefinitely, those about Avalokitesvara say he will take over Sukhavati. So the answer lies in defining which sutras one regards as definitive. For the Pure Land schools it is the former.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 27th, 2013 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

sinweiy said:

Sambhogakayas do have a beginning but do not have an ending. it's the beginning of the very first time a person attained Buddhahood(a.k.a Source). One attained the Bliss body, there after, the bliss is forever, we do not say when one attained Buddhahood, they will become deluded again. Dharmakaya, Truth body is the the one without beginning non ending. nirmanakaya always have a beginning and ending, on going cycle.

Astus wrote:

And that's why there was a debate regarding whether Amitabha is nirmanakaya or sambhogakaya. Shandao said it's the latter, consequently there is no end of Amitabha's presence to save all beings.

LastLegend said:

My reasoning is this Pure Land and manifestations of Amitabha are conditioned relatively to Samsara that they are merely there to help sentient beings. They are still subject to change. We must remember that "lives" and anything that takes "forms" are subject to change. But does not mean nothing exists in a nihilistic sense. Apparently things come to into being due to conditions, and depart due to conditions ending. Where does Buddha go after Parinirvana?

Astus wrote:

Sukhavati is not within samsara, see the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_spiritual_realms. Although there is change since beings come and go, etc., similarly to the fourth dhyana related heavens and above, it is not destroyed by anything. Parinirvana is related to nirmanakaya buddhas only, and it is only a display to urge beings for liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 28th, 2013 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

LastLegend said:

Astus, Pure Land is there to liberate sentient beings. If there are no sentient beings to liberate, will Pure Land be there?

Astus wrote:

Of course, when there are no sentient beings there is no use of buddhas either. Alas, the number of beings to be liberated is endless.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 28th, 2013 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

sinweiy said:

Amitabha is an Emanation body; the corresponding Enjoyment body is Amitayus, "infinite life"-propitiated for longevity; the Dharma body is Ananta-prabha, "boundless illumination."

Astus wrote:

That's not the same as what is taught in the Pure Land schools, but the Tibetan interpretation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 28th, 2013 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Who is this Rev. Anraku you quote from, what is the source?

Here is a short series of answers regarding Amitabha from a Shinshu perspective:

<http://www.nembutsu.info/standard/amida.htm>

And the Jodoshu view: <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Pureland/LINEAGE/budbod.html>

As for the word Amituo/Amida (阿彌陀 / 阿弥陀), it is just the transliteration of the Sanskrit word "amita":

amita 2 mfn. (3 %{\mA}) , unmeasured , boundless , infinite RV. &c. ; without a certain measure S3Br. Sus3r. &c. ; (%{a4-mitam}) ind. immensely RV. iv , 16 , 5.

It is related to words like "measure" and "metre" via the

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Proto-Indo-European/med- root>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 29th, 2013 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: What state is this?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is good not to get caught up in things, that's what non-clinging is about, and it requires mindfulness. Correct mindfulness in Zen is sometimes called the sword that kills and gives life, because you know when to let go and when to get hold of something. It is wisdom, discerning good and bad. While sitting on the cushion it's OK to let everything come and go, when you get up there are things to take care of, people to talk to, etc. So if you are mindful on the cushion you can bring that to all activities. Therefore, if you want to check your practice, see how you act in different circumstances, how thoughts and emotions sway you or if you are the captain of the ship.

When sitting in meditation you should check if there is any clinging to whatever state you think you are in. If you see how feelings and thoughts come up, do you imagine yourself to be the witness observing all this? Do you have thoughts about what you observe occurring and passing? Is there a gap between subject and object? If there is a gap, if you are the witness and you judge or consider occurrences, that is the beginning of watching the mind. If there aren't really any thoughts about phenomena but you are the watcher, that is still holding on to an imaginary self. If there is no position that you rely on and doing meditation is nothing special at all, and there is awareness, it is indeed proper Zen practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 29th, 2013 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

sinweiy said:

he used to be from esangha i met last time, studying Japanese PL. that's his email.
although i am not into Jap PL.

using the triple bodies that all Buddhas have. why must it be a credit of Tibetan interpretation?

i was taught by MCK, that there are 3 kind of gate in Buddhism. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Astus wrote:

In that case I think I know who Rev. Anraku was (died a few years ago), and he wasn't really a representative of any actual Japanese Pure Land school, plus he had some peculiar ideas about Buddhism.

Amitabha Buddha as he appears in his land is sambhogakaya. Of course, just as every buddha, there is dharmakaya, however, it is generally irrelevant for the Pure Land path. Dharmakaya is simply the ultimate reality, and for ordinary deluded beings it is imperceptible. You can see that briefly explained on the Shinshu explanation regarding Amitabha I linked in my previous post.

What I referred to as Tibetan is the idea that Amitabha is nirmanakaya and Amitayus is sambhogakaya. In East Asia the two names are not differentiated that way, they are names for the same buddha. So, when they say Amituo or Amida, it stands for both names.

As for MCK's categorisation of different Buddhist paths, that's his interpretation. In Jodoshu and Shinshu the Pure Land gate (Jodomon) is contrasted with the gate of the sages (i.e. every other Buddhist schools where they try to attain enlightenment through wisdom). This site sums up Honen's ways of selecting the exclusive nenbutsu as the correct path: <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>. Shinran gives a similar explanation: http://www.shinranworks.com/majorexpositions/kgssVI-15_36.htm#35. As for Chinese Pure Land teachings, there are many views depending on teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 29th, 2013 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Vairochana

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Mahayana generally buddhas are considered real beings, and they are also embodiments of different qualities and teachings most of the time.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

what does the True Pureland sects say about the sutras that say Amitabha Buddha will be going into Parinirvana???

or do they not have any material that covers that subject?

Astus wrote:

I'm sorry but I have no knowledge whether anyone has addressed that issue. Maybe someone did, maybe not. I don't have the sources to answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

LastLegend said:

If Nirmanakaya is the physical manifestation, then Sambhogakaya is the mental manifestation such as wisdom or compassion. Then the two cannot be separated.

Astus wrote:

There are many interpretations of the three bodies teaching, just like practically every Buddhist doctrine have various meanings taught by different masters. Still, such a distinction what you say about physical and mental is something influenced by our modern concepts. Something that has a form is rupa, and sambhogakaya buddhas definitely have forms and bodies, it's just a different kind than the nirmanakaya, similarly to the difference between gods and humans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 7:08 AM

Title: Re: True Pure Land and Parinirvana

Content:

Dodatsu said:

Also, one should remember that the interpretation on the concept of Nirvana differs in the Mahayana and Theravada traditions.

Astus wrote:

Regarding that point there was a separate topic created:

<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=12817>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Whatever happened to the wicked dwarf?

Content:

Astus wrote:

No mention of a wicked dwarf, but the story is the same:

"And the robber died to be reborn in a world of paradise." (The Skill in Means Sutra, p. 74)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Whatever happened to the wicked dwarf?

Content:

SunRay said:

The idea behind being that the Boddhisattva kills the evil being he takes it's karmic burden upon himself willingly entering the hell realms for the sake of the others? Demon dissolves into Rigpa kinda thing..

Astus wrote:

Taking over another's karma is impossible in Buddhism. In the story the captain simple prevented the robber committing murder, that is, generating very bad karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Social Work & Christian Evangelism

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the concept of a religious master has existed in Western religions for many years. That is why Western religions have been able to spread all over the world. For example, among aborigine tribes in the mountainous regions of Taiwan, I have seen many Catholic nuns and priests as well as other Christian missionaries and ministers, who have gone deep into the aborigine regions to learn the native languages, live native lifestyles, and help the natives to live more comfortably and safely. Because of them most of the aborigines have become Christians. The dedication of these missionaries is worthy of our admiration. They are not reluctant to leave behind the free and comfortable life of Western society. Across the oceans, living a hard life in Taiwan's remote land and poor villages, they think nothing of enduring hardship. It is as if one were exiled to a barren region. Most of us probably would not want to go there.

...

A true Buddhist master must have the spirit of offering oneself and all one has in order to practice, uphold, and propagate Buddhadharma. A Buddhist master should have this kind of mindset and the will to be compassionate. If one becomes a monastic only to have a peaceful life or escape from reality, this attitude will certainly produce a selfish, vexed "ghost" and it would be impossible to attain liberation. In addition, without the proper mindset to begin with, vexation would get more serious and more frequent with time.

A correct starting mindset is what I have just said: "Practice, Uphold, and Propagate Buddhadharma." These attitudes are sequential and interrelated: when our practice begins to gain some footing, we need to protect and uphold the Buddhadharma – to spend our time and energy on all events related to spreading Dharma. As we protect and uphold Buddhadharma, we effectively propagate it, and in turn, we learn more about it. Spreading Buddhadharma can be carried out all the time and under all circumstances. One does not have to wait until one is as old as I am to feel comfortable doing it, and it does not have to be done all by talking. We can do it by our action, our mannerisms, and our viewpoint. In any case, there are many ways to spread Buddhadharma. Do not let a closed mind shrivel away or stifle your potential for growth."

(http://sanghau.ddm.org.tw/en/Teaching/TheSpirit_of_MonasticLife.aspx)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 30th, 2013 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Social Work & Christian Evangelism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Christians, Muslims and smaller groups like the Krishna followers all do charity works by helping the poor. And that is very good. If Buddhists want to follow that, by all means, there's never enough soup kitchen and shelter. On the other hand, Buddhism should also offer mental help. Now, religions are of course in the business of "saving the soul", and Christianity is founded upon converting the lower classes to Jesus. Buddhism is different in that, it's sramana style is not attractive for poor people who have more mundane worries, and when you are lost in debts and you have to feed your kids, just leaving it all behind to become a monk doesn't sound very ethical, so they are left where they are. Buddhism can offer similar afterlife heavens as any other religions, except that it won't last for ever and there is no saviour to ask help from. What Buddhism specialises in is mental training, and that's what makes it popular among richer citizens who want not only a nice home but also a cosy mind. So, it's more like a hobby, a therapy. Still, it is something that the other religions are not really known of, unlike social work.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 1st, 2013 at 11:46 PM

Title: Re: Noble Onefold Path?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Everything depends on what kind of books you read. If they are introductory teachings to Zen, it is only expected that they talk a lot about the basic practice, and even that can be a little simplified (e.g. zazen as breath counting). But I don't think this is a problem.

There are books that talk a lot about superficial things, like social philosophy, rituals,

arts and such. They are more distracting than useful in terms of understanding Zen, although they can be entertaining nevertheless.

An important thing to understand about Zen in general is that as a Mahayana Buddhist school its primary style is very simple and direct. "See nature, become buddha", that's the motto. Philosophising about complex theories and the finer points of ethics can be beneficial, but it's not what Zen is about. Even the many forms of meditation and levels of attainment are pointless sophistries on the sudden path. But it's a mistake to think that Zen exists separately from the other teachings of Mahayana, rather it accepts and incorporates them all. The main difference between Zen and other schools is that it takes personal insight as the source and method of interpreting the teachings and not a specific scripture or teacher. And that doesn't mean the followers of other schools lack insight. Zen is just not that systematic.

Dogen himself studied the Buddhist canon and quoted from many sources in his writings and teachings. Sure, he taught about zazen, but that's just a small part of the entirety of his works. But only once zazen is comprehended and experienced is one ready to plunge into the other things.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 2nd, 2013 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism Compatible with Evolution?

Content:

Jikan said:

But the bigger question in this discussion is here: what use is a worldview as such? Why bother adopting worldviews, why take them on, why identify with one Weltanschauung or another? Better to try to get at the reality of the situation. here I'm following on jeep'r's post in this thread, which is a good one.

Astus wrote:

A philosophically conscious person who willingly adopts a view has a reason for taking it up - instead of staying in the usual naive slumber of ordinary humans. The philosophy of one's own, a worldview, has enormous consequences. It leads and organises almost everything what one does. Therefore the correct view, something that fits reality, is also important, as it defines one's success in life. Delusions are bad because they mislead one and fail to fulfil their purpose, i.e. assisting in life. That means that finding the truth is necessary.

It is not at all meaningless whether biological evolution is acceptable in Buddhism or not. Denying evolution is equal to rejecting natural science, and that sounds bad for Buddhism as it puts into the category of extremist religions. What has always been the method of Buddhists is to incorporate the ruling philosophy of a culture and transform it in a way that is fitting for the Dharma. For instance, the Buddha accepted all the ancient Indian gods but he denied the existence of their omnipotence, omniscience, eternal life and their creating power. Basically, gods were rendered meaningless. Natural science can be subdued in a similar way, saying that its area of expertise lies only within the

realm of the four material elements. The physical universe has only a minor role in Buddhism. Just as formerly Buddhists could use traditional Indian and Chinese theories about the human body, they can do the same with modern scientific doctrines. The Dharma has no need for the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prana#V.C4.81yus> and the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meridian_%28Chinese_medicine%29, chemical elements are an acceptable explanations too. And if scientists say that life on this planet evolved from dead matter, it is because they understand life as the physical body. Buddhism in fact agrees with this, saying that the body is nothing else but the combination of the four elements.

What Buddhism has to leave behind to accept evolution is only its Indian cosmology, but that's something very few ever cared about. The teachings about consciousness and karma remain intact, just as the path of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 2nd, 2013 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism Compatible with Evolution?

Content:

jeeprs said:

As I mentioned, I don't deny the fact of evolution. What interests me is the meaning of it - or the absence of meaning, which amounts to the same.

Astus wrote:

Evolution has no meaning in the sense that there is no higher purpose behind/above it. Samsara has no meaning either. Beings are stuck in their habits and that's it, it's just a fact of life. There is no big plan, nobody designed evolution nor samsara. The big difference is that if one looks only at evolution, i.e. the bodily life, it teaches only violence and hedonism. Understanding samsara, however, means realising the futility of all mundane pursuits and the true cause of suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 4th, 2013 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Walking Away

Content:

Unknown said:

"And what is the stress of separation from the loved? There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wanting. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings

subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wanting. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.141.than.html>)

Astus wrote:

What is the way to become free from stress, from suffering, from being unsatisfied? There are just so many answers to that in Buddhism. The short one is to see how it is only you creating the trouble, it is a mind made experience and it originates from believing that it is real and not just some concept. And there are longer ways, as other's have already suggested.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 5th, 2013 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Condoms Available to Monks in Bhutan

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Thich Nhat Hanh's "Freedom Wherever We Go" (i.e. a revised pratimoksha) the precept against male masturbation is moved from "sanghavashesa" to the "payantika" rules, same level as it exists in the bhikshuni rules. So it is a minor offence for both, while in traditional pratimokshas it is minor only for nuns. On the other hand, touching or letting be touched by another person with both parties having sexual intentions is a defeat for nuns and community restoration for monks. There's hardly any way around the rules to justify the acceptance of sexual activities between monastics.

On the other hand, that's just the theory. There are also social factors to be considered, as mentioned already. In fact, the Vinaya itself was meant to harmonise the monastic community with the prevailing social norms. If the lay community is happy to support a family temple - as in Japan - it can also preserve and carry on the Dharma. There are family lineages in Tibet and they are also doing quite well. I'm not saying that the rules should be thrown out the window, but flexibility and diversity of the Buddhist clergy is a good thing. I believe that it is in agreement with the Mahayana idea to allow a greater variety of Dharma professionals than what is in the Vinaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 5th, 2013 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: "In One Lifetime"

Content:

Astus wrote:

The majority of East Asian Mahayana schools claim that enlightenment in this life is possible, the exception is the Pure Land school where they guarantee your liberation in your next life in Sukhavati. However, since Buddhism is not a centralised church, different teachers can say different things, including the requirement for aeons of

bodhisattva practice. Or it can be also said that the important thing is to become a bodhisattva - who is an enlightened being by the way - and then continue to help all beings.

Talking about the Soto school, their basic doctrine is practice-enlightenment, i.e. that the moment you do zazen right there you are buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 6th, 2013 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: "In One Lifetime"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides the usual teachings about enlightenment in this life, there is another view one can find.

"Sometimes, for the sake of weak-willed men, they show how to attain perfect enlightenment quickly by skipping over the stages of the Bodhisattva. And sometimes, for the sake of indolent men, they say that men may attain enlightenment at the end of numberless aeons. Thus they can demonstrate innumerable expedient means and suprarational feats. But in reality all these Bodhisattvas are the same in that they are alike in their lineage, their capacity, their aspiration, and their realization of Suchness; therefore, there is no such thing as skipping over the stages, for all Bodhisattvas must pass through the three terms of innumerable aeons before they can fully attain enlightenment. However, because of the differences in the various beings, there are also different ways of teaching them what to practice."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

In Chan (and especially Korean Seon) there is a prominent idea called "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice", where while there is a direct entry, it is followed by gradual practice. At the same time this is not necessarily understood as the same level as the bodhisattva vehicle but rather the supreme one vehicle.

In modern Chinese Buddhism, thanks to the influence of Ven. Yinshun (1906 - 2005), the bodhisattva path is emphasised in Humanistic Buddhism instead of "buddhahood in this life". In his http://www.buddhanet.net/cbp2_f3.htm he differentiates bodhisattvas to those who attain no-birth (i.e. the stage of no regression, 8th bhumi) gradually and those who attain it suddenly. Then he says,

"It attains understanding of voidness, equality, and great wisdom. It does not attach itself any longer to the three realms of existence nor Nirvana. Nor will it attach itself to the fact that it is ferrying the suffering sentient beings over to the other shore of Nirvana. Neither will it attach itself to attaining Buddhahood. It will work vigorously to cultivate the Six Perfections. The awakened mind will utilize the expedient path to help all beings. These are the ones who have the Bodhisattva spiritual foundation."

Master Yinshun in the book Human-Centered Buddhism categorises both mature

Chinese Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism as Late Mahayana based on the Tathagatagarbha doctrine, something that teaches enlightenment in this life. He compares Late Mahayana to the old age period when people turn to theistic beliefs, fear decline and death, thus they are eager for fast and easy solutions. (p. 49-50) He also says later,

"People fantasize about instant buddhahood and are in such a rush to get there they cast aside the bodhisattva practice. What nonsense!" (p. 77)

Ven. Shengyan (1930 – 2009), discussing the question Can One Become a Buddha Instantaneously? (Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p. 100-103), using the Tiantai teaching of six identities (六即), says that the Chan claim for sudden buddhahood is only rhetoric, and it's just an initial insight that they actually mean.

The meaning of this criticism of buddhahood in this life is that the theory is contrary to what we can actually see in the Buddhist world. Even respected teachers don't claim any high attainment, so what can we say about ordinary practitioners who have trouble following even the basic precepts? It is this gap between the ideal and the actual that these modern teachers address.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 6th, 2013 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: "In One Lifetime"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nilasarasvati,

I don't recommend taking the idea of sudden or gradual side too seriously. And the emphasis is on idea here, not the actual systems. The many teachings are there to address different inclinations people have. Or we can say, the teachings express certain individuals' approach to the Dharma. As I see it, a teacher's style is determined by his personal experiences he had on the path. Then specific teachers become prominent according to circumstances (within and without the Buddhist community). Naturally, all styles and forms of teaching claim superiority to itself, so such statements practically mean nothing when comparing teachings. What is important is to find what feels personally close and inspiring.

Seeing the teacher as buddha is central in Vajrayana as it uses devotion to allow students to receive blessings. That is, if you trust the teacher you are open to the teachings and can accept them and follow them. No devotion means a closed mind, no blessings means not hearing the teaching. This is a very skilful method, but it requires faith. Actually, faith is important on every Buddhist path, only its style is different.

A teacher is someone who can give you guidance on the path. It depends on the student whether this or that teacher is helpful for a specific problem. A teacher doesn't have to be someone in an official post. It really depends on what actually works. When you

receive the Dharma from someone, that person is as the Buddha himself, the first refuge, and this is true for every Buddhist path.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 7th, 2013 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

wisdom said:

In essence the Mahayana approach goes beyond accepting and rejecting objects of the senses as inherently good or bad...

Malcolm said:

Well, no, it doesn't — Mahāyāna regards sense objects as negative, something to be rejected.

Astus wrote:

This is from a Theravada teacher (who was also a Vinaya specialist),

"For the really earnest student, the more sensations the better. But many meditators shrink away from sensations, they don't want to deal with them. This is like the naughty schoolboy who won't go to school, won't listen to the teacher. These sensations are teaching us. When we know sensations then we are practicing Dhamma."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/chah/living.html>)

The doctrine that "affliction is enlightenment" (煩惱即菩提) is well known in East Asian Mahayana schools like Chan and Tiantai. In Vajrayana they say that the sutra path is renunciation, the tantra path is transformation and the dzogchen path is self-liberation (e.g. <http://www.dzogchen.org.au/index.php?page=dzogchen>). And here is what a Chan master said,

"There are many methods in practicing Buddhism. The Lesser Vehicle practices "eradicating afflictions." The Great Vehicle (Mahayana) "transforms afflictions." In the Ultimate Vehicle "afflictions are bodhi." Each method is centered on the mind. In the end, they all enable sentient beings to attain unsurpassed complete enlightenment." (http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=219&Itemid=59)

Although there are different traditions they are aware of the various methods that can be used in order to deal with desire, anger and ignorance. In a single teaching the Buddha gave five different methods to deal with unskillful thoughts, and these techniques could be matched with the above three:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.020.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 7th, 2013 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea of the decline of Dharma has been around since the beginning. Piya Tan explores the concept in his <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/1.10-Dharma-ending-age-piya-proto.pdf> within the Pali Canon. In China the Three Stages School (Sanjie jiao 三階教) founded by Xinxing (信行, 540-594) was among the first to propagate the end of Dharma (mofa 末法) and based on that claim that its own teachings are the most appropriate and viable. The idea that only this or that path is the available one in this age has been in use for a while now, so any statement with such a reasoning has little weight, just like the grandiose claims for superiority.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 7th, 2013 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: New to Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are some communities you could contact in Korea and they speak English (or at least some of them):

<http://www.hanmaum.org/eng/>

<http://wakeupandlaugh.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.bels.kr/>

<http://www.korea4expats.com/article-buddhist-temples-meditation-seoul.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 8th, 2013 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

You can find such statements in Mahāyāna sutras, but such statements do not constitute the path of Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that they teach one thing but practise another? The non-differentiation of samsara and nirvana exists in Mahayana from its early times. That view is part of the practice in both ethics and meditation. Chan and Tiantai are good examples. There are also sutras like the Samantabhadra Contemplation Sutra, Vimalakirti Sutra and others where it is expressed in practical terms.

Malcolm said:

In Vajrayāna one does not transform afflictions. That is not what "path of transformation" means in Vajrayāna. You don't experience anger, for example, and then try to change it into the mirror-like wisdom.

Astus wrote:

Later you write:

The path of transformation means transforming our relationship with the world, sentient beings and our own body (through empowerment and sadhana) from an impure relationship into a pure relationship. The path of transformation involves taking the result as the path -- for Buddhas, sense objects are not toxic, they are not afflictive, they are pure goddesses. When sense objects and consciousnesses are purified through the process of sadhana, the afflictive power of sense objects is lessened, and the links between sensation and craving is weakened and finally severed. For example, we replace our sense of identity with a Buddha identity -- the so called "divine pride" which is the essence of the creation stage, etc. In the course of working with pure vision, it is necessary to engage sense objects in every different way, smells, colors, tastes, sounds, sights, and so on.

You change the view from attachment to objects to non-attachment to objects. This is no different from what Ajahn Chah said, or what you find in Mahayana. True, no colourful deities are involved in the process most of the time.

Malcolm said:

Further, we have to examine what is meant by "affliction" is bodhi.

Astus wrote:

It means that affliction (klesa) is empty, therefore there is nothing to reject or transform.

Malcolm said:

Perfect example of the path of renunciation in toto. I do not see at all how, for example, this relates in anyway to the path of transformation.

Astus wrote:

These are the five methods:

1. Switching from unskilful to skilful object.
2. Understanding the drawbacks.
3. Abandoning the unskilful.
4. Abandoning proliferation.
5. Strengthening awareness.

For instance, changing from unskilful to skilful is no different from changing from impure view to pure view. Abandoning the unskilful object itself or the following proliferation is simply letting it self-liberate. Are the objects rejected? No, only the attachment to them, otherwise arhats would be blind and deaf. The sensation stays, only grasping goes.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 9th, 2013 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

this is the function of the two truths.

In truth, this statement by Nāgārjuna illustrates how to practice according to Mahāyāna:

Astus wrote:

It is a letter written to a worldly ruler. As Baizhang said, "If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. You should not speak this way to a worldling beyond measure, someone like Vimalakirti or the great hero Fu." (in "Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang", p. 29) Note that both Vimalakirti and Fu were lay people. This is simply recognising the different inclinations and the appropriate methods. Bodhisattvas have no trouble with samsara because they understand how afflictions are enlightenment, it is not some abstract far away goal but the path itself, because a bodhisattva practises prajnaparamita.

"To the extent that beings take hold of things and settle down in them, to that extent is there defilement. But no one is thereby defiled. And to the extent that one does not take hold of things and does not settle down in them, to that extent can one conceive of the absence of I-making and mine-making. In that sense can one form the concept of the purification of beings, i.e. to the extent that they do not take hold of things and do not settle down in them, to that extent there is purification. But no one is therein purified. When a Bodhisattva courses thus, he courses in perfect wisdom." (PP8000, ch. 22, tr. Conze)

Zen teaches the same thing,

"Those who seek the Dharma should not seek for anything. Outside of mind there is no other Buddha, outside of Buddha there is no other mind. Not attaching to good and not rejecting evil, without reliance on either purity or defilement, one realizes that the nature of offence is empty: it cannot be found in each thought because it is without selfnature. Therefore, the three realms are mind-only and 'all phenomena in the universe are marked by a single Dharma.'"

(Mazu Daoyi, in "Sun-Face Buddha", p. 62)

Malcolm said:

But in former, you do so without ever giving up such objects, and in the latter, one must give up objects. This is the essential difference between the path of renunciation and the path of transformation.

Astus wrote:

As above, the dharmas need not be rejected or removed. Even in Theravada it is taught that the problem is not with the skandhas but with attachment ("I-making and mine-making").

Malcolm said:

But Chan is still a path of renunciation, even if its view is beyond accepting and rejecting objects, there is still subtle and not so subtle accepting and rejecting concerning relative and ultimate truth.

Astus wrote:

It is with the realisation of emptiness that one can walk the bodhisattva path itself. If there were "subtle and not so subtle accepting and rejecting" then how could it be non-abiding?

Malcolm said:

Yes, this is why it is not part of the path of transformation because "...those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned and subside." And it is not teaching a path of self-liberation either because the refrain in each verse is "...those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned and subside."

Astus wrote:

Is there still attachment on the path of transformation and self-liberation? If yes, then how can it be called transformation and self-liberation? If no, it also abandons attachment.

Malcolm said:

It is unrealistic for lay people (and even bhikṣus) to abandon sense pleasures in this day and age, therefore, it is best to use a method where sense pleasures are used for one's own purposes as part of the path, hence the reason for the Vajrayāna path of transformation. Of course if you do not have Vajrayāna methods you try and be free from accepting and rejecting ala Chan and Zen, but that is a slow path since it lacks skill methods, from a Vajrayāna perspective.

Astus wrote:

Shinran quotes Shandao (http://www.shinranworks.com/majorexpositions/kgssVI-15_36.htm#34), "The Tathagata already knows that foolish beings of the latter age possessed of karmic evil and defilements are incapable of visualizing forms and fixing the mind on them. How much harder is it to seek realization without visualizing forms; it is like a person lacking transcendent powers building a house in the air."

From the perspective of the Pure Land school, Vajrayana is no different from the other schools of self-power and in the Dharma ending age it's unlikely that anyone is capable of attaining liberation through them. Therefore, the nenbutsu of the other-power is the best and virtually only choice anyone has who aims for enlightenment.

Obviously, only those following that path accept such an argument. Therefore, saying that renunciation is less possible than before is a statement valid only for those who want to practise something else.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

Has any modern bhikshu/ni tried to actually live from begging? I mean, homeless people can manage somehow, why not a few bald people too?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

So would it be possible for somebody to be a beggar monk while living in a western country? Sure, but they will have to live in shelters or on the street and rely on soup kitchens etc... run by the state and other religious organisations. Like all homeless people do.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. Like all homeless people do. Another thing that is not considered is that while "[w]e do not really have a donation culture" we have a tax paying culture, and at least in some European countries tax money also goes to churches. The key is to have enough followers who choose your church. Spiritual services (to some level) are expected to be free because (traditional) Christian churches are open for the public throughout Europe. But there are other religious communities that can manage quite well even without a large support base, have temples and community houses built, even establish their own theological colleges. The difference between those and Buddhists is that their followers are religious people and see themselves as such. Or maybe even this is not that big a difference. It's just that on the one hand the monastic lifestyle is not a popular one, and on the other Buddhism is simply not strong enough yet to support dozens of renunciates in every major city. It shouldn't be forgotten that in Asia the Buddhist monasteries usually had state support.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

kirtu said:

Homeless people do not actually manage. They die on the streets.

Astus wrote:

Can't speak for every country, but in Hungary mostly those die who stay outside in the winter instead of going some place warm for the night. I've met people who have been homeless for 10+ years. And I'm not saying it's an easy life, but I'm quite sure you can beg enough money a day to have food and even more, plus the social services.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

kirtu said:

Perhaps it's just best to make one's way to Thailand and take ordination in a small village and abandon the Mahayana institutions.

Astus wrote:

Plum Village is open for new applicants: <http://new.plumvillage.org/about/becoming-a-monastic/>, so you don't have to leave Mahayana institutions behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

kirtu said:

Austria was briefly officially declared a Buddhist country by law.

Astus wrote:

There is some info here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_tax, (also check the German version: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirchensteuer>). In Hungary you can choose to send 1% to an "established church" (new invention by the current government, but it still includes some Buddhists) and another 1% to a civil organisation. Similar tax based funding also exists in Slovakia for instance.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

I see, so for you a bodhisattva is solely someone who has realized emptiness. Well, that certainly does leave a lot of people out.

Astus wrote:

"if a bodhisattva holds the notion of a self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, and the notion of life span, then she is not a bodhisattva." (Diamond Sutra, ch. 17, tr. C. Muller)

"Nothing real is meant by the word 'Bodhisattva.' Because a Bodhisattva trains himself in non-attachment to all dharmas. For the Bodhisattva, the great being, awakes in non-attachment to full enlightenment in the sense that he understands all dharmas. Because he has enlightenment as his aim, an 'enlightenment-being' [Bodhisattva], a great being, is so called." (PP8000, ch. 1, tr. Conze)

Of course, there are other views, like the 5 paths and the 52 stages, where they consider the realisation of emptiness and the practice of the paramitas a far away attainment. That kind of thinking naturally led to the emergence of sudden teachings where awakening came closer again. So while I don't make the difference here between ordinary and noble bodhisattvas, it is with the intention to show that the bodhisattvayana, as presented by the sutras and several teachers, is not just how it tends to be represented in later "sudden teaching" texts (i.e. as something that only incompetent fools choose over their direct path to buddhahood).

Malcolm said:

No, in terms of relative truth Mahāyāna teaches that phenomena themselves are afflictive. Also in the Nikāya schools, phenomena themselves are regarded as afflictive and a cause of suffering.

Astus wrote:

If "phenomena themselves" are afflictive, then are phenomena should be removed or the afflictions? If ignorance lies in appearances then shouldn't the realm of nothingness or complete annihilation be nirvana? As I understand it, the problem is with believing appearances to be self, and that's why the realisation of emptiness is the solution.

Malcolm said:

In reality the intent of such statements that you introduced is that in Mahāyāna, the contemplation of emptiness is for abandoning sense objects.

The victor stated that desire objects, wealth and the three planes of existence are similar to illusions, mirages, a moon in the water, and apparitions.

Astus wrote:

They are like illusions because they are empty, and seeing things as empty only means non-attachment but not annihilation. Why do you say then that they are abandoned?

Malcolm said:

But common Mahāyāna offers no methods for ordinary persons to take sense objects in to the path. How do ordinary Mahāyāna practitioners practice? For the most part their practice is no different than that of non-Mahāyāna Buddhists. i.e. śīla, samādhi and prajñā.

Astus wrote:

"you should understand that all the afflictions constitute the seed of the Tathāgata. It is like not being able to attain the priceless jewelpearl without entering the ocean. Therefore, if one does not enter the great sea of the afflictions, one will not be able to attain the jewel of omniscience." (Vimalakirti Sutra, ch. 8, tr. McRae)

This sutra says quite the opposite, that one needs all the defilements to walk the bodhisattva path. On the other hand, it is similar to what you say in that it attributes the "total renunciation" view to a lower path and the "freedom in samsara" view to itself. The prajnaparamita sutras in general recommend the realisation of prajnaparamita itself as

the way of the bodhisattva, and that has no problem with the sense objects at all. And even if someone secludes oneself to have a nice and calm environment for meditation, I see nothing wrong with that, nor anything impossible or difficult to achieve.

Honen gave this advice regarding practice:

"If you cannot stay in one spot and do it, then do it when you are walking. If you cannot do it as a priest, then do it as a layman. If you cannot do it alone, then do it in company with others. If you cannot do it and at the same time provide yourself with food and clothing, then accept the help of others and go on doing it. Or if you cannot get others to help you, then look after yourself but keep on doing it. Your wife and children and domestics are for this very purpose, of helping you to practice it, and if they prove an obstacle, you ought not to have any. Friends and property are good, if they too prove helpful, but if they prove a hindrance they should be given up." (Honen the Buddhist Saint, p. 75)

Malcolm said:

Attachment is used on the path transformation to eliminate attachment. Desire is used to eliminate desire, etc.

The path of self-liberation is a little difference since self-liberation is non-attachment (but it is not so simple as that).

Astus wrote:

You don't use afflictions on the path of transformation just as they are, but with the view that they are essentially pure (empty), and so it associates pure visions to impure ones. Thus it is not exactly using the very same afflicted mentality to defeat another afflicted mentality, but more like a different way of using antidotes. Self-liberation is also based on the understanding that appearances are empty, so the only thing to do is to stay with that realisation thus stopping all contrivances (i.e. I-making and mind-making). As Traleg Kyabgon says, "It is simply a matter of maintaining our awareness (sampajanya)." (Mind at East, p. 14)

Ajahn Chah talks in a similar fashion,

"This is our foundation: to have sati, recollection, and sampajañña, self-awareness, whether standing, walking, sitting, or reclining. Whatever arises, just leave it be, don't cling to it. Be it like or dislike, happiness or suffering, doubt or certainty, contemplate with vicara and gauge the results of those qualities. Don't try to label everything, just know it. See that all the things that arise in the mind are simply sensations. They are transient. They arise, exist and cease. That's all there is to them, they have no self or being, they are neither "us" nor "them." They are not worthy of clinging to, any of them." (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/chah/heartfood.html#samma>)

Malcolm said:

It is obvious that renunciate paths (as opposed to the general dissatisfaction with samsara) are less possible then before. Actually, it is easier to be dissatisfied with samsara now, but it is much less easy to do something about it.

Astus wrote:

Obvious from what? In older times there were persecutions, wars, famine, no printing, no schools, no internet, and strong state control. Today you can go to quite a few Buddhist monasteries and just stay there, or travel around. If you want to sell everything and move into the mountains, nobody stops you.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mahāyāna does not just exist as a teaching on ultimate truth.

Astus wrote:

Mahayana encompasses all teachings there are. However, the main path is the bodhisattva path as the practice of the six paramitas. Practising the paramitas requires insight into emptiness, that is the way emphasised by the prajnaparamita texts and others. Also, in Chan the first thing one needs is to see the nature of mind, practically the same thing as realising emptiness. Practising only on the level of everyday truth is good for accumulating worldly merit, but that's only the path of "humans and gods" and not even the sravakayana.

Malcolm said:

The path of renunciation suggests, in both Nikaya schools as well as Mahāyāna, that phenomena are to be removed -- and this is generally accomplished with vows. For example, monks remove the phenomena of others' genitals; they remove the phenomena of handling precious things. More importantly, the abandonment of sense objects is seen as a condition for development of samadhi in both Nikāya Buddhism and Mahāyana.

Astus wrote:

Yes, vows are useful. At the same time, if you look at the Skill in Means Sutra, the Definitive Vinaya sutra (in the Ratnakuta), or the Vimalakirti Sutra, it is an important quality of bodhisattvas to roam freely in samsara and liberate beings. Vimalakirti himself is a great example here. You may say then this is only the result of the path, however, as I write above, this is the path of the paramitas.

Malcolm said:

nothing of the sort. The citation you provide is no different than the peacock eating poisoned plants metaphor...

Astus wrote:

You said,

But common Mahāyāna offers no methods for ordinary persons to take sense objects in to the path. How do ordinary Mahāyāna practitioners practice? For the most part their

practice is no different than that of non-Mahāyāna Buddhists. i.e. śīla, samadhi and prajñā.

And for that was my response quoting the Vimalakirti sutra about differentiating the sravaka and the bodhisattva path, and that the afflictions are not rejected but they are actually required. In this case I have not said that it represents the view that the afflictions equal enlightenment, although they are not completely different either. Zhanran in his commentary (T38n1778_p0683c26-28) on the section explains that the five aggregates become nirvana, like ice turns into water. It is in the commentary on chapter 4 where Zhiyi mentions regarding Vimalakirti's discussion with Maitreya how affliction is no different from bodhi (T38n1777_p0530c17-22). Since it is the 8th chapter that describes a rather common approach, as you have said, I don't see your above comment justified.

Malcolm said:

You don't change afflictions, you train in pure vision. By slowly transforming your vision, since ordinary vision is caused by afflictions which generate concepts, counteract that with sadhana practice, completion stage etc.

You use afflictions just as they are, but by changing how you relate to the world, by transforming your world, slowly you realize the state of Mahāmudra without giving anything up at all.

Astus wrote:

With establishing prajnaparamita as the correct view there is nothing to improve or get rid of. As it says in chapter 22 in PP8000, purification means simply the extent one uses prajnaparamita. To this you may say that this is again the ultimate view, and that in order to reach that one has to follow a sravaka-style practice by renouncing the world, etc. As I see it, to hop on the Great Vehicle, one needs prajnaparamita (ch. 1, PP8000).

The training on the path of transformation is with pure vision, correct view, and the application of visualisation, etc., therefore while it may be said that afflictions are left just as they are, affliction is something where there is impure vision. So once there is pure vision, it serves as an antidote. Being afflicted is one view of the world, being unafflicted is another. This is how prajnaparamita is a universal solution for all defilements, because it removes the root of the problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Ultimately once the wisdom realizing emptiness is achieved this is true. But in order to realize emptiness one requires a substantial amount of merit which is why we need an integrative path that integrates method and wisdom. Also, from a Mahayana POV Sravakas and so forth have realized selflessness but due to their not cultivating the method side of the path they are not able to achieve the final goal of full enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

Saying that one needs merit to realise emptiness is equal to saying the requirement for good karma. Meeting with the Dharma, with Mahayana, with teachers, etc. is already the sign of merit. And as the sutras say, not becoming frightened of emptiness is the sign of a mind ready for realisation. Charity, repentance, morality, meditation and studying are all beneficial, however, to see emptiness one has to actually look at it (paraphrasing the Zen motto of "direct pointing" and "seeing nature"). Thrangu Rinpoche likes to say (e.g. Essentials of Mahamudra, p. 166-167) that the difference between sutrayana (madhyamaka) and vajrayana (mahamudra) is that the former uses analysis, inference while the latter uses direct perception. My small objection is that such a definition is true only where common Mahayana is reduced to a theoretical background. The sutras themselves are very practical, at least that's how many of them were intended to be used.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2013 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

What do you mean by 'realizing emptiness', Astus?

Astus wrote:

To see that no appearance has a self(-nature), attaining the view that is free from the extremes. Just the usual.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Insofar as I know, 'realizing emptiness' in Vajrayana and Dzogchen means quite a different thing.

Astus wrote:

Something else than non-fabrication is fabrication. There is only one suchness, no matter what tradition.

As the 3rd Karmapa wrote (An Aspirational Prayer for Mahamudra, tr. J. Rockwell; <http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/mahamudra.pdf>),

"Free from mental fabrication, it is Mahamudra.

Free from extremes, it is Great Madhyamaka.

This is also called the Great Perfection, the consummation of all.

May we have confidence that understanding one realizes all."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

LastLegend said:

Is this for all practitioners of different levels/capacities? How does one enter the gate directly?

Astus wrote:

It really depends on who you ask. Different traditions say different things. Ask a Soto Zen teacher and they say you just have to do zazen. Ask a Dzogchen teacher and they advise you to do the preliminary practices and/or receive introduction. Ask a Jodoshu teacher and they might say you better just focus on the recitation of the name of Amita Buddha and aspire for birth in the Pure Land. The Lankavatara Sutra tells you that everything is only mind, and the prajnaparamita sutras teach you that all appearances are nothing but conceptualisations.

Some say that their practice is only for people of the highest capacity to boost your enthusiasm, while others say that it is accessible to all to strengthen your confidence. Usually both are said at the same time.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

treehuggingoctopus,

Then let's say instead of "realising" it is experiencing emptiness, that is, I don't mean an intellectual comprehension of it but first hand personal experience. And that experience is the same for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is not a statement about means.

Astus wrote:

Prajnaparamita is the basis of the bodhisattvayana, and there are no methods to apply without it. It is prajnaparamita that liberates all beings and it includes all means. Isn't the inseparability of compassion and wisdom the essential realisation of a bodhisattva?

Malcolm said:

Pāramitāyāna is a gradual path, one that requires infinite lifetimes to complete.

Astus wrote:

The bodhisattva liberates all beings without conceiving any person that liberates or is liberated. How can you complete such a path? Let me quote a bit from the "<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>" that was, and still is, popular in East Asia.

The Buddha asked Mañjuśrī, “When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, does he attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?”

Mañjuśrī replied, “When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, he does not attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Why not? Because the appearance of bodhi is true suchness. Not finding a speck of dharma to capture is called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Because bodhi has no appearance, who can sit and who can rise? For this reason, I see neither a Bodhisattva sitting in a bodhimaṇḍa nor anyone realizing anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.”

Mañjuśrī said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, bodhi is the five rebellious acts, and the five rebellious acts are bodhi. Why? Because bodhi and the five rebellious acts are free from duality. Hence there is neither learning nor learner, neither perceiving nor perceiver, neither knowing nor knower, neither differentiating nor differentiator. Such appearances are called bodhi. In the same way one should view the appearances of the five rebellious acts. If there are those who say that they see bodhi and have attained it, we should know that they are the ones with exceeding arrogance.”

Malcolm said:

Actually, prajñā takes many eons to perfect according to Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “If good men and good women, having heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā, can come to resoluteness in their minds, not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, know that they stand on the Ground of No Regress. If those who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, but believe, accept, appreciate, and listen tirelessly, they have in effect achieved dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, dhyāna-pāramitā, and prajñā-pāramitā. Moreover, they can reveal and explicate [the teachings] to others and can have them train accordingly.”

The Buddha asked Mañjuśrī, “In your opinion, what is meant by attaining anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and by abiding in anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?”

Mañjuśrī replied, “I have no anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi to attain, nor do I abide in the Buddha Vehicle. Then how should I attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi? What I describe is only the appearance of bodhi.”

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 10:19 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

bodhicitta is the basis of the bodhisattvayāna, and that has both relative and ultimate aspects.

Your bodhisattvayāna is a bird that is wounded in one wing.

Astus wrote:

"When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path."

(The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p. 252)

Bodhicitta without the ultimate aspect is a heap of good intentions, but that is not the same as saying that everything else is rejected.

Having generated the great mind to realize bodhi, it is necessary to recognize what constitutes the essence of the bodhi mind. Now, as for the substance of the bodhi mind, if one fails to generate it from one's true mind, there is no source through which one might succeed in reaching bodhi. On account of this, it is essential that one differentiate clearly [what it is]. Only then does this result in Dharma practice which corresponds to correct causality.

...

The Buddhas of the ten directions, all beings, and this mind of mine—"in these three, there are no distinctions." It is this which is identical with the essence of the bodhi mind. One forsakes this and, failing to recognize it, one instead recognizes [only] one's own false thoughts. Consequently one engages in a continual process of dying and being reborn again and thus endures suffering shoulder- to-shoulder with the various species of birds and beasts. How could it be that one who is truly a man would not feel shamed by this?

(Peixiu: Exhortation to Resolve on Buddhahood, p. 6-7; tr. Bhikshu Dharmamitra)

Also,

"Since it is the mother of the Bodhisattvas,

It is also the mother of the Buddhas:

The prajñāpāramitā

Is foremost among the provisions essential for enlightenment."

(Nagarjuna: Guide to the Bodhisattva Path, v. 5; tr. Bhikshu Dharmamitra)

Malcolm said:

In any event, this stream of replies and responses is far away from the original point, which is that Mahāyāna is a path of renunciation, just like Śrāvakayāna.

Astus wrote:

The topic is about dealing with desires, and you restrict Mahayana to a single approach that desires can only be rejected. My position is that Mahayana is more than that and encompasses several methods.

"For the bodhisattva, afflictions accord with his nature.
He is not one who takes nirvāṇa as his very nature.
It is not the case that the burning up of the afflictions
Allows one to generate the seed of bodhi."
(Nagarjuna: Guide to the Bodhisattva Path, v. 79)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2013 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: The balance between compassion and wisdom

Content:

Astus wrote:

In formal sessions where there is the section on awakening bodhicitta and the section on dedicating merit, they cover the compassion part, while the vipashyana section in meditation and studying sutras the wisdom part. In daily life you maintain good intentions towards others and at the same time non-attachment to illusory appearances, thus compassion and wisdom are combined. In other words, you try to be nice and not to hang on to (unwholesome) emotions and thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 12:42 AM

Title: Re: Uncertain steps...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chan and Pure Land practices have no general structures, it is whatever the teacher says or what you follow. So for that practically any Chinese or Vietnamese community/temple is a good place to go. If you like Thich Nhat Hanh (based on your list of books), their website also contains teachings and he has introductory works too.

Besides the BuddhaNet site, for East Asian Buddhism there are some good places to start.

<http://blpusa.com/category/buddhism-in-every-step> - Ven. Xingyun's teachings covering lot of subjects

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/> - some of Ven. Shengyan's introductory works; there are also <http://chancenter.org/cmc/multimedia/video/>

<http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice> - Thich Thien Tam's great summary of the Pure Land teachings

<http://www.wwzc.org/book/long-distance-training-program> - they provide distance training in Soto Zen

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: Any translation of this volume 高僧傳

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've seen a translation of a collection of biographies of eminent nuns in English, alas I can't remember the book's title. Otherwise I don't think any biographical record has been fully translated, except for the travel stories.

It has an English wiki article: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memoirs_of_Eminent_Monks

And those collections are also used to compare it with Chan records, like here:

http://www.chibs.edu.tw/ch_html/chbj/07/chbj0716.htm and here:

http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/befeo_0336-1519_1998_num_85_1_3835

In Chinese DDM/DDBC has a <http://dev.ddbc.edu.tw/biographies/gis/> to search for biographical info: <http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

oushi said:

What if a faulty idea is introduced, or an ideas that can be easily misinterpreted later on? Is there a way of cleaning the standard Mahayana content? Because it is inevitable that some faults will/was introduced, and later structures were build upon them.

Astus wrote:

Doesn't really work like that. Mahayana contains a wide range of teachings, and then specific traditions and teachers select some they prefer and emphasise those. When someone starts talking about "cleaning the standard Mahayana" (or something similar), it is just a prelude to a new idea under the cover of "restoring the original".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

oushi said:

what standard Mahayana is?

Astus wrote:

There is no such thing. It simply means the general features that most of the Mahayana schools have.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Standard Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I prefer to distinguish Tibetan/Northern and East Asian/Eastern Mahayana. We may also talk about different eras of Mahayana in India. In Tibetan Buddhism what is called common Mahayana is based mainly on specific shastras and it is very structured and mostly left as it is because it has little relevance to their actual daily practice that is primarily Tantra. In East Asia there is different situation, because Chinese Buddhism gradually developed its own systems based mostly on sutras.

While Madhyamaka is the main form of Mahayana philosophy in Tibet, in East Asia it has long been forgotten. The Abhisamayalamkara is used in Tibet to interpret the Prajnaparamita works, in China it was initially the Dazhidulun (大智度論; Mahaprajnaparamita-upadesha by Nagarjuna) but that was somewhat superseded by indigenous schools. Yogacara played a somewhat stronger role in East Asia than in Tibet, but while in Tibet they have it now as "Shentong Madhyamaka", in East Asia it is still a marginal thing.

In East Asia the ruling teachings are Tiantai, Huayan, Jingtu and Chan, in Tibet it is Madhyamaka and Vajrayana. To say that at least the paramitas and bodhicitta is common probably misses the point how such terms are used in the two Mahayana groups. For instance, saying that bodhicitta is separated to conventional and ultimate, that's a Tibetan thing. In East Asian Mahayana it is a given that a bodhisattva wants to liberate all beings, the 4 vows are regularly recited, but there is no special training for that like tonglen. The paramitas are known of course, but they are not emphasised and they are considered to belong to a gradual path while teachings like Chan are the sudden path.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

Something regarding precepts (and renunciation):

"How is "keeping the precepts purely"? That means in twelve hours, stop all involvement outwardly, and still your mind inwardly.

Because the mind is still, you are peaceful while seeing a scene. Your eyes don't slip outward when consciousness arises by the seen, and your consciousness doesn't slip inward by the scene you see. The outward and the inward don't interfere each other, so we call blockade. We say blockade, but it doesn't mean "to block." The senses of ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are just like that.

That is called the Mahayana precepts, the unsurpassed precepts, also the unequalled precepts. All the monks, young or old, must keep the precepts purely like that."

(http://www.quangduc.com/English/zen/37zen_ancientmaster.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

to give up attachment to the five desire objects, the five desire objects themselves are given up as part of the path.

Honestly, why is this so hard to understand?

Astus wrote:

Because it means, as I read it from your words, that one gives up what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched. That is, the person becomes completely insensitive and incorporeal. I doubt that either sravakas or bodhisattvas would aim for that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

oushi said:

How would you people interpret the underlined part?

Astus wrote:

"Why? It is without creation and without destruction..." i.e. empty, without any essence. You just let it come and let it go, not grasping and not rejecting. So, you don't sever it and you don't not sever it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2013 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Malcolm said:

When the householder bodhisattva possesses three Dharmas, having stayed at home, until perfect unsurpassed awakening, he never enjoys the five desire objects, and in that way develops the root of virtue.

Trisambaranirdeśaparivarta-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra

Because of this sūtra in the past, having abandoned the five desire objects, I will always take the [Mahāyāna] vows [samvara] at the six times.

Ārya-prabhāsādhana-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra

Astus wrote:

Not enjoying a sunset is not the same as not seeing a sunset. So, what is abandoned is attachment and desire, not the sense data. Even when contemplating the foulness of the body the point is not to see no bodies at all but not to see it as desirable.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2013 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: Dealing With Desire

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

The point of what has been said is that conventional Mahayana does not make use of the sense objects as Vajrayana does. It rejects them as unsatisfactory, relies upon antidotes, etc. such as the charming image you paint of women. The way to cultivate non-attachment in conventional Mahayana is by avoiding the objects. Of course, the goal is to develop mental non-attachment but the way to do it is to avoid the object and use thought constructs to condition oneself. That's all that has been said. It's really not a controversial opinion.

Astus wrote:

My point is that there is more than one method in Mahayana, not just avoiding objects. Sure, there are restrictive precepts, they are applied by every Buddhist who has taken vows from 5 to 250. Even Vajrayana samayas tell you things one shouldn't do. My argument is against the idea that outside of Tantra all there is is renunciation as the only way to deal with desire.

It is understood very well that desire doesn't lie in the object:

"The passion for his resolves is a man's sensuality, not the beautiful sensual pleasures found in the world. The passion for his resolves is a man's sensuality. The beauties remain as they are in the world, while the wise, in this regard, subdue their desire."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.063.than.html>)

And there several methods known to handle passion (e.g. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.21.00.irel.html#ananda>). It is also not true that in Vajrayana you don't aspire to become free from desire, since it also uses several techniques to manage them. Saying that changing an impure vision into a pure vision constitutes a whole different system, while methods like switching an unwholesome mind to wholesome and such are just renunciation is overlooking how both are nothing but changing one's attitude.

The path of renunciation in a Dzogchen book is defined this way:

"In general, the Sutra teachings are known as the path of renunciation because an individual following this method may be obliged to give up a whole variety of things, such as sex and alcohol, and to avoid performing negative deeds. ... The idea is that by

avoiding or eliminating the factors in our lives which inflame our feelings or fuel our emotions, we don't experience the same kind of problems. It is as simple as that!"
(Lawless & Allan: Beyond Words, p. 17)

That is, this statement is based only on the Vinaya, as if that were the essence of Hinayana and Mahayana. First of all, just by avoiding sex doesn't make one free from desire, so it'd be a very weak solution. Second, there are also lay practitioners who don't live a celibate life.

"People who see that their mind is the Buddha don't need to shave their head. Laymen are Buddhas too."
(The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p. 39)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2013 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Transgression, Tantra, Radical vs Conservative Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are always religious stories (hagiographies, myths, legends, etc.) that serve a purpose within their own context. It is an error to believe that such stories are actual historical accounts, that's not why they are told and retold again and again. It's like the tales told to children and films people like to watch, all that forms a cultural environment. Buddhist stories convey certain values and principles, but they are not direct reflections of actual historical events. Also, stories are usually written (long) after the events supposedly happened, and they are meant for a specific audience. For instance, Zen koans tell more about how people imagined Zen in the Song dynasty rather than anything historical from the Tang era.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2013 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Transgression, Tantra, Radical vs Conservative Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I believe that commodification and commercialisation of Buddhism is a necessary step in spreading the Dharma. Ordinary religious practice can be embraced by a growing number of individuals only when it seems useful, interesting, satisfying and it is easily accessible. Salvation of the masses takes simple practices. Scholars and ascetics are the elite specialists, the rest is satisfied with a few nice words and colourful pictures.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 14th, 2013 at 7:03 PM

Title: Re: Compassion and loving kindness in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some Soto Zen related quotes:

"When great compassion is deep within you, and your wish to spiritually aid sentient beings everywhere is well seasoned, there are no such obstructions."

(Dogen: Keisei Sanshoku)

"If you can have compassion for your loved ones, have compassion for them. To have compassion for our loved ones means letting go of them."

(Dogen: Gyoji)

"Keep in mind that kindly speech arises from a loving heart, and a loving heart makes compassion its seed. You should explore the idea that kindly speech can have the power to turn the very heavens around, and it is not merely a matter of praising someone's abilities."

(Dogen: Bodaisatta Shishobo)

"Based on this, what is inherent in leaving home life behind is having compassion for all living beings as if they were one's own offspring. This means not giving rise to evil acts, and our body and speech being in mutual accord."

(Dogen: Shukke Kudoku)

"There is a very easy way to be a Buddha: Do not do any evil. Do not try to cling to life and death but, with deep compassion, work for all beings. Respect your elders and sympathize with those younger. When you do neither deny things nor seek them or think and worry about them - then you are called a buddha. Don't look for anything else."

(Dogen: <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/sho.shtml>)

"Remain always compassionate, and dedicate the limitless virtue of zazen to all living beings. Do not be arrogant; do not be proud of yourself and of your understanding of dharma. Being arrogant is the way of outsiders and ignorant people."

(Keizan: <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/zzyk.shtml>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 14th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Attention - Impending Structure Change

Content:

Astus wrote:

A new structure is going to be set up shortly:

Bodhisattvacarya

Mahāyāna Buddhism, East Asian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Sūtra Studies,
Academic Discussion

Upāya

Meditation; Ethical Conduct; Engaged Buddhism; Prayers and Aspirations; Wellness,
Diet and Fitness (sub: Alternative Health)

General Dharma

Exploring Buddhism, Open Dharma (previously: Dharma-free-for-all), Personal Experience, Dharma Events, Dharma Stories

Buddha Lounge

Lounge, Media, Language, News & Current Events

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 16th, 2013 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: Compassion and loving kindness in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The question is what you consider Zen practice. Helping others, charity, teaching, and practically any act can come from compassion. Walking the Mahayana path itself is based on compassion, the wish to liberate all beings. If you are thinking of a Zen specific meditation technique to cultivate compassion, there is and there isn't such. There is, because buddha-mind is naturally compassionate, it is its active force. There isn't, because compassion is inherent in the buddha-mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 17th, 2013 at 3:02 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Manhood.

Content:

Astus wrote:

We should see that the changes in the conception of the Buddha (Shakyamuni, and a buddha in general) are results of doctrinal development in Buddhism. If we go through the stages in Mahayana (that is itself a syncretic view) we practically arrive where we have started. That statement that mind itself is buddha and there is no other buddha outside of the mind brings the entire colourful set of teachings back to everyday people who can realise and embody the principle of buddhahood in this very body. In East Asia this is called the "buddha vehicle", in Tibet it is simply Vajrayana.

"There are a bunch of shavepate monks who say to students, 'The Buddha is the Ultimate; he attained buddhahood only after he came to the fruition of practices carried on through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas.' Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours. You say, 'The thirty-two [primary] features and the eighty [secondary] features indicate a buddha.' Then must a cakravartin also be considered a tathāgata? We clearly know that these features are illusory transformations.

...

Followers of the Way, true buddha has no figure, true dharma has no form. All you're doing is devising models and patterns out of phantoms. Anything you may find through

seeking will be nothing more than a wild fox-spirit; it certainly won't be the true buddha. It will be the understanding of a heretic."
(Record of Linji, p. 19-20, tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 17th, 2013 at 4:13 AM

Title: Re: What has Chinese Buddhism lost?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you have listed as lost in China are art forms/objects and rituals. Chinese Buddhism didn't stop after the Song dynasty. And although this is a biased statement, I don't think that the Dharma lies in sculptures and ceremonies. Humanistic Buddhism is a newer trend, but it is just one of the many other schools. For instance, Chung Tai Shan doesn't seem to be strongly Humanistic (although they have their own modernisations to some extent). Besides the four big churches, Taiwan has others, and there is also mainland China where many ancient articles have been destroyed but some are still there. Have you seen the documentary "Amongst White Clouds"? I doubt that those hermits were influenced by new trends.

Similarly to the Japanese, Koreans like to say that they have preserved the original Tang era Buddhism. The Taisho canon itself was based on the Tripitaka Koreana. Nevertheless, saying that any school or country has the "original" and "ancient" is no different from "returning to the original". You can't have what existed thousand years ago. Religions change too. This is the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism, every compounded thing changes. Only the Dharma is eternal.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 17th, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: What has Chinese Buddhism lost?

Content:

Indrajala said:

In the context of this discussion, I'm really talking more about Nara and Heian Buddhism which preserved a lot of Tang Buddhism. Shinran and Nichiren are not representative.

Astus wrote:

But it's quite obvious that Shinran and even Nichiren were in the end more successful in spreading the Dharma to a larger community than any Nara school, and Shinran beat even Heian schools. I think what is important is to find the right way to connect to the largest number of people and bring them the correct teachings.

From my perspective, old Buddhist art is more like curiosity than anything religious. I mean, I live in Europe, so the Buddhist temples I see are very recent or more likely a normal room or house decorated by some statues and pictures. True, they don't give the same impression as a Gothic church, but at the same time, old Christian churches are

visited mostly by tourists rather than flocks of believers.

As I said before, religions change. Returning to "the original" is always an arbitrary choice. You could say that by simplifying the decoration in modern temples they are returning to an even earlier time of simple viharas uncontaminated by Hindu and Chinese popular beliefs.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 21st, 2013 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Dzigar Kongtrul Madhyamikavatara 2013

Content:

Nilasarasvati said:

distinctions between Cittamatra, Madhyamika, whatever!

Astus wrote:

It depends on which Madhyamaka or Yogacara you mean. There are quite a few versions of both of them, including unified theories found in later Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 21st, 2013 at 10:43 PM

Title: Accumulate Merit

Content:

Astus wrote:

"With no understanding of the meaning of absence,

But engaging only in mere studies

And failing to engage in meritorious acts-

Such base people are lost."

(Nagarjuna: Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning, v. 31, tr. Thupten Jinpa)

"Practicing as a lay practitioner is conducive to cultivating merit, but disadvantageous to cultivating wisdom. For laypeople already possessing plenty of karmic blessings, it's even easier for them to cultivate merit."

(Shengyan: http://sanghau.ddm.org.tw/en/Teaching/TheMeaning_of_MonasticLife.aspx)

Doing good things generates good karma, that's a basic doctrine of Buddhism. Charity is the most straightforward way to accumulate merit. The laity supports the monastics by donations and in return harvests merit. But besides material support there is another kind. The Dhammapada says: "The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts"

(<http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=354>). In chapter five of the Prajnaparamita Sutra in 8000 Stanzas it is explained that the greatest amount of merit is accumulated when one not simply copies and gives away the sutra but also explains them to others. In the Diamond Sutra it is regularly stated how memorising and spreading the sutra generates greater merit than any other kind of giving (e.g. ch. 11-16, 24). The Lotus Sutra has several chapters (17-19) describing all the immense merit gained by reading, reciting, teaching and simply hearing about the sutra. In the

penultimate chapter (13) of the Vimalakirti Sutra we are told that the merit of that scripture is immeasurable, because "the enlightenment of the Buddhas arises from the Dharma, and one honors them by the Dharma worship, and not by material worship".

The <http://www.fodian.net/world/0599.html> Spoken by the Buddha for Ocean Dragon King, that teaches briefly about the four seals, states: "if one can accept, uphold, read, and recite them, and can understand their meanings, although he spends little effort, he will gain lots of blessings. The merits and virtues that he gains will be the same as reading and reciting eighty-four thousand Dharma-Stores." That is, by understanding the four seals one covers all the other sutras and the merit of their studying.

But there is more. Tendo Nyojo (teacher of Dogen) is often quoted, "Just-sitting is all you need. You don't need to make burning incense offerings, meditate upon the names of buddhas, repent, study the scriptures or do recitation rituals." The sole practice of zazen is enough. Linji goes one step further:

One day the Councilor Wang visited the master. When he met the master in front of the Monks' Hall, he asked, "Do the monks of this monastery read the sutras?"

"No, they don't read sutras," said the master.

"Then do they learn meditation?" asked the councilor.

"No, they don't learn meditation," answered the master.

"If they neither read sutras nor learn meditation, what in the world are they doing?" asked the councilor.

"All I do is make them become buddhas and patriarchs," said the master.

The councilor said, "Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts."

"I always used to think you were just a common fellow," said the master.

(Record of Linji, p. 301, tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 22nd, 2013 at 12:59 AM

Title: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

Inspired by <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2013/06/a-bit-of-what-kensho-is-and-a-bit-more-of-what-it-isnt.html>, I'd like to raise the topic here about the meaning of seeing the nature of mind. James Ford mentions the mystification of kensho. However, as long as "kensho" is considered some special experience, it is mystified. How can a sense of unity with every being or the entire world make a difference in our attachment to thoughts and emotions? In Shengyan's http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/chan_garden/chan_garden3.aspx?sn=48 the experience of unity is the second stage of three. But if you look at what Shangyan taught as the actual insight, does that sound clear or rather vague and mystical? How about the following descriptions:

Q: What does "not dwelling anywhere or on anything" mean?

A: Not to dwell anywhere or on anything means not to dwell on good or evil, existence or

non-existence, within or without or on the middle, nor on concentration nor dispersion, and neither to dwell on the void nor on the non-void. This is the meaning of "not dwelling anywhere or on anything". Just this alone is real abiding. This stage of achievement is also the non-abiding Mind, and the non-abiding Mind is the Buddha Mind.

Q: What is the non-abiding Mind like?

A: The non-abiding Mind is not green, yellow, red or white. It is not long or short, nor does it come or go. It is not pure or impure, nor does it have birth or death. It is only deep and permanent stillness. This is the non-abiding Mind, which is also called the Original Body. The Original Body is the Buddha's Body, which is also called the Dharmakaya.

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment>)

And this one:

Those whose mind has transcended
Existence and non-existence and abides no more [in them],
They've realized the meaning of conditioned existence,
The profound absence of objectification.

...

If one possesses a locus,
One becomes attached or detached;
But the great beings who're devoid of locus,
They have neither attachment nor detachment.

(<http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, 1, 58)

And this:

"Everything is coming and going, and we just let things come up freely and let them go away freely. We don't try to fight against our thoughts or any other mental condition, and we don't try to interact with them, either. The intention is not to grasp what is coming up from your consciousness. We actually do nothing but let the things happening within the mind just flow."

(<http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/okumura-zazen.shtml>)

What if we were told that the nature of mind is that all experiences are impermanent?
That's quite obvious, isn't it? Is there anything mystical about that?

Then the question is, why isn't that what is taught in Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 23rd, 2013 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: Where does Mahamudra fit in the Lamrim outline?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Thus, the explicit teaching of this Mahamudra is the Madhyamaka of emptiness free from discursiveness as taught in the sutra system. Ultimately, Maitripa's key notion of "mental nonengagement" or "mental disengagement" is nothing but the subjective side of what is called "freedom from discursiveness." The only way in which the mind can engage in this "object"—the absence of discursiveness—is precisely by not engaging in or fueling any discursiveness, thus letting it naturally settle on its own accord. In other words, the absence of reference points can be realized only by a nonreferential mind, since this is the only perceptual mode that exactly corresponds to it. This is stated many times in the sutras."

(Center of the Sunlit Sky, p. 55)

Brunnhölzl goes through the subject of Mahamudra's relation to Madhyamaka in that chapter on "The Transmission of Madhyamaka from India to Tibet". Also, if you look at the Jewel Ornament of Liberation, Gampopa brings up Mahamudra where he is discussing the practice of prajnaparamita.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 24th, 2013 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Where does Mahamudra fit in the Lamrim outline?

Content:

smcj said:

Which book of Brunnhölzl's?

Astus wrote:

It's the Center of the Sunlit Sky that I quoted from.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 25th, 2013 at 6:54 AM

Title: Dharma or Ethnic Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a recent article by Shravasti Dhammika that raises some very interesting questions: <http://sdhammika.blogspot.hu/2013/06/dhamma-or-ethnic-buddhism.html>

He writes there:

"When a western monk in the west asks to be addressed as ahjan or gelong, saydaw, roshi or sensei rather than their English equivalent he is identifying himself, not just as a Buddhist, but with a particular ethnic expression of Buddhism. When they chant in the Tibetan or the Burmese or the Chinese way the same impression can be created. ... Dhamma is universal, it transcends culture and ethnicity. The practice of the Dhamma is not the special preserve of any particular ethnic group. Let us practice the Buddha's teaching, not Thai Buddhism, not Tibetan Buddhism, not Burmese Buddhism or any other culturally-specific expression of the Dhamma."

What do you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 25th, 2013 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Dharma or Ethnic Buddhism?

Content:

Huifeng said:

So, using English is "universal", and not another "culturally-specific expression of the Dhamma"?

The irony!

Astus wrote:

I think he meant using the local language that people can understand. To make the message the important part and not the exotic smells and sounds. Although I think it should be recognised that a foreign look can be attractive, for a while, but it results in the high expectations discussed in the article that eventually result in disillusionment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 2nd, 2013 at 7:50 PM

Title: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is buddha-nature within one of the aggregates or not? The storehouse-consciousness in Yogacara is included in the consciousness aggregate (as shown in the Pancaskandhaprakarana). But often later schools claim that buddha-nature is beyond arising and ceasing, however, the aggregates are not. Assuming that buddha-nature is beyond the aggregates generates several problems (as argued in chapter 18 of the Mulamadhyakamakarikas).

Since the doctrine of buddha-nature is cardinal in both East Asian and Tibetan Mahayana, I'd love to hear some answers for the topic's question.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 3rd, 2013 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The question about the relationship between buddha-nature and the aggregates occurred to me when I was reading Ringu Tulku's commentary to one of Gampopa's works. So, let's see first a Mahamudra work on the topic.

"The aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings have all from the beginning the true nature of awakened male and female buddhas and deities. As it is taught in all sutras and tantras, they are themselves buddha mind.

If, on the contrary, you assume that there is another superior buddha mind to be attained outside of your mind and believe that it is impossible that the extremely pure buddha mind exists within the mind stream of impure beings, that this is nothing but glossing things over and misinterpreting the vajra words of the secret mantra, you have distorted the meaning of the abiding nature and this is improper."

(Wangchug Dorje: Ocean of True Meaning, p 209-210, tr. Henrik Havlat)

Next, here is a Yogacara interpretation (note that there can be other Yogacara views, also note that what is discussed in the following passage from Xuanzang is not identical to the doctrine of "universal buddha-gotra" since there are several gotras):

"The 'meritorious qualities' (gunas) and the bodies and lands of the Tathagatas are comprised in the Skandhas, Ayatanas, and Dhatus, as it is fitting that they should be so comprised; but the Skandhas, etc., may be pure (anasrava) or impure (sasrava). ... It is certain that the qualities, bodies, etc., of the Buddha are comprised in the Dhatus. - Why? Because, according to the texts, all Samskratas (conditioned dharmas) are comprised in the five Skandhas, all dharmas are comprised in the eighteen Dhatus and the twelve Ayatanas ; there is no nineteenth Dhatu (Vimalakirti). ... Let us therefore conclude that the eighteen Dhatus are found in the body of the Buddha but are absolutely pure (anasrava)."

(Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun, p 787-789, tr. Wei Tat)

The Tiantai understanding of buddha-nature is also interesting, as it is used to cover the entire path as shown in this essay: http://academia.edu/1138952/Chih-i_and_Buddha-nature. It is useful to have a deeper appreciation of Dogen's presentation of the subject in his writing on buddha-nature

(<http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/pdf/bussho%20translation.pdf>). He writes (with reference to a passage in the Platform Sutra where Huineng explains buddha-nature as impermanent to a monk asking about the Nirvana Sutra),

"Therefore, that the grasses, trees, thickets and groves are impermanent is the buddha nature; that humans and things, body and mind are impermanent — this is because they are the buddha nature. That the lands, mountains, and rivers are impermanent — this is the buddha nature. Annuttara-samyak-sambodhi, because it is the buddha nature, is impermanent; the great parinirvāṇa, because it is impermanent, is the buddha nature. All those with the small views of the two vehicles and the tripiṭaka master teachers of the sūtras and treatises should be “alarmed, dubious, and frightened” at these words of the Sixth Ancestor. If they are alarmed and dubious, they are grouped with Māra and the aliens."

Also (with reference to a Zen story where Nagarjuna manifested the buddha-nature by appearing as full moon),

"Though the buddha nature has a “spacious clarity” that takes a “shape like” “the full moon,” it is not the case that it lines up with the “round moon form,” let alone that its “explanation” is “sound or sight,” or its “body manifesting” is form and mind, or the

aggregates, fields, and elements. Even if we say it completely resembles the aggregates, fields, and elements, it is “showing by which”; it is “the body of the buddhas.” ... The buddha body is the body manifesting, has a buddha nature that is the body manifesting. Even the measure of a buddha or the measure of an ancestor that speaks of and understands it as the four major elements and five aggregates is the hurried act of the body manifesting. Since we have called them “the body of the buddhas,” the aggregates, fields, and elements are like this."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 3rd, 2013 at 3:45 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This all-pervading buddha-nature reminds me of the Huayan teaching on the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Dharmadh%C4%81tu that end with the interpenetration of phenomena with phenomena, fully integrating relative and ultimate.

"First, [all] contain one to enter one.

Second, [all] contain all to enter one.

Third, [all] contain one to enter all.

Fourth, [all] contain all to enter all.

They simultaneously interpenetrate one another without obstruction or hindrance. ...

This is to say that all and one are simultaneous. Setting both against each other, each has the two-fold headings and four sentences just introduced. They fuse into each other in a total manner without any obstruction as seen in other aforementioned principles."

(<http://fodian.net/world/1884.html>)

Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche also has a nice poem, that fits more into the 3rd dharmadhatu view (interpenetration of principle and phenomena):

<http://www.ktgrinpoche.org/songs/concise-explanation-dharmadhatu-called-mind-itself-dharmadhatus-luminous-expanse>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 4th, 2013 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: If samsara had a theme song...

Content:

Astus wrote:

If there should be a single theme song, I vote for this (both song and lyrics):

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

"One who stays focused on the beautiful,
is unrestrained with the senses,
knowing no moderation in food,
apathetic, unenergetic:
Mara overcomes him
as the wind, a weak tree."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.01.than.html#dhp-7>)

"Behold the puppets prancing on the stage, and see the man behind who pulls the strings."

(The Zen Teaching of Rinzai, tr. Irmgard Schloegl)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 5th, 2013 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

so does the Dharmakaya of the Buddha have Skandha's?

Astus wrote:

It doesn't have skandhas, it is the skandhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 5th, 2013 at 3:59 PM

Title: Re: Dharma or Ethnic Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I heard that some students in the West went to a high-ranking Tibetan lama and asked if they could call their teacher "Rinpoche." In case you don't know, "Rinpoche" means "precious one." And the high lama said that they could call their teacher "Rinpoche" if they wanted to. That's how the Tibetan system works. There are no official pronouncements of what someone will be called. For example, I can take someone as my lama and use whatever title I prefer, like "His Holiness" or "Rinpoche" or "Yizhin Norbu," which is a name given to the Dalai Lama that means "wish-fulfilling jewel." The lamas wouldn't call themselves that; it is only the students who use those names to honor their teachers."

(Ringu Tulku: Confusion Arises as Wisdom, p 135)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 7th, 2013 at 3:18 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

What do you mean "at its core"?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 7th, 2013 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

'Mystical' is not 'vague' either. It is very precise and clear, but the subject is such that it is very hard to put into words.

Astus wrote:

Mystical, and the related word mystery, has always been connected to the concept of secrecy and hidden knowledge, therefore the meaning includes vague and difficult to understand. Just as you say, it is hard to put into words. And while it is common in a Christian and generally Western spiritual context to use "mystical" for a higher, divine knowledge, in Buddhism the expression for the highest realisation is "knowledge and vision of reality" (yathabhuta-jnana-darsana). It is not secret but apparent and as clear as day. As the original of the <http://www.fakebuddhaquotes.com/three-things-cannot-be-long-hidden-the-sun-the-moon-and-the-truth-buddha/> goes:

"Bhikkhus, there are these three things that shine when exposed, not when concealed. What three? (1) The moon shines when exposed, not when concealed. (2) The sun shines when exposed, not when concealed. (3) The Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata shines when exposed, not when concealed. These are the three things that shine when exposed, not when concealed." (AN 3.131, tr. B. Bodhi)

jeeprs said:

If it's not a special experience, why is there a Zen teaching? I think this is a misunderstanding of the intention behind 'nothing special'.

Astus wrote:

What I'm emphasising with not being special is the directness (zhi/jiki 直) of Zen. As Bodhidharma says,

"If you seek direct understanding, don't hold on to any appearance whatsoever, and you'll succeed. I have no other advice. The sutras say, "All appearances are illusions." They have no fixed existence, no constant form. They're impermanent. Don't cling to appearances, and you'll be of one mind with the Buddha. The sutras say, "That which is free of all form is the buddha.""

(Bloodstream Sermon, tr. Red Pine, p. 27; X1218p3c12-15)

It is the immediacy, the straightforwardness of the instruction that is the hallmark of Zen and the meaning of sudden enlightenment. Once the teaching is shrouded in technical terms and poetic nonsense it cannot function as a liberating method. On the contrary, it becomes a source of confusion.

jeeprs said:

recall that the nature of the tree from which the apple was taken in the Biblical genesis: it was the tree 'of the knowledge of good and evil'. I suggest the underlying meaning is the same. ... The act of renunciation involves rising above that or 'dying to the known'. But it is no small undertaking.

Astus wrote:

Good and evil in the Bible is based on divine law (obeying or disobeying God). In Buddhism it is based on intention. However, Huihai is not talking about abandoning morality but only abandoning reification and grasping. In the same text he writes:

"Wisdom is reached when you can discriminate between good and evil, as well as other dualities, but, grasping none of them, remain free." (X1223p19c6-7)

So, while in the Bible knowledge is evil, in Buddhism it is wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

Why bother with impermanence if you have such a neat explanation which excludes everything without holding any exclusion?

Astus wrote:

Because unlike talking about an unseen "core", "it", or "ocean", saying that all phenomena are impermanent is easy to understand and confirm, and also it doesn't sound like implying some essence/substance one should find. Saying one shouldn't dwell on anything is good, however, it lacks the method to do that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Koji said:

The tathagatagarbha can't be a skandha. No way José! Here is why.

According to the Mahavastu, "There is no safety in the skandhas, but torment and great fear. There is no freedom in them: they are worthless."

Astus wrote:

What that quote refers to is not to identify with or attach to the aggregates. If you say that there is buddha-nature beyond the skandhas and dhatus then it has no relevance and no connection to any sentient being.

As Nagarjuna writes, "If the aggregates were self, it would be possessed of arising and decaying. If it were other than the aggregates, it would not have the characteristics of

the aggregates." (MMK 18.1)

Substitute self with buddha-nature and you get the same problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

Thats weird the Buddha said the exact opposite

SN 22.59 Anatta-lakkhana Sutta: The Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic

(the 5 aggregates are all listed) "Form, O monks, is not-self; if form were self, then form would not lead to suffering, O monks, since form is not-self, therefore form leads to suffering

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna argues that assuming a self identical to or different from the skandhas are both wrong. How does that contradict what the Buddha taught?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

The contradiction is actually very obvious line up the quotes and you will see.

One says if the 5 aggregates were self it would lead to decay and ceasing.

The other says if the 5 aggregates were self they would not lead to suffering.

You dont see those 2 quotes being in contradiction?

Astus wrote:

If the skandhas were self they would not lead to suffering, therefore they are not self, this is what the Buddha says. Nagarjuna says that because the skandhas are impermanent they are not self. The three characteristics (trilaksana/tilakkhana) are impermanence, suffering, no-self. The SN quote mentions suffering, Nagarjuna mentions impermanence, and both prove that the skandhas are no-self. Where is the contradiction?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"If the aggregates were self, it would be possessed of arising and decaying."

That is, if self (self is necessarily something permanent) were identical to the skandhas

(that are impermanent), then the self would have to be impermanent, and that contradicts the very definition of self. This is what Nagarjuna says.

Here is Kalupahana's translation:

"If the self were to be identical with the aggregates, it will partake of arising and ceasing. If it were to be different from the aggregates, it would have the characteristics of the non-aggregates."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

To understand something is to dwell on it. If you dwell on understanding of impermanence BAM! and you are confused needing to return to understanding of impermanence. How unstable, fragile and stressful it is. Not because impermanence is incorrect, but because nature of understanding is unstable, fragile and stressful.

Astus wrote:

If the instruction is "don't dwell on anything" or "don't understand anything" they can still be construed as conceptual objects, but unlike with impermanence, they are more difficult to comprehend thus giving way to incorrect application.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

that quote is saying IF the aggregates WERE self, it would lead to arising and decay
My quote says.....IF the aggregates WERE self, it would NOT lead to suffering.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna talks about the self, the Buddha talks about the skandhas. Different subjects.

Nagarjuna says that IF self=skandhas THEN self=impermanent (& suffering)

Buddha says that IF self=skandhas THEN skandhas=happiness (& permanent)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 7:43 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

Why construct an object that is easier to comprehend? That would only make grasping

easier. This quote you provided, about not dwelling, is ungraspable and makes everything ungraspable. That's the whole point, isn't it?
Impermanence is limited, because it enables temporary grasping. Everything will decay for sure, but some things last longer, thus we are tempted to grasp on them.

Astus wrote:

When it is easy to comprehend it can serve as a guideline. Without understanding the teaching it's not possible to apply it and gain results. It'd be like listening to the Dharma in a foreign language you don't understand. What's the benefit of that?

Yes, the whole point is to attain a non-dwelling mind. When everything is accepted and understood to be impermanent there is nothing left to dwell on. However, if we were told only "not to dwell on anything" then we didn't know how. Still, they are both fine and I posited the simpler teaching of impermanence against mystical-sounding teachings as outlined in the OP.

We are already in the habit of grasping everything. Impermanence shows that it's no use to do so. Some things seem to last longer, but understanding that they end anyway leads to letting them go. And when impermanence is applied to our actual experience, then it happens from moment to moment, and even in the present there's nothing that could be held on to, thus we arrive at not dwelling.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

So which one leads to arising and ceasing the aggregates or the self?

Astus wrote:

It is already known and agreed upon that the skandhas are impermanent (arising and ceasing). The self is necessarily permanent, not arising and not ceasing. If the self were the skandhas, the self would have to be impermanent. That is, being impermanent is a contradiction for the self, not for the skandhas. Therefore, the self cannot be the same as the skandhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

seeker242 said:

Was Bodhidharma wrong when he said it's hard to see, hard to fathom?

If it is not mystical, then how can a person hear 20 dharma talks about it, read 20 books about it, and still not experience it? If it is readily apparent and obvious, they should

experience it after only 1 dharma talk yes? Or after only reading 1 book about it. But, that is highly unusual!

People hear the words "don't dwell on anything" and they say ok, that sounds good. I agree! Then they turn around and dwell on most everything. Why?
There are people who have been working on the Mu koan (or insert whatever koan here) for 20 years and still haven't got it. How can this be the case if it's readily apparent and obvious?

Astus wrote:

It all comes down to correct view and correct motivation. If one has the wrong motivation it is not possible to hear, understand and confirm the teachings. If one has wrong view, it is not possible to attain liberation. Motivation depends on one's personal background and then it is developed by the view. The view depends on the teachings received.

If a teacher can give the right teachings in an appropriate manner to a receptive student, there is no problem in getting results. You can look at the many sutras where the Buddha could help so many people. Huineng, Mazu and several other teachers of the Zen tradition helped hundreds of people attain sudden enlightenment.

If someone hears the teachings but fails to apply it, that is the lack of motivation. If someone hears only incomplete and misleading teachings, it results in the lack of correct view.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

People found a workaround. It's called carpe diem. If everything is impermanent (and even science proves it is) lets enjoy the moment.

Astus wrote:

That is not the understanding of impermanence. When one thinks only about enjoying different sorts of pleasures then one believes the abiding existence of oneself, the object and even of pleasure. That is seeking happiness in pleasure. To see that pleasure is changing and lost every moment shows that it is not reliable, not a source of satisfaction, and attachment to it results in pain and sorrow.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 11:04 PM

Title: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

In Sakyapa instructions they use three steps for vipasyana (e.g. http://www.hhthesakyatrizin.org/teach_fourattach4.html):

Step One: Outer Appearances Are One's Own Mind

Step Two: Mental Objects Are Illusory

Step Three: Illusions Are Devoid of Inherent Nature

Why is there such distinction? If something is not really out there, it is illusory and without a self-nature. Is this meant to be investigating from different angles rather than separate stages?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

1. Show me in which point carpe diem refers to permanence. It doesn't, because it doesn't have to. As I said, for atheists there is nothing permanent, and still they fall into ignorance.
2. In one hand you promote impermanence, and in the other you rebuke pleasure because it changes. If everything is impermanent what is a reliable source of satisfaction?

Impermanence is very useful if we apply it to the goal of the whole life. Still, that will not refute carpe diem. Impermanence needs to go hand in hand with Anatta and Dukkha refute it.

In a long run it will become a view and then we can ask, is impermanence permanent?

Astus wrote:

The permanence in carpe diem:

- assuming that there is a permanent self
- assuming that there are permanent things to enjoy
- assuming that there is a permanent desire

(Note: permanence is anything that lasts, that stays from moment to moment)

There is no reliable source of satisfaction, that the insight to be gained from contemplating impermanence.

From impermanence both no-self and suffering are established.

Impermanence is permanent (this is like saying that emptiness and buddha-nature are permanent). However, there is no such thing as impermanence as it is only the characteristic of phenomena. It is only a conceptual idea, and in that sense it is also impermanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

1. We are grasping moment here, so it does not have to last longer than for a moment.

People go for pleasure knowing it will end. It is enough for the pleasure to be perceivable.

2. How do you define moment? Like Dogen? However, there is no such thing as impermanence as it is only the characteristic of phenomena.

Then why dwell on it?

Astus wrote:

A moment cannot be grasped. A moment is the present experience, and I use it in a similar way as point is used in Euclidean geometry, a conceptual element of time.

Why dwell on it? Just because something is conceptual it doesn't mean it is meaningless. In fact, concepts are the only things that have any meaning and they are probably the most important things we have.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Which Skandha is Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

OK, then Batchelor's translation is misleading. The reason it was quoted for is its meaning that I think is now clarified.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

oushi said:

When does the present experience end?

Astus wrote:

Now.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

If the five skandhas cannot be transcended mystical unity and kensho are impossible.

Astus wrote:

There is nowhere to transcend them to. As the Heart Sutra says, they are to be recognised as empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jinzang,

The order looks different than in the seven steps mind training. Establishing that all phenomena are mind is similar, but then here it emphasises first the dependent origination (2nd step) and then their emptiness (3rd step). Relaxing into the natural state comes after that with the unification of calming and insight (at least as I understand Sakya Trizin's explanation).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Stream-entry help!

Content:

Astus wrote:

Theravada instructions:

http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/study/into_the_stream.html

<http://www.thisismyanmar.com/nibbana/thtut03.htm>

Mahayana instructions:

http://www.buddhism.org/board/read.cgi?board=Dharma_Talks&y_number=19

<http://www.unfetteredmind.org/mindtraining/introduction.php>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2013 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Chinese vs Japanese pure land

Content:

shaunc said:

Does anyone know of a school of Buddhism that incorporates married clergy, meditation & pure land teachings.

Astus wrote:

Married clergy exists not only in Japanese but also Korean, Tibetan and Nepalese

Buddhism. (But I don't see why having married clergy is relevant to the issue.) Aspiration to be born in the Pure Land and meditation exists in practically every Mahayana tradition. At the same time, you don't have to become a monk to practise any of that. Although mainstream Jodoshu and Shinshu are "exclusive nenbutsu" paths, there are other Pure Land oriented traditions in Japan, and even in those schools it's not a sin to do some meditation (as long as it supports nenbutsu).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2013 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Chinese vs Japanese pure land

Content:

Greg said:

Really? I thought Korean monks followed the vinaya.

Astus wrote:

Yes, most of them. However, the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taego_Order allows marriage.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2013 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

Skandhas are the problem. Transcending them is the obvious solution. While it is true that the transcendent cannot present itself in the flux of inner, impermanent appearances, for example, the 3rd, 4th and 5th skandhas, we can, however, penetrate through such appearances, including even the 5th and, in doing so, recognize the transcendent, purely, on its own terms.

There is no mysticism with regard to the conceivable, impermanent mundane truth. There is only mysticism in recognizing the inconceivable trans-mundane truth.

Astus wrote:

Skandhas are not the problem, attachment is. If there is something beyond the skandhas, how could it be recognised? The skandhas include all mental functions, consciousness among them. If the transcendent you talk about is beyond the aggregates, it lacks all forms of perception and cognition.

"You who come here from here and there all have a mind to seek buddha, to seek dharma, to seek emancipation, to seek escape from the three realms. Foolish fellows! When you've left the three realms where would you go?"

(Record of Linji, p. 22-23; tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2013 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

The skandhas *are* suffering which is the first noble truth. They are also the killer (Mara). I would prefer to attach to the Buddha's teachings rather than the skandhas! If, as you imply, there is nothing beyond the skandhas, we are in deep doo-doo.

Astus wrote:

There is a difference between the five aggregates and the five clinging aggregates (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.048.than.html>). The first noble truth is defined like this:

"the five clinging-aggregates are stressful. And which are the five clinging-aggregates? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrication clinging-aggregate, & the consciousness clinging-aggregate." (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.028.than.html>)

Seeing the three characteristics of aggregates leads to liberation from clinging, but not annihilation (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>). Indeed, the aggregates themselves are empty (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.095.than.html>). When there is no identification, no obsession, then there is no problem (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.036.than.html>). If, as you say, the aggregates themselves were suffering, the Buddha himself suffered since he had had all five aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2013 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

Whatever 'it' is, is certainly beyond the realm of discourse. But beyond that, it is hazardous to say what 'it' might be. If you say that 'there is nothing beyond the aggregates and discursive thought' then you are throwing away the key to liberation. But if you assert that what is beyond it has substantial existence then you're guilty of reification.

What a bind!

The way I interpret that Lin Ji saying is the mistake of 'seeking elsewhere'. It is in line with his constant teaching 'what you are seeking is right here'.

Astus wrote:

If it is "beyond the realm of discourse" you can't say anything about, nor can you argue

for or against it. Can't even think of it. Then how can you say it is "beyond the realm of discourse"?

As for something being outside the aggregates, the Lankavatara Sutra (2.18) says, "those who do not understand the teachings of the Tathagatas of the past, present, and future, concerning the external world, which is of Mind itself, cling to the notion that there is a world outside what is seen of the Mind and, Mahamati, go on rolling themselves along the wheel of birth-and-death."

At another section (2.53): "... the Nirvana which is attained when there takes place the severance of the bondage conditioning the continuation of individuality and generality of the Skandhas. ... [this view] of Nirvana belong to the philosophers and are not my teaching." Similar misunderstandings regarding Nirvana is stated in 3.74.

Also, as it is taught in Yogacara and followed by many (e.g. Hakuin), for buddhas the 8 consciousnesses transform (paravrtti) into the 4 wisdoms, thus from contaminated aggregates we get pure ones (see Xuanzang quote <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=174056#p174056>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2013 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Stream-entry help!

Content:

lite said:

It's a study guide. I was looking for practice guide.

Astus wrote:

It includes practical teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 11th, 2013 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Context of "no practice"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mazu Daoyi taught:

A monk asked, "What is the cultivation of the Way?"

The Patriarch replied, "The Way does not belong to cultivation. If one speaks of any attainment through cultivation, whatever is accomplished in that way is still subject to regress. That is the same as the Sravakas. If one says that there is no need for cultivation, that is the same as the ordinary people."

The Patriarch said to the assembly, "The Way needs no cultivation, just do not defile. What is defilement? When with a mind of birth and death one acts in a contrived way, then everything is defilement. If one wants to know the Way directly: Ordinary Mind is

the Way!" What is meant by Ordinary Mind? No activity, no right or wrong, no grasping or rejecting, neither terminable nor permanent, without worldly or holy. The sutra says, 'Neither the practice of ordinary people, nor the practice of sages, that is the Bodhisattva's practice.
(Sun-Face Buddha, p 63, 65, tr. M. Poceski)

"No practice" is the highest form of realisation. In Theravada the arahant is an "asekha" (non-practitioner) because there is no more practice required. In Mahamudra and Dzogchen they call it non-meditation. This is the insight into the buddha-nature that requires no perfection, no purification. Linji's teaching that there is no need to seek anything means to rest all grasping and attachment, give up all fabrications and abide nowhere. This is the practice of Zen.

However, Baizhang Huaihai distinguished the different teachings and practitioners:

The complete teaching discusses purity; the incomplete teaching discusses impurity. Explaining the defilement in impure things is to weed out the profane; explaining the defilement in pure things is to weed out the holy.

Before the nine-part teaching had been expounded, living beings had no eyes; it was necessary to depend on someone to refine them. If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. You should not speak this way to a worldling beyond measure, someone like Vimalakirti or the great hero Fu."

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 29. tr. T. Cleary)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 11th, 2013 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

If you are trying to say, in a round about way, that the five khandhas cannot be transcended it seems odd to me that the Tathgata has nothing to do with them, nor does a learned disciple. They reject them completely, in other words. So if they've left the burning house of the khandhas, where are they?

By the way, the Mahâsatipatthana Sutta says the 5 khandhas of grasping (upâdâna) **are** suffering.

Astus wrote:

If transcending the skandhas means not clinging to them, it is the very goal. If it means eliminating them and attaining a state beyond the skandhas, that is a false view of a self.

As in the above definition of the first noble truth, the "aggregates with grasping" are suffering. That's because of the grasping. Without grasping there is no suffering either. Just to make sure it is clear, the skandhas are simply the functions of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing. A buddha without skandhas means that he can't see, hear, feel or perceive; no different from dead matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 11th, 2013 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

I think there is a sense in which that which is 'everlasting' is not something durable, which exists 'in itself', so to speak. It is imperishable in not being subject to change and decay, but it is not something completely separate to the realm of change and decay either - outside of time, rather than persisting through time.

Astus wrote:

It sounds like instead of choosing "yes" or "no" you select "yes and no". Alas, it's an impossible thing for something to be permanent and impermanent at the same time. What Dogen is saying, following Huineng (and Tiantai teachings), is that right here this impermanent, ephemeral world is buddha-nature itself. Same as Nagarjuna explained the non-difference of samsara and nirvana. Huineng's criticism of someone who proposed a separate dharmakaya:

"According to what you say, there is a Dharma-body that exists apart from physical form and a tranquil extinction to be sought apart from production and extinction. Moreover you propose that there is a body which enjoys the permanence and bliss of Nirvana. But that is to grasp tightly onto birth and death and indulge in worldly bliss."
(Platform Sutra, ch. 7)

jeeprs said:

But if you ask the question, 'what is it that is not annihilated at death', this question is not directly addressed.

Astus wrote:

It is answered. "And so, my friend Yamaka — when you can't pin down the Tathagata as a truth or reality even in the present life — is it proper for you to declare..." As Nagarjuna writes (MMK 22.15-16), "Those who make fixations about Buddha who is beyond fixations and without deterioration -- all those who are damaged by fixations do not see the tathagata. Whatever is the own-nature of the tathagata, that is the own-nature of this world. The tathagata has no own-nature. This world has no own-nature."

jeeprs said:

If your intention is to demonstrate that 'insight into impermanence' is not 'mystical', I don't think you can do that, because it is not as if such questions are clear and obvious for all to see.

Astus wrote:

My point is summed up with this: "as long as "kensho" is considered some special experience, it is mystified. How can a sense of unity with every being or the entire world make a difference in our attachment to thoughts and emotions?" As related to the

linked article. It is arguing against the image of a special experience of unity with something transcendental. Not against that it takes time and effort to walk the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 11th, 2013 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

Consider this phrase from the quote of Nagarjuna's you provide:

Astus wrote:

So, let's look at that verse then.

Kalupahana in his commentary (p. 310) says regarding the expression Batchelor translated as "without deterioration": "The term avyaya in the present context expresses the same idea of stability and steadfastness achieved by a Buddha. This is not to assume his permanent existence." Tsongkhapa says (Ocean of Reasoning, p. 450), "being essentially unarisen, does not extinguish by essentially passing on". That is, just as the previous verse states, there is nothing that could be called existing or non-existing - not because there is something beyond those two, or because it cannot be said - but because it is not a thing but the lack of substance. As the Chinese commentary (tr. B.C. Bocking) says, "From the very beginning the Thus-Come was utterly empty; how much more so after his decease?" Same as the Yamaka sutta's "you can't pin down the Tathagata".

jeeprs said:

He doesn't really say what it consists of

Astus wrote:

He says that is is an experience of unity with lasting effect and leaves a vivid memory. If you compare that to the quote from Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche, it is clear that such strong experiences are not insights but only visions. In Zen they count as afflictions, klesha, bonno. How could that equal to kensho?

jeeprs said:

And at that point the individual mind intuitively realises its non-difference from Mind

Astus wrote:

It sounds a like talking about the unity of jivatman and paramatman.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 12th, 2013 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

Transcending means, by definition, to go beyond the limits of the skandhas. Now this brings up an interesting question: Is the position of the one who is not clinging to the skandhas inherently transcendent or skandhic? If the latter, this implies the skandhas have somehow conspired not to cling to themselves!

One more point, in this passage it seems the Buddha is saying in so many words, eliminate the skandhas.

"These are the five aggregates subject to clinging. This Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these five aggregates subject to clinging, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning." The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (volume II), by Bhikkhu Bodhi, page 1565

Astus wrote:

The skandhas are what? All the experience there exists. It means seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. It means feeling, recognising, comprehending and knowing.

You propose that the experience of seeing is suffering, that being aware of something is suffering, that being able to speak and hear is suffering; therefore a buddha must be without all of this, incapable of any perception and comprehension. Even if there were something else beyond the skandhas, it would be without all forms of perception and understanding, it would be completely insentient and dead.

What I say is that the problem is not with the fact of sensing and knowing but with attachment. As your quote itself says, the "aggregates subject to clinging" must be eliminated. Aggregates not subject to clinging, that is the result, that is liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 12th, 2013 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

The fact that the tathagatha cannot be 'pinned down' does not amount to a description of a 'continually existing entity'. But that 'something is undefineable' or 'cannot be pinned down' is obviously not 'a definition' at all. Ideas of 'what exists' and 'what is permanent' can only be conceived in terms of 'the sense aggregates', and it is true that nothing in the realm of the sense aggregates is eternal or self-existent. But to say therefore that the Tathagata is impermanent, is to categorize the Tathagata with other phenomena.

The main point of the whole sutta is the idea that the view that 'the monk is nothing more than the total of the aggregates, and therefore ceases to exist at death, is a mistaken view - actually a grievously mistaken view ("evil supposition").

So I'm struggling to see how your views expressed in this thread differs from this same view which is being rejected in this sutta.

Astus wrote:

"Cannot be pinned down" is anupalabbha/anupalabdha/無所得. A central term, in Mahayana especially, as an equivalent of emptiness. It is often translated as unobtainable, unattainable and ungraspable.

In chapter 71 of the Lankavatara Sutra this "unobtainability" is explained as, "That [transcendental] knowledge is unobtainable is due to the recognition that there is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind, and that these external objects to which being and non-being are predicated are non-existent." And in chapter 83, "by 'right knowledge' is meant this: when names and appearances are seen as unobtainable owing to their mutual conditioning, there is no more rising of the Vijñanas, for nothing comes to annihilation, nothing abides everlastingly; and when there is thus no falling back into the stage of the philosophers, Sravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas, it is said that there is right knowledge. Further, Mahamati, by reason of this right knowledge, the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva does not regard name as reality and appearance as non-reality."

In the Heart Sutra there is this line, "Because there is nothing to be attained, the bodhisattva relying on prajna paramita has no obstruction in his mind." And Lok To writes in his <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/harttr.htm>: "The Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra is the core of the Maha Prajna Paramita in six hundred scrolls. Its teaching is the teaching of supramundane Void as the only true existence, the true Void being mysteriously concealed in the existing. Therefore one might say the substance of this sutra is the characteristic of Void of all dharmas; non-obtaining is the purpose. There is nothing to be obtained from the manifestation of dharmas, all dharmas being void, or empty."

Because the aggregates are empty, there is no self found (unobtainable), there is liberation. It is indeed mistaken to think that someone perishes because there is no permanent self inside or outside the skandhas. Emptiness is not the same as annihilation, it is not an eternal substance either, but the dependent origination of all phenomena. Ignorance is taking the skandhas - that is, our realm of experience - as essentially real and graspable. Realising that everything is empty, unobtainable, is becoming free from suffering. But to think that there is something beyond this realm of experience as a place of escape is still grasping and self-construction.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 12th, 2013 at 8:35 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

So you are in fact saying 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more (mental) effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.'

Astus wrote:

No. Where did I say that the mind-stream is annihilated at death? Nowhere. All I'm

saying is that looking for buddha outside the mind is mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 12th, 2013 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Koan practice in the light of the Nikāyas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It depends on how you practise with koans. If you use them as a fixed object of meditation, that's samatha. If you use them to investigate the way the mind works, that's vipassana. If you use them to cut conceptual proliferation and maintain awareness, that's the combination of samatha and vipassana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 13th, 2013 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

What then your theory implies is that the pañcakhandhâ, which are those of an arahant, are subject to Mara. The sutta doesn't mention upâdânakkandhâ are subject to Mara. So are we to conclude that upâdânakkandhâ are not subject to Mara and arahant pañcakhandhâ are?

Astus wrote:

There are definitive and provisional teachings. The Mara Sutta of SN 23.11 requires further interpretation in my view. To decide that, please clarify to me two things. According to your opinion:

- Where is suffering in sight (e.g. seeing a cloud) when there is no attachment?
- If the skandhas are to be abandoned, how can an arhat see, hear, sense and think?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 14th, 2013 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

Probably understanding what abandon means in Pali might help. Even the eye is to be abandoned according to the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

I'm simply asking for your explanation of the views you have put out here. Since at the moment I don't see it as in agreement with what is taught in the Pali Canon (and Mahayana especially), I don't see how it could be matched with any Pali term. But if you have one for it and references, please bring them here.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 14th, 2013 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

But there is, as you acknowledge, 'a mindstream' which functions as a quasi-self (or, more likely, a rhetorical device necessitated by a dogmatic interpretation of 'anatta'.)

Astus wrote:

Mind-stream simply refers to the mental aggregates. It's not some separate entity, but the flow of the moments of mental phenomena.

jeeprs said:

So when it is said that 'the Tathagata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea' is this a reference to mere absence of lack of substance?

Astus wrote:

What is buddha? The mind is buddha. What is mind? The mental aggregates that are without substance. To believe that they have substance is the ignorance of self-view.

jeeprs said:

There is a state beyond ordinary sensory perception, but it cannot be discovered by 'the self'.

Astus wrote:

There is no self of any kind (provisional or ultimate). If there is a state that one is unable to discover how do you know about it? How can anyone know about it?

jeeprs said:

The phrase 'objectifies non-objectification' (vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti) is key here.

Astus wrote:

Fabrication (prapañca) is the root of grasping the aggregates, and without it there is no grasping either. This is taught clearly in Madhyamaka and in Zen too. However, there is not something beyond to look for, otherwise we claim that there is buddha outside the mind.

"When the views of the self and being mine are extinguished,

With respect to the internal and the external,

Appropriation ceases.

Through this having been eliminated, birth is eliminated.

Through the elimination of karma and affliction there is nirvana.

Karma and affliction come from conceptual thought.

These come from mental fabrication.

Fabrication ceases through emptiness.

...

Not dependent on another, peaceful and
Not fabricated by fabrications,
Not conceptualized, without distinctions:
That is the characteristic of things as they really are."
(MMK 18.4-5, 9; Ocean of Reasoning, p. 376-376, 385)

And the buddha is nothing but the ending of fabrication, as
<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=174993#p174993> from MMK 22.15-16.

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment also says (ch. 2, tr. C. Muller), "the cessation of illusion is called 'unchanging.'" And in the next chapter explains, "the unchanging purity of the nature of enlightenment completely pervades—it includes everything without restriction. Therefore you should know that the six faculties completely pervade the realm of reality. Since the faculties completely pervade, you should know that the six sensory fields completely pervade the realm of reality. Since the sensory fields completely pervade, you should know that the Four Elements completely pervade the realm of reality."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 15th, 2013 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

While the typical profane person hangs on to them, the ariya disciple doesn't.

Astus wrote:

Not hanging on to the skandhas is not the same as eliminating them, because what is to be removed is one's attachment to the aggregates. This is explained often, as in SN 23.1 where the Mara theme is introduced.

Koji said:

When I read the Nikayas or Mahayana discourses I see only mysticism, which is all about transcending samsara, realizing the deathless—your read is probably different.

Astus wrote:

It is the kind of transcendentalism (similarly to Philosophia Perennis, Theosophy, etc.) that posits an ultimate thing above and beyond dependent phenomena that I'm arguing against, as that is the background of Ford's article. I'm not denying the validity of the third noble truth at all. What I'm saying is that the actual nature of all things is deathless and that there is no deathless beyond the things themselves, in other words, "Cyclic existence is not the slightest bit different from nirvana. Nirvana is not the slightest bit different from cyclic existence." (MMK 25.19)

Koji said:

Just curious, what is your basis for concluding there "is no self of any kind"? Are the

skandhas your basis insofar as the Buddha said they are self-less (Pali, anattâ)?

Astus wrote:

The aggregates are neither self nor the possessions of a self, they neither me nor mine. That rules out both an internal and an external self.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.007.wlsh.html> explains in brief how understanding this makes all the difference. A rather elaborate way of showing this is Candrakirti's

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Sevenfold_reasoning_of_the_chariot. As Nagarjuna summed it up:

"[The Buddha] has declared that form is not self, self is not form,

There is no form in a self, and there is no self in form.

These four ideas are conceived in relation to the form aggregate.

Any link of a "self" to the other aggregates is in all respects the same.

These twenty ideas are inverted views.

If one can cut them off entirely, this is the most superior [insight]."

(Letter From a Friend, v. 40; tr. Bhikshu Dharmamitra from Gunavarman's)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 17th, 2013 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

I am not claiming to know that, or to have realized that state, but I think the case can be made for it on the basis of documentary sources.

This is why there is a dimension of insight, knowledge, or prajna, which is totally beyond 'worldly knowledge'. You seem to deny that yet whilst quoting sources that I think are referring to such states.

Astus wrote:

So it is a matter of looking at the scriptures and treatises. I have brought here various works from different authors of Mahayana treatises to show how claiming that there exists something beyond the five aggregates cannot be established. Although Nikaya/Agama schools state that there is a nirvana without remainder where the skandhas are eliminated, that is not the Mahayana view (e.g. <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=167186#p167186>).

jeeprs said:

So, is the Buddha identical to 'the mind-stream'? I thought the theory was that when 'the effluents' were extinguished, the 'mind-stream' is no more, which would seem to indicate not.

Again, the point of the 'Yamaka sutta' which you introduced several pages back, is that it is incorrect to say that the nirvana of the enlightened monk is 'annihilation' or 'non-

being'. When such a one has gone totally beyond 'mindstreams' yet they still are not non-existent. What kind of being is that?

Astus wrote:

The mind is not just the afflictions, in fact, those are only "adventitious defilements" and the nature of the mind itself is pure. This is the buddha-nature doctrine. When the mind-stream is purified we get to the buddha-mind (that includes the three bodies, four wisdoms, etc.). So, to say that the mind-stream is extinguished is not true.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 17th, 2013 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

In the first quote 'nothing beyond the aggregates'. In the second 'pure mind' which is 'not extinguished. Aren't these statements in conflict?

Astus wrote:

How so? The mind exists only from moment to moment, but there is a causal continuity. The death of the body is not the death of the mind. Liberation is not the elimination but the purification of the mind-stream. In other words, one has to see the nature of this mind and not go and find another one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 17th, 2013 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

So I am still unclear. If body dies, but mind doesn't, this implies that a mind thoroughly purified is 'beyond death', does it not? And therefore not 'the same' as the aggregates. You said earlier that this mind was simply 'lack of substance'. But it is not merely an absence, simply nothing at all. That is nihilistic, isn't it?

Many of the Mahayana books I have talk about 'one mind' or 'Big Mind' or simply Mind with a capital M. That is a mystical idea, no matter how you slice and dice it. I'm not saying they're right, and you're not, but I prefer those intepretations, and as far as I am concerned, it is not nearly so cut-and-dried as you seem to think you have made it.

Astus wrote:

The skandhas can be split into two parts: rupa and nama (body and mind). The four mental aggregates represent one of the possible categorisation of mental functions. It doesn't mean there are 4 minds or anything like that. They are what the mind-stream is. Since the mind-stream is maintained not by material things (rupa) but by previous mental phenomena, with the death of the body the mind does not cease to function. That's why there is rebirth. And when the mind is purified there are the three bodies, etc.,

that is, all the buddha qualities and functions. This is not nihilistic at all, rather it might look like some eternal soul, but it isn't that.

The terms you mention are mostly the work of translators. There is no such thing as upper and lower case in Chinese or Sanskrit. Another difficulty is that in Zen literature they often use the same word (心 - mind) for both ordinary and buddha mind.

Capitalising it is meant to help the reader, but at the same time it gives the impression as if there were two minds. Zongmi often said, "That which is clear and capable of awareness right now is your Buddha-mind." (Jinul quotes it a few times, e.g. Collected Works of Chinul, p 272) Mystical or not, it is right here for everyone to recognise.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 18th, 2013 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

I think you are conflating the abhidhamma categories with the primarily mystical attitude that began to appear with Mahayana Buddhism. In fact in the abhidhamma mind is usually understood as 'manas' being the 'organ which grasps ideas'. I think the terms that are generally rendered as 'mind' in the more mystical sense are derived from 'citta' (as in 'bodhicitta') rather than 'manas'.

Astus wrote:

What mystical attitude started with Mahayana? Madhyamaka refutes the ultimate reality of the abhidharma categories, but as relative things they are OK. Yogacara embraces the abhidharma system and even expands it, further elaborating on the functioning of mind. Regarding mental activities in abhidharma, it sets up the two mental categories as citta and caitasika. Here is a Theravada explanation:

"According to the Pali or Sanskrit language, the citta, or mind, has many different synonyms. The most important ones are mano, manas, and vinnana. In the commentaries of the Abhidhamma, manas, vinnana and citta are considered to only be synonyms. Also in the Vissudhi Magga. Their difference is only in discussing different aspects of the subject matter.

Citta is defined as, "Alambanam cintati iti cittam," that which cognizes the object. That is the mind. When we speak of mana, what is emphasized is that which is thinking. "Yena minnyatae tat manas." So, the mind is considered as an instrument of thinking, as the action of thinking, cettana, and also as that which thinks about the object. Then, we have the vinnana, from vi- janati: that which differentiates. So, the mind is also that which differentiates the objects.

All of these meanings are there, and they are synonyms for the same thing. In the Theravada tradition, all are synonyms for the same phenomena, mind. What is most important is that the mind is understood as cetana, just thinking. What it means is that there is no possibility of what is common in European philosophy, "Cogito ergo sum," or "I

cognize, therefore I am.”

In Buddhism, there is only, “Cogito er cognatio es,” or “I think therefore there is cognition.”

Cognition. There is nothing else to the mind. That mind, which is cognition, is also the instrument of cognition, and it is that by which the object is cognized."
(<http://www.phathue.com/buddhism/dharma-talks/abhidhamma-with-dhammadipa/>)

If you check Madhyamaka, they recognise the normal six consciousnesses, while in Yogacara there are eight. In Vajrayana they match the five aggregates with the five buddha families and the five wisdoms, in Yogacara the eight consciousnesses with the four wisdoms. In the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana the tathagatagarbha is matched with alayavijnana. And all these consciousnesses correspond to the mental aggregates in the five skandhas. Where is the extra mystical component?

jeeprs said:

My belief is that there are mystics within Buddhism itself, and have been from the very earliest times, and that there are a number of levels or layers within the teaching, mysticism being one of them. You can say that without saying that Buddhism is primarily or only mystical. It is many things.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by "mystics"? Not that I have any problem with the term, but it'd be good if you could clarify what its significance is.

jeeprs said:

But there are somewhat 'quasi-theist' streams in Mahayana, notably, for instance, scriptures such as 'Awakening of the Faith in the Mahayana'.

Astus wrote:

What quasi-theist streams are you referring to? Could you point to it in Asvaghosa's treatise?

jeeprs said:

But there is another 'domain', if you like, namely the domain of laws, one form of which is the idea of 'dharmakaya', which is not the subject of the notion of 'impermanence'. Of course one has to tread carefully here because neither is 'dharmakaya' an 'object of perception' for that very reason, so discussing it in terms of permanence and impermanence might be misleading. However suffice to say that the Mahayana idea of the 'cosmic Buddha', a class of being that has appeared and will continue to appear 'through aeons of Kalpas', is only meaningful if the underlying principle, namely Dharma, is not something that is subject to change and decay.

Astus wrote:

If there is a domain that cannot be experienced it has zero relevance to us. On the other hand, in the Awakening of Faith and many other teachings it is explained how one can

understand and realise the true nature of mind. For example:

"If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks, nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks, nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it."

"There is only the insight into Suchness transcending both the seer and the seen; we call this the experience of the Dharmakaya."

And if you look at the practical instructions from the treatise:

Cessation:

"All thoughts, as soon as they are conjured up, are to be discarded, and even the thought of discarding them is to be put away, for all things are essentially in the state of transcending thoughts, and are not to be created from moment to moment nor to be extinguished from moment to moment; thus one is to conform to the essential nature of Reality (dharmata) through this practice of cessation. ... It should be understood that this "correct thought" is the thought that whatever is, is mind only and that there is no external world of objects as conceived; even this mind is devoid of any marks of its own which would indicate its substantiality and therefore is not substantially conceivable as such at any moment."

Observation:

"He who practices "clear observation" should observe that all conditioned phenomena in the world are unstationary and are subject to instantaneous transformation and destruction; that all activities of the mind arise and are extinguished from moment to moment; and that, therefore, all of these induce suffering. He should observe that all that had been conceived in the past was as hazy as a dream, that all that is being conceived in the present is like a flash of lightning, and that all that will be conceived in the future will be like clouds that rise up suddenly."

Their Unity:

"That is to say, he is to meditate upon the fact that things are unborn in their essential nature; but at the same time he is to meditate upon the fact that good and evil karma, produced by the combination of the primary cause and the coordinating causes, and the retributions of karma in terms of pleasure, pain, etc., are neither lost nor destroyed. Though he is to meditate on the retribution of good and evil karma produced by the primary and coordinating causes [i.e., he is to practice "clear observation"], he is also to meditate on the fact that the essential nature of things is unobtainable by intellectual analysis."

If you look through these teachings, these meditation instructions from Asvaghosa, it talks about not grasping at phenomena and also seeing that all phenomena arise inter-dependently. That is the realisation of the middle way. Same as in Madhyamaka and

Yogacara. Also in Tiantai and Zen. It doesn't talk about anything beyond appearances, it says that the nature of appearances is unborn and empty. That is what has to be realised.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 19th, 2013 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

Yes, as a matter of fact. Zen Buddhism is deeply mystical. How did it start? With the Buddha gazing at a flower and smiling. One particular monk 'gets it' and also smiles. There you go, birth of a grand tradition, via 'mind to mind transmission outside the scriptures'. How is that not mystical? What do you think we're discussing?

Astus wrote:

The story of raising a flower was first mentioned in the Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (Zen Classics, p 203), a Song Dynasty text propagating the Linji faction (The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy, p 39f) and their idea of "transmission outside the scriptures". Previous Zen records have no knowledge about it. It is at best the mythological beginning of Zen.

jeeprs said:

The alayavijnana is a mystical conception. It is often equated with Jung's idea of 'the collective unconscious'.

Astus wrote:

I agree, the alayavijnana is not a common term, however, it is well known among Mahayana Buddhists. On the other hand, it is definitely not a "collective unconscious". Everybody has their personal karma, their own habitual tendencies. Yogacara denies even the possibility of perceiving another's mind, sharing it among each other is even less likely.

jeeprs said:

Here I have a book called 'No River to Cross', by Zen Master Daehaeng. Almost every page is about 'one mind'

Astus wrote:

Look at how she defines the term Juingong:

"Why is it called Juingong? It is the doer, so it is called "Jui (主人)," and it is completely empty, that is, it is always changing, without any fixed shape, so it is called "Gong (空)". Thus Juingong means your fundamental, underlying essence, which is always changing and manifesting."

(No River To Cross, p10)

How is that different from Linji?

"What is dharma? 'Dharma' is the dharma of mind. Mind is without form; it pervades the ten directions and is manifesting its activity right before your very eyes."
(The Record of Linji, p 11. tr. Sasaki)

"Followers of the Way, mind is without form and pervades the ten directions.
In the eye it is called seeing, in the ear it is called hearing.
In the nose it smells odors, in the mouth it holds converse.
In the hands it grasps and seizes, in the feet it runs and carries.
Fundamentally it is one pure radiance; divided it becomes the six harmoniously united spheres of sense. If the mind is void, wherever you are, you are emancipated."
(p 9-10)

Later Linji also says,

"when it is realized that these six—color, sound, odor, taste, touch, and dharmas—are all empty forms, they cannot bind the man of the Way, dependent upon nothing. Constituted though he is of the seepage of the five skandhas, he has the supernatural power of walking upon the earth."
(p 20)

Daehaeng Sunim often explained that there is no point in praying to Juigong waiting for some sort of solution to our problems. What one has to do is to trust in Juigong, the true nature of the mind, and let go of everything, let Juigong take care of it. This is the essential practice of Zen, letting go. Although Daehaeng Sunim may sound like someone talking about Juigong as if it were God, a careful look at her teachings show that it's nothing like any deity of any religion, it is simply the nature of our own mind. Yotaku Bankei was also mistaken for a Christian by some because of his teaching of the Unborn. This is similar to people who confuse buddha-nature with a soul. It's all because people lack the necessary training in the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. It is one of the reasons I say that emphasising impermanence makes things easier.

jeeprs said:

Granted, many translations of the Awakening of the Faith are influenced by the fact that one of the original translations were by Samuel Beal who was a Christian chaplain. But the text is about 'the world soul' and 'the one mind'.

Astus wrote:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html is quite good. It does talk of one mind, and by that it means the mind of the sentient beings that is the tathagatagarbha, it has the two aspects of principle (emptiness) and function (dependent origination), and they are not two separate things or realms. This is what one recognises through the meditation practice described in the treatise.

jeeprs said:

And I emphatically disagree with 'seeing nothing beyond appearances'. The notion of the 'equality of nirvana and samsara' - and remember that is a very radical idea, which to

this day the Theravada Buddhists have never accepted - is not that the uninstructed worldling is no different to the Buddha. How does Suzuki put it:

Astus wrote:

Is emptiness outside of appearances? No, appearances themselves are empty. The teaching of emptiness is a statement about the nature of phenomena. I don't know how radical this is when it is a core Mahayana doctrine and found in every tradition. It doesn't mean that there are no ignorance and enlightenment. In fact, wisdom is seeing that all things are empty, while not seeing that is being deluded.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 19th, 2013 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

What do you think is the significance of 'supernatural' in this quotation?

Astus wrote:

Its significance is in refuting the idea that one should attain paranormal powers. It points to the actual goal of Buddhism in attaining liberation in this body. That's why "walking upon the earth", a most ordinary activity, is supernatural.

jeeprs said:

Substitute the word Juigong with 'God' and any Christian would say the same. ... That seems to be the kind of 'God' that many people pray to and atheists deny. But the mystical understanding of 'God' is completely different to that.

Astus wrote:

That is, only a handful of esoteric oriented Christians would consider God as one's own mind, not mainstream Christian churches. But this is going to a "comparative religion" area that is not for this forum.

jeeprs said:

But she herself says in that passage I quoted, that it might be thought of as God. She doesn't have a problem with that, even if you do.

Astus wrote:

She says that one can call it god, father, mother, etc. It doesn't matter, because it's just a name. She is not talking about mashing up religious doctrines.

jeeprs said:

'The true nature', 'big mind', 'buddha nature', these are concepts from within a religious tradition, namely, Buddhism. I don't see how you can keep quoting them, referring to them, and saying 'this is what they mean', without acknowledging that elementary fact.

Astus wrote:

This discussion is taking place in the Zen forum. I happily acknowledge the contextual nature of terminology. As you say, context is very important. And, as far as I'm concerned, the entire topic has meaning only in a Buddhist context. Other contexts (philosophies, religions, literature, etc.) are irrelevant. And that's why bringing in Western mysticism and equating it with Zen - as done in Ford's article - is disregarding the context.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 19th, 2013 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

And if you spoke to a non-Buddhist about 'the nature of your own mind' what would that mean to them? If I stopped the man in the street and said 'look here, trust in the true nature of your own mind', how would he respond?

Astus wrote:

And what if you go to someone who knows nothing about Buddhism and ask them: Isn't it true that things change? Isn't it true that we give names to objects? Isn't it true that while things necessarily change we hold on to their concepts? Isn't it true that we have the freedom to grasp and let go of ideas? Isn't it true that holding on to unrealistic thoughts causes suffering? Isn't it true that if you find a view false you don't hold on to it any longer? Isn't it true that having a correct understand how we can see clearly what thoughts and emotions move us we can learn to avoid suffering and attain peace?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 19th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

It better be something mystical like the attainment of nirvana which takes us beyond the kindergarten teaching.

Astus wrote:

Kindergarten is a pretty good place.

All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old

monks.
(Record of Linji, p 19; tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 20th, 2013 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: The Two Truths

Content:

Astus wrote:

Relative is believing the relative to be absolute. Absolute is seeing that the relative is relative.

The knowledge that appearances arise unfailingly in dependence,
And the knowledge that they are empty and beyond all assertions—
As long as these two appear to you as separate,
There can be no realization of the Buddha's wisdom.

Yet when they arise at once, not each in turn but both together,
Then through merely seeing unfailing dependent origination
Certainty is born, and all modes of misapprehension fall apart—
That is when discernment of the view has reached perfection.

When you know that appearances dispel the extreme of existence,
While the extreme of nothingness is eliminated by emptiness,
And you also come to know how emptiness arises as cause and effect,
Then you will be immune to any view entailing clinging to extremes.
(<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/tsongkhapa/three-principal-aspects>)

Also see this brief and practical explanation: <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/two-truths-view-mahayana>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 20th, 2013 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

When you leave the house on fire, are you in the world of dependent originations? Are you still under the powers of the murderous demon of impermanence? Is there anything in the house on fire that can save you or other sentient beings?

Astus wrote:

Why leave? Linji says in your quote, "it will suffice for you to seek nothing outside."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2013 at 12:34 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

desertman001 said:

In dependent arising the first condition is ignorance, followed by mental formations then consciousness then mind and matter. This is all before the senses and before birth. So what is it that is being ignorant? Does this imply a mind prior to form? Is the condition prior to mental formation emptiness?

Astus wrote:

The 12 links don't describe some primal origination, it is an ongoing process from moment to moment, and from life to life.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2013 at 1:28 AM

Title: Re: The Two Truths

Content:

rachmiel said:

This, of course, doesn't help me if I don't understand what "relative" and "absolute" mean in this context.

Astus wrote:

To believe that there is something solid in our experience is the realm of the relative. To see that there is nothing substantial anywhere that could be grasped is the absolute. To perceive that appearances are dream-like without any basis is the middle way.

As Patrul Rinpoche explains under The Provisional Understanding In Terms Of The Two Truths:

"When we understand the natural condition of phenomena in general, and realize that they are similar to an illusion on the relative level because they appear although they are not truly existent, whereas they are like space on the absolute level because they can not be established as existent or non-existent, and we also understand that ultimately the truths are inseparable within the great Middle Way—the absolute space of reality beyond all conceptual extremes—the mind or awareness that has this understanding is relative."

rachmiel said:

Is "The knowledge that appearances arise unfailingly in dependence" = relative truth and "the knowledge that they are empty and beyond all assertions" = absolute truth?

Astus wrote:

Yes. However, as the verse goes on, it states one should not stay with the view that there are actually two truths.

Patrul Rinpoche writes, "The division into the two truths is only a provisional device, based on the distinct perspectives of two states of mind, that is made in order to

facilitate understanding."

rachmiel said:

This sounds pretty much exactly like what I said: "Absolute truth is 'what is' (sans interpretation)." Am I misunderstanding something ... or is my take on absolute truth correct?

Astus wrote:

When there is still something, it is conceptual elaboration, it is interpretation. It's not that one should get rid of thinking and understanding, it is believing that concepts hold some sort of truth when one fails to see "what is". And by that "truth" the belief that they are contrary to reality is included. That is, as long as we think we should gain or get rid of something, that is the relative view and not the absolute.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2013 at 9:55 PM

Title: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here it is shown how the practice of Mahamudra and Yogacara match:

Maitreya's Dharmadharmatavibhanga:

"The comprehension of the correct
Yogic practice in four points
Is the yogic practice of observation,
The yogic practice of nonobservation,
The yogic practice of the nonobservation of observation,
And the yogic practice of the observation of nonobservation."
(Karl Brunnholzl: Mining for Wisdom within Delusion, p 167)

Rangjung Dorje's Mahamudra Aspiration Prayer:

"When observing objects, they are seen to be the mind,
devoid of objects.
When observing the mind, there is no mind, as it is empty of an entity.
When observing both, dualistic fixation is spontaneously freed.
May we realize the natural state of the luminous mind."
(Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche: Song of Karmapa, p 14)

Go Lotsawa's Commentary on The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena:

"You may wonder, "Such is certainly the case, but if one holds that this text of the Bhagavan Maitreya is also a text of what is known as the yogas of Mahamudra, do the four yogas of this [Mahamudra] fit with those [four yogic practices in the

Dharmadharmatīvibhaga]" They do fit very well. The first [Mahamudra yoga] is to look inside and then to focus on [everything being] one's own mind. As for the explanation [in] the second [yogic practice] that there is nothing external, it is the [Mahamudra yoga of] freedom from reference points in which one realizes that all phenomena that are objects of the mind lack any basis or root. The realization that both what appears as [if] external and the inner mind free from reference points are of one taste is the yogic practice of the nonobservation of observation. To not meditate through deliberately focusing on even the nonduality of subject and object is called "nonmeditation," which is the fourth [Mahamudra] yoga."

(Mining for Wisdom within Delusion, p 320)

Do you know of other correlations?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2013 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

conebeckham said:

Which Yogacara? The one that posits an existent "mind?" Or later interpretations?

Astus wrote:

Which Yogacara posits an existent mind? It seems to me that only Tibetan apologetics invented that. Vasubandhu certainly did not.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 23rd, 2013 at 3:09 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

smcj said:

Yogacara is the "Mind Only" school. I do not know of a variant that does not posit the existence of Mind, unless you mean "Absolute Yogacara", which is a Gelug pejorative for Shentong. Shentong does not posit an existent Mind, but they do posit something else. However my information comes from Tibetan sources, so I don't know the history in India. These things do evolve over time.

Astus wrote:

This is a useful summary by Dan Lusthaus:

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro-uni.htm>.

Mahayanasutralamkara, ch. 6:

"Realizing intellectually that there is nothing apart from mind, she understands then that mind (itself) has no (ultimate) existence. Understanding that duality has no existence, such a genius dwells in the ultimate realm which has no (duality)."

(tr. from "The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature", p 52)

28th verse of Vasubandhu's Trimsika:

One does abide in the realization
Of mere [representation of] consciousness
When one does not perceive also a supporting consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that,
[Namely, the grasping of the supporting consciousness].
(tr. T.A. Kochumuttom in "A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience", p 258-259)

When consciousness itself
Does not observe any focal object,
It rests in the very being of mere consciousness
Since there is no apprehender without something apprehended.
(tr. K. Brunnholzl in "Mining for Wisdom within Delusion", p 262)

When in perceiving the sphere of objects, wisdom (jnana) no longer conceives any idea of object, then that wisdom is in the state of vijnaptimatratā. Because both the object to be grasped and the act of grasping by consciousness are not there.
(tr. Swati Ganguly in "Treatise in Thirty Verses on Mere-consciousness", p 130)

Mahayanasamgraha, ch. 3:

"When the mind encounters these objects, its knowledge of the rope is also negated. When with a parallel insight one eradicates the apparent names and objects that appear in these six images, then discriminative, defiled understanding in mental words will no longer arise, just as in the knowledge of the snake. In suppressing objectivity in these six images, just as was the case with the knowledge of the rope, by relying on the wisdom of suchness, the understanding of conscious construction only itself can be rejected.

In this fashion, in understanding that the images discriminated by the mental words appear as objective, the bodhisattva fully understands the imagined pattern. In understanding the meaning of conscious construction only, he fully understands the other-dependent pattern. But how does he understand the reality pattern? By abandoning any idea about conscious construction only! At that moment the bodhisattva clearly understands the imagining of mental words, which long since had been yoked to the permeations of hearing doctrine, and he suppresses any idea of their correspondence with the external world. These [ideas] no longer arise because their apparent objective status no longer has any cause and thus they do not even arise as an imagining of the mental words of conscious construction only. This implies that the bodhisattva dwells only in non-imagination in regard to all objects and names, and in virtue of non-imaginative wisdom he realizes and abides in the Reality Realm of suchness. He then enters the reality pattern because of the arising of non-imaginative wisdom wherein subject and object are entirely identical."
(tr. J. P. Keenan in "The Summary of the Great Vehicle" p 64)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 23rd, 2013 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

smcj said:

Mahamudra isn't married to any one perspective.

Astus wrote:

True. But if you look at the initial post, it shows how a Yogacara practice - the four yogas - is actually identical to a Mahamudra method, stage by stage. And this is not only something I have noticed, but so did old masters like Go Lotsawa.

smcj said:

Since I'm a Kagyu, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso's "Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness" works just fine.

Astus wrote:

If you use a source that emphasises a different perspective you cannot learn the actual teachings of another school. You have to look at the authentic teachers of Yogacara to see what they say. It's just like reading a Theosophist or a Muslim writer in order to learn Buddhism - it is inevitable that they don't present a correct view. Since the three quotes from fundamental Yogacara treatises contradict the idea that they teach some sort of substantial mind, that criticism does not stand.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 23rd, 2013 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

smcj said:

I'll stick to KTGR's synopsis.

Astus wrote:

When I said "authentic teachers of Yogacara" I meant those who uphold Yogacara as their primary doctrine and are regarded as Yogacara teachers. As for KTGR, when he talks about Shentong in that book, he identifies its source as the five treatises of Maitreya, and that includes the Dharmadharmatavibhanga where the four yogic practices are mentioned and then connected to the four yogas of Mahamudra by commentators. In Br nnholz's Center of the Sunlit Sky he practically identifies Shentong as Yogacara, since it is based on Yogacara texts:

"There is no Shentong-Madhyamaka nor any need to make one up. The subdivision of Madhyamaka into "self-empty" and "other-empty" is obsolete. ... It is all the more inappropriate to wrongly subsume it - as many Tibetan doxographies do - under the questionable category of "Mere Mentalism" and thus regard it as inferior to Centrism. It

would definitely contribute to the appreciation of this Yogacara system for what it is if it were called neither Mere Mentalism nor Shentong but simply "the Yogacara System of Maitreya/Asanga" or "the lineage of vast activity."
(p 445)

Therefore, what is identified as Mind Only in KTGR's meditation book is only a lower stage to reach the correct understanding of actual Yogacara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 24th, 2013 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Who/what is the subject?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20the%20Presence%20of%20Something%20Prior>

Some say that whatever is involved in seeing, hearing etc. and feeling etc. exists prior to them.

If [that] thing is not evident, how can there be seeing etc? Therefore, the presence [of that] thing [must] exist before them.

What configures/makes known that thing which is present before seeing and hearing etc. and feeling etc.?

...

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

I didn't mean this thread to slip into a debate about what is and what isn't Yogacara. I find it most fascinating that a primary Mahamudra method actually has a Yogacara source. So I'm interested if there are other things within the Mahamudra tradition that can be connected to Yogacara.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Silent Illumination/Shikantaza

Content:

beautiful breath said:

Well no other tradition seems to offer a clarity of teachings on Emptiness like the Tibetan schools do and I cannot find it in myself to mix traditions.

Astus wrote:

It is true that there are many great teachings from the Tibetan tradition on emptiness.

However, emptiness is a general Buddhist doctrine, so there is no need to feel bound to any tradition just because you like this or that teaching. Ven. Shengyan, following Ven. Yinshun, taught in a Madhyamaka style, so you might want to look deeper into their works.

As mentioned before, there are a number of differences between the path of Dzogchen and the path of Zen. It is mostly about Dzogchen being integrated into Vajrayana and carries with it methods like guru-yoga, empowerments, energy channels, etc., while Zen is not bound to any method.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Silent Illumination/Shikantaza

Content:

flavio81 said:

Would you please elaborate on what do you mean with "Zen is not bound to any method"? This is puzzling me.

Astus wrote:

Zen is simply "seeing nature", i.e. realising buddha-mind. Because it teaches sudden enlightenment, it is not bound to this or that method, while at the same time there are no restrictions about what technique one could use.

Huangbo <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Anccestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang%20Po/Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang-po.htm>, "The practice of the six paramitas and various other disciplines is known as the gradual method of becoming a Buddha. This gradual method, however, is a secondary idea, and it does not represent the complete path to Perfect Awakening. If one does not understand that one's mind is Buddha, no Dharma can ever be attained."

Also, "We are enlightened only by Mind, no matter whether we follow the Six Paramitas or other methods. All such methods and teaching are used only as expedients to help save all sentient beings. ... Since, in reality, the Mind is Buddha, the first and only teaching necessary for saving sentient beings is 'The Mind is Buddha.'"

It is summed up in Bodhidharma's four-line definition of Zen:

A special transmission outside the scriptures,

Not dependent upon words and speech;

Directly pointing at the mind,

See into one's true nature and become a Buddha.

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=38&Itemid=59)

You call it "sutra school", but it's not based on sutras. You call it something, but it's not in words. You say there is a method, but it goes directly. You say it goes gradually, but

this very mind is the buddha.

Linji says, "Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma." (Record of Linji, p 17, tr. Sasaki)

Regarding sitting meditation, Huineng says, "In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness. ... In this teaching, there is no impediment and no hindrance. Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called 'seated' (za). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called 'meditation' (zen). ... The fundamental nature is naturally pure and naturally concentrated; it is only by seeing the realms and thinking of the realms that one is disturbed." (Platform Sutra, p 45, tr. McRae)

Dogen <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/fzgi.shtml>, "Zazen is not a meditation technique. It is simply the Dharma gate of joyful ease, it is practicing the realization of the boundless Dharma way."

Keizan <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/zzyk.shtml>, "Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down. ... Now, zazen is entering directly into the ocean of buddha-nature and manifesting the body of the Buddha. The pure and clear mind is actualized in the present moment; the original light shines everywhere."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Silent Illumination/Shikantaza

Content:

Sönam said:

This is a total misconception (outsider view) about Dzogchen ... Dzogchen is not integrated into Vajrayana. Dzogchen is not integrating in anything, for it integrates anything ... even hinayana or any sutra teachings.

Method like GY exist, because the student has been introduced by the master to his real nature, Buddha nature. Therefore Dzogchen GY reactivates that process (being in the state of the master).

... because of the blessing of the master.

Astus wrote:

I don't know of any Buddhist tradition outside of Vajrayana that has guru-yoga, or the idea that a teacher is required to introduce the nature of mind, or that there are such things as blessings. You say all of that exist in Dzogchen, and that's what I meant by being part of Vajrayana.

As for claiming superiority (that anyone can do and has little meaning), Yogi Chen <http://www.yogichen.org/cw/cw33/bk090.html> about Zen, "It is really beyond doctrine at

all. Just realization to realization, I use my realization to touch your realization. This means that at the same time the Guru and disciple are in Truth. It is very important, this is the real Chan. Beyond Mahamudra which uses four Yogas and the Great Perfection, which uses initiation too."

He also has an essay: <http://www.yogichen.org/gurulin/efiles/e0/e0164.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Lineage and Individual Approaches to Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is it to receive transmission from a lineage? It is to receive teachings. The same teachings can also be written down. Reading the sutras is receiving the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Numerous Mahayana scriptures state that they are in and of themselves are authentic and sufficient sources of the Dharma. There are also sutras that describe the method to meet other buddhas and receive teachings from them. Sutras also teach how to attain different levels of enlightenment. What could be missing then?

Diamond Sutra (http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-8):

"Subhūti, all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra."

Some passages from the Lotus Sutra (tr. Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama; BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, 2007):

If there are any sons or daughters of a virtuous family who preserve, recite, explain, and copy even a single line of the Lotus Sutra, or who pay homage to this sutra with various offerings of flowers, perfumes, necklaces, scented powders and ointments, burning incense, canopies, flags, banners, clothing, or music, or who honor it with their palms pressed together, such people should be respected by the entire world. They should be revered in the same way as the Tathāgata is revered. Know that these people are great bodhisattvas who are to attain highest, complete enlightenment. Out of their compassion for sentient beings they wish to be born among them in order to expound and explain the Lotus Sutra far and wide. How much more to be honored are those who completely preserve the entire sutra and pay homage to it with various offerings!

(ch 10)

Wherever this sutra is taught, read, recited, copied, or wherever it is to be found, one should build a seven-jeweled stupa of great height and width and richly ornamented. There is no need to put a relic inside. Why is this? Because the Tathāgata is already in it.

(ch 10)

Those sons and daughters of a virtuous family, who preserve and recite this sutra after

my parinirvāṇa will attain good qualities like those mentioned above. You should know that such people have already set out for the terrace of enlightenment, are near to highest, complete enlightenment, and are seated under the bodhi tree.
(ch 17)

O Mahāsthāmaprāpta, know that this Lotus Sutra will greatly benefit the bodhisattva mahāsattvas and lead them to highest, complete enlightenment. For this reason, after the Tathāgata's parinirvāṇa the bodhisattva mahāsattvas should always preserve, recite, explain, and copy this sutra.
(ch 20)

To sum up, in this sutra I have clearly revealed and taught all the teachings of the Tathāgata, all the transcendent powers of the Tathāgata, all the treasure houses of the hidden essence of the Tathāgata, and all the profound aspects of the Tathāgata. For this reason, after the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata, you should wholeheartedly preserve, recite, explain, and copy it, and practice according to the teaching. Those who accept, recite, explain, and copy it, and practice according to the teaching, in whichever land they may be, in a place where the sutra abides—either in a garden, a forest, under a tree, in a monk's chamber, in a layman's house, in a palace, on a mountain, in a valley, or in the wilderness—in all of these places they should erect and pay homage to a monument. Why is this? Because you should know that these places are the terraces of enlightenment where all the buddhas have attained highest, complete enlightenment, where all the buddhas have turned the wheel of the Dharma, and where all the buddhas entered parinirvāṇa.
(ch 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Lineage and Individual Approaches to Practice

Content:

heart said:

If you want to master it, you need a master.

Astus wrote:

On the one hand, I think that people can read the sutras as they are. On the other, there are commentaries, written by various masters. I don't mean there is no use for a living teacher, however, receiving teachings on the Lotus Sutra, the Avatamsaka Sutra, or practically any sutra, is quite difficult to come by in the West. And there aren't many commentaries translated either. Although it is understandable in light of the popular concept that one just needs to visit a Dharma centre and follow whatever the local leader says. Probably it takes monastics to establish a solid scriptural system as lay people are rarely interested in such things.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 26th, 2013 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: Vairocana

Content:

Astus wrote:

The "dharmakaya" is a very abstract concept, and it is without form. Vairocana had its own cult and other devotional and meditational elements that other popular buddhas. It is his symbolic aspect that is identified with the ultimate truth. The Wikipedia explains briefly: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vairocana>

Vairocana attained enlightenment, has his own buddha-land (Padma-garbha-loka-dhatu), etc. (Guang Xing: The Concept of the Buddha, p 169-171). There's also this essay that has some info on him: <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/ew26987.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 27th, 2013 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Lineage and Individual Approaches to Practice

Content:

JKhedrup said:

The Tibetan tradition seems to value the shastras over the sutras generally, perhaps because they summarize and explain the extensive doctrines contained in the Mahayana Canon, which is extremely vast.

Astus wrote:

For that we might say that Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism are complementary as native Chinese schools are more focused on sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 29th, 2013 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

monktastic said:

Being endlessly curious (but end-fully knowledgable) about the finer philosophical issues, I'd like to ask: isn't this also true of Zen, and quite possible, Advaita Vedanta?

Astus wrote:

That's one of the problems with accepting the idea that one can just practise without understanding the relevant views. It is philosophical naivete, i.e. accepting things at face value without investigation. Mahamudra teaches to first establish "the view", although it doesn't mean a conceptual understanding but rather the experiential confirmation of the nature of the mind. Still, considering all the methods and underlying doctrines involved, it is superficial to claim being beyond dogmas and such. The same is true for every system that likes to appear as "strictly practical". In the starting post of this thread it is shown how Yogacara and Mahamudra have exactly the same meditation steps, making their "practical aspect" identical. But then you hear all the arguments how Yogacara is only Sutrayana and Mahamudra is the pinnacle of Vajrayana.

Dependent origination is a fundamental teaching of the Buddha. In terms of teachings, it means that one should remain aware of the context. If you change the context of a sentence you change its meaning. Same is true for personal experience, because raw experience itself lacks meaning, only concepts can give it importance and content. Even if we theorise that there is such a thing as a universal (religious) experience (as Theosophists believe), even then it is always dependent on the context it is experienced in. That's why it is not irrelevant according to what view one wants to attain what.

In Buddhism this comes up regarding meditation. In the Brahmajala Sutta the Buddha lists the various wrong views different philosophers/priests believe based on what level of absorption (jhana) they experienced. And while Buddhists also know about those, because they see that they are all impermanent and without self, there is no attachment. Whenever one considers any experience as the ultimate, deviates from the middle way of emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2013 at 6:46 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

monktastic said:

In my own understanding, what Advaita posits is transcendent and beyond the realm of intellect or concept, and the same is true of Zen. This is not to say that the three systems are equal (this is trivially falsifiable), but that nonconceptual views do not seem to have readily identifiable features that could reasonably differentiate them -- and this is not coincidental.

Astus wrote:

Leaving unrelated comparisons (except with Yogacara of course) behind, there are two ways non-conceptuality can be understood. One is the simple lack of concepts (like a gorilla staring into space), and the other is not being attached to concepts. The first kind is present in everyday life and in the various levels of absorption from the second dhyana on. Those who consider the complete lack of conceptuality the ultimate are categorised in the Brahmajala Sutta under Asaññivāda, and these unconscious beings (asaññasatta) have their own heaven. In Mahamudra it is called the deviation of grasping non-thought. The second type, that is what Buddhism generally aims for, and that is wisdom. Wisdom is called non-conceptuality because appearances are not reified and grasped but seen as they actually are: empty and interdependent. Or, as the nature of the mind is described: empty and aware. Empty, because it doesn't hold on to anything. Aware, because it clearly perceives everything. That's how, unlike other philosophies and religions, Buddhism doesn't have any ultimate being or essence, not even a special experience. And even when it calls something the true substance and source of everything, it is simply this empty awareness that is not found anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2013 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are two commentaries on the Dharmadhatuvibhanga's stanza defining the nature of phenomena. Go Lotsawa states how it is the pure mind-stream, the luminosity, and Rangjung Dorje shows how it is the same everywhere and explains the emptiness of the three svabhavas.

Furthermore, the defining characteristic of the nature of phenomena
Is suchness, which lacks any distinction
Between apprehender and apprehended,
Or [between] objects of designation and what designates them.

Go Lotsawa's commentary (Mining for Wisdom within Delusion", p 303):

Therefore, what is called "the nature of phenomena" is the continuum of the mind that is of one taste, just like the expanse of space, because all phenomena of samsara do not go beyond this nature either. With regard to this, some [say] that [the nature of phenomena] is either [suitable as] a nonimplicative negation [in the sense] of being the nonexistence of apprehender and apprehended or that it is suitable as an implicative negation [in the sense] of existing as this very nonexistence of nonduality. Though there are assertions of such [negations] being the nature of phenomena, here it is not like that because the commentary [by Vasubandhu] explains it to be nothing but the continuum of stainless mind. For the Mahayanasutralankara also says that it is the pure luminous mind:

Mind is held to be always luminous by nature,
Contaminated [only] by adventitious flaws.
Apart from the mind that is the nature of phenomena,
Another mind's luminosity in nature is not taught.

The Third Karmapa's commentary (p 229-230):

This is what was stated above: "The defining characteristic of the nature of phenomena is suchness, which lacks any distinction between apprehender and apprehended, or [between] objects of designation and what designates them." This is the perfect nature, for which numerous synonyms are given in all the sutras and tantras. Glorious Naropa says:

This very being empty is awareness, mind.
Also bodhicitta is just this.
The tathagata heart is nothing but this.
Great bliss is precisely this.

What is called "secret mantra" is just this.
The reality of valid cognition is exactly this.
The fourth empowerment is this.
Connate joy is nothing but this.

The paramitas are precisely this.

Unity is simply this.
Great Madhyamaka is solely this.
Vairocana is this.

Vajrasattva is simply this.
The sixth family is only this.
The buddha disposition is just this.
Many enumerations, such as these,
Which are stated in the sutras and tantras,
Are for the most part based on this.

As for the meaning of noble Nagarjuna's statement that all phenomena lack a nature, the nature of all phenomena is that they neither arise by nature nor cease by nature. For this reason, since they are not real as being permanent or extinct, coming or going, or one or different, they are free from reference points. Therefore, they are both "all phenomena" and "the lack of a nature." The enumerations [of this lack of nature] are "the lack of nature in terms of characteristics," "the lack of nature in terms of arising," and "the ultimate lack of nature," which are taught in relation to the imaginary, {528} the dependent, and the perfect [natures], respectively. One should understand that all [kinds of] emptiness are also divisions [that are derived] from this.

As for extreme interpretations of annihilation and permanence, Taranatha rejects both (The Essence of Zhentong, p 19-20):

In the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra others asked, "Aren't the major and minor marks of the enlightened essence the same features as those of the soul of the extremists?" In response, it was explained [by the Buddha] that "These are not the same features because they are of emptiness." So, it is said that this enlightened essence does not exist as real, and if these major and minor marks were to exist, then they would be from the system of the extremists. It is also said that like space, what is not established whatsoever is known as the "enlightened essence."

However, the mere recognition of different kinds of emptiness as meaning the unreal and the non-existence of anything whatsoever without definition is the mental fault of fixating onto one's own erroneous philosophical system. From the [Laṅkāvatāra-] sūtra it reads, "The reason why these are not the same features as the extremists is because of the manifestation of emptiness, not because these major and minor marks are not manifest." So, the claim that the enlightened essence of the completely radiant major and minor marks is explained to be interpretive in meaning is reduced to a mere deception within the world of lies.

The claim that the [enlightened] essence is permanent as asserted within the system of the extremists is also reduced to a refutation within the Essence Sūtras. Moreover, it is not acceptable to assert that the meaning of permanence is the permanence of a continuum. This is because saṃsāra, the entire subject-object complex, is merely the permanence of a continuum. So, if the mere permanence of a continuum was sufficiently permanent, then all conditioned phenomena would have to be permanent. Brühnholz (In Praise of Dharmadhātu) has a section for the question "Is Buddha Nature an Eternal Soul or Sheer Emptiness?" There he quotes Mipham (p 105):

In this way, Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems cannot be distinguished through mere words, but as far as the profound essential point is concerned, they are as

different as the earth is from the sky. Hence, after his arrival in Tibet, Atiśa said that, in the India of his days, it is difficult to distinguish Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems.

And concludes (p 109):

To summarize, when not just clinging to the words but understanding what is conveyed by these words, let alone Nāgārjuna's Dharmadhātustava, in Indian Yogācāra texts too, there is no reifying interpretation of tathāgatagarbha. The teachings on buddha nature were never designed as a doctrinal or ontological alternative to or replacement of emptiness. Tathāgatagarbha—the luminous nature of the mind—is not regarded as a monistic absolute beside which all other phenomena have a mere status of emptiness. Rather, it is the natural state of our mind, in which no self-delusion is ever at work. The default example used throughout tathāgatagarbha texts for this nature of the mind being without reference points, inexpressible, and indemonstrable is space. Still, in order to clarify that the ungraspable expanse of the mind is not just a mere inert vacuum, but that this expanse is vivid sheer experience—the natural unity of expanse and wisdom—these texts also give many examples for the luminous aspect of mind's nature and its boundless inseparable qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2013 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

jeeprs said:

It is true that this nature ought not to be reified, but not to reify it is not to say that it is non-existent. It is neither 'something that exists' or 'non-existence', being beyond opposites.

Astus wrote:

The problem is with the idea: it. The four yogas described in Yogacara and Mahamudra show the path and the result. Objects are only products of the mind, mind itself is nothing real whatsoever, without both subject and object the correct realisation of suchness is there, but even that shouldn't be grasped. All four possibilities (is, isn't, both, neither) presuppose something what one can make statements about, and that is reification.

If you want a Zen take on it, look at the discourses of Huairang, Xuanjue and Shenhui in the Platform Sutra (ch. 7 & 8).

the master asked "Where have you come from?"

[Huairang] said, "Mount Song."

The master said, "[No matter] what kind of thing, how would it come?"

[Huairang] said, "If you say it's like a single thing, then you're off the mark."

[Xuanjue] said, "How can the birthless have a meaning?"

The master said, "If there is no meaning, who is it that discriminates?"

[Xuanjue] said, "Nor is discrimination a meaning."

One day the master announced to the assembly, "I have a thing without head or tail, without name or title, without front or back. Do you know what it is?"

Shenhui came forth and said, "It is the fundamental source of the buddhas. It is my buddha-nature."

The master said, "I told you it was without name or title, but you have called it the fundamental source, the buddha-nature. You've just covered your head with thatch. You've become a follower with only discriminative understanding."

jeeprs said:

That is 'natural' for us, and what needs to be surmounted or abandoned. You can't deny the fundamental distinction between the Buddhas and the unenlightened. Otherwise, how would there be any path or training? What would there be to teach?

Astus wrote:

Calling it "natural" or "ordinary" mind is simply a matter of terminology, and it is not meant for those who are not already familiar with Mahayana. Teachings like Mahamudra are not really entry level. The four noble truths already establish the path and its role, and both Yogacara and Mahamudra describe various stages from deluded to complete enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 31st, 2013 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Gampopa taught about the mind in three aspects (Confusion Arises as Wisdom, p 212-213):

In relation to cutting through the perceiving mind, Rinpoche taught three aspects: the mind's characteristics (1), essence (2), and nature(3).

(1) The mind has two characteristics: it appears as various colorful, outer forms, and it emits various positive and negative mental states.

(2) What is meant by the —essence of the mind is your own awareness, that which you think of as —I or —me. The essence of the mind is clarity-emptiness. It cannot be pinpointed, yet it never ends. Awareness is baseless, fresh, naked, and spontaneous.

(3) You need to understand that the essence of the mind and its radiance as various thoughts and emotions are not two different things. When you understand that the essence and characteristics of the mind are naturally inseparable, this is called the nature. When you realize what this means, it is the heart essence of all the buddhas of the three times. This nature is present within all beings.

That is, there are all the internal and external appearances, there is the essence as empty awareness, and these are not two separate things at all. In a similar fashion, in Madhyamaka there is the conventional truth of appearances, the ultimate truth of emptiness, and the two truths are not separate from each other. It is famously summed

up in the Heart Sutra as "form is emptiness, emptiness is form".

Vasubandhu explains in the Madhyantavibhaga (tr. Kochumuttom) this way:

(v3)

Neither void nor non-void :

So is everything described,

That indeed is the middle path,

For there is existence as well as non-existence,

And again existence.

That indeed is the middle path, for, on the one hand, there is the existence of emptiness within the imagination of the unreal, and, on the other, the existence of the imagination of the unreal within the emptiness. It is therefore neither exclusively void nor exclusively non-void.

(v14)

There is the negation of the pair of the graspable and grasper. The definition of emptiness, then, is the assertion of that negation. Thus, it is shown how the emptiness is to be defined in negative terms. And, what those negative terms are, [is further stated] :

It is neither [total] assertion,

Nor [total] negation.

Why not [total] assertion ? Because there is the negation of the pair of subject and object. Why not [total] negation ? Because there is the assertion of the negation of that pair. This indeed is the definition of the emptiness. Therefore, with reference to the imagination of the unreal, the emptiness is :

Neither different from the imagination of the unreal,

Nor identical with the imagination of the unreal.

If different, it would imply that the 'universal' (dharmata) is other than the particular things [dharma] , which is unacceptable. For example, 'impermanence' is not other than the impermanent things, and the state of suffering is not other than suffering itself. If identical, there would be no place for purifying knowledge, nor would there be the commonplace knowledge. Thus is shown a definition which states that emptiness is that which is free from being different from thatness.

The Yogacara teaching of the three natures gives a different perspective on the attainment of non-dual wisdom. By the elimination of the imagined (perceiving appearances as substantial) from the dependent (i.e. dependent origination) one realises the accomplished (the middle way). In the Trisvabhavanirdeśa (tr. Kochumuttom) Vasubandhu uses the example of the conjured elephant:

It is like the magical power,

Which by the working of incantations

Appears in the nature of an elephant;

There is altogether no elephant at all

But only its form.

The elephant stands for the imagined nature,
Its form for the other-dependent nature,
And, that which remains when the elephant has been negated,
Stands for the absolutely accomplished nature.

So, the imagination of the unreal
By the working of the basic thought
Appears in the nature of duality;
There is altogether no duality at all,
But only its form.

<http://www.turtlehill.org/uttara/vasu.html> (comment to v32) sums up the meaning:
"Abandonment of commitment and attachment to imagined phenomena is achieved through the transcendence of instinctive assent to the imagined nature. The attainment of freedom is accomplished through the direct, immediate understanding of the unity of the three natures, and hence the non-dual awareness of all phenomena in their consummate nature."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 1st, 2013 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Vairochana

Content:

Astus wrote:

The role of different characters can change depending on the text and tradition. A good example is Vajrapani who in early texts is a spirit (yaksha), then a protector deity (dharmapala), then a bodhisattva, then in certain tantras a buddha and finally in later tantras reverted into a less important position. Vairochana, just like other buddhas (e.g. Akshobhya), once had his own devotional system, then he was rendered into a metaphysical symbol, again to be put into a lesser position in later tantras (one of the five dhyani buddhas) and superseded by Samantabhadra (in Nyingma) and Vajradhara (e.g. in Kagyu).

While it is often forgotten, Buddhism lived and spread not only via concepts, meditation and famous teachers, but the cults of buddhas and bodhisattvas was (and still is) an important element. Richard D. McBride in

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=XpUyLqQ26ioC> explores exactly this. Therefore, just as certain doctrines and practices changed, so did the rituals and the importance and meaning of deities.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 1st, 2013 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Anders said:

Isn't it possible to resurrect it the same way the original lineages presumably started? I.e, a Buddha or mahasattva emanating to start a line, or a yogin receiving such abhisheka by virtue of having the siddhis to communicate with such beings?

The impression I get is that this was more or less what Hsu Yun did when he resurrected the Guiyang school of Chan and passed it on to Hsuan Hua.

Astus wrote:

Good question. In Tibetan Buddhism there are both long and short lineages, and visionary empowerments and connections are accepted. Even the old lineages start with some buddha or bodhisattva manifesting for someone.

In Chan it's a bit different. One can claim distant lineage connection based on personal affiliation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2013 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Comprehensive List of Meditation Styles

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do you have a working definition of "meditation"? So that it becomes possible to consider styles.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2013 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Comprehensive List of Meditation Styles

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let me point to some problems.

Take buddha-remembrance (nianfo/nenbutsu) as an example.

The Amitayurdhyana Sutra (aka Visualisation Sutra) describes 13 methods. They are visualisations of various objects. But the tradition knows several other objects one could visualise, and the visualisation can be combined with different postures and movements. These are practices related to the Amitabha. Also, in the Pure Land tradition of East Asia the most common understanding of buddha-remembrance is not a visualisation practice but the recitation of the name. Reciting the name also has many forms and styles. Another factor is that not only those who consider themselves Pure Land practitioners use these practices but almost everyone. Also, Mahayana has several other buddhas, and they all have their own visualisations and recitations. That is, in the single category of buddha-remembrance there are numerous practices and interpretations of the practices. The single common feature is that they are all related to a specific buddha or bodhisattva. Just to complicate things, buddha-remembrance also means recalling the virtues of the Buddha (Shakyamuni), as it is used in Theravada, and

it is more like an inspirational contemplation rather than a focused repetition or visualisation. Adding another factor, buddha-remembrance can also mean abiding in the buddha-mind, that is again not a typical meditation technique.

Thus, in this single term one can encompass so many things that talking about it as if it were a single method is being blind to the complexities that are actually there. That's why I asked if there is any definition of "meditation", because you can't really put all those methods into the categories of shamatha and vipashyana, and even specific traditions don't view all forms of buddha-remembrance as meditative practices.

If you want to follow traditional categories, you should look at the major meditation handbooks, like the Visuddhimagga, the Mohezhiguan and the Bhavanakrama. Theravada distinguishes samatha and vipassana, while Mahayana adds to this their combined practice (which doesn't mean that in actual practice it is not known in Theravada). If you want to encompass other meditation related practices, you can add to those three a fourth as preliminary practices conducive to meditation. Otherwise, as it shows in the current list posted previously, it won't be a list of meditation techniques but rather of various schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2013 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Grasping and Self

Content:

rachmiel said:

Ignorance -> push/pull -> reification of self (and other sundry nasties)

Astus wrote:

Not that linear. The moment one sees something as permanent (persisting from moment to moment) there is grasping. Although one can differentiate between that kind of subtle attachment and emotional clinging that comes after that. Thus in Mahayana they talk about grasping at self (emotional hindrance) and grasping at dharmas (conceptual hindrance).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2013 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Condensed Summarization of Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are numerous ways to sum up the teachings. In the Pali Canon you can find many suttas where the Buddha is asked to give a brief instruction. They are generally insufficient for people with no knowledge of Buddhism. Therefore, there is what is called <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/index.html>, that the Dhammapada quote above covers.

Don't do evil, do good: Dana (generosity), Sila (virtue)

Result: Sagga (heaven)

Tame the mind: Adinava (drawbacks), Nekkhamma (renunciation)

Path and result: Four Noble Truths

If you want something less complicated, you can use the concept of "interbeing" or "dependent origination" as the cardinal doctrine of Buddhism. It is the best of you pick something that you can elaborate on if required. It doesn't matter if it's about ethics, meditation or wisdom, since all of them are connected to the other parts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2013 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Comprehensive List of Meditation Styles

Content:

dharmagoat said:

I no longer think that trying to force practices into categories will be productive.

Astus wrote:

Or you should use proper analysis. If a term like "phowa" includes various practices, it means it is not a single meditation method but rather a package of methods. It's like a Happy Meal. You have to dissect them, otherwise the toy will be confused with the hamburger.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2013 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Comprehensive List of Meditation Styles

Content:

Roland said:

What about deity practices? There are so many and there are different variations according to different traditions and lineages.

Astus wrote:

They usually follow the same steps. There are only a few varieties and maybe a couple of exceptions.

Consult books like Jamgon Kongrul's "The Treasury Of Knowledge" (especially The Elements Of Tantric Practice, but also Systems Of Buddhist Tantra and Esoteric Instructions); Jeffrey Hopkins: Tantric Techniques; Daniel Cozort: Highest Yoga Tantra; Dharmachakra Translation Committee: Deity, Mantra, and Wisdom; etc. if you are more interested.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2013 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Comprehensive List of Meditation Styles

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me you are not looking for a list of Buddhist meditations but rather all sorts of religious activities done in Buddhism. And that actually includes the entirety of Buddhism, like taking refuge, prostrations, reading, contemplating and listening to teachings, chanting, observing precepts, various rituals, freeing animals, and so on. Meditation is only a smaller part of those activities, and it is different from reciting texts, saying prayers, performing rituals, thinking about teachings, etc. Meditation is about actively calming (shamatha) and understanding (vipashyana) the mind with the purpose of attaining liberation. While for instance copying a sutra is a merit making activity, in itself it doesn't lead to seeing clearly the true nature of mind, and it doesn't even bring about any level of absorption, thus it is not a meditative practice, although it is certainly a Buddhist religious activity.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2013 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: Grasping and Self

Content:

rachmiel said:

I'm having trouble understanding this, on two counts:

Astus wrote:

Momentariness is one classical way in Buddhism to express it, but let me rephrase it then. What a "beautiful sunset" is is simply a concept, and idea. And as every idea, it is complex and dependent, that is, it requires several other ideas to be meaningful. Nobody ever sees any "beautiful sunset". The eye has no such concept, no understanding of what the changing colours and forms are, it doesn't even know what colour is. It is a mental interpretation that there is a "beautiful sunset". The eye has no memory, it cannot connect one moment with the next one, therefore it is unable to perceive any motion. The eye also has no aesthetic evaluation of anything whatsoever, and cannot tell the difference between beautiful and ugly. So, again, a "beautiful sunset" is nothing but a concept. And if we look at concepts, we see that they don't stay in our minds but rapidly change. Also, a concept has no meaning in and of itself, it is not something actually graspable. Nevertheless, because we imagine that there is such a thing out there as a "beautiful sunset", we fail to see things for what they are, and in our ignorance have grasping at illusory ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 4th, 2013 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: Grasping and Self

Content:

jeeprs said:

So, do that mean that if we 'see things as there are', there is no beauty?

So the teaching of impermanence is an antidote to clinging to such temporal things.

Astus wrote:

It means that beauty is a concept. It is not the same as denying that we think something is beautiful, but pointing to the fact that it is only a thought. You may compare the Buddhist understanding of insubstantial beauty with the Platonic "ideal beauty". The Platonic explanation is quite a good representation of how ordinary people relate to beauty. And yes, the whole purpose of the entire Buddhist teaching is to liberate one from attachment as that is the cause of suffering.

jeeprs said:

Well, I agree - there is a lovely word from medieval philosophy, 'haeccity', which Wikipedia translates as

It is directly comparable with the Buddhist notion of 'Tathatā' or 'suchness', which again according to Wikipedia:

Astus wrote:

It seems to be related to the concept of "svalaksana" (individual/particular attributes) that is contrasted with samanyalaksana (shared/universal attributes), as described in Buddhist epistemology.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 4th, 2013 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Absolute teaching

Content:

Astus wrote:

As the Srimala Devi Sutra says, there is only one truth that is the ultimate among the four, the truth of extinction.

“The one noble truth, namely, ‘the extinction of suffering,’ is separate from the conditioned. What is ‘separate from the conditioned’ is permanent. What is ‘permanent’ is not false and deceptive in nature. What is ‘not false and deceptive in nature’ is true, permanent, and a refuge. Therefore, the noble truth of the extinction [of suffering] is the supreme truth.” (tr. Diana Y. Paul)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 5th, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Absolute teaching

Content:

Ramon1920 said:

What point were you trying to get across by that quote Astus?

Astus wrote:

That the essential message of the Buddha is not in any specific doctrine but the experience of liberation. One can emphasise the four noble truths (sravaka), dependent origination (pratyekabuddha), six paramitas (bodhisattva), four samadhis (Tiantai), four dharmadhatus (Huayan), wordless transmission (Chan), empowerments (Tantra), or

any other aspect, even without mentioning anything else, as long as it results in liberation, it is the "absolute teaching". This is the meaning of the one vehicle teaching expounded in the Srimala Devi and other similar sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 5th, 2013 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Absolute teaching

Content:

Sönarn said:

My point, precisely, deferes on that. What I highlight in that thread is that 4 NT IS, after elightenment, the direct introduction, ultimate teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni ... then 8 fold path is sravakas and so on as you explain.

Astus wrote:

In general Mahayana texts assign the four noble truths as the primary teaching of sravakas. It means that those with the so called sravaka attitude - because in Mahayana it is simply a wrong approach, not a specific school or teaching - focus only on eliminating suffering, removing themselves from this world, and abiding in nirvana, because they don't understand how both samsara and nirvana are empty, and that is represented by the four noble truths.

The eightfold path is the fourth truth, and the first of the eightfold path is the four noble truths. You can't really take them apart as they mutually include each other.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 5th, 2013 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Absolute teaching

Content:

Sönarn said:

I don't think 4NT can ONLY lead to Arhat Attainment

Astus wrote:

This means that there is only one kind of attainment and distinguishing arhats, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas have no relevance. The prevailing Mahayana interpretation is that the sravaka attainments are only skilful means, temporary, and what everyone eventually reaches is buddhahood. This is the One Vehicle concept. Theravada (and some Yogacara) says that while in terms of liberation arhats and buddhas are equal, there is a qualitative difference in terms of the buddhas ability to restart the wheel of Dharma and other supernatural things.

Not that I'm against this interpretation that there is only one sort of liberation and everything else are just skilful means. But it should be clear that this contravenes all the many schools' statements about their superiority (which I believe is a good thing, sectarianism is quite a bad illness).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2013 at 7:02 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics at a national level

Content:

Astus wrote:

About the need of armies and killing:

The last time Hungary was attacked was in the 16th century by the Ottoman Empire, and (unsurprisingly) most of the country got occupied until the end of the 17th century. Mostly before and after that the army was used to attack other countries. It seems to me that the whole concept of "you need weapons to defend yourself" is wrong and mistaken. Just as on a personal level there are certain individuals who are intent on killing, occasionally there are military leaders who want to conquer the world. But just as the majority of humans don't run around murdering others, countries rarely rise to take over everyone else's lands.

It might be that in the USA it is OK for the police to shoot people, but that is not normal in most European countries. Death sentence in the EU is also abolished.

I believe it is possible to have the law of non-violence and other basic Buddhist values govern a society. That's what the rule of a Cakravartin is about. And while there are wars on Earth even now, billions of people live in peace.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2013 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist ethics at a national level

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nations don't exist outside of the imagination of people. Nations don't make decisions, nations don't do anything, only people do. And people simply means many individual humans. Ethical behaviour is possible only for individuals, because they can make choices and have views. If a person identifies with the concept of a nation it is accepting a community as one's own, and that includes the rules of that community. It is subjecting oneself to an ideology, the ideology of nationhood. This ideology can be used by those who are accepted as leaders within the same framework of community. Whether nations "do" this or that depends on each person's thinking. Since many are happy to relinquish the burden of thinking for himself in matters that don't directly concern him, leaders are invested with making decisions for those. But again, leaders are humans just like everyone else, and they make decisions based on their own thinking.

Buddhism exists also on the ideological level. And just as people can believe in nationhood, they can also do that with Buddhism. Of course, it has to be simple and easy, because unless one has strong interest in something, they don't care to ponder

about abstract doctrines. That killing and stealing is bad is generally self-evident for everyone. The trick is that people can always come up with exceptions, or don't think of something as actually murder or theft. There is also a huge lack of general understanding about how emotions could be correctly managed. And it is this area, handling emotions, where Buddhism can provide useful and practical methods. But first it is important to establish the idea that emotions can actually be managed.

Jumping to unclear concepts of metaphysical entities like nations makes one lose sight of the daily reality. As I said, nations don't actually do anything, therefore they can't have any ethics either. Only living people can act in ethical and unethical ways.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2013 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

The first Bhavanakrama of Kamalasila also uses the Lankavatara quote where the four yogas are mentioned in explaining vipasyana. The Bhavanakrama is also referred to in the 3rd Karmapa's commentary (Mining for Wisdom in Confusion, p264 and related note: 683 on p422).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 7th, 2013 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Practice of the Lotus Sutra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra emphasises a few Mahayana ideas (skilful means, one vehicle, eternal buddha, sudden transformation, bodhisattva compassion) that became important. In East Asia the sutra's position was elevated because of Zhiyi, actual founder of the Tiantai school, who used it as frame for his synthesising ideas. It is because the sutra says very little about actual methods that one can just interpret it in dozens of ways. As for its repeated statement about its own superiority, the same you find in many other Mahayana sutras, and the same goes for the injunction to read, recite, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 7th, 2013 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: Classifying Schools

Content:

Astus wrote:

Would you exclude Vajrayana from Mahayana? Shingon was removed from the Tibetan area years ago because they are two different systems with different history, and it was suggested by some Shingon followers who found the unending comparisons and such with Tibetan Vajrayana tiresome (IIRC). Tibetan and East Asian exist separately because they are distinct historical developments of Mahayana with several significant

differences between the two, while the two groups share a lot within their own area. If anyone wants to discuss this topic about the differences between major Mahayana groups please open a topic for it in the Mahayana forum.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 7th, 2013 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Violence in late period Indian Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

I recall stories of Indian masters where they debated with tirthikas and it got violent.

Alas, I can't find sources now to give names. But it'd show that it's not necessarily connected to Vajrayana.

(not what I wanted, but for instance in Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India (p 30)

Sankaracarya kills himself after losing in debate to Dharmakirti)

From the Mahaparinirvana Sutra (Adamantine Body chapter):

"One who upholds Wonderful Dharma does not receive the five precepts and practise deportment, but protects with the sword, bow, arrow, and halberd those bhiksus who uphold the precepts and who are pure."

"The eternal body of the Tathagata is one carved in stone, as it were." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "O good man! For that reason, bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas should all the more make effort and protect Wonderful Dharma. The reward for protecting Wonderful Dharma is extremely great and innumerable. O good man! Because of this, those upasakas who protect Dharma should take the sword and staff and protect such a bhiksu who guards Dharma. Even though a person upholds the precepts, we cannot call that person one who upholds Mahayana. Even though a person has not received [in formal ceremony] the five precepts, if he protects Wonderful Dharma, such a one can well be called one of Mahayana. A person who upholds the Wonderful Dharma should take the sword and staff and guard bhiksus." Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! If all bhiksus are to be accompanied by such upasakas with the sword and staff, can we say that they are worthy of the name, or are they unworthy of such? Or is this upholding the precepts or not?" The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "Do not say that such persons are those who transgress the precepts. O good man! After I have entered Nirvana, the world will be evil-ridden and the land devastated, each pillaging the other, and the people will be driven by hunger. At such a time, because of hunger, men may make up their minds, abandon home and enter the Sangha. Such persons are bogus priests. Such, on seeing those persons who are strict in their observance of the precepts, right in their deportment, and pure in their deeds, upholding Wonderful Dharma, will drive such away or kill them or cause harm to them." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said again to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! How can all such persons upholding the precepts and guarding Wonderful Dharma get into villages and castle towns and teach?" "O good man! That is why I allow those who uphold the precepts to be accompanied by the white-clad people [lay people, non-monks] with the sword and staff. Although all kings, ministers, rich lay men [grhapati] and upasakas may possess

the sword and staff for protecting Dharma, I call this upholding the precepts. You may possess the sword and staff, "but do not take life". If things are thus, we call this first-hand upholding of the precepts."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 8th, 2013 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Commonalities among all Buddhist traditions

Content:

rachmiel said:

Dependent Origination

Eightfold Path

Five Precepts

Five Skandhas

Four Dharma Seals

Four Noble Truths

Karma

The Three Universal Seals

Three Jewels

Threefold training of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom

Twelve Links of Dependent Origination

Astus wrote:

A few more:

12 ayatanas & 18 dhatus

5/6 realms

37 factors of enlightenment

liberation as arhat, pratyekabuddha, buddha

Basically you can take everything that were taught in the Vinaya and Agama/Nikaya as common teachings. The first strong differences occurred with the various abhidharma works and then other developments like the Bodhisattva/Vaipulya Pitaka, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 8th, 2013 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: People's reaction to presence

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you want to move this discussion into a Buddhist context, I recommend you reconsider your thoughts and views in light of this essential teaching:

<http://www.tsoknyirinpoche.org/2575/web-teaching-i-2/>.

And I advise that because it seems to me that you have found yourself a level of inner peace, perhaps some special experience, and now you strongly identify with that. It can be a good beginning, if you don't stop there.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: pre-Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From a Buddhist perspective, the Buddha only discovered what was known before him by previous buddhas. And, as mentioned, there were pratyekabuddhas when the Dharma was generally extinct.

As for the idea that Buddhism is some sort of offshoot of Hinduism, not at all. For instance, today reincarnation is a core element of Hinduism, however, it was most likely originally spread by Buddhism in India. In the Buddhist canon itself you get a nice description of the local religions, and that consisted mostly of various ascetic orders, among them the Jainas being the most outstanding, the old pantheon of gods that can be connected to the Vedas and generally to Indo-European paganism, and there were the brahmanas doing their rituals. What appears today as Hinduism, that's quite a different story.

You may want to look into some studies in this area, like those of Johannes Bronkhorst:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=4GNG5KuH73QC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=BaX58-E5-3MC>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Mahavairocana empowerment applicability

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm no representative of any school, so I'm just sharing my thoughts on this.

Generally all practices have their own transmission. Even if abhiseka is not involved, such things as breath-meditation are taught differently by various masters and lineages. Learning breath-meditation from a Rinzai Zen teacher is not the same as the Tendai style (although related), not the same as it is taught in Burmese Theravada or the Thai Forest tradition. Knowing one form of breath-meditation doesn't mean you know all of them. Similarly, if you get one form of Vairocana empowerment it doesn't include all the other Vairocana related practices. Shingon and Tibetan Vajrayana are two distinct lineages and naturally they have various differences in their methods, so you can't presume that learning one includes the other.

From a personal point of view, everybody does whatever he likes. If you feel connected to Vairocana and you want to do practices that are found in Shingon nobody will stop you. If you make up your own Vairocana meditation, who can say it's all wrong? What you can't do, however, is to claim authority as if you were a specific Shingon or Sakyapa

or XY school's lineage holder. Of course you can still say you are this or that kind of Shingon/Tantra master/yogi, whatnot, since that doesn't mean any actual lineage. But as long as you don't try to set up your own school and gather followers nobody will care, except if you start posing on the forum as some sort of authority figure (but that is again the position of a master).

So, if you want to follow the traditional, mainstream path, you need the necessary empowerments, teachers, etc. If you are content with your own interpretation, you are free to do as you like (i.e. the Buddhist police won't arrest you and burn you at the stake).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: pre-Buddhism?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Hmmmmmm... Interesting! Funny thing is that currently it is such a central teaching and add the fact that most Westerners know/understand reincarnation from a "Hindu" (atman-centred) perspective, that it seems bizarre that it was a concept that was introduced into "Hinudism".

Astus wrote:

I can't specify a source for this one, whether it is from India or not, but the idea of reincarnation was known to Europeans to some extent before the 19th century rise of Orientalism. In the ancient Greek context it is called <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metempsychosis> and in Judaism it is <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilgul>. It is also known in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeticism#Posthumous_lives.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: The costs of different Buddhist traditions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Traditions don't have costs. Only one's practice has. If one is content with keeping some precepts, that has a low cost in terms of money and time. If you spend some time with formal practices, that has a time cost. If you go to retreats, that costs time and money. If you by books and/or go to teachings, that costs time and money, but if you do that online the costs are lower in money but not in time. If you buy Buddhist paraphernalia that costs money but not much time. And if you become a home leaver that has practically no cost in money but all your time.

It is perfectly possible to do low cost Vajrayana. A single transmission can be enough to give you all that you need for your practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: pre-Buddhism?

Content:

philji said:

There has been some talk here about reincarnation being introduced into Hinduism BT Buddhism. however do not the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita pre date Buddhism? These texts specifically teach the concept of an atman reincarnating. The Buddhist view of course is very different.

Astus wrote:

The Bhagavad Gita's current form was settled around the 4th century CE, although parts of it are assumed to be as old as the 5th c. BCE. The early Upanishads don't describe reincarnation but rather a path of the soul to Brahman through different stages (Sun and Moon).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: pre-Buddhism?

Content:

Anders said:

If nothing else, the Buddhist texts also tell us that there were other views of reincarnation current in the Buddha's day, given the Buddha's commentary on these.

Astus wrote:

Reincarnation is said to be known in the Magadha culture, but that's different from the Brahmanic-Vedic culture. Since it was Buddhism that spread out in India (empire of Ashoka) it served as the medium of the doctrine.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2013 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: Mahavairocana empowerment applicability

Content:

Indrajala said:

Funny one of the prominent Zhenyan teachers in Taiwan, who has revised a lot of material, told me in person he thinks what Koyasan is teaching nowadays isn't real Mijiao/Mikkyo.

I don't know what to make of that, but he has a sizeable following and the practices clearly work for him and his disciples.

However, what I'm asking really is a matter of theory and in my mind a good question given the cultural dynamics at work. Someone might ask why bother, but I like exploring possibilities.

Astus wrote:

In theory people give whatever explanation they like. In practice history decides which theories become generally accepted. "Tradition" only means that something survived for some time, it doesn't give it any authenticity.

Since the rules of Tantra require transmission you need to connect yourself in one way or another to a lineage. It's like Western Zen teachers who are nominally connected to this or that Japanese school but actually their teach is more or less modified. If that Mantra teacher in Taiwan has connection to Shingon but later changed this or that, the link to the original school remains but he ceases to be its representative.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 12th, 2013 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

desertman001 said:

Astus, when I said "at its core" back on page one, I have to say the experience of recognizing Mind as having unconditioned nature is also why I called it a "core". This insight passes but it can take a portion of the self concept with it and leaves with you a permanent(if practice continues) effect. It also allows you recognize true nature just by returning to the moment because "this mind is Buddha". Whether it is halucination or recognizing true nature it is both an experience and a continuing recognition when in the moment. So to your question "How can a sense of unity with every being or the entire world make a difference in our attachment to thoughts and emotions?" I would say if the Kensho rises to a certain level it creates a new view, less bound by self identification and able recognize nature as unconditioned .

Astus wrote:

This idea that there is something at the core is the basic self-view, the belief in substance. As the metaphor of the http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Plantain_tree illustrates, there is no core. The mind itself is made up of various instances of consciousness. What is called insight is the insight into the emptiness of phenomena, i.e. that they are without core, without self, without essence. And this unborn nature (unborn because there is no "thing" to become or cease) is the unconditioned, the fact that everything is conditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2013 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

desertman001,

You talk as if there were something unconditioned outside of the conditioned. If that were the case, as conditioned beings we'd had nothing to do with it at all. Thus such an

unconditioned has no relevance to any of us.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2013 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Whose Buddhism is Truest? The quest for "Original Buddhi

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another thing is that the article over-emphasise the importance of the Gandharan findings. We knew that there were various traditions of transmission. Even a thousand years ago they knew it. What modern scholarship found by comparing the Agamas and Nikayas is that there are lot of things shared in them, proving how connected the different traditions are, and that talking about a group of fundamental teachings ("original Buddhism") is not unfounded. It is also unlikely that those who are lost blind in their chosen traditions' claims of superiority will care about what scholars not within their tradition say.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2013 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

How to account for sayings such as the Nibbana Sutta?

I have always thought it was the insight into this 'unborn' which constitutes kensho. That is why I understand the symbol for prajñāpāramitā to be the letter 'a-'. which signifies un-, and in 'unborn, unfabricated'.

Astus wrote:

That Nibbana Sutta has been misused by atman believers so often. While in fact all it says is that by the elimination of desire suffering does not arise any more. And that's an unconditioned "state" as there is no cause of pain any more. But not actually a state that is achieved or developed or discovered, otherwise it would be conditioned.

As I said before, it's not possible to find an unconditioned state, because finding it makes it conditioned. What is always instructed in Zen is to let go of conceptual and emotional attachments, to see that they are empty of substance and exist dependently. There is nothing else to be found beyond that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2013 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Scriptural Reference For This?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Using that simile of the tip of the fingernail occurs in various suttas, like these titled

Nakhasikha Sutta (The Tip of the Fingernail): SN 13.1; SN 20.2; SN 22.97. But most of the similes are found in SN 56 (Sacca-samyutta): 51 and from 60 to 131. However, none of them is about enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

Your position reads like the Sautrântika view, i.e., nirvana/asamskita is abhava (absence of klesas, etc.) being essentially nothing in and for itself which, I hasten to point out, Buddhaghosa attacked like a junkyard dog unchained, arguing that for an arahant it would amount to mere extinction which is a no-no. It appears that Stephen Batchelor has taken the Sautrântika position with regard to nirvana/asamskita. I find it interesting.

Astus wrote:

What relevance is there of two Hinayana systems - those that believe nirvana to have svabhava - and the ideas of a materialist? Look at Nagarjuna's Middle Treatise, and what it says in chapter 25 on nirvana is what I mean too.

"The phenomenal universe and Nirvana, activity and motionless placidity - all are of the one 'substance'. So also are the worlds and with the state that transcends worlds. Yes, the beings passing through the six stages of existence, those who have undergone the four kinds of birth, all the vast world-systems with their mountains and river, the Bodhi-Nature and illusion - all of them are thus. By saying that they are all of one substance, we mean that their names and forms, their existence and nonexistence, are void. The great world-systems, uncountable as Ganga's sands, are in truth comprised in the one boundless void. Then where can there be Buddhas who deliver or sentient beings to be delivered? When the true nature of all things that 'exist' is an identical Thusness, how can such distinctions have any reality?"
(The Zen Teaching of Huang-Po, p. 109)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

desertman001 said:

Astus, the quotes provided by jeepers make it obvious that some type of mind exists after the conditioned, without claiming an atman exist, since no separate existence is implied. I get the logic you imply but that logic cannot escape the conditioned. If the unconditioned state is unaware how could it be any different from sleep. If that state has no awareness why are we even talking about it as relief from stress?

Astus wrote:

This radical separation of conditioned and unconditioned is what I'm calling false and not established. Appearances are already empty as they are, they don't need to be emptied nor one needs to switch to an empty state.

Awareness cannot be cut off from what it is aware of. An independent mind cannot exist because it would have no connection to anything and it couldn't know of anything. It doesn't mean that everybody is unconscious. Quite the opposite. Consciousness exists together with all forms of phenomena, it is present in every experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Scriptural Reference For This?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is also a logical problem with that hypothetical quote. And that is it would only serve as a deterrent for those who want enlightenment, it would be demotivating. In later Mahayana teachings there are talks about the Dharma ending age where enlightenment is near impossible, however, there is always a special teaching that one should use instead of the others and that guarantees success.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

The reason it is put in such oblique terms is so as not to create a verbal representation of it, which becomes an idol. That is Buddhism's distinct difference from 'the atman believers' and many other religious types.

Astus wrote:

You mean, in your interpretation the only difference between Buddhism and atmavada teachings is that Buddhism fails to speak plainly and straightforwardly about it? The idea sounds to me similar to those who claim that Buddhism says nothing about God but one can just believe in whatever supreme deity one likes to; while actually there are numerous teachings refuting the possibility of such a being.

As for the atman vs anatman issue,

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=10864> is now available again for reading.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

Buddhism rejects 'speculative metaphysics', but the teaching is nevertheless metaphysical.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by metaphysics here?

jeeprs said:

As this state cannot be understood by the worldly mind, it can only be described in negative terms, but it is not mere absence, mere cessation.

Astus wrote:

So, either one has a non-worldly mind or one doesn't say anything meaningful. Do you see how that undermines what you or anyone says?

jeeprs said:

I will quote the passage from Suzuki again:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is the negation of substance and affirmation of dependent origination. Suzuki's quote sounds like he interprets emptiness as a universal substance, and that is contrary to the very meaning of emptiness.

jeeprs said:

However 'higher states' or 'higher truths' are imperceptible to the verbal/symbolic mind. Hence the emphasis in Buddhism on dhyana which is, among other things, the suspension of discursive thinking.

Astus wrote:

From the second dhyana on there is no discursive thinking, however, rarely any Mahayana school or teacher emphasises deep absorptions. Also, while calming meditation does not require conceptual thinking, insight practice does. That is, you cannot reach liberation without actually understanding how the mind works. And that understanding is not some mystical revelation or state, it is looking at things and seeing them for what they are. If one just suspends discursive thinking the result is a blank vegetative stare and a dumb mind. This is what Dahui criticised as "silent illumination", and this is how Chan is misinterpreted in Tibet as Hashan's heresy. This negation of discursive thinking is mistaking emptiness for nothingness.

jeeprs said:

But this negation ought not to be interpreted as referring to mere nothingness, non-being, simple absence, or cessation, in itself. It simply acts as the 'gateless gate' to the higher realm (which is actually 'this realm' seen without the habitual conditions and verbal associations through which we habitually see it).

Astus wrote:

It is not nothingness but in order to see clearly one has to nevertheless remove thinking.

If you are saying that one should not be attached to concepts and ideas, I agree. If you mean that one should stop thinking completely, the above applies.

jeeprs said:

And it is not a part of that web, because it can never be 'brought down' to the level of symbolic mind and representational consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Words are just words. An apple is not identical to a noun. Is that mystical?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

It is true that his interpretation is opposed to yours, but I think his is correct, which is why I quoted it. Suzuki would never propose a 'universal substance', the fact that you read his quotation like that indicates an interpretive problem in my opinion.

Astus wrote:

It is opposed to what I say if it claims a universal substance ("it is what makes these things possible; it is zero full of infinite possibilities, it is a void of inexhaustible contents"). But if he means what Nagarjuna says I can only agree: "Those for whom emptiness is possible, for them everything is possible. Those for whom emptiness is not possible, for them everything is not possible." (MMK 24.14)

jeeprs said:

What I mean is that 'the chain of dependent origination' cannot be described in scientific or even objective terms. It is a metaphysical concept.

Astus wrote:

You can't describe the joy of dancing in objective or scientific terms but it doesn't make it metaphysical in its philosophical sense. Dependent origination can be called "Buddhist metaphysics" if you want, as the ontological basis of the universe as causal processes. But unlike philosophy, the teachings are not meant to find the true reality of the world but to bring about liberation, and therefore every teachings is provisional (unlike in metaphysics).

jeeprs said:

the nearest to the Buddhist term for 'mind' would undoubtedly be the nous of neo-Platonism

Astus wrote:

Mind in Buddhism is understood only as a stream, as momentary successions of mental phenomena. It is dependently originated. It is not a background, basis or container of mental events, but the mental events themselves. So it doesn't seem to fit

the idea of nous.

jeeprs said:

Certainly Zen criticizes metaphysics, but only insofar as it has become a verbal representation of non-conceptual realities, or a dogma (dṛṣṭi).

Astus wrote:

There are views (dṛṣṭi) and there is correct view (samyagdṛṣṭi).

Q: What is the right view?

A: To perceive without perceiving any object whatsoever is the right view.

Q: What does "to perceive without perceiving any object whatsoever" mean?

A: Perceiving all sorts of things without grasping -- that is, not being clouded by the arising of any thought of love or hate, etc. -- is perceiving without any objects. If one can see without seeing any object whatsoever, that is using the Buddha-Eye, which is like no other eye. On the other hand, if one sees all sorts of things that cause thoughts of love and hate, etc., to arise, that is known as "perceiving objects" with ordinary eyes, and sentient beings have no other kind of eyes. This is true, likewise, with all of the other sense organs.

(Ta-Chu Hui-Hai: Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment)

It is not that one does not recognise and know what one perceives, but one is not moved by them, there is no attachment or aversion.

jeeprs said:

Othewise why put yourself through the arduous hardships of learning Zen?

Astus wrote:

Disillusionment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism beyond the nation state

Content:

Astus wrote:

I prefer the linguistic-cultural differentiation. That often connects with national ideas but not necessarily. By the way, as I know there is a complete Mongolian canon, while there are no full Korean/Japanese/Vietnamese translations.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2013 at 11:54 PM

Title: Owner/Host/Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Heze Shenhui was the first to emphasise "awareness/knowing" in Chan and connected it with the practice of no-thought. This was later followed by practically every later Chan teacher but mostly by Guifeng Zongmi, Yongming Yanshou and Pojo Jinul. This teaching on awareness is easily misconstrued as an atman similar to Sankhya and other essentialist views. What shows that awareness is not an ultimate soul is the practice (see: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=11398>) where it is not that one finds something eternal but does not abide in anything. Thus it is in harmony with the fundamental teachings of the Buddha on emptiness. Zen is a very practical path, therefore when one wants to compare it to non-Buddhist philosophies it is understandable that those ignorant of the doctrinal teachings confuse it with wrong views.

"The term "Owner" is used here to mean the non-birth-and-death essence within this body composed of the five aggregates. This essence will fully manifest itself when one's feelings, conceptions, mental formations, and consciousness calm down. It is never apart with these aggregates, but when they are operating, we rarely realize this essence. The Owner is the tranquil, aware essence that has never been agitated, changed, or eradicated. To experience it, try this contemplation: When meditating or sitting alone at a quiet place, note how your feelings, conceptions, mental formations, and consciousness calm down, yet your eyes, your ears, etc., are full of awareness. Then, ask yourself, "Who is it that is seeing, hearing, etc.? Is it the permanent, tranquil, aware nature inside?" Therefore, the theory of "the Owner" mentioned here does not contradict the Buddha's teaching about no self. When we have real experiences, we know it. It is useless to hang on to or argue over theories."
(Thich Thanh Tu: Keys to Buddhism, p 57-58)

"Foreign dust illustrates false thinking, and voidness illustrates self-nature, that is the permanent host who does not follow the guest in the latter's coming and going. This serves to illustrate the eternal (unmoving) self-nature which does not follow false thinking in its sudden rise and fall. Therefore, it is said: 'if one is unmindful of all things, one will meet with no inconvenience when surrounded by all things.' By dust which moves of itself and does not inconvenience voidness which is clearly still, one means that false thinking rises and falls by itself and does not hinder the self-nature which is immutable in its Bhutatathata (suchness, thatness) condition. This is the meaning of the saying: 'If the mind does not arise, all things are blameless.'

...

If there is singleness of thought abiding in that 'which is not born and does not die', without pursuing sound and form, this is 'going against the stream'; this is called 'looking into the hua t'ou' or 'turning inwards the hearing to hear the self-nature'."
(Hsu Yun: http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html)

"The bodhi mind is replete within us. If we look for it elsewhere, we will not find it. Just as a Chan patriarch said, "To move the mind is to err, to raise a thought is to stray." As soon as we look for it we lose it; it is like looking for an ox while riding an ox; we are already sitting on its back, but we do not know it. It is also like looking for a shadow at midday. At this moment, when you are listening to this teaching, the mind that does not raise a single thought is the profound and clear bodhi mind. A mind with no-thought is the mind

of total clarity, knowing, and awareness, without a single bit of delusion, drowsiness, or scattered thoughts. When we realize this mind that is unborn and undying, we attain enlightenment."

(Wei Chueh:

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=219&Itemid=59)

"Since all dharmas are like dreams or phantoms, deluded thoughts are originally calm and the sense-spheres are originally void. At the point where all dharmas are void, the numinous awareness is not obscured. That is to say, this mind of void and calm, numinous awareness is your original face. It is also the dharma-seal transmitted without a break by all the Buddhas of the three time periods, the successive generations of patriarchs, and the wise advisors of this world. If you awaken to this mind, then this is truly what is called not following the rungs of a ladder: you climb straight to the stage of Buddhahood, and each step transcends the triple world."

(Pojo Jinul: <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=105&t=12572> in "Collected Works of Chinul", p 145)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

A good analogy might be made of the difference between a pot of clay and clay itself or of a gold lion and gold.

Astus wrote:

And for that a good explanation is

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Sevenfold_reasoning_of_the_chariot. Or, to make it more complicated, there is Fazang's

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Miscellaneous/Treatise_on_Golden_Lion.html. Candrakirti shows how no essence can be established anywhere, Fazang shows how emptiness and phenomena are inseparable and interpenetrated.

Koji said:

Reading your comments you seem to be championing samsara/conditionality and maculate minds over nirvana/unconditionality and immaculate minds.

Astus wrote:

As above, not established and interpenetrated. The dichotomy of samsara and nirvana is only a skilful means, but there is no nirvana outside of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Treetop said:

What about a "universal non-substance"? We all share a Buddha nature, is that universal?

Astus wrote:

Universal non-substance is emptiness, no-self, i.e. nothing has a substance. Buddha-nature has many interpretations, it generally refers to the capability to attain buddhahood and not some hidden soul.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

My analogy fits perfectly insofar as Fa-tsang drew a distinction between the gold/noumenon and the lion shape/phenomenon. He described the noumenon as the substance or essence which is by nature clear and pure and all perfect, not to mention luminous. This substance he explains is Dharmata, the nature underlying all things.

As for your last remark "there is no nirvana outside of samsara," nirvana cannot exist in samsara because its own nature is unconditioned. Escape from all conditioned states is only possible because we have as our own nature that which is the antithesis of conditionality, namely, the unconditioned element (cp. Itivuttaka-atthakathâ II.2.6).

Astus wrote:

First let's look at what Fazang calls the five doctrines. This strong distinction you mention between gold and form is OK for the first stage of Sravakayana. But already at the second of basic Mahayana dependent origination is identified as emptiness, thus they are not two. In the final Round Doctrine of the One Vehicle there is the interpenetration of phenomena with phenomena (the fourth dharmadhatu) where "whatever arises is absolutely true" and "myriad manifestations, despite their variety, interpenetrate without confusion or disarray".

Right before the list of the five doctrines Fazang simply states: "There is nothing apart from the gold." And before that: "Emptiness does not have any mark of its own; it is through forms that [Emptiness] is revealed". That is, whatever is seen is gold, just as it is. He explains it in detail in the ten mysteries, where "the gold and the lion are simultaneously established", "the gold and the lion both establish and include each other in harmony", "The one is the other. The principal and the companion interchange their radiance." and "the gold and the lion may be manifest or hidden, one or many, but they are both devoid of a Self-being [Svabhāva]".

In practical terms Fazang teaches: "when we look at the lion, we see at once that all conditioned things, without going through the process of disintegration, are from the beginning in a state of quiescent non-existence." The appearances are not destroyed, no

external peaceful state gained, simply the actual nature of appearances are seen. So he says: "To comprehend the fact that from the very no-beginning all illusions are in reality non-existent is called Enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Buddhas, omnipotence and mantras

Content:

Astus wrote:

So called "other power" works in Buddhism based on one's association with it. You do the mantras, you have faith in it, so you actually do the practice. Without practice there is no effect.

Honen's poem expresses this well:

Amida's Light

The Sutra says: "Amida's light illumines all sentient beings throughout the ten worlds, who call upon the sacred name, protects and never forsakes them."

There is no place where the moonlight
Casts not its cheering ray;
With him who has the seeing eye
Alone that light will stay.

(Joseph A. Fitzgerald: Honen the Buddhist Saint, p 79)

See also this Dharma talk on the poem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIG9YLW4AV4>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

Where is the joy in all this? Where is the energy that fuels the bodhicitta that feels compassion for all beings? If Zen enlightenment is simply 'disillusionment', then why strive for anything? If it is such an ordinary matter, if there really is 'no gold', then what is the point?

Astus wrote:

Kensho, seeing nature, is disillusionment with one's objects of attachment. Because one sees the actual nature of mind as ungraspable, unattainable, unborn, that is, dependently appearing like dreams and magic tricks. As Zhiyan explains the metaphor of Indra's net (Entry into the Inconceivable, p 136), there is no special power involved when the teachings talk about things like "infinite buddha-lands in a single atom" etc. In Zen this is called the functioning of the mind. Case 4 of the Book of Equanimity is an

example:

"When the World-Honored One was walking with his assembly, he pointed to the ground with his hand and said, "This place is good for building a temple." Indra took a stalk of grass and stuck it in the ground and said, "The temple has been built." The World-Honored One smiled."

Or as Yuanwu said in the intro to case 8 of the Blue Cliff Record: "Sometimes we take a blade of grass and use it as a sixteen foot golden body [of the buddha]; sometimes we take a sixteen foot golden body and use it as a blade of grass."

If this is viewed as mystical and magical one automatically distances oneself from the immediate reality. That is, thoughts come and go, change and move around, but they are no problem as long as one does not take them to be anything substantial.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

how does this give rise to compassion? What is the link? In my experience it is not a matter of 'incorporating Bodhicitta' because it is something beyond your will. It has to happen to you. It is not something you do, but something you yield to, or so it seems to me.

Astus wrote:

Great compassion comes from opening up for all appearances, from not hanging on a supposedly unconditioned state (the usual theme of sravakas stuck in nirvana), but through seeing our human-sentient nature we understand the struggle of all beings and can only wish for their well being and liberation. That's how emptiness and compassion are inseparable.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2013 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: I just want to hear your opinion. No offenses please,

Content:

Astus wrote:

Vaisnavas believe that Buddha was an incarnation of Visnu. Indian religions are often distinguished by Hindus whether they follow the Vedas or not (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80stika_and_n%C4%81stika). So the above commentary criticises the Jainas because they are neither orthodox Hindu nor Buddhists,

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 2:25 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land Resources

Content:

Mr. G said:

I recommend this: <http://www.ymba.org/BWF/bwf0.htm>

Luke said:

Unfortunately, that website doesn't exist anymore. But here is the web archive for it:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20081205151947/http://www.ymba.org/BWF/bwf0.htm>

Astus wrote:

The website is up and running, they just reorganised things:

<http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 2:25 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land Resources

Content:

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Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

As I read Astus he is saying that the conditioned cannot be transcended (nirvana-ed) because there is nothing beyond conditionality (nirvana is thus not real). In this respect, the unconditioned (nirvana) has no relevance for us. This is hardly a recipe for mystical unity and especially kensho which in every way implies transcendence of conditionality.

Astus wrote:

What I'm saying is that there is no unconditioned outside of the conditioned. Conditioned is essentially unconditioned. That is, appearances are originally empty. There is no emptiness outside of appearances. And looking for an unconditioned somewhere else is following mistaken ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

But in practice such an idea can be misleading.

Astus wrote:

Only if one believes that there is nothing to change about identifying with phenomena. Otherwise it is actually pointing to the practice to be done, because one has to see the emptiness of one's own everyday experience and not look for some supernatural realm outside of that. Also, obtaining the "ordinary mind" is right here and not some other place.

jeeprs said:

Again these passages stress the profound difference between the Buddha and the 'ignorant worldling'.

Astus wrote:

The difficulty is not in the teaching but the abilities of the practitioner. Thick and dull people should busy themselves with repentance, purification practices and merit accumulation, not high level wisdom teachings that only confuses them.

jeeprs said:

I think Astus is reading this in a somewhat 'deflationary' way, to dismiss or discount the essentially 'world-transcending' attributes and characteristics of 'the Tathagatha'. It is possible to interpret many Zen passages in support of that view, but I don't read those passages the same way.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, Zen is the path of sudden enlightenment for those with the proper abilities. Otherwise one should look at the general Mahayana teachings and follow the gradual training. It is useless to follow a method meant for high level practitioners when one has lesser abilities.

"Those of dull faculties who cannot bring this into effect
Must continuously strive at repentance
Of their beginningless crimes.
When all hindrances are extinguished
The Buddha-state appears before your eyes."
(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 11)

"Therefore, being with no place to dwell is the way of all Buddha activity. The Mind that does not abide anywhere is the Perfect Awakening, Without understanding the Unconditioned Truth, even with much learning and diligent practice, one still does not recognize one's own Mind. ... Because one lacks the capacity for sudden Awakening, one must study the Tao of Dhyana for 3, 5, or 10 years. There is no special arrangement or negotiation for achieving Buddhadharma. However, this Teaching of the Tathagata exists as an expedient for the purpose of transforming all beings. For example, one shows a yellow leaf to a crying baby and pretends that it is gold. This is not really true, but it stops the crying of the baby. If a teaching says that there is truly something to obtain, then it is not the Teaching of my sect, nor would I be a member of such an heretical sect."

(Huang-po: Chung-Ling Record)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Buddhas, omnipotence and mantras

Content:

Astus wrote:

brendan,

Purification happens because you practice. There is nothing magical here. Instead of thinking about one's desires and aversions, one focuses on the object of meditation, thus overwriting to some extent one's habits. This is purification.

Supernatural powers like having many bodies and reading minds are not exclusive for bodhisattvas and buddhas but practically any being (including the lower realms) with a not too dull mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: zixing or self-nature

Content:

some1 said:

the Sixth Patriarch HuiNeng was not a well educated person and he should be unaware of the Sanskrit terms

Astus wrote:

Except that the writer(s) of the Platform Sutra were well educated, but it still doesn't have to do anything with Sanskrit.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2013 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sure it does. Japanese take the bodhisattva precepts, in other countries they take all the usual Buddhist precepts. Dogen wrote extensively on regulations, in modern Rinzai meditation on the bodhisattva precepts is the final and highest stage of koan practice. Also, Chan traditionally has an extra set of precepts for monastics called the Pure Regulations that is attributed to Baizhang.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 12:54 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

This means also that emptiness cannot be established apart from the phenomenal world. But we can't stop here if we do this blossoms into nihilism.

Astus wrote:

In your interpretation how could the affirmation of the phenomenal world mean nihilism?

Koji said:

I forgot to mention it, but we can say that emptiness is the negation of false views. Naturally, too, there is no Buddha-nature to be found in emptiness since BN transcends causation (i.e. dependent origination). Hence, there is neither mystical unity nor kensho. As far as it goes we are still stuck in samsara. This is why we have to get beyond emptiness. It is inadequate. Emptiness is only descriptive, not essence. We have to be on guard not to reify emptiness making it, for example, into universal nothingness (sarva-abhavat). The true middle path leads to Buddha-nature or the same Mind-only. Here is where mystical unity or kensho kicks in.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not holding on to any view:

"If even my correct teachings are to be abandoned, how much more incorrect teachings?"

(Diamond Sutra, ch 6)

"The victorious ones have said

That emptiness is the elimination of all views.

Anyone for whom emptiness is a view

Is incorrigible."

(MMK 13.8)

If you say there is a view beyond no view, that is another view and it is attachment.

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.'

Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma. ... Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do."

(Record of Linji, p 17; tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shel,

The question is whether Zen has ethics, not whether you can give a list of incidents where people behaved unethically. However, if you can logically show that Zen necessarily leads to bad morals it is a different matter, and there is already a topic like that: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=9305>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

shel said:

Not just any people who have behaved unethically. The people mentioned are transmitted and realized Zen masters and teachers of Zen. Are there any more relevant exemplars of Zen ethics? It goes to the very heart of what transmission and realization mean in Zen.

Astus wrote:

Zen is approximately 1500 years old. I don't see people bringing up the story of Nanquan's cat or Juzhi's finger to point out how bad Zen teachers are. And again, the cases like that of Shimano was already addressed in that other thread that is about the lack of morals in Zen. So, I think that if you want to run a debate about the ethicalness of Zen here - and I consider that a fine idea - instead of citing those few well known incidents, bring in some reasoning and such to support the argument that Zen has an ethical fault.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 3:20 AM

Title: Re: Buddha-lands and Pure-Lands

Content:

zamotcr said:

1. Saha world is just a world system (like a galaxy) or Saha applies to our complete universe?

2. What is the difference between a Buddhaksetra and a Pure Land?

3. Are Pure Lands always a reward land, a Sambhogakaya land?
4. If Saha World is just a world system, there can be other world systems like our saha world, impure?
5. All impure Buddha Lands are physical, I mean, material worlds, like the same physical plane or dimension as us?

Astus wrote:

1. Sahaloka (World of Endurance) signifies our universe (trichiliocosm) from hells to heavens.
2. The term "pure land" occurred first in Chinese language as an equivalent of "buddha land" and they are synonyms.
3. No, they can be both nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya.
4. There are many worlds, many universes.
5. Something physical is not automatically impure. Only the mind can be impure. And yes, from the very word "land" comes that buddha lands have an appearance perceptible by the five physical senses. In Buddhism only the highest heavens of the formless realm are without physical qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Mystical Unity and Kensho

Content:

Koji said:

Rather how is the phenomenal world not nihilistic insofar as the term nihilism means the world has no real existence?

Astus wrote:

Real and exist - that are negated - mean ultimately real and existent. Ultimately means substantially, independently. No Buddhist says that a 'table' doesn't exist at all, what emptiness and dependent origination means is that a 'table' does not exist in and of itself independently of everything else. There is no 'substance' in a table. A table is necessarily made of several parts and it has a limited existence as that. It naturally disintegrates eventually. But a table exists as something one can see, touch, smell and think of.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

shel said:

I've done better than merely argue the case, I've shown evidence.

But okay, I reason that because an apparent sociopath (someone without a conscience or sense of responsibility for other beings) can be a transmitted and realized master of Zen, that therefor conscience and a sense of social responsibility is superfluous in Zen.

A Zen master can do pretty much whatever they like and still be considered a realized Zen master. Shimano, for example, is still considered a realized master of Zen.

Astus wrote:

Evidence would be if you could show in the canonised scriptures of Zen that it denies ethical behaviour. What you gave evidence to is that there can be individuals who act unethically, however, that does not discredit the entire tradition. Devadatta was a fully ordained monk, nevertheless, he did bad things.

You are giving lot of credit to the status of Japanese Zen priest. Such words as "transmitted" and "realised" have meaning only in a modern Western Zen context. It is quite unimaginable if a Chinese abbot behaved unseemly who wouldn't be shortly removed from his position and banished from the monastery.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-lands and Pure-Lands

Content:

zamotcr said:

1. Each of this universes or trichiliocosm are limited in space right? It's like a big galaxy are they?

3. Thanks to previous discussions with you, I learned that Amitabha's PL is a Sambhogakaya realm, so other buddha-lands. Could you provide an example of a nirmanakaya pure land?

5. But isn't it true that for instance Amitabha's Pure Land is above highest heavens, outside samsara and triple realm? In which sense can the physical senses apply to Amitabha's Pure Land? Are beings there of physical matter, like us?

Astus wrote:

1. Yes, objects exist in space. Only mental phenomena are without form.

3. The present buddha Shakyamuni is the example of nirmanakaya, so all the previous buddhas are also nirmanakaya, and where we live is their land. I don't know if there is a clear definition somewhere of what counts as nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya realm. In East Asia it was through the development of Pure Land teachings that Amitabha is now considered a sambhogakaya land, but in Tibetan Buddhism they differentiate between Amitabha as nirmanakaya and Amitayus as sambhogakaya. I'd say - and this is just speculation - that where all the six realms exist count as nirmanakaya and where only select people - noble ones - are present are sambhogakaya. Or another interpretation is possible, the appearance of nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya depends simply on the perceiver's level of enlightenment, since sambhogakaya is visible only to noble bodhisattvas.

5. Yes, in the East Asian system of 10 realms worlds of buddhas are separate from the

six samsaric realms. However, in Buddhism "physical" (rupa) means simply the four elements that actually correspond to fundamental sense-perceptions of heat, solidity, movement and cohesion. When there is a visible object, it is rupa. When there is an auditory object, it is rupa, etc. It's not like assuming some essentially physical behind perception.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

shel said:

According to Bodhidharma (first Chinese patriarch) Zen follows a "special transmission outside scriptures" which "did not stand upon words". Does not stand upon words, Astus. But perhaps you know better than Bodhidharma.

Incidentally, Bodhidharma is credited with the physical training of the Shaolin monks

Astus wrote:

Both are later additions to the legend of Bodhidharma (attribution of the four-line slogan to Bodhidharma: 11th century (The Koan: Texts and Contexts, p 79); kungfu and Shaolin temple: 13th century; martial art book by Bodhidharma: 1642 (Seeing through Zen, p 26)). However, Zen existed within a strictly monastic environment from the very beginning, and they emphasised the upholding of precepts early on (Mario Poceski: Guishan jingce (Guishan's Admonitions) and the Ethical Foundations of Chan Practice in "Zen Classics", p 15f).

shel said:

In fact they ARE the tradition. They are the "special transmission outside the scriptures."

Astus wrote:

No. First of all, Buddhism is not a single centralised institution, nor is Zen. One person is not a representative of everyone else, and certainly not the entire tradition. Possessing a certificate of transmission only means that the one person who gave that believes that man worthy of it. But it is not a validation of a central examination. You are using the concept of collective responsibility, however, such a thing does not exist in Buddhism.

shel said:

I've shown that in effect the "special transmission outside the scriptures" doesn't need to have a conscience. Indeed, some in Zen go so far as to suggest that overriding conscience is necessary, or even indispensable.

Astus wrote:

You have shown that there are a few people how intentionally distort specific teachings to back up their immoral actions. This is nothing new, as some have misinterpreted the teachings like no-self and emptiness in the same way, but at the same time such perversities were regularly refuted by outstanding masters, starting with the Buddha

himself. Per definition a bodhisattva must have great compassion. Without compassion there are no bodhisattvas, therefore no Zen practitioners.

Three books on Zen and ethics by current Zen teachers:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Jy0ArFx-YEgC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=koijpgpwiHgC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=EeXSq0GSwekC>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

Luke said:

Right, but how much importance do they place on them?

Astus wrote:

One should not forget that there is a big difference between modern Western Zen and Zen in East Asian countries, especially before the 20th century. Zen was the philosophy of elite monastics and higher class laity. For older monastics you don't need to preach about the precepts, and enthusiastic aristocrats were also familiar with them. Also, there's a strong connection between the transmission of precepts and the transmission of Zen, as summed up here: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=104&t=13679>. For instance, Heze Shenhui - the first propagator of radical sudden enlightenment and the so called southern school - made a career of giving bodhisattva and monastic precepts. The famous Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch bears in its title that it is taught from the "ordination platform", and its central chapter is about precepts and repentance practice.

Luke said:

I guess there is also the question of how much Zen books reflect actual Zen practice, as opposed to just what sells.

Astus wrote:

Exactly.

Luke said:

But weren't most of his regulations morally neutral stuff like how to prepare soup with perfect concentration without wasting any ingredients?

Astus wrote:

The Eihei Shingi of Dogen contains various regulations. They are about monastic organisation. It also has rules against for instance bringing weapons, meat, secular books, musical instruments, etc. into the study hall. It regulates how unruly monks should be handled, managing financial matters, etc. The Shobogenzo contains writings on the 16 precepts and other ethical issues. Since becoming a monk includes taking the

precepts, and Zen practice contains the bodhisattva vows, the essential ethical teachings are unavoidable and they are the backbone of the entire training.

Luke said:

Can you provide a link about this, please?

Astus wrote:

There are books discussing it briefly, like "The Zen Koan" of Miura & Sasaki that describe Rinzai training. As for Baizhang's rules, you can download it from the BDK site:

http://www.bdkamerica.org/digital/dBET_T2025_Baizhang_2006.pdf, and there's also Ven. Yifa's book "The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 9:20 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

Luke said:

This question of mine still hasn't really been addressed. How do these "mushin" ("no-mind") types of concepts imply any morality?

Astus wrote:

The Diamond Sutra explains it very well, how a bodhisattva should practice charity and save all beings without forming the concept of self, person, life-span or sentient being. That is no-mind practice.

Dogen starts the Jukai chapter in Shobogenzo (tr. Nearman) this way:

"All Buddhas in the three temporal worlds—past, present, and future—affirm that to leave home life behind is to realize the Truth. The twenty-eight Indian Ancestors and the six Chinese Ancestors, all of whom Transmitted the Buddha's Mind seal,* were, each and every one of them, monastics. Most likely, it was because they strictly observed the monastic regulations that they were able to become outstanding models for those in the three worlds of desire, form, and beyond form. Thus, in practicing meditation and inquiring of the Way with their Master, they made the Precepts and the monastic regulations foremost. Had they not distanced themselves from their faults and guarded against misdeeds, how could they have realized Buddhahood and become Ancestors?"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2013 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: 'Mind' in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for the early scriptures,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html> states it clearly that only uninstructed people believe that there is something lasting in mind. As for

nibbana not being mind: <http://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/vinna%E1%B9%87a-is-not-nibbana-really-it-just-isn%E2%80%99t/> Also check out Maha Boowa's teaching: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/boowa/straight.html#radiant>.

For Mahayana, the best source on what mind is is Yogacara, as they produced a substantial amount of generally recognised treatises on the subject. Within the eight consciousnesses there is nothing lasting, even the karmic seeds have only a momentary existence.

In chapter 14 of Xuanzang's Cheng Weishi Lun (tr. Cook), it explains eternity regarding the dharmakaya:

"This [result] is also ETERNAL, because it is endless. The pure realm of the Dharma is said to be ETERNAL, because it is devoid of origination, devoid of cessation, and by nature unchanging. Because the support of classes of mind of the four knowledges is eternal, they are endless and therefore said to be eternal, but not that they are eternal by nature, because they originate from causes, because of the categorical declaration that that which is born ends with cessation, and because we do not see form or mind that is not impermanent. However, as a result of the power of original vows and the inexhaustible number of sentient beings to be converted, the four classes of knowledge last forever, uninterrupted and endless."

In the same chapter:

"It is also said that the Dharma body is devoid of generation and cessation, only acquired through causes for its realization, neither form nor mind, etc."

Candrakirti in the Madhyamakavatara (11:17; tr. Leschly) says practically the same:

"When the dry firewood of everything knowable,
Is [consumed by the fire of wisdom], the peace of the victorious one's dharmakaya [is all there remains]
At that moment, there is no creation and no cessation;
When mind ceases, its [enjoyment]-body manifests in actuality."

However, the above only applies to a buddha's dharmakaya and not to the usual 6/8 consciousnesses. This is what later schools like Zen and Vajrayana call the (true) nature of the mind. The quoted "luminous mind" section doesn't fit the description of the dharmakaya as it cannot be defiled.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 19th, 2013 at 1:26 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

Luke said:

Okay, but it still doesn't directly say that practicing evil actions without forming the

concept of self, person, life-span or sentient being is the wrong way to go or is not Zen. I'm looking for a quote that clearly rejects this mistaken idea.

Or getting historical, were there any Zen masters in medieval Japan who were harsh critics of the samurai instead of being samurai apologists?

Astus wrote:

The Diamond Sutra speaks about what is to be practised by a bodhisattva. It doesn't go into avoiding evil actions but only talks about good actions. Texts that talk about avoiding evil are first of all found in the Vinaya collection, and that is part of every Buddhist canon. The Zen tradition kept the Vinaya, therefore it is part of it. Only the Japanese tradition dumped the complete Vinaya but it kept the Brahma Net Sutra that teaches the bodhisattva precepts.

Master Xuyun in explaining the prerequisites of http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html gives first the firm belief in karma and the observance of discipline:

"Whoever One may be, especially if striving to perform one's religious duty, one should believe firmly in the law of causality. If one lacks this belief and does whatever one likes, not only will one fail in the performance of religious duty, but also there will be no escape from this law (of causality) even in the three unhappy ways."

"In striving to perform one's religious duty, the first thing is to observe the rules of discipline. For discipline is the fundamental of the Supreme Bodhi; discipline begets immutability and immutability begets wisdom. There is no such thing as self-cultivation without observance of the rules of discipline."

Or if we want to go back in time, a 1000 years earlier Baizhang Huihai says at the beginning of his recorded sayings that for the uninstructed beginners one has to first teach about precepts and renunciation, but for those who have renounced the world should teach about the mind.

The very first mistake some people make is to think that Zen is somewhat outside of Buddhism. Zen is a Mahayana tradition that doesn't teach anything different from what the Buddha said. Zen doesn't have any separate ethics from what is already in the canonical texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 19th, 2013 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-lands and Pure-Lands

Content:

Astus wrote:

The teaching of mind-only Pure Land supports the general Pure Land teachings. That is, people perceive based on their karma. Even if it is a buddha standing before one, only with the right karma - right mental seeds - can one realise it is a buddha. Although

Shakyamuni lived in India, it didn't make the world pure and peaceful for everyone. Also, this world is generated by the karma of the beings living here, while the buddha-land of Amitabha is created by his vows.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 20th, 2013 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

shel said:

...strayed from the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha...

There is no question that Zen ethics are questionable. The better question at this point is why is that the case? Why can a sociopath so easily become a Zen master? What allows that to happen?

Astus wrote:

To acknowledge that they strayed from the teachings by committing immoral actions is also saying that there is an ethical norm expected to be upheld. That is, it confirms that there is such a thing as Zen ethics, and that is the measure of their behaviour.

As for how someone who acts unethically could become and remain a Zen teacher is not a question about the ethical teachings of Zen but rather the institutional structure. Or rather about Westerners who like to believe in omniscient gurus and crazy wisdom. Both are a different topic that has already been discussed previously in the Zen Has no Morals thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 20th, 2013 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is interesting that while the Crusades are cited to show how the Christian(s / Church) can be vicious and bloodthirsty, Eastern warriors are acceptable. Although perhaps the whole romance surrounding chivalric virtues and stories is a more appropriate parallel to the idea of the samurai. Indeed, the acceptance of Buddhism in the West is part of the Romantic movement.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 20th, 2013 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: Hsu Yun ---paralysis meditation---question

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is an answer to the issue (in PDF):

http://www.chibs.edu.tw/ch_html/chbj/22/0619huimin.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2013 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The "five types of Zen" was created by https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guifeng_Zongmi.

"Samurai Zen" doesn't fit in it anywhere, the so called outsider Zen is for non-Buddhist religious practitioners, particularly Taoists and Confucianists, as Zongmi explains in his "Origin of Humanity". He writes in Chan Prolegomenon (J. L. Broughton: Zongmi on Chan, p 103):

"The true nature is neither stained nor pure, neither common nor noble. Within dhyana, however, there are different grades, ranging from the shallow to the deep. To hold deviant views and practice because one joyfully anticipates rebirth in a heaven and is weary of the present world is outsider dhyana. Correctly to have confidence in karmic cause and effect and likewise practice because one joyfully anticipates rebirth into a heaven and is weary of the present world is common-person dhyana. To awaken to the incomplete truth of voidness of self and then practice is inferior-vehicle dhyana. To awaken to the true principle of the dual voidness of self and dharmas and then to practice is great-vehicle dhyana. (All four of the above types show such distinctions as the four [dhyanas of the realm of] form and the four [concentrations of the] formless [realm].) If one's practice is based on having all-at-once awakened to the realization that one's own mind is from the outset pure, that the depravities have never existed, that the nature of the wisdom without outflows is from the outset complete, that this mind is buddha, that they are ultimately without difference, then it is dhyana of the highest vehicle. This type is also known by such names as tathagata-purity dhyana, the one-practice concentration, and the thusness concentration. It is the basis of all concentrations. If one can practice it from moment to moment, one will naturally and gradually attain the myriad concentrations. This is precisely the dhyana that has been transmitted down from Bodhidharma."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2013 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Luke said:

So this "Bompu Zen" idea was made up by Yasutani-roshi or by some other Japanese Zen teacher?

Astus wrote:

The order presented on the Wanderling's site is different from the original as it first puts ordinary Zen followed by outsider Zen. Originally the Zen of ordinary people means those Buddhist practitioners who don't aim for any liberation but rather to accumulating merit and gaining pleasurable birth as humans and gods. The difference in Zongmi's

system between outsiders' and ordinary people's Zen lies in accepting the teaching of karma and rebirth or not, that is, Buddhist or non-Buddhist. Both follow basic precepts against the worst misdeeds and cultivate some sort of spiritual practice, that can be conveniently called the eight absorptions as they are the requirements for birth in the form and formless heavens. The Wanderling's site's description of Bompū and Gedō Zen focus more on pursuing worldly goals in defining them, however, those following a materialist philosophy don't qualify for any level of Zen in Zongmi's system. It is another thing that the other three levels are also understood differently by the Wanderling and Zongmi.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2013 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Luke said:

So did Yasutani-roshi invent this particular classification which starts with "bompū" and "gedō"?

Astus wrote:

Can't say whether it was his interpretation, he heard it from someone else, or some other way it got presented like that in the Three Pillars of Zen. Someone should have to do a research on the development of the theory of five types of Zen. All I can say is that Zongmi had a different idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2013 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

To add some more to what Meido said, as a consequence of established monasteries, Buddhism relied on the support of the ruling - i.e. warrior/aristocratic - class in every country. Chan spread and survived because of its close connection to Chinese regional landlords (it is a myth that Chan monasteries were self-reliant).

I think when we are talking about the connection between samurai and Zen it is primarily a modern image, a myth, that is connected to the Western fascination with Asian martial arts and all things oriental. It is not a historical question, as history is a lot more complicated thing. For instance, in Song China the Zen teachings were for educated lay people, for literati and aristocrats, and not the common people. And that's true for most of the well known Zen teachers themselves who came from upper class families. And so it is with Zen in Japan.

"Does Buddhist practice have anything to offer someone - like a police officer, a soldier, a government official - whose work involves the use of force or its authorization?"

Of course, and that depends on the individual's level of interest. I don't think that Buddhism should appear as some sort of judgement of character. It is an open market. People take and use whatever they want. One can be a soldier, a banker, an office clerk or even a criminal, and at the same time Buddhist. There is no such thing as excommunication from the religion. Only monastics can lose their robes, but not the refuge they take.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 22nd, 2013 at 10:30 PM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

gregkavarnos said:

Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana? People that don't want to practice Vajrayana! It's not like anybody is pointing a gun at your head or anything...

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 22nd, 2013 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Stage of Non-retrogression

Content:

Astus wrote:

A whole chapter on the subject in Shinran's Kyogyoshinsho:

<http://www.amidanet.com/kgss-e.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2013 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It makes you wonder if the secrecy advocated in the Buddhist tantras is not so much about being secret as it is "Hey guys, this Hindu yoga stuff is freaking awesome, but if our Buddhist compatriots get wind of how effective this stuff is a) they won't believe us b) they will consider us heretics no matter how much we insist our view is grounded in Buddhadharma".

Astus wrote:

And that gives another group of who shouldn't practice Vajrayana. Those who don't believe in ("transcendent") energy and related ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2013 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it is only a stereotype that Tantra is complicated while Zen is simple. As already mentioned, there are many ways in Vajrayana that are simple and straightforward. On the other hand, if you have ever looked into a classic Zen work like the Blue Cliff Record, it is anything but simple.

Zen and Tantra (from "Dropping Ashes on the Buddha", p 79-80)

One evening, after a Dharma talk at the Boston Dharmadhatu, a student said to Seung Sahn Soen-sa, "At a recent seminar on Zen and Tantra, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche compared Zen to black and white and tantra to color. What do you think of this?"

Soen-sa smiled and said, "Which one do you prefer?"

(Laughter from the audience.)

The student shrugged his shoulders.

Soen-sa said, "What color is your shirt?"

"Red."

"You are attached to color."

The student hesitated for a few moments, then said,

"Maybe you are attached to black and white."

Soen-sa said, "The arrow has already passed downtown."

There was a long silence. "Do you understand?" (A few giggles.) "Okay, I will explain: The dog runs after the bone." There was another long nervous silence. "Okay, I will explain even more." (Loud laughter.) "When you are thinking, your mind and my mind are different. When you are not thinking, your mind and my mind are the same. Now tell me -when you are not thinking, is there color? Is there black and white? Not thinking, your mind is empty mind. Empty minds means cutting off all speech and words. Is there color then?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? I hit you! Now do you understand?" (Laughter.) "In original mind there is no color, no black and white, no words, no Buddha, no Zen, no Tibetan Buddhism."

The student bowed and said, "Thank you."

Soen-sa said, "'Thank you?' What do you mean by 'Thank you'?"

"Only 'Thank you.'"

Soen-sa laughed and said, "Only 'Thank you' is good. I hope that you soon understand your true self."

The student said, "I've begun."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2013 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

Luke said:

But still, I would argue that Zen meditations are simpler than tantric meditations. However, talking about Zen can certainly be as complicated as talking about any other Buddhist tradition.

Astus wrote:

If you were familiar with the full system of koan practice in Rinzai Zen you might reconsider that.

Very briefly:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenBookReviews/Zen_Sand.html

Briefly (PDF):

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenBookReviews/Zen_Sand-Wu.pdf

The complete introduction as in the book (PDF):

<http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/files/2012/12/Zen-Sand-Introduction.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2013 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

Meido said:

Bankei had several teachers.

Adding to Kirt's points, we might also recall that after his initial awakening Bankei still went looking for someone to confirm his experience [he found Dosha Chogen, who told him that he had indeed recognized his nature but had yet to clarify it...Bankei at first rejected this, but then realized Dosha was right and so stayed to practice under him for over a year].

Astus wrote:

But he realised the unborn on his own and, although visited teachers, later rejected them. That is, he tried to find someone who could give him the teachings but failed. He tried to follow the traditional route but it didn't work. So, I go with Kirt on this, that while certainly Bankei had sources to learn about Zen - and he was an ordained monk - it was not the case that he found the right teacher eventually.

"I can see now, looking back to that meeting, that even Dosha's realization was less than complete. If only he were alive today, I could make him into a fine teacher. It's a great shame. He died too soon." (Waddell, p 47-48)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2013 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Are samurai good symbols of Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bankei compares samurai to easily breaking china because their code of honour requires them to answer even the smallest disrespect as if it were a serious challenge, he also tells a story where a samurai intentionally bumped into people to call it an offence and give him reason to kill them (Waddell, p 108-109).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 26th, 2013 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Who SHOULDN'T practice Vajrayana?

Content:

Anders said:

I think this demonstrates more that Zen can be obscure more than that it can be complex.

Astus wrote:

I agree.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 26th, 2013 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-lands and Pure-Lands

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't know about a buddha-land classification system, so I'm just saying how I think about it.

The Saha world is the buddha-land of Shakyamuni only in the sense that he was present here, however, he is no more around. It is probably because of the absence of Shakyamuni that the search for other buddhas emerged, since there are infinite number of buddhas.

I don't know of a separate land of Shakyamuni. Do you have a source? Here is a short summary of how the buddha-land of Shakyamuni is often understood:

<http://jklr.net/2008/12/24/shakyamuni-buddhas-pure-land/>.

It is part of the bodhisattva work to establish one's own buddha-land when becoming a buddha. The difference between buddhas and lands is explained by the difference in their specific vows.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 26th, 2013 at 10:46 PM

Title: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there a definitive source of Dzogchen teachings? I mean, if I want to check whether a teaching given is authentic, is there a written canon that can confirm or deny the validity of a doctrine or method? Like, can the tantras be used for this, or the writings of certain masters? Or is it only the living lineage holders who can serve as accepted sources?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 26th, 2013 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: The FGS Buddha tooth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there a single tooth relic anywhere that was confirmed by an independent team of scientists to be at least from around the time of the Buddha? Or any other Buddha relic?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: The FGS Buddha tooth

Content:

Indrajala said:

As far as I know, no, but this tooth is purportedly from Tibet, though no record of it exists, and the prominent Tibetans consulted on the matter were unaware of its existence.

Astus wrote:

There are a couple of other questions.

Did Buddha live in Tibet? Does the Tibetan government/church have all there records intact from the time before the Communist occupation? Did they have a reliable record of every relics throughout the country? Is the tooth from a temple that is well known? Do other relics in general have some certificate next to them? Is there a way to tell the difference between genuine and fake relics? What is the importance of that tooth relic anyway?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Astus wrote:

So the three statements of Garab Dorje can be used in a similar way as the Four Dharma Seals?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's good. It is then quite easy to tell the difference between Dzogchen and not Dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: The FGS Buddha tooth

Content:

Indrajala said:

Still, in this case the claim is made it was a Buddha tooth that was kept in Tibetan monastery, and yet the Tibetans were unaware of it.

Astus wrote:

Certain Tibetans currently are unaware of it. Do we have the records of the mentioned temple and information on the area?

Indrajala said:

Besides remains dug out of archaeological digs, I'm not likely to believe claims of Buddha relics.

Astus wrote:

Then why is this one so interesting unlike all the others around the world?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: The FGS Buddha tooth

Content:

Indrajala said:

Are you implying in the absence of such details the legitimacy of the relic is enhanced?

Astus wrote:

The legitimacy is unknown without evidence. Isn't that logical?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 6:18 AM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Astus wrote:

So there are the 17 Dzogchen root tantras and their commentaries, however, they are not available in English, so those who can't read Tibetan can't really use them.

Does the three statements of Garab Dorje include a definition of rigpa that is to be introduced? Because it hinges on what is actually being shown, as pointed out by Pero. So if it is clarified then it's still a good measurement. If it isn't, perhaps there is some widely accepted commentary?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Dronma said:

It is not a matter of any definition, but of recognition through personal experience.
So, again a qualified Dzogchen Master is absolutely necessary!

Astus wrote:

In your opinion then only a Dzogchen teacher can confirm if one has the correct experience? But how do you confirm that the teacher is indeed giving you introduction to the nature of mind? Should one simply trust the appearance of authenticity of the teacher?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Sönam said:

NO, and that my point ... when one realize his real nature, thru the presence of the teacher, one can not mistake it. Knowledge is within the realization, with no possible mistake (to take it for chocolate pudding for exemple) That's why a master (or a realized practitioner) is a must. Without a master, doubt will always remain.
If one is not sure to have realized his true nature, with a teacher ... he has not.

Astus wrote:

But what guarantees the content of the realisation? There are numerous mental states one can believe to be supreme enlightenment. There are many versions of chocolate pudding, it can also be completely artificial flavouring, and a child or a foreigner could be cheated about what a chocolate pudding is.

You say a master is required. In what way is that an assurance? Also, how can one be sure of the master? Like, if you say that this or that person is the orthodox representative of Dzogchen and he decides who is correct and who is wrong, that's one way to go about it, like the Roman Catholics do.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: What is the Definitive Source?

Content:

Sönam said:

Only confidence can help in this case ... and peoples having recognized there true nature recognize each others, that's the only point.
It is also not a question of being sure of the master, because the one who recognize is You, not the master.
If it is said that this realization is ineffable, it's because it is ... what ever would be the way we try.

Trust me, once, we the energy of the master, you've realized your nature ... doubt is eliminated.

Astus wrote:

That means there is no way to decide who is or who is not an authentic Dzogchen teacher. Either you recognise someone as such or not, but it's completely arbitrary. Consequently there is no basis for debating anyone's claim to being a realised Dzogchen master.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 29th, 2013 at 7:05 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen have ethics?

Content:

oushi said:

When it comes to free will, you may not see it, but it is inconsistent to say that there is no difference between karma (which is cause and effect mechanism) and will, because it would mean that will has its cause so it isn't free, but rather determined by its cause. Buddhism is pretty much deterministic, but because of anatta there is ultimately no one determined. All is karma and there is Tathagata, the unconditioned, who is not free to act good or bad, but is free from acting good or bad. And this is what you will find in Zen masters' teachings. This is why ethics are only a background framework, and not a major issue.

Astus wrote:

"The nihilistic approach evokes the psychological attitude of fatalism. You understand logically that if you do something, things happen in reaction to it. You see a continuity of cause and effect, a chain reaction over which you have no control. This chain-reactive process springs from the mystery of "nothingness." Therefore, if you murder someone, it was your karma to murder and was inevitable, foreordained. For that matter if you do a good deed, it has nothing to do with whether or not you are awake. Everything springs from this mysterious "nothingness" which is the nihilistic approach to reality. It is a very naive view: one leaves everything to mystery."

(Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Shunyata in "Dzogchen Primer", p 225)

Karma is not universal cause and effect, it is ethical responsibility and mental habituation. Fatalism and pre-determinism are not Buddhist views.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 30th, 2013 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Chinese mahayana meditation

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Does anyone know of any resources on how meditation was practiced in the Hua Yen tradition?

Astus wrote:

This is the only work I know in English: <http://www.fodian.net/world/1884.html>. It's also found in Cleary's collection plus commentary.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 30th, 2013 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Chinese mahayana meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/collected_works.html there are two volumes on Huayan, although by Korean authors, but Uisang's seal is known throughout East Asia and it can also be used for meditation. Also, in the second Hwaeom volume it has a treatise on the Ocean Seal Samadhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 3rd, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: which pure land do you seek?

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Amitabha Buddha is the Lord of the Western Pure Land, and Bhaisayaguru is the Lord of the Eastern Pure Land. My question is why the Western Pure Land is seen as a more desirable option, as Bhaisayaguru (Medicine Buddha) also made powerful vows for the benefit of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

The Pratyutpanna Sutra was translated to Chinese in the 2nd century. In the 3rd century both Zhi Qian and Saṅghavarman translated the Larger Amitabha Sutra. Huiyuan established the first community dedicated to birth in Amitabha's Pure Land in the early 5th century, while Kumarajiva translated the Shorter Sutra a little later. Zhiyi's (6th century) constantly walking samadhi prescribes contemplation on Amitabha in his grand meditation manual. The so called patriarchs of Pure Land Buddhism (https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:jL3dja0dBkkJ:www.thomehfang.com/kumarajiva/13Patriarchs/13Patriarchs_20Nov2003.htm+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=c&lnk&gl=us, <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Pureland/lineage.html>) show some traditionally outstanding teachers propagating this teaching.

Besides the above I don't have enough information or resources to provide regarding the social development of the cult of Amitabha.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=jhKVXrkVIZsC> can give some insights, just as <https://books.google.com/books?id=Wjv85t5E0hQC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=n2h2Gf4dE4MC>, and on a linguistic level <https://books.google.com/books?id=48nRNu5PlOMC>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 3rd, 2013 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: which pure land do you seek?

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Astus, Thanks so much. A few more "must reads" to add to my ever-increasing pile!

Astus wrote:

If you are interested in a more internal argument for Amitabha, Honen's

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=BT43aTdifVIC> (here's a

<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/senchakushu.html>) is the work to look into.

The common argument everywhere is that the Pure Land path is simply the easiest and safest to buddhahood among all the other options. And frankly, this is something that no other Buddhist method or school can beat.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 12:32 AM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka, Nagarjuna and Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Samatha meditation in Mahayana is not much different from what you find in Theravada (but no kasinas) and other Agama schools. A good meditation manual related to Madhyamaka is Kamalasila's Bhavanakrama. You may also use Zhiyi's teachings on samatha-vipasyana (http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm and http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm), or from the Tibetan side the lamrim and lojong teachings of various schools. From the Tibetan side, this is a superb summary of both theory and practice in Madhyamaka:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=8zeh8VAFCvAC>, and this one is also OK:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=dJQVkgEACAAJ>, and its pair:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=LHo4lw15XQC>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 3:37 AM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the time when Buddhists started to write down the words of the Buddha the Dharma has been preserved in a literate medium. Customs, robes, styles, rituals, languages, cultures changed, while the texts were preserved to remain the authentic source. Shakyamuni died, the disciples died, teachers died, but their thoughts were kept in the canon. We can't meet Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Zhiyi, Gampopa, Dogen, Tsongkhapa, or even modern teachers like Yinshun and Tulku Urgyen. Famous masters today, like Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama, are unreachable for most of us. What

we have from all of them are their written teachings.

Besides the texts there is also a living, breathing tradition, the Sangha. It is very beneficial to become a part of that, to remove ourselves from the ideal images we might cherish in the confines of our rooms. To see that all Buddhists are human beings, and we are not alone with our troubles and doubts. It is only natural that we want to know others who share our views and interests. It is good to learn from those more experienced in the Dharma than us. In fact, those are also reasons for people joining this very forum.

"all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra."

(Diamond Sutra, tr. C. Muller; ch 8)

"So then, if someone wants quickly to know full enlightenment, he should indefatigably and continually hear and study this very perfection of wisdom. For he will understand that in the past, when he was a Bodhisattva, the Tathagata trained in the perfection of wisdom; that also he should train in it; that she is his Teacher. In any case, when the Tathagata has disappeared into final Nirvana, the Bodhisattvas should run back to this very perfection of wisdom."

(The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, tr. Conze; ch 3, p 107)

"One should know that such a Bodhisattva is reborn here after he has deceased in other world systems where he has honoured and questioned the Buddhas, the Lords. Any Bodhisattva who, after he has deceased in other world systems where he has honoured and questioned the Buddhas, the Lords, is reborn here, would, when he hears this deep perfection of wisdom being taught, identify this perfection of wisdom with the Teacher, [1771 and be convinced that he is face to face with the Teacher, that he has seen the Teacher. When the perfection of wisdom is being taught, he listens attentively, pays respect to it before he hears it, and does not cut the story short. Such a Bodhisattva should be known as one who has practised for long, who has honoured many Buddhas." (ch 7, p 138)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: Budha was wrong about desire

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the video she says that the suffering is not the desire itself but focusing on what we don't have and what we don't want. So we should not resist desire and appreciate the present. We should also understand that desire never stops, there is no end of it, thus there is no state to reach and hold on to.

The above statements can be easily matched with the Buddha's teachings. Her ideas about the universe, etc. are a different matter, but fairly understandable considering the cultural background, and they serve the practical application of her teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

smcj said:

In my experience, they are completely different. A book can't see through you, know your mind, and know which teaching or practice is right for you--for starters.

Astus wrote:

A teacher can give appropriate advice if s/he knows you personally, as a good friend. And that is great. At the same time, if you study texts, in time you can find just the right answers to whatever questions you may have. And being in a community has lot more to offer than just a single wise fellow rephrasing the Buddha's teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

smcj said:

A book can't call you on your b.s. A good lama can and will.

Astus wrote:

Buddhist teachers are not exclusive to Tibet. You can even find a couple of them among registered users here. Who considers what b.s. is another matter. Teachers are not homogeneous, and who is a "good lama" is a subjective decision on the part of the seeker.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

JKhedrup said:

But there are some criteria that I think we can hold across the board

Astus wrote:

Yes. And those are both sensible and important.

Indrajala said:

It logically follows that placing spiritual authority in classical texts rather than fallible humans is probably a preferable arrangement given the numbers of degenerate individuals taking advantage of people, to say nothing of all the nepotism, corruption and politics you find in Buddhist institutions.

Astus wrote:

Buddhist institutions are not the work of Mara. I agree with you that one shouldn't glorify everything that is old and Asian, nor take hagiographies at face value. At the same time, communities seem to be doing fine most of the time, and they are usually reliable sources of the Dharma. Neither saints nor devils.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

JKhedrup said:

I understood that "absence of living Buddhadharma" to be the absence of teachers and practitioners, not texts. But of course, if you have a different opinion I am interested in hearing it!

Astus wrote:

It is said in the Pure Land tradition that the last sutra to remain is the Larger Amitabha Sutra for another 100 years after all the others are gone. And even after that people will attain birth in Sukhavati for some time just by the name. Noble beings are already gone by the time of the Dharma ending age except for adventurous bodhisattvas visiting this realm. Even in the Dharma semblance age Buddhists mostly act out of customs rather than realisation. Also, in Chinese Buddhism it is believed that the first sutra to disappear is the Surangama Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2013 at 12:20 AM

Title: Re: Ippen- Don't worry about your heart/mind.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shinran's teaching from <http://www.shinranworks.com/relatedworks/tannisho1.htm#9>:

"Although I say the nembutsu, the feeling of dancing with joy is faint with me, and I have no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. How should it be [for a person of the nembutsu]?"

When I asked the master this, he answered, "I, too, have had this question, and the same thought occurs to you, Yuien-bo!"

"When I reflect deeply on it, by the very fact that I do not rejoice at what should fill me with such joy that I dance in the air and dance on the earth, I realize all the more that my birth is completely settled. What suppresses the heart that that should rejoice and keeps one from rejoicing is the action of blind passions. Nevertheless, the Buddha, knowing this beforehand, called us 'foolish beings possessed of blind passions'; thus, becoming aware that the compassionate Vow of Other Power is indeed for the sake of ourselves, who are such beings, we find it all the more trustworthy.

"Further, having no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly, we think forlornly that we may die even when we become slightly ill; this is the action of blind passions. It

is hard for us to abandon this old home of pain, where we have been transmigrating for innumerable kalpas down to the present, and we feel no longing for the Pure Land of peace, where we have yet to be born. Truly, how powerful our blind passions are! But though we feel reluctant to part from this world, at the moment our karmic bonds to this saha world run out and helplessly we die, we shall go to that land. Amida pities especially the person who has no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. Reflecting on this, we feel the great Vow of great compassion to be all the more trustworthy and realize that our birth is settled.

"If we had the feeling of dancing with joy and wishing to go to the Pure Land quickly, we might wonder if we weren't free of blind passions."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2013 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: Lost foolish being

Content:

Astus wrote:

Fortunately birth in the Pure Land does not require special techniques or empowerments. Realising that one is full of karmic defilements, that only Amitabha's Vow can help in reaching enlightenment, and sincerely aspiring for birth in the Pure Land, these are the essentials for having right faith. And even in times of doubt one should keep the name in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2013 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Does this statement come from the Pure Land Sutras themselves, commentaries, or both?

Astus wrote:

It is in the Larger Sutra:

"In the future, the Buddhist scriptures and teachings will perish. But, out of pity and compassion, I will especially preserve this sutra and maintain it in the world for a hundred years more. Those beings who encounter it will attain deliverance in accord with their aspirations."

(Three Pure Land Sutras, p 61; tr. Inagaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2013 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

smcj said:

Do you know of any equivalent opportunity for practice anywhere in the world today?

Astus wrote:

There are strong retreat oriented communities in both Theravada and Mahayana countries. Some follow the traditional dhutanga, some a different type of practice. There are also hermits in mountains and forests. One can not only learn from such people but even join them. As I hinted before, Tibet is not the only Buddhist place on this planet.

Also, it is not even a strictly Buddhist phenomenon that people completely withdraw from the world (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anchorite>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2013 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Books and Teachers

Content:

smcj said:

The culture of Tibet encouraged and logistically supported people to do extended retreats to a degree not seen elsewhere. You don't see groups of 17 year olds committing to a lifetime of retreat these days, and being given the material support needed to do so (up until the society collapsed due to invasion).

Astus wrote:

Becoming a monk/nun is leaving home, leaving the secular world behind. It is the backbone of the Buddhist tradition, therefore it is very much supported by Buddhists everywhere. There are different types of monasteries, and among them you find those that are even more withdrawn and closed off from the world.

Some examples from China:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6miAPuNYj8>

<http://www.tricycle.com/interview/the-chinese-hermit-tradition-an-interview-with-red-pine>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=UAD5m5f3oH0C>

And from Thailand:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjKxHa07dfo>

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/khantipalo/wheel083.html>

Outside of Buddhism, other religions also have monastic and eremitic orders, like the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosed_religious_orders.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 7th, 2013 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Ippen- Don't worry about your heart/mind.

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you think you live maybe a long or short life,
and then you die, and then you go to Amida's realm,
you are still clinging to a self that is real.
in other words, you are still relying on self-power.

Astus wrote:

If we had to be free from clinging to self in order to attain birth in the Pure Land then ordinary beings could never make it. And that is against the very purpose of the Pure Land path, to provide a safe route to buddhahood for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 7th, 2013 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Impossible to follow?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea is that since we live in the Dharma ending age the capacity for difficult practices is virtually non-existent. Therefore the recommended method is the recitation of the name, as that does not require a concentrated mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 7th, 2013 at 7:36 AM

Title: Re: Impossible to follow?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The translator, <http://amidanet.com/inagaki.htm>, is a Shinshu follower, and as such he presented the orthodox view of the teachings of Shinran.

Shinran writes (http://www.shinranworks.com/majorexpositions/kgssVI-15_36.htm#34, <http://amidanet.com/kgss-g.htm>):

"Master [Shan-tao's] intent seems to be as follows: He says [in the Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra], "The number of the gateways of the excellent practices provided for different capacities of people is eighty-four thousand and more. Gradual and sudden teachings are suited to their capacities. Those who follow favorable conditions all attain emancipation."

We note, however, that ordinary and ignorant people, who are ever sinking in the state of birth-and-death, find it hard to cultivate a meditative mind, because it requires cessation of thought and concentration of it. A non-meditative mind is also hard to cultivate, because it requires abolishing evil and practicing good. For this reason, visualizing forms and fixing the mind on them are hard to accomplish; hence, Shan-tao says [in the Commentary on the Meditative Practice] "Even if one dedicates a lifetime of a thousand years, the Dharma-eye will not be opened." How much more difficult it is for

them to attain formlessness and no-thought! Therefore, he says, "The Tathagata knew beforehand that ordinary people of the latter age defiled by karmic evil would not be able to accomplish even the practice of visualizing forms and concentrating on them - to say nothing of seeking realization without visualizing forms. It would be like building a house in the air without magical means."

Also:

"It is impossible for us, who are possessed of blind passions, to free ourselves from birth-and-death through any practice whatever. Sorrowing at this, Amida made the Vow, the essential intent of which is the evil person's attainment of Buddhahood. Hence, evil persons who entrust themselves to Other Power are precisely the ones who possess the true cause of birth."

(<http://www.shinranworks.com/relatedworks/tannisho1.htm#3>)

"It cannot be said that the practitioner of self-power is equal to Tathagata. With one's own mind of self-power, it is impossible to reach the land of the Buddha of inconceivable light. It is taught that only by shinjin that is Other Power does one reach the land of the Buddha of inconceivable light."

(<http://www.shinranworks.com/shorterworks/virtueofname.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 7th, 2013 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Ippen- Don't worry about your heart/mind.

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

My point is that if you are waiting until you die,
you have already missed that opportunity countless times
even in this one lifetime.

Astus wrote:

From the perspective of the Pure Land teachings, the opportunity that should not be missed, but was missed countless times before, is to grasp and hold on to Amida's vow. Ordinary people are bound by their own habits and fail to comprehend emptiness. Even the most respected masters of various schools say that they are simple unenlightened human beings, although they are educated in the Dharma and spent many years in retreat. What hope can an average lay person have?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 8th, 2013 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

Arabic Buddhist said:

So what I shall follow ?

Just by practice the name ?

Or practice the Name with Morality ?

Astus wrote:

As Ven. Huifeng said already, Chinese Buddhism doesn't have schools like Japanese Buddhism. There are various outstanding teachers who say this or that about Pure Land. You follow what you have inclination to. Read widely and find the one that you feel drawn towards.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2013 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

Arabic Buddhist said:

I have inclination to Shan tao and Honen teaching .

But when I read the The pure land Sutra and I read Buddha Speak About morality practice to be born in pure land . Then I have Doubt about Shan tao and Honen teaching .

So I am Confused .

Astus wrote:

Honen's message is simple and straightforward: "There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself." (<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/ichimai.html>)

It doesn't mean that we should act in an immoral way. Against that interpretation Honen spoke explicitly and emphatically. He says that doing good things is what all buddhas taught, but as ordinary beings evil acts are common. It should be clear that he means karmically evil, that is, acts that result in lower birth (see a summary here: <http://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbelieve/156.htm>). It is true that some of us can uphold a high moral standard, but most of us fail now and then. But no matter what, the condition of birth in the Pure Land is the nembutsu and nothing else. If you can do good things and avoid the bad ones, by all means do that. But don't be arrogant because of it. And if you find yourself lacking in certain aspects, don't feel down about it, don't be afraid that you lose your chance with Amida. If you can, correct yourself. If not, minimise the harm.

"While believing that even a man guilty of the ten evil deeds and the five deadly sins may be born into the Pure Land, let us, as far as we are concerned, not commit even the smallest sins. If this is true of the wicked, how much more of the good. We ought to continue the practice of the Nembutsu uninterruptedly, in the belief that ten repetitions, or even one, will not be in vain. If this is true of merely one repetition, how much more of many!"

(Honen the Buddhist Saint, p 30)

"Do not be worrying as to whether your evil passions are strong or otherwise, or whether your sins are light or heavy. Only invoke Amida's name with your lips, and let the

conviction accompany the sound of your voice, that you will of a certainty be born into the Pure Land."

(p 31)

"Let the Nembutsu of the Original Vow stand by itself and receive help from no other quarter. By outside help I mean that of one's own wisdom, the observance of the commandments (sila), religious aspiration, deeds of charity, and the like. But the good man, as he is, and the bad man too, as he is, each in his own natural condition, should seek help nowhere except in the Nembutsu. But he is in harmony with the mind of the Buddha who practices it by giving up his wickedness and becoming good. A man who cannot make up his mind, but is always thinking himself unfit in this way or that, will not be sure of attaining birth into the Pure Land."

(p 32)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2013 at 3:27 PM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

plwk said:

If one is sincerely & properly practicing the Nembutsu, the practice of sila should also be naturally forthcoming, no? ... one's obscurations and obstacles becomes purified, hence, sila is no longer an issue for us but a natural consequence and response to the gift of Amida?

Astus wrote:

I have not seen such a connections stated anywhere, especially not Honen. Could you point to some sources here?

I'm also wary of equating other-power with no-self. From the point of view of the Path of Sages, it is neither a practice nor a realisation of emptiness. And from the Pure Land side, if other-power were a way to attain insight into no-self, one would not need to be born in the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2013 at 3:32 PM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

Arabic Buddhist said:

" In the Amitabha Sutra, the Buddha further explained that to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, we have to be "good men and good women." The standard for this is the Three Conditions; thus, they are a crucial part of our practice, an integral component of rebirth in the Pure Land.

To achieve this rebirth, we need belief, vows, and practice—leading a moral life and chanting Amituofo mindfully.

...

For example . Do they said THREE CONDITIONS practice is useful just in first Dharma Age . Or they have other obinions ?

Astus wrote:

That's only Ven. Chin Kung's interpretation. It is not written like that in the sutra itself, nor did Honen explain it that way. If you want a different perspective from the Chinese side that is closer to Honen - but still not the same -, I recommend Ven. Yin Kuang.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2013 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

So yeah, what are the relationships between Zen, Indian Buddhism, and Taoism?

Astus wrote:

Zen is a Chinese form of Buddhism developed in China. It is doctrinally and practically a Buddhist teaching.

There isn't really such a thing as "Taoism". There are certain philosophical-religious schools in China that could be called Taoist, and there is just generally the Chinese folklore and native beliefs people may call Taoist. The two are not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

LastLegend said:

While Tao or Taoism or whatever it may be called are Chinese folklore and native beliefs, I do believe the principle of yin and yang are practical and true to my experience. It is the foundation of Chinese medicine. For example, I can make a tea from red brown rice and aduzki red bean that can be as strong as viagra. No ingredients added-just red brown rice and aduzki red bean. I personally don't take the Tao lightly, and I am of the opinion that eating is a big part of the spiritual path. Not just being any vegetarian but being a vegetarian by applying yin and yang principle is the way to go, I feel.

Astus wrote:

If I take an Aspirin or some other modern medicine it doesn't make Western Buddhism a mixture of European philosophy and Indian ideas. When I distinguished between regulated Taoist doctrines and general beliefs I meant that while Chinese Buddhism - and not just Zen - adapted and absorbed the culture, starting with using Chinese language, it does not mean accepting ideas that contradict the Dharma or confusing the

Buddha's teachings with those of Zhuangzi, Mengzi or any other Chinese thinker.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

It seems at least certain Zen masters saw some value or connection between Zen and Tao, such as Takuan Soho's commentary on the Tao Te Ching, but what I think is questionable is that Zen is basically Taoism in Buddhist garb.

Though I suppose, again, considering Buddhism being influenced by Bon in Tibet or incorporating Shintoism in Japan, there is a likelihood of influence of Taoism in Chan but to what extent I am unaware.

Astus wrote:

These are inevitably huge generalisations that Taoism, Shinto and Bon influenced Buddhism here and there. Thing is, none of those three religions had any fixed canon or doctrine before Buddhism appeared. All of them were native beliefs. I'd say Confucianism had a greater impact on forming Chinese Buddhism than Taoism, although for some reason people tend to forget about that. There are some Buddhist commentaries on "Taoist" works like the Yijing, and there were some who propagated the unity of the three major Chinese traditions. Just as today you find people who believe that Christianity and Buddhism, or science and Buddhism, are somehow compatible or even one.

Zen perfectly fits into the Buddhist teachings and I have yet to see those peculiarly Taoist traits in it. What Zen adopted from the Chinese culture is the idea of the lineage of transmission, and it is based on the imperial succession. There are certain literary styles used in Zen that are also specifically Chinese. Oh, and again, the language they used was Chinese. Now, as we speak English, if someone analysed it, they could say that Western Buddhism got mixed with Christianity, materialism, phenomenology, utilitarianism, and probably a number of other thoughts, not to mention the pervasive romanticism and colonialism-orientalism in Western Buddhist discourse. And almost forgot, the purist idea of an "Original Buddhism".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

Astus wrote:

plwk,

Yes, as you say, there are various forms of Pure Land practice. Honen is kind of a special case because of his process of selecting

(<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>) the Rightly Established Practice as the recitation of the name. And the form of nembutsu used is just the recitation and nothing more
(<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Pureland/DOCTRINE/nembutsu.htm>). He did not reject other teachings. He said that for ordinary beings in this age the simple recitation is the best choice to attain buddhahood. And while recitation has innumerable merits, it doesn't follow that it makes someone a better person in this life. It may, but it's not necessary nor important.

Outside of Honen's teachings, the practice of remembrance and recitation has many uses. Already in Daoxin's (fourth Chan patriarch) teaching there are references to the Meditation Sutra and how buddha-mindfulness is identical to the buddha-mind, something that in the later tradition became the True Mark Buddha Remembrance. And this only shows how in Chinese Buddhism it is very misleading to talk of any distinct schools like Pure Land and Chan. In Tibetan Buddhism they also recommend meditation on Amitabha with the aim of attaining birth in Sukhavati, but nobody says there is a special Tibetan Pure Land school. Really, it was only Honen who rejected everything else in favour of focusing only on attaining birth with nembutsu.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

Though in the case of Taoism at least, Laozi and Zhuangzi were taken to be the major texts. Perhaps the way of uncovering what influences these indigenous faiths left is through comparing and contrasting them to Indian Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

"The Daode jing and Zhuangzi are the only Daoist texts that matter because they are the "essence" and "original teachings" of Daoism"

Response:

"There is no principal Daoist scripture. Although the Daode jing is probably the most central and influential scripture in Daoist history, different Daoist adherents, communities and movements revere different scriptures. The primary textual collection in the Daoist tradition is called the Daozang 道藏 (Daoist Canon). It is an open textual collection, with new additions having been made throughout Daoist history. The first version was compiled in the fifth century CE. The received version was compiled in the fifteenth century, with a seventeenth century supplement. It consists of roughly 1,400 texts, texts that come from every major period and movement of Daoist history. "
(http://www.daoistcenter.org/Daoism_Misconceptions.pdf)

Regarding Taoism this article is strongly recommended (in PDF):

[http://faculty.franklin.uga.edu/kirkland/sites/faculty.franklin.uga.edu.kirkland/files/TEN N97.pdf](http://faculty.franklin.uga.edu/kirkland/sites/faculty.franklin.uga.edu.kirkland/files/TEN%20N97.pdf).

And here find Guifeng Zongmi's criticism and at the same time inclusion of both Taoism and Confucianism: <http://www.slashdocs.com/ixrhyn/on-human-origins.html>.

Also see this post I made in a similar thread last year:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=110688#p110688>

Vidyaraja said:

I would have thought Taoism would have considering both are spiritual systems with ascetic practitioners and would have thought Confucianism would have been more for informing ethics. DT Suzuki apparently said

Astus wrote:

Confucianism was the state philosophy most of the time, Confucian works were studied by every educated person and Confucian ethics and values were the social standard. The majority of outstanding and influential Buddhists were from the higher classes (aristocracy, literati), and thus were raised on Confucian teachings. While mountain hermits may have shared practices and ideas with each other to the point that distinguishing sources was nearly impossible, they were not the people who defined the mainstream doctrines or composed works on anything even if they could write at all.

DT Suzuki, well, his writings are mostly biased and fairly outdated.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

LastLegend said:

I sense that there is a general consensus among Western scholars to downplay the significance of Taoism or Tao as a religion. Maybe I am wrong?

Astus wrote:

I'd say it's rather the opposite, that Taoism was and is a religion and not a pure philosophy. See the links in my previous post.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

plwk said:

During the time of Sakyamuni or Amitabha Buddha, where were Shan Dao and Honen? When Shan Dao and Honen read the Sutras, who do they refer to?

Astus wrote:

Honen's presentation of the Pure Land teaching is based on the sutras. To say otherwise

is to reject him as a Buddhist teacher. Honen emphasised what is the bare minimum to attain birth, something that is still achievable by ordinary humans. That's what his process of selecting the nembutsu of the Primal Vow about. He didn't say that all the other practices are wrong, meaningless or don't exist.

While he remained a monastic till the end of his life, he didn't require of everyone else to do the same. He recited the name tens of thousands of times a day and regularly went to retreats, but he said that a single utterance suffices. He was a highly educated Buddhist master, and he said that the only thing needed is the nembutsu and one doesn't have to know what even the Three Minds are.

Honen's approach is like the not so bright student who wants to get over his university years and it is enough if he can pass all the exams. Sure, there are a few top students with the best grades and honours and whatnot. And there are many who can just survive. Honen included everyone in his teachings from the imperial court and elite monastics to the prostitutes and fishermen. For instance, even today you can't learn all the esoteric practices of Shingon unless you are ordained (and speak Japanese). But you can recite Namu Amida Butsu no matter who you are or what you know and attain buddhahood. Wasn't that the intention of the Buddha, to give a path that liberates all beings?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Question About Chinese pure land

Content:

plwk said:

Let's face it Astus. In the Pure Land tradition, teachers are a mere reference point and not the main point.

Astus wrote:

I see it the other way around. Without teachers developing an interpretation there is no Pure Land tradition. First of all, there are more than three sutras mentioning Amitabha, so selecting those three as the primary source is already a traditional choice and not something said by the Buddha. Reciting the name, that's not taught in any of the three sutras, but again developed in China. The sutras can be interpreted in many ways. In Buddhism it is perfectly valid and acceptable to create one's own interpretation, maybe even start a new school if one can gather enough followers. I'm not saying it is some sort of heresy or something bad, especially when one does not come up with non-Buddhist views like a creator God and an eternal soul but stays within the boundaries of the four seals.

To follow up on your Christian example, it took a number of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council to establish a generally accepted interpretation. Even defining what books are canonical took time and consensus. And there were and are Christian churches who don't agree with any of that. Luther may have believed that the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura, but he was already

building on a 1500 years old tradition, and in fact accepted many of the traditional interpretations (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran_Marian_theology).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 at 10:30 PM

Title: Re: Question: Other Power & Cleaning Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you said, it is impossible in Buddhism for anyone to meddle with another person's karma. What makes all the difference is your attitude and your practice. Even the smallest thought can result in aeons of trouble or bliss. That way being mindful of a buddha is a positive influence on what and how you experience. So even if something bad befalls you, you could say that without the influence of a buddha/bodhisattva, it would have been much worse.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Question: Other Power & Cleaning Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Repentance is among the daily practices in both Chinese Buddhism and Jodo Shu.

An example of a Chinese practice: <http://kongmu.wordpress.com/2011/10/09/88-buddhas/>.

And this is from the <http://english.jodoshuna.org/prayer/daily-prayer/>:

San Ge-ge

In the presence of Buddhas, we repent of harmful karmas we accumulated from the past to present.

GA SHAKU SHO ZO SHO AKU GO

KAI YU MU SHI TON JIN CHI

JU SHIN GO I SHI SHO SHO

I-SSAI GA KON KAI SAN GE

All harmful karmas I have ever accumulated from the past are caused by my wrong speech, conduct and mind, that are derived from my greed, anger and ignorance. I now repent of all of them.

And the same in different translation from

<http://www.jsri.jp/English//otsutome/otsutome.html>:

SANGE-GE

(Confession)

GA SHAKU SHO ZO SHO AKU GO

KAI YU MU SHI TON JIN CHI

JU SHIN GO I SHI SHO SHO

I-SSAI GA KON KAI SAN GE

All the evil Karma ever accumulated by me in the past, which I realize is derived from my inherent greed, anger, and ignorance.

Whatsoever born of my body, words, and thoughts, I now make full confession of them wholeheartedly to the everlasting Compassion of Amida Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

While I am personally not convinced, there must be some basis or reason for multiple figures to make these claims.

Astus wrote:

The question is where and why were Taoism and Zen connected by certain individuals. Without binging in actual quotes and references this can't really be answered. As for Zen itself, the tradition makes no connection to Taoism, Taoist teachers or teachings, but recognises only Buddhist scriptures and doctrines.

Vidyaraja said:

I haven't read much of Suzuki, but why is he biased and outdated?

Astus wrote:

He represented a specific interpretation of Zen defined by Japanese Rinzai rhetoric and modern Romantic/Theosophist/New Age ideas. That's why it is biased. And it is outdated because since then scholars have extensively reviewed and modified the understanding of Zen history and religion.

Vidyaraja said:

Huang Po also speaks of the Buddha-Nature or Mind being the source substance of all phenomena, which of course includes all that is merely human. Aside from that, if Zen is indeed a form of Buddhism, did not the Buddha teach that skandhas which comprise the human is anatta or "not myself"? What is merely human is denied in Buddhism as far as I can tell, whereas Buddha-Nature/Pure Mind is all there is.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me you are misinterpreting Zen as some sort of monism. Zen doesn't teach anything like a supreme absolute thing nor does it deny ordinary phenomena. Sure, certain translations and terms can be misleading. But, first of all, Zen does not discuss Buddhist doctrine, it talks about practice. So if you gain some sort of view from reading Zen texts, that's not what they were written for. It is very important to clarify the basic teachings of Mahayana before attempting to understand Zen, otherwise one fails to see the context and inevitably misconstrues the whole thing. If you don't know where to start with Mahayana, I recommend Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara. Although it was

never popular in East Asia, it is still a great summary. But if you want to stay within the Chinese Buddhism area, go through the works translated by Ven. Dharmamitra:
<http://kalavinka.org/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

Perhaps Suzuki is wrong about his claims, I wouldn't know because I never read him, but I personally never understood the idea of views being outdated. Why is the 2013 understanding of Zen history and religion the correct one? If in the future scholars modify the current understanding, will we then be outdated? Is the Buddha outdated?

Astus wrote:

Certain philosophical and religious ideas are theoretically timeless as they are not bound to material evidence, nevertheless, they can change too by time. Suzuki's works are outdated in terms of their scholarly perspective, what they say about the history and development of Zen, and how it generalises his interpretation of Zen to all forms of Zen. And yes, even the current view of the history of Zen can expire if new sources and studies appear. Translations also require refreshment and corrections for several reasons.

Vidyaraja said:

Zen also doesn't say we are the human body with its thoughts, memories, expectations, etc. Zen and Buddhism in general is a doctrine of awakening to our true nature/the Absolute, not humanism. Buddha himself claimed the 5 skandhas to be anatta, and what else comprises the human organism but the 5 skandhas?

If Zen (and Buddhism by extension) doesn't teach an absolute Buddha-Nature or One Mind or Universal Ground Gnosis, which of course is not a "thing", what does it teach? What is beyond the 5 skandhas that are anatta, anicca, and dukkha?

Astus wrote:

The five aggregates are indeed impermanent, not self and empty. That is their true nature. That is our true nature. But if you look for something beyond that, a universal essence, that's "adding a head on top of your head". Look at the Heart Sutra and the Diamond Sutra - the two most prominent scriptures used in Zen - do they talk about anything like an absolute? And there's the Platform Sutra, right after the story of Huineng it gives an explanation of Mahaprajnaparamita, shows how the nature of the mind is empty, functioning and includes everything, that is, one should not block the senses but be aware without attachment. That is no-thought, the essential path of Zen, and no different from what are taught in the sutras.

If you look into Zongmi's criticism of Taoism (<http://www.slashdocs.com/ixrhyn/on-human-origins.html>), it is exactly this idea of a fundamental source and basis of

everything that he refutes as nonsense. Similar arguments exist in both Madhyamaka and Yogacara works.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Huang Po said:

The Dharmakaya, from ancient times until today, together with the Buddhas and Ancestors, is One.

Astus wrote:

"If Dharma students wish to know the key to successful cultivation, they should know that it is the mind that dwells on nothing. Emptiness is the Buddha's Dharmakaya, just as the Dharmakaya is emptiness. People's usual understanding is that the Dharmakaya pervades emptiness, and that it is contained in emptiness. However, this is erroneous, for we should understand that the Dharmakaya is emptiness and that emptiness is the Dharmakaya.

If one thinks that emptiness is an entity and that this emptiness is separate from the Dharmakaya or that there is a Dharmakaya outside of emptiness, one is holding a wrong view. In the complete absence of views about emptiness, the true Dharmakaya appears. Emptiness and Dharmakaya are not different. Sentient beings and Buddhas are not different. Birth and death and Nirvana are not different. Klesa and Bodhi are not different."

(Chung-Ling Record in "The Dharma of Mind Transmission", tr. Lok To)

Also from Huangbo:

"Worldly and holy are very clearly explained in the Three Vehicles. You do not understand and grasp them as objects. Wouldn't it be incorrect to think of emptiness as really existing? Merely wipe out the worldly-and-holy view. There is no Buddha outside of the Mind. The Patriarch came from the West solely to point out that people's minds are Buddha. You do not recognize this and actively pursue the Buddha. You do not recognize this and actively pursue the Buddha outside, thus deluding your own mind. For this reason, I talk about the Mind as Buddha. Actually, giving rise to a single thought, one falls into heterodox paths. Since time without beginning, there is no differentiation or discrimination, Void-ness is the Unconditioned Awakening."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

jeeprs said:

It is often said that the idea of dharmakaya is the nearest equivalent to the God idea. I don't think it's true, because it is not something along the lines of a personal deity. But

there are many parallels between the Dharmakaya and the God of the mystics.

Astus wrote:

"All of the non-Buddhist paths are attached to the view of a self. If it was actually the case that a self existed, then it ought to fall into one or the other of two categories. Either it is characterized by destructibility or else it is characterized by indestructibility. If it is characterized by destructibility, then it ought to be something like a cow hide. If it is characterized by indestructibility, then it ought to be comparable to empty space. In the case of both of these positions, they are both such as would involve no offense entailed in killing and would involve no merit in refraining from killing. If it were like empty space, then neither rain nor dew would be able to moisten it and neither wind nor heat would be able to dry it out. If this were the case, then it would fall into the category of something which is permanent. If it were permanent, then suffering would be unable to torment it and happiness would be unable to please it. If it thus was something which did not experience suffering or happiness, then it ought not to be concerned with avoiding evil and striving to perform deeds which generate merit. If it was comparable to a cow hide, then it would be such as might be destroyed by wind and rain. If it was destructible, then it would fall into the category of something which is impermanent. If it were impermanent, then there could be neither [future punishments resulting from] offenses nor [future blessings resulting from] engaging in meritorious karmic deeds. If in fact the discourse of the non-Buddhist traditions corresponds to these characterizations, then what would be the point in having the teaching that refraining from killing is karmically meritorious and that engaging in killing constitutes a karmic offense?"

...

"[The beliefs of] you and other non-Buddhists like you are so extremely different from the Buddha's Dharma as to be as far apart as heaven and earth. Your dharmas and that of other non-Buddhists like you is a place for the production of afflictions. In the case of the Dharma of the Buddha, it is a place for the doing away with afflictions. This constitutes a great difference."

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf)

jeeprs said:

But if one thinks that emptiness is a non-entity, that is also a wrong view.

Astus wrote:

"Thus because the view of existence and nonexistence of entities will have many faults, therefore that "lack of intrinsic nature of entities" is the vision of reality; it is the middle path; and just that is the attainment of ultimate reality (paramartha)."

(Buddhapalita's commentary to MMK chapter 15, tr. William L. Ames, "Buddhapalita's Exposition of Madhyamaka" in "Journal of Indian Philosophy 14 (1986), p 322)

"For us, there is no view of reification or nihilism based on essence, because we do not maintain that entities exist essentially. Suppose one charged, "Although you do not adopt the view of reification, you do adopt the view of nihilism!" We would reply that if one first maintained that the object of annihilation exists essentially and then later

maintained that it does not exist, one would thereby repudiate the necessity of the eternal existence of that which exists essentially, and thus would fall into nihilism. But to say that that which never existed essentially in the first place does not exist is not deprecation, and therefore is not nihilism."

(Tsongkhapa's commentary to MMK 15, in "Ocean of Reasoning", p 325)

jeeprs said:

Actually, giving rise to a single thought, one falls into heterodox paths.

One has to think in order to write.

Astus wrote:

Thoughts are not eliminated or stopped. Not giving rise to means not attaching to, not having a view that there is an essence of a thought.

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.

If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, tr. McRae, p 33-34)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 11th, 2013 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Question: Other Power & Cleaning Karma

Content:

Nosta said:

Do you interpretate that way too?

Astus wrote:

There are various ways Buddhism is taught and explained. See:

<http://www.tientai.net/glossary/4siddhanta.htm>. The above one falls into the category of "worldly method".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

Our true nature is impermanent, without a self, empty, and merely the 5 skandhas?

Sounds like nihilism and materialism more than a spiritual doctrine of Awakening to me.

Aside from that, the 5 skandhas are all immanent and yet Buddhism often speaks of "transcendent wisdom." What is this wisdom that is transcendent if all that exists is the 5 skandhas?

Astus wrote:

The idea that there is a self (permanent being) inside or outside the five aggregates has never been accepted in Buddhism. Once the Vatsiputriyas/Pudgalavadins tried to walk around this by saying that the "person" (pudgala) is neither inside nor outside, and they have been regularly refuted. See chapter 9 of the Abhidharmakosabhasyam for a series of arguments against them. From the beginning of that chapter:

"Is there any liberation outside of Buddhism?

No, there is not.

What is the reason for this?

There is no liberation outside of this teaching, because other doctrines are corrupted by a false conception of a soul. The word as other doctrines conceive it is not a metaphoric expression for a series of skandhas. By the power of their belief in this soul as a substantial entity, there arises clinging to the soul, the defilements are generated, and liberation is impossible.

How do we know that the word "soul" is only a designation for a series of skandhas, and that no soul exists in and of itself? We know this because no proof establishes the existence of a soul apart from the skandhas, no proof by direct perception, nor any proof from inference. If the soul were a real entity, separate like other entities, it would be attained (i.e., known) either by direct perception as are the objects of the five sense consciousnesses and the objects of mental consciousness, or by inference, as are the five indriyas.

...

There is neither direct perception nor inference of a soul independent of the skandhas. We know then that a real soul does not exist."

Similar arguments are found in Nagarjuna's Middle Treatise (ch 18) or in Xuanzang's Cheng Weishi Lun (ch 1), just to name two fundamental Mahayana works. From the Zen side:

"There is a type of person (who holds that) there is a bright and intelligent nature that reasons and knows, that sees and hears, and is a lord over the corporeal field of the five skandhas. If one is like this and is an excellent teacher, one cheats people greatly. Do you know this? Now I ask you, 'If you acknowledge this bright intelligence as your true reality, why when you are profoundly asleep are you still not bright and intelligent? If when you are deeply asleep you are not so (bright and intelligent), you are (mistakenly) recognizing a bandit as one's own offspring, which is the root of birth and death and the conditional production of delusion.'" (Xuansha Shibe, Jingde Chuandeng Lu 18, T51n2076_p0345a18-24, tr. from http://www.buddhism.org/board/read.cgi?board=Dharma_Talks&y_number=51&nnew=1)

Or look at Dogen's writing on

<http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/intro.html>
l. From the introduction by Carl Bielefeldt:

"In his opening remarks, Dōgen dismisses several of the most common views: that the buddha nature is the potential to become a buddha, that it is the activity of cognition within us, or that it is a universal self pervading the world. Rather, he says, the buddha nature is existence itself — not an abstract principle of being, but the actual occurrence of things, or, as he puts it simply at the end of his essay, "fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.""

And there's also Sallie B. King's book on the Treatise on
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=VHQPXMqmHNIC>, about which there was some
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=2416> already.

Guifeng Zongmi, whose teachings are prominent in Jinul's Zen, also gives us a short analysis of the aggregates (Chan Prolegomenon in "Zongmi on Chan", p 126):

"There are no other dharmas beyond these, but, upon analysis, a self cannot be apprehended in any of them. Thus, one awakens to the realization that these [types of] body and mind are merely conditions, with the characteristic of seeming concord, but were never one substance. They are characterized as an apparent self and others, but there never existed a self and others."

And regarding the nature of mind as taught in Zen (p 88):

Therefore, thought of the unreal from the outset is calmed, and sense objects from the outset are void. The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. This calm Knowing of voidness and calm is precisely the mind of voidness and calm that Bodhidharma formerly transmitted.

...

Because of delusion about this Knowing there arises the characteristic of a self. When one calculates self and mine, love and hatred spontaneously arise. According to the mind of love or hatred, one does good or bad, and, as retribution for this good or bad, is reborn in one of the six rebirth paths, life after life, birth after birth, cyclically, without end. If you find a good friend to show you [the path], you will all-at-once awaken to the Knowing of voidness and calm. Knowing is no mindfulness and no form. Who is characterized as self, and who is characterized as other? When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices. With respect to understanding, it is to see that all characteristics are non-characteristics. With respect to practice, it is called the practice of nonpractice.

Both Zongmi and Jinul teaches no mindfulness/no thought as the essential path of Zen, just as it was taught in the Platform Sutra and later by Dogen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the path, the method to realise that self you say is taught in Buddhism? What meditation shows it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

jeeprs said:

So the answer as to whether there is self or not is neither yes nor no.

But large numbers of people seem to say that the answer was 'no'.

Astus wrote:

The sutta actually says that the "bewildered Vacchagotta would become even more bewildered: 'Does the self I used to have now not exist?'" There was no self any time, it does not disappear either, and that's the difference between no-self and nihilism, as already shown in what I quoted from Tsongkhapa before.

jeeprs said:

So what is 'the ground of existence'? What is it that is lacking? To have theories about that is to engage in speculation.

Astus wrote:

Actually, it is not speculation, it is defining the object of negation. And that object is the idea of independent existence, the concept that something exists on its own as it is. I say it is a concept because nobody ever experiences (or can experience) such a thing. And calling it a "non-thing" is simply saying that it doesn't exist at all and again it cannot be perceived in any way.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

I suppose a generalized path to intuiting Truth is through faith, self-mastery, detachment, seeing the 5 aggregates as anatta, meditation (be it Zazen, Vipassana, or some tantric sadhana in Vajrayana), transcending concepts, looking inward/self-inquiry etc.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific? There are step by step instructions on realising the emptiness of self and phenomena, like Chengguan's

<https://sites.google.com/site/dharmadepository/translations/examination-of-the-five-aggregates>, and other, more extensive works. Is there one to guide to the realisation of self?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

jeeprs said:

The ground of existence is not the object of negation, and is not what is being negated.

The idea that beings exist 'in themselves' is what is being negated. But the dharmadhātu cannot be negated, because without it nothing would exist.

Astus wrote:

If by dharmadhātu you mean a universal substance upholding all existence, it is negated by the same arguments that refute a creator god or the similar Taoist ideas. If dharmadhātu stands for emptiness and therefore dependent origination, it is not a shared substratum but simply interdependence of all phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Zen, Buddhism, and Taoism

Content:

LastLegend said:

It is true that the original question asked for a historical question. Therefore, we are answering in the context of that. But how much do we know to pass on such information as something accurate or who influenced who?

Astus wrote:

If knowledge of the subject is denied it cannot be asserted whether any tradition borrowed from any other, and the validity of the question is removed. If historical knowledge is possible, then there are https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_method to investigate past events.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2013 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

Astus wrote:

The word in <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/lesson/pali/reading/gatha5.htm> is

<http://dsalrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.3:1:3070.pali>, it means both ancient and eternal.

We could say that the laws of mathematics is eternal. Or the rules of chess. Or the laws of physics. Thus we have a quite old philosophical question here, the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Problem_of_universals.

From a Buddhist point of view, since we don't experience constantly anything, not even universal laws, it is not permanent. Such laws exist for us only as thoughts and nothing more. It should be noted that this is an epistemological answer to the question of a religious tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

Astus wrote:

The teaching of the Buddha has its own frame of reference, and that is the four noble truths. The teachings are meant to help one become free from suffering. The three universal characteristics (impermanence, suffering, no self) are the topics to realise to reach the three gates of liberation (emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness). The characteristics are to be contemplated in our personal realm of experience (six senses). If there were anything permanent in our experience we would be experiencing it all the time. Since there is no such experience we can confirm that all of them are impermanent. We might theorise that there is something permanent outside of our experience, however, that is only a concept, an impermanent thought, and even if there were such a thing it'd have no relevance to us.

In Yogacara they count six unconditioned dharmas. Space, analysed cessation, non-analysed cessation, motionless cessation, cessation of feeling and perception, suchness. As unconditioned they are permanent. At least they would be permanent if any of them meant a specific experience, instead of the lack of experience or a theoretical generalisation that they actually signify. In the same category we could put for instance impermanence itself, and impermanence is permanent, just like emptiness and no self. But again, they are simply conceptual explanations and not experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

jeeprs said:

realization is a different thing to experience, as per the quotation

Astus wrote:

Nevertheless, experience is something that happens in one of the six sensory gates.

Even if we talk about the subtlest mental phenomena, they are impermanent. There is no seventh sensory gate beyond the six. And if any of them were permanent we would experience it constantly.

jeeprs said:
pertain to reality, not to experience

Astus wrote:
A reality beyond experience cannot be sensed or known, therefore it is nothing but speculation.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 8:02 PM
Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent
Content:

jeeprs said:
So this level of perception is beyond 'experience' in the sense we generally understand the term, which is the experience of the natural man in the world. That is why the Buddha understands such things as the factors that cause beings to be reborn, and which drive the whole process of birth and death; and why he is said to be 'lokkutara', 'world-transcending'.

Astus wrote:
Yogic direct perception (yogipratyaksa) is still a form of experience, something that occurs and passes, that depends on causes and conditions. A definition from Mipham's Blazing Lights of the Sun and Moon (p 41):
"unconfused knowledge free from conceptualization arising in dependence on the dominant condition of the yogas of shamatha and vipashyana."
Also (p 45):
"By the yogin's meditating well in accord with the precepts taught by the guru, the ultimate meaning of egolessness, the two emptinesses, and three and countless kinds are seen. Moreover, in a single atom as many buddha fields as there are atoms, and limitless pure phenomenal worlds, the mandalas of countless buddhas, are seen and so forth. Clearly experiencing its own sphere, this is yogic direct perception."

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 8:14 PM
Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent
Content:

undefineable said:
I guess you're saying that 'permanent dharmas' refers to characteristics of reality rather than to states of mind in and of themselves. Is it not the case, though, that such dharmas can atleast be 'experienced' indirectly as a deep-seated change in one's way of seeing things (which one might of course nonetheless 'back-slide' from up to a point), rather than via some soupy altered state of consciousness?

Astus wrote:

In Yogacara there is nothing outside mind, i.e. nothing outside the realm of experience. Space is simply the lack of a physical object. Cessations are various ends of causal continua. Suchness is the fact that there is no self. Therefore these are not experiences per se, but the lack of certain factors in experience. This corresponds to the usual explanation about buddha-nature that one only has to remove the adventitious stains in order to recover it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

undefineable said:

give me the impression that you see 'yogic direct perception' is an inferior state, and that we should simply 'achieve' literal cessations (rather than transcendence) of mental activity. I've also read the translated term 'space' as referring to the nature of mind rather than to a 'lack of a physical object', as you put it.

Astus wrote:

Yogic perception is a term used in Pramana for meditative experience, it is not an inferior state, just a category of direct sensing. Regarding the cessations and space, I was simply using the Yogacara categories of the unconditioned dharmas as you can find them in Vasubandhu's Treatise on One Hundred Dharmas and Asanga's Abhidharmasamuccaya. Space here is not a metaphor for emptiness or the nature of mind, it is simply empty expanse in its ordinary sense. Also, among the different types of cessations, analysed cessation (pratisamkhyā-nirodha) corresponds to the end of defilements as achieved via insight (vipasyana), and it is not the total end of all experience. The coma-like state you mentioned would be nirodha-samapatti (attainment of cessation, the 9th dhyana) or asamjñi-samapatti (thoughtless attainment) and both are among the conditioned dharmas. Involuntary cessation of something is the unanalysed cessation (apratisamkhyā-nirodha) and that covers cases like the involuntary loss of consciousness because of fainting or deep sleep, and other types of endings in causal continua.

undefineable said:

I can't find where you resolve the apparent contradiction and explain where you find a 'middle way'

Astus wrote:

There is no contradiction. Buddha-nature has various definitions. In the above post I used it in the sense of the original nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 13th, 2013 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

undefineable said:

Is this really meant to be taken literally

Astus wrote:

"What is space (akasa)? It is the absence of matter (rupa), because the latter permits the manifestation of all kinds of activities." (Abhidharmasamuccaya 1.1.1, p 24)

undefineable said:

is this really always necessary?

Astus wrote:

No. Not everything in Buddhism has to do specifically with the path, and not everything regarding the path is a necessary element. Buddhist teachings also talk about mistaken ideas and wrong goals.

undefineable said:

Which is distinct from nothing, I take it.

Astus wrote:

As I said, there are various definitions, and many misunderstandings. For instance, saying that empty awareness is buddha-nature is easy to be mistaken for a soul, while calling it no mind or empty mind is easily misunderstood as unconsciousness. What both means, however, is that all mental phenomena are without essence, thus one can let them come and let them go, they self-liberate.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

You are in effect saying that the actual experience of enlightenment is a fiction.

Astus wrote:

How so? I say one can really be free from ignorance, clinging and all the causes of suffering. Otherwise I'd deny the very meaning of the Buddha's teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

Enlightenment is not a paradigm, attitude, or concept. It is an experience.

Astus wrote:

Could you define that experience, describe it?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

The experience of your own Buddha Nature after the adventitious defilements are removed. Retroactively it is then seen as having always been present, therefore permanent.

Astus wrote:

Yes, I asked about the experience of enlightenment you mentioned. Is the answer that it is always present? Because then I can only conclude that it simply does not exist. Unless you mean something nominal, like for instance although the water itself changes we call it the same river every day. But then it is not really an experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

Or you can conclude that you are presently unaware of it, that it is something beyond your imagination, as the teachings suggest.

Astus wrote:

If I am unaware of it now but can become aware of it later it cannot be permanent. If something is permanent either one is always aware of it or never, otherwise there is change and so impermanence.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

So the world is flat until it is discovered to be round? What changes? Does the world change or does the unawareness become aware to what actually is?

Astus wrote:

Your argument stands only when you presume there are objects independent of the mind, and you claim that buddha-nature is an external independent object to be discovered. But then, the idea that there are independent objects is only an inference and not experience. Is not enlightenment an experience?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 14th, 2013 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Not Everything is Impermanent

Content:

smcj said:

No, Buddha Nature is the essence of mind, before subject and object. It can never be taken as an object of consciousness anymore than the retina of your eye can see itself.

Astus wrote:

Experience that is not divided into subject and object is simply just experience itself, and it is always changing. But if I consider you likening it to the eye, it sounds more like an ultimate subject rather than lack of duality.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 16th, 2013 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: what is the Nirvana in zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Please see this thread about the Mahayana understanding of nirvana (including Zen) : <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=167186>. That's how non-abidance is the essential path and goal of Zen, both sudden enlightenment and the path of the bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 17th, 2013 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

If that is the case, how are we to discern which form of continual revelation is true? Nichiren claims that only the Lotus sutra and the chanting of Daimoku can lead to liberation in this degenerate age of the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra answers your question (e.g.:

http://www.fodian.net/world/0262_05.html). Nichiren followed Saicho, Saicho followed Zhiyi, Zhiyi followed Nagarjuna, Nagarjuna followed Buddha. There is a very clear connection, but also changes according to times and circumstances. That is the bodhisattva's skill in adapting the teachings to the audience.

Nichiren <http://nichiren.info/gosho/EarthlyDesires.htm>, "To practice only the seven characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo may appear limited, yet since this Law is the master of all the Buddhas of the three existences, the teacher of all the bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and the guide that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way,

its practice is incomparably profound."

So, if you approach from the teachings of Nichiren, you find the Buddhadharma in the Daimoku. If you go from the teachings of Shinran, you find it through the Nenbutsu. There are many entrances, many teachings. But they are not unrelated, they don't come from nowhere, and every Buddhist teacher establishes the teachings on the words and realisation of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 17th, 2013 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Vidyaraja said:

What I am saying is Nichiren claims that Daimoku is the only means for our era. That contradicts your very message about many entrances, at least for our Latter Day of the Law. Same thing with the issue of celibacy and tantric sexual practices. The latter isn't taught by the Buddha and contradicts his emphasis on celibacy.

Astus wrote:

Don't give too much credit to exclusivity and superiority. Every single school says that and almost every Mahayana sutra makes similar claims. It is meant to strengthen one's resolve.

You are either celibate or not, but can't be both at the same time of course. It's a matter of selecting this or that method. And as long as the method leads to liberation, it is taught by the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 17th, 2013 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: What do you really think of Western monks and nuns?

Content:

JKhedrup said:

Well it depends. I mean, if one trains as a translator, of teachings or texts, can contribute to the running of the centre, becomes a qualified teacher, or serves the lay community, there can be very great benefit.

1) If there is any hope whatsoever or I should just throw in the towel, following this as my individual path and accepting that it just isn't going to happen in the West.

2) People are meeting a lot of Western monks and nuns who are not qualified or behave badly, but if the standards improved they might be interested in assisting sincere practitioners who have an affinity for the path of ordination.

Astus wrote:

Religion is not a matter of financial resources. Even poor communities can afford to

build magnificent religious monuments and temples, plus support a strong clergy. (And then things turn and they blame the clergy for being greedy and oppressive.) What makes a religion stay alive and thriving is how well various people (classes) accept its message.

As long as Buddhism is either a hobby for relaxation, an inner quest or an intellectual curiosity - i.e. only the liberal-spiritual middle class follows it - it is a somewhat weak trend. And there is a competition for the same areas by other systems (New Age, psychology, other Eastern religions, Christianity). As I see it, Buddhism is gaining strength, many translations are published, a large number of universities have Buddhist Studies among its courses, new monasteries are established, and more and more Westerners become teachers and renunciates. It is only a matter of time to achieve bases among the larger population (or fail and disappear).

I don't see how improving behavioural standards among monastics have any relevance. In every religion there are various problems among its clergy, and Buddhism is not an exception. It is normal to struggle for perfection but that is something never reached. What is to be recognised is that the acceptance and popularity of any system or organisation depends on the social situation. As long as a tradition can change (without losing its identity) it can stay alive, but I have yet to see any example where such a change was a fully conscious event.

I believe that monasticism is important because it provides the ideal environment to train people in the Dharma. Although lay people may be able to reach a similar level of knowledge and experience, only those within the proper social situation can do that. A monastic life is open to both poor and rich. At the same time, the monastic tradition exists because there are people who want to live like that, and there are others who see them as holy individuals. That monastics are fields of merit is not a reason to establish an institution like that but an explanation for why it exists.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 18th, 2013 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Does zen believe in pure land of buddhas ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Trikaya doesn't mean three separate bodies. We'd then have three different buddhas for one buddha. The trikaya consists of the dharmakaya and the rupakaya (sambhoga & nirmana). Dharmakaya is the essence (emptiness) and rupakaya is the function (dependent origination), and they are inseparable. You can't actually have one without the others. The trikaya teaching is used to explain different aspects of a buddha, but they don't signify three distinct entities or even emanations. And just as the trikaya is used for external buddhas, they correspond also to the buddha-mind and buddha wisdoms. So it's both personal/subjective and universal/objective at the same time. A lot depends on the context the trikaya teaching is used. Buddha-lands are part of the work of the buddhas, so they come together actually.

Soto Zen - or any Zen school for that matter - does not posit a separate cosmology or "buddhology" different from common East Asian Mahayana. The unique qualities of Soto Zen lie in only certain aspects of wisdom related teachings and their application, plus certain ritualistic and organisational elements.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 18th, 2013 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: in practice chan do I need teacher !

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is better to find a Buddhist community and learn from experienced people, teachers and monks. This is especially true if you are new to Buddhism. But Chan is not restricted in any way for anyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 19th, 2013 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and meditation.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The basic requirement is the faith and vow. What practice one uses to maintain that may vary. Honen made a distinction between different forms of nenbutsu and other practices. He propagated the recitation of the name because that's the easiest and simplest. That's not the same as negating or denying the validity of other ways. And outside of the teachings of Honen and his followers the Pure Land way encompasses virtually all forms of Buddhist techniques.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 24th, 2013 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

As a short reference about previous topics discussing the same idea of "ultimate self in Buddhism":

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=36&t=14004>

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=13964>

And from the <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.001.than.html>:

Uninstructed Run-of-the-Mill Person:

"He perceives Unbinding as Unbinding. Perceiving Unbinding as Unbinding, he conceives things about Unbinding, he conceives things in Unbinding, he conceives things coming out of Unbinding, he conceives Unbinding as 'mine,' he delights in Unbinding. Why is that? Because he has not comprehended it, I tell you."

The Trainee:

"He directly knows Unbinding as Unbinding. Directly knowing Unbinding as Unbinding, let him not conceive things about Unbinding, let him not conceive things in Unbinding, let him not conceive things coming out of Unbinding, let him not conceive Unbinding as 'mine,' let him not delight in Unbinding. Why is that? So that he may comprehend it, I tell you."

The Arahant:

"He directly knows Unbinding as Unbinding. Directly knowing Unbinding as Unbinding, he does not conceive things about Unbinding, does not conceive things in Unbinding, does not conceive things coming out of Unbinding, does not conceive Unbinding as 'mine,' does not delight in Unbinding. Why is that? Because, with the ending of delusion, he is devoid of delusion, I tell you."

The Tathagata:

"He directly knows Unbinding as Unbinding. Directly knowing Unbinding as Unbinding, he does not conceive things about Unbinding, does not conceive things in Unbinding, does not conceive things coming out of Unbinding, does not conceive Unbinding as 'mine,' does not delight in Unbinding. Why is that? Because he has known that delight is the root of suffering & stress, that from coming-into-being there is birth, and that for what has come into being there is aging & death. Therefore, with the total ending, fading away, cessation, letting go, relinquishment of craving, the Tathagata has totally awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening, I tell you."

That is what the Blessed One said. Displeased, the monks did not delight in the Blessed One's words.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 25th, 2013 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Buddha rejected the interpretation that there is a self outside the aggregates, and some assumed this is somehow related to Samkhya (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.022.than.html#fn-8>). Although I don't think it really matters whether Samkhya was known or not, as their views don't fit the Buddha's teachings anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 25th, 2013 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

There is no passage in the nikayas that states, unambiguously, the Buddha "rejected the interpretation that there is a self outside the aggregates." To assert such is also to assert there is nothing outside or beyond the five murderous aggregates (S.iii.114) which also happen to be Mara the killer (S.iii.189). Neither the Buddha nor his disciples identified their self with the aggregates anymore then they might identify their self with a burning pile of grass, twigs, branches and foliage.

Astus wrote:

Read the note that was linked, read the sutta that states how there are ignorant people who believe that outside the aggregates there is an eternal self. Look at the referred sutta in the note where it states the same again. And there are other works (DN 1, MN 1, MN 11, etc.) pointing out clearly that the Buddha's teaching is different from all the others because it does not assume any self in any way whatsoever. Later tradition also refutes it in many ways, just as it has been done several times by people on this forum.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Malcolm said:

Apart from a common agreement that klesas are what is responsible for transmigration, I don't see these systems as having much in common in terms of how they present the basis, the path and the result.

Astus wrote:

"Though certain recluses and brahmins claim to propound the full understanding of all kinds of clinging...they describe the full understanding of clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, and clinging to rules and observances without describing the full understanding of clinging to a doctrine of self. " (MN 11)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

How is it that one of Japan's greatly respected Buddhist scholars, who is also an expert in Indian religions, writes:

Astus wrote:

That has no relevance to what is and what is not stated in the Nikayas. Your quote is not even from a commentary, not to mention an actual sutta. If you can find a passage in the Pali Canon where the Buddha states explicitly that there is an eternal self beyond the aggregates, that is something pertinent here. Because I have already shown that he

says exactly the opposite in several major suttas in a clear language.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

to be fair Not-Self was treated worse in the Nikayas than "Self"

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.059.mend.html>

"Form, O monks, is not-self; if form were self, then form would not lead to affliction and it should obtain regarding form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus'; and indeed, O monks, since form is not-self, therefore form leads to affliction and it does not obtain regarding form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus.'

people forget the Pali canon is like 20,000 pages long.....and many of those Nikayas say No self is suffering, No self is what leads to suffering, to abandon no self, one sutta even says no self is what belong to Mara("the devil")

Astus wrote:

No-self is not a thing, it is a statement that something is without self, that is, a permanent identity. Self, on the other hand, is the concept that there is a permanent identity. If form, etc. had a permanent identity, it wouldn't change, therefore we couldn't do anything about it, no matter whether it's pleasurable or painful. So, a permanent identity makes zero sense to me. If you say that an unchangeable thing or being is a useful idea, that's your decision.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

He does this by dis-identifying with the whole aggregate package; this dis-identification, by any other name, is transcendence.

Astus wrote:

But if after that you identify with a "transcendental self" it is still clinging to the aggregates. If you suppose there is a self beyond the aggregates, that is the very ignorance resulting in suffering. If you believe that nirvana is self, that is, again, a self-view that results in rebirth. And if you think that there was a self that got removed is the extreme view of annihilation, just as a permanent (transcendent or not) self is the view of eternity.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

jeeprs said:

The Buddha nature is inconceivable, but not non-existent.

Astus wrote:

If it is inconceivable, how can you make any statement about it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2013 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

If emptiness is equated with dependent origination, then if emptiness is unconditioned, dependent origination must also be unconditioned. If dependent origination is unconditioned, then causality must also be unconditioned. In other words, there is no cause for causality, which is a contradiction in terms.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means the lack of independent essence. Because things are dependent they are not independent, that is, empty of independent essence. That's how dependent origination and emptiness mean the same. And that lack of independence is indeed unconditioned, it did not come from somewhere nor does it go anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

The problem is that "vertical" dependence demands a starting point. The question then is: Is this starting point conditioned or unconditioned? If it is conditioned, then it cannot be the starting point. If it is unconditioned, how can it be the cause of all the others that is above it?

Astus wrote:

Buddhism never posited a starting point, a fundamental essence, a creator god. And there is no need for that either. There is simply no beginning that could be assumed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

So after quarks, it is turtles all the way down.

Astus wrote:

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of good and bad [dharmas]?"

Answer: "The body is their fundamental basis."

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of the body?"

Answer: "Desire is its fundamental basis."

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of desire?"

Answer: "False discrimination is its fundamental basis."

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of false discrimination?"

Answer: "Confused conception is its fundamental basis."

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of confused conception?"

Answer: "The nonabiding is its fundamental basis."

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, "What is the fundamental basis of nonabiding?"

Answer: "Nonabiding is without any fundamental [basis]. Mañjuśrī, all dharmas are established on the fundamental [basis] of nonabiding."

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 7, p 126-127; tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 3:21 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

Understanding this is not as easy as it looks.

Astus wrote:

A similar series of questions is found at the end of MN 44 where they go through the stages of gradual training ending in nirvana (also see AN 10.58 and AN 4.174). Neither the Vimalakirti Sutra nor the suttas in the Pali Canon talk about an ontological problem but about how the mind works and what is to be practised. You may find clearer instructions in meditation manuals covering vipashyana, for instance those by Zhiyi or Kamalashila.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

conebeckham said:

Per 3rd Karmapa's Mahamudra prayer, Mind does not "exist." But Mind cannot be said to be "nonexistent." ... Consciousness at it's most basic level. A "Knowing."

Astus wrote:

A knowing/awareness cannot be experienced - only assumed - existing in and of itself.

There is always something known, there is always a content of awareness. Or rather we should change the words mind/knowing/awareness to experience. Experience cannot be separated from appearances, they are not two different things. Experience may or may not include the duality of subject and object, this is well explained in Yogacara.

Some quotes from Chökyi Nyima's "Song of Karmapa" (highlights by me):

"When we try to examine our mind, what do we find? We do not find a 'thing' which we can think of or perceive. Beyond being an object of investigation it is not existent, and therefore lies beyond the extreme of existence, of eternalism. But on the other hand, we have various sorts of feelings and thoughts, as well as our sense organs, which link objects and consciousness together. Different sense perceptions occur; we see forms, hear sounds and so forth. So because of perception, mind is not nonexistent. In this way the extreme of the mind as a complete nothing is also avoided."
(p65)

"Mind is not existent since even the perfectly enlightened ones, the buddhas who see everything in the three times distinctly and precisely, have not seen it as being a concrete thing of a certain size, color or shape. Therefore we cannot say that the mind exists. But as the basis of samsara and nirvana, in the sense that its nature is to manifest perception, thoughts and feelings, we cannot say it is nonexistent. There is no contradiction or conflict here. That is the view of the Middle Way. Samsara is not understanding the unity of the two truths; nirvana is having the right understanding of this unity. This is the dividing line between samsara and nirvana."
(p66)

"Things appear in that they are perceived, while in fact they are by nature nonexistent. While being empty or nonexistent they still appear, and this occurs without any contradictions or conflict between emptiness and appearance. This nature of things is what we must realize. May we see the vital point of the nature of things, the unity of appearance and emptiness."
(p70)

"Why is the nature of mind not nonexistent? Given the possibility of perception, of experience taking place, we cannot say that it is nonexistent. For example, based on the buddha nature you can prove that the mind is the unity of emptiness and cognizance. Whether we call it 'relative phenomena,' 'the cognizance of enlightened mind' or 'the apparent aspect of things,' still there is something that cannot be denied, and this refers not only to mistaken mind. But when we examine a thought or feeling, there is no concrete thing to find; it has no self nature. We have arrived at emptiness."
(p72)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, if you are a follower of Madhyamaka.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how an independent awareness could fit into Theravada or Yogacara either. And, as Cone said, in Kagyu.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

daverupa said:

Vinnana arises dependent on namarupa, the six sense bases, or the first four khandas, and is nowhere in the Nikayas said to cognize itself.

Additionally, it is not the same vinnana which cognizes sounds and which cognizes sights, so to say that vinnana might cognize itself seems to take it as an existent entity which persists over time, rather than as one aspect of a process.

Astus wrote:

But if you take self-awareness in a different way, not analysed to the smallest particles, it is quite clear that one is conscious of one's thoughts, otherwise the whole mindfulness practice is impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Malcolm said:

There exists a detailed defense of reflexive cognition in Ratnakarashanti's Madhyamakālaṃkāra, not to mention the fact that epistemologists like Dharmakīrti extensively advance the idea.

Further in secret mantra it is stated that the wisdom of a tathāgata is a reflexive cognition, not only is it a reflexive cognition but it does not operate through sense organs.

Astus wrote:

I know only Shantarakṣita's Madhyamakālaṃkāra and there self-awareness is a conventional phenomenon, and it's his way of explaining consciousness only. Also, self-awareness is not necessarily the same as an independent awareness. so I'm not sure why you brought in the topic of reflexive cognition.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Malcolm said:

The core of the conditioned is unconditioned.

Sherab said:

So the core of the compounded is un compounded, the core of the born is unborn, the core of the transcended is untranscended?

If yes, then it simply means what is experienced as conditioned is really unconditioned, what is experienced as compounded is really un compounded, what is experienced as born is really unborn, and what is experience as transcended is really untranscended. That would simply mean that there is no conditioned, no compounded, no born, no transcended. And that would simply mean that all that is experienced is nothing but an illusion, a hallucination.

And since, in a non-dual state, the experiencer is the experienced, the experiencer must also be an illusion. So we could all be merely part of a computer simulation such as The Matrix and the Buddha is part of that as well. Or the Hindu belief that we are all the dream of the God Brahma is correct and Buddha is also part of the dream.

And that would be a problem.

Astus wrote:

You talk of compounded and un compounded as two different things. Rather, because appearances are compound phenomena they are empty, dependent. Because things are born they are unborn. Unborn means that there is no actual fixed independent essence that is really born of something (or nothing, from itself or another...). If there were such an essence it could not be born, either it was existent or non-existent but change could never happen. That's why emptiness is not different from appearances at all.

There is neither an experiencer nor an experienced, there is just experience, and even that is empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

My view is that reflexivity has to be the nature of any form of awareness. Otherwise, there is no possibility of an awareness being an awareness. In other words, for awareness to be aware, it has to be aware that it is aware.

Astus wrote:

It is aware that it is aware, and it is aware that it is aware it is aware, etc. I think it's rather that appearances and consciousness are inseparable. Whatever is experienced is necessarily perceived. This need for a special self-reflection comes up when awareness is believed to be an entity on its own that shines outside, as if it were like the physical eye, however, I consider it an incorrect metaphor.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

you say a permanent Identity makes no sense to you.....so did Shakyamuni

Permanently get rid of greed anger and hatred when he became Enlightened or did those traits arise again in his life time???

once a person "becomes" Enlightened do they ever slip back into Samsaric ways, falling back into death and rebirth or are they Permanently Enlightened?

Astus wrote:

When there is no cause for something to occur it does not occur. When the root afflictions/causes are removed then there is no more birth, no more afflictions. That's how not just buddhas don't fall back but even a stream-enterer doesn't fall back from the path.

Son of Buddha said:

but again it all depends on your teacher what sect or tradition you follow and what suttas/sutras you adhere to.

Astus wrote:

I wonder, if you don't mind answering, what tradition do you follow?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2013 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

anjali said:

Just to confirm: you take the position that self-reflexive knowing is not possible (the knowing quality of the mind can't know itself in a direct, nondual way)?

Astus wrote:

Mind is itself knowing. Knowing is the essential quality of mind and a mind without awareness is not mind at all. There is no mental phenomena that could be without consciousness. Therefore, to say that "knowing knows itself" is redundant and unnecessary, as there is no mental phenomena without awareness, but also there is no

fixed phenomena as "knowing itself" that should be self-aware.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Son of Buddha said:

so Shakyamuni did put a Permanent end to greed anger and hatred when he became Enlightened correct??

so the "cause" was permanently put to an end correct?

is Enlightenment Permanent or can i slip back into Samsaric ways?

Astus wrote:

Of course, it is a permanent end of afflictions and there is no return. That's why it is also called, among other names, the Deathless.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

I am just wondering, but how does one personally know "there is just experience"? Of course we all know that anyone can imagine such as state but what the imagination concocts doesn't mean it is either real or attainable.

Astus wrote:

If there is something that is not an experience you don't experience it, consequently you don't know anything about it. What is not an experience is nothing more than a presumption, a hypothesis, a fantasy, an idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

When you said ealier: There is neither an experiencer nor an experienced, there is just experience, and even that is empty, does this pertain to "a presumption, a hypothesis, a fantasy, an idea"?

Astus wrote:

As Cone replied already, yes. Whatever is said here is always and inevitably a conceptual creation. One of the main aspects of the teachings on emptiness is to realise this fact, that concepts are concepts and not truths. Those who believe that one should therefore get rid of concepts still assumes that thoughts are somehow real and

they are a hindrance. The only hindrance is the idea that concepts are more than concepts. Without attachment there are neither grasping nor rejecting of thoughts and appearances, they are simply dependent appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

conebeckham said:

This leads to the question: for those who feel they have "had an experience" or "experienced" Wisdom or Buddhamind or whatnot, and have somehow consequently conceptualized that experience as a sort of "Self," is that "experience" really the experience of Wisdom that is talked about in Sutra, Tantra, and Upadesha? Or is it a mistaken experience?

Astus wrote:

As in my response above, I don't separate concepts and experience that strongly. Thoughts are parts of our everyday experience. One can taste honey, smell it, see it, touch it, and also name it and imagine it. Wisdom is seeing the nature of experience (mind, appearances, etc.), and it is readily apparent that experience is impermanent, dependently originated, empty, if looked at in the right way. At the same time, when there is mistaking this or that experience for some ultimate reality, truly abiding, permanent entity, attachment, suffering and habits occur. Even if that experience is assumed to be nirvana, the nature of mind, or any other lofty concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

anjali said:

I think we all accept the higher-order knowing model: I see an apple; I know that I see an apple.

The trikaya model takes this three-aspect approach. The three facets/dimensions are, 1. emptiness, 2. clarity (knowing), and 3. radiance or emanation. The knowing knows itself directly; the knowing knows it is emptiness; the knowing knows radiance as itself. Again, none of this involves a knower of any kind. We discuss these three aspects separately, but in fact they are a unity and are indivisible.

Astus wrote:

Since the beginning Buddhism has the six consciousnesses and eighteen areas of experience, among them the mental consciousness and the area of mental phenomena. Thus seeing an apple is an eye-consciousness where one already has awareness of that appearance, and generating another layer of recognising that one is aware of seeing an apple is mental consciousness. In terms of the aggregates seeing an apple is form,

calling it an apple is perception, and knowing about both is consciousness. All of the eighteen areas and five aggregates work together without a problem.

In the internalised trikaya model, as you said, the three are explained separately but they are not actually three different things. There are a number of ways to explain that. The simplest is the statement of the third "kaya" that emptiness and clarity are inseparable; here it is understood that clarity includes all appearances, it is dependent origination. When clarity is meant only as awareness and the nirmanakaya as phenomena, one can add the fourth body to confirm their inseparability. It is also possible to turn to a Huayan explanation where there are 10 bodies, that is, each body includes the other two making nine and all of them together to arrive at ten. So, when you say that knowing knows itself, emptiness and radiance, that is actually the Huayan model. Although logically to say that knowing includes (knows) knowing is nothing but stating that knowing is knowing.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Sherab said:

Consider a situation when there is no internal or external stimulus for the mind. In that situation, the mind should still be aware that it is aware in spite of the lack of any form of stimulus (ie. appearance). So to me, reflexivity should be part and parcel of mind itself.

Astus wrote:

When there is no "internal stimulus", it means there is no mental movement, no mental phenomena. And that means unconsciousness, mindlessness. Mind does not exist as some container, it is not above and beyond mental content. That's why in Buddhism there is the teaching of the eighteen dhatus. There is no "consciousness itself" in Buddhism, not even in Yogacara (Asanga-Vasubandhu, Xuanzang). If there were such a thing it would mean that everyone is always aware, but that's not the case. It would mean there is a consciousness independent of everything else, consequently not conscious of anything other than itself. What would be the use of that kind of self-contained consciousness? It would be like an unmoved mover that doesn't actually move anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 29th, 2013 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

jeeprs said:

Why then is there significance given to dhyana states such as the 'immaterial dhyanas'? Do you think when yogis are in those states they are simply inert? Might they as well be asleep? The way I would understand it, this is what is implied by 'passing beyond duality',

but it is not simply 'unconsciousness'. It is consciousness without the sense of there being an observer. "Contentless consciousness" is one description I have read.

Astus wrote:

Arupa-dhyanas only exclude rupa but not the mental aggregates. All the qualities of the fourth dhyana are also present, so it is far from being an inert state. And the formless absorptions are not "beyond duality" either, at least not as realisations or mental states. A contentless consciousness is a misleading poetical term, or a mistaken philosophical concept, depending on what you mean by it. The realm that is without all mental functions ("contents") in Buddhism is found within the form realm and it's called the realm/heaven of unconscious beings (asamjnisattva; 無想天).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 29th, 2013 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

jeeprs said:

So you equate the jhanas with mindlessness?

Astus wrote:

Not at all. Absorptions are all mental activities themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2013 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

Let's look at conceptual appearances. Upon what, specifically, do these "dependent appearances" depend?

Astus wrote:

The six senses depend on mentality-materiality, mentality-materiality depends on consciousness, consciousness depends on formations. In short, interdependence, and not dependence on an ultimate ground/base/substance as some believe.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2013 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

anjali said:

The question on the table is whether the knowing quality of the mind can turn back on itself (self-reflexive knowing)? To hijack a zen phrase, is it possible to "turn the light and illuminate back?" From the perspective of self-reflexive knowing, this can be interpreted as taking the light of one's awareness and turning it back on itself. There are folks who

say this can be done, and describe it as a singular experience.

Astus wrote:

The Zen phrase does not mean a self-contained knowing, it means to see the mental states we just follow and not recognise, that is, acting out of emotions and convictions. And in some sense this is in fact mind seeing mind, and in ordinary language it is appropriate to call it self-reflection.

There is no knowing quality on its own. Consciousness does not exist alone. Therefore, there is nothing to turn back on itself. In other words, mind is not a singular entity.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2013 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

jeeprs said:

I have heard the argument that mind, being of the nature of clarity and awareness, must have clarity and awareness as its substantial cause, as like must come from like. This argument also says that mind is not something that can be produced or artificially created. So that would suggest that mind is not something that can be reduced or explained in terms of something else, would it not?

Astus wrote:

There is a mental continuum, series of thoughts, emotions, habits, etc. The idea is that the cause of rebirth lies in ingrained habits (taints/asrava and defilements/klesa; summed up as alayavijnana in Yogacara) and they are mental phenomena/dharma, therefore the demise of the physical body does not hinder the generation of further births. But stating a radical separation of mind and matter (nama-rupa) is unnecessary, as in the 18 dhatu system we see how external phenomena take part in forming various consciousnesses, and in the mind only systems we find the explicit inclusion of all appearances into a single realm of experience. The substantiation of mind as an independent awareness goes against the general meaning of dependent origination and postulates an ultimate self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2013 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

futerko said:

Correct me if I'm wrong here, but aren't formations (and hence the rest) dependent on ignorance? In other words, there is no first cause, and no origination.

Astus wrote:

Yes, as you say. Formations come from ignorance, ignorance is interdependent with ingrained habits, and both are maintained and generated by further actions, deeds that

are themselves motivated by ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2013 at 9:17 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

futerko said:

...the point being that this does not thereby refute the idea of the base/ground as the alternative to the causal chain of ignorance.

Astus wrote:

Such a ground is necessarily without cause, therefore does not agree with interdependence. A ground also has other problems, like a single cause of many results, independent while creating dependent things, permanence generating impermanent things, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

anjali said:

Yes, the knowing quality of the mind is fundamentally empty. As far as I know, no one is saying otherwise. However, this doesn't preclude the possibility self-reflexive knowing. This is why, in a reply to daverupa, I noted that we need to be clear on the distinction between self-reflexive knowing and self-grasping. Self-knowing is just that, knowing that knows itself. Nothing more. Relative to the trikaya model, it is only the ignorance of self-grasping that imputes a substantial (instead of empty), isolated (instead of unified with it's radiance) self-knowing.

Astus wrote:

We know that we are sentient beings simply because we sense things and we are aware of this process. This is self-awareness. Would you call this knowing that knows itself? If so, this is not a problematic idea at all. Only if you suppose some independent knowing that knows itself is there a problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Malcolm said:

what do you mean by independent knowing?

Astus wrote:

Knowing without an object, pure subjectivity, self-contained awareness.

Consciousness that does not require conditions to bring it about.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

anjali said:

In response to devarupa, I commented that this is also known as self-awareness direct perception (rang rig mngon sum), and is defined

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Valid_direct_perception_of_self-awareness as, "the unmistakable non-conceptual reflexive awareness that accompanies all states of mind".

A further assertion is that self-reflexive knowing is primal. When the ignorance of self-grasping becomes wisdom, the self-illuminating quality remains.

Astus wrote:

Xuanzang in the Cheng Weishi Lun (Keenan: p 61-64, ch 3.11-12/ Wei Tat: 139-143, 2.3.2-3) describes a maximum of four aspects (bhaga) of consciousness. The seen (nimitta), the seeing (darsana), self-knowing (svasamvitti), and self-knowing knowing (svasamvitti-samvitti). The object is known by the subject, that by self-knowing what is known by the self-knowing knowing, and that is known by self-knowing itself to avoid infinite regression. That is: object <-- seeing <-- self-knowing <--> self-knowing knowing. Self-knowing and its knowing are both direct perceptions. An important point here is that there is know subject/seeing/knowing without object. Also, the four parts can be reduced to three (seen, seeing, self-knowing), two (seen and seeing) and even one (consciousness). These functions are not defined by whether one grasps a self or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 5:20 AM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

futerko said:

For interdependence to be "truly true", as opposed to merely the play of appearances of that which is uncaused, you need to posit a first cause.

What you refer to here as, "many results", created "dependent things", and generated "impermanent things", all have their "first cause" as ignorance.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by "truly true"? Appearances are like a dream, a mirage, an illusion, etc., as many sutras say, both Nikayas and Mahayana texts.

Ignorance is not a "first cause" because it has its causes too. If ignorance were without a cause it could not be ended.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Koji said:

It's illusion all the way down.

Astus wrote:

Infinite regression occurs when you posit a ground, and when asked what that ground stands on you claim there is another ground. I don't say there is a ground. The orbit of the Earth is influenced both by the Sun and other planets, not to mention its own mass and other factors. That's interdependence. Proposing a ground without cause is just a turtle flying in space (like Great A'Tuin).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't accept that explanation. I found the source for that argument, it was from the Dalai Lama's statement on reincarnation:

Similar causes produce similar results (samanantara-pratyaya), from a previous mental dharma a new mental dharma comes. This is a generally established factor in Buddhist teachings on causality and karma. From that it does not come that there is some ultimate substance that is maintained from moment to moment, or an independent consciousness persisting through time. It actually confirms the momentariness of mind and the concept of mind-stream.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Early Buddhism and Mahayana

Content:

futerko said:

There seems to me to be a marked difference between claiming that the basis is empty/illusory and simply denying it altogether. What you're calling interdependence here looks basically like a list of effects without any substantive cause, but still treating the objects as if they were substantial and actual.

There seem to be two basic ways to treat this; either as actual causes and effects, which would require some kind of exceptional causal event (such as the big bang, or and act of creation), or to see the effects themselves as symptomatic of the illusory nature of the ground of Being.

In other words, despite denying “another ground”, you still seem to be relying on a transcendent ontology.

Astus wrote:

An illusory basis is that there seems to be one but there is not. And that is true for those who believe in an ultimate ground/self, for them there appears to be such a thing while in fact there is not. What I say is that there are causes and effects. There is no cause without effect, and there is no cause that was not caused by another cause. A ground would be an effect without cause.

Why the need for an exceptional causal event? Do you assume that once there was nothing?

What transcendent ontology do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 6th, 2013 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: "Four articles of conversion"

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I will practice the four all-embracing acts (giving, kind speech, benefiting others, and cooperation toward leading all beings to virtuous deeds) for all living beings, and not for myself. I accept all living beings without lust, without satiation, and without prejudice."
(Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar, ch 2; tr. Diana Y. Paul)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 6th, 2013 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: Christian Influences in Modern Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

On what bases are those influences attributed to Christianity? The 19th and 20th century Western intellectual elite was (and still is) secular. Those who did not reject Buddhism completely as idolatry were secular thinkers and not God fearing theologians. The romantic view of Buddhism as a human achievement was made up by those who did not agree with the whole idea of religion as it was perceived in Europe. Therefore to say that "The Buddha could be seen as a humane religious reformer on the model of Jesus, teaching through parables and other simple and straightforward means." is inappropriate. Turning Jesus into a mere human being is a detestable belief by all mainstream Christians and a heretic idea since 325 (First Council of Nicaea). Also, viewing Jesus as some sort of counter-culture hero is far from the Christian perspective, especially of the 19th century and before, since it has been the established order in Europe from the beginning of the Middle Ages that it is God who ultimately gives legitimacy to kings and other worldly rulers.

All in all, Christianity is the wrong place to look at for modern sources of changes in

Buddhism. It is rather the secular thinkers (philosophers, artists, politicians, scientists) who made the greatest impact.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 6th, 2013 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Christian Influences in Modern Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Humanistic Buddhism is not necessarily a new idea. Maitreya cults existed in China centuries before and they tried to create a Pure Land on Earth (even with violent means). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taixu>, who is said to be the founder of this modern movement, was influenced by the political changes in early 20th century China, and it's said he also participated somewhat in overthrowing the Qing dynasty. But it is only in Taiwan that the idea could actually manifest through the works of people like Yinshun, Xingyun, Shengyan and others. In some sense we could say that this idea of "modernising Buddhism" is a good way to distance oneself from continental ("communist") Buddhism as it exists now, and deflect attacks that Buddhism is outdated and backward. However, this has very little, or rather nothing, to do with Christianity or even direct Western influence.

It is easy to make biased claims when one has a very partial knowledge of the various processes that took place in a far away land. For example, that reincarnation and meditation are strictly Eastern ideas is such an uninformed view. While New Age embraces Asian ideas, it is less an implementation of Indian thoughts than a renewal of Western esoteric ideas. See for instance <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metempsychosis> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilgul>. Also, ancient Christian teachers rejected the idea of reincarnation (see <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/reincarnation>) without having a direct contact with Buddhism or any Hindu religion.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2013 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Christian Influences in Modern Buddhism

Content:

rory said:

Western esotericism derived from Jewish and Christian magic and Kabbalism and that derived from Greek and Egyptian magical treatises (see the above).

Astus wrote:

I said "without having a direct contact with Buddhism or any Hindu religion" related to ancient philosophers. Also, "New Age ... is less an implementation of Indian thoughts than a renewal of Western esoteric ideas". Europeans knew about various Buddhist and Eastern ideas from the 16th century on. What I say is that the Western tradition, while had influence from Asia, it relied more on its own predecessors. And as an example I gave the idea of reincarnation, something that existed within the European tradition before Westerners started to colonise and convert Asian countries. I quoted ancient

Christian writers only to show that they made no reference to any Indian thinker when refuting the idea of reincarnation, that is, they had no direct contact with India or other Asian territories. That in ancient times there was some sort of contact between India, Greece and the Romans is well known, but it does not mean any massive cultural influence. And even today, against all the popular books on Taoism, Yoga, Buddhism, etc., it is on one hand transformed in today's context, and they still represent only a minor and exotic aspect in Western thought.

And all that was just an example, as the topic is a supposed Christian influence on modern Buddhism, something that I don't see as an established fact.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 18th, 2013 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Provenance of Pure Land Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

All Pure Land practices and teachings are Mahayana. Looking at the Agamas and Nikayas is pointless as those are not Mahayana. The exclusive nenbutsu is a teaching of Honen as described in his many writings.

In the Agamas and Nikayas only the sravaka path is taught. Mahayana is about the bodhisattva path. Infinite buddhas and buddha-lands are taught within the Mahayana scriptures, and the methods to establish a connection with various buddhas and attain birth in buddha-lands. Amitabha is one of those buddhas and Sukhavati is one of those buddha-lands. For numerous reasons, as Honen explained, the sole practice of nenbutsu is enough to attain birth in Sukhavati and be assured of reaching buddhahood.

So, what is the origin of Pure Land practice? The Mahayana sutras. Are the Mahayana sutras authentic? Only for Buddhists who follow them. Is authenticity based on verifiable historical findings? No. How could then modern research about the development of Buddhism have any relevance to the validity of Pure Land teachings? Even without all the scholarly arguments there are many past and present Buddhists who don't accept Honen's teachings, otherwise everybody were his followers.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 20th, 2013 at 6:36 AM

Title: Re: What has Chinese Buddhism lost?

Content:

Indrajala said:

I find Pure Land philosophy inconsistent and simply unappealing. It moreover seems contrary to a lot of what I would think constitutes Buddhadharma. The idea of attempting to escape the world and achieve eventual liberation by hoping for rebirth in a celestial paradise at death based on the purported vows of a buddha is hardly in line with early Buddhism or even more mainstream Indian Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

Bodhisattvas postpone their complete liberation till all beings are liberated. Also, bodhisattvas visit numerous buddha-lands to serve, respect and learn from many buddhas. This is taught in early Mahayana. Aspiring for birth in Amitabha's land fits into this perfectly. Sukhavati is recommended over other lands because it is said to be the easiest to get into, that it does not require one to be an arya-bodhisattva. Among the various practices recitation is recommended simply because it is easier than visualisation. How is all this contrary to Buddhadharma?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 27th, 2013 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: Provenance of Pure Land Practice

Content:

Indrajala said:

Focusing exclusively on gaining entry into the Pure Land while largely ignoring and/or disregarding the core teachings of Buddhadharma is unwise.

Pure Land as it is commonly practiced is more Devayāna in my estimation. You attempt to gain the graces of a certain buddha in the hopes of being freed from the pains of this world and thereafter ascend into a higher realm, but this is said to only be possible postmortem.

You can say the whole point is to advance one's bodhisattva career thereafter, but this is hardly what I have observed in real life.

Astus wrote:

You refer to your observations among common Buddhists. However, no religion is defined by its lay followers, but by its canonical works and accepted interpretations. It is easy to point to ordinary people failing to follow the teachings of their chosen faith anywhere in the world. And here's an important difference between the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land (according to Honen): simply by nenbutsu people attain birth in the Pure Land. They don't need to understand anything about karma, buddhas, lands, or even the three minds and four practices. On the other hand, on the Path of Sages one needs not only to understand such concepts as emptiness, rebirth, mind only, merit, etc. but also actualise them. One needs to uphold not just the five precepts but also avoid minor offences and accomplish great deeds.

The Pure Land path is not Devayana, as the Pure Land is not merely a heavenly realm, and the goal of any informed practitioner is not to gain some sort of eternal salvation in Paradise but to fulfil the bodhisattva vows. One understands the impermanence of this world and every other realms in samsara, moreover one realises the deficiency in one's abilities and circumstances. As Shakyamuni was a rich prince who renounced worldly affairs, Honen was an erudite and respected monk who gave up all his studies and meditation for the nenbutsu.

The core teachings of Buddhism are not disregarded at all. In fact, the Pure Land

teaching is built upon them. There is no meaning to the entire teaching of any Pure Land tradition without Mahayana. Madhyamaka teaches that the essence of the Buddhadharma is insight into emptiness. Yogacara teaches that the essence is insight into mind only. Zen teaches that the essence is insight into the nature of mind. All of them find insight into suchness as the cardinal point of the bodhisattva path, what separates ordinary people from noble beings. The path of Pure Land - in Honen's presentation - is something that presents an option for those who fail to gain such wisdom, and gives them a simple and easy practice to gain that liberating realisation in the next life. He does not say that such an insight is not important, nor does he say that practising the paramitas and upholding the precepts is meaningless. He just recognises that those are not easy things to accomplish, especially for common householders. He accepts that enlightenment in this life does not happen to everyone. How is that contrary to the Buddha's teachings?

What Honen observed in himself, and others, is not very different from what you say, that people mostly pretend to be practitioners, and even those who do it seriously often fail to show the qualities that the Blessed One's teachings should bring about. The majority of Buddhists are far from being saints, and among those with seemingly pure ethics it is difficult to find wise ones. But instead of criticising others, Honen pointed his finger to himself and said that he is just an ordinary human being who has no other choice but to rely on the nenbutsu. He did not write pamphlets and treatises about how wrong and corrupt everybody else are, rather he advised his followers to desist from quarrelling with other Buddhists and instead respect them. This is something one can rarely see even among the most outstanding masters.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 28th, 2013 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Provenance of Pure Land Practice

Content:

Indrajala said:

What you're referring to is the prescriptive. I'm referring to the descriptive.

Astus wrote:

Do you have a description of any Buddhist group/tradition where the majority of followers are fulfilling the prescribed teachings? And if your criticism is about how certain people act it does not address the teaching itself.

Indrajala said:

This is an article of faith that would seem contrary to traditional theories of karma, including what the Buddha described.

Astus wrote:

Karma is an article of faith. The possibility of birth in a buddha-land is not contrary to karma as I see it. Could you explain what you see here as a contradiction?

Indrajala said:

Saying you can neglect proper study and get superior results to one who actually put in the time and effort to study is like saying the amateur surgeon is commendable for their good intentions.

Astus wrote:

Nobody said that. The idea in gaining birth in the Pure Land is to postpone that required study and effort. And it is postponed because in one's current situation such study and effort is not possible and/or not certain to bring results. The attainment of buddhahood is guaranteed only on the stage of no regression. Since there's hardly any living teacher who claims to be anything but an ordinary person (pudgala), on what basis can one have faith that one would be more successful in practising the Dharma? Therefore it only seems logical that aspiring for birth in the Pure Land is the most sensible decision. To use your example, mastering surgery takes lot of education and practice, and that costs time and money. While a few may be rich and already finished primary and secondary education, many people have trouble not just with biology and chemistry, but with the basic skills of literacy and mathematics, plus they are quite poor and busy with making a living. And even among those who are qualified surgeons, only a handful of them are really good at what they do.

Indrajala said:

As I have demonstrated above, this is not so

Astus wrote:

Could you give a link to your explanation?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 4th, 2013 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Following the breath is breath meditation (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anapanasati> and http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm). Shikantaza is something else, as explained in that video. See the <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/okumura-zazen.shtml> of Shohaku Okumura. You may also look at the <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>, although as an end note there it mentions breath awareness (and makes an incorrect distinction between Hinayana and Mahayana), in the actual guide on what to do with the mind it only says, "Do not concentrate on any particular object or control your thought. ... Just leave thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely. The essential thing in doing zazen is to awaken (kakusoku) from distraction and dullness, and return to the right posture moment by moment." The http://antaiji.org/?page_id=7136&lang=en is also a very good classical instruction.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 8th, 2013 at 6:56 PM

Title: Re: Daesung Sunim

Content:

Astus wrote:

So there is a Korean monk who cannot make a difference between the Buddha's teachings and those who believe in an ultimate self. Perhaps they should strengthen their studies of actual Buddhist doctrines instead of spreading incorrect views.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2013 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is almost what in Theravada they call the awareness of rise and fall, the difference lies in the background explanation. So it's not difficult to integrate breath awareness and shikantaza, since shikantaza is basically prajnaparamita. As mentioned above, if you follow Zhiyi's Six Gates then you cover it all in an organised fashion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2013 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Matylda said:

ST has nothing to do with rise and fall, neither it is integration of breath awareness and ST... nor Zhiyi taught ST.

The only close source for ST is Wanshi Shogaku teaching.

Astus wrote:

I said that based on what is found in Dogen's, Keizan's and Uchiyama's instructions, plus others, about shikantaza. How do you define shikantaza?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 16th, 2013 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana views on dying and intermediate state

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jinul writes (Chinul's Works, p 141; in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2):

At the moment of your death, wind and fire will oppress you, the four material elements (mahābhūta) will separate and scatter, and the mind will go mad, feeling stifled and cramped, and become subject to the inversions (viparyāsa) and distorted views. As you have no stratagem for soaring into the heavens above nor any plan through which to enter the earth below, you will cower in fright, bereft of everything on which you used to

rely. Your physical body will be left behind as if it were a cicada's cast-off shell. Confused about the road stretching before you, your lonely spirit will have to go on alone. Although you may have owned precious jewelry and priceless riches, you can take none of it with you. Although you may have relatives from prestigious households, ultimately not one of them can follow along behind to rescue you. This is what is meant by the statement, "What one makes oneself, one receives oneself; there is no one to take one's place."

Then quotes Baizhang (p 142),

"[At the time of your death,] all the unwholesome actions you performed throughout your lifetime will appear before you, either alarming or pleasing you. The six rebirth destinies (s.ad. gati) and the five aggregates of being (pañcaskandha) will appear before you, and you will see beautifully decorated houses, skiffs, carts, and palanquins all shining brilliantly. [These sights] make your mind dissolute so that the things you view with greed and lust are all transformed into pleasing sensory objects. You will be reborn at the spot where those sights are most intense, without one iota of choice in the matter; whether as a dragon or an ox, whether of high or low status, absolutely nothing is fixed."

Only enlightened beings are capable of choosing their birth. Jinul quotes Sengzhao (Straight Talk on the True Mind, in "Collected Works of Chinul", p 181):

"Saints abide in existence but are nonexistent; they dwell in nonexistence but are not nonexistent. Although they cling neither to existence nor nonexistence, they do not reject existence or nonexistence. Therefore, their light blends harmoniously with the troubles of the dusty world. They pass between the five destinies, calmly going, suddenly coming. Tranquil, they do nothing and yet there is nothing they do not do."

Therefore, ordinary people cannot do anything once dead to change their birth, and enlightened beings are free from the constraints of karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 19th, 2013 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Advice for the young layperson

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's nothing special about being young or a layperson. Buddhism offers the same to everyone. The difference lies in the level of commitment. You can simply call yourself a Buddhist without any content. You can take one, two, three or dozens of precepts and follow them to the best of your abilities. You can read nice books and ponder about the meaning of life. You can do some sort of meditation regularly or not so regularly. And many many more. It is really up to you. You can follow a single teaching, a single practice, or you can follow a complex teaching with a variety of methods. Being young and a layperson has meaning only to you, as you define your level of interest in the Dharma.

The Mahayana has the six paramitas as the basic description of the path of the bodhisattva. You can read about them from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagarjuna> in this book: http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shantideva>'s inspiring poem is also a very good introduction to Mahayana: books.google.com/books?id=IEqvQBKyA6MC. And the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vimalakirti_Sutra is a great example of how lay life and Buddhism can come together, not to mention it is a quite funny scripture: https://www.bdkamerica.org/digital/dBET_Srimala_Vimalakirti_2004.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 19th, 2013 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Locality of nibbanna

Content:

Huifeng said:

Without being more specific where various ideas and views on nirvana come from, but all throwing them into the discussion, things are only going to get more confused than clearer. The understanding of this term -- and we were only given a term without any specific context or tradition point of view to be with -- vary a considerable amount over time and place.

Astus wrote:

Just as Master Huifeng says. Buddhism has many forms, many styles, many teachings. Without context all meaning is lost.

Simply put, samsara is being moved by greed, anger and ignorance. Nirvana is freedom from (putting out) those

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_poisons_%28Buddhism%29.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 21st, 2013 at 8:11 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is hishiryo for Dogen, as stated in the "Popular Fukanzazengi", and that corresponds to the following in his "Tenpuku Fukanzazengi" and Zongze's Zuochanyu (see correspondence here: <http://terebess.hu/zen/Fukanzazengi-6.pdf>):

"When thought arises, be aware of it. When you are aware of it, it will disappear. Put aside everything outside continuously, and make yourself into one piece."

This also goes back to the earlier teaching of Zongmi (Chan Prolegomenon), Huineng (no thought) and Zhiyi (<http://www.tientai.net/lit/mksk/v2/v2p2-1p5.htm>). As for Uchiyama, there is a complete book by him: Opening the Hand of Thought. Again, he says nothing different from the above. Or here's the instruction from his disciple, <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/okumura-zazen.shtml>:

"In zazen we simply allow any thought, feeling or emotion to come up and then we simply let them go away; we actually do nothing. In sitting, any thought or condition of mind is like a cloud in the sky."

Also, on the official Soto Zen site, in an essay on hishiryo the same source (Tenpuku Fukanzazengi) and the same explanation is used by http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms08.pdf:

"When a thought arises during zazen and we become aware of it, it disappears by itself. And when another thought arises, we again become aware of it and it disappears. If we maintain this process, we naturally put aside everything outside and become one with ourselves. This is exactly the state of mind during zazen and the content of hishiryo."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 22nd, 2013 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

All the above sources are presented as instructions and definitions of shikantaza. You claim they are not. Can you substantiate that with reliable sources?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 23rd, 2013 at 8:32 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

What you described with the example of a duel is an aware and unattached mind. I don't see the difference here between that and the above descriptions of hishiryo, aside from the dramatic metaphor.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 24th, 2013 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: seeing my true nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

This short text sums up well Bodhidharma's teachings, explaining in brief the principle (true nature) and the function (practice) of zen:
<http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enBodhiDharmaSutraWithAnnotation.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 24th, 2013 at 9:09 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

They are about shikantaza, they claim so in those writings. That is, none of them are for specific problems. Keizan in the http://antaiji.org/?page_id=7136&lang=en gives specific instructions for specific problems, but he also simply says: "Be beyond thinking. This is the essence of zazen." Just as Dogen in the <http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazengi/zazengi.translation.html>: "Nonthinking. This is the art of zazen."

From one of the teachers at <http://www.wwzc.org/> comes this explanation of hishiryō:

It's all very simple. So simple that we don't know what to think about it. We sit. The longer we sit, the more we see that any thought that comes up is just another thought and that all thoughts arise within the vastness of Awareness. When we think, we are experiencing thinking. Depending on the extent to which we are practicing, there is some awareness of the thinking. If we are not practicing at all, we have withdrawn, obsessed with our stories, recoiling from present experiencing into fabricated labyrinths that lead us nowhere and teach us nothing. When we practice, we can allow the thoughts to rise and fall and know simultaneously that they are only thoughts, without substance, and allow them to be simply a movement, like a breeze rustling through leaves.

(<http://www.wwzc.org/dharma-text/thinking-about-not-thinking>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 24th, 2013 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

LastLegend said:

Is Shikantaza limited to just sitting in one place or "sitting" here means the mind sits undisturbed anywhere?

Astus wrote:

Dogen writes in the Fukanzazengi, "Don't think about "good" or "bad". Don't judge true or false. Your mind, intellect, and consciousness are spinning around – let them have rest. Give up measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha. How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?"

And in the

<http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazenshin/zazenshin.translation.html>, "Then there is another type of person [who says,] "To pursue the way in seated meditation is a function essential for the "beginner's mind and the latter-day student", but it is not necessarily an observance of the buddhas and ancestors. 'Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen; whether in speech or silence, motion or rest, the substance is at ease.' Do not adhere solely to the present concentrated effort [of seated meditation]." Many of the type calling itself a branch of the Linji [lineage] are of this view. It is because they are deficient in transmitting the right life of the buddha-dharma that

they speak thus. What is the "beginner's mind"? Where is there no "beginner's mind"? Where do we leave the "beginner's mind"?"

And in the Shinjingakudo (tr. Nishijima-Cross), "As we continue, moment by moment, to give up the body and receive the body—whether for three great asaṃkheyas of kalpas, for thirteen great asaṃkheyas of kalpas, or for countless great asaṃkheyas of kalpas—the momentary state of learning the truth is always to learn the truth in forward steps and backward steps. To do a prostration and to bow with joined hands are the moving and still forms of dignified behavior. In painting a picture of a withered tree, and in polishing a tile of dead ash, there is not the slightest interval."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 24th, 2013 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

WuMing said:

True. Or course, it is simple! But not easy to do. Such a statement (as all other such similar statements do) comes from a person with a long history of practice, years of practice, the exchange with a teacher. It "requires" and demands a lot to come to this place.

Astus wrote:

I doubt that she's talking about of herself. It was meant for Zen followers. As for whether it is difficult or easy, there is a nice story of Layman Pang and his family.

The layman was sitting in his thatched cottage one day. "Difficult, difficult, difficult," he suddenly exclaimed, "[like trying] to scatter ten measures of sesame seed all over a tree!"

"Easy, easy, easy," returned Mrs. P'ang, "just like touching your feet to the ground when you get out of bed."

"Neither difficult nor easy," said Ling-chao. "On the hundred grass-tips, the Patriarchs' meaning."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 25th, 2013 at 7:42 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

WuMing said:

Or do you want to imply that Zen teachers do not speak from their own experience when they instruct their disciples and followers, just words out of the blue?

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that when anyone wants to teach another person, one tries to say things that are meant for the student. So, if the teacher says something is simple/complicated, easy/difficult, etc., it is meant for the listener, and it is neither bragging about one's own

greatness nor complaining about one's former hardships. It is meant for the student to understand it in this way or that way. Teaching, as I see it, is not a therapy session where one talks about personal memories in front of others, especially when it does not benefit the audience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2013 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think there are specific rules in Buddhism about how should various realms exist. There is certainly no sophisticated cosmological doctrine that explains all the details, as it'd be mostly a philosopher's job. Amitabha's land lacks oceans too. It is meant to be a very pleasant place. Yes, it is normally categorised beyond the samsaric realms, that's how beings can stay there indefinitely.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2013 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a huge gap between the modern understanding of the world and the ancient one. This difference could be grasped by the single word "physical". To us something is either physical/perceptible/comprehensible/regular/real or spiritual/mental/supernatural/fantastic. This is an old method of demonising and disqualifying an unwanted view. The Pure Land is not physical, so not like our world, so it is far away, and maybe even just a symbol or a pious myth. This way we end up reinforcing our received cultural education and rejecting/transforming anything that does not fit into it. And that's absolutely normal. The Pure Land teachings could spread because it fit well into people's preconditioning, that the world is inhabited by other forms of intelligent life. Modern scientific education comes from an opposite view, that denies all "superstitions" (although once the word superstition was applied to pagan beliefs by Christians).

My take on the matter is that if you want to understand Buddhist cosmology, especially its Mahayana version, you have to become a proper philosopher, and put aside everything (or rather, as much as you can) you think about the world and start anew, establishing yourself on the Buddha's words. That is, the world is what we experience as the world. Our experience is formed by our habits. Entire worlds can become out of beings' habitual impulses. This is what samsara is about. Buddhas are beings who have not only defeated their habits (karma), but out of compassion gained mastery over their experience. That way buddhas establish various lands to assist deluded beings in gaining liberation. All the abilities of the buddhas are made out of perfect merits that were created by perfect deeds (paramitas) and steered by vows - this is what the bodhisattva path is about. Amitabha is one of the many buddhas, and his story is about

how he, as a bodhisattva, made his 48 special vows to create a land where every willing person can attain birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2013 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza

Content:

Rakshasa said:

To me Shikantaza sounds like Satipatthana of Pali canon? Or is there any difference?

Astus wrote:

Satipatthana is a complex system that includes numerous meditation techniques based on the early teachings. Shikantaza is a single method based on late Mahayana teachings. Without considering the doctrinal context of the two methods there is no point in making any comparisons. And even from the practical perspective, Satipatthana contains several stages of calming and analysing. Shikantaza has none of that, it has no stages nor goals, it is perfect from the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2013 at 6:56 PM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

zamotcr said:

Seriously, it is hard to drop for me the current view of the world. I will have to, but I don't know how and at the end, are Buddha and Science compatible or can both have an arrangement?

Astus wrote:

Dropping a view and putting it aside are two different things. There are many ways to analyse something, and you don't need to refuse physics to do an aesthetic evaluation. Religion is not philosophy, mathematics, sport or economics, but it also does not exclude any of them. It makes no sense to claim that only "purple" is true while "yellow" is false as they are just various colours. At the same time, it is also pointless to say that purple and yellow are compatible, they mean the same thing, etc.

zamotcr said:

If I can't use reasoning in which way is that better than Christianity?

Astus wrote:

First of all, reasoning has many forms and just because something is logical it doesn't mean it is true (or false). It is good to be reasonable, and denying the force of rationality is exactly what it is: irrational. Christianity has many forms too, and at least the older, mainstream churches (Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, etc.) have no problem with reasoning, philosophy and science. Theology itself is a combination of faith and reason.

Secondly, in what sense can one religion be better than the other? It is a matter of personal choice and taste. But of course, arguments for the truth/superiority of one belief over the other is abundant.

If you want to understand the way various Pure Land teachings are considered orthodox Mahayana, you need to study Mahayana. Explanations in Pure Land works assume that one is already familiar with general Mahayana.

zamotcr said:

And believing that Pure Land is a physical realm, is not materialism?

Astus wrote:

Physical in Buddhism means that something is perceived by the five bodily senses. The only purely mental realm in Buddhism is called the arupaloka, where no form exists at all. That means that from Avici to Akanishta everything is physical. Since Sukhavati has many physical characteristics, as described in the sutras, it is also considered physical in its Buddhist sense.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

zamotcr said:

can you delineate the major principles of what Buddha said about cosmology? Which correct views one should adopt, a proper way of understanding. I want to know more to study in that line

Astus wrote:

See this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_cosmology and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_spiritual_realms.

Further, the Abhidharmakosa (vol 2) has a description of the spatial and temporal cosmology.

zamotcr said:

I want to but I feel lost. There a lot of disagreements between masters, every Master explain the same things in very different ways.

Astus wrote:

Start with the basics: Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Zhiyi. And when you have a difficult topic, you can always open a discussion here on the forum.

zamotcr said:

Perhaps they are here, but our senses are limited by something that does not let us see them around us.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism it is called the "divine eye" with what it is possible to see spirits and gods. You might also call it an "inner eye", like what is used in meditation. You might think then that it is mental, however, just as in dreams, you can see forms, hear sounds, etc., so it is physical.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

zamotcr said:

That does not mean that if the Pure Land is physical (in your description of the term) then it is observable by our own human eyes, as we can't see neither Devas realms, so why Pure Land would be an exception? After all is outside Samsara, and is a Buddha realm (would be wrong to consider Pure Land as or in the 10th Realm (Buddha realm)?)

My doubts started when I saw a video of Master Sheng Yen, when he said that Pure Land is a galaxy in the west, so I thought that is was visible by our normal human eyes (if we could get there somehow). Of course Pure Land is above all and inside everyone. Immanent and transcended?

Before starting to touch Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Zhiyi, do you think is a good idea to start with "Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations"?

Astus wrote:

Being a buddha-land doesn't necessarily mean that it is outside of samsara, but that was a topic of another thread. Sukhavati is without suffering, so it is necessarily outside of samsara, and because it has all sorts of residents it is a mixed buddha land. Also note that in Tiantai's presentation of the ten realms there is also the teaching of "three thousand realms in a thought", that is, that all realms contain all the others.

You could say it is in a galaxy to the west. Why not? Not that we could just explore it anyway. Saying that Sukhavati is "immanent and transcendent" would imply a symbolic interpretation, and that's OK, but then it is a symbol for enlightenment, and as such it is not understood that way normally if one practises for birth in the Pure Land through the vow of Amitabha.

Yes, it is a good introductory book.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

zamotcr said:

But, if Sukhavati were a "normal" galaxy, and with that I mean, observable or visible to human eyes, wouldn't that make it part of Samsara? Everything we see with our humans

eyes born and dies, stars, planets, people, every living being.

Astus wrote:

Samsara and nirvana are not places but types of experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

zamotcr said:

Also, I thought that Samsara were the Six Spiritual Realms, which are basically the 28 planes of existence. But of course I'm always wrong

Astus wrote:

Yes, samsara consists of the six realms and 28 planes. At the same time, all of that are products of karma and forms of experience.

Sukhavati is outside of samsara in the sense that there is no suffering and people definitely attain enlightenment there.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 at 11:46 PM

Title: Re: Cosmology and Pure Land

Content:

Arjan Dirkse said:

The Pure Land is right here. The problem is recognizing.

Astus wrote:

That's a very symbolist self-power approach. Most of the Pure Land teachings (e.g. Shandao, Yongming, Yinguang; Honen, Shinran) are not like that, and aspiring for birth in the Pure Land - as an actual place - is common in most Mahayana schools.

It is also quite pointless to give the same teachings already told in a complicated metaphorical way.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 28th, 2013 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Permanence of Recognition?

Content:

Bhadantacariya said:

My objection to this argument is with recognition, take of blue for example: how can my recognition of blue occur if I or it are not the same as we were the first time I cognized blue?

Astus wrote:

Recognising something as "blue" is a thought process, that attaches to a range of visual experience the idea of blue. Physically, there are always different photons contacting photoreceptor cells and triggering a number of biological processes. In the Buddhist system of the 18 dhatus, visual consciousness occurs only when there is a visual form, and it happens only moment by moment. So, there is nowhere to be found any constant element.

The argument usually goes that if there were any perception or cognition that was permanent it would always be experienced. That is, a permanent thing permanently causing.

Bhadantacariya said:

If I am not the person who cognized blue that first time, how is it that I can recognize it? If the color blue is not the same color as it was when it was first cognized, how can it be recognized?

Astus wrote:

A form/colour is perceived by various mental processes. Mental processes constantly change. You don't always think of blue, do you? That one can recognise in separate instances that something is blue only means cognitive connection between visual perception and ideas of colours. It does not mean that you see the same thing every time, that's only a very superficial (non-analysed, naive) approach.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 28th, 2013 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: Struggling with the Concept of No/Non-Self/Emptiness

Content:

SittingSilent said:

I know that may sound strange but it seems very depressing to me to give up my identity.

Astus wrote:

You don't lose any identity or self in Buddhism. It is about seeing what that "self" actually is, i.e. a series of corporal and mental phenomena that we like to identify with. But there is no loss of body or mind in the process, it's the concept of being one and the same thing all the time that is discovered to be false. That lack of permanent identity is what is called emptiness and no-self. Bodily perceptions change, feelings change, thoughts change, that's all. Nothing really new or unknown. It's just that we are conditioned to think that there is a stable core that remains the same. Understanding emptiness means understanding change. Change means that you can overcome whatever problem you may have, that you can move and evolve. You are not stuck with any eternal attribute or personality trait. And why this is important in Buddhism is to see that whenever we identify with a specific quality we may or may not possess, we struggle all the time to keep it the same, to organise everything around it, instead of being free and open about our life.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 3rd, 2013 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: Namó Amitabha Buddha, True and False

Content:

Astus wrote:

An old thread: <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=60&t=1084>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 3rd, 2013 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Written texts from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Chan Patriarchs

Content:

Astus wrote:

The works attributed to Hongren and Daoxin are considered works of the so called Northern Schools. Sengcan's poem is likely to be an even later work.

Hongren: <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Anccestors/Treatise%20on%20the%20Supreme%20Vehicle/Treatise%20on%20the%20Supreme%20Vehicle.htm> or
http://www.dailyzen.com/zen/zen_reading0705.asp and
http://www.dailyzen.com/zen/zen_reading0706.asp

Daoxin: http://www.dailyzen.com/zen/zen_reading0811.asp

Both works are also found in the appendix of Daido Looi's "The Art of Just Sitting". More about early Chan read McRae's

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Northern_School_and_the_Formation_of.html?id=5M4KAAAAYAAJ.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 3rd, 2013 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Anatta experience ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Realising that there is no self means simply the recognition of the lack of a substantial being. In fact, there never has been any self anywhere, it is only an idea, a feeling that there is a self. There is no self in any sensory experience, or even in our thoughts and emotions. So, to experience no self does not mean a new experience, it is the recognition that there has never been any being/actor/thinker/feeler/perceiver as all there is is experience (five aggregates, six sense gates) and all experience is impermanent (etc.). But it's the same experience as always. The difference lies in the wisdom of seeing them for what they actually are.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 6th, 2013 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: It's a sign / Magical thinking is stupid

Content:

Astus wrote:

Magical thinking supposes unknown causal relations and/or an external intelligent force. It can serve as an explanation for not understood events, it provides a feeling of power. It is basically cheating oneself, accepting a lie for the sake of emotional comfort. Is it stupid to feel safe? Not at all. Can it generate positive mental states? Yes. It is not much different from conspiracy theories and paranoia.

Citing "interdependence" means very little. It does not mean in Buddhism that everything is connected to everything, and such. It is used to prove that all phenomena are composites without a substance. Although it is true that traditionally Buddhism accepts magic as a real thing, it has no explanation for it whatsoever, therefore it is nothing but accepting the ruling cultural beliefs, just as today many like to connect biochemical phenomena to meditation.

Magical thinking is also a sign of mental proliferation, the desire to explain everything. But that nobody can explain everything does not mean that simple concepts (e.g. God, karma, energy, UFO's) are the solution. They are not much better than children's stories.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 7th, 2013 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: It's a sign / Magical thinking is stupid

Content:

Astus wrote:

We aren't limited to UFOs here. What Buddhism understands to be causal fails most criteria for non-magical thinking.

Yes, where Buddhism says that one's intention and action modifies physical reality it is magical thinking. Only when karma is restricted to a personal mental continuum and its way of perception could we say that there is no "magic" involved. See this one here: <https://eubuddhist.blogspot.com/2012/09/buddhist-magic.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 7th, 2013 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Differences between Chan and Zen? If any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=147672#p147672>

Also: <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=9703>

In short, both Chan and Zen are generic terms for various teachings and traditions. To find actual differences one better picks something from the Chinese side and

something from the Japanese side. And there can be numerous differences between teachers even of the same lineage.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 8th, 2013 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: Differences between Chan and Zen? If any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It should be noted that many American Zen teachers actually belong to a modern Zen movement called the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanbo_Kyodan. The founders of that organisation were open to foreigners and they accepted people of other religions as students, like the Jesuit priest Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle. Sanbo Kyodan is not representative of all the other Japanese Zen schools.

One should also be aware that while in Japan we can talk of independent Zen institutions, in Chinese Buddhism the name "Chan" is often synonymous with Buddhism for various reasons, and not restricted to a specific set of teachings and methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 8th, 2013 at 8:30 AM

Title: Re: Differences between Chan and Zen? If any?

Content:

Huifeng said:

So, relying on English language material is only going to show a tiny corner of Chan.

Astus wrote:

Many of the important works are translated to English. Except that they are not necessarily titled as Chan, but simply as sutras and other works. It is also quite true for Korean and Vietnamese Buddhism that "Chan" is a general word and not really a school. So we can say that the way Japanese Buddhism is fragmented into various schools is an exception, a result of historical development and how the state controlled Buddhist institutions. Just as in China it was the Chan movement that gained imperial support and eventually became the organisational frame for the whole of Chinese Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 8th, 2013 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: True Self in Jodo Shinshu

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea of inherent enlightenment (hongaku) was irrelevant for Honen and Shinran, just as the concept of buddha-nature. For the simple reason that ordinary beings have no knowledge of it. Believing that one is already enlightened can easily lead to the misconception that one is not an ordinary being. Believing that there is a buddha-nature

can easily lead to the misconception of an eternal soul. The teaching of inherent enlightenment is avoided, since the very first thing to understand and accept on the Pure Land path is that we are deluded ordinary beings incapable of saving ourselves. The teaching of buddha-nature is avoided for the same reason, it has no relevance and easily leads to false views. As for the buddhas and Amitabha Buddha in particular, of course they are perfect, enlightened, wise, and complete with all the great qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 9th, 2013 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: True Self in Jodo Shinshu

Content:

Astus wrote:

Occurrences of "buddha-nature" in the KGSS (<http://amidanet.com/dharma-treasury-index.htm>):

1.6 - in a quote, used for describing the Buddha, in 1.7 Shinran sums up how all the above quotes confirm the Larger Sutra as the ultimate teaching

2.87 - in a quote, identified as the One Vehicle, previously in 2.84 Shinran says that the ultimate One Vehicle is the "One Buddha Vehicle of the Vow"

3.26 - in a quote, used to explain "true" for "true and sincere mind" (shijoshin) of the three minds. It was already explained in 2.13 that shijosin means "We should not show outwardly how wise, virtuous and diligent we are, because, inwardly, we entertain deceitfulness. Being possessed of all kinds of greed, anger, falsity, and crookedness, we can hardly remove our evil nature; we are indeed like snakes or scorpions." The quoted passage containing "buddha-nature" is meant to strengthen Shinran's statement that "the true and sincere mind endowed by the Buddha for our benefit through the inconceivable, indescribable and ineffable ocean-like Vow of great wisdom of the One Vehicle."

3.31 - in a quote, again used to establish that the Joyful Faith is based on Amitabha's compassion and not one's own effort, as introduced in 3.28.

3.105 - in a quote, used to praise nenbutsu practitioners

3.116 - in a quote, to show that the Buddha saves evil beings out of compassion

5.9 - in a quote, stating that the Buddha is not different from the buddha-nature

5.11 - in a quote, used as previously

5.15 - in a quote, used as previously

5.16 - in a quote, used as previously

5.17 - in a quote, icchantikas have buddha-nature, i.e. everybody can attain liberation

5.20 - in a quote, buddha-nature is hard to see

5.21 - in a quote, used as previously

5.37 - Shinran comments, liberation exists in the Pure Land

I wouldn't say he was "big on the attainment Buddha Nature" as he only uses it in one paragraph when not found in various quotes. The quotes are used in various contexts and they are not related to one's practice or anything that one should understand now. Buddha-nature is used as a synonym for various things (buddha qualities, compassion, liberation, potentiality of enlightenment, buddhahood) and not defined as anything central to the doctrine of Jodo Shinshu.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 9th, 2013 at 8:01 AM

Title: Re: True Self in Jodo Shinshu

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I also wrote, the expression buddha-nature occurs with various meanings, but mostly as a synonym for buddhahood. To say that the goal of being born in the Pure Land is to attain buddhahood is not an unusual statement at all. So, why do you say it is an important thing that the word buddha-nature occurs among all the other words used?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 11th, 2013 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Differences between Chan and Zen? If any?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the Surangama Sutra is the one text that is central in Chan but rarely used in other countries.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 13th, 2013 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: Is the tulku system too exclusive?

Content:

Huifeng said:

When one throws a rock at a dog, the dog chases the rock,
When one throws a rock at a lion, the lion chases the thrower.

Astus wrote:

Problems exist in the mind. The tulku system worked for the Tibetans for centuries. Some may consider it an issue, but it seems to me most of the time people accept it as a unique feature of Tibetan Buddhism.

It is not easy to push through a revolution and it usually fails. In the realm of religion it is easier to go separately than to reform the existing structure. In Buddhism this is quite normal and happened in Tibetan too where there are some major and more minor sects. There is little meaning in endlessly criticising others. If you really don't like how it goes, work on finding or establishing a community that fits your ideals. There are already new independent groups making their own decisions about the administrative system and the teachings.

In the end every person is responsible for their Dharma practice. Blaming the church, the teachers or anyone else is meaningless. Your actions, your karma.

Dizang said, "I've heard you say several times that 'the three realms are only mind and the myriad dharmas are only consciousness.'" He pointed to a rock by the gate. "So do you say that this rock is inside or outside of mind?"

Fayan said, "Inside."

Dizang said, "How can a pilgrim carry such a rock in his mind while on pilgrimage?"

Dumbfounded, Fayan couldn't answer.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 316; T47n1991_p0588b09-12)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 13th, 2013 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: "...but the science of Buddhism will never change."

Content:

Malcolm said:

But I do have a mind, the last I checked (some may disagree of course), and as a matter of inference, is seemed unlikely to me (when I examined the question) that ultimately my stream of consciousness could have emerged from my brain alone (which is a necessary condition for sense cognitions, but in my opinion cannot account for knowing).

Astus wrote:

And that is the only topic where Buddhism needs to develop some proper arguments. Many of Shantarakshita's arguments against the materialists could be today refuted by the current understanding of neurology and biochemistry. For instance, he writes in relation to the body being the material cause of consciousness:

"What is a fact is that when the modification of one thing always follows the modification of another, then alone can the one be rightly regarded as the Material Cause of the other."

(Tattvasamgraha, §1886, vol 2, p 900)

Although there is no complete map of the human brain, but a strong correlation between the neural system and consciousness is quite apparent. There are many drugs people use daily to improve their mental functions, just as there are known physical symptoms of mental illnesses (p 912). There are also physical signs of one's emotional state (p 915), just as the brain still functions during the dream state and such (p 921).

Explaining the actions of newborn infants do not require assuming previous lives (p 926), and mental states can often be explained by physical elements (p 933). Thus the usual Buddhist position is hard to maintain that

"Subjective Consciousness rests entirely upon the previous Consciousness; this is the idea expressed in the words 'Subjective Consciousness must be regarded as independent'. The reason for this 'independence' consists in the fact of its not requiring anything else, In all cases, this Subjective Consciousness proceeds entirely from its own Cause, because it does not stand in need of any causes other than its own, in the shape of the Eye, etc.; as is found to be the case during sleep."
(p 922)

As you say, Buddhists should update themselves to the 21st century, if they want to be taken seriously and not as narrow minded people lost in a long gone era. Of course, there are Buddhists for whom such things as the philosophy of mind are not unknown, however, it is too easy to end up on the materialist side and lose important elements of Buddhism.

For those who believe that it is pointless to engage in science and philosophy as religion is mostly for the uneducated simple folk who believe whatever the authority figure says, it is partially true. Still, most human beings want to rationalise what they believe in. That's why reasoning and arguments matter. And those who are considered authentic sources of truth tend to be people with at least a little higher intellectual capacity than the average humans. Also, the more effort one puts into one's religion the more one wants to understand the details behind the surface.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 1:52 AM

Title: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen is a specific form of Buddhism that developed at the beginning of the Common Era around five hundred years after Gotama Buddha's death as a reaction to the way Buddhism had strayed from its origin as a meditative practice and become more of a religion. The Zen movement sought to strip away all the inessential rituals, constuming, and other trappings and get back down to the basics. This is evident in the name of the sect. "Zen" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Sanskrit word dhyana, meaning "meditation."

(Brad Warner: Sex, Sin, and Zen, p 4)

developed at the beginning of the Common Era

The beginning is usually attributed either to Shakyamuni Buddha or Bodhidharma, but it shows how actual historical information on Zen is hard to come by. And it doesn't matter anyway. Long ago somewhere far far away.

a reaction to the way Buddhism had strayed

Zen is returning to the original teachings of the Buddha. This is the real Buddhism.

from its origin as a meditative practice and become more of a religion

Buddhism is about meditation. It is not a religion, it only looks like one, but that is a mistake. That's why Buddhists in the West are called 'practitioners' because unless you meditate it is not even Buddhism.

Zen movement sought to strip away all the inessential rituals

Zen is a movement, not a religious sect or anything like that. And rituals are not important. Everything but meditation is inessential. Except for a little chanting, black robes, zafu, keisaku, gong, tea ceremony, prostrations, gardening, precepts, initiations, priests, etc. Those are just for decoration.

This is evident in the name of the sect. "Zen" is ... "meditation."

Meditate. Meditation. Zen is meditation. Buddhism is meditation. We could call this the "Meditation Only Movement".

p.s. No disrespect intended towards Brad Warner. It's just happened that it was his writing that caught my attention to this topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

tomamundsen said:

To be clear, you are disagreeing with both the words in bold and not in bold, correct?

Astus wrote:

Yes. I meant to highlight the nature of the myth created for Zen (and Buddhism).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

matthewmartin said:

I would say that single practice Buddhism is a Japanese idea, post Chan, but pre-Brad.

Astus wrote:

There is no Buddhist school that I know of where they only have one kind of practice.

It is true that Honen emphasised the recitation of the name as the single practice that is sufficient for attaining birth in the Pure Land, but that is not the only practice he taught but also the miscellaneous practices of the Pure Land Path (zogyo) and the four auxiliary acts (jogo).

Dogen was definitely not the kind of "zazen only" teacher that some like to interpret him. Yes, zazen is a central method, but as it is apparent in his writings, he embraced and transmitted lot more than that. Most of his works in the Shobogenzo and his speeches in the Eihei Koroku are not about zazen. I just counted it, and the word zazen occurs in the 75-fascicle SBGZ only in eleven writings (10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 43, 47, 50, 63, 69), and in three more (Bendowa, Butsuda/Doshin, Juundo Shiki) if you add 20 other works. That means 14.6% or 14.7% of the Shobogenzo works contain the word zazen, and even less talk about it to some extent. Plus, zazen has a wider meaning than just sitting in meditation.

And although I don't know much about Nichiren's teachings, I know that they do more than just repeating the Odaimoku endlessly.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Personally, I would not go so far as to say that as chanting, prostrations, gardening, tea ceremony, Oryoki, etc, etc is all itself, meditation.

Astus wrote:

They are not considered meditation, unless the argument is that "everything is meditation as long as you are aware of what you do", i.e. meditation is "being in the present". They are elements carried on in various communities without much consideration. But of course there is no particular reason as for why wear robes mimicking monks, or why eat like they do (did) in Japan, or why a Zen garden is better than an English garden. However, if those "cultural trappings" were removed completely, Zen would look no different from the Insight Meditation Society or simple meditation groups outside the Buddhist frame. Thus Zen is defined not by what is actually taught but by its outward appearance. Zen is therefore a style.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Indeed, largely, though not entirely, based on Sung dynasty Neo-confucian aesthetics as interpreted by the Japanese.

Astus wrote:

There was a topic: <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=4385>.

My view is that seeing and/or presenting Zen as a style is losing what actual teachings were transmitted. But when it becomes a taboo to even consider that Zen has a doctrinal position, it is easy to reduce it to superficial techniques and artistic forms. And that's what this "Western Myth" does.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2013 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

ReasonAndRhyme said:

I'm not sure which part of your post is a quote and which part is you speaking, but concerning the above statement: this is not necessarily so.

Astus wrote:

Text not in bold are my comments.

There are various definitions. My point is that there is a tendency that Zen (and Buddhism in general) is primarily/only about meditative practice. That's what Zen people (and Buddhists) do. If you are a Zen follower you are necessarily a Zen practitioner, and practitioner means meditating. The programs of a Zen community consists mainly of meditation practice. Intensive practice is a retreat with lots of meditation. There is no Sunday school, nothing like a catechism, nothing particular to accept as true or a specific code of conduct to follow - or in Buddhist terms, no correct view and no correct ethics. Although there are talks about buddha-nature, emptiness, the bodhisattva precepts, but they are not really more important than ritual eating and drinking. Actually, even meditation is not a well developed subject, there are mostly generalisations and simple instructions.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 15th, 2013 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

But if you mean to describe what is actually happening in Western Zen practice, I think the picture is much more varied and nuanced...certainly more so than one might think surveying the online Zen world.

Astus wrote:

I don't have any specific group or organisation in mind. And even if I did I would raise the subject only on the theoretical level because I don't think there's much good in a series of criticisms on an online forum. What I quoted in the OP here is to bring attention to the

origin myth and definition of Zen as it is used many times, and that it has an impact on how Zen is perceived and practised. As you say, there are many groups and in those groups there are all sorts of people, so it'd take a thorough investigation to start a discussion on that, and that's not something I have the capacity to do, plus I think it's up to each organisation and individual members to decide what and how they want to do. So I'm writing about the "Western Myth of Zen" on the level of principle and theory and not about any actual institution, teacher or person. That kind of discussion is for those who are in close contact with them.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 15th, 2013 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

They are considered meditation at a real zen temple.

Astus wrote:

Isn't that the other extreme, saying that a real Zen temple must take everything (or certain things) as meditation? As above I mentioned, there is that view, when you "just do it" or when "you are aware doing it" means meditation. But then, what's the difference between "just bowing" and "just chanting", and "just listening to music" and "just swimming in a lake"? If there is no difference, then no point in doing those things instead of others. If there is a difference, then it is something else than "just doing it".

For instance, recitation is good for memorising a text. That's what it was/is used for. And if you memorise a text you can always go back to it, reflect on it, etc. And there are reciting mantras for magical effects and reciting the name of buddhas as a form of worship or contemplation. Saying that recitation is for "just reciting" makes it meaningless, as I said above. Same goes for other practices.

seeker242 said:

To someone who is not trapped by "cultural trappings", cultural trappings don't even exist. There is no such thing.

Astus wrote:

Cultural trappings is a sort of argument to reduce Zen (Buddhism) to a set of chosen methods and teachings. It doesn't mean that they are actually related to the source culture (Japanese, Chinese, Indian, etc.) or not. So, calling it "cultural" is based on the idea that there is a difference between the Dharma and the culture, a very modern idea actually (that is, the idea of cultural relativism and cultural identity).

seeker242 said:

The purpose of such activity is to practice "mind sitting". Huineng did not teach that "only sitting on the floor with your legs crossed" is meditation.

Astus wrote:

If there is an activity to be done, it is not "mind sitting". Chapter five of the Platform Sutra about seated meditation says clearly,

"In this teaching, there is no impediment and no hindrance. Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called 'seated' (zuo). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called 'meditation' (chan)."

That is, zazen (zuochan, seated meditation) is not a technique or practice, it is not an activity or teaching to follow. "Mind sitting" is not being hung up on sensory and mental phenomena based on the wisdom of emptiness. As the sutra says in the previous chapter,

"There is in the self-nature fundamentally not a single dharma that can be perceived. To think that there were any would be a false explanation, a disaster, a false view of enervating defilements. Therefore, this teaching takes nonthought as its central doctrine."

The Platform Sutra does not recommend or teach any other practice than "no practice". This is also true of Zen in general. Look at the followings.

If you don't see your nature, invoking buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings, and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking buddhas results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory; keeping precepts results in a good rebirth, and making offerings results in future blessings-but no buddha.

(Bloodstream Sermon, The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 11)

In the authentic transmission of [our] religion, it is said that this Buddha-Dharma, which has been authentically and directly transmitted one-to-one, is supreme among the supreme. After the initial meeting with a [good] counselor we never again need to burn incense, to do prostrations, to recite Buddha's name, to practice confession, or to read sutras. Just sit and get the state that is free of body and mind.

(Bendowa, Shobogenzo, vol 1, p 5, tr. Nishijima-Cross)

Again [Master Tendō] said, "Practicing [za]zen is the dropping off of body and mind. We need not burn incense, do prostrations, recite the Buddha's name, confess, or read sutras. When we are just sitting, we have attainment from the beginning."

(Gyoji, SBGZ, vol 2, p 209)

One day the Councilor Wang visited the master. When he met the master in front of the Monks' Hall, he asked, "Do the monks of this monastery read the sutras?"

"No, they don't read sutras," said the master.

"Then do they learn meditation?" asked the councilor.

"No, they don't learn meditation," answered the master.

"If they neither read sutras nor learn meditation, what in the world are they doing?" asked the councilor.

"All I do is make them become buddhas and patriarchs," said the master.

The councilor said, "“Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts.”
“I always used to think you were just a common fellow,” said the master.
(Record of Linji, p 38, tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 5:43 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meido,

Could you give some examples of those Zen communities where they give a well rounded Buddhist teaching? Where they view Zen as a form of Mahayana Buddhism, complete with a large written canon, religious beliefs and traditions. I'm just curious about who you think of as exemplary transmitters of the Buddhadharma.

From my end, as I don't even live in America, I can see only what they put online, publish in writings and maybe things I hear from others. As an example, on the Zen Studies Society (Daibosatsu Zendo) site <http://www.daibosatsu.org/onzen.html> they say,

""Buddha" simply means "awakened one." His great teaching was that we can all awaken; that fundamentally, we are all buddhas— Jewish buddhas, Christian buddhas, Hindu buddhas, Islamic buddhas, Ashanti buddhas, Haudenasaunee buddhas, secular buddhas."

Or here's one description from the <http://stillmindzendo.org/about/>,

"Still Mind Zendo emphasizes the practice of zazen (sitting meditation) above all else, recognizing it as a way for people to deepen their insight and realization of their essential self, which is nothing other than the realization of their lives. And because essential self, or essential nature, is not bound by the limitations of any religion or gender or path in life — not bound, in fact, by anything — we welcome people from all walks of life and from all religious or non-religious backgrounds to sit with us, practicing the development of a still mind as the necessary path to awakening.

Our singular commitment to zazen practice makes our sangha (community) a simple one. Apart from upholding the tradition of the basic Zen chants, we hold no services or other rituals, and we do not wear robes. We are, however, deeply committed to the teachings of the ancestors; to the discipline of the Way; to the attention to posture and detail; to the practice of being in the moment; and to the extension of that practice into every facet of our lives."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

What do you consider a well-rounded approach to Buddhist teaching? Particularly since we're talking about Japanese Zen, which has a large stream of self-view as Ekayana based on recognition of one's nature and transcending divisions of the Three Vehicles.

Astus wrote:

What I'm looking for/into is how Zen is presented in the West currently. Saying that Zen is all about meditation and there are no doctrines attached to it is one possible way. There are other options, like as you say, an Ekayana teaching beyond the three vehicles. I'm not saying this or that is good or wrong, but I believe that the definition has short- and long-term consequences. One example is <http://www.zenbuddhisttemple.org/> that was previously the Zen Lotus Society but changed name for Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom, and they have a mission that includes elements of social engagement and Mahayana. Its difference from the <http://zenpeacemakers.org> is that the BSCW is explicitly Buddhist, while the ZPO is more secular.

Meido said:

So you get a lot of talk meant to stress welcome, accessibility and non-sectarianism.

Astus wrote:

Saying that a group is welcoming to everyone or that Islam and Buddhism can go together are two different things as I see it. There are some Christian priests who are also Zen teachers, so according to that view, Zen is not really bound by any religion. That's why I brought that part of Daibosatsu's introductory text. It continues that quoted part with this, "With this flexible and accommodating attitude toward the various cultures and beliefs it encountered, Buddhism was embraced throughout Asia. In China, it merged with Taoism and evolved into Ch'an, the Chinese word for meditation, which became "Zen" in Japan." So, this might be just an advertisement to invite everyone - although in that case it is questionable why they state something they don't actually believe in - or it is what they think. Don't get me wrong, I'm not picking on the Zen Studies Society, and I'm not saying this is heretical or anything like that. What I'm interested in is to see how various groups present/define Zen, thus creating the "Western myth of Zen".

Meido said:

In any case, from within the Zen view of itself I see no problem with saying that anyone, regardless of beliefs and self-identification, could experience awakening if they encounter a realized teacher.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean your interpretation of Zen is that it is above cultures and beliefs? If I were a devout Evangelical Christian I could still attain enlightenment without leaving behind my faith in the Saviour? Like, I could reach black belt level in some martial art regardless of my religion?

Meido said:

What's wrong with them benefiting in this way according to their capacity?

Astus wrote:

It's not wrong. It can be very beneficial, I'm not questioning that at all. Although I think that wisdom is an integral part of Zen, using meditation alone is not a bad thing at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

The point in doing them is that there is no point in not doing them.

Astus wrote:

In that case one should do something enjoyable or socially beneficial, and then there is some meaning in doing them. The same nihilist (no point, no meaning) reasoning can be used practically for any sort of abuse and evil action too. It's not correct discernment and clarity but blank mind and blind faith.

seeker242 said:

"Mind sitting" precisely is the practice of no practice. So is bowing, so is chanting, so is sitting, so is cleaning the bathroom.

Astus wrote:

Same as above. This is denying all sense.

seeker242 said:

Following your own likes and dislikes is not zen.

Astus wrote:

This is an easily misinterpreted concept. It does not negate moral/ethical discernment, nor "common sense".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: "All cognitions brought about by words are ultimately fal

Content:

Bhadantacariya said:

I have a hard time buying this since it seems to imply that the cognitions that his words are bringing about in me are ultimately false, including the cognition formed by the words in the title of this thread.

Astus wrote:

The problem is raised in Nagarjuna's

<http://leonlbreaux.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/refutation-of-objections.pdf>.

The question:

If no phenomena anywhere possess inherent existence,
your statement, without inherent existence, cannot discard inherent existence.
But if your statement possesses inherent existence,
you refute your initial position. Explain your lapse in logic.

His answer:

No thesis can address all causes and conditions, separately or apart.
This proves the lack of inherent existence in phenomena and, consequently, emptiness.
Emptiness occurs through the dependent nature of phenomena.
Dependent-natured phenomena lack inherent existence.
Similarly, a conjured phantom can deny a phantom its own magic conjures.
I make no claims of inherent existence, so you have not refuted an assertion.
No inconsistency occurs, so I need explain no grounds.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Common sense is not abandoned simply by chanting a sutra. Chanting is not unethical, nor is doing prostrations.

Astus wrote:

I'm not talking about chanting or doing prostrations. I'm criticising the argument, the reason you gave for doing those practices. That is, that there is no reason whatsoever and one should just do it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2013 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

If there was a significant reason for doing chanting in particular, it would not be the practice of no practice. So you are criticizing the practice of no practice? I thought that is what you were advocating? I don't understand! Do you think the practice of no practice is appropriate or not appropriate?

Astus wrote:

The teaching of "no practice" cannot be used to validate any sort of practice. If we put this into the Mahayana frame of the six paramitas, then it could be argued that while with prajnaparamita the view of emptiness is clear (no practice, no practitioner), the

other five paramitas - while viewed with prajnaparamita - are to accumulate merit and develop qualities. The Zen teaching of sudden enlightenment may or may not agree with this, depending on how it is interpreted. If sudden enlightenment is truly sudden, then there is no need to develop wisdom and accumulate merit, because the buddha-nature is in and of itself perfect. But when it is taught as "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice", there is a reason for practising, as it agrees with the bodhisattva path of common Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

Again, I believe that an awareness of this is growing in those quarters where it did not previously exist.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for your answers. I'm happy to hear that you see that as a general trend.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

And likewise the teaching of "no practice" can not be used to invalidate any practice just like the teaching of "no thought" can not be used to invalidate thoughts. Because "no thought" does not actually mean no thought but no thought within thought. The same can be said about "practice". As for sudden vs gradual distinction, I prefer the platform sutra explanation of that in there really is no such distinction to begin with. I believe it says that the only difference is capacity of different individuals.

Astus wrote:

The Platform Sutra says (ch 4):

“Good friends, there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these. These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings are greatly mistaken!”

The master addressed the assembly, “Good friends, the correct teaching is fundamentally without either sudden or gradual—it is human nature that is either clever or dull. Deluded people cultivate gradually, while enlightened people suddenly conform [to the truth]. If you recognize your own fundamental mind and see your own fundamental nature, there will be no such distinctions! Thus it is that sudden and gradual are posited as provisional names.

That is, any sort of practice - as listed - is a mistake. Only deluded people cultivate gradually. If one sees one's true nature - sudden enlightenment - then there is no point any more to talk of either sudden or gradual path. As it says in chapter 2:

There are no sudden and gradual in the Dharma,
It is delusion and enlightenment that are slow or fast.
It is only this teaching of seeing the nature
Which stupid people cannot comprehend.

And,

Those with deluded minds appear to be cultivating and seeking buddhahood, but they are unenlightened to their self-natures. Hence are they of small capacities. If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature.

And in chapter 8:

The morality, meditation, and wisdom of your master is for exhorting those of small capacities to wisdom, but my morality, meditation, and wisdom is for exhorting those of great capacities to wisdom. If you are enlightened to the self-nature, you need not posit bodhi and nirvana, nor do you have to posit emancipated perceptual understanding.

The self-nature becomes enlightened itself, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the dharmas. The dharmas are quiescent—how could there be a progression?

So, yes, there are differences in capacity. Those with little affinity for the sudden teaching cannot understand it, and they need to follow the gradual path of Mahayana. Huangbo says the same thing,

"The practice of the six paramitas and various other disciplines is known as the gradual method of becoming a Buddha. This gradual method, however, is a secondary idea, and it does not represent the complete path to Perfect Awakening."

And,

"The attainment of one who has practiced the myriad Dharma doors throughout three kalpas, having passed through the many Bodhisattva stages, and the attainment of one who has suddenly awakened to the One Mind are equal. Both of them have just attained their own Original Buddha. The former type of disciple, the gradual attainer, upon arriving at his Original Buddha, looks back on his three kalpas of past practice as if he were looking at himself acting totally without principle in a dream."

And as you say, there isn't really any sudden and gradual path, since both ends in buddhahood. Huineng taught for those of the best capacity, to directly see the nature of mind, and so did Huangbo and others, but not everyone. But the distinction is there, that doing such practices as sitting meditation, recitation, chanting, etc. as practices are of the gradual path. The sudden path would not be sudden if there were methods to follow. It wouldn't be "no practice" if there were practices to use. Just as it wouldn't be "no thought" if there were thoughts to keep in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 8:08 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

So then what do you think is meant by "the practice of no practice"? Does that just mean you sit on the couch all day and just watch TV and don't do anything?

Astus wrote:

It means buddhahood. There is in fact an old term: aśaikṣa (Pali: asekha), it means non-training, and it is a term for arhats and buddhas who have completed the path. Of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bh%C5%ABmi_%28Buddhism%29#Five_Paths it is the path of no more training (aśaikṣa-mārga).

seeker242 said:

I disagree as it's possible to not practice chanting, while practicing chanting.

Astus wrote:

That is the bodhisattva training in the paramitas, and that is for accumulating merit.

seeker242 said:

Which means it's possible for it to be "no thought" while at the same time, holding thoughts in mind.

Astus wrote:

I said that the meaning of no thought is not that one should keep a specific thought in mind for that. I didn't say there are no thoughts at all, or that one cannot have thoughts. But no thought is not to have this or that thought, and it is open to all thoughts. Saying that one should do this or that kind of practice for no practice is equal to saying that one should have this or that kind of thought for no thought.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

It is of gradual path but to non-gradual path, meditation, recitation, and chanting are

non-gradual. Why is it necessary and not necessary to do meditation, recitation, and chanting? If it is not necessary, then why and what is there to do? If it is necessary, then why?

Astus wrote:

On a gradual path, various practices can have their own role and relevance. It is summed up in the six paramitas, where prajnaparamita is for the accumulation of wisdom, and the other five are for the accumulation of merit. Yongming Yanshou discussed this in his Treatise on the Common End of Myriad Good Deeds, that incorporates various practices into a "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" system (see Albert Welter's dissertation: <http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2714&context=open dissertations>).

On a genuinely sudden path, it is not really a path at all. As quoted previously, there are no practices to do, as there is nowhere to develop. It is buddhahood itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

What is meant by genuine sudden path? Can you explain further? Many ancient masters have spoken, students realized their mind is Buddha. But they were not fully enlightened. Are chanting and other practices not good for "activating correct views?"

Astus wrote:

There is "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" and "sudden enlightenment, sudden practice" within Zen. The first one was originally emphasised by Guifeng Zongmi primarily against the emerging Hongzhou school (disciples of Mazu Daoyi) and to some extent the Baotang school. The latter one is the argument of Heze Shenhui against the so called Northern School, and that concept spread to the later generations (everyone except the Northern School itself).

The "sudden-gradual" system is the reintroduction of the bodhisattva stages into the new frame of "sudden enlightenment" (i.e. the hallmark idea of the "Southern School"), while the "sudden-sudden" is upholding the "genuine sudden path" as done by the Hongzhou school. The "sudden-gradual" form developed a more systematic approach, while the "sudden-sudden" created most of the Zen dialogue collections. Their eventual fusion is most apparent in the teachings of Bojo Jinul.

Seeing nature means (originally meant) buddhahood. That is because only buddhas can see buddha-nature (see e.g. Nirvana Sutra, Lotus Sutra). The way kensho (seeing nature) is interpreted in the "sudden-gradual" system and post-Hakuin Rinzai is another matter, where they consider it only an initial fleeting experience, a momentary insight. So, seeing nature in the Platform Sutra and the Hongzhou school stands for full

enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Saying one should do this or that kind of practice, is not the same as actually doing it. You don't need to say anything to actually do it. You don't need to have this kind of thought or that kind of thought, to actually do it.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean there is such a thing as action without intention?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Yes and no. When I sit down to actually do chanting, I'm not trying to practice making merit. ...There is just "om baara tobiya hum" and that's it. That's what I mean.

Astus wrote:

If I want to go from one place to another I don't need to keep in mind the other place I'm going to while travelling. But to start the journey I need to know where I am going to. Similarly, to sit down and chant you need to have the intention to do it, and behind that intention there is a reason. And that reason is why one does this or that, it's not simply "just chanting", etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

basically seeking for instructional.

Astus wrote:

Could you explain that?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 4:39 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Precisely why the answer to your question is both yes and no. For example does a soto practitioner when they sit down to do shikantaza, are they trying to "get elightment"? Well, yes and no.

Astus wrote:

The starting point for the discussion about why one should do chanting, prostrations, sitting, etc. began with me questioning the validity of the argument that there is no reason at all, and "just chanting", etc. is all there is. If you agree that yes, there is first an intention with a particular goal in mind, then the original argument for "just chanting" is removed as non-existent. Consequently the question still stands. Why do any kind of practice if not for the sake of accumulating wisdom and merit, and ultimately for attaining enlightenment and liberating beings, that is, the bodhisattva motivation of the gradual path?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

They would just be considered insufficient for completely dissolving accumulated habit-energy, and also crucially for maturing the power and means to skillfully assist others.

Astus wrote:

Just as Jinul explains,

As for "gradual cultivation," although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the buddhas, the beginningless proclivities of habit (vāsanā) are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Therefore he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening so that this efficacy of gradual suffusion is perfected; he constantly nurtures the embryo of sanctity, and after a long, long time he becomes a sage. Hence it is called gradual cultivation.

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 216-217)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 6:24 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

The original argument is not removed when both yes and no are true, at the same time. When reason and no reason are both true at the same time. "Just chanting" is "just chanting" because it comes from the no perspective. Do you think a soto practitioner sits shikantaza for the purpose of attaining enlightenment or attaining anything at all?

Astus wrote:

Yes is true for there is a purpose for engaging in a form of practice. No is true when doing the practice itself and there is no need to keep in mind the intention behind it. If one is hungry one just goes and eats something. The intention is not to feel hungry. The reason for eating is satisfying the hunger. But while eating there is no need to think again and again that one is hungry. However, just because one does not keep thinking about hunger while eating, doesn't mean there is no reason for eating.

As for why various people feel the need to sit in meditation can be different for every individual. With a worldly mind it is for temporary benefits, like health and removing stress. With a sravaka mind it is for attaining liberation from samsara. With a bodhisattva mind it is for becoming a buddha and liberating all beings. There is no higher intention than bodhicitta.

seeker242 said:

What else is there to do?

Astus wrote:

Do you mean one engages in Buddhist practices because there's nothing else to do? Like, one could as well play football or read a novel, depending on the weather.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 7:10 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

Circling back to western myths of Zen, I would say what some popular Zen books have failed to stress is that kensho itself is not considered uncommonly difficult. And that the meat of Zen lies after.

Astus wrote:

That is likely because of the various texts not organised. In the teachings of Bodhidharma, Mazu, Dazhu Huihai, Linji and other Tang era teachers, seeing nature is buddhahood.

"Awakening is to awake to one's original nature. Once awakened, one is awakened forever, there being no more ignorance."

(Mazu in Sun Face Buddha, p 67-68)

Initial awakening followed up by gradual practice occurs first in Zongmi's teachings (published in English in 2009), and it's prominent in Jinul's works (published in English in 1983), however, they are not among the more popular works read by people interested in Zen, unlike the Teachings of Huangbo (translated to English in 1958) and various excerpts and collections. Also, I think there are still only partial translations of the works of Hakuin. And without good resources for the practices coming after kensho, only

those who are in an actual Rinzai programme can know about it. Soto Zen is somewhat different in this regard, as it doesn't really have this concept of "sudden-gradual".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

Episodes have been pointed out that do not support such a conclusion, for example the story of Linji's own training, Baizhang's experiences with Mazu, Bodhidharma's pronouncements regarding flesh/skin/bone/marrow (I recognize that appears late) and so on. But again, I have not seen the sudden-sudden model denied anywhere in Zen as a possibility at least.

Astus wrote:

Linji trained himself in general Mahayana before meeting Huangbo, but after meeting Dayu there is no further studying mentioned. Baizhang's record is sketchy, and it doesn't discuss any training, only some stories with Mazu. And at best we rather look at their teachings about what they said about enlightenment and not stories that are even less reliable, if we are considering historicity and not only the developed canonical view.

Meido said:

In terms of books I was thinking more of popular works in the west like Three Pillars of Zen, which presents kensho in a light that has to my mind caused some obstacles for people.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that is more appropriate. Alan Watts and DT Suzuki are also major players here.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 7:43 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

Curious. What do you think of Linji himself sitting zazen, but at the same time, saying the below?

Astus wrote:

It is a repudiation of the gradualist view. But what makes you think he was sitting in zazen? No such thing is mentioned anywhere.

seeker242 said:

what happens to bodhicitta when one would believe "There is really nothing there that is real to save beings from to begin with"

Astus wrote:

From the path of seeing (i.e. the first bhumi; the 41st stage of enlightenment) bodhicitta is based on the realisation of emptiness. That's what the Diamond Sutra, and the prajnaparamita scriptures in general, talk about. It is the combined practice of wisdom and compassion. And it still has the intention to save all beings, while knowing that "beings" is only a conventional term. However, ultimate truth is not a negation of conventional truth, but the affirmation that conventional is in fact conventional and nothing more.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

For sudden-gradual, if one does not practice chanting, recitation, or others, and since chanting or recitation is just an activity, is there an approach that can encompass all activities?

Astus wrote:

In the "sudden-gradual" system one does practise all sorts of things. At the same time, it is possible to reduce everything to a single practice, as long as it is with an enlightened perspective. In Zen that is normally the practice of no-thought, and its derived methods of shikantaza and huatou.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 18th, 2013 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

Explain more on no-thought.

Astus wrote:

From Thich Thanh Tu's Keys to Buddhism (p 52):

Also, if we look directly at the false thoughts, they will disperse like clouds or smoke. This is "directly pointing at the mind," not relying on any means. If we all practiced in this manner, no one would be unwise enough to run after their thoughts, trying to destroy illusions. We only need to know that thoughts are false and not follow them. This is the essence of Bodhidharma's pacification of mind.

From Hanshan Deqing's <http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>:

What is commonly known as practice means simply to accord with [whatever state] of mind you're in so as to purify and relinquish the deluded thoughts and traces of your

habit tendencies. Exerting your efforts here is called practice. If within a single moment deluded thinking suddenly ceases, [you will] thoroughly perceive your own mind and realize that it is vast and open, bright and luminous, intrinsically perfect and complete. This state, being originally pure, devoid of a single thing, is called enlightenment. Apart from this mind, there is no such thing as cultivation or enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 19th, 2013 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Is Soto Zen Gradual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8591/2498> (PDF).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 19th, 2013 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

As for the recorded spoken teachings of these masters having greater historicity or being less subject to canonical revision, I couldn't say if that's the case.

Astus wrote:

"As I have shown in a previous publication, none of the encounter dialogue stories or exchanges, neither those that feature Baizhang nor any other Chan monk, can be traced back to the Tang period. From what we know, the encounter dialogue format was not even known during the Tang dynasty."

(Mario Poceski: Monastic Innovator, Iconoclast, and Teacher of Doctrine - The Varied Images of Chan Master Baizhang, in Zen Masters, p 15)

"The Extensive Record is an especially valuable source of information about Baizhang's teachings, and it is also among the most valuable resources for the study of Chan doctrine from the Tang period."

(p 21)

"The story of 'Ye yazi' or 'Wild Ducks,' for example, according to the early record in Wuxie heshang, in volume 15 of Zutang ji, originally was attributed to Baizhang Weizheng, but in later records, such as juan 3 of Wudeng huiyuan, juan 1 of Guzun su yulu, and juan 6 no 53 of Biyan lu, its attribution was changed, and it became the most important enlightenment dialogue written by Baizhang Huaihai."

(Zhaoguang Ge: History, Ideology, and General Ideological History - A Case Study of Chan Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty, in New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture, p 65)

As for Baizhang's teachings in his Extensive Record, he was less a subitist than Mazu or Huangbo, as he used a three stages system of progressive elimination of attachment,

nevertheless, it ended in buddhahood that could be accomplished in this life.

Regarding the relevance to the Western Myth, because Zen introduced itself primarily through the stories rather than the teachings, it gives the impression of unintelligible mysticism realised suddenly, as in both the wild ducks and the deafening shout story Baizhang attains enlightenment, but the stories do not give any useful information on how one could accomplish the same, besides the idea that one needs to find an enlightened master. And that brings us to the elevated status of the Zen teacher within the Western idea of Zen.

Meido said:

I think it safe to assume that since he participated in the monastic activities he did what others were doing, for example the several times he is mentioned participating in manual work.

Astus wrote:

My reply was for that particular situation when Linji gave that teaching. The record says, "At the evening gathering the master addressed the assembly" (師晚參示衆), the usual situation of shangtang, ascending the hall, i.e. giving a lecture. So, unlike what seeler242 said, the teaching was not given during a meditation session.

Meido said:

At the end of the day I'm rather fond of the approach which flexibly allows for any possibility, while having concrete methods matching the reality of most students' capacities.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that is the reality of a viable Buddhist community. And there is a palpable difference between the literary works of Zen and the daily activities of a Zen monastery. But at the same time, literary works can have a strong influence of what activities are considered Zen and what sort of Zen is expected by people. I think it is still the general scenario that those disillusioned by both the traditional religious and New Age arena, and by materialist consumerism, turn to Buddhism as a third alternative. In my opinion, while the "meditation only" approach can work to a certain extent, it fails to generate a stronger connection to the Dharma within a larger community, making Buddhism vulnerable to changes in social trends. For example, the lack of younger generation in Zen communities, as perceived by some
(<http://nozeninthewest.wordpress.com/forum-young-people-in-dharma/>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 19th, 2013 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

But as Westerners encountered that armed with their own presuppositions and conditioning - and without a lot of key background information to clarify the situation, as

you point out - I can agree that certainly confusion has sometimes resulted.

Astus wrote:

I think changing to a fully lay environment that lacks all knowledge of Buddhist tradition is a big change. Although lay practitioners have always participated in Zen to some extent - to the level that Dahui recommended kanhua practice only to lay people - but the teachings and methods were normally meant for ordained monastics.

Meido said:

Some folks who complain that in their experience Zen lacks such engagement may have just run into the latter approach without knowing it.

Astus wrote:

It's good that one can always choose whatever teacher or community one likes, such are the benefits of religious freedom. Although if I look around among the programmes offered by various Zen groups, it's not easy to find one that conducts lectures on sutras and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 22nd, 2013 at 7:21 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Huifeng said:

The quote you give in Chinese 晚參 means exactly "evening meditation session". It does not mean "evening gathering".

Astus wrote:

Yes, I see what you mean. But perhaps canchan is not that old a term to mean practice here, or the evening rituals were not the same as now. I can only rely on some other sources to clarify this, but I of course acknowledge that you may know better.

Footnote in Sasaki's version (p 150) says, Evening gathering 晚參. We have no definite knowledge of what this term referred to during Tang times, but in the Song it was an evening meeting of the assembly held in the master's quarters 方丈 (see page 131, above). It was informal in procedure, in contrast to the formal service held in the morning in the main hall, when the master took the high seat.

And if I understand it correctly, the

<http://dictionary.buddhistdoor.com/en/word/61523/%E6%99%9A%E5%8F%83> also gives various meanings here, not only the current system of morning and evening sessions of meditation and recitation.

Burton translates it as "evening lecture" (p 21), Shimano "evening gathering" (p 12), Schloegl "evening question period".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 22nd, 2013 at 8:24 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

The stories don't "give any useful information on how one could accomplish the same" but doesn't a person learn that when they get off the internet and go to a real life zen center or temple and meet with actual monks and teachers, etc?

Astus wrote:

Yes, experience in various communities is important. It is good to visit as many as one can, to see that Zen is not uniform. And then one can also see, that this is a human endeavour where anyone willing can take part.

seeker242 said:

The idea that one should "find an enlightened master", is that really an invention of "western zen"?

Astus wrote:

Zen was (and mostly still is) practised within a monastic environment, where one automatically has elders who are one's teachers. The idea that one should look for a "transmitted Zen teacher" was promoted in the Song era to strengthen the Zen school against others. Eventually that resulted in the complete takeover of Chinese monastic leadership, so abbots in China are almost always members of a Zen lineage, just as it is a requirement in Japan that all Zen monasteries are lead by a Zen teacher (thus the transmission became mostly hereditary after the Meiji era). And that's all quite different from the Western perception of the enlightened Zen master.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 26th, 2013 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Cross Buddhist Upaya

Content:

Astus wrote:

Skilful means are means of liberation. Could you demonstrate how all you listed are methods to bring enlightenment?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 27th, 2013 at 6:13 PM

Title: Re: Cross Buddhist Upaya

Content:

kindergarden said:

First, let us look at the word "enlightenment." Is it something one finds in oneself or discovers outside and brings it in? In my tradition (Rinzai Zen), as I understand it, one rediscovers it within. Is it gradual or sudden or a combination?

Shall we start? What do you know of upaya, Astus? As far as I know, Buddha only mentioned speech but said there are 84000.

Astus wrote:

In Japanese Rinzai Zen, although they distinguish five levels of koan practice, it is not necessarily a clearly established path (Zen Sand, p 29). I think that Zen is not a good approach for devising methods, paths and stages of enlightenment, as it is rather against/without such schemes. Other Buddhist schools fit the requirements better for extensive analysis of the path to enlightenment, complete with methods, stages and definitions. Major works like the Mahaprajnaparamita-upadesha and the Yogacarabhumi-shastra in East Asia cover that, however, because of lack of complete English translations, one better looks at Tibetan Mahayana where we already have complete works in English (from Tsongkhapa, Mipham, Jamgon Kongtrul, et al).

I don't know if such a list of skilful means exists. If I think of teachings like the Vimalakirti and the Upayakausalya Sutra, they show how bodhisattvas work in a way to meet the needs of the individual. That's what skilful means is about, that's what the knowledge of aspects/characteristics (sarvakarajnata/道種智), also called discriminatory wisdom, is about. It is the same thing that Linji says (Sasaki, p 13) about meeting various people and teaching them accordingly. But while most of the Buddhist schools have an established structure for training (stages and methods), Zen rather leaves it to the individual teacher to act freely (although in practice there are traditional sets of methods, but no sophisticated philosophy).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 31st, 2013 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Which Sutras make the Best Reading?

Content:

ylee111 said:

Which ones read more like epic novels rather than lectures? I am not necessarily looking for Game of Thrones but...

Astus wrote:

That Avatamsaka (Flower Ornament) Sutra is epic. And it's very popular.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 1st, 2014 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Meditation from Shurangama Sutra Volume 5

Content:

Astus wrote:

This sounds so much like a state of not simply being deaf but even dead mindless.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 1st, 2014 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: Meditation from Shurangama Sutra Volume 5

Content:

Astus wrote:

Even the perception of awareness vanished, was emptied out. When the emptiness of awareness reached an ultimate perfection, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be. ... Then the mind capable of creating vanished, as did the states that were made empty, so that then there wasn't even any emptiness!

I mean that for instance the above quote sounds like total annihilation. It equates emptiness with ceasing, with non-existence. As I see it, that is not the view of the middle way, it is an extreme view.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 2nd, 2014 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Meditation from Shurangama Sutra Volume 5

Content:

Will said:

Says Master Hua: "there was no attachment. At that time it was "producing the mind that does not dwell anywhere." Further, he remarks that the state is "inexpressibly blissful".

A non-attached & blissful state is hardly 'total annihilation', nor is it an 'extreme view' but a view central to the path.

Astus wrote:

What is such a state where there is no hearing (or any other of the six consciousnesses) if not the cessation of all phenomena? And if what is meant is rather not being attached to phenomena, it is not the cessation or vanishing of anything but only attachment itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 6th, 2014 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

fckw said:

In (the highest stages of) Mahamudra, mind moments are allowed to arise from the ground, then instantaneously (in the very moment of arising) self liberate and dissolve back into the ground.

In Dzogchen, mind moments arise as the expressive aspect of the ground, i.e. not different from it. Therefore there is no need for self-liberation at all.

If this is true (and please correct me if I am mistaken), then there would actually be a very subtle difference in practice between the two systems, namely in terms of the view taken in regard to arising mind moments.

Astus wrote:

From the <http://www.rinpoche.com/dchng.html>:

Whatever arises, is the fresh nature of thought.
and
The essence of thought is dharmakaya, it is taught.

So, there is no substantial difference between appearances and the nature of mind, both are dharmakaya. It is quite an important part in Mahamudra vipasyana meditation to clarify this for oneself.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 8th, 2014 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

fckw said:

Claiming that the two systems are "basically the same" is therefore only true on a superficial level, but not in terms of various aspects of the practice - at least for the Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug-Systems. Unfortunately, Berzin does not elaborate on the Bons or the Nyingmas.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me all Berzin says is that Dzogchen deals only with rigpa while Anuttarayogatantra's clear light is a more inclusive term. That is, while AYT encompasses the Dzogchen teachings, that's not true the other way around. However, Mahamudra has more than one meaning or one interpretation, and that's not addressed in Berzin's article at all. On the other hand, previously there were several quotes given right from the beginning of this thread how the view of Dzogchen and Mahamudra can be the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 9th, 2014 at 8:06 AM

Title: Re: Great Doubt Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Great doubt is the determination to get an answer and at the same time not accepting (i.e. doubting) whatever answer one finds in the process.

Some related things:

Robert E. Buswell: <http://www.undv.org/vesak2012/iabudoc/04RBuswellFINAL.pdf>

Jeff Shore: http://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/great_doubt.pdf

http://www.buddhism.org/board/read.cgi?board=Hwadu&y_number=33&nnew=2

Also: Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 3; p75-77 n132, n135

This looks like a good source, however, don't know where to get it:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=EuYFOAAACAAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 10th, 2014 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: What is the Largest Buddhist Sect on Earth Today?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I have to second Master Huifeng's question. The word "sect" needs to be defined, even if loosely. Why?

Vajrayana, Mahayana and Theravada are not sects. That's because they lack the necessary identification in terms of organisation, doctrine and ritual. Buddhism is not like Christianity where most of the churches have a defined organisational structure and a set of beliefs. In fact, there are very few Buddhist groups with an explicit and exclusive teaching, i.e. statements of faith.

Technically speaking, all Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels. The monastic community is traditionally defined by the precepts followed, and while there are some minor differences between the three living traditions, they are fairly similar, while the lay community has the same five precepts everywhere. In that sense, there aren't really any sects, we are all followers of the very same Shakyamuni Buddha. (A recommended reading: <https://sites.google.com/site/sectsandsectarianism/>)

What defines Pure Land Buddhism? The simple intention to be born in Sukhavati. While the recitation of the name of Amitabha is the most popular form of practice for that, it is not the only one. It doesn't have any unique doctrine, precept, ritual or organisation.

What defines Zen Buddhism? There is nothing that is found in all Zen groups but not outside of Zen. No unique doctrine, precept, ritual or organisation. We could say that Zen has its own lineage system of transmission, but on the one hand there are other Buddhist groups with similar lineages, and on the other there are a number of highly respected Zen teachers without lineage affiliation.

What defines Theravada? That looks somewhat easier, because of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathavatthu>, however, if we look at the current state of what is called Theravada, it is something very diverse in their doctrines, practices, rituals and organisations. And since all of them are Theravada, there isn't actually one definitive Theravada school.

What defines Vajrayana? It feels easy to say that all things tantra. However, tantric teachings and practices are found not only in a couple of Tibetan Buddhist groups, but also in Tibetan Bon, in Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, in Japanese Buddhism (mostly Shingon and Tendai, but certain elements exist(ed) in other schools too), and most importantly in various Hindu schools. And if we start limiting the meaning of Vajrayana, we find that there are all sorts of traditions within Buddhism that don't agree with each other on certain points, so like for Theravada, there is no single orthodox school.

So, I think either there aren't really sects in Buddhism, or there are a whole lot of them. Thus some sort of definition is needed to answer the question about the largest Buddhist sect. Or change the question to something else, like "the most popular understanding of enlightenment", "the favourite colour for monastic robes", "the most popular buddha", "the most respected teacher", etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 10th, 2014 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Jodo Shinshu and personal morality

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is the problem of 'licensed evil', a known misinterpretation of the teachings of Honen and Shinran. The answer is that those who renounce the world and want to attain birth in the Pure Land don't wilfully commit any evil actions, don't intentionally engage in greed and hatred.

Things you may read:

<http://www.adelaideshinbuddhistdojo.com.au/shinranwasan/kw40.htm>

<https://amida-ji-retreat-temple-romania.blogspot.com/2010/06/meaning-of-there-are-no-precepts.html>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Xb3BlmNUdRAC&pg=PA53&lpg=PA53&dq=shinran+licensed+evil&source=bl&ots=Gnr5frL6n8&sig=d6VTtaRBahxRJO5uLRbAP4UESYA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TtjPUun2CtWysQsJ7YCYDA&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=shinran%20licensed%20evil&f=false>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 10th, 2014 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: What is the Largest Buddhist Sect on Earth Today?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For the sake of statistics, it is easier to count monasteries, temples and community buildings. Making a headcount of ordained people is also something quite reliable as long as the government keeps track of them. However, neither monasteries nor ordination define one as belonging to this or that sect, lineage, whatnot.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 14th, 2014 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Faith in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are various forms of faith. There is the general faith in the Three Jewels, common to all Buddhists. There is the very first stage of faith within the ten faiths in the 52 stages system of the bodhisattva path, something one could call Mahayana faith. Such

Mahayana faith has various interpretations depending on what source we look at. In Zen it is discussed for instance by Bojo Jinul, who identifies it with faith in buddha-mind, an initial insight into the nature of mind. Then there is great faith among the three essentials of Zen practice as taught first by Gaofeng Yuanmiao, and that is mostly about faith in one's ability to reach enlightenment (i.e. a form of faith in buddha-nature) and faith in the practice itself. In general, Zen teaches the faith that mind is buddha, and that is the highest faith of suchness as taught in Mahayana, where faith is in fact equal to enlightenment.

Dogen writes (<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/GakuDoYoJinShu.pdf>):

"In general, students of the truth want to be caught by the truth. To be caught by the truth is to lose all trace of enlightenment. Practitioners of the Buddhist truth should first of all believe in Buddhism. Belief in Buddhism should be the belief that we ourselves originally exist inside the truth, without delusion, without wrong images, without disturbances, without anything extra or anything missing, and without mistakes. These are the kind of beliefs we should establish, and this is how we should make the truth clear. Then according to these beliefs, we practice. This is our basis for pursuing the truth."

Sources to look at:

https://books.google.com/books?id=_A2QS03MP5EC

The Aspiration for Enlightenment through the Perfection of Faith in

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html

http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama7/shurangama7_4.asp

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 14th, 2014 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: What if Buddhism had become the dominant faith of Europe

Content:

Astus wrote:

Religion is not the only force in a society. Highlighting any factor and raising above the others results in serious distortion of one's perspective. History is often viewed as the history of politics, warfare and economics, and that is somewhat biased too, but still more encompassing and logical than putting religion to the front. No Buddhist country I have heard of achieved some sort of golden age where at least the basic five precepts were observed. I'd also be interested to hear of Buddhist scientists and inventors before European influence in Asia.

What if Buddhism had become the dominant faith? Nothing. Christianity had a widespread and influential monastic system, mostly wiped out either by Protestant rulers or by other political changes. Christians have a strong message to "love thy neighbour", but it didn't really stop people from waging wars, pillaging and ransacking towns, suppressing the poor, and persecuting intellectuals and other unwanted people. Buddhism cannot really show any better historical record in transforming societies, plus

it mostly lacks the level of social engagement Christianity has always had.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 14th, 2014 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: 23rd Minor Precept

Content:

Jikan said:

The Brahma Net precepts are used for purposes of ordination in East Asia.

matthewmartin said:

I was sort of surprised to see this, since normally institutions like to keep tight control of membership.

Astus wrote:

It is used for such ordinations only in Japanese schools (and the Taego order?). And I presume no school there would accept self-ordination. At the same time, this feature of the bodhisattva vows allowed everyone to take them freely and thus helped establishing the bodhisattva precepts throughout China and related cultures. However, unlike in Japan, taking only the bodhisattva precepts does not confer any special rights or position.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 15th, 2014 at 1:58 AM

Title: Re: Omniscience and the future

Content:

Astus wrote:

Do buddhas know the future? Then lot of classical incidents of Shakyamuni would not have happened. Some discussed here: <http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/BuddhaOmniscience.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

heart said:

So, thögal in tantric mahamudra?

Malcolm said:

Yes, so it seems.

Astus wrote:

Interesting. I have always had this impression that thögal with its channels and visions is a "step back" to tantra from the direct simplicity of trekchö and mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 6:38 AM

Title: Meaningful in Tibetan

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is "meaningful" in this poem,

"Like the continuous flow of a great river,

Whatever you do is meaningful."

(Thrangu Rinpoche: Songs of Naropa, p. 99;

<http://luminousemptiness.blogspot.hu/2008/12/reflections-on-naropa-summary-of.html>;

<http://gdamsngagmdzod.tsadra.org/index.php/%E0%BD%95%E0%BE%B1%E0%BD%82%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%A2%E0%BE%92%E0%BE%B1%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%86%E0%BD%BA%E0%BD%93%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%94%E0%BD%BC%E0%BD%A0%E0%BD%B2%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%9A%E0%BD%B2%E0%BD%82%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%96%E0%BD%A6%E0%BE%A1%E0%BD%B4%E0%BD%A6%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%94%E0%BC%8B>)

Could someone explain this word, what it is in Tibetan, its use, etc.?

འབབ་ལྟར། ཁྱིམ་སྤང་ཡུང་དོན་དང་ལྡན།

'bab ltar / ji ltar spyad kyang don dang ldan

The <http://www.thlib.org/reference/dictionaries/tibetan-dictionary/translate.php> says "don dang ldan" stands for:

JH-ENG connected with the meaning

JH-OE {C}intent on what is beneficial

JH-SKT {C}artha-yukta

So I presume here "meaningful" (arthayukta - is that only a back translation, or there is such a term in Indian Buddhism?) actually stands for the unlimited compassionate activities of liberating all beings. However, if I just look at the English, the word does not convey such a meaning. Therefore my question.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Meaningful in Tibetan

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

As far as I know, 'dang ldan' and 'ldan' are synonymous,...

Astus wrote:

It still makes no sense in the text itself. I'd like to understand why the word "meaningful" is used. I assumed that it would be understandable in Tibetan, but if the original contains no other meaning either - and that is what I really want to find out - then there's no difference between the English and the original.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 7:58 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

The problem I have always had articulating the unique feature of Vajrayāna view to you sutra guys is precisely summed above: wisdom merged into emptiness is the basis [sthana, gzhi], and this is what accounts for the visions in both Dzogchen [klong sde and man ngag sde] as well as Kalacakra.

Astus wrote:

But that's only those two systems. And even in thogal the fourth vision is the total dissolution, like going through creation and completion stages again. Mahamudra is complete with non-meditation, and there is no point in repeating the whole process of mandalas, mantras and buddhas based on the final realisation. So, I don't think I base my understanding on sutra, since that's how it looks like to me in Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 8:31 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Its not only those two systems, it is merely articulated most clearly in those two systems.

Astus wrote:

You mean you know some teachings from other schools too that give similar methods?

Malcolm said:

Also Astus, the four yogas are sūtra mahāmudra. If you do not practice the completion stage, mahāmudra according to the upadeśas is a slow path, or so it is asserted by the Sakyapas. This is the reason why vase breath is used extensively even in so called sems sde.

Astus wrote:

Yes, the criticism of the White Self-Sufficient Remedy. But from the Dagpo Kagyu perspective, the path of liberation is as valid as the path of transformation, and both are transmitted without putting one above the other. And I'm not trying to prove anyone's right here, there are enough versions of Dharma to satisfy all needs. I'd rather like to understand the reason behind considering the appearance of drops and buddhas - that

result in their return to the natural state anyway - is the necessary next step.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

in thogal the four visions appear not because the "natural" state is somehow lacking; they appear in their sequence because persons possess affliction and afflictions attenuate the visions as as they naturally unravel the visions first increase and then vanish. However, the idea that at the end of the four visions there are no appearances is a complete misconception.

Astus wrote:

The process is a removal of afflictions, and the visions are a sign of that, so they don't appear simply because of the natural state, and thus their disappearance is the final accomplishment. I didn't think dissolution here means total nothing, otherwise it wouldn't be the achievement of buddhahood for the benefit of all beings. Just as in mahamudra non-meditation is not about absolute non-activity. However, it seems to me that thogal and its visions is only one possible method of purification, and not the culmination of everything else, therefore other paths don't need it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2014 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

mutsuk said:

I mean, you certainly know that in the two stages one works with the mind (sems) and does visualizations (dmigs pa, and other technical words for "visualize") while in Thögel one works with Rigpa (and its dynamism, rtsal) and has visions (snang ba) which are a completely different thing.

Astus wrote:

Working with rigpa means what? The view that appearances are only illusory phenomena, "the play of the nature of mind". Doesn't Vajrayana in general have the same understanding that deities are to be viewed as mental appearances without substance, and the understanding of the twofold emptiness? Doesn't thogal include instructions about how to induce such visions, using postures and other techniques? Dzogchen may have its own form of explanation that is different from anuttarayogatantra, but that doesn't mean that they don't follow the same process of the build up of a vision and then the vision's dissolution. That's why I said it is like creation and completion.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 9:17 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza & Visions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Whatever occurs inevitably disintegrates and dissolves. The teaching of impermanence is at the heart of the Buddha's doctrine, and it is a straightforward guide to liberation. Zazen is about being buddha, and buddha is non-attachment. Zen is not being affected by the six kinds of appearances, so even if buddhas appear in one's meditation, that's only the work of the devil. At the same time, Dogen creatively combines the two truths in his Muchu Setsumu, stating that the realm of visions/dreams is the realm of buddhas, in other terms, there is no difference between ordinary and enlightened experience. Consequently, nice visions, bad visions, neutral visions and no visions are equal.

Your mind may feel as though it is sinking or floating, dull or sharp, or as though you can see outside the room, inside your body, or the body of buddhas or bodhisattvas. ...

These unusual and strange conditions are all sicknesses that occur when the mind and breath are not in harmony.

(http://antaiji.org/?page_id=7136&lang=en)

Someone who tries to discern me in form

Or seek me in sound

Is practicing non-Buddhist methods

And will not discern the Tathāgata

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-26)

If one wishes to see the Buddha then one sees him. If one sees him then one asks questions. If one asks then one is answered, one hears the sutras and rejoices greatly. One reflects thus: 'Where did the Buddha come from? Where did I go to?' and one thinks to oneself: 'The Buddha came from nowhere, and I also went nowhere.' One thinks to oneself: The Three Realms—the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Realm of the Formless—these Three Realms are simply made by thought. Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathagata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha. The mind does not itself know the mind, the mind does not itself see mind. A mind with conceptions is stupidity, a mind without conceptions is nirvana. There is nothing in these dharmas which can be enjoyed; they are all made by thinking. If thinking is nothing but empty, then anything which is thought is also utterly nonexistent.'

(Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, ch 2, tr P. Harrison, p 21-22)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 9:48 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

mitsuk said:

In the perspective of the practice of Thögel, Rigpa remains conceptual at the level of

Trekchö because its dynamism has not be "activated".

Astus wrote:

If such dynamism naturally unfolds from rigpa, there is nothing need to be done besides being in the state of rigpa. Being in the nature of mind is what mahamudra is all about, still, there are no such visions as in thogal. Trekcho is also being in the nature of mind, but no visions there either. So, either only in thogal one rests in the natural state and everyone else is deluded, or there are certain factors that induce the visions, and in that case it is a willingly used method. As you say, outside of thogal the natural state is a conceptual fabrication, so while others claim that their meditation is free from concepts, you deny that. Such a perspective is equal to saying that only one's own system is true and the rest are false, although here I fail to see the reason behind that, as I don't see how mahamudra (and others) still maintain a conceptual state.

mutusuk said:

With the two stages you do something with your mind , you visualize. With Thögel you don't visualize, you contemplate the arising of the dynamism of your natural state.

Astus wrote:

That depends whether only thogal knows of the nature of mind or others too.

mutusuk said:

They are natural visions not visualizations imagined by the mind.

Astus wrote:

Don't they occur to the mind, aren't they experienced within mind? If yes, they are no different from any other phenomena, being mental fabrications without any substance. If no, they are not experienced at all. Or is there a second mind besides mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

thigle said:

And if knowledge/transparency is "stabilised" while you looking at the sky like you looking at the sky, typical thögal-"developments" appear, because there's no grasping.

Astus wrote:

Then it should occur to everyone without grasping, not only those following the dzogchen teachings. However, they are not really discussed anywhere else. Or, those visions are induced by looking at the sky, remaining in darkness, and similar conditions conducive to visions.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 10:19 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

The visions in dzogchen are not conceptual constructs like visualizations of the creation and completion stage.

Astus wrote:

Do those visions occur without any instruction or method whatsoever? If yes, then there's little point in teaching it. If no, how are they not conceptual constructs? True, during the creation stage one methodically and regularly needs to build up the visualisation, while in thogal one needs to let it unfold into a complex vision, and I'm not debating this difference in the method.

However, normal dreams are not intentionally created by oneself, still they are understood as conceptual constructs. Everyday experience of houses, trees, people, etc. are not intentionally created, but they are also conceptual constructs. Even the language is not something one creates for oneself, but it is clearly a conceptual construct. Visions of shamans and mystiques are not taken to be their own imagination, but they are mental creations nevertheless.

Visions in thogal have a special status based on the idea that because one remains in rigpa, it is not one's own doing. However, remaining in rigpa does not eliminate the six senses, does it? Still, lights, noises, etc. are not given any special status there, they are not the natural unfolding of the nature of mind.

Malcolm said:

It is not really a process of removing afflictions, it is more of a process of afflictions becoming undone on their own.

Astus wrote:

Being in the natural state is being free from afflictions, isn't it? One practises thogal by remaining in rigpa, that is, free from afflictions and concepts, so why the need for afflictions to unfold? True, this is a good explanation to back up the need for further practice and using thogal after one has ascertained the nature of mind and gained a stable footing in trekcho, so I'm not questioning the efficacy of the teaching, the method and the tradition. However, it seems somewhat illogical to me to say that on the one hand the nature of mind is the nature of buddha, and on the other that at the same time there are karmic imprints to clear out, because this presupposes that there are two minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

They do, but very few people understand what they are.

Astus wrote:

Shouldn't it be widespread at least within Tibetan Buddhism then? Many mahamudra teachers were and are familiar with dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

mutsuk said:

From a Dzogchen perspective, everything that is not Dzogchen is incomplete.

Astus wrote:

Claiming superiority over others is not a unique idea. The result of such a view is that there are many different sects, as they simply fail to convince each other. It seems many Kagyu teachers are more easy going in this regard. For example those already quoted at the beginning of this topic, and people like Lama Shang:

Just this mind alone, which is completely empty, clear, aware, and lucid, is what is called the perfection of wisdom, luminosity, mahamudra, dzokchen, and dharmakaya. (Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 77)

or Tsele Natsok Rangdrol:

Resting in the unaltered mind is the essential meaning of all the countless, profound, and vast meditation instructions, such as mahamudra, dzokchen, result as the path (lamdre), severance (cho), and pacification (shiche). Nevertheless, these different kinds of instructions exist because individuals differ in their understanding. (p 301)

mutsuk said:

They are not mental fabrications, they are the visionary expression of the glow of Rigpa.

Astus wrote:

The nature of mind is without beginning or end, the visionary expressions are not. As they have beginning and end, they are dependently arisen, and as such, they are fabrications.

mutsuk said:

The mind (sems) is conditioned, Mind-itself (sems-nyid) is not. The ordinary mind (sems) functions in the mode (tshul) of ignorance (ma-rig-pa) while Mind (sems-nyid) functions in the mode of Rigpa.

Astus wrote:

Can there be a function that is not conditioned? That would mean eternal existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 19th, 2014 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

mutsuk said:

No, but the visions are not objects of the senses. If you close your eyes, they arise anyway. They arise in the dark where your senses cannot perceive anything. They are not objects of the senses.

Astus wrote:

Dreams and imagination are not objects of the physical senses either, and it doesn't mean they are anything extraordinary.

mutsuk said:

Still, lights, noises, etc. are not given any special status there, they are not the natural unfolding of the nature of mind.

They are karmic perceptions. THogel visions are not like this.

Astus wrote:

Differentiating between products of mind and products of rigpa means separating mind and rigpa. Either then mind and rigpa separated as difference between ignorance and wisdom - both are functions of the same mental continuum - or they are separated as minds of two different beings. If they are like two different beings, it makes no sense to me to have two minds. If they are functions of the same mental continuum, it is not possible to have both function at the same time, thus either everything is perceived with ignorance or with wisdom. In other words, either everything is the product of karma or the vision of enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 20th, 2014 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

You have a film on a movie projector. As you focus the image on the screen, the image appears to become brighter and more clear. But you have not changed or altered the film inside of the projector in anyway.

Likewise, though the visions appear to increase and decrease, they are not actually increasing and decreasing.

You can consider them to the visible expression of the mind essence, this is why these appearances are termed wisdom appearances since they do not arise from mind.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying that one always experiences the same visions, except that there are times when one properly focuses and times when not? That is, every experience is the

same vision, but without the right eyes, they look like the ordinary five elements, but with the right eyes, they are the buddha families? Personally, I always thought of such a connection between elements and buddhas as rather symbolic, and not in a literal way that instead of a green recycle bin I see green Tara.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 20th, 2014 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: Mahāmudrā & Dzogchen

Content:

mutsuk said:

Mind functions with karmic winds, Rigpa functions with the wisdom wind.

Astus wrote:

You agreed that during remaining in rigpa one still hears noises, etc. and said that they are karmic products. At the same time, when remaining in rigpa, one has thogal visions, and they are wisdom products. Only sems has karmic products and only rigpa has wisdom products. Are sems and rigpa present at the same time? Can one be attached and non-attached concurrently? Because if yes, buddhas can still be afflicted. So that's why I don't really see how what you say is possible at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 20th, 2014 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza & Visions

Content:

thigle said:

The experimental context for my question to the dogen-followers is: Sitting in front of the sky or in darkness, just the way like one is sitting in front of the sky or in darkness.

Astus wrote:

One can see strange things in front of oneself even by staring at the wall or the floor, if one stares long enough, and that's more about mental distraction than being aware and free. It doesn't really matter what kind of sensory experience one has during zazen, as that's not the point. I don't see how total darkness or open sky could make a difference in that, black or blue are both fine.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza & Visions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thigle,

If I can follow you, the difference between solid and pure visions are the presence or absence of duality (subject-object). The non-dual view, i.e. the middle way, is not

defined by any visions, but whatever appears is either pure or impure depending on the view. Why should special rays and lights appear? I see no reason for that. But even if they appear, they cannot be but conditioned appearances, no different from any other. To use your example, the broken straw in the water is the pure vision itself, and there is no other vision (i.e. samsara=nirvana).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 23rd, 2014 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

Astus wrote:

Self - that's a thought, a concept, an idea.

No self - that's a thought, a concept, an idea.

True self - that's a thought, a concept, an idea.

Thoughts come and go, they exist only dependently. And no matter what magnificent concept it is one likes to hold on to, it is definitely no different from any other concept in that it is impermanent, dependent, empty. On the apparent level thoughts are all different, but their nature, their essence is universally and permanently that they are without permanence, independence, self. This truth is clear and obvious for all who looks at it, and it's quite logical too. What use is there asserting or denying some imaginary self?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 23rd, 2014 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

smcj said:

If there is such a thing as an eternal "Truth", then it has to be active and present now.

Astus wrote:

I agree, an eternal anything must be obvious now or hidden forever, otherwise it is not eternal. Now what is apparently eternal? Emptiness, aka dharmadhatu, aka dharmakaya, etc. Eternal change.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 24th, 2014 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

Jikan said:

What implications does this discussion have in terms of practice?

Sherab Dorje said:

My sentiments exactly, which is why I asked SoB what his practice was, to see how his

theory integrates into his practice. To see if it can be liberatory.

Astus wrote:

I'm also curious to hear about the practical side.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 24th, 2014 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: Shikantaza & Visions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thigle,

Could you say it then in a less technical way? I don't think I understand what you mean.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 24th, 2014 at 7:42 AM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

"What is your practice SoB?"

Son of Buddha said:

Enlightenment is the True Self.....so whatever Buddhist practice leads to Enlightenment leads to the True Self.

but if you are asking if there are Buddhist monks who have claimed their practice lead them to True Self/Enlightenment then yes there are quite a few.

Ajahn Mun

Ajahn Maha Boowa

Vijja Dhammakaya is said to lead to True Self

Dolpopa stated one could gain True Self through Kalachakra practice.

and a bunch of chinese and japanese chan/Zen monks claim their meditations lead to True Self/Enlightenment....I can get you a list of a ton of names if you want it will take a little while cause I have to write my friend from Taiwan for it)

also you will attain True Self in the Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

An interesting claim for universal validity. Although the majority of Theravada (unlike the Dhammakaya movement) is clear about anatta, as in the Abhidhamma and such; and the Madhyamikas (unlike a few Tibetan teachers) refute again and again all sorts of self - according to your interpretation, they in the end teach "True Self".

However, I still fail to see the practical value of such a belief in a self.

No mention of self in such classic meditation texts like the Anapanasati, the Satipatthana and the Kayagatasati Sutta. No self in Zhiyi's famous manuals like the Smaller Samatha-Vipasyana or the Six Gates. No self asserted in Kamalasila's three Bhavanakramas either. However, they do talk about removing the mistaken idea of a self, and such a practice has clear practical value in liberating one from suffering.

So, putting aside the theory, where is the practical side of the "True Self" concept? Or is it just another name for enlightenment, just a stylistic thing that some might prefer over such terms as nirvana and liberation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 24th, 2014 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

steveb1 said:

When Buddha made self-references, just what kind of thing was he referring to, if it wasn't a self?

Astus wrote:

There is the relative, everyday truth, and there is the ultimate truth. Thus one should know the difference between the teachings and utterances of the Buddha.

in order to express the meanings they know, they follow the accepted language. Afterwards they are not forced to reconsider. Thus, good son, the saints, being freed from language through their holy wisdom and insight in this regard, realize the perfect awakening that reality is truly apart from language. It is because they desire to lead others to realize perfect awakening that they provisionally establish names and concepts and call things conditioned or unconditioned.

(Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 2; tr. Keenan)

The Buddhas have designated a self;
And have taught that there is no self;
And also have taught that
There is neither self nor selflessness.
What language expresses is repudiated because
The domain of thought is repudiated.
Unarisen and unceased:
Reality is just like nirvana.

(Madhyamaka Sastra, 18, 6-7; Ocean of Reasoning p380, 382)

Those who develop fabrications with regard to the Buddha—
The unextinguished one who has gone beyond all fabrication—
And are impaired by those fabrications,
Fail to see the Tathagata.
Whatever is the essence of the Tathagata,
That is the essence of the transmigrator.

The Tathagata has no essence.
The transmigrator has no essence.
(Madhyamaka Sastra, 22, 15-16; Ocean of Reasoning p450-451)

"And so, my friend Yamaka — when you can't pin down the Tathagata as a truth or reality even in the present life — is it proper for you to declare, 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death'?"

"Previously, my friend Sariputta, I did foolishly hold that evil supposition. But now, having heard your explanation of the Dhamma, I have abandoned that evil supposition, and have broken through to the Dhamma."

"Then, friend Yamaka, how would you answer if you are thus asked: A monk, a worthy one, with no more mental effluents: what is he on the break-up of the body, after death?"

"Thus asked, I would answer, 'Form is inconstant... Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is inconstant. That which is inconstant is stressful. That which is stressful has ceased and gone to its end.'
(Yamaka Sutta, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 24th, 2014 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza & Visions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thigle,

"Solid vision" like "pure vision" can appear out of "ignorance", or as expression of knowledge, which is the end of "ignorance"

What is the difference then? The supposition that pure vision has no external source but "self-generated". That is not the case, however, as there are conditions for the pure vision just as for the solid one. Both appear as visual phenomena, and only mentally makes one a difference between solid and pure, but not visually. And that mental difference is just the supposition that pure vision is self-generated. And there is another assumption here.

Unknown said:

The described natural capacity and development of "knowledge" closes this important gap.

Astus wrote:

That idea of capacity and development do not exist in Zen, so it cannot be used as an explanation or basis for the occurrence of pure visions distinct from other sensory phenomena. Consequently, both solid and pure are interpretations not made in the Zen tradition, thus even if they came up during meditation, they would not be handled in any special way.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 25th, 2014 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

But let's get to the real point. If the True Self is beyond the conditioned how can one achieve it by relying on relative (conditioned) methods?

Astus wrote:

That's one thing. But I have yet to hear about an actual practice that is a meditation on/with the "true self".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 26th, 2014 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: "the Self is real" according to T. Page

Content:

Sherab said:

Merely saying that emptiness is defined as unconditioned does not address my question, which was how is it possible to have a thing that is both conditioned and unconditioned at the same time. Perhaps, you are saying it is possible as long as it is defined as possible.

Astus wrote:

The problem you raise exists only because you suppose 3 separate things: a substance (the thing) and two opposing attributes (conditioned, unconditioned). (Although here it could be said that a box can be both big and small (1 substance, 2 attributes), but that's only because the attributes exist in different context.)

Emptiness means simply the lack of independent essence/substance. That is, empty = without essence/self/etc. and it is not an added quality of something. Empty = not eternal, not independent. And that lack of essence is an unconditional truth, because it is not created by something, not caused by anything. It is simply the absence of substance.

Such absence of independent essence is shown by things being dependently originated. Something does not exist on its own, it exists because of various causes and conditions. That interdependence is the fact of being conditioned.

Thus conditioned and unconditioned are true for everything at the same time. That is: nothing is eternal and everything is impermanent at the same time. Not being unchanging is the unconditioned part. Being of a changing nature is the conditioned part. Actually, it is stating the same thing from different perspectives. Neither part exists without the other.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 6:54 PM

Title: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Astus wrote:

There was a topic <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=77&t=3286>. I can only agree that life in Buddhism is meaningless. And it is not only meaningless, it is samsara, beginningless and endless dissatisfaction. Miao Yun wrote a chapter http://www.buddhanet.net/cbp2_f12.htm that sums up neatly that the only meaning Buddhism provides is to achieve liberation. Similar conclusions were drawn in the mentioned topic. What is forgotten is that Buddhism is not about saying how things are but how one should see them.

Renunciation and bodhicitta are qualities to develop. Before engaging in the path to enlightenment one naturally believes that life is full of meaning. That there are things (wealth, sex, power, knowledge, etc.) that are worth the trouble. And that is clinging, that is attachment, the great evil. Seeing that all phenomena are empty clears away that attachment. In other words, meaninglessness needs to be realised.

Such a view found in that realisation is not unique to Buddhism. Philosophers and religious thinkers all talk about it. It is in the face of apparent meaninglessness that people come up with various answers. They created answers because of the fear of nothingness. The Buddha, on the other hand, taught that it is that desire to have something to hold on to is the root of the problem.

The ideal life proposed by Buddhism is that of a beggar, who is content with the bare necessities of life. Thus, being busy with family, career, study and the other distractions of life that most of us call normal things to do, is meaningless and even harmful from the Buddhist perspective. And that makes Buddhism more than nihilism (in the Western philosophical sense), it is the ultimate refutation of what non-Buddhist everyday people call life.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

I believe that Buddhism makes life meaningful rather than meaningless.

Astus wrote:

Care to elaborate?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

KonchokZoepa said:

it sounds nihilist to say this precious human rebirth is or should be meaningless.

also vajrayana offers such a wide variety of skillful means that having a normal life should not be a problem to a person of the highest capacity.

Astus wrote:

It is nihilist. Vajrayana offers skilful means to what end? Liberation. Liberation from life (and death). And while there is contemplation on the preciousness of life, it is precious only because one can practise the Dharma. And then there is the contemplation on the meaninglessness of samsara.

Also, why would one want to stick to any normal life?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you truly believed that life is meaningless,
and that the only worthwhile activity is striving for liberation,
you wouldn't have wasted time posting to this forum.

Astus wrote:

Besides that it is a waste of time, it could as well be considered bodhisattva activity.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you read to the bottom of Miao Yun's "What is the Significance of Life?"
(the link you provided)

it reads:

Life is meaningful. Not only should we discover its worthiness, we should also realize its ultimate significance. With this human life, we can progress to the attainment of Buddhahood. How precious our lives are!

Astus wrote:

And so I wrote in the OP: "the only meaning Buddhism provides is to achieve liberation."
And that's what your quote says.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

KonchokZoepa said:

we need not to be monks in forests to advance on the path.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say one must be a monk to be a Buddhist. It is simply the ideal way of life, full renunciation. And so aspiring on the path means aspiring for renouncing life.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 28th, 2014 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

kirk5a said:

Do you mean - there are no goals, other than liberation, that are worth achieving?

Astus wrote:

Yes, like that.

kirk5a said:

If so, I don't agree that is all Buddhism is about. That's primarily because, since we do want to focus on that hard-core reality - the reality is, we are here. Therefore, the matter of liberation becomes tied to the matter of participation. One's manner of participation then, is entirely relevant and meaningful. And Buddhist teachings have a lot to say about that.

Astus wrote:

Participation in what? Life? One is already bound to all sorts of things, and liberation is about ending that. The path is moving away from being engaged in phenomena, in life.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 12:14 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The path is about moving away from dualism. Phenomena is empty.

Astus wrote:

Away from being engaged, not phenomena themselves. We are ourselves phenomena. It is the attachment that needs to be removed.

PadmaVonSamba said:

I'll tell you an interesting story. ...

Astus wrote:

Seeing life's meaninglessness does not mean living in this or that way. Buddhism sets the ideal form of life as the renunciate (not necessarily an ordained monastic). The point is that all goals but liberation is futile in Buddhism, and liberation is leaving behind all aspiration and goals. As Linji said, "If you engage in any seeking, it will all be pain. Much

better to do nothing." (Sasaki, p19)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 12:54 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

KonchokZoepa said:

you seem to make it sound like renunciation and the path has something to do with the external. again, this is a hinayana/theravada monk approach.

Astus wrote:

If there is no motivation to build a career, a family, achieve fame and wealth, then it is only logical to say one does not pursue those things. From thoughts actions come. Renunciation is a mental attitude, but it necessarily appears in one's daily life. So, if one sees no point in hoarding plastic Pokémon figures, one does not collect them. Also, only in Japanese Buddhism exists such a thing as a bodhisattva monastic ordination, not anywhere else.

KonchokZoepa said:

it should be noted that Buddha opened 84,000 different Dharma Doors and no doubt this worldly life renunciation is one door.

Astus wrote:

All teachings are aimed at liberation from samsara. This is true for all Buddhist traditions. And that liberation is the complete renunciation of life and death. So, this is not only about what in Tibetan Buddhism they categorise as "the path of renunciation".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 1:05 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Well, in the Great Vehicle it seems that the ultimate meaning of life is helping others along the way to our own liberation, or perhaps truly helping others after our own liberation, either way you want to slice it. To me it seems that the message is that life IS meaningful

Astus wrote:

Yes, the sole aim bodhisattvas and buddhas have is to liberate beings. Liberate from life and death, that is, show them that all is impermanent and empty, without any lasting or real value. And we may call that the meaning of the bodhisattva's life, that after they themselves have seen how meaningless everything is, to show others the same. Is teaching meaninglessness meaningful? Not for the bodhisattvas themselves, who see that all beings are nothing but empty fabrications.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Because, even if one merely applies the teachings of the Shravakayana, every life situation can become a vehicle for liberation. Even if it is not the "instantaneous" liberation promised by (some of the) Mahayana and the Vajryana, every situation is still an opportunity to gather merit.

Astus wrote:

So, life is meaningful, because there is always an opportunity to see its meaninglessness and become free from it. Gradually, or instantly.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:01 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Right, the problem is....the very concept of looking for "meaning" in things is samsaric, not just the samsaric "things". That's the whole point, meaning can't be found. So happiness, contentment, liberation, whatever, it has to come from something other than this apparent constant need we have for "meaning", which I think is connected entirely to false conception of a self.

Astus wrote:

Yes, the problem is with looking for a meaning, imagining a meaning. Thus, meaninglessness is something one has to arrive at, by removing that grasping for a meaning. Grasping a meaning is the attachment to an imagined essence and function, just as you say, it is the false conception of a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

1. what are you going to renounce?
 2. The point is not to 'take refuge' in composite phenomena as a source of the cessation of suffering. That's all.
- So, go and enjoy stuffing your self with pizza, just don't think it means you'll never feel hungry again.

Astus wrote:

Renunciation is renouncing all meaning one attributes to life, death and whatever else comes up.

Is there any sane person who believes that one never becomes hungry again after eating no matter what amount of food? I don't think so. Craving after food again and again, that's quite common. In the context of eating, what is it that one considers it meaningful or meaningless? Eating is meaningful when there are rules to follow, importance to believe in, purity to maintain, etc. Eating is meaningless when such views about food are seen as false. As you say, when it is not a refuge, not a religion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Indrajala said:

One is aware all things lack inherent existence and hence can be tentatively qualified as meaningless, but simultaneous one sees the conventional nature of meaning and can freely operate within it without being emotionally or mentally compromised, or such is the ideal.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's the bodhisattva ideal. And the only reason the bodhisattva "stays in samsara" is because of great compassion. That motivation is about showing the same meaninglessness of life, bringing about the renunciation of samsara, that the bodhisattva already possesses. There is no enjoyment of samsara, no suffering from samsara, there is only the compassion to save beings. Therefore, all engagement in samsaric things by a bodhisattva is illusory, as the Vimalakirti Sutra explains. So we can see that a bodhisattva's attitude toward samsara is different from an arhat only because of compassion, but the total renunciation is there at the same time, and no meaning is given to anything at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

flavio81 said:

What it is seeking is the ultimate liberation from all mental conditioning; from "wrong views" in the ultimate sense of the word.

Astus wrote:

All views are wrong views. Samsara, life and death, is being attached to a view. That is, grasping a meaning. No meaning, no view, no life, no death, and that is liberation. That's why I said it is liberation from life, the removal of all meaning.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Matt J said:

And if there is no meaning to be found in that, then it should be no surprise to be unable to find meaning in enjoying a cup of coffee, playing with one's kids, or suffering a toothache.

Astus wrote:

What meaning do you find in that?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

by 'meaning' aren't you referring, basically, to the notion of a pre-destined purpose?

Astus wrote:

Meaning is both essence and function. That is, both as something existent, essential, substantial, true, real. And something that has a purpose, a role in life, a goal to achieve, a future. A "pre-destined purpose" is one of the possible meanings of meaning.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

jeeprs said:

I don't agree with it. Bodhicitta is compassion, it is literally love or loving-kindness, it is not simply non-existence or vacuity.

So where does it come from? What is the source of compassion, if life is completely meaningless? What gives rise to 'compassion'? And isn't compassion meaningful? I find it tremendously meaningful, myself. Is that a mistake?

Astus wrote:

Compassion is seeing how those who believe in a meaning suffer because of that. It is exactly because the meaninglessness of existence is realised that one knows the root of suffering is the search for and grasping of meaning. If compassion becomes meaningful, if it is something of great importance and relevance, that is nothing but attachment to a self, to a view. Thus a bodhisattva sees no beings to save and that's how they are saved.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Been chewing on it and I think that maybe it is fair to say that Buddhism expects you to ultimately give up on "meaning", at least meaning in the sense that the term is used in other traditions.

Astus wrote:

Yes, such words as "meaningful" and "life" I use to fully put it in English and leave behind Buddhist terminology as "emptiness" and such that do not really have deep associations in one's mind and strike no emotional cords. If you look into Indian or Chinese Buddhist texts, you don't really find the topic of the "meaning of life" as it is a Western idea. One thing that triggered this topic was an essay written by a Calvinist minister in 1912 where he compared Buddhism with Christianity, and found that the teaching of the Buddha is in general against life. And he was quite correct, if you look at it from his perspective. And the Buddhist solution of nirvana is what else but removing oneself not only from this life but all sorts of life, the entire world of existence, and there is no promise of eternal heaven or eternal soul or anything like that, although some like imagining that to exist in the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's important not to confuse arhatship with lacking compassion.

Astus wrote:

I see, it was ambiguous. I meant the "philosophy of compassion" that exists in Mahayana, that is used as an explanation for the bodhisattva activity. It should also be noted that (arya) bodhisattvas are free from samsara, and they could choose to leave everything behind, but there are many versions of what a bodhisattva is depending on what era of Mahayana we look at, what tradition, sutra, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

jeeprs said:

many people put an end to their life because they feel it is meaningless. It is a real and serious problem, one remedy to which is the practice of Dharma, which is, among other things, about learning to live in a meaningful way. I will never agree with nihilist interpretations of Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide." (Camus: The Myth of Sisyphus)

Buddhism, somewhat similarly to existentialism, is about facing the reality of life. Unlike existentialism, there are past and future lives that one should be free from, and it's an entire cosmology that poses the problem of unsatisfactory life. Meaning in Buddhism exists on the relative level of karma, where one can work for a better life through meritorious deeds, however, in the end it's all samsara. And because it is samsara, living in a meaningful way is impossible, spare striving for liberation from it. So, in Buddhism, suicide is simply pointless, because life goes on even after death.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

A beggar is not necessarily content with the bare necessities of life.

Astus wrote:

Beggar, that's what bhikshu means. I didn't refer to the modern situation of homeless people and such. It is the voluntary leaving of home and choosing the life of a beggar, a monk.

shel said:

In my opinion, the "ideal life" proposed by any viable religion would be one of responsibility and cooperation.

Astus wrote:

That's practically the same as the Confucian (and others, like Communists) critique of Buddhist monasticism. However, it is unlikely that suddenly a large number of people would go for higher ordination.

shel said:

It's unclear what you mean by "more than" nihilism.

Astus wrote:

I mean that is is more because it not only denies any meaning of this life but in fact the entire existence of everything. All are made by karma, and karma is what one needs to become free from.

shel said:

In that scenario what most people in the world do is get religion, they find meaning in religion, a religion like Buddhism for example, and suddenly rock rolling becomes a Dharma Gate.

Astus wrote:

A Dharma Gate is a method to leave behind all meaning, all attachment. And eventually leave behind that Dharma Gate too. Finally, leave behind leaving behind itself (not attached to nirvana).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

smcj said:

But since death is not the finality that secularists believe it to be, the continuity that experiences the significance (meaning) of prior actions is not. (imo)

Astus wrote:

That "continuity" is either a form of self-view - if taken to be one's personal identity - or it is samsara. And that is something to be free from.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What would "meaning" look like? How would it manifest?

What would make "meaning" meaningful?

Astus wrote:

Meaning can be attributed to practically anything. Examples: raising a family, reaching a higher pay grade, climbing Mt Everest, buying new pants, learning a new skill, completing a retreat.

Something is meaningful because one believes it to be important, fulfilling, satisfying, true, real. In other words: self, independent, ultimate, eternal. Any object of attachment is being attached to because it is considered meaningful.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

kirk5a said:

If someone thinks life is meaningless, what's to stop them from causing trouble for others? Does such a person think it doesn't matter what they do or don't do? That would be a catastrophic mistake. Why would "meaningless" spur someone on to achieve liberation? Why not instead just wallow in despair? People with the "meaningless" view have been doing that forever, it's not exactly insightful.

Astus wrote:

You could raise the same questions regarding such terms as selflessness and emptiness. The difference here is that "meaningless" is a native English term/concept, while "emptiness" is kind of artificial and foreign.

The will to cause trouble to others presupposes a meaning to do that. Either personal gain or hatred. It can presuppose a sense of justice that needs to be served by punishing others. And so on. That's all meaningful.

Liberation is not attaching meaning to anything. Meaninglessness is not another meaning, that would be very stupid indeed, and that's when people feel despair and depressed.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

kirk5a said:

Someone who causes trouble for others might do it just for the sport of doing it, or out of sheer selfish arbitrariness, or whatever cookoo impulse happens to spring up in the moment. There doesn't have to be any meaning. I don't see how removing all meaning keeps one within right action, right speech, right livelihood. There is the 8-fold path, if we're trying to accurately represent what Buddhism actually teaches.

Astus wrote:

If it's all just impulses, there is no understanding of meaninglessness. That is only acting out of ignorance and habit. Meaninglessness is to see the impermanence and emptiness of all, to use Buddhist terms. Removing all meanings means removing craving and hatred, means liberation. So, you actually ask, what stops a buddha from committing all sorts of bad things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Astus wrote:

From three posts, with practically the same points, and then how I translate that.

smcj said:

"No-self" means the continuity is fundamentally free, not that there is no continuity.

Indrajala said:

There's a kind of different perspective on that. In the absence of self, there is no bodhisattva, but that doesn't mean there is nothing at all, or some abyss to dissolve into.

There is still tattva, or reality as is. There's neither existence nor non-existence. At such a transcended level, the bodhisattva ideal is naturally manifest as all the cosmos is encompassed in a womb-like embrace. It isn't a matter of staying on in saṃsāra, but just that the transcended state is naturally active participation in reality. Saṃsāra is participation in reality with wrong view. Nirvāṇa is participation in reality with realization, not an escape hatch.

Anders said:

Bodhicitta may look like meaning in life, but actually, I think genuine Bodhicitta and meaning in life are sorta contrary to each other. To find meaning is to have concepts - true Bodhicitta is void of this - it's a signless impulse that grows from the realm where things are simply SUCH, wherein there is nothing that comes from here or goes to there that can be designated as having any purpose or meaning. To really manifest bodhicitta is to leave behind the ideation that gives rises to meaning in life and the one whom might appropriate such meaning as being relevant to him/her.

On a more relative level, where bodhicitta also involves concept, it works fine as a 'meaning of life' project though. And certainly, one must be wary of appropriating the idea that there is no meaning to life at all. The point is not to see no meaning to life. But rather to see how we construct it and then let it go. What happens beyond that is wordless.

Astus wrote:

To put them into the context of a meaningless life, being meaningless is not a negation of life but the affirmation of life as it is, without meaning. Hating life would be giving it a meaning, that it is something bad and detestable, like in some religions. Meaning removed is attachment removed. Without attachment there is no reason to be engaged in life, to pursue goals and hope for good things to happen. And that kind of meaningless life is what the Buddhist path is meant to achieve.

As for the great compassion towards all beings, it is about seeing how those who attach meaning to life suffer, and bringing them to the realisation of the futility of all their efforts to make life meaningful. Saving beings is making their lives meaningless, just as it is for the bodhisattvas who don't consider even saving beings and liberation meaningful.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 1:54 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Personally to me this is a much more claustrophobic, stifling idea than emptiness, which implies no beginning, middle, or end. Combine that with the non-abiding Nirvana concept and it's absolutely beautiful in comparison, IMO of course.

I don't really see how Buddhism is any more "anti-life" than other philosophies, even in

it's Thervedan form, which I think is the easiest to accuse of that, theistic systems appear to posit meaning simply because they avoid explaining it, the exact same existential conundrums exist, Buddhism just actually looks at them.

Astus wrote:

In other religions, while they are rather anti-life regarding our earthly existence, they provide some hope for something far away. Buddhism eventually - not necessarily from the start - removes all hopes (and fears). First one learns that there are heavens, then instead of heavens one should aim for nirvana, then one should forsake even nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Nighthawk said:

Do you have a link for that essay? I'd be interested in reading it.

Astus wrote:

I do, but it's in Hungarian. However, no doubt you find similar sentiments in the writings of other Christians who consider Buddhism an atheist nihilist philosophy (not even a religion). I recommend late 19th and early 20th century texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

I am very curious as to why you neglect to mention Buddhism, the FNTs or the Eightfold Path in your examples of what meaning can be attributed to. If you believe that Buddhist practice is meaningless, that seems to mean that you don't believe it's true or has any purpose. It seems to mean that you don't believe practicing the Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering, and like Sisyphus, we are all doomed to endless cycles of birth and death. But that can't be what you believe. Can you somehow explain how all this could possibly make any sense?

Astus wrote:

Sure, one can attribute meaning to Buddhism, and Buddhists do just that. However, unlike other things, the goal of Buddhism is to remove all meaning. If you look at the first post in this thread, it says just that.

How this makes sense? The belief in meaning is the cause of birth and death. Seeing the meaninglessness of life - past, future and present - is liberation from it, and that is the very goal of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What I want to know from you is how you would picture a perfectly meaningful existence.

Would you be a buddha statue floating on a lotus in outer space?

Give me some idea of the alternative.

...

So, is meaningful subjective or objective?

Astus wrote:

A perfectly meaningful existence is a perfectly ignorant existence. It is subjective, of course, because different people consider different things meaningful, although there are some cultural trends (school, career, family, consumption to no end, etc.). A floating buddha statue might be meaningful for some devote enough for that. One can make up an ideology for any activity, any attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 6:36 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Nighthawk said:

Just curious though, are you having second thoughts about Buddhism or just engaging in intellectual exercise?

Astus wrote:

This is meant as an investigation into a possible angle on Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 6:40 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

You're not saying that Buddhism is meaningless, you're saying that it's the only thing that has real meaning. This is the normal attitude for any religious practitioner.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is meaningless as well (raft parable, non-abiding even in nirvana). That is, meaninglessness is also meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 7:25 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

OBVIOUSLY, you do not find Buddhism meaningless, so how can you say that it is meaningless? To be frank, it sounds dishonest of you to say that it's meaningless.

Astus wrote:

If Buddhism were meaningful one would need only to become a Buddhist but never reach liberation. With liberation even Buddhism is left behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 7:39 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

I actually have a lot of sympathy for what you are saying in this thread, Astus. In English, I feel that the word "meaningless" is not really appropriate though, it's connotations are too "negative". There is a Buddhist word that seems related to what you are talking about, 'apranihita'. Does that have anything to do with what's on your mind?

Astus wrote:

I think its negative sound is not a bad thing. I consider it a shock value.

Apranihita is a good word, but "meaningless" has a bigger range. Apranihita is not seeing a nimitta to aspire for. Meaninglessness is that, but it also heavily points to the conceptual fabrication that one has in the background of every "sign" one "wishes" to reach. And as this thread shows as well, while most of us don't think much about the importance of signs and wishes, to find some meaning is important. Thus, calling life meaningless - although the title of this topic is actually "make life meaningless" and not "life is meaningless" - gives the opportunity to reflect on one's preconceptions and attachments.

By the way, Thich Nhat Hanh has a very positive

<https://curiouscrook.tumblr.com/post/46469553964/no-program-no-agenda-thich-nhat-hanh-on-aimlessness>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, "The Third Door of Liberation is aimlessness, apranihita. There is nothing to do, nothing to realize, no program, no agenda." I like it, how sweet it is!

This Zen teaching also reminds me of neo advaita. Of course the mind is promiscuous and loves to wander. If no effort is made to bring it back to the here and now then it will chatter on endlessly. I'd say apranihita is only good for the very ripe.

Astus wrote:

Apranihita is actually an attainment, a synonym for nirvana, and not a practice, although in a sense it can be used as a method. It is achieved by contemplating suffering. The other two marks of existence correspond to the other doors: anitya-animitta, anatman-sunyata.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

Fair enough. I guess what I'm thinking is that if most English speakers were to try to "make life meaningless", they would probably be generating what Buddhists would consider kleshas, like some of the things found in this list:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_factors_%28Buddhism%29#Twenty_secondary_unwholesome_factors

Astus wrote:

I agree. It shows well, as Indrajala mentioned before, that the teaching of emptiness can be a dangerous one. And there is the old teaching on grasping the snake/Dharma correctly. Similar dangers are not considered where people emphasise positive sounding teachings like buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Surely what is meaningless, from the Buddhist point of view, is a certain kind of life. Not life per se.

Astus wrote:

Life is samsara. One can spend innumerable lifetimes as a very good person, generate immense good karma, and that's still within samsara. From a Buddhist perspective, only the path of liberation makes sense. That path is about becoming free from samsara, from life and death. And that is done by seeing that life is meaningless, it is not worth being attached to. And the path of liberation - that exists only within samsara - is left behind as well, once liberation is reached.

tobes said:

i.e. the process of being on some kind of path is surely highly meaningful, and the outcome of arriving at bodhi is also surely meaningful.

Astus wrote:

Meaningful, as it is a process of realising the total meaninglessness of life. And once liberation is reached, all meaning has been abandoned. Even the meaning of liberation. So, it is a gradual path to complete meaninglessness, absolute non-attachment.

tobes said:

What seems to be missing from your analysis is that **something** follows from relinquishing the desire to hold on. To remain (philosophically) only at the point of relinquishing is to fail to see that relinquishing is simply the method. What is that something? Well, for one it is characterised by pretty glowing adjectives in the Nikayas, isn't it?

Astus wrote:

Nirvana, that glorious goal, is freedom from life and death. It is the negation of all meaning, and so the end of pain and suffering. Because there is no life and no pain, it can be called deathless and peaceful, even eternal bliss. It is not annihilation, but it is devoid of all meaning. To create a meaning out of meaninglessness, that is called the wrong way to grasp a snake.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

greentara said:

Astus, "Aimlessness, Apranihita is actually an attainment, a synonym for nirvana, and not a practice, although in a sense it can be used as a method."

Can't it be used as an enquiry such as who needs this, or who wants this? Or who is it that really has no agenda?

Astus wrote:

I don't think there are such rules for or against it. But it's not the intended meaning and context. The general rule is that one should use whatever helps in removing attachments and gives peace and freedom. So, if it works for you, go for it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 30th, 2014 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Nobody is disputing that, but if Mahasiddhas are misogynists too, it doesn't say much for enlightenment does it? Either that, or we will have to agree that women are actually an inferior category of human beings. Or we will have to say that Mahasiddhas are not enlightened.

Astus wrote:

There are other options.

1. Reinterpret the meaning of "woman". In the Nirvana Sutra there is a nice section where it says similarly nasty things about women, and then explains that all beings/humans are women who have not realised buddha-nature, and those who realised it are men, regardless of their biological sex.

2. What is considered appropriate changes by time and culture. Buddhist rules are mostly about monastic life, where there are no wives and concubines to rule over. Still, at least in Chinese monastic rules, beating is a possible punishment for misbehaving monks. So, advising the beating of women can be a compassionate thought.

3. As for women having more desire than men, nowadays it is believed that's the other way around. Both are worldly conventions. Why should enlightened beings be accountable for the beliefs of ordinary people?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

They may not be accountable for them but they are also not obligated to perpetuate them. We, as ignorant worldly beings, are not obligated to perpetuate them, so why would enlightened beings?

Astus wrote:

We copy the cultural ideas without even recognising them. In fact, "culture" is a modern Western cultural idea. And we want Buddhism to fit our perspective on reality, and that's only normal and expected. No different from the process of Buddhism integrating into the Chinese cultural sphere, and similar historical events. If once in the future an English Buddhist canon emerges it may not contain a single misogynist idea or reference. That's what canonisation is about after all. But to the Indians of that era even the concept of misogyny may not have occurred. It is another Western invention.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

smcj said:

If life were intrinsically meaningless there would be no such thing as karmic consequences. The very idea that the nature and quality of an action comes to fruition as circumstance and experience means the universe is, over time, "demonstrating" the truth of the action. If the Dharma is to be believed, we live in a world where the quality of actions are being illuminated by Truth.

Astus wrote:

Karma is generated by ignorance. Ignorance is believing that there is a meaning to hang on to. Karma is how all beings keep repeating the same things over and over again, following blind passions.

I don't know what you mean by "truth of the action" or "illuminated by Truth".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Nagarjuna was a Mahasiddha. He could not see past the cultural norms of his time? He could not recognise hatred (the miso- in misogyny is the Greek word for hate) when he saw it? As an Arhat wouldn't he apparently have overcome the fetter of ill-will? We (currently) label it misogyny, but even without the label one would think that an enlightened being would see the ill-will involved in the specific behaviour. One would hope.

Astus wrote:

I think there is too much attributed to concepts like enlightenment, arhat, bodhisattva, mahasiddha, etc. Sure, the root poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance are removed. But that doesn't include exaggerated qualities and superpowers, nor special knowledge not related to the path (see declared and undeclared teachings, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.063.than.html>)

Beating women could be refuted as erroneous based on the Buddha's own teachings:

"Here someone, abandoning the killing of living beings, becomes one who abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.041.nymo.html>)

However, the above statement does not necessarily rule out beating as a form of education. Such an act could be argued to be done out of concern and kindness, not with the intention to kill or maim. Just like beating children was considered perfectly all right and proper parenting a couple of decades ago. So, calling it misogyny might be the wrong word, as there was no hate involved. Male chauvinism or something similar sounds more fitting, as women were considered inferior in almost all aspects. And that's why birth as a man is generally the desirable thing in Buddhism. But this is not because people hated women. They were simply viewed as very different from men, and that difference meant a lower status in every way.

Modern people may see many apparently degrading statements about women in Buddhism as misogyny. What is not taken into consideration is karma. Even today if we look at women's social status it is worse than men's. This means that women have worse karma than men. So, being a woman is worse than being a man. And although it

could be argued that it's all because of social norms, education, wrong thinking, etc., however, that is a post-Enlightenment rationalist thinking. Modern people often believe that social status is a matter of other's doings, something that could be changed. Traditionally, Buddhism is unaware of such a concept, and teaches that everyone gets what they deserve because of their karma. Compassion, helping others, giving donations are all important, just as being kind and caring. But those are things done on a personal level, out of one's own level of Dharma practice, and not in order to bring about "heaven/Pure Land on Earth" but to generate merit and because those are the right things to do. Taking the teachings to the social and political level was a rare thing in the past, and didn't always mean something noble.

So, was Nagarjuna a misogynist? I don't think so.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

justsit said:

Really??

Guess it depends on who you ask...

Astus wrote:

I can only rely on those who work in that area. For instance:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

<http://www.womenlobby.org/?lang=en>

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW_full%20report_color.pdf (PDF)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:36 AM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

rory said:

Buddhism originated in Magadha which was Jain the Jains had and have a very good opinion of women and there were and are women renunciants. Later Brahmanism took over and yes, only Brahmin males can perform those rituals necessary to the king. Buddhists started to compete and there we get that unnecessary patriarchy & misogyny. That's what ruined Hokkeji as the nuns there had no access to the state esoteric rituals, which were taught on Mt. Hiei and Mt. Koya (today women can train there:)

Astus wrote:

In the Nikayas there are some respected woman teachers, although there were a lot more men. Women are said to be incapable of being born as various higher gods or a buddha (MN 115). Wives serve their husbands (DN 31, AN 5.33, Thig 1.11, Sn 1.2).

Although ultimately there is no difference between genders (SN 5.2). All three ideas (birth restriction, servitude, genderlessness) were carried on in Mahayana, and as with practically everything else, they were extended and elaborated on. What new concept came up most prominently is women's impurity. However, impurity (because of giving birth and menstruation) resulted in strong restrictions only in Japan, so it'd be difficult to blame Brahmanism for that.

rory said:

And if Nagarjuna himself wrote that he definitely was not a mahasiddha.

Astus wrote:

A mahasiddha is someone who has realised that passion is actually wisdom. Does being a mahasiddha come with perfect body and mind? I don't think so. The realisation of emptiness does not require any scientific, scholarly or artistic knowledge. That is, being a mahasiddha doesn't mean one cannot speak utter nonsense. Enlightened beings are not infallible or omniscient. Or, if one wants to believe that enlightened ones are actually like superhumans, then no living person can ever match the criteria.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:41 AM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

justsit said:

To Astus: There is no doubt it is more difficult to live as a woman, but I'm not sure I'd describe it as "worse" to be a woman. At least in First World countries. I took your previous post to mean "worse" as in lesser or inferior. Hence my reply.

Astus wrote:

I meant only harder conditions (even in highly developed countries), and that harder conditions imply bad karma. In that sense, women have worse karma than men. And some Buddhist works point to the biological differences (primarily motherhood) as another implication of the more difficulties of a woman's life.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

reddust said:

I don't think men have it that good compared to women. Your reproductive parts are carried outside of your body and you seem to be distracted because of that.

Astus wrote:

Never thought of it that way.

reddust said:

I think it's difficult to be a human and gender is just a distraction.

Astus wrote:

It's great we can always find some reasons to feel superior. As I see it, gender is as good an excuse as any other.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:04 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

I suppose the disagreement is that where you say only the path of liberation makes sense (and therefore, all others are meaningless), I say many paths make sense, but the path of liberation is the highest, or most privileged, or most meaningful.

If life was truly meaningless, even from the standpoint of those who have relinquished it, then why do they not choose to take it? i.e. Why do enlightened ones not kill?

Astus wrote:

My argument here is not whether this or that is meaningful, but that the Buddhist path is about gradually making life and everything meaningless, including the path itself at the end. To reverse that, yes, at the beginning good deeds are meaningful, then liberation is meaningful, then there's nothing left to be meaningful.

Killing, like other actions, require a meaning, require an intention that is based on a concept. With meaning removed there is no concept, no intention, no action.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Surely there is a difference between attachment and meaning?

Granted, one can be highly attached to meaning. But isn't there a case for saying that meaning simply happens? Is there no meaning in the dharma taught by those who are liberated? That seems to be an absurd proposition.

Astus wrote:

Meaning is grasping, it is the concept that something has an essence and a purpose. We could separate meaning as a verbal concept and there are non-verbal concepts, so it might be the case that there are two forms of attachments to phenomena. But this is not necessary.

The Dharma is a skilful means. It is not the ultimate, it is not liberation per se. So, first

one believes Dharma has meaning, but eventually it is left behind as another meaningless thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Nirvana is indeed beyond life and death, but where is it said that nirvana is the negation of all meaning? What Pali/Sanskrit/Tibetan/Chinese term are you pointing us to?

Astus wrote:

No P/S/T/C term. Meaninglessness can be related to emptiness mostly.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 31st, 2014 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Saving all beings???

Content:

seeker242 said:

But of course that does not mean that you don't help the child. You would still help the child, but all the while still knowing that they are, and always were, perfectly ok to begin with.

Astus wrote:

You have already answered your question.

"All Buddhas pronounce the Dharma to teach and transform sentient beings, each delivering as many sentient beings as the innumerable sands of the Ganges, enabling them to enter nirvāṇa. Yet the realm of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases. Why not? Because the definite appearances of sentient beings can never be captured. Hence, the realm of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases."
(Sūtra of Mahā-Prajñā-Pāramitā Pronounced by Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

If what you're saying is true, it would mean that people with no inclination towards any sort of spiritual practice are actually more advanced spiritually, and that those who practice like their "hair is on fire" are desperately deluded. That makes no sense at all.

Astus wrote:

See what I what just before that: "The Dharma is a skilful means. It is not the ultimate, it

is not liberation per se. So, first one believes Dharma has meaning, but eventually it is left behind as another meaningless thing."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at 1:53 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Why would anyone practice something that they felt was meaningless? Because it's entertaining and fun?

Astus wrote:

Meaninglessness is realised gradually. It means that one sees the futility of pursuing something, letting it go. Practice is to let go, release attachments.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Right, so especially because it happens gradually as you say, by your logic the more meaningless the Dharma is to someone the more realized they must be, and the more meaningful it is to someone the less realized they must be. People who devote their lives to practice, like Buddhist teachers, must be the furthest way from realization and the most deluded.

Astus wrote:

Do those teachers think of the Dharma as substantial, real, something to be attached to?

Since the arrogant say that they have apprehended something, they cannot be said to be firmly established in genuine pure conduct.

(Gangottara Sutra, in Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p 39)

(After the Buddha had described the arrogance of sravakas and bodhisattvas, i.e., their attachment to various attainments and teachings) Upali asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, how can a monk be free from arrogance?"

The Buddha answered Upali, "If he is not attached to any doctrine, no matter how inconceivable it is, he is completely free from arrogance."

...

One who thinks about the teaching of emptiness

Is a fool, lingering on the wrong path;

Explanations of emptiness are mere words;

Both words and emptiness are inapprehensible.

One who contemplates the teaching of quiescence
Should know the mind is empty and unborn.
The mind's reflections and observations
Are all futile and meaningless.

...

When I speak of the practice that leads to realization,
I mean detachment from all forms.
If one claims to have achieved anything,
He is far from realizing the Sramana's fruit.
No dharma has a self-entity;
What is there to realize?
The so-called realization is no attainment at all:
To understand this is called attainment

(The Definitive Vinaya, in Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p 272, 273, 277)

'One does not attain Buddhahood through the body, nor does one attain it through wisdom.' Why? If one looks for wisdom one cannot find it. Even if one looks for the T, it cannot ever be found. Nothing is attained, nothing is seen. All dharmas are originally nonexistent. To think that they exist causes attachment. If they do not exist, to say perversely that they do is also attachment.
(Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, BDK edition, p 36)

Resolute Mind asked, "Have you, sir, attained the Surangama Samadhi?" The Indra king replied, "Could the characteristics of 'attain' and 'not attain' exist within this samadhi?" Resolute Mind said, "No." The Indra king said, "Good youth, you should understand that when a Bodhisattva practices this samadhi, there is nothing that is attained in any of the dharmas."
(Surangama Samadhi Sutra, BDK edition, p 32)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at 8:13 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

that is why most of Buddhism, like most of Christianity and all other religions, is for people who hate themselves and are bitter and resentful towards life. Fortunately, in Dzogchen (and I'm pretty sure in Zen too) there is a breakthrough to an understanding of the nature of reality that is the exact opposite of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ressentiment>: that is, that your nature is the same as the nature of all reality, and it is fundamentally pure (empty) and inexhaustibly creative and responsive. You don't need to do anything for this to be the case, it already is.

Astus wrote:

There's no need to go as far as Dzogchen or Zen for the idea that "your nature is the same as the nature of all reality", as that is a basic principle of the bodhisattva path. In practice, however, neither Tibetan nor East Asian Buddhism differ from their Indian predecessors in being a monastic tradition that teaches leaving home and various forms of hermetic life as the right course of action. It is one of the earliest Mahayana polemics to call Hinayana stuck in nirvana (for many: a false nirvana) and rejecting samsara.

"Jamgon Kongtrül said that, in order to begin our practice of getting used to the view, laying the foundation is most important. The foundation is renunciation mind. Renunciation means revulsion for this endless, meaningless, worldly life that is constantly creating suffering, whether directly or indirectly. Some amount of renunciation mind is very necessary as a foundation. This is a very important remark by Jamgon Kongtrül because we really cannot take refuge until we have renunciation mind. As long as we do not have renunciation mind, we always think that there is an alternative, a different way to solve the problem."
(Dzogchen Primer, p 104)

"when we realize that all the achievements of the six realms of samsara are futile, insubstantial, and meaningless, we lose our appetite for them."
(Tulku Urgyen: Repeating the Words of the Buddha, p 41)

"Perceiving that any attempt to renounce or accept anything is meaningless, you let go in a state of resting imperturbably."
(Longchenpa: Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission, p 396)

Here are the comments that partially answer each other and clarify this subject. Then I continue with summing them up and answering the missing points.

tobes said:

What about compassionately helping sentient beings? Not an action? Not a meaning? Not an intention?

...

emptiness implies the relinquishing of ordinary meanings derived from the conventional symbolic order. Plus desires, intentions, purposes which are predicated on that. But does it imply the relinquishing of any other forms of meaning?

PadmaVonSamba said:

You are really attached to this idea of meaningless, aren't you?

shel said:

And incidentally, something need not be substantial, real, or even particularly attached to, to be meaningful. Fiction, that we fully realize as being fiction, can be far more meaningful than mere facts.

tobes said:

Ah, I see that you mainly have in mind linguistic or discursive forms of meaning...which

are necessarily conceptual.

...

Because it is coherent, it has meaning. Otherwise enlightened mind is just a random expression of chaos.

Indrajala said:

Again, in the Mahāyāna it is not about embracing meaninglessness. It is a double perspective: one understands both the conventional and ultimate without being attached to either one. This is because one sees how existence of meaning exists by virtue of a relative opposite: meaninglessness. In the absence of meaning, there is no substantial non-meaning to cling to either. One stands nowhere like empty space. This transcended perspective is where the path of language is cut away, and actually leads to a very active bodhisattva path rather than nihilism if properly achieved.

Affirmation of a negative is as problematic as affirmation of a positive. Both are views, and all views are to be abandoned. Emptiness as a view is consequently poison. Even emptiness dissolves under analysis.

Astus wrote:

In the OP I wrote:

Before engaging in the path to enlightenment one naturally believes that life is full of meaning. That there are things (wealth, sex, power, knowledge, etc.) that are worth the trouble. And that is clinging, that is attachment, the great evil. Seeing that all phenomena are empty clears away that attachment. In other words, meaninglessness needs to be realised.

And that makes Buddhism more than nihilism (in the Western philosophical sense), it is the ultimate refutation of what non-Buddhist everyday people call life.

But then, if we move on whether Buddhism itself is meaningful, or if meaninglessness is meaningful, then the answer to both are no, because they are need to be left behind in the end. That one tries to call something meaningful, that is the desire to hang on to something. To hold on to emptiness or nirvana, that's among the wrong views in Buddhism. What is left then to call meaningful? Compassion and saving all beings? The bodhisattva activities are possible only because they don't abide anywhere, they don't hold on to anything, not even liberation, much less the concept of "sentient beings" that need to be saved. Plus, what does saving beings mean? Saving them from their own lives, from what they believe in as important and meaningful, and make them realise it is all samsara.

"That all perception, all discrimination, all logic are meaningless from the supra-mundane point of view is the very nature of Buddhahood and of emptiness. Accordingly, even the Buddha's forty-five years of propagating the Doctrine is here wholly negated by the assertion that the Buddha preached not a word."

(Nagao: Madhyamika and Yogacara, p 42)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Was Nāgārjuna a misogynist?

Content:

plwk said:

Nagarjuna is bad huh? Wait until you read these ones attributed to the Conqueror Himself...

<http://sujato.wordpress.com/2010/12/05/is-this-sutta-true/>

Astus wrote:

Today aggressiveness and promiscuity are (almost unquestioningly) attributed to men. Is that misandry? We don't call it that because various studies prove it. But if we consider gender differences not genetic but cultural (and mostly fictional generalisations and ignorant prejudices), then in the context of that sutta those attributes of women could have been true.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

As others have pointed out, if you assert meaningless as a the content of enlightened experience, it is just an assertion - not the experience.

Astus wrote:

Meaninglessness is not a content of enlightened experience, it is the path, the method used to relinquish attachment that is based on the idea that something has a meaning. So, meaninglessness is only as much an experience as non-attachment is.

Meaninglessness is the antidote for meaning, and when the sickness is gone, there is no need for the medicine. But this thread seems to show that meaninglessness is a medicine with too many side effects and causes confusion, although not too different from teachings like suffering that makes many reject Buddhism as a total pessimistic view, and then everyone tries to excuse the first noble truth that it's not what they think it is, although in fact it is indeed what they think, a clear statement that life is inevitably full of pain and sorrow.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

From the Dzogchen perspective, this is why so-called "lower yanas" are called "causal yanas": they all claim that you need to do something to "cause" or "achieve" liberation.

They say "we have been trapped in samsara since beginningless time, do this that and the other and after incalculable eons (mahayana) or in this life (vajrayana) you will finally, after lots of hard work, achieve liberation". Dzogchen asks "what makes you think you are in bondage? who has put you in bondage and where are your chains? Is waking from one dream into another dream an achievement?"

Astus wrote:

Aren't the five aggregates without any self from the beginning? Still, attachment doesn't go away just by hearing that.

"I do not say that the attainment of gnosis is all at once. Rather, the attainment of gnosis is after gradual training, gradual action, gradual practice." (MN 70; cf. Ud 5.5)

Zen has a different idea of course, as it propagates sudden enlightenment.

[At the place of] Great Teacher Third Ancestor [Jinazhi Sengcan], once the novice [Dayi] Daoxin at age fourteen made prostrations to the ancestor and said, "I entreat the master with your compassion to give me the Dharma gate of release and liberation."

The ancestor said, "Who has bound you?"

The novice daoxin said, "Nobody bound me."

The ancestor said, "Then why are you seeking for liberation?" Daoxing hearing these words had great realization, and worked as a follower there for nine years.

(orig. in Jingde Chuandeng Lu, vol 3, T51n2076_p0221c18-c21; tr. Leighton & Okumura, in Dogen's Extensive Record, p 540)

A fourteen-year-old boy sounds young for enlightenment, but it's not that exceptional. The Lotus Sutra talks about the eight-year-old daughter of the dragon king who turned into a buddha. The Dhammapada commentary has on record seven-year-old arhats (<http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/> 96, 110, 406). But I think the winner is the three-year-old Ratnadatta, who instructs and corrects Maudgalyayana, Shariputra and Manjushri in the <http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=30>, although that's not when he attained enlightenment, so he could be disqualified from this list.

But that is a completely different topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 at 7:21 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

And because everything is supposedly left behind in the end, that doesn't make the vehicle meaningless.

Astus wrote:

Not is meaningless but has to be made meaningless. When it is made meaningless, it is

left behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddhism doesn't reject "meaning". Buddhism rejects a self to which the concept of "meaning" has any application.

Astus wrote:

Without the concept of self there is no meaning. Without meaning there is no concept of self. Because the concept is the meaning, and self is a concept. Not conceptualising a self is not giving meaning to a self. Otherwise, self is the most meaningful thing we have.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 5:51 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you assert a self, then both meaning and meaningless apply.

If you assert no-self, then this thread has no point to it.

As long as you go on about "meaning vs. no meaning" you are and essentially asserting a self that denies itself.

Astus wrote:

Same could be said about self and no-self. There is the teaching of no-self to remove the concept of self. Once the self is removed, no need for no-self either. So it is with meaninglessness. As long as there is meaning, one needs to investigate it, and see that such a meaning is false. When all grasping to a meaning has been shattered, then meaninglessness has no value either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

If meaninglessness is the antidote for meaning as you say, then the only workable course would seem to be giving up any sort of religious belief or practice, because religious belief and practice perpetuates a system of meaning.

Astus wrote:

Seeing the falseness, the illusoriness of meaning is the practice. And yes, all attachment needs to be given up.

"If even my correct teachings are to be abandoned, how much more incorrect teachings?"

(Diamond Sutra, ch 6)

shel said:

I don't know what life is inevitably full of but there is also pleasure, joy, and satisfaction in life. To deny this would be to deny your own experience, in favor of a belief system.

Astus wrote:

There are three types of suffering (SN 38.14), of what the suffering of conditioned existence is all-pervasive. It is the clinging to the five aggregates, that is present for all deluded sentient beings. All the good and joyful things, those are the "allure of sensuality" (MN 13). They are the bait. And once hooked on it, there is a drawback, i.e. suffering. And from this drawback, this trap of samsara, the Buddha offers an escape. This is seeing clearly (yoniso manasikara) the set of allure, drawback and escape (assada, adinava, nisarana).

"There is no satisfying sensual desires, even with the rain of gold coins. For sensual pleasures give little satisfaction and much pain. Having understood this, the wise man finds no delight even in heavenly pleasures. The disciple of the Supreme Buddha delights in the destruction of craving."

(Dhp 186-187)

Objection: Even though the body is impermanent, it still has pleasure. In response, Aryadeva says:

Harm is certain for what is impermanent.

What is harmed is not pleasurable.

Therefore everything that is impermanent

Is said to be suffering.

(CS II.25)

Harm is certain for an impermanent thing that is damaged by impermanence. What is harmed is also not pleasurable. Therefore, all things that are impermanent are said to be suffering because harm is the definition of suffering. Consider the example of pouring water on salt. All the water poured on salt will become salty. Similarly, because everything that is impermanent is painful, constructed things have only a painful nature. Here we say:

Since all constructed things

In this world are harmed

By being impermanent,

All constructed things are indeed painful

(Candrakirti: Four Illusions, p 152)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Jesse said:

There will always be pain, it's inevitable so long as we have a body which can feel it. Suffering isn't all pervasive though, once you stop thinking so damned much life can be quite enjoyable, this is exactly why people continue living in spite of so much suffering, and to suggest otherwise is crap. Pain and suffering are two completely different things.

To be honest, the ultimate joy is actually being alive, and we rarely see it because we are so caught up in shit philosophy, thinking, etc.

Astus wrote:

Physical pain is a different kind of suffering than suffering by change and suffering by conditioning.

As I see it, thinking and arguing that one should do things one way or the other is philosophising.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

When you say falseness or illusoriness you mean impermanence, right? Impermanence doesn't mean that something is false, it means that it changes. Impermanence doesn't mean illusion, it means that it changes.

Meanings change like everything else apparently changes. That doesn't make meanings meaningless. That doesn't make them false. That doesn't make them illusions.

Astus wrote:

Impermanence means illusion. Why? The past is already gone, the future doesn't exist yet, the present cannot be grasped. So, where do impermanence and change exist? In our mind only, in a conceptual realm. And the illusion is believing that it is something external and real. Meanings, like change, are conceptual creations of the mind, not something external and real. External and real means independent from the mind and self-existing.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The links you provided in your original post essentially point out that there is no ultimate reason or purpose for our being here. There is nothing that really suggests that we are part of some divine plan or anything like that.

That's really pretty much all they were really saying, as far as I can tell.

Is that your basic point as well?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

PadmaVonSamba said:

What is the point of this thread again?

What is it you are trying to say?

can you sum it up some how?

Astus wrote:

See my previous posts:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=212499#p212499>

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=212800#p212800>

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=212520#p212520>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 3rd, 2014 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: putting an end to love

Content:

Sonrisa said:

I understand...sort of. I remember reading pne teaching where he said that we're born out of sexual desire. While I think that extreme sexual desire can be a hindrance, but if it wasn't for our parents engaging in intercourse, we wouldn't be here cultivating. Forgive me if I'm misinterpreting this.

Astus wrote:

There are three conditions for birth: mother, father, karma. Now, our birth is because of our karma, and the mother and father are conditions for the body. So, if we had had no desire/attachment to be born, we would not have been born.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 4th, 2014 at 12:57 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

You believe that meaning is illusory because it exists in our minds and is not something "external and real." By this logic everything is an illusion, including "external and real," and the problem with that is if everything is an illusion then nothing is an illusion.

Astus wrote:

Except that this is not an ontological matter but Buddhist teachings that are used to remove a view that results in suffering. So, when everything is actually seen as only illusion one sees correctly.

All conditioned phenomena
Are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow
Like the dew, or like lightning
You should discern them like this
(Diamond Sutra, ch 32)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 4th, 2014 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

It's just an idea to see everything as only illusion, so that too must be an illusion and false.

Astus wrote:

Naturally. As I have said before, meaninglessness is also meaningless, and the path to liberation is to be abandoned in the end as another useless idea. This I have said right from the beginning of this thread.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Does that include arguing that one should abandon "meaning"?

Astus wrote:

Arguing is better to be philosophising, as part of a systematic analysis. Otherwise it is just like people gossiping.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 4th, 2014 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Meaninglessness is not meaningless, significantly. You, for example, seem to find it quite meaningful.

If the path to liberation liberated then obviously it was not useless. How does that not make sense to you?

If the path to liberation did not liberate, well, then perhaps it offered essential meaning, so it's all good.

Astus wrote:

This has already been answered. Meaninglessness is gradually realised through various stages. The last thing relinquished is the raft.

Regarding the problems with the understanding of the illusoriness of keys and other things, I heartily recommend this work: <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/wheel-analysis-and-meditation>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2014 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

If that's true then why is there no history of anyone doing this? Was everything meaningless to the Buddha?

Astus wrote:

Meaninglessness, just as meaning, is a Western concept, not Asian, as previously said.

shel said:

If you understand then why don't you address my questions?

Astus wrote:

Cone and Malcolm have already answered you in many ways.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2014 at 6:18 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

That is it has a particular kind of casual functionality, which is not reducible to linguistic dependence. An empty appearance, sure. But one in which its particular causal functions are efficacious.

To say that all keys are illusions is to subtly obscure the critical point that some keys open some doors and other keys open other doors.

If you really believe that all keys are pure illusions, throw yours away.

Astus wrote:

That's a differentiation made between true (functional) and false (non-functional) conventional reality. However, both are conventional, in that in the ultimate analysis there is nothing found that one could attach to. Even true conventional phenomena are ungraspable when investigated. And the critical point from the Buddhist perspective is to remove all clinging, and not to set up a nice theoretical system for the sake of philosophical explanation. In other words, Buddhism is a type of key used to unlock

ignorance, and not for anything else. When used for other things, that is incorrect and has no useful results. That doesn't mean there are no other keys, as one can happily research the nature of deep sea algae using the relevant scientific methods, while a microscope is only misleading if one wants to understand Serbian epic poetry.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2014 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meaning can be sought for in the past, the present or the future.

Past meaning is nostalgia, the lost golden age. It is being saddened by the present situation and without hope for the future. It is a meaning for those who can't stop dreaming about an imaginary past world.

Present meaning is hedonism, enjoying life and seizing the day. It is a misguided struggle to hang on to whatever pleasure one can find, but it is mostly about failure to preserve happiness or strive for more delights. It is a meaning for those who can't see their own impotency to stop time.

Future meaning is utopianism, believing in a dream world. It is a faith in an unexplainable turn of events that makes everything perfect, that is, blind optimism. It is a meaning for those who believe that either themselves or some external power can do magic.

Some Buddhism related examples for all three.

Past: the three Dharma ages, that now we live in the era of decline and corruption

Present: be in the present, enlightenment is this present mindfulness

Future: enlightenment will come, sometime in the future in this life or the next, or perhaps even later

And then some quotes.

For emptiness does not proceed nor recede, and that holds good also for the Signless and the Wishless. To demonstrate that is to demonstrate all dharmas. But no one has demonstrated it, no one has heard it, no one has received it, and no one realizes it, in the past, present or future.

(PP8000 9.3; p 151, tr. Conze)

For the Tathagata has not apprehended any thought as past, as future, or as present, because thought is not really there.

(PP8000 12.3; p 176)

What lifetime will you use to experience this prediction, past, future, or present? If a

past life, then the past life is already extinguished. If a future life, then the future life has not arrived. If the present life, then the present life is nonabiding. It is as the Buddha has explained, "O bhikṣus, you are in this immediate present born, aged, and extinguished. If you experience this prediction with birthlessness, then the birthless is the primary status [of Hinayanist enlightenment]. Yet within that primary status there is no receiving the prediction, and also no attainment of anuttarā samyaksambodhi.

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 4, p 97, tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2014 at 7:28 AM

Title: Re: Question on wake up sermone ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Appearance (http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/X63/1219_001.htm) means all the things that we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. So the

<http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enHeartSutraWithAnnotations.htm> says, "no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2014 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

oushi said:

For most of us, meaningless will be seen as a dead end, simply because we cannot allow ourselves to go for it. Although, all my experiences with meaninglessness are very positive when it comes down to daily life, my thinking is still based on predictions, so I am unable to go outside of hopes and fears. The main concern is thinking itself.

Although it continues in Meaninglessness, it is "unmanaged", that means, it's honest, and in nowadays society, being utterly honest is very risky. This way we come all the way down to the root of our problem. Culture and conditioned dishonesty. Those are not only those big lies, but also half-truths, white lies, cunning disinformation etc.

If you want to be a Buddha today, be utterly honest... if you dare.

Astus wrote:

I like what you say. And honesty, that's a whole different topic, but a fruitful one for sure.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2014 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Is there meaning in enlightened aesthetics, activities and communications?

Astus wrote:

Yes, and this has been another part of this thread, that making something meaningless and being meaningless are not exactly the same. The path is to make it so, and therefore before it is made meaningless, it is meaningful.

tobes said:

Is there meaning in the domain of the sambhogakāya?

Astus wrote:

I think Linji explains well the two truths applied to the buddha-bodies.

What is my purpose in speaking this way? I do so only because you followers of the Way cannot stop your mind from running around everywhere seeking, because you go clambering after the worthless contrivances of the men of old.

Followers of the Way, if you take my viewpoint you'll cut off the heads of the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya buddhas; ... Why is this so? Followers of the Way, it is only because you haven't yet realized the emptiness of the three asaṃkhyeya kalpas that you have such obstacles.

(Record of Linji, p 10, tr. Sasaki)

According to the masters of the sutras and śāstras, the dharmakāya is regarded as basic substance and the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya as function. From my point of view the dharmakāya cannot expound the dharma. Therefore a man of old said, 'The [buddha-]bodies are posited depending upon meaning; the [buddha-]lands are postulated in keeping with substance.' So we clearly know that the dharma-nature body and dharma-nature land are fabricated things, based on dependent understanding.

Empty fists and yellow leaves used to fool a child! Spiked gorse seeds! Horned water chestnuts! What kind of juice are you looking for in such dried-up bones!

Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma.

(p 16-17)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2014 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Lindama said:

he is speaking to the samsaric perspective only which seeks meaning.

Astus wrote:

Yes, and the programme of "making life meaningless" is about samsara. Buddhism is about becoming free from samsara, through realising that it is meaningless, an endless round of birth and death.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 8th, 2014 at 8:30 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But free from samsara really must include not regarding phenomena as having any intrinsic value, or purpose.

this is what you mean by "meaningless".

But the contradiction is that by trying to be "free from samsara", to negate it as specifically "meaningless"

you are imputing it with a meaningful (although admittedly uninviting) quality.

Astus wrote:

Meaningless means without meaning. It is not giving it a quality, it is removing the idea of meaning. Giving something meaning is giving it a value and a purpose. Removing that conceptual veil is seeing it without meaning, i.e., as meaningless. Making meaninglessness meaningful is still grasping a meaning, and not applying meaninglessness to it. It's like what they call in Tibetan madhyamaka a non-affirming negation. And here are two Chan examples.

Wuzhu often said:

It is because beings have thought that one provisionally teaches no-thought, but at the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not. (Mystique of Transmission, p 361)

And Baizhang's three stages elucidate the same:

For now just do not be confused and disturbed by any existent or non-existent objects; and do not stop and abide in disillusion, and yet have no understanding of nonabiding. (Sayings and Doings of Pai-chang, p 67)

PadmaVonSamba said:

Unfortunately, the trap of samsara is in thinking that such "fame", or the material gains one may make from such a career, will bring happiness, and they suffer when, ultimately, that does not last, and "fame and fortune" turns out to be hollow, or is quickly used up. But it isn't the job or the money that's the problem. It's "taking refuge" in that...believing it will bring lasting satisfaction, that is the problem. That's where samsara begins.

Astus wrote:

As above you have said, considering things meaningful is samsara. Seeing that they are without meaning, without the ability to provide lasting satisfaction, is liberation. And that's why it is the meaning that needs to be removed, not things that one attributes meanings to. However, once something has lost its meaning, why would one keep it or crave it?

PadmaVonSamba said:

But it is quite possible to engage in, and enjoy the temporary arising of the composites that fill our lives, without becoming attached to them, without relying on them as a source for something permanent. It is possible to be, for example, rich and famous, and not really care about that. We can be happy without relying on happiness.

Likewise, it is possible to experience appropriate sadness when those temporary things end, when loved ones and pets die, when the house is washed away, when one becomes ill, without dwelling in that sadness.

Astus wrote:

Enjoying without attachment is the same as suffering without attachment. As you say, one can be happy and sad without relying on them. That is, nothing actually changes. One loves good food, good films, good sex, it's just without any clinging. Similarly, one hates bad weather, bad smells, bad neighbours, except without relying on them. The difficulty I see in this is that it disconnects grasping from being delighted and disgusted by things. However, delight and disgust comes from the very attachment one has for various experiences. Not abiding in phenomena is not being moved by them. And not being moved emotionally is still not the level of non-conceptuality. Both pleasure and pain hold meaning. Pleasure is meaningful because it feels good, and pain is meaningful because it feels bad. Good feeling is something we like, and bad is something we hate. As the Buddha taught

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.011.than.html>), we suffer only for the loss of people we are attached to, not for those we are not. Renunciation is not avoiding what happens, not shunning experience, it is seeing them for what they are without attributing any meaning, and so not being moved by them to one way or another. See this one about not taking the bait:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.189.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2014 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Objects which arise conditionally were empty of inherent existence long before the concept of emptiness was even conceived.

Astus wrote:

Things like "objects", "arise", "conditionally" are all concepts. Talking about a non-conceptual realm is a conceptual act involving concepts. Chapter 9 of the Vimalakirti Sutra makes this very clear.

Why is that? It is because no Buddhist teaching is interested in or relevant to explaining or discovering a physical or metaphysical reality. The Dharma is strictly and only about the fourth noble truth, the path of ending suffering. That's why positing an independent realm of objects arising conditionally is a mistaken view, a wrong approach. Mistaken

and wrong in light of the path to liberation.

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, while 'emptiness' (sunyata) is, on the one hand, merely our correct understanding of phenomena

the fact that phenomena are in fact empty

is the same whether we 'convene' it or not.

If it were not already so,

asserting emptiness would be false.

Astus wrote:

Asserting anything is false from the ultimate perspective, i.e. emptiness. Denying is false as well. On the conventional level it is fine to differentiate between correct and incorrect. That's the realm of concepts. Emptiness can be a conceptual view, and as such it can be a correct or incorrect understanding of the Dharma. What emptiness really stands for, however, is beyond all views. It is the very relinquishing of attachment to a conceptual reality. In other words, realising that reality is only conceptual, fictitious, illusory, a mental fabrication. So, there is nothing "before concepts". Assuming there is something, that's also just another concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2014 at 5:58 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

That may be the case. That doesn't change anything.

Just because you conceive of something or don't conceive of doesn't alter it.

Astus wrote:

That's all that matters. Because the perspective that needs to be considered is one's own subjective experience. And from that point of view there is nothing else but one's own experience. It does not matter at all whether there is or is not something beyond that. As I said, what Buddhism deals with is suffering and the ending of suffering.

Theories of a reality beyond one's experiential scope is for the philosophers to consider.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If you are suggesting that nothing arises conditionally prior to somebody thinking about it,

that's total nonsense.

maybe your experience of things hadn't happened yet, but that's all.

Astus wrote:

Whether such an idea is nonsense or not is not that easy a question, but irrelevant to Buddhism. What matters, as I have said above, is one's own experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2014 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

so, are you going like a ping-pong ball back and forth between personal experience and this ultimate perspective?

Astus wrote:

No. In <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=214590#p214590> you refer to I stated: "The Dharma is strictly and only about the fourth noble truth, the path of ending suffering." Suffering is not something out there, it is one's personal experience, just as the path is one's own personal journey.

PadmaVonSamba said:

composites do not require any cognitive awareness of them in order to occur.. They only require some kind of observance of them in order to arise as personal experience.

Astus wrote:

It is an irrelevant philosophical problem. What the Dharma is about is one's own experience. Experience exists only when there is awareness. Whether there are things outside one's experience or not is not related to the path of liberation.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If all that matters is one's own experience, then the statement 'life is meaningless' is false.

Astus wrote:

Life is one's own experience. What can of life could we talk about that is not experienced at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2014 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, nothing matters except that which should be abandoned, which is our personal experience because personal experience that is all the matters. Or, more succinctly, "nothing matters except what matters, which we should abandon."

Astus wrote:

Meaning exists in one's experience, and that's what should be abandoned. In other words, attachment to whatever occurs. Whatever occurs, that is, within one's personal

experience. Because one cannot be attached what is not part of one's experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2014 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

You are saying:

one should abandon one's experience

Astus wrote:

If by abandoning you mean not attaching, then yes. If you mean stopping all experience whatsoever, then no.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2014 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Abandoning attachment to experience = abandoning linguistic and conceptual forms of meaning.

Still having "experience" after that [that is: a coherent relationship with the phenomenal world] = out of necessity, the experience of phenomenological meaning.

Astus wrote:

Attributing meaning to experience is conceptual attachment. What is phenomenological meaning?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2014 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Phenomenological meaning is not an attribution - in the sense of an imputation imposed upon. It is rather the activity of consciousness in synthesizing sensory impressions into a coherent unity, such that an experience of reality can happen in the first instance. Without that, we have something like schizophrenia - a chaotic and fragmented jumble of impressions, perceptions, ideas etc.

Astus wrote:

That is assuming there is chaos that needs to be organised. But we don't need to go there, as it is another theory similar to things outside one's experience.

tobes said:

Yogacaran texts are far more overt in expressing this, but nonetheless, I think it is absurd to twist Madhyamika into a denial of yogic experience, on the basis of its critical metaphysical project.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is about attaining wisdom, and not about turning people into mindless idiots, so there is no danger of falling into denial of the aggregates on the conventional level. The middle way is empty and apparent together. What is removed is only the mistaken understanding of appearances as real substantial things, as meaningful phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 12th, 2014 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

Not really - it only assumes that minds or consciousness have to have some kind of synthesizing or unifying ability such that a continuity of experience can occur. It doesn't assume anything about external reality, except perhaps that phenomenal content is 'given' to subjects. So the only assumption here is about what happens to subjectivity when that synthesizing ability fails - this is the text book definition of psychosis or schizophrenia, and I claim: very far from buddhahood or the direct realisation of emptiness.

Astus wrote:

As you say, it assumes that consciousness needs to interpret and synthesise external stimuli. That is, experience comes from some outer source and it needs to be transformed before it is understood in any way. That's why I said it is an assumption of chaotic external things.

tobes said:

Sure, so you take away the predication and misapprehension of svabhava. Phenomena can no longer have the meaning which relies on that predication and imputation. End of story?

No. To posit an end of story there is to reify emptiness into a something - in this case, a subjective state devoid of meaning.

Astus wrote:

You say that the realisation of emptiness results only in a subjective state devoid of meaning. As for the "subjective state", that's a questionable interpretation, as subject and object are both removed (emptiness of self). But I see no problem with being devoid of meaning, as that was the very goal.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 12th, 2014 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the biggest mistake is to fail to see that Zen says nothing different from what is stated in the sutras. The second biggest mistake is to get lost in words and letters. Even the retarded version of Zen says that the transmission started with the Buddha, so it is the Buddha's teaching, and necessarily Buddhism.

The source of confusion is the way Zen is defined. In that sense, the word Dharma can be defined in several ways as well, both as something beyond all conceptual ideas and as something very much religious. Zen, just like Dharma, can be interpreted as the ultimate truth, and as such, it is beyond all methods and teachings. That's how people can say that Zen is not Buddhism, not a religion. And if we look at the everyday reality, it is no different from Buddhism, no different from a religious teaching. So, as Madhyamika masters have said several times, one needs to understand the two truths properly.

Here is what Sheng-yen says,

"People seek help, and their prayers are answered. It is common in every religion. In this respect. Buddhism is like other religions. Ch'an Buddhism, however, is different. Ch'an Buddhism penetrates directly to the original essence of Buddhadharma, and encourages practitioners to rely on themselves, and to solve their own problems. ... Since Ch'an espouses self-initiative, it can do without the religious, supplicating aspects of other Buddhist sects."

(Sheng-yen: Is Ch'an a Religion? in <http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0217>)

And then he says the opposite:

"Many people think that Chan practice depends solely on their own efforts, requiring self-reliance, while those who practice by reciting the Buddha's name depend solely on external help. Both of these views are incorrect. In reality, Chan practice also requires external help, and the practice of reciting the Buddha's name also requires one's own effort. One can hardly become an accomplished Chan practitioner through one's own efforts. In India, China and Tibet, all meditators need the support and assistance of teachers, Dharma-protecting deities, and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. That is why Chan monasteries in China erect and worship the statues of Dharma-protecting deities such as the eight divisions of divinities and the four deva kings."

(Sheng-yen: <http://chancenter.org/cmc/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/ChanPracticeandFaith.pdf>, p 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 13th, 2014 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: the ten dharma realms is states of mind ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The five/six/ten realms are samsara itself, it is where beings are reborn. See this thread:
<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=107&t=12644>

"The basic teaching of the Buddha is that our life is suffering and we transmigrate within the six realms of samsara because we live and act based on three poisonous states of mind : greed, anger/hatred and ignorance. All Buddhist practices are about cessation of suffering in samsara by being released from these three poisonous minds."
(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/pdf/dharma-eye/de13/de13_08.htm)

"In ten thousand kalpas and thousands of lives, how many times are we born and how many times do we die? This cycle of lives is samsara, caused only by blind clinging to worldly affairs."
(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/common_html/zuimonki/01-16.html)

In the official <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/scriptures.html> we can find various references to the ten realms and even to birth in a pure land. The followings are from the
http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_1/kanromon.html.

"We also pray that your bodies, conveyed by this dharani-food, may leave suffering behind and gain liberation; that you may attain the joy of birth in heavens; that you may, in accordance with your wishes, be delivered to one of the pure lands in the ten directions; that you may give rise to the thought of awakening, practice the path to awakening, and in the future become buddhas; that you may never backslide; and that whoever first attains the way may vow to lead the others to liberation as well."

"With the good karma gathered in this practice, we repay the virtuous toils of our fathers and mothers, that the living may be blessed with joy and long life without distress, and the deceased freed from suffering and born in the pure land. May the four benefactors, sentient beings in the three classes of existence, and those born in the three evil destinies and eight difficulties all be able to repent their transgressions, purify their defects, entirely escape the round of rebirth, and be born in the pure land."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 13th, 2014 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

tobes said:

But to say that these are empty of svabhava is not to deny them outright. And if they are not denied outright, then what is your explanation for how consciousness and phenomena interact?

Astus wrote:

There is no phenomena separate from consciousness. All we have is the flow of experience, and not anything beyond that. Since experience without awareness is impossible, I say that phenomena and consciousness are inseparable.

tobes said:

this is what I claim your position leads to.

Astus wrote:

As you can see, I don't posit any subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 14th, 2014 at 1:16 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Yes, there is phenomena separate from consciousness,
but there is no consciousness separate from phenomena.

It is important to make that distinction.

Consciousness is a level of interaction between awareness and objects of awareness (phenomena).

Astus wrote:

Phenomena are objects of awareness. How can there be an object of awareness without awareness?

PadmaVonSamba said:

Experience without awareness is impossible,
but basic (ground of) awareness without experience is possible
in fact, it is necessary
because experience only occurs conditionally
and physical objects of awareness cannot spontaneously generate awareness
much less, consciousness
which is why a brain does not know it's a brain.

Astus wrote:

You say that consciousness exists unconditionally? Then it were not consciousness/awareness at all, as it would be without anything to be conscious/aware of.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 14th, 2014 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

There is plenty of stuff around that has not arisen along with awareness.

Astus wrote:

How do you know? What does it matter? It's like a discussion about the look of the most beautiful woman nobody has ever seen. Pure fiction.

PadmaVonSamba said:

There is no denying that awareness exists fundamentally.

Astus wrote:

An awareness without anything to be aware of is like seeing without anything to see. When one doesn't see anything, it is not called a sight. When there is nothing one is aware of, that is not called awareness. If not seeing is sight, then blind men are seers. If lack of awareness is awareness, then corpses are aware. Such a fundamental existence of awareness is like above, a baseless assumption, a work of imagination. As you agree: Awareness cannot observe itself directly, just as eyes cannot look into themselves directly. But awareness can be observed as an object of awareness, when it arises with phenomena and manifests as consciousness just as eyes can see themselves when looking at their own reflection in a mirror.

That is, there is no experience about such a fundamentally existent awareness that you say is there. It is indeed strange that while it is so real, there is no direct information about it at all. Eyes and other sensory faculties are all conditioned things, one can describe their qualities and such. None of that can be said about your ground of awareness. So, what is its fundamental existence?

PadmaVonSamba said:

Furthermore, if you are discussing meaning in life, then it is important not only to define what you mean by 'meaning' but also what you mean by 'life'.

Astus wrote:

I have <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=214690#p214690>: "Life is one's own experience. What can of life could we talk about that is not experienced at all?"

PadmaVonSamba said:

Since this basic awareness cannot be found to have a cause other than itself, and since it has no defining characteristics of its own, and since it cannot be denied, or separated into any kind of 'non-awareness' parts, I would suggest that it is truly existent, non-specific, non-self, synonymous with the meaning of Dharmakaya and the essence of realization.

Astus wrote:

That shows very well how the attachment to self is the root of all beliefs in meaning. Religions and philosophies often tend to posit an ultimate soul/god as the basis of all, and that's where the Buddha said that no such thing can be found and it is total ignorance and the root of samsara. All phenomena are impermanent, selfless and empty. Something that is not a phenomenon is no different from non-existence, in other words, it does not exist. Attributing meaning to a non-existent thing is the reason why

there is no actual meaning, but only mistaken ideas that life is meaningful.

PadmaVonSamba said:

It is the basis of the three poisons, the reason why all beings experience dukkha, and why all beings possess the potential for enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. It is ignorance about the emptiness of phenomena. And since that ignorance is empty as well, we can be free from it. If such a basis were real, then either we are permanently deluded or permanently enlightened.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 14th, 2014 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Malcolm said:

People who think dharmakāya is truly existent are simply wrong, and suffer from an eternalist bias.

In reality the three kāyas are also conventions.

Astus wrote:

Linji says it clearly:

Therefore a man of old said, 'The [buddha-]bodies are posited depending upon meaning; the [buddha-]lands are postulated in keeping with substance.' So we clearly know that the dharma-nature body and dharma-nature land are fabricated things, based on dependent understanding. Empty fists and yellow leaves used to fool a child! Spiked gorse seeds! Horned water chestnuts! What kind of juice are you looking for in such dried-up bones!

Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma.

(Sasaki, p 17)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 14th, 2014 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

2.Does it matter? If one thinks, for example, that no cancer is developing in the body simply because one is not aware of it, and that because one is not aware of it it cannot possible exist, then this would certainly lead to problems. In that case, perhaps it matters.

Astus wrote:

How is that related to the path of liberation? It is not.

PadmaVonSamba said:

I am not referring to cognition, rather, the causes of that cognition.

Astus wrote:

An ultimate ground cannot be a cause of anything, otherwise it would be changing and conditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 15th, 2014 at 1:18 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

Is Picasso's art worthless/meaningless from a Buddhist POV?

Astus wrote:

If by that you ask whether a piece of art is relevant to the path of liberation, then the answer is most likely no. There might be some exceptions, considering primarily Buddhist art. And here's another question: is Picasso's art good for fixing a Unix server error? Probably not.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 15th, 2014 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

Does Buddhism allow for meaning outside the path of liberation?

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is the path of liberation, and that's what it is concerned about. For everything else there are all the other things.

gad rgyangs said:

no, but people who fix unix server errors usually don't claim that anything that is not useful for fixing Unix server errors is meaningless and a waste of time.

Astus wrote:

The question is "useful for what?". Usefulness/meaning/worth does not exist on its own, it is within a specific framework of values. Buddhist values are about liberation, that's how Picasso's art is meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2014 at 7:08 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

Buddhism is not like fixing unix servers: it makes universal claims about what is true and what is not, what is conducive to ending suffering or what creates more suffering, and basically it says that anything that does not aim towards liberation by definition will be creating more suffering. So recouch the question: does viewing a Picasso painting result in increased suffering, if for no other reason than it is delaying your "practice"? And if a non-Buddhist views a Picasso painting, is the idea that everything that person does is meaningless and only increases their suffering, including viewing the painting?

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is about fixing the problem is suffering. Nothing more, nothing less. It identifies the problem, describes the causes of the problem, identifies the solution and gives the method to reach the solution. The four noble truths. The rest Cone has already answered. Just a small supplement to that: seeing beautiful/pure (subha) what is ugly/impure (asubha) is one of the four distorted views (e.g. AN 4.49).

Something is meaningful when it is conducive to one's goal, and meaningless when it is not. Seeing the meaninglessness of life is meaningful on the path of liberation, and eventually, once the goal is reached, even the path becomes meaningless. Making up excuses to call various elements of samsara meaningful only strengthens attachment and hinders one's progress on the path. It shows that one still believes that there is some peace and contentment to gain from ephemeral experiences, while in fact true peace lies only in nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2014 at 7:30 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

There, you see, you make empirical statements ("There is no phenomena separate from consciousness") as though it is a fact (when it isn't) and then base your argument on that, but when this sort of statement is challenged, your response is basically the challenge is irrelevant because that's merely a philosophical discussion and doesn't relate to one's subjective experience.

Astus wrote:

How do you know of any phenomenon without experience? By reasoning. But through reasoning you don't get to any phenomenon, only theories. So, is there a phenomenon separate from consciousness? We can only theorise about it. Does that philosophising have any relevance to the path of liberation? It has not (cf. MN 63: the parable of the arrow; MN 2: ideas unfit for attention).

PadmaVonSamba said:

then what is it that interprets the activity of the brain, the neurological and electrical activity of the brain, what experiences that as thoughts, as viewed objects, as emotions?

Astus wrote:

See the Avyakata-samyutta (SN 44) regarding why neither the sameness nor the difference of body and mind were asserted by the Buddha. In short, because the Tathagata does not posit a self (permanent substance) in one's realm of experience (i.e. the five aggregates and the six senses), as said for instance in SN 44.7 and SN 44.8.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Either phenomena is awareness, or it isn't.
And if it isn't, then what is?

Astus wrote:

As I said above, phenomena are inseparable from consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2014 at 7:40 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

kirtu said:

But imho the complete meaninglessness of samsara is very difficult for even Dharma people to accept.

Astus wrote:

So is emptiness. And that's perhaps because their liberating quality is not apparent. As <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/chah/atasteof.html#middle>, "The essence of Buddhism is peace, and that peace arises from truly knowing the nature of all things. If we investigate closely, we can see that peace is neither happiness nor unhappiness. Neither of these is the truth." Peace depends on grasping or not grasping phenomena, and grasping depends on attributing a meaning to something or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2014 at 7:44 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

if you want to make the sole goal of your life the reduction and avoidance of all suffering, fine, but not everyone is going to agree that such an impoverished and limited life is either attractive or meaningful, thank god.

Astus wrote:

Yes, the four noble truths are not easy to accept. There are all sorts of other distractions one can busy oneself with.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2014 at 8:11 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

you can reduce suffering while doing other things. otherwise its like hatha yogins who do nothing but exercise and purify their bodies so they can live as long as possible. what for? so they can live as long as possible so they can practice hatha yoga to live as long as possible.

Astus wrote:

I've once heard a Dharma teacher put it this way, "Sitting in meditation is just training. Everyday life is the actual practice." The teaching of the Buddha is for the living, and it is to influence one's every action. The bodhisattva vows are valid not only for life but until all beings are liberated.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 17th, 2014 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

gad rgyangs said:

I'm not even going to ask "who ever put you in bondage?" but, assuming that all beings eventually are liberated, then what? then we can go to the beach without anyone annoying us telling us that even when we think we're happy we're really suffering?

Astus wrote:

Is your question about life after enlightenment? There are many answers. First is that it is impossible to identify someone as an enlightened being as all attachments have ended (see: SN 44.2; MMK 22). Then there are the colourful descriptions of superpowers and buddha-fields. And there are answers like "chop wood, carry water" and "eat when hungry, sleep when tired". If you want, you can even combined them into the three bodies.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 17th, 2014 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Not really, we can grasp at what we don't understand or know the meaning of. And we can be neutral about things that we know the meaning of.

Astus wrote:

Meaning, as the basis of grasping, is attributing an essence, a function and a purpose to

something. A slice of cake is meaningful in being viewed as delicious. And those who follow some diet it becomes a more complex meaning. On the other hand, if we can't tell whether something is food or anything else, there is no attachment to it.

shel said:

We suffer meaninglessness. Religion offers meaning, hence a religious life can be far from impoverished, though it may still be rather limited.

Astus wrote:

Suffering is from the desire to find a reliable meaning in something. But meaning always expires because all appearances are impermanent. The want of meaning is the wish to find a constant element in a vanishing reality. Religion proposes an unseen realm that is eternal, and so truly meaningful. Buddhism, however, eventually shows that such an unseen eternity is nothing but another mistaken idea, i.e. meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 18th, 2014 at 6:17 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

It's funny you should say this in context of religion, where people are attached to all sorts of unknowables.

Astus wrote:

It is attachment to vague, often emotionally charged concepts like God, soul, self, ultimate awareness, etc. that people hold on to. They become meaningful as they appear to answer every question by being mostly undefined ideas. The Buddha has very well identified it as self-view and clinging to a self, the root of ignorance. Unfortunately, the same philosophical confusion exists in Buddhism where people like to smuggle in some sort of eternal soul into the Buddhadharma. This is because of the fear of meaninglessness and emptiness, that there is something to lose. This fear of loss (of meaning and substance) is the attachment to self. It is also a misunderstanding of emptiness as annihilation, thus the counter-argument is an eternal thing. The two extreme views. However, the Buddha's middle way is not the extreme of being nor the extreme of non-being. Also, meaninglessness is not another meaning, but only a method to remove attachment to samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 18th, 2014 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: The Prajñāpāramitā in One Letter

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two things. The "a" sound is part of every Sanskrit consonant letter, so it is sort of the "universal basis". The "a" is also a negating prefix, like "un-" in English. Therefore "a" is like emptiness that is both universal and negates substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 19th, 2014 at 7:03 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

conebeckham said:

But the crucial point, Shel, is that the goal of Dharma practice is to transcend meaning, and relative meaninglessness. Enlightenment, for sentient beings, may be the ultimate meaning, but for the enlightened one, meaning is transcended. So, too, is the relative meaninglessness, really. Being "Meaningless" in an absolute way, is the state of being unattached from Samsara. It is freedom, Nirvana, the exhaustion of habitual patterns, which includes all concepts related to meaning.

Astus wrote:

I find this a wonderful summary, that highlights the way gradually everything is let go:

"If you are attached to this life, you are not a true spiritual practitioner;

If you are attached to samsara, you have no renunciation;

If you are attached to your own self-interest, you have no bodhichitta;

If there is grasping, you do not have the View."

(<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/sachen-kunga-nyingpo/parting-four-attachments>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 19th, 2014 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

The Buddha was enlightened. The Buddha taught subsequent to enlightenment.

Teaching requires perception, feeling, and purpose on the part of the teacher.

Perception, feeling, and purpose are some basic components of meaning. There must have been meaning for him. There seems to be no way to deny this. Can anyone try to explain how there could not have been meaning for him?

Astus wrote:

"Not the aggregates, not other than the aggregates; the aggregates are not in him; he is not in them: the Tathagata does not possess the aggregates. ... Those who make fixations about Buddha who is beyond fixations and without deterioration -- all those who are damaged by fixations do not see the tathagata."

(<http://www.fodian.net/world/1564.htm#Investigation%20of%20the%20Tathagata>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 19th, 2014 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

ground said:

What is more than "meaningless" (since you are writing "not only meaningless") ? You are contradicting yourself. Either life in Buddhism is meaningless or it is samsara which is meaningful. Buddhism makes life meaningful like any other religion or philosophy does. What is life without buddhism? It simply is assigned different meanings, maybe "worldly meanings" as buddhists would say or christian meanings or materialist meanings and what have you.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism life/samsara is to be perceived as meaningless, thus "make life meaningless". That path can and should be seen as meaningful, as a contrast to staying in samsara, but that meaning is only temporary, and noble beings know that even the Dharma is part of the illusory creations of the mind. So it is not only meaningless, because in the end both meaning and meaninglessness are gone.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 19th, 2014 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: a healthy sex life.

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

In terms of taking words literally, simply following the 3rd precept is pretty easy, I have actually done that my whole sex life, prior to even being a Buddhist. So obviously, what i'm asking goes beyond just "the basics" of literal interpretation, since to follow Buddhas historical suggestions for layfolks on the subject actually is not too taxing.

Astus wrote:

The first precept is not to kill (or torture) humans. That's not very taxing either. Isn't it important anyway? Most often keeping the five precepts and avoiding the ten wrong actions are difficult only in a given situation. What is actually karmically binding is not even the action itself but the intention and the attachment behind that (an important difference between Jainism and Buddhism). So, the third precept is good as it is, and it is about avoiding doing bad things, being free from the three lower realms.

Going beyond the basics can be done in various ways. To simplify, let's use the classic set of "avoid bad, do good, purify mind". Avoiding bad is keeping the third precept, and it can be extended with further restrictions (new and full moons, place, time, etc.), but it seems to me personally that those added rules are often more cultural than a logical consequence of the teachings, so we could as well switch them to our own cultural superstitions that we already abide by. To do good in terms of sex is likely to be about kindness and putting others in front of ourselves, giving up self-interest. In other words, being loving and caring. The most interesting part is purifying mind. This is about being aware and in control of our emotions and thoughts. It helps tremendously in accomplishing the first two points, and gives us a degree of freedom. Although Ajahn Brahm advertises jhanas by saying that it's better than sex, for the non-celibates, meditation makes sex better, as it helps removing the distractions from our mind and

strengthens openness and focus.

Johnny Dangerous said:

I'll also be frank here, i'm interested in this question particular from the viewpoints of people (maybe with a few years under their belts) who have had normal, or abnormal sex lives, and how they view this stuff as regards their Buddhist practice.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, like with every other activity, one should incorporate sex into one's practice of embodying the bodhisattva virtues and perfections. I believe it is a problem to consider sex something extraordinary and special, while actually there are very few things that are more common among humans, like talking and hugging.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 20th, 2014 at 1:21 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Suffice to say that you cannot even try to explain?

Astus wrote:

I can try to tell the same in my own words. You say, "Perception, feeling, and purpose are some basic components of meaning." Those are the aggregates. The Buddha does not identify with any aggregate. He is also not separate from the aggregates. That is, it is not possible to pinpoint what the Tathagata is. Thus to ask whether there is or isn't a meaning for the Buddha is mistaking a who the Buddha is. By the way, the Buddha has not even taught anything.

shel said:

express something meaningless

Astus wrote:

A monk asked, "What is the most valuable thing in the world?"

The master said, "The most valuable is a dead cat's head."

The monk asked, "Why is a dead cat's head the most valuable?"

The master said, "Because nobody can price it."

(Record of Chan Master Caoshan Yuanzheng of Fuzhou, T47n1987Ap0529a04-06)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 20th, 2014 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

ground said:

In the end life is gone and you do not have to do anything specifically. You may perceive life as meaningless or meaningful through equating it with "that path". It does not matter

because in the end life is gone and the sound "life" or the sign "life" will not evoke any meaning in a brain that is dead.

Astus wrote:

As far as Buddhism is concerned, life is more than just body functions.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 20th, 2014 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: a healthy sex life.

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Is it ever possible to have sex with an altruistic, or even just conventionally "healthy" motivation, on any level? Can the act of sex under any circumstances create "white seeds"?

Astus wrote:

Keeping the precepts is generating white seeds. Attachment can be present in both good and bad actions, so it is not a qualifying factor in ethics. Sex, like other kinds of human interaction, can be harmful, neutral or beneficial. Beneficial sex can be kind, compassionate, caring, empowering and even altruistic. It can also be considered how the six paramitas can be applied to sex.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 20th, 2014 at 6:57 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Are you just making excuses now?

Astus wrote:

Excuses for what? Life in Buddhism does not begin at birth and does not end at death. Abandoning clinging to this life is the first step, renouncing samsara is the next.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 21st, 2014 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

shel said:

Sounds lovely. Nevertheless the Buddha taught. He taught the Four Noble Truths. If you haven't heard of the FNTs try googling it.

Astus wrote:

"From the night of Enlightenment till that of Nirvana, I have not in the meantime made any proclamation whatever."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.61)

And a different passage,

"the great Parinirvana is neither abandonment nor attainment, neither is it of one meaning nor of no-meaning; this is said to be Nirvana."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.38)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 21st, 2014 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Astus wrote:

"From the night of Enlightenment till that of Nirvana, I have not in the meantime made any proclamation whatever."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.61))

PadmaVonSamba said:

...including that proclamation?

Astus wrote:

As Cone said, yes.

"And there is also no set teaching that can be delivered by the Tathāgata. Why? The teachings explained by the Tathāgata can neither be appropriated nor explained. There is neither a teaching nor a non-teaching."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 21st, 2014 at 7:53 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Well, since there is neither a teaching nor a non-teaching, then why quote it?

Astus wrote:

This might sound a little confusing at first.

"words are neither different nor not-different from meaning and that meaning stands in the same relation to words. If, Mahamati, meaning is different from words, it will not be made manifest by means of words"

(Lankavatara sutra, 3.65)

But if you read the section, it becomes clear that words (ruta) stand for concepts and meaning (artha) for beyond concepts.

There are many other passages in various sutras and teachings explaining how conventional and ultimate reality are not two different things. As I have said previously in this thread, seeing the meaninglessness of life is not the same as denying life.

Renunciation means not being attached to things, and not that one has to lock oneself up in a small dark cave.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2014 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's reverse this. Chan is a Tiantai school. See for instance Faure on Shenxiu's background in his "The Will to Orthodoxy", p 49-53, where you get a short description of how Huisi and later Tiantai teachings influenced early Chan, like Daoxin's "one act samadhi". Even the idea of a lineage was first invented by the Tiantai school.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2014 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

jikai said:

if we don't use the five houses categorization to differentiate between orthodox and otherwise Zen transmissions then what can we use in our determinations?

Astus wrote:

The "five houses" idea was made up in the Song as a method to organise lineages and stories in major collections, starting with the Jingde Chuandeng Lu (pub. 1009) that uses the scheme but does not name it (the reason behind the scheme of five houses is unknown), then the Guandeng Lu (pub. 1039) uses five discrete sections for the houses but does not call it as such, and the first clear mention found of the five houses is from around 1060. (source: How Zen Became Zen, p 22-23)

Talking about "orthodox" in Chan is a difficult question. When Saicho travelled China things looked very different from how later generations imagined it. At that time none of the five houses existed, as schools like Linji and Fayan were created much later.

By the way, could someone specify what kind of practice/teaching is recognised in Tendai as Oxhead?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2014 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

Astus wrote:

As for Oxhead School texts, this is a really good one:

<http://terebess.hu/zen/jueguanlun.html>. But more interesting would be to see how it all appears in Tendai, if at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2014 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

Matylda said:

I always thought that it was Kanchi Sosan, the 3rd patriarch of the lineage who wrote it.. it would mean 2 generations before oxhead appeared. Am I wrong?

Astus wrote:

It is as you say. Farong's work is the Xinming (心銘), <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mindins.htm>. Also this: <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-JOCP/henrik.htm>.

The mentioned Wikipedia article questions the authority of the Xinxinming:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinxin_Ming#Authorship

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2014 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

Matylda said:

Do you know Chinese or Japanese version of the oxhead's of inscription? The English translation is nice but I prefer original one.

Astus wrote:

The first link includes the original. Otherwise: http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2012/T2076_,51,0457b25.html

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 1:57 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness in Yogacara

Content:

Malcolm said:

we are dicussing emptiness in yogacara, and whether it really is true that they posit non-dual consciousness that substantially exists. I think in face of the evidence it is a little hard to deny that in fact they did so.

Astus wrote:

"ultimate reality is divorced from existence and divorced from nonexistence by nature"
(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 285, tr Cook)

Dependent nature with discrimination is the imagined, without it it is the perfected.
However, existence and non-existence are discrimination. Also, among the final verses it says,

"Whenever, regarding the objective realm,
Knowledge is completely devoid of something obtained,
Then it dwells in consciousness only,
Because it is divorced from characteristics of the twofold grasping."
(p 306)

Although in the commentary that Xuanzang accepts as valid it maintains "that the seeing part of this knowledge exists but the seen part does not", although it is still the path of seeing, and the seeing part is required to have suchness as object.

As for the ultimate accomplishment, Yogacara has non-abiding nirvana, so it doesn't look like something that accepts any substantially existent things or minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Vimalakirti corrected Ananda,

"the bodies of the Tathāgatas are bodies of the Dharma, not bodies of longing. The Buddha is the World-honored One, who has transcended the triple world. The Buddha's body is without flaws, the flaws having been extinguished. The Buddha's body is unconditioned and does not fit the [conventional] analytic categories. A body such as this—how could it be ill, how could it be vexed?"
(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 3, tr. McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

When Guatama ate contaminated food from the blacksmith,
did his body get poisoned and die, or not?

Astus wrote:

"Although I do not actually enter parinirvāṇa I proclaim that I do. It is through this skillful

means that the Tathāgata leads and inspires sentient beings. Why is this? Because if the Buddha abides a long time in this world, those who have few qualities do not plant roots of good merit, acquire poor and superficial characters, are attached to the desires of the five senses, and enter into the web of illusions and false views. If they see the Tathāgata always existing without extinction, they then become proud, self-willed, and negligent."

(Lotus Sutra, ch 16, tr Kubo & Yuyama)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

jikai said:

That is, many of the great Zen masters are quite 'unorthodox' in light of the sutra and commentary material...aren't they? (forgive me if I am mistaken, as i mentioned, Zen is not my specialty). At least as I understand it, many Chan masters really are in a seperate category of their own. Can they be evaluated in the normal way?

Astus wrote:

Zen teachers, at least those I know of from past and present, teach straight Mahayana orthodoxy. The major confusing source is how Zen took up a colloquial style in the Song era, although it could as well be considered nothing more than a literary technique, something that was then on copied by later generations and foreigners (i.e. non-Chinese). The casual style of Zen is a tricky one. It can easily become rigid and traditional, very formalised. At the same time, Buddhist teachers/practitioners can very well be spontaneous and friendly emanations of the Dharma who assume a direct form of communication. So, what is a Zen teacher? Many possible answers. Let's translate it to English: meditation instructor. And we know that Buddhism has meditation instructors in practically every school and monastery. Has anyone noticed how Ven. Dharmamitra in his translation of the Xiao Zhiguan says, "Great Tiantai Meditation Master & Exegete: Sramana Zhiyi"?

"The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters." (<http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0027>)

"Whoever would bring out the vehicle of Zen and cite the doctrines of the Teaching must first understand what the Buddha meant, then accord with the mind of Zen masters. Only after that can you bring them up and put them into practice, comparing degrees of closeness.

If ... you do not know the doctrines and principles but just stick to a sectarian methodology, when you adduce proofs readily but wrongly, you will bring slander and criticism on yourself."

(Fayan Wenyi: Ten Guidelines for Zen Schools

(http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/X63/1226_001.htm), in Five Houses of Zen, p 140.
see <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=160843#p160843>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

jikai said:

I hope my posts did not in any way come off as me dismissing the Chan/Zen transmission.

Astus wrote:

Not at all.

And since we're in this topic, let me bring this up. In "The Collected Teachings of the Tendai Lotus School" (BDK edition, p 117) Gishin writes,

"Only the samadhi of following one's own thoughts can be contemplated constantly by both monks and lay persons. Even though one is burdened by the duties of a royal court, one should not avoid [this practice]."

This practice seems to come closest to Zen (see <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=145499#p145499>). One thing is not mentioned in that text, however. How does it relate to the teachings on buddha-nature in Tendai?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

kirtu said:

Buddhist realization instructor/guide. Certainly not just a meditation instructor.

Astus wrote:

You are right, of course, that here "zen" does not actually mean meditation. Although, if we consider what is found in Rinzai Zen, and Korean and Chinese Buddhism, the "zen teacher" is normally the head of the meditation hall. Zen, as another word of buddha-mind, is a different matter. As Huangbo remarked, "Do you know that there are no teachers of Chan in all of China?" (Blue Cliff Record, case 11). And Deshan said, "My teaching has neither words nor phrases. It is actually without a Dharma that may be given to others." (Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 198) So, what is a Zen teacher then and what is there to guide to? Realisation is not given or taken, methods, however, are. Meditation is about working directly with one's mind, so giving the right instructions can indeed serve as a short cut to enlightenment. Thus, "meditation instructor" might as well do it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 7:56 AM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Well, I don't know how that even addresses the question at all, but it certainly is wordy.

Astus wrote:

The entire life story of the Buddha is only for the education of certain types of sentient beings. It is like a magic show, an illusion. The real body of the Buddha is the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2014 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Difference between consciousness and the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

Basically in Buddhism there are six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. They stand for the momentary consciousnesses of the six sensory areas.

Consciousness exists when there is something to be conscious of. Besides the five bodily sensory consciousnesses, there is the sixth consciousness, and it is the consciousness of mental phenomena. Mental phenomena includes everything else besides the five bodily sensory consciousnesses.

Generally speaking, there is no separate consciousness from the above six. Together they could be called simply consciousness or mind. The important point is that mind is necessarily impermanent and dependently originated. Mind is a series of moments of mental awareness, and that's how it can also be called mind-continuum.

Rebirth is possible because mental phenomena like greed, hatred and ignorance don't cease with the death of the body, as they don't depend on the existence of the body. The mind continues to exist because mental phenomena are produced by previous mental phenomena, like one thought leads to another thought.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 28th, 2014 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Difference between consciousness and the mind

Content:

zerwe said:

Does your explanation encompass the notion of the final mode (nature) being "pure mind?"

Astus wrote:

Mind is constantly changing, so there is no final mode. It is always different. Pure mind is a mind without attachment, a mind that understands the nature of mind, i.e. that the mind changes all the time.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 1st, 2014 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Some general questions about Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. The usual definition of "sentient being" is that it has senses (see, hear, smell, taste, touch), and can feel pain and pleasure just as humans do. This includes animals - as it was understood before the microscope - and beings of other realms like ghosts and gods. Living being is often used as a synonym for sentient being. Note that the texts were not only not written in English, but often well before the modern era. That is, they had concepts like very small beings, but not specifically cells and bacteria. One of the areas where the definition of a sentient being matters is ethics. Buddhist ethics is intention, and not action based. I think very few people hate virtually invisible bacteria and consider cleaning the bathroom with chemicals as mass murder.

2. Correct, there are infinite number of beings a bodhisattva wants to save. The meaning of that is again the intention, that a bodhisattva's compassion knows no limits. Becoming a buddha is the culmination of the bodhisattva path, but that doesn't mean buddhas don't work on saving all beings. They do, endlessly.

3. Omniscience in Buddhism often does not refer to godlike all knowledge. Rather it is knowing what the true nature of phenomena is, how everything is empty and dependently originated. It is true that the traditional Buddhist cosmology is at odds with our modern version. There's not much to do about it.

4. The tulku system of lamas reincarnating is a Tibetan invention. It's like when in Europe people were told that the king was invested by God, and other such "son of heaven" emperors and rulers over the planet. I leave it to others to give it further explanation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 1st, 2014 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: Make Life Meaningless

Content:

Anders said:

All this talk about what Buddhas do, how truly realised beings are, etc though - No wonder if people are tying themselves into knots. How can we really talk about this with a straight face? I wonder if the Lonely Planet forums are full of people telling others what Indonesia, Burma et al is really like just from having read the travel guides.

I think it's fine to play around with a bit, polishing the concepts so to speak, but at the end of the day third hand knowledge needs a few grain of salt.

Astus wrote:

All those ideas are knots. One might go to countries, but there is no place to find the Buddha beyond one's mind. And within one's mind it's all just imagination.

"If there is no false thought, there is no Buddha. Why not? Just because if you have a view of Buddha, you will think that there really is a Buddha to be attained. If you have a view of sentient beings, you will think there really are sentient beings to be delivered. Such is the totality of your false thought. However, if you are without any thought or view at all, where then is the Buddha? So this is why Manjusri said, 'To have any view of Buddha whatsoever is like being limited and obstructed by the two iron-enclosing mountains'."

(Wan-Ling Record of Huang Po, tr. Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 2nd, 2014 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: Tendai is a Ch'an school.

Content:

Anders said:

Since the purpose of Buddhism is in fact inner peace, compassion and happiness, some evidence of such qualities strike me as fairly essential in a guru who would teach the path to these.

Astus wrote:

As for assessing others, I like

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.192.than.html>. That is, through practically living together one has the opportunity to observe the other person's behaviour, and through discussion one learns the other's views. Living together is hardly for lay people who see their teachers mostly in a ritualistic environment (the temple/monastery/centre), so observing daily behaviour is virtually out of the question, while at the same time, because of the religious setting one can easily get the impression that the teacher is a holy being (same phenomenon with celebrities, priests, etc.).

I rather reverse your statement, that the growth of peace, compassion and happiness in the student is the real measure that listening to another person is beneficial. And if being a student involves full time discipleship or only reading a few passages, it does not matter as long as there are good results. A teacher can be anyone from whom one can actually learn something useful. And that can be as little as saying 'I dare not belittle you. You will become a buddha.' or even less, like raising a flower or moving a finger. Or sometimes decades of full time studying proves to be of little benefit. And the Buddha was the perfect teacher, however, the disciples had various capacities.

Indrajala said:

Bodhidharma was known for his temper. Linji used to whip his students ... often by the sounds of things. Some teachers are rather wrathful and downright mean, yet they're regarded well in history.

Astus wrote:

Zen stories are not history, they are for entertainment and education. Wrathful and mean teachers sound to me more like abusive individuals with psychological issues.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 2nd, 2014 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: Esoteric Buddhism: is it real? Why?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Esoteric Buddhism simply denotes a type of teachings. As for what qualifies as "free and open" is not necessarily an easy question. If by that you mean whether you can find things about it on the Internet without paying anything extra, then yes, the Dharma is free and open to all.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 2nd, 2014 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: Esoteric Buddhism: is it real? Why?

Content:

Nosta said:

If I cant find it on internet, etc thats another issue. I was really talking about any form of Buddhism just to a few, like secret societies or secret because its dangerous...and so on.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism itself is just to a few, those with the right karma. If there are some secret groups, then first of all, you won't hear about them; and second, they are very small. As for being dangerous, I think that it would not be Buddhism then. Buddhism is about liberating beings, not harming them. True, people may get the wrong idea when they hear about things like selflessness, emptiness, rebirth, nirvana, suffering, etc., but that's a mostly unavoidable risk.

Bhikkhus, there are these three things that flourish when concealed, not when exposed. What three? (1) Women flourish when concealed, not when exposed. (2) The hymns of the brahmins flourish when concealed, not when exposed. (3) And wrong views flourish when concealed, not when exposed. These are the three things that flourish when concealed, not when exposed.

Bhikkhus, there are these three things that shine when exposed, not when concealed. What three? (1) The moon shines when exposed, not when concealed. (2) The sun shines when exposed, not when concealed. (3) The Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata shines when exposed, not when concealed. These are the three things that shine when exposed, not when concealed.

(AN 3.131)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 5th, 2014 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Qualities of a teacher

Content:

Meido said:

Different things reveal the depth of different aspects of cultivation.

Astus wrote:

I have not investigated this area, so all I know is that Buddhism has the teaching of major and minor signs, but nothing else really. And even those signs are difficult to explain as real physical qualities. So, my question is, what is the source of the symptoms you have described? Is it something specific to Japanese Rinzai Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 5th, 2014 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: Qualities of a teacher

Content:

Meido said:

So at least from the time of the Mongol invasions we have records of Chinese masters in Japan commenting on things like energetic cultivation centered on the abdomen and the evidence of its fruition, the use of a shout to facilitate recognition, and so on. I therefore wouldn't say it's a Japanese thing; I would probably say that some Japanese Rinzai lines have preserved this kind of approach and understanding.

And of course I don't consider all of this a purely Zen thing either. In my experiences with teachers from non-Zen and non-Japanese Buddhist traditions who were considered to have been greatly realized, I've also observed many of the same qualities, and have heard descriptions of practices and methods that are remarkably similar. For what it's worth.

Astus wrote:

Aren't those energetic cultivation techniques of Taoist (or indigenous Chinese) origins? And those signs you mentioned could be present in Taoist literature and art as well. But I'm just guessing here. Perhaps you or anyone familiar with that area could clarify this.

Besides observing the qualities yourself, do you know any other Buddhist tradition, besides some Rinzai lineages, where they mention them? Like, as the closest tradition, in Soto Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 5th, 2014 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: Qualities of a teacher

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

The greats of the past (many times) start off as the degenerates of the present.

Astus wrote:

Those greats of the past through the ages get deified and given superhuman attributes. Naturally, it's impossible to find any real person comparable to them. It should be considered that whatever we know of past sages are very minimal and often fictitious. No wonder the "qualities of a teacher" people look for can be irrationally exaggerated. Learning Buddhism is not much different from learning some worldly skill like sculpting, programming, carpentry and such. Teachers and schools are there to help in the process of mastering the skill, to transfer proven knowledge and methods. As I see it, the whole process is too mystified, but I guess it is part of being a religion. At the same time, there have always been teachers who wanted people to grasp the simplicity of the whole thing, like the renowned patriarchs of Zen, but there are also a number of modern teachers, like the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche and his Rebel Buddha programme.

Here are some harsh words from Linji (tr. Sasaki) about present teachers, past teachers, and those who prefer to stick to the scriptures.

Virtuous monks, time is precious. And yet, hurrying hither and thither, you try to learn meditation, to study the Way, to accept names, to accept phrases, to seek buddha, to seek a patriarch, to seek a good teacher, to think and speculate.

“Make no mistake, followers of the Way! After all, you have a father and a mother—what more do you seek? Turn your own light inward upon yourselves!

(p 10)

Followers of the Way, you seize upon words from the mouths of those old masters and take them to be the true Way. You think, ‘These good teachers are wonderful, and I, simple-minded fellow that I am, don’t dare measure such old worthies.’ Blind idiots! You go through your entire life holding such views, betraying your own two eyes. Trembling with fright, like donkeys on an icy path, [you say to yourselves,] ‘I don’t dare disparage these good teachers for fear of making karma with my mouth!’

(p 17)

Followers of the Way, even if you should master a hundred sutras and śāstras, you’re not as good as a teacher with nothing to do. If you do master them, you’ll regard others with contempt. Asura like conflict and egotistical ignorance increase the karma that leads to hell. Such was the case of Sunakṣātra bhikku — though he understood the twelve divisions of the teachings, he fell alive into hell. The great earth had no place for him. It’s better to do nothing and take it easy.

(p 31)

And one on Shakyamuni:

Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara

and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours.

(p 19)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 5th, 2014 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: Qualities of a teacher

Content:

Meido said:

Perhaps other folks could chime in.

Astus wrote:

Let's hope they do. And thanks for your input, it is interesting to hear about those things.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 8th, 2014 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Authentic Buddhist Scriptures?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030220183543/http://hjem.get2net.dk/civet-cat/mahayana-writings/entry-into-mahayana.htm> is a good answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 15th, 2014 at 7:46 AM

Title: Re: Three Turnings.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"In the country of Benares at Rsipatana in the Deer Park, the World-honored One first turned the wheel of doctrine, [teaching] the four holy truths for those setting out in the word-hearers' vehicle. This turning of the wheel was marvelous and wonderful, such as nobody, whether gods or men, had been able to turn in the world before. Nevertheless there were superior teachings, for [this first turning] had to be interpreted and occasioned controversy. Then the World-honored One with an underlying intent turned the wheel for the second time for the sake of those setting out in the great vehicle, [teaching] that all things have no-essence, no arising, and no passing away, are originally quiescent, and are essentially in cessation. This turning of the wheel was marvelous and wonderful indeed. Nevertheless there were teachings superior to this, for it also had to be interpreted and occasioned controversy. The World-honored One then with an explicit meaning for the third time turned the wheel of doctrine for those setting out in all the vehicles, [teaching] that all things have no-essence, no arising, and no passing away, are originally quiescent, and are essentially in cessation. This turning was the most marvelous and wonderful that had ever occurred in the world. It had no superior nor did it contain any implicit meaning nor occasion any controversy."

(Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 5, p 49; tr. Keenan, BDK edition)

So, to sum up the teachings of the three turnings:

1. four holy truths for those setting out in the word-hearers' vehicle
2. all things have no-essence, no arising, and no passing away, are originally quiescent, and are essentially in cessation
3. all things have no-essence, no arising, and no passing away, are originally quiescent, and are essentially in cessation

The definitions of the second and third turnings are identical.

The same sutra also answers the question about the nature of the unconditioned.

"Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also a word provisionally invented by the First Teacher. Now, if the First Teacher provisionally invented this word, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And, if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the unconditioned does not exist."
(ch 2, p 12)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 16th, 2014 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Can't Really Work with Mahayana by the Looks of it

Content:

Astus wrote:

I say I choose Mahayana over anything else because it is a Vast Vehicle. That is, it encompasses everything you can find within Buddhism. It is like the Great Collection (i.e. the Chinese canon) that includes all sorts of texts from the agamas to the tantras, from the Dharmapada to Zen poetry. At the same time, it allows reducing all that not only to a short list of doctrines but even to a single word (A, Evam, nenbutsu, emptiness, etc.), symbol (vajra, circle, finger, etc.) or even a posture (zazen). Mahayana can be anything and everything, an infinite number of skilful means, and at its core there is nothing to find.

You say you are bored of and confused by all the different explanations, methods and theories. No problem. You can choose whatever fits.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 20th, 2014 at 8:09 AM

Title: Re: Three Turnings.

Content:

kirtu said:

It's not a Cittamatrā or Madhyamāka view. It could however be a Mahayana POV since the view of reality has nothing to do with the motivation to attain enlightenment for all beings and since, at least in Śākya, one trains progressively in the lower views as

steps to the higher views (with "lower" and "higher" seen from the TB perspective). Thus a bodhisattva could hold a Vaihashika or Sautrantika view.

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva is not just the intention to attain buddhahood. Without the view of prajnaparamita there is no bodhisattva. Wisdom and compassion can go only hand in hand. Otherwise compassion is no different from those of worldly beings, and the intention to achieve buddhahood is nothing more than wishful thinking.

Wise Bodhisattvas, coursing thus, reflect on non-production,
And yet, while doing so, engender in themselves the great compassion,
Which is, however, free from any notion of a being.
Thereby they practise wisdom, the highest perfection.
(Verses on the Perfection of Wisdom, ch 1, p 11-12, tr Conze)

"the Bodhisattva, the great being, awakes in non-attachment to full enlightenment in the sense that he understands all dharmas. Because he has enlightenment as his aim, an 'enlightenment-being' [Bodhisattva], a great being, is so called."
(PP8000, ch 1, p 89, tr Conze)

"Good sons and good daughters who want to arouse the aspiration for peerless perfect enlightenment should think like this: 'I will save all sentient beings.' Yet when all sentient beings have been liberated, in fact, not a single sentient being has been liberated. And why not? Subhūti, if a bodhisattva holds the notion of a self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, and the notion of life span, then she is not a bodhisattva. Why? Subhūti, there is actually no such a thing as peerless perfect enlightenment."
(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-17)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 20th, 2014 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Three Turnings.

Content:

kirtu said:

The bodhisattva is defined by his/her commitment to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings and their commitment to eventually bring all beings to enlightenment. Their view of reality is not a defining factor until they are further along the path - they can't become an Arya without refining their view to at least the Cittamatra view.

Astus wrote:

If the view does not matter then worldly merit brings about buddhahood. Without the right view there is no practice of the paramitas, and without the paramitas there is no path to buddhahood. The vow to liberate all beings means unlimited compassion, and it cannot be boundless as long as one grasps at the idea of truly existing beings and things.

kirtu said:

If we have to have the correct refined view of wisdom from the start then we will never get to Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

From the start all we have is ignorance. Then we learn, reflect and realise. Isn't that the path?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 20th, 2014 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: What makes practice so hard?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinul> 's answer for the reason behind gradual cultivation:

"As for "gradual cultivation," although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the buddhas, the beginningless proclivities of habit (vāsanā) are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Therefore he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening so that this efficacy of gradual suffusion is perfected; he constantly nurtures the embryo of sanctity, and after a long, long time he becomes a sage. Hence it is called gradual cultivation. It is like the maturation of an infant: from the day of its birth, [an infant] is endowed with all its faculties, just like any other [human being], but its physical capacities are not yet fully developed; it is only after the passage of many months and years that it will finally mature into an adult." (Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 2, p 216-217)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 23rd, 2014 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra in Wikipedia

Content:

Astus wrote:

For the tantra part:

"to ingest excrement or urine and do other similar acts is to apply the practice of total sameness of flavor of the sense faculties and their objects"
(JKLT: Systems of Buddhist Tantra, p 288)

"There are numerous methods of pointing out, directly and in actuality, the wisdom that is the union of emptiness and cognizance or emptiness and awareness."
(Tsele Natsok Rangdrol: Empowerment, p 44; see also pp 40-48)

see also: David B. Gray: The Cakrasamvara Tantra, pp. 104-114, 117-124.

For a Mahamudra take on it:

Saraha:

"For those unaware of the nature of everything,
Great bliss is attained in sexual union;
As if thirst-ridden, chasing after water in mirage,
They die from thirst, and do they ever drink the sky-water?
Whoever frolics in this bliss,
Living between vajra and lotus,
What for? This has no capacity for truth,
So {where} in the three worlds will you be complete?
The bliss of means is the moment,
And this itself becomes both;
Through the kindness of the master,
A handful in a hundred will understand."
(Dreaming the Great Brahmin, p 166)

Takpo Tashi Namgyal:

"It is highly incorrect to claim as the state of mahamudra an experience of bliss that pervades the body and mind and which is transmuted with [awareness of] void as if through the process of imprint. This is because the sensation of bliss has emerged from the cyclic flow of the sexual fluid brought about by means of the third empowerment."
(Mahamudra - The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation, p 108)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 24th, 2014 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist neglect of academic findings.

Content:

Indrajala said:

So, with no immediate tangible benefits and no pedigree from the Buddha nor intense philosophical backing, Pure Land is basically undermined.

Astus wrote:

Not only PL teachings are undermined when historical authority is involved in backing up a teaching but all Buddhist doctrines and methods. Pure Land thinkers have produced enough philosophical material to give an acceptably solid basis not more shaky than other Buddhist schools.

To give a general example, the idea of the confirmation-transmission between teacher and student, present in various traditions, is historically at least questionable and in many cases refuted as later concoctions. So, the usual argument that having an "enlightened teacher" is enough, that is pure faith in a person and nothing more, as there is no proper criteria for such a teacher besides referring back to an invented lineage.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 25th, 2014 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Satori/Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

If someone says he can obtain it, he is indeed an arrogant person and indeed is one with those who left the Lotus Assembly, refusing to listen to the Lotus Teaching. Thus the Tathagata said: "There was really no Dharma by means of which the Tathagata attained Supreme Awakening."

(Huangbo Xiyun, Chung-Ling Record, tr. Lok To)

A thorough description of deluded states is found in the Surangama Sutra, chapter 8 (PDF): http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf#G1011700

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 25th, 2014 at 6:57 AM

Title: Re: Satori/Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

The actual meaning of the words satori and kensho should also be given some consideration. Satori literally means understanding, comprehension of something, in this case that something is the ultimate truth of reality. Kensho means to see the nature, that is, to perceive the true nature of mind. Reality is of course the same as the nature of mind, so practically the two words can be used as synonyms. And the reality of mind to be understood and perceived is that no matter what experience there is, it is unstable and impermanent. So, when one calls something an experience of satori/kensho, it is necessarily not that, as it is only another fleeting mental phenomenon and nothing special at all. Understanding the ultimate truth means not attaching to any of our changing moments of life. Thus it is taught that the truth is unattainable and that there is nothing to attain. Seeing that there is nothing to attain is the real attainment, or rather non-attainment.

"Neither grasping at form and sound outside nor allowing a false thought to arise inside is known as attainment. However, when there is attainment, there should be no thought of attainment; and this is known as having non-attainment. Furthermore, when non-attainment is realized, there should be no thought of non-attainment; and this is known as not having non-attainment."

(Dazhu Huihai: Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment, tr. Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 25th, 2014 at 7:36 AM

Title: Re: Satori/Kensho

Content:

jeeprs said:

There are degrees of realisation and these are validated within Zen orders, as I

understand it. Not everyone reaches the same level of realization.

Astus wrote:

Yes, of course, Buddhism has various forms of interpretations regarding the stages on the path, from the four levels of arya sravakas to the fifty-two levels of bodhisattvas. Scriptures popular in Zen, like the Diamond Sutra and the Shurangama Sutra, also mention them. That's part of being a gradual path. However, Dazhu Huihai was more of a representative of the immediate realisation (dunwu/tongo 頓悟) teaching, so talks about no attainment is the norm in such a text.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 25th, 2014 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: Question about Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nirvana as annihilation is a misunderstanding. A bodhisattva realises on the very first stage that there is no difference between samsara and nirvana, so there is no attachment and no suffering. A bodhisattva liberates beings without the grasping of the idea of liberating beings.

As for the Zen view, even Shenxiu taught that the six realms are the six senses, and liberating beings is not clinging to the six types of impressions. So, if you want to liberate all beings, see that the nature of all experience is unattainable, that there is nothing to rely on or hold on to, as it's all constantly changing.

By the way, if bodhisattvas had delayed complete enlightenment until samsara was emptied of beings, there would have been no buddhas at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 28th, 2014 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: How do you experience PL?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is karma real or not? Buddhism says there is karma. Is the path of the bodhisattvas real or not? Mahayana says it is. If there is karma and there is buddhahood, then the buddha-fields can be real as well. And if there are buddhas and buddha-fields, then there can be an Amitabha Buddha with his specific vows.

Also, if one wants first hand experience, consult the Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra and Tiantai's walking samadhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 31st, 2014 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: What is Enlightenment?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What kind of enlightenment do you want? There are many to choose from in Buddhism. Of course, most - but not all - of them are temporary achievements on the path. If you want buddhahood, learn the paramitas. Know how to give without grasping at the giver, the receiver and the gift.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 1st, 2014 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Questions about bodhisattva vow

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure what "root bodhisattva vow" you refer to. If it is the intention to attain buddhahood in order to liberate beings, i.e. bodhicitta, then yes, if one abandons that aspiration, there is no achievement of the various bodhisattva stages, as one ceases to practise on the path. It's like deciding not to go that way any more. But then, if one reconsiders, the wish for perfect enlightenment comes back, one can start to walk on the path again.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 2nd, 2014 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Huayan translations

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/collected_works.html, volumes 4 & 5 contain translations of Huayan/Hwaeom works.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 3rd, 2014 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Zen's view of bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides what Master Huifeng has already pointed out that there is no such thing as "Zen orthodoxy", I'd like to add that Zen has never existed in some sort of vacuum independent of the larger Buddhist tradition. Dogen criticises "sectarianism" in his <http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/butsudo/translation.html> (Buddha Way):

"The treasury of the eye of the true dharma, the wondrous mind of nirvana, correctly transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors, they rashly call the "Zen school." They call the ancestral masters "Zen ancestors"; they call the students "Zen masters" or "Zen preceptors"; or they call themselves "lines of the Zen houses." These are all but "branches and leaves" that have taken a biased view as the "root." When, throughout the Western Heavens and Eastern Earth, from ancient times till the present, there has not

been the term "Zen school," rashly to call oneself [by this term] is to be a demon who would destroy the way of the buddha, an unbidden enemy of the buddhas and ancestors."

And if we look at the larger tradition (as does Steven Heine in <https://books.google.com/books?id=mgOcmlCwZ5MC> and <https://books.google.com/books?id=me8hUT-pvw4C>) we find that Buddhists believed not only in the usual Mahayana cosmology but also the local common beliefs (Chinese/Japanese/etc. values, folklore and mythology). And that's not different from us today when we take modern ideas for granted. Therefore the conflict is not on the level of "Zen views" but rather modern conditioning against an ancient one.

As for what could be qualified as Zen, it is better understood as a higher level teaching within Mahayana that focuses on wisdom. As such, it emphasises direct understanding of the truth of the real nature of mind and appearances, i.e. emptiness. Direct means not mediated by explanations but experienced personally. So, it is the final moment before enlightenment on the path of sila, samadhi and prajna. Therefore external entities like bodhisattvas and buddhas have no place here. So, Dazhu Huihai writes (<http://terebess.hu/zen/huihai-eng2.html>, X63n1223, p23, a9-12):

"Sentient beings must seek to save themselves and not wait for the Buddha to do it. If the Buddha could liberate sentient beings, then, since there have been Buddhas as numerous as all the dust motes that have ever existed, surely all of them would have been delivered by now. So why do we still loaf about in these realms of birth and death, unable to become Buddhas? Everyone should understand that sentient beings must save themselves. The Buddha will not do it. Make an effort! Practice yourself! Do not depend upon the power of other Buddhas."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 6th, 2014 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Zen's view of bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you look at current Chinese Buddhism, most organisations are not centred around a specific doctrine or practice, thus they often claim - in line with the idea of Humanistic Buddhism - that they embrace all eight schools of Chinese Buddhism (i.e. Vinaya, Madhyamaka, Pure Land, Chan, Tiantai, Huayan, Yogacara, Tantra).

For instance, in the Fo Guang Shan's school customs

(http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs/fgs_introduction.aspx), defining their approach, it is stated:

"To propagate all eight schools of Buddhism, and promote the coexistence of monastics and laity." (八宗兼弘，僧信共有。) (also in "The Buddha's Light Philosophy", p 139)

Practically speaking, Chinese Buddhism has never seen strong sectarianism, and monasteries have always accepted all sorts of teachings as long as one abided by the

general regulations of monastic life. This, because of projecting Japanese Buddhism on the Chinese, Western scholars often misinterpreted as some sort of syncretism, most often as a mixture of Pure Land and Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 7th, 2014 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra meditation problem: locating the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mind is what knows, the presence of consciousness. If you say you imagine/feel your brain to be your mind, that is not your mind, it is an image/feeling that the mind is aware of. So, if you want to locate the mind, find what knows.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 7th, 2014 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra meditation problem: locating the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

Brains and neurology are besides the point. Mahamudra is not a https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind but a practical method that is to be applied within one's personal sphere of experience. If there are bodily feelings one identifies with mind, those should be looked into using the correct path of analysis as presented in the Mahamudra instructions. Theorising about all that is a different thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 9th, 2014 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: How to reconcile both views?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the first big step is to accept that Buddhism is not a "practical philosophy" as late 19th century colonists liked to present it to the Western intellectual elite, but an Asian religion. And if we move Buddhism under the category of religion it is not surprising at all that it is full of religious things like rituals, spirits, deities, magic spells, holy places, relic worship, etc. And you may find all that from the very beginning. It doesn't mean you have to accept ancient Indian beliefs in order to benefit from the Buddha's teachings.

However, there's nothing you need to do about traditional concepts you see in Asian Buddhist communities where people pray in front of statues and pictures for health and prosperity.

It all depends on what one's goal is with Buddhism. Think of it as a supermarket where you have a large selection of services. It is completely up to you to choose whatever you like. You can do chanting, prostrations, visualisations, philosophy, all sorts of meditation, and many other things. These are not differing views to reconcile, they are methods. The view itself is quite universal within Buddhism, the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Noble_Truths, the
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_marks_of_existence,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prat%C4%ABtyasamutp%C4%81da>, the
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhipakkhiy%C4%81dhamm%C4%81>, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 9th, 2014 at 9:25 PM

Title: Bankei's All Things Resolved

Content:

Astus wrote:

I'd like to get clear on the meaning of "resolved" in the "lion's roar" of Bankei.

Japanese says, 一切の事は不生で調うのではないか。

Both English translations render it as: all things are perfectly resolved in the unborn.

How 調うのではない becomes resolved? Is it like dissolved, dispersed, destroyed, melted, disassembled? Or is there another meaning? Is this something colloquial or can it be connected to any Buddhist terms?

Later it is said that Bankei's teaching can be summed up as 不生万調（不生の心で万（すべ）て調（ととの）う）, but this is contrary to the previous one where 調う is denied.

Japanese: <http://www.sets.ne.jp/~zenhomepage/nipponnzen.2.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 10th, 2014 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Bankei's All Things Resolved

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think Bankei's example might help with the meaning of "resolved/organised":

その不生でととのひまする不生の証拠は、皆の衆がこちらむひて、身どもがかふ云う事を聴いてござるうちに、後にて烏の声雀の声、それぞれの声を聞こうと、思う念を生ぜずに居るに、烏の声雀の声が通じわかれて、間違わずに聞こゆるは、不生で聞くといふものでござるわひの。

"In the Unborn, all things are perfectly resolved. I can give you proof that they are. While you're facing me listening to me speak like this, if a crow cawed or a sparrow chirped, or some other sound occurred somewhere behind you, you would have no difficulty knowing it was a crow or a sparrow, or whatever, even without giving a thought to listening to it, because you were listening by means of the Unborn." (tr. Waddel, p. 40)

So, thanks PorkChop for highlighting that in the original saying it is actually a negative question and not a statement.

Later Waddel (p. 55) actually translates 調 using a different expression: "the Buddha-mind puts all things in perfect order by means of the Unborn" (佛心は不生にして、一切事がととのう。)

Now I feel quite confident in saying that "resolves" has the meaning of solution by harmonisation. Thanks Qianxi for giving a summary on the meaning of 調 in Chinese, it is a useful set of associations.

And if anyone else has something more to add, please do so.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 11th, 2014 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Interesting look at Lotus Sutra at Fake Buddha Quotes

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is often forgot in the search for the "original teachings" is that there is no such definition in Buddhism of what should be considered the Buddha's saying. It is, as the OP's quote shows, a confusion with modern Christian ideas about looking for the "real (historical) Jesus". Unlike the Judeo-Christian world view, Buddhism is not based on a historical narration but on the Saddharma that is accessible to all. So, verification of a teaching relies not on historical investigation but on personal experience.

"As for the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding': You may categorically hold, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'"

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.079.than.html>)

Also check: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/recognizing.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 14th, 2014 at 2:23 AM

Title: Re: Who is it that hears?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Now, there are many points at which to access the principle. I will point out one approach that will allow you to return to the source.

Chinul: Do you hear the sounds of that crow cawing and that magpie calling?

Student: Yes.

Chinul: Trace them back and listen to your hearing-nature. Are there many sounds there?

Student: At that place, all sounds and discriminations are unascertainable.

Chinul: Marvelous! Marvelous! This is Avalokiteśvara's method for accessing the principle. Let me ask you again. You said, "At that place, all sounds and discriminations

are unascertainable.” But since they are unascertainable, at such a time isn’t the hearing-nature just empty?

Student: Originally it is not empty. It is always bright and never benighted.

Chinul: What is this essence that is not empty?

Student: As it has no form or shape, it is ineffable.

Chinul: This is the life force of all the buddhas and patriarchs—have no further doubts. Since it has no form or shape, how can it be either large or small? Since it is neither large nor small, how can it have any boundaries? Since it has no boundaries, it cannot have either inside or outside. Since there is no inside or outside, there is no far or near. As there is no far or near, there is no here or there. As there is no here or there, there is no coming or going. As there is no coming or going, there is no birth or death. As there is no birth or death, there is no past or present. As there is no past or present, there is no delusion or awakening. As there is no delusion or awakening, there is no ordinary person or sage. As there is no ordinary person or sage, there is no purity or impurity. Since there is no impurity or purity, there is no right or wrong. Since there is no right or wrong, names and words do not apply to it. Since none of these concepts apply, all sense-bases and sense-objects, all deluded thoughts, even forms and shapes, names and words are all inapplicable. Hence how can it be anything but originally void and calm and originally no-thing?

(From " Moguja’s Secrets on Cultivating the Mind " in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 2, 221-222)

A topic with links to two translations of the text:

<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=105&t=12572>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 14th, 2014 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: What Buddha Actually Did According to pudgala2

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-3 is already clear that a bodhisattva should save beings without the concept of beings, otherwise he is not a bodhisattva at all.

Then, the Vimalakirti Sutra has a whole chapter (ch. 7) regarding how sentient beings to be viewed.

[Mañjuśrī] also asked, “If one wishes to save sentient beings, what should be eradicated?”

Answer: “If one wishes to save sentient beings, the afflictions should be eradicated.”
(BDK edition, p 126)

And the idea that beings are no different from afflictions has also been articulated in Chan from early on.

False thoughts are sentient beings. For the body and mind to be motionless is called “to

save sentient beings.”

(Shenxiu: The Five Expedient Means, in "The Northern School and the formation of early Ch'an Buddhism"; tr. McRae, p 181)

So, I don't see how the definition of sentient beings has been misunderstood by the tradition or followers. That there is no self but only the five aggregates has been the teaching of the Buddha ever since. This is not a Zen specific teaching, it is fundamental in all Buddhist traditions. Even saying that sentient beings are no different from buddhas and afflictions are enlightenment is just common Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 15th, 2014 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: A Physicalist Theory of Mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

The contradiction of mind versus matter is unresolvable simply because they are defined as different in nature (material-immaterial). Various solutions have been proposed, often reducing dualism into monism.

The Buddha was asked whether the soul (jiva) is identical or different from the body (sarira). And he said such a position "is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, & fever, and it does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, full Awakening, Unbinding." (MN 72)

Some misunderstand that as avoiding so called "metaphysical questions", but that's not it. Rather, when there is no substance (difference in nature, material-immaterial), there is no contradiction. Instead of a body-mind dualism there are the five aggregates and the eighteen dhatus, various categorisations for the complete realm of experience, where things arise and cease in an interdependent causal nexus.

Kant refused to take a position in the idealist-realist debate, and it seems to me that phenomenology is the idea that avoids the idealist-positivist extremes. As for physicists trying to argue for a philosophical concept, they seem to be mixing up scientific results with philosophical reasoning. And that's not really better than confusing theology with biology.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 16th, 2014 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Who is it that hears?

Content:

Ethan said:

Can anyone elaborate on the student's comment, "Originally it is not empty"?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not nothingness, that's what it means. Awareness is the function of emptiness, the substance. Function and substance are not two different things. Awareness itself is empty, emptiness itself is awareness. And awareness is the countless phenomena experienced all the time.

"Simply knowing that there is nothing you need to understand is in fact seeing the nature." (Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, p 218)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 18th, 2014 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Instantaneous awakening.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Instantaneous awakening to the ordinary mind being buddha." - that single sentence encompasses such a complicated conceptual system that in order to comprehend it intellectually can take years. And then comes actualisation of such an understanding, working for who knows how many years or even lives.

Let's put this idea of "instantaneous awakening" into ordinary English, so that those who know nothing about Buddhism can make sense of it. How would that sound?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 22nd, 2014 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: Jodo Shinshu and the non-believer's "outcome"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Amida is not some kind of deity to enforce anything on beings. Everybody is a victim of their own doings. Therefore, only if one has the proper connection with the Vow it is possible to be born in the Pure Land. And that connection is faith itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 24th, 2014 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land Contradicts Buddha Teachings....

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides the Pure Land being out of samsara, eternal life there doesn't mean permanent. In fact, whatever that is alive is necessarily changing, therefore not permanent. The Pure Land itself is a step on the path to buddhahood. Once buddhahood is reached, you don't stay in Amitabha's land.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 28th, 2014 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land Contradicts Buddha Teachings....

Content:

jeeprs said:

I am interested in how 'eternal' and 'permanent' might be distinguished.

Basically, the Pure Land teachings seem to me to arise from the deification of the Buddha. That is not meant as a criticism, but I find it hard to distinguish quite a lot of what is said in Pure Land philosophy from Christian theology.

Astus wrote:

Eternal in Amitabha's case means unending, continuing uninterrupted. Permanent means static, not changing. Samsara has no beginning or end, but it is not static.

Yes, the Pure Land teachings are part of the general trend to venerate buddhas, bodhisattvas and other superior beings. However, Christian theology is quite a different matter in a different context and world view. The resemblance is very superficial. In order to understand what Pure Land Buddhism is about and how it fits into Mahayana, one needs to study Mahayana. Otherwise it's all just speculation without any relevant knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 1st, 2014 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Instantaneous awakening.

Content:

White Lotus said:

it just cant be done. this points to the necessity of having travelled some way along the path in order to appreciate such expressions. there needs to be prior experience in order to appreciate the term: "Instantaneous Awakening". can anyone here put it into simple understandable language. I doubt it!

Astus wrote:

Could we then say that the myth of instantaneous awakening is busted?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kunle,

The third step could be matched with Yogacara's parinispanna, the perfected nature, if one wants to follow their trisvabhava system.

"Through the perception of mind-only
One achieves the non-perception of objects;
Through the non-perception of objects

There is also the non-perception of mind."

(Vasubandhu: Trisvabhava-nirdeśa, v 36, <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-EPT/garfie.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

By not out there I meant not independent of the mind. When something is not independent of the mind it is not an objective reality. As a mental creation it has no more reality than dreams and such. So it could even be said that things that seem to be independent of one's mind are non-existent, and existent only as mental products. Therefore real existence independent of mind is an illusion, a mistake. Since there is nothing left to attach to as reliable and real, there is no subject that could be attached either. So setting up three steps is pedagogical only, although this is no surprise as all teachings are nothing but skilful means.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

kirtu said:

Cittamatra is in fact taught as a prelude to Madhyamaka in Sakya.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean Cittamatra in its limited sense of "all phenomena are only mind"?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Three Steps Insight Meditation

Content:

Malcolm said:

As in Shantaraskita's Yogacara Madhyamaka.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's what I thought of, thank you.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 8th, 2014 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: The Idea of Madhyamaka and Yogacara as Equally Correct

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that the confusion regarding Yogacara originates from the unchecked presumption that Madhyamaka is some sort of pure communication of the ultimate truth in the form of total negation. That is a failure of taking account of common reality and the so called everyday truth. If we look at Nagarjuna's Middle Discourse, he uses classical abhidharma terms in chapter 17 to explain karma. As I see it, what Yogacara does is that it organises and explains in a detailed fashion how karma, mind and the whole path of liberation works, unlike Madhyamaka that leaves it to abhidharma. So, Yogacara was/is necessary to establish a more complete and complex view of Mahayana than what early Madhyamaka presents.

Later fusions and debates between Indian and especially Tibetan thinkers can easily distort the perception of the various ways Yogacara was interpreted by its followers. As far as I can tell, the argument that Yogacara posits an ultimate existence contrary to the understanding of emptiness is an (intentional/unintentional) mistake. That there is a really existing mind, or that dependent nature is an absolute reality are equally faulty concepts, as either it is a claim that the dreamer (grasper, self) is real or that the dream (grasped, dharmas) is real.

Regarding the meaning of the three natures, see Vasubandhu's Trisvabhava-nirdeśa 11-13 (tr. Kochumuttom, p 249; also: <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-EPT/garfie.htm>), and also look at Trimsika-vijnaptimatratā 20-25, and chapter 10 of Chengweishilun (BDK edition: pp 281-296) for commentary.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 9th, 2014 at 8:24 PM

Title: Re: Obaku?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides that there are only a couple of books available in English on Obaku-shu, if anyone wanted to practice in a sort of zen-nenbutsu style, it is a lot easier to just go for Chinese Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 13th, 2014 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: Non-celibacy

Content:

Astus wrote:

First I'd like to extend the area of investigation to all sense pleasures and not only sex. This I find important, because while sex is supposedly the ultimate sense pleasure, it is hardly the only one. In fact, there are perfectly ordinary people, who are not even Buddhists, who spend years without any sexual relationship, but not without all sense pleasures.

Eating and drinking are the most common source of sense pleasure. Tasty food is practically a basic requirement even for the cheapest fast food products. And although

infusion can sustain the bodily functions, just as various nutritional products, we don't even call them food. Something without any taste is almost inedible. Why is that? Because we like to eat and we like to feel good tastes. But I have yet to see Buddhists debating with each other about whether to switch to injecting themselves with some sort of nutritional liquid or stay with consuming common food. That's probably because eating is not considered a big issue. In the same fashion one could consider various drinks - and there's no need to include alcohol here - like tea, coffee, juices, milk, and all the other kinds. Other sensory areas also give us almost infinite forms of pleasure, like the melody of a sutra recitation and the golden colours of a Buddha painting. And the joys of an intellectual challenge is a whole different area, although something not considered sense pleasure.

Is it possible to enjoy a nice meal and still be a good Buddhist? Is it allowed for a zealous practitioner to find a few moments of happiness in the smell of spring flowers? How about the hermit living up in the mountains and writing poems about the beauty of the scene?

Can a buddha eat a slice of chocolate cake and not fall out of nirvana? If yes, is it because he feels no taste, or because he makes no difference between good or bad taste, or because he is not attached to it, or is it something else? If he feels no taste, that would be annihilationism. If he makes no difference between good or bad taste, that would be indifference. If he is not attached to it, that would be escapism.

It is easy to come up with some theoretical excuse that everything is empty and the mind is originally pure. Or a practical-looking attitude of "just be in the moment". Although they are good advice, unless one can live it, they are useless. Whatever solution one thinks is there, it is nothing but another identity view.

No matter what is the explanation, the very effort of trying to prove that enjoying this or that shows how one is stuck with a concept of purity. What one should pay attention to is rather the emotional and intellectual frustration one generates constantly regarding all sorts of phenomena. This approach of "I'm not good enough" is mistaken from the very beginning, and the same goes for such ideas as "I'm sinful because I like strawberry cake".

As I see it, besides the saintly stories of the enlightened masters of the past one should also recognise the human world. And only when samsara and nirvana are no different from each other, when things are simply what they are, then it becomes possible to stop being afraid of whatever comes or whatever goes.

Yunmen said (tr. App, p 95),

"when someone gets there, speaking about fire does not burn his mouth. He can discuss the matter all day long without it ever touching his lips and teeth and without uttering a single word. Though he eats and all day long wears his robe, he never touches a single grain of rice nor a single thread."

And Linji paraphrasing Lanza (tr. Sasaki, p 11),

"Followers of the Way, as to buddhadharma, no effort is necessary. You have only to be ordinary, with nothing to do -defecating, urinating, wearing clothes, eating food, and lying down when tired. Fools laugh at me, but the wise understand."

Dazhu Huihai explains (tr. Lok To),

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

And Bodhidharma relates this to sex (tr. Red Pine, p 39),

But since married laymen don't give up sex, how can they become Buddhas?

I only talk about seeing your nature. I don't talk about sex simply because you don't see your nature. Once you see your nature, sex is basically immaterial. It ends along with your delight in it. Even if some habits remain, they can't harm you, because your nature is essentially pure. Despite dwelling in a material body of four elements, your nature is basically pure. It can't be corrupted.

Finally, <http://www.wisdompubs.org/book/wake-and-laugh/selections> sums it up,

"It's natural to think about and take care of the things that come up in your life. I've never said, "Don't make money, don't participate in society, don't fall in love, don't do anything at all." Just understand that everything is already flowing, and don't try to cling to it. Nothing remains stationary and unchanging."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 15th, 2014 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Obaku?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As a background information on the origin of the Obaku school I recommend the book <https://books.google.com/books?id=Y7sueo8jsYwC>. It shows how Yinyuan Longqi (Ingen Ryuki, founder of Obaku-shu) was a member of a highly sectarian group that worked hard to take over the (Chan) Buddhist scene in China.

And an essay by the same author on Mount Huangbo:

http://www.eastasianhistory.org/sites/default/files/article-content/31/EAH31_02.pdf.

As for the idea that Soto Zen is a "one practice school", that is a major simplification. Dogen basically took everything he had seen and learnt in China back to Japan, including monastic regulations and architectural style. It is a very modern idea - strongly propagated by Kodo Sawaki - to reduce everything to seated meditation as the sole thing to do. Even the emphasis on Dogen and his works is an 18th century innovation of the Soto school started by Menzan Zuiho.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 15th, 2014 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: What is "mind" in mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

You might also do some homework on the subject:

http://www.namsebangdzo.com/Distinguishing_Dharma_p/11445.htm

<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/conwisdom.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 19th, 2014 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land for the not very faith-inclined?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides just accepting/believing in the Vow (i.e., reciting the name connects one to Amita Buddha and brings about deliverance to the Pure Land after death), one can take this as a method (it is a Mahayana skilful means after all). The first thing to consider is if one can accept that there is such a thing as karma. Karma means that there is a non-material mental continuum that follows a specific type of causal law. If you cannot agree to that - either because of indecision or disbelief - then no matter what practice you choose, it is only for a temporary pacification of mind. If you want to move beyond that level, either you leave it to chance or you start investigating your mind and studying the teachings. On the other hand, if you accept karma, then it can be followed by considering first how one's attachment leads to various births, then a contemplation on the existence of bodhisattvas, buddha-lands and buddhas. Once that is understood, it becomes obvious how and why birth in the Pure Land is possible through buddha-remembrance.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 22nd, 2014 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Nothing Exists

Content:

Astus wrote:

Platform Sutra, chapter 9 (tr McRae, BDK edition, p 77-78):

Shenhui said, "Nonabiding is the fundamental, and seeing is the master."

The master said, "What will this novice say next!"

Shenhui then asked, "When Your Reverence sits in meditation, does he see or not?"

The master struck Shenhui with his staff three times and said, "When I hit you, does it hurt or not?"

[Shenhui] answered, "It both hurts and does not hurt."

The master said, "I also see and do not see."

Shenhui asked, "What is this seeing and also not seeing?"

The master said, "My seeing is to see constantly my own mind's errors. I do not see other people's right and wrong or good and evil. This is to see and also not to see. You said it hurts and does not hurt. How about this? If you do not hurt, then you're the same as a tree or rock. If you hurt, then you're the same as an ordinary [unenlightened] person, who would become resentful. When you just said 'seeing and also not seeing' [you thought] they were two extremes, and your 'hurts and does not hurt' were [your misconception of] birth and death. But you don't see your self-nature, so you're just playing around."

Shenhui bowed in gratitude.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 23rd, 2014 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: why is Vajrayana considered the fastest way to buddhahood

Content:

JKhedrup said:

It would be interesting to see how "speed" compares in Vajrayana vis a vis Pure Land.

Because of course if one goes to the Pure Land of Sukhavati after death one can bypass a great deal of samsaric experience. However, from the POV of the evolution of a Bodhisattva I am guessing on the theoretical level progress would be a bit slower, as one needs to receive teachings from Amitabha and cultivate the gradual Sutric approach towards realization. Also, there are the different "grades" of lotuses, which has always confused me a bit. How are these grades determined?

At first look, it seems PL is a pretty good deal too!

Astus wrote:

The Pure Land path is the easy method of guaranteed buddhahood in one life.

In the <http://www.amidanet.com/amida-sutra-b.htm>:

"sentient beings born in that land all dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression, and will not fall again into an evil realm, be born in a border-land or in the state of debased people or mlecchas. They always enjoy visiting pure lands of other Buddhas. With their excellent vows and practice advancing and developing every moment, they will unfailingly realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment."

The <http://www.amidanet.com/contemplation-sutra.htm> says about birth on the lowest level of the lowest grade:

"Because he calls the Buddha's Name, with each repetition, the evil karma which he has committed during eighty kotis of kalpas of Samsara is extinguished. When he comes to die, he sees before him a golden lotus-flower like the disk of the sun, and in an instant he is born within a lotus-bud in the Land of Utmost Bliss. After twelve great kalpas the lotus-bud opens. When the flower opens, Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta teach him with voices of great compassion the method of extinguishing evil karma through the realization of Suchness of all dharmas. Hearing this, he rejoices and immediately awakens aspiration for Enlightenment."

The 19th vow in the <http://www.amidanet.com/larger-sutra-1.htm>:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters, who awaken aspiration for Enlightenment, do various meritorious deeds and sincerely desire to be born in my land, should not, at their death, see me appear before them surrounded by a multitude of sages, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment."

And vow 46:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land should not be able to hear spontaneously whatever teachings they may wish, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 23rd, 2014 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: why is Vajrayana considered the fastest way to buddhahood

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is not a statement that they will achieve buddhahood in a single life in Sukhavati.

Astus wrote:

The 11th vow:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not dwell in the Definitely Assured State and unfailingly reach Nirvana, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment."

Later in the Larger Sutra:

"Sentient beings who are born in that Buddha-land all reside among those assured of Nirvana."

Also:

"However hard you may practice in this life, it can only be for a short while. In the life to come you will be born in the land of Amitayus and enjoy endless bliss there. Being forever in accord with the Way, you will no longer be subject to birth-and-death and be free of the afflictions caused by greed, anger and stupidity. If you wish your life to be as long as a kalpa, a hundred kalpas, or ten million kalpas, it will be just as you please. You will dwell in effortless spontaneity and attain Nirvana."

Shinran's collection of quotes regarding enlightenment in the Pure Land:
<http://www.amidanet.com/kgss-e.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 23rd, 2014 at 11:47 PM

Title: Re: why is Vajrayana considered the fastest way to buddhahood

Content:

Malcolm said:

None of these citations assure buddhahood in a single lifetime.

Astus wrote:

True, strictly speaking, all they assure one of is the stage of non-regression, and that guarantees buddhahood. However, life is unlimited in Sukhavati, so perfect enlightenment can happen in one lifetime.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 24th, 2014 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: why is Vajrayana considered the fastest way to buddhahood

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kukai has a short treatise on <http://www.amidanet.com/sokushingi.htm>, as an answer to the original question.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 27th, 2014 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

To me zen is to see life as life. Life is inevitably and unstoppably changing every moment. What does not change is dead. Trying to hold on to something is murder. The constant failure to keep things still is the dissatisfaction with oneself and with life. Thus, abiding nowhere is the buddha-mind, and buddha-mind is what zen is all about.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 28th, 2014 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

duckfiasco said:

Is this related to the quote by Dogen, "Impermanence is Buddha-Nature"?

I notice that trying to remain aware of impermanence and see the rich interplay of things, life in general is far less painful.

The view is more keen curiosity than having preferences for certain outcomes.

I'm unclear what "abiding nowhere" means. I realize it's hard to put into words a stranger on the internet can understand.

Astus wrote:

You can relate it to Dogen's teachings if you want, but it's not necessary. What I'm saying is about first hand experience, that is, something to check for yourself.

Maintaining an awareness of impermanence is an important practice, but that's not what I meant. Everything is already changing, there's nothing you can do about that. The problem is when one happens to form a concept, views it as permanent, and thus grasps it and identifies with it. That is, ignorance is having a view and acting on it, it is not the lack of something but something added. Thus it is said that the buddha-nature is clouded and one simply has to remove the dirt. However, that dirt is just this mistake about appearances, of trying to fix things and make things happen (i.e. generating karma).

Abiding nowhere, or non-abiding, is the central teaching of prajnaparamita as well as zen. Understanding that already the mind is without any abode (fixed state) and phenomena are originally empty (without anything to hold on to), that is seeing nature (that change is universal) and not abiding anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 29th, 2014 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Arhats and Bodhisattvas

Content:

Astus wrote:

It reminds me of the common criticism found in the popular versions of Mahayana (e.g. Zen and Tantra), that the common path of the bodhisattva, as it is actually presented by most of the sutras, takes too long and it is too difficult. What hardly anyone dares to consider is that those popular versions actually teach sravakayana under the pretence of "buddhahood in this life". Also, both Zen and Tantra are famous for emphasising discipleship (sravaka-hood). So, I'd add to Bhikkhu Bodhi's quote that hardly anyone wants to take the bodhisattva path, and all the arguments against Theravada are practically valid against the same people who use them.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 30th, 2014 at 6:36 AM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

duckfiasco said:

I read something similar, and notice that each perception forms a mental wave of consciousness or an impression. Then that impression can be glommed onto and fantasies woven around it, long after the initial contact has faded. Is this where the grasping and identification you mean occurs? It's very, very deep and habitual in my mind, and daunting to try to maintain consistent awareness of something happening so frequently.

As for "understanding that already the mind is without any abode" what is this understanding? Surely not an intellectual set of ideas? It wouldn't matter anyway since I can't remember most of what I learn, so I'll forget. Then some experiential insight? If so, how does one come to see this without setting up goals to see something and doom zazen from the start? This is the paradox of Zen I keep running into: it's not nothing but at the same time it's not something in the realm of all the "somethings" I'm used to.

Astus wrote:

There is no state or perception you need to hold on to. If you want to figure out something extraordinary, that is just another impermanent experience. Whatever thought, feeling or sensory impression occurs, it inevitably disappears, and there is nothing you need to do about it. That is why it is often said that the mind is naturally peaceful and aware. Ignorance is mistaking impermanent phenomena for a permanent self, that is, intellectualising (trying to understand and/or explain things) and emotionalising (mostly liking or disliking something). The mistake lies not in the fact that there are thoughts and feelings, but in regarding them as real, as true, as self or a possession of the self. Knowledge is to see that all thoughts and feelings are momentary appearances. To see this you just need to sit down (or you can lie down, or stand, or walk, doesn't actually matter, sitting is recommended mostly because it can give a balance between relaxation and tension), and look at what happens. Is there any experience that stays? Can you even do anything to maintain an experience?

Non-abiding mind is just the natural - i.e. already present - awareness. Experience is always changing. Experience means that there is awareness, and since it changes, there is nothing to grasp, nothing that can be taken as reliable, as self. So it is an empty awareness, without attachment, and that is a mind without abode. Don't your thoughts come and go? So, there is no thought to hang on to from the very beginning. The first error we can make is to believe that we can maintain a thought, a state of mind, an experience. The second error is to believe that we have to get rid of a thought. Without attachment and rejection the mind is naturally as it is, open and aware.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 30th, 2014 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

duckfiasco said:

The difficult point I think is the ceaseless, instantaneous identification with what the mind does. I see dukka woven into the mind but think "well, what else is there other than this churning out of thoughts, feelings etc.?"

It feels like trying to watch the surface of a lake, and bugs keep skittering by. Now, they're going to do that no matter what, but I seem to pay attention to every single one to the point of exhaustion, and I've lost sight of the water's calm surface. All I see is bugs making endless ripples.

Astus wrote:

As long as one thinks that bugs should not be there, that the surface must be calm and peaceful, there will be dissatisfaction. What is dissatisfaction? When things don't match our expectations. Now, is the source of the problem found in the things or in the expectations? Or, in Zen lingo, do you hit the cart or the horse?

If you believe that you are your mind, your consciousness, your attention or whatever else, then you want to freeze it in some state you consider acceptable. If you want control over what happens, that is assuming a self. But if you want to disassociate from everything going on, that is also assuming a self. What you might want to see is that even when you get lost in a stream of ideas, that is as insubstantial as everything else. Don't consider one type of experience good and another type bad. That's because this kind of like-dislike attitude is the very problem. If you focus on the bugs, then just focus on them, it is the same awareness as the awareness of the whole lake. In fact, both are just temporary experiences. The question is whether you want to stay somewhere, want to move somewhere, or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 31st, 2014 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: Arhats and Bodhisattvas

Content:

Malcolm said:

"Buddhahood in this life" means completing the two accumulations which lead to both freedom and omniscience.

It is impossible for someone to have generated bodhicitta to experience the fruit of an arhat, i.e. cessation, indeed, it is against the very principles of the bodhisattva path to do so.

Astus wrote:

Completing the two accumulations by what? If killing people in a dream is not the same karma as actually being a mass murderer, imagining doing the paramitas and actually practising them for at least three immeasurably long cosmic time periods might not be equal either. Or we can say that there is the buddha-nature already perfect and complete that requires no such accumulation of anything, although this practically means non-attachment to the aggregates.

As for cessation being the fruit, that is claiming that the Buddha answered the question regarding the life of a Tathagata after death with a negative statement.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 12:36 AM

Title: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If and when someone agrees that the whole of samsara from hells to heavens is painful and unsatisfactory, liberation from it is the logical choice. But when nirvana is presented as not only the end of all the inconvenient things in life, but the end of all the good things as well, how could enlightenment be desirable? When one is without all the attachments and goals that motivate human beings to get up in the morning, isn't that like being totally uninterested in everything, like losing one's appetite?

If one is free from like and dislike, hope and fear, there is no reason to do anything. The only type of action left is mechanical reaction without emotions, a robot made of flesh and blood. Although it is said that nirvana is the great happiness, it only means total contentment, that is, being satisfied and thus wanting nothing, again a state that lacks all motivation to achieve anything. When there's nothing left to do, why do anything at all?

It is taught that compassion motivates the buddhas and bodhisattvas. However, is it anything else than externalising what otherwise common beings have as internal motivation? Isn't it like a slave or a puppet who acts only as others will, or like natural phenomena like rain and wind?

Or if we say that attachment is already enlightenment, that emotions like anger and worry are naturally empty and harmless, what is the difference between a buddha and a common mortal? If through awareness one is not affected by whatever emotion or thought occur, that turns feelings dead and one is not moved by them at all, losing all motivation.

So, can the Buddha have a human face instead of a blissed out aloofness?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Lindama said:

The attachment stops, not the activity. One does the next thing... the aloof, empty robot thingy is a misunderstanding although it may appear as aloofness to others. As one example, when tired, sleep. further, the ending of samsara does not insure the end of so-called bad things happening.

Astus wrote:
What is the cause of activity?

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 3:22 AM
Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?
Content:

David N. Snyder said:
I thought this was just a Theravada dilemma. So Mahayanists struggle with this too? I thought you guys had Bodhisattva vows, Buddha-lands, Pure-lands, Buddha-fields.

Astus wrote:
Those are either pre-nirvana (bodhisattva activity) or manifestations of a buddha's pre-nirvana activities (accumulation of merit). There's also the idea of non-abiding nirvana, where buddhas work on saving beings out of compassion, but I have addressed this type in the OP.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 3:23 AM
Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?
Content:

Sherab Dorje said:
Astus, I think the question you are asking is mistaken. I believe a more relevant question would be: Is Samsara Worth It?

Astus wrote:
See my first sentence in the OP. However, it still does not answer the nature of buddha/bodhisattva-activity.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 6:08 AM
Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?
Content:

Vajrasvapna said:
Nirvana is seen as extinction only in the Hinayana's teachings.

Astus wrote:
A nirvana is just as empty in Mahayana as samsara. Nevertheless, one needs to realise that emptiness, and through that one is liberated from all afflictions and attachments. So, there is no difference in that nirvana is about freedom from both good and bad things. Therefore the question about the desirability of enlightenment is not resolved.

Vajrasvapna said:
The fact that a bodhisattva perceive the world as illusion, not taking his motivation for

living

Astus wrote:

If someone realises that what one wants is unreal the desire to obtain it becomes pointless. If by motivation for living you mean compassion, that's a different question addressed later.

Vajrasvapna said:

Nevertheless we must try to improve our illusory life. Otherwise we will keep getting bruised by illusory events. Since we don't realize they're illusions, we suffer just as if they were real

Astus wrote:

That's not an answer, as it only says one has to try to improve one's illusory life only because one fails to see it as illusory. What if it is understood clearly to be an illusion?

Vajrasvapna said:

The compassion of Buddhas and bodhisattvas originates from emptiness, when we realize that all beings possess the same empty and luminous nature, then we can generate the four immeasurable.

Astus wrote:

That is when motivation becomes external, dependent on others in stead of one's own will. That is being a puppet.

Vajrasvapna said:

The difference is that a Buddha see the world free of dualistic perceptions, while ordinary beings remain trapped in a dualistic vision

Astus wrote:

Anger, fear, love, desire - they all exist within a dualistic perception only. But that eliminates the possibility of seeing attachment itself as empty, since there is no attachment present.

Vajrasvapna said:

Moreover, buddhas and bodhisattvas may use negative emotions as a tool for compassion

Astus wrote:

That does not qualify as actually having those negative emotions, it is only acting.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

One of the attributes of nirvana, in any case, is joyousness, sukha (as distinct from dukka). For various reasons many of the descriptive texts about Nirvana are couched in negative terms, but there are also positive descriptions, wherein it is described as 'blissful', 'peaceful' and 'sublime'.

Astus wrote:

Once total contentment and bliss is reached, what then? There isn't any motivation left to do anything, is there?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 2nd, 2014 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That should give you plenty to go on with.

Astus wrote:

See third paragraph in the OP.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 2:44 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Lindama said:

there is no cause and no effect

Astus wrote:

That means action occurs without cause, same as claiming that from nothing comes something, or there is no activity at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Vajrasvapna said:

The idea of liberated or not liberated beings is just something conceptual

If you remain imprisoned in samsara, in fact, it makes no difference from the absolute point of view.

Samsara possesses great pleasures, but also great suffering, it is a matter of whether you prefer to live in a world of illusion or seek liberation. Red pill or blue pill?

Astus wrote:

Just as all questions, all answers are conceptual as well. But without concepts there is

not even the teaching, not to mention nirvana.

From that absolute point of view there is no absolute point of view, therefore even referring to an absolute point of view is a relative statement, and as such necessarily recognises a difference between absolute and relative.

If one needs to choose between relative and absolute, the final view excludes all attachments, both good and bad things. Therefore, it is no solution to the question of the activity of an enlightened being.

Vajrasvapna said:

It means to live free from attachment to hopes and fears, no matter what happens you are always well

Astus wrote:

One is always well because there is nothing that could move him. Even if there are appearances, they are perceived as pure phenomena, unlike for an ordinary human being. And that means a very solid distinction between a buddha and a common mortal, where a buddha lacks all human qualities. Thus a buddha is practically an abstract concept that feels nothing and thinks nothing.

Vajrasvapna said:

in this state compassion arises naturally

Astus wrote:

What does it mean to arise naturally? Like, without an actual cause? If so, that violates dependent origination.

Vajrasvapna said:

even if he lives as a householder, is not affected by negative emotions or ego-clinging. Understanding the void nature of ordinary worldly activities, he is neither attracted to them nor afraid of them.

Astus wrote:

As a householder one has to take care of many things. If there is no attraction, there is no cause to have a spouse, have children, have tasty food, warm rooms, etc. If there is no fear, there is no reason to have doors and locks, to wear clothes, to clean the house, etc. Or if what is meant is stronger emotional states, like love and hatred, or even mania and paranoia, then one is like some emotionless robot, just doing what should be done according to some imagined set of programs and norms.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think it comes from acting, and being, without selfish motives - which means you can do what the situation calls for, or what duty requires, without a sense of self-seeking. As such it is universally recognized in all the wisdom traditions.

Astus wrote:

Do what the situation calls for means a judgement call, and judgement requires a set of rules one follows. Duty is a good example of believing in rules. And when Arjuna massacres his relatives, it is perfectly fine according to Krishna, because that is a warriors duty. Just doing what the situation calls for. But I doubt that the Buddha would agree with Krishna.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Mkoll said:

Is the taste of an orange worth it? You won't know until you try it.

Astus wrote:

What makes a man taste a new food? Friends tell him it is good. An advertisement tells him it is good. It looks or smells good. Unlike food, nirvana is not something one can order online. So, why should one want nirvana? If what one gets renders the person totally content and peaceful, isn't it losing all interest in life and going on an eternal holiday?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:38 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Lindama said:

huh? no... it's more like we do the next thing. I have already explained this. it's not about nothing.... perhaps I was sloppy, I mean that we don't need a lot of mental constructs and reasons.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like a biorobot. I don't think anyone needs a lot of thinking to do the dishes and other daily chores. However, that is hardly the sign of living the life of an enlightened being.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Jesse said:

When we stop grasping at ideas, emotions, thoughts it's not like they go away, or we don't feel them anymore, it just becomes a choice, and we almost form a new relationship to these things, rather than being confused and consumed by them, we exist with them in a more healthy manner.

Astus wrote:

What is that more healthy manner?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Fa Dao said:

by not being slaves to these things they are free and no longer create actions/causes/karma...its not a bland state of nothingness but a dimension of pure potentiality.....

Astus wrote:

Experiencing emotions without attachment is practically not experiencing them at all, as most of the emotions come from attachment, like feeling sorry for losing one's favourite umbrella. A dimension of pure potentiality, when there is no actuality allowed to emerge, cannot be differentiated from nothingness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

kirtu said:

Is Nirvana worth it?

No of course not. I'd much rather wander from life to life fixated upon total reactivity and enjoying the sufferings especially of the lower realms. Ignorance rules!

Astus wrote:

See the first sentence: "If and when someone agrees that the whole of samsara from hells to heavens is painful and unsatisfactory, liberation from it is the logical choice."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 5:49 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Lindama said:

how do you know

Astus wrote:

Because then all people without the inclination to use their minds are living buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

seeker242 said:

Curious. What do you make of Wu wei action? Or "wei wu wei"? It seems like you are saying it's just a load of BS.

Astus wrote:

It depends on what level we look at it. As a general, superficial, poetic description of unhindered non-karmic action, it is fine. But if you give it some thought, the expression of "doing without doing" or "non-doing" makes zero sense, because either there is or there is not something according to the basic principles of logic. The middle view in Buddhism is dependent origination, expressed as the unity of essence and function in East Asia, therefore assuming only a causeless substance is necessarily an extreme and wrong view. Also, once such a substance is taken to be the absolute, it is not possible to answer for activity.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I am still wondering whether you simply wrote it to challenge people to look into this rather than being a question you are seriously entertaining at this stage in your practice.

Astus wrote:

I consider it a very good question to investigate. I also find the usual answers often repeated in Buddhism lacking in many ways.

Dan74 said:

It's very much a natural action as other have said, like reaching for the pillow in the night.

Astus wrote:

Reaching for the pillow at night was an example used for the compassionate action of Guanyin by Daowu. But what separates ignorant (dark) action from non-discriminating (dark) action? I think <http://www.mro.org/mr/archive/24-2/articles/dogenandkoansdaido.html> has something important to say when he emphasises ethics. However, that is still not enough. As long as this body and mind are negated in order to find something beyond that is peaceful and supreme (the aloof buddha), it remains impossible even to reach for that pillow.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

It makes perfect sense as an act without intention. There is a subtle duality involved, that is why logic should be applied with caution.

Astus wrote:

What kind of action is without intention? If it is without intention, it is automatic, unconscious, like bodily functions and natural phenomena. It is like insentient things. It leaves no space for wisdom and compassion.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think the basic idea of 'non-doing' is expressed in theistic religions in such sayings as 'not my will but thine be done', i.e. the subject having abandoned himself, doesn't act from any personal motive or sense of self. That also relates to the point raised earlier in this thread about 'detachment' 'equanimity' and 'apatheia' which are the ground of un-self-centred action.

Astus wrote:

Giving an external cause instead of an internal one is still being moved around by various things. Small children, soldiers and servants all do whatever they are told.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

Automatic? Depends on how you understand automatic. I would rather say independent of "you", and since this dependency is what defines "you", it's often expressed as selfless.

Unconscious? No.

Astus wrote:

Is there or is there not intention behind the action, as the cause of the action? If there is no intention, what is the cause and what is the role of consciousness? If there is intention, there is a decision, and that decision is a product of numerous mental factors, like perception, understanding and memory.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 7:33 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

Karma.

There are results of old intentions, but there is no generating of new intentions. Why? Because the generator (idea of free actor) is gone.

Astus wrote:

Then without intention there is no preceding mental action before an action, making the action unconscious. Or if you say that the mind is still involved, in what manner?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

Yes, we can assume that, although I don't know if we have similar understanding of your statement. As I understand it, there is no "blocking" involved.

This very involvement does not arise, and since the self is nothing more than this involvement, there is no self. Thus no mind.

Astus wrote:

That means that buddhas don't have mental aggregates, only a body. A body without mind is a corpse. Or in this case perhaps a zombie.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Dan74 said:

The action proceeds from causes and conditions but is not longer related to the self. No need to propitiate the non-existent self and conform to related ideas which are no longer clung to.

Astus wrote:

There has never been a self anyway, only the concept that there should be a self somewhere, so the actual function of the mind is not determined by any self, only the idea of an imaginary self is what plays a role in attributing "I and mine" to phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 9:48 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

Mind is a shape, not an actually existing entity. There is a small confusion here. When we talk about the mind, self, intention we see it as an added component of the body-skandhas thing.

Astus wrote:

When I say mind, it means the mental aggregates. There is no mind besides the aggregates in Buddhism. Intention (cetana), for instance, belongs to the fourth aggregate (samskara).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Yes, so what is the problem with understanding action when it is no longer conditioned by these ideas?

Astus wrote:

What is the motivation when there is no more attraction or rejection? Or, if we say that like and dislike are not dependent on ignorance that assumes a self, then either craving is not the cause of suffering as the second noble truth says, or there is no end of suffering as in the third noble truth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Buddhas don't have minds. They have wisdom.

Astus wrote:

The four/five wisdoms/knowledges are the eight consciousnesses without the two hindrances, or in other words, a non-attached mind. As they include all the good dhammas (either developed over the bodhisattva path or inherently in buddha-nature) and exclude all the defilements, there is no hope and fear, no like and dislike, no attachment and rejection, thus no wish to do or achieve anything. The explanation often is that buddhas are driven by their previously made vows, but that drive is only a result of past actions and not an action itself. Therefore, buddhas are like some unintentional natural force, a product of someone who worked hard and was full of aspiration but who's now gone.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 12:05 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

oushi said:

And what is that which can use aggregates? What is that which we know through the shape of those aggregates?

Astus wrote:

The aggregates mean all the functions and experiences there are. They are not things to be used by anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Whatever the case may be, Buddhas do not have operations of vijñāna. They do not possess the eight consciousnesses because all the traces that constitute the ālayavijñāna are exhausted, thus there is no basis for the arising of the other seven.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that there are only some differences between consciousness and wisdom. For example, there are various mental functions going on according to Xuanzang:

"Thus, the mind associated with the four Wisdoms (Jnanas) forms in each case a simultaneous group of at least twenty-two dharmas (the mind itself, five universal Caittas, five special ones, and eleven good ones). It comprises, like its Caittas, the Bhagas (that which manifests itself and that which is manifested), as well as Bijas and mental attributes in action. But the attribute of wisdom (Jnana) (which is the Prajna caitta) is particularly active. This mind is therefore indicated by the name of wisdom (Jnana)."

(Cheng Weishi Lun 9.4.5.2, p 769; tr. Wei Tat)

And explaining the Great Mirror Wisdom he quotes the Buddhahumi Sutra:

"in the Mirror Wisdom of the Tathagata there appear all images of the six Ayatanas (eye, ear, etc.), the six Visayas (colour, sound, etc.), and the six consciousnesses (visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, etc.)."

(p 775)

But that's kind of besides the point of this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But this contradicts the very sutra he is citing

Astus wrote:

Maybe not. As your quote says: "there is the appearance of many kinds of reflected images in the circle of a mirror". Xuanzang doesn't equate alayavijnana with darsanajnana, but describes the way the mirror wisdom works. There are various dharmas, there are mental functions, especially the ripening of good seeds. As a mirror, reflects everything but hindered by nothing.

"The mental attributes associated with the Great Mirror Wisdom (Mahadarsajnana) : The mind associated with this Wisdom is entirely dissociated from all mental discriminations (vikalpa). [According to the Buddhahumisastra, in this mind there is neither discrimination between atmagraha and atmiyagraha nor discrimination between grahyagraha and grahakagraha.] Its objects of perception and modes of activity are subtle and 'difficult to comprehend'. It carries all objects without failure of memory (because its objects are eternally present) and without error (because it is never troubled or obscured).² In its essential nature and characteristics it is pure (i.e., clear and good), being free from all impurities and confused states (samklesa) . It is the supporting basis for absolute qualities (superior to the pure qualities of non-Buddhas) which are pure (i.e., superior to impure qualities) and perfect (i.e., superior to the qualities of the two Vehicles) ; it is the receptacle of the Bijas of these qualities. It manifests the images of other Jnanas (which themselves are born of their Bijas) ; it gives birth to bodies and lands. Without interruption, universally and eternally, like a great mirror, it manifests the images of all Rupas."

(p 767-769)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Dan74 said:

The motivation is natural response to the causes and conditions, like reaching for the pillow, like branches bending in the wind, except it is illumined by the clear light of wisdom and unswayed by the ideas of self and other obstructions.

Astus wrote:

I think this word "natural" only covers for a lack of clear discernment of what function (yong 用) means. Jinul writes: "That which is able to see, hear, sense, and know is perforce your buddha-nature." (Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind in "Collected

Works of Korean Buddhism", vol 2, p 208) If we argue that one should abandon the present mind and find a new one that is without all the common activities of a human being, then in fact we are saying "this mind is not buddha", and there is no explanation for such simple things like eating and sleeping. However, if we confirm that "this mind is buddha", where lies the distinction between enlightened and unenlightened? (Jinul writes (p 224): "The only thing that makes them different is that they can protect their minds and thoughts, nothing more.") If it is the same body and same mind but without attachment, that vanished attachment cannot be responsible for one's daily activities but only for being dissatisfied with them. One shouldn't only be able to let go everything but also to hold on anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that none of those images are happening in the mirror.

Astus wrote:

Then what is the relationship between the images and the mirror? Before enlightenment all phenomena are mental appearances, after enlightenment they are somehow not?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 4th, 2014 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

LastLegend said:

So it's like you can pick it up, you can put it down.

But where does compassion, morals, precepts, etc fit into all of this?

Astus wrote:

Compassion is the wish to help. Wisdom is to know where and how. Correct action is the manifestation of compassion and wisdom. That's why both picking up and putting down are required. If nirvana is dropping everything, leaving behind all intention and comprehension, becoming a natural force, an automaton, then it is rather a fictional abstraction than anything realisable by humans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 5th, 2014 at 3:05 AM

Title: Re: Is Nirvana Worth It?

Content:

smcj said:

The mirror transcends the images.

Astus wrote:

Can there be images without the mirror? If yes, then they are independent external things and not images. If no, then they are mutually dependent, or the two extremes of mirror (subject) and images (object) don't exist. What does "transcends" exactly mean?

smcj said:

"All phenomena are mental appearances" is the Cittamatra perspective.

Astus wrote:

Just as the four wisdoms and the eight consciousnesses are Yogacara teachings. Vasubandhu explains how phenomena are mere representations of consciousness (vijñapti-matra) in his Vimsatika-karika.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 5th, 2014 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Female Dzogchen or Mahamudra Teachers

Content:

Astus wrote:

http://tenzinpalmo.com/tenzin_palmo/biography.htm

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 9th, 2014 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: Instantaneous awakening.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The constant excuse for saying anything shows some uncertainty regarding what instantaneous awakening is. However, Chan teachers, starting with Heze Shenhui, were quite clear about it that non-thought is all there is to realise. That there is nothing that could be grasped/attained, everything is originally empty, the mind is pure from the beginning - these were all known teachings well before the emergence of Chan. The difference between gradual and instantaneous lies in how the gradual path gives a step by step instruction to how to reach non-attachment, while the direct path is just not attaching to anything. That's how there is actually no such thing as sudden enlightenment, as it all depends on the individual's qualities. Either one understands it immediately or not. And even if there is a clear realisation that the six sensory impressions are insubstantial, it is easy to fall back to one's habitual clinging to phenomena, thus many Chan teachers emphasised continuous training, or the so called "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" format.

So, how is there instantaneous awakening? One only needs to observe the emerging and disappearing phenomena of sights, sounds, feelings and thoughts to confirm that there is nothing anywhere in one's realm of experience that stays even for a moment, so there is nothing to hold on to or reject. Why is this information/instruction useless most of the time? Because knowing how to observe is already a technique one learns through calming the mind and detaching from constant conceptualisation. Because even if one

can personally confirm that all sorts of identification and clinging are false and mistaken, that attachment is the true source of dissatisfaction and suffering, as a result of habits one easily forgets about all that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 12th, 2014 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Instantaneous awakening.

Content:

theanarchist said:

Nope, non-thought can also be a temporary result of shamata practice which does not equal with liberation/awakening.

And an awakened person can and will have thoughts. But unlike us the awakened/liberated person will have direct realisation that neither the thoughts nor any other phenomenon have a solid reality. That insight is in sutrayana archived by vipassana practice.

As long as you cling to non thought you are definitely not liberated.

Astus wrote:

Non-thought (wunian/munen) is not lack of thoughts, nor a temporary result of any calming practice.

The Sixth Patriarch taught:

"Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts."
(Platform Sutra, ch 4; p 43; tr McRae)

"in wisdom's contemplation both interior and exterior are clearly penetrated, and one recognizes one's own fundamental mind. If you recognize your fundamental mind, this is the fundamental emancipation. And if you attain emancipation, this is the samādhi of prajñā, this is nonthought.

What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations.

...

to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(ch 2; p 33, 34)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 13th, 2014 at 10:25 PM

Title: Re: Cognitive Surplus and its Discontents

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the very idea that one wants to spend one's time on useful things is a symptom of uneasiness. Of course I agree that creating problems is pointless, but 90% of what modern people do are mostly a pretension of being useful, maintaining a false image of productivity and/or creativity. The other 10% is related to maintaining one's physical existence. It is only natural that an unruly mind cannot rest. And that is cognitive surplus. No wonder that there are hundreds of volumes of Buddhist scriptures and other works.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 16th, 2014 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Untraditional zazen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are all sorts of methods that people call zazen. How is it different if you focus on your belly or your head? It is still something you focus on. And if you prefer your head, or your toe, or whatever, that's fine as long as it helps you gain some level of relaxed concentration. Once you are relaxed and focused at the same time, you can then start to go to the next level.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 18th, 2014 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Untraditional zazen?

Content:

kirtu said:

The difference is that meditating on certain points on the body really has different effects.

Astus wrote:

If what matters is to gain a calm, steady, concentrated mind, then practically any meditation object can be used as long as it works. The 40 kammattana are as good as all the peaceful and wrathful deities. However, Huineng's tradition is not about developing a serene mind and gaining various levels of oneness. Although, it could be said that if one wants to master samatha, one might as well follow some reliable path for that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 23rd, 2014 at 5:30 PM

Title: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kyabgön Phakchok Rinpoche posted the following on 21 June:

If you see thoughts don't truly exist you are no longer a Buddhist, you are actually a Buddha.

Therefore, if you see for yourself that there is not a single thought that could be held on, you are enlightened.

What is there to stop one from this realisation?

Is it a matter of habit? Is it ignorance? Is it a lack of will?

If it is habit, one needs to clarify that the assumption of a self is based only on false thoughts. Habit needs repetition

If it is ignorance, once one understands that thoughts are unreal, the mistake won't happen again.

If it is lack of will, one has to learn that there is suffering only because the objects of attachment are illusory thoughts.

Seeing the unreality of thoughts then should be a remedy for all problems.

Is it? Is it not? Why?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 23rd, 2014 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

oushi said:

It's easy to say, but what does it actually mean that something "don't truly exist"?

Astus wrote:

That it seems reliable only as long as one does not look into it. True existence is something permanent, something one can attach to, identify with, possess. It means a thought stays for ever as it is. However, thoughts don't do that. We only imagine that thoughts are hidden in our mind or exist on another realm, but that is just our imagination. In actual experience thoughts cannot be grasped.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 23rd, 2014 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

seeker242 said:

Although, if you define "understanding" as mere intellectual understanding, I don't think that's good enough.

Astus wrote:

What understanding is enough? I think the stages of learning, understanding and applying are still valid here.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, June 23rd, 2014 at 7:59 PM
Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts
Content:
Malcolm said:
Obscuration.

Astus wrote:
Is that different from ignorance? If so, how?

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, June 23rd, 2014 at 9:42 PM
Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts
Content:
oushi said:
I think that we all are perfectly aware of the fact that phenomena that we experience are not permanent.

Astus wrote:
To believe that there is anything enduring from one moment to the next, that is the belief in true existence, in permanence.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 24th, 2014 at 4:58 PM
Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts
Content:
Wayfarer said:
Isn't seeing through thought, the whole point of the higher states of dhyana? These consist of going beyond discursive thought, don't they? That is why they are described as 'domains of neither perception nor non-perception', and the like.

Astus wrote:
From the second dhyana on there is no applied and sustained thought, that is, extra mental effort to keep the meditation object. The immaterial dhyanas are various levels of mental objects for the meditation. The (almost) complete cessation of mental processes happens only with the ninth dhyana (nirodha-samapatti). However, insight into the unreality of thoughts don't occur out of merely attaining any of those states, they are still bound to samsara. In fact, all mental states are conditioned and impermanent. Seeing that is the insight into their unreality.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 24th, 2014 at 10:40 PM
Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts
Content:

Wayfarer said:

Which is, perhaps, why that teacher said that intelligence and thought are not the same thing - intelligence being what 'sees that'.

Astus wrote:

A seer/knower separate from thoughts couldn't even be aware of thoughts. Such an ultimate seer is the mistaken belief in a self, an incorrect thought.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 25th, 2014 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

seeker242 said:

I don't see the OP statement as a negation of thoughts, but rather simply a non-affirmation of their existence. A non-affirmation quite different from a negation. With simply a non-affirmation, rather than a negation, there can be a middle, so to speak, that is neither affirming or denying either existence or non-existence. "Thoughts don't truly exist" IMO is really just another way of saying "thoughts are emptiness". Seems to me that emptiness can't have existence or non-existence applied to it, because if it could, it would no longer be emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means empty of permanence, of essence, of self. That is, thoughts are conditioned and impermanent. Anyone can see for themselves that thoughts don't stay around and they cannot even be held up or kept. One can also see in their first hand experience how thoughts define everything we do and experience. So, once there is certainty that thoughts come and go without any hindrance, there is no need even to train one's mind. In other words, they are already empty as they are.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 26th, 2014 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

LastLegend said:

Are you talking about maintaining this view all the time or you talking about the mind seeing itself clearly all the time? There is still some training for the latter case.

Astus wrote:

Neither maintaining nor seeing. Seeing emptiness means not being fooled by appearances, not superimposing, not projecting an essentialist view. Once the mistake has been removed there is only clear perception.

"If you know the illusions and are separated from them, then you will not create expedient means. If you are separated from illusions and are awakened, then also there will be no (need for) gradual stages."

(Hyujeong: Seonga gwigam, §34; Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 3, p. 100)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 26th, 2014 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

LastLegend said:

Ok. If mind is not seeing, what is it doing then? Clear perception all the time?

Astus wrote:

Is your question "What if mind is not seeing itself?" If yes: it is not that there is a seer and a seen, but that the wrong views and attachments are not present any more. If no: please clarify.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 26th, 2014 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Unreality of Thoughts

Content:

seeker242 said:

I would agree with all of that but would add that just because anyone can see that, does not necessarily mean that they do see that. If one can see for themselves that thoughts don't stay around and they cannot even be held up or kept, then one would not try to hold them up or keep them to begin with. But people do try to hold them up and keep them, which means they can't see they are already empty as they are.

Astus wrote:

Trying to keep a thought is itself not seeing. Not keeping a thought is seeing. What you call seeing but keeping is conceptualisation.

"A single moment's stupidity and prajñā is eradicated, a single moment's wisdom and prajñā is generated. The people of this world are stupid and deluded and do not see prajñā. They speak of prajñā in their mouths but are always stupid in their minds. They always say to themselves, 'I am cultivating prajñā.' In every moment of thought they speak of emptiness, without recognizing true emptiness.

...

To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body. ... With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, p 30, tr McRae)

"Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought,

one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental."
(ch 4, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 2nd, 2014 at 10:37 PM

Title: The Single Solution of Honen and Dogen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that these two fundamental texts display very similar ideas. Not in what they teach as the essential method, but regarding the role and importance of that method. Please consider the followings and let's discuss it.

<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/ichimai.html> (written in 1212, Honen's last writing)

<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/advice/fukanzanzeng.html> (written in 1227, Dogen's first writing)

It is not meditation.

In China and Japan, many Buddhist masters and scholars understand that the nembutsu is to meditate deeply on Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. However, I do not understand the nembutsu in this way.

The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice.

Not based on study or understanding.

Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning.

put aside the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing phrases ... Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views.

It is a self-sufficient practice.

There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself.

Practice-realization is naturally undefiled.

It is a practice complete in itself and encompasses everything else.

Reciting the nembutsu and believing in birth in the Pure Land naturally gives rise to the three minds (sanjin) and the four modes of practice (shishu).

Although they say that there are ten thousand distinctions and a thousand variations, they just wholeheartedly engage the way in zazen.

This is all one needs to know and do.

If I am withholding any deeper knowledge beyond simple recitation of the nembutsu, then may I lose sight of the compassion of Shakyamuni and Amida Buddha and slip through the embrace of Amida's original vow.

Please, honored followers of Zen, long accustomed to groping for the elephant, do not doubt the true dragon. Devote your energies to the way of direct pointing at the real. Revere the one who has gone beyond learning and is free from effort. Accord with the enlightenment of all the buddhas; succeed to the samadhi of all the ancestors.

Everybody can do it.

Even if those who believe in the nembutsu deeply study all the teachings which Shakyamuni taught during his life, they should not put on any airs and should practice the nembutsu with the sincerity of those untrained followers ignorant of Buddhist doctrines.

This being the case, intelligence or lack of it is not an issue; make no distinction between the dull and the sharp-witted. If you concentrate your effort single-mindedly, that in itself is wholeheartedly engaging the way.

This is the essence of the tradition.

I hereby authorize this document with my hand print. The Jodo Shu way of the settled mind (anjin) is completely imparted here. I, Genku, have no other teaching than this.

It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice realization of totally culminated enlightenment. It is the koan realized; traps and snares can never reach it. If you grasp the point, you are like a dragon gaining the water, like a tiger taking to the mountains.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 3rd, 2014 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: The Single Solution of Honen and Dogen

Content:

kirtu said:

Yes, it is meditation as we understand it today. It is not analytical meditation, that is certainly true.

Astus wrote:

What is meant by meditation?

Honen uses 觀念 (kannen), and that refers to the visualisation or contemplation practices as it is (was) commonly used by Pure Land practitioners.

Dogen uses 習禪 (shuuzen), and that refers to the dhyana practices, what is often called calming the mind.

Kannen-nenbutsu (觀念念佛) is discarded in favour of kusho-nenbutsu (口称念佛), that is, the oral recitation of the name (持名念佛).

<https://fukan-zazengi.blogspot.com/2007/09/shuuzen-ni-arazu-not-end-gaining-zen.html> defines shuuzen as an "end-gaining" approach.

<https://susuddho.blogspot.com/2012/05/isho-fujita-zazen-is-not-shuuzen.html> calls it aspiring to "achieve a human ideal" and "an effort to control the mind and attain a certain state of mind by applying a certain method".

Honen's nenbutsu is not meditation, it is literally the repeating of the name, and does not require maintaining or achieving any special state of mind. Dogen's zazen is not meditation, as it is not training in anything nor meant as a method. In both cases the context is what is categorised under either samyag-samadhi or dhyana-paramita, and samadhi as the second element of the threefold training. If they were actually meditative practices, then all the other claims regarding their teaching would prove false and unfounded.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 7th, 2014 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Chan and Pure land

Content:

Astus wrote:

The merit of any practice can be dedicated to birth in the Pure Land. What matters is the intention behind the practice. While the recitation of the name is the simplest and easiest method for strengthening one's faith in Amitabha's vow, it is possible to use other techniques.

Chan is somewhat different. It is a

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/hwadu/content_view.asp?cat_seq=118&content_seq=26&page=1 to use <http://www.undv.org/vesak2012/iabudoc/04RBuswellFINAL.pdf> 's http://terebess.hu/zen/great_doubt.pdf as the basis of one's practice. This is summed up in the question "Who is mindful of the buddha?" (念佛是誰?) when it is combined with the practice of reciting the name. Here we could say that the recitation itself is the calming (samatha) part, and the investigation (kanhua 看話) is the insight (vipasyana) part, thus it follows the traditional gradual path.

The other Chan method is called the "Real Mark Buddha Recitation" (實相念佛). It is described by Cheng Wei-an as the 31st method in <http://www.ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice/forty-eight-aspects-buddha-recitation>, and the three techniques preceding it are useful preliminaries. Practically speaking, this is the direct path of sudden enlightenment, the immediate realisation of buddha-mind. Therefore, it is not really a method but liberation itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 11th, 2014 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Dzongsar Khyentse on the importance of Mahayana

Content:

Unknown said:

hey have at least four malas around their neck, and they love to talk about power and magnetizing wealth. Their view often seems to be founded on a rather superstitious cast of mind. Whereas those who have first practised Mahayana seriously have a very mature and refined approach to practising the Vajrayana.

Astus wrote:

What the above seems to say is that when Vajrayana is used for worldly purposes, it is nothing but a system of magic techniques, whereas with the motivation of enlightenment it is a means of the bodhisattva path. However, I think most Westerners don't believe in magic anyway, so the mistakes about Vajrayana are different.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 17th, 2014 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: What is your moment-to-moment Zen practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

My not so moment-to-moment Zen:

When there is greed, see it as greed. When there is anger, see it as anger. When there is jealousy, see it as jealousy. When there is pride, see it as pride. When there is doubt, see it as doubt. When there is anxiety and agitation, see it as anxiety and agitation. When there is laziness and lethargy, see it as laziness and lethargy. Whatever affliction occurs, once recognised as such, see what is the allure, what is the danger and what is the escape.

When there is something to do, try not to think about something else to do. When there is nothing to do, try not to think about something else to do.

Remember that as long as there is food to eat, clothes to wear and a bed to sleep in, I am already rich. Remember that the time of death is uncertain. Remember that whatever I have I can also lose. Remember that wisdom without compassion is not wisdom.

As all experiences are ungraspable and unstoppable, there is nothing to be afraid of and nothing to hope for.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 24th, 2014 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: "Eternal" Buddha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think that reading the idea of eternal buddha as an immortal being is at best a provisional teaching. What in my view the eternity of Shakyamuni points to is no different from what Vimalakirti said to Ananda:

"You should understand, Ānanda, the bodies of the Tathāgatas are bodies of the Dharma, not bodies of longing. The Buddha is the World-honored One, who has transcended the triple world. The Buddha's body is without flaws, the flaws having been extinguished. The Buddha's body is unconditioned and does not fit the [conventional] analytic categories."

And as the Diamond Sutra teaches:

"Someone who tries to discern me in form
Or seek me in sound
Is practicing non-Buddhist methods
And will not discern the Tathāgata"

In other words, emptiness is the true nature of the Buddha (cf. SN 44.2), and that is eternal.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 24th, 2014 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: "Eternal" Buddha?

Content:

Anders said:

The point the lotus sutra makes is basically that the 'seed of bodhi' can not be burned out. Hence, Arhats can continue on the path of Buddhahood despite having ended the afflictions and Buddhas likewise can continue to emanate bodies after their provisional "Parinirvana".

That said, the notion of individual Buddhas does look somewhat less true than it's conventional presentation.

Astus wrote:

Everybody can reach buddhahood, and buddhahood is the dharmadhatu, emptiness. Thus the arhat is the example of the practitioner who understands emptiness as annihilation and not as dependent origination, thus the parable of the illusory city.

As for individual buddhas, since the notion of individuality is about self, and enlightenment is realising the lack of self, the concept of individual buddhas is only a provisional skilful means.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 24th, 2014 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: "Eternal" Buddha?

Content:

Anders said:

The point of Buddhahood is how much more capable of a Buddha is of helping other beings. If we're just talking about depth of realisation and how that realisation looks to the one attaining it, there is no point of even having a Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

And the point of the teaching of buddha-nature (and even prajnaparamita) is that the magical powers are inherent in the nature of mind, in other words, emptiness is inseparable from dependent origination and compassion. That's how the only true

enlightenment is that of the buddhas and everything else is a mistake.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 25th, 2014 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

Alex123 said:

I understand that I can't control mental states and that holding onto a certain state is futile. What often happens is that I can't seem to remember not to be abiding anywhere. This is a problem. I can't seem to always remember and do Hishiryo, etc. I wonder why.

Astus wrote:

You say that holding onto a certain state is futile, then you call it a problem that you can't always do hishiryo. Isn't there a contradiction?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 26th, 2014 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

Alex123 said:

Right, and how does one reach state where grasping doesn't occur?

Astus wrote:

Through realising that there is nothing to grasp.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 26th, 2014 at 7:22 AM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

Alex123 said:

And how to realize that?

Astus wrote:

The answer to that is the complete teaching of the Buddha. Within that vast amount of methods there are the Zen techniques. And among Zen techniques there is the option to directly look at your mind - your complete realm of experience - and see whether there is any concrete, stable thing you can identify and grasp or not. And once you let all experiences appear as they are, you can see for yourself that they are ungraspable. In fact, letting them appear and seeing their ungraspability are one and the same. Letting things be as they are is the same as not seeking anything to rely on.

It is when one cannot just, so to say, relax, let go and open up, that all the methods from sitting posture, phrase contemplation and all the other skilful means come into the picture. They give some reason to stop grasping at ideas and feelings, or rather they are

substitutes to the normal objects of attachment, however, they are still attachments and delusions. But unlike ordinary delusions, they might help one get over all clinging and false concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 30th, 2014 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Daily life practice?

Content:

LastLegend said:

Does this mean we use no effort or intention because things appear as they are? Flow like the Dao with no blockage? A medium that connects with everything else?

Astus wrote:

It is effortless if one has the clear realisation that appearances are without anything to grasp.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 1st, 2014 at 10:12 PM

Title: What is Blessing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the definition of blessing (any and all types)? What dharma is it? What are its qualities and conditions?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 2nd, 2014 at 7:30 AM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let me give an example for the blessing I'm asking about.

in Vision and Violence (p 107-109) Carl S. Yamamoto said:

In many ways, the English word "blessing" is simply not adequate to capture the full import of the Tibetan term byin rlabs. Byin rlabs is something that comes from direct contact with a buddha or a realized lama, and is often spoken of almost as a quasi-physical substance—or energy—that passes from the lama to the disciple at certain key moments.

...

Sometimes a blessing is like an electric shock delivered to the body of the recipient.

Other times, the body is paralyzed or goes limp.

Blessings are also thought to inhere in sacred objects and places, particularly ones that have a connection with an exalted figure.

...

It is this locally concentrated blessing energy that makes a place or object sacred, so

that when pilgrims visit a holy site, or when lamas perform rituals centered on a consecrated object, one of their goals is to share in the blessing that resides in that site or object.

...

Though it lacks this important connotation of power, “blessing” seems to be the only translation of byin rlabs that fits all of its usages reasonably well. Still, some scholars have offered coinages that work well in particular situations. Lama Yeshe offers “inspiration,” Geoffrey Samuel “blessingpower” and “positive spiritual energy,” and David Jackson “spiritual impulse,” while Toni Huber suggests “empowerment,” which he says “fits better with most Tibetan conceptions of the term.” These translations— while not adequate substitutes for “blessing” as an all-purpose stand-in—do capture the sense of a dynamic and personal power that emanates from the lama to the disciple, charging body and mind with spiritual energy and inspirational zeal.

Indeed, as Huber points out, the notion of byin rlabs as “power” pervades all sectors of Tibetan culture and may in fact have its origins in the political realm. Though it is traditionally glossed as a Buddhist term, translating the Sanskrit word *adhiṣṭāna*, it in fact has a pre-Buddhist meaning, associated with the kings of the early Tibetan royal cult

...

In this sense, as a bridge between the political realm, represented by divine kingship, and the religious, represented by the spiritual power of the lama, the term “charisma” might not be an entirely inappropriate rendering of byin rlabs.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 2nd, 2014 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

anjali said:

Perhaps this will be useful. From Rigpa Wiki's entry on <http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Blessing>

Astus wrote:

Both definitions are about achieving or developing a state of mind, and as such I don't see the connection to the idea of receiving blessing from other beings (or objects, places, etc.). If those were the meaning of blessing, then blessing would be synonymous with insight and correct effort.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

You are looking for an objective phenomenon called blessing?

Astus wrote:

I'm looking for a usable definition that describes the way blessing exists and functions. As for "objective phenomena", that's a different discussion about the nature of reality, perception, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Byin rlabs means quite literally "conferral [rlabs] of power [byin]."

Byin is defined in Tibetan as "the ability or power to transform the minds and vision/appearances of another."

The word Byin rlabs is defined in Tibetan as "the power to remain in any subject of the Dharma of the Noble Path."

Astus wrote:

Thank you. Does that mean then that a blessing is inducing insight/realisation/enlightenment in another being directly (instead of through giving instructions)? If so, what is being communicated/transferred between one being/thing to another? What connection exists at the time of receiving a blessing?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

muni said:

As long as me is there, as a solid independent wall - opposing another wall (person), the flow cannot flow.

So is it that nature like it is arises from itself by faith and devotion, and the blessings of Awaken Nature.

Astus wrote:

If blessing had existed only when there was no attachment to the idea of a self, it would have had no meaning because then there would be no attachment whatsoever thus no need for further liberation. Unless you equate blessing with enlightenment or ultimate reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

This is why I asked if you are looking for an objective phenomenon called "blessing".

Astus wrote:

If things like money, stupa, bliss and hunger count as objective phenomena, then yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

muni said:

Blessings exist - does not exist; they are like nature: dependent-empty. An idea of a self makes this dependence-emptiness impossible.

It is also possible to call it a moment of openness, "to receive" the blessings.

There is the Zen cup, which must be empty, or the Master tells you to come back when "your cup" is empty.

Blessings are clear examples of intangible nature.

Astus wrote:

Heat, beauty, anger, vapour and radio transmission are all intangible as well, but they are not the same type of things as Excalibur, Narnia or the motherly grace of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 9:01 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

muni said:

The solidity, the object-subject can fade by blessings, while blessings are themselves an example of no separation (the idea being a subject and an object).

Astus wrote:

So what you mean is that when one is blessed by another person (or object), that individual will realise non-duality?

At the same time, blessing exists only as non-duality, what is something difficult for me to understand, because the ultimate nature of reality has the single taste of suchness and in that there is no place for giving or receiving anything, thus the word blessing appears to be meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Malcolm said:

"Blessing" here just means the power of one person to inspire another to follow the path in some way. That's all. There is no Dharma called "blessing", no magical force called "blessing". If there was, the Buddha, being compassionate, would have blessed us all into nirvana long ago.

Astus wrote:

That makes sense. Thank you.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: What is Blessing?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I should add, it can also be the power of an object such as a statue, book, incense, stupa, etc., to induce the same effect. But again, there is no Dharma called "blessing", no magical force called "blessing".

Astus wrote:

Yes, that is what I wanted to clarify. Inspiration from buddhas, bodhisattvas, teachers, places, objects, etc. are easily understandable and quite common even outside of religious context. Blessing as a power/authority transferred magically is a different matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 15th, 2014 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Advice on Vajrayana and Rigpa meditation books

Content:

Astus wrote:

Further recommendations:

Sutra:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=68sGSKdE1OUC>

https://books.google.com/books?id=3g34_5impnUC

<https://books.google.com/books?id=g6m7T7v6tiYC>

Tantra:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=WQojn90vLA0C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=sy2QAwAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4e7cAB1tO68C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=tysQyPivYusC>

Dzogchen series (good overview):

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Il0dAgAAQBAJ>
https://books.google.com/books?id=_o3QDa536ikC
<https://books.google.com/books?id=r7Zr2Eyms4YC>

Dzogchen:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=LwS6RjZWd7QC>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=9gbrPjsEaVMC>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=cz0RAQAIAAJ>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=TDFTD6HRCU8C>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=Kj5QE-Tw6YkC>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=kPNRbhvNWG4C>

Scholarship:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=SJbxvDZOZz8C>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=vM5ivXPmxwoC>
https://books.google.com/books?id=Tv_hE200rNkC

Biography:

https://books.google.com/books?id=_yo1BGZXODEC
<https://books.google.com/books?id=b344o95F-WEC>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 4th, 2014 at 3:50 AM

Title: Re: "a bridge round like a ball" --Chozen-Ji Canon

Content:

Astus wrote:

Did a little online search for: "丸橋の道", "円橋の道", "丸橋之道", "円橋之道", "まろばしのみち"

No results.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 4th, 2014 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Study Guides & Commentaries

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here I only mention some Mahayana sutra commentaries, but Theravada teachers published (book & online) even more on the Nikayas.

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=v5-0LLINNTEC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=bQ7P7buVH74C>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Xn8pAwAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=n0A6AwAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=PeBWAAAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Yx-KvflFhV0C>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=fHPjEP23D4YC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=kGcwG9YrrL4C>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=HKgWxoLk0V8C>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=XH0JAAAAAYAAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=pCHvfGyBtf4C>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=fslSW2tBG8UC>
https://books.google.hu/books?id=uXB1a6_dFBQC
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=jzzRtAsCbekC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=8WZgR7gDTtYC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=NR79g-BT2AcC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=1wHYAAAAMAAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=T3jlh-xPVhIC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=GVeLJ16emHUC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=xe4GAAAAAYAAJ>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=k1l9dUewsKgC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Yfuv-zFB1PoC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=dYw5q40gCg8C>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=u0nyhBMsQtUC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=yRnOPXXQE5AC>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 7th, 2014 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Root text in verse accompanied by autocommentary

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think the style goes back to how the Vedas are commented upon in the Brahmanas and Aranyakas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 13th, 2014 at 10:57 PM

Title: Applied Wisdom

Content:

Astus wrote:

It may appear that scriptures and reasoning have little relevance to practice. There is even the commonly used pair of "scholars and practitioners" (cf. AN 6.46). In East Asian Mahayana they talk about the meditation and the teaching schools. In Tibetan Buddhism there are the panditas and the yogis. And for some reason Westerners often prefer what they believe to be practice oriented (practical) paths. So, I'd like to raise a case here for the view that the study of the Buddhadharma necessarily consists of learning (reading/listening), understanding (reasoning) and confirming (analysing), thus making the studying of the scriptures directly relevant to whatever meditative practice one may do.

"What is correct contemplation? This is the contemplation of the Bodhisattva who, with a very good understanding of the definitive and provisional meanings of the scriptures, will have no doubts about them, and thus thereby the meditation will be certain. Otherwise, riding on the swinging rope of doubt, there will be no certainty, and, like a traveler at the junction of two roads, one cannot decide which way to go."
(The Stages of Meditation by Vimalamitra, tr Lozang Jamspal, p 13)

"Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom."
(The Dalai Lama: Stages of Meditation, p 134)

"An indispensable prerequisite for insight is to use the wisdom gained through study and reflection to develop knowledge of reality. For without a decisive view of how things exist, you cannot develop insight that knows the real nature, emptiness."
(Tsong-kha-pa: The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, vol 3, p 111)

"That one should not be reflective, should not grasp, and should not discriminate - as the sutras teach - really means that one should not be reflective of the existence of inherent nature, should not grasp it, and should not discriminate it. It does not mean one should cultivate prajna by not remembering, not thinking, and not discriminating. If all discriminations are attachments, then would the wisdom that comes from listening, thinking, and practicing as taught by the Buddha not be distorted? If nondiscriminating wisdom could arise without the requisite awakening of wisdom from listening, thinking, and practicing, then it would arise without a cause."
(Yin-shun: The Way to Buddhahood, p 299)

"In general, Buddhism provides a large variety of skillful means to generate insight into the true nature of mind and phenomena, but analytical meditation is the way in which this insight is developed and enhanced in a very systematic and thorough way."

(Karl Brunnhölzl: The Center of the Sunlit Sky, p 273)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 16th, 2014 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Applied Wisdom

Content:

seeker242 said:

Do you think Huangbo and his like would disagree? After all he says "If you students of the Way wish to become Buddhas, you need study no doctrines whatever, but learn only how to avoid seeking for and attaching yourselves to anything."

Astus wrote:

"learn only how to avoid seeking" is something that requires learning. And what is there to learn from but the teachings of the Buddha? Those teachings are what one can learn from the scriptures. So, what Huangbo basically says is to use the teachings for one's and others' welfare instead of just satisfying one's intellectual appetite.

What I'm trying to highlight here is less about the importance of studying the sutras and shastras but how using correct analysis is the safe, traditional and direct path of insight that connects the teachings with practice and at the same time is understandable and open to everyone. And in fact even such seemingly non-analytical methods like Zen include analysis, as one needs to realise the emptiness of appearances in order to be free from them.

See what Mazu says (and quotes from the Vimalakirti Sutra),

"Just put an end to all mental calculations of the triple world. If one originates a single deluded thought, this is the root of birth and death in the triple world. If one simply lacks a single thought, then he excises the root of birth and death and obtains the supreme treasure of the dharma-king. Since countless kalpas, the deluded thoughts of ordinary man—flattery, deception, self-intoxication, and arrogance—have formed the one body. Therefore, the sutra says, 'It is only by many dharmas that this body is aggregated. When arising, it is only dharmas arising; when extinguishing, it is only dharmas extinguishing.' When the dharma arises, it does not say 'I arise'; when the dharma extinguishes, it does not say 'I extinguish.' The former thought, the later thought, and the present thought — all successive moments of thought do not wait for one another, and all successive moments of thought are quiescent and extinct. This is called the ocean-seal samadhi, which contains all dharmas."

(The Hongzhou School, p 126)

Compare that to Kamalashila:

"Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the

present, is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical."

(Stages of Meditation, p 131-132)

And to the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>:

"to know the appearances of a self means not to be captivated by it. Not knowing and not being captivated by anything is what Buddhas know. The inconceivable [state of] not knowing and not being captivated by anything is what Buddhas know. ... The inconceivable state is what Buddhas know, such as neither grasping nor not grasping, seeing neither the appearance of past, present, or future, nor the appearance of coming or going, and grasping neither birth nor death, neither cessation nor perpetuity, neither arising nor acting. This knowledge is called the true wisdom-knowledge, the inconceivable wisdom-knowledge."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 16th, 2014 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: Applied Wisdom

Content:

LastLegend said:

How do you put correct analysis in practice? Is it the practice itself? How do you apply this correct analysis?

Astus wrote:

It is the practice and application itself, investigating the nature of experience and confirming directly the truth of the Buddha's teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 16th, 2014 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Applied Wisdom

Content:

Dan74 said:

Huangpo, as we know him, is mostly invention, it would seem (see Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism by Dale S. Wright). But even as such there is no actual rejection of texts, but re-examination of the way we read them.

Astus wrote:

Blofeld's translation can be misleading, unless one is aware of the language used and its relation to the original, and if I remember correctly, that's what Wright's work addresses. The texts of Huangbo are still considerably early and authentic, even if not strictly a clear report of one man's teachings. See:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/HuangPo_Literature.html.

Dan74 said:

As I see it, the OP does not lack learning but still has many doubts about the practice and the fruit. So perhaps it is a matter of balance. Often in life it is precisely the direction that seems least likely, the part of us that gets least attention, that requires it the most. Thus a very intellectual person loath to get her hands dirty in a menial task like gardening, would really benefit from it, to use an example.

Astus wrote:

While to some extent I agree with the idea that facing unfamiliar situations can help reflection on one's habits, when it comes to practising Buddhism it is better to follow methods one can easily use. What would be the point to ask a mute person to learn chanting sutras, or an illiterate man to study abhidharma? As I see it, the majority of Western Buddhists are educated people, therefore trained from an early age to process texts and arguments. It is out of the romantic ideal that there is a desire to move from reason to intuition and mysticism, while at the same time arguing how Buddhism is a very rational doctrine (Kalama Sutta, et al).

Dan74 said:

'Safe and traditional' and 'analysis' are not the words I would use to describe Buddhist practice. There is nothing safe about discarding habitual patterns - it is indeed the opposite of safe. We cling to habitual patterns out of the instinctual craving for safety and control and discarding them, laying down the narratives and plunging into the unknown now - the jump off the 100-foot pole, does not feel safe.

Astus wrote:

Using learning, understanding and investigation is rather a step by step approach, a gradual climb up the pole. Jumping off of the top can happen only once it is reached. What I'm saying here is that instead of waiting for some insight to happen through doing mostly unrelated practices, one should go straight to investigating the nature of phenomena.

Dan74 said:

Analysis, as it is ordinarily used, doesn't reveal emptiness to us, even though it might convince us of the correctness of a certain philosophical position. Emptiness is realised, the way I see it (which is hazy and limited), by virtue of insight into reification (thing-making, me-making, mine-making, of owning mental objects, of intoxication by mental objects) and the step behind it so to speak, the not-knowing that is most intimate.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is realised through looking into the experience at hand by following the correct method. And that method is analysing whether there is anything real one can grasp or not. Once the unreality of things is realised there is no more place for reification.

Dan74 said:

So learning can point the way, contemplating the teachings can point the way, but the way needs to be tread. And for that concepts, including Dharma concepts, need to be

set aside.

Astus wrote:

Quite the contrary. It is through learning and understanding that one can apply the knowledge in one's experience. If it had to be put aside it would mean there is no use to it at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 17th, 2014 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Applied Wisdom

Content:

LastLegend said:

How do you do it exactly? Explain how you practice it. Thanks.

Astus wrote:

Analysing the five aggregates and six sensory fields are first of all to confirm if there is anything permanent or not. If there is nothing permanent, there is nothing to attach to and nothing to regard as self. This is realising the emptiness of self. Then by investigating the aggregates and sensory fields themselves, whether they are in any way independent or substantial, one confirms the emptiness of appearances. Longer instructions exist in many texts, like the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana, Zhiyi's shorter and longer meditation manuals, etc. Here is a very brief work on it:

<https://sites.google.com/site/dharmadepository/translations/examination-of-the-five-aggregates>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 18th, 2014 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Applied Wisdom

Content:

seeker242 said:

Huineng must have had a good reason to lock the library.

Jikan said:

Yes, I'm sure he did; he was trying to help those who were addicted to their studies and the rather constipated one-up-manship that can ensue from debate culture to realize their nature directly.

Astus wrote:

What seems to be somewhat hidden from people is the simple fact that all the Zen stories, and practically everything we know of Huineng and the majority of famous teachers, are found in written form, actually most of them right there in the Buddhist canon. And those Zen texts are not really actual records but rather refined literary and religious works created for an educated audience. So, Zen iconoclasm and anti-textualism is as authentic as a multimillionaire preaching about the beauties of poverty.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 19th, 2014 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Do sentient beings gain merit when one generates Bodhici

Content:

Astus wrote:

Merit is the result of one's actions, a positive mental imprint. If one's lunch could fill another's belly there'd be no point in the whole karma teaching and people could appear in the hells and in buddha-fields randomly. It is good to wish others happiness and liberation, but ordinary people still suffer regardless of how many fully enlightened beings reside in the world.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 20th, 2014 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: Do sentient beings gain merit when one generates Bodhici

Content:

LastLegend said:

Merit is transferable

Hieros Gamos said:

It is?

Astus wrote:

Not literally. Merit transference means that (1) one dedicates the merit generated by some good action (as a practice of generosity and non-attachment), and (2) another identifies with the giver's actions, agrees with them and rejoices in them (thus creating a similar mental attitude).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 20th, 2014 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: Is Tibetan Buddhism world-denying?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism itself is world-denying. Just look at the life story of Gautama.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 24th, 2014 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and Accepting death

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel desire & passion. Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining,

or censure would cause me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel no desire or passion."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.011.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 24th, 2014 at 11:43 PM

Title: Re: ZenStories' Commentary - Daitso Chisho Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The Dharma of the buddhas appeared to the Buddha Mahābhijñānābhibhū [大通智勝佛 (Daitso Chisho Butsu)] after ten intermediate kalpas had passed, and he attained highest, complete enlightenment." (Lotus Sutra, ch 7, p 115, tr Kubo & Yuyama)

It should also be noted that while Siddhartha had practised asceticism for many years, in the end he realised it had been pointless and switched to sitting pleasantly in the shade of a tree after a good meal.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 29th, 2014 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

It means that in Vajrayāna, the key to awakening lies in human anatomy, not in philosophical speculation. It means that all the qualities of the basis, path and result are complete in the human body, and do not need to be gathered elsewhere. It means that, according to Vajrayāna, that the mind is a function of the body and its anatomy.

Astus wrote:

Didn't what could be called Sahajayana, i.e. Mahamudra teachings, come later, as a further development from Vajrayana? Because it seems to me that it's distanced itself from the energy system established in HYT, and moved closer to established sutra teachings. Well, at least some teachers taught that way ((Saraha), Maitripa, Jnanakirti, Sahajavajra).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 29th, 2014 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, Astus. First, there is no such thing as a "sahajayāna" — this is fabricated term. Maitripa taught standard Vajrayāna, as did these other masters, complete with creation stage and completion stage.

Astus wrote:

A number of teachings by the mentioned Indian masters show something else. See for instance:

http://www.academia.edu/5614409/Mathes_2006_Blending_the_Sutras_with_the_Tantras_The_Influence_of_Maitripa_and_his_Circle_on_the_Formation_of_Sutra_Mahamudra_in_the_Kagyu_Schools

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 29th, 2014 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

But the fact of the matter is that Maitripa promulgated a cycle of Vajrayogini teachings which is preserved to this day in both Kagyu and Sakya. Saraha wrote a famous commentary on the Buddhakapala tantra, and is credited with being the first master to promulgate the Cakrasamvara tantra and so on. Maitripa also bestowed many empowerments and teachings on Marpa.

Astus wrote:

They don't exclude each other. Kagyu has a large number of Tantric teachings besides Mahamudra, just as Gampopa taught both path of means and path of liberation. What the mentioned article attempts to show is that "not-specifically-Tantric" Mahamudra existed already in India, and those who taught it considered it beyond both Sutra and Tantra like Gampopa.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 29th, 2014 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

since everyone he cites was already a well schooled Vajrayāna master, his argument is quite weak.

Astus wrote:

If they were competent Sutra and Tantra teachers, wouldn't that rather strengthen the validity of their assessment of the direct Mahamudra path?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 29th, 2014 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

First of all, what do you mean by a "direct" Mahāmudra path? What are its characteristics, and so on. Then we will see whether or not it is part of Vajrayāna or not.

Astus wrote:

Direct in the sense that it does not require empowerments or other practices, only the instructions of the teacher pointing out the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 30th, 2014 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: How do I know when to start shikantaza?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza does not depend on how long you can concentrate on your breath. Just sitting means just sitting, nothing complicated.

"Shikantaza means "just sitting" in Japanese, and to just sit means that we really only sit without doing anything else. This is a really simple practice; we do nothing but sit in the zazen posture breathing easily, keeping the eyes open, staying awake, and letting go. That's all we do in zazen; we do nothing else." (Shohaku Okumura: http://www.sanshinji.org/pdf/zazen_instructions.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 30th, 2014 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yeah, this is not just not true Astus, the basic practice of this approach to Mahāmudra is guru yoga. It may not involve the two stages per se, but it does involve practices such as Vajrasattva, mandala offerings and so on which are characteristic of Vajrayāna practice, i.e., there is still purification and gathering accumulations. And more importantly, there is the practicing of integrating one's mind with the mind of the Guru based upon so called "direct introduction."

Astus wrote:

Mathes concludes in the mentioned article (and this is what I have said before):

"Our study of the Tattvadasakatika has shown that no Tantric empowerment or such skillful means as great bliss are required by this type of mahamudra, which merely depends on the pith-instructions of one's guru."

As further reference (although actually both works contain the preliminary practices you mentioned):

Takpo Tashi Namgyal writes (Mahamudra: The Quintessence, p 124):

"if one follows venerable Gampopa's system in elucidating mahamudra alone, it is not necessary to bestow the empowerment upon devotees. In keeping with his system one

should adhere to the preparatory exercises he prescribed without incorporating the tantric meditation of Vajrasattva, the utterance of mantra, the transformation of oneself into yidam, and the visualization of one's guru in the form of Buddha Vajradhara, the source of the mystic empowerment."

Thrangu Rinpoche explains (Essentials of Mahamudra, p 89):

QUESTION: You said that mahamudra is taking direct perception as the path. Also, you said that mahamudra is the path of the blessing of faith and longing devotion. Could you explain the relationship of devotion to mahamudra practice?

RINPOCHE: I spoke about three different divisions of the path. They were taking inference as the path, taking blessing as the path, and taking direct experience as the path. The second of those, taking of blessing as path, is the meditation upon yidam deities, the practice of guru yoga, and the practices of subtle channels and drops. The third is being introduced directly to the mind as it really is. These latter two are not incompatible with one another. The introduction to mahamudra is the pointing out of your mind.

And even if we add the preliminary practices, there is still no requirement or even use of the channels and winds in one's practice of Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 30th, 2014 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Tantric and late Indian Buddhist philosophy

Content:

conebeckham said:

There most certainly CAN be the use of channels and winds in Mahamudra, in some way, even in a path that does not utilize deity yoga or the stages of creation and completion.

Astus wrote:

The only point I wanted to bring to this topic with mentioning Mahamudra was about the development of Buddhist philosophy in India. The gradual integration of Vajrayana to a monastic environment resulted, among other things, in the "blending of Sutra with Tantra". It also seems to me a natural evolution of things that there appeared some who were critical of Vajrayana and, according to their claim, they superseded even HYT.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 14th, 2014 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: How to stop desiring in meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Trying to remove concepts with more concepts hardly ever works, unless you learn to be good at proper Buddhist reasoning. If you just want the zazen remedy, the skilful means is focusing on your posture, as it's been advised before. Of course, that's not exactly Zen but body-mindfulness, it can still work. There are other options as well, like using a koan,

breath, or you could walk instead of sitting. Also check <http://terebeess.hu/zen/mesterek/meiho.html> for some inspiration.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 17th, 2014 at 12:34 AM

Title: Re: Jon Kabat-Zinn: authorization to teach?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't really see the relevance of authorisation. It counts if one tries to present oneself as the representative of someone else. However, there seems to be no claim for anything like that. Anyone can teach whatever they want to (science, art, religion, etc.). The important question is the content of the teaching, not who else claims that the teacher is fantastic. I don't see Candrakirti criticising Yogacara teachers for their lack of special authorisation. Buddhism is not copyrighted.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 17th, 2014 at 3:29 AM

Title: Re: So what is the Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a fine summary:

"From the beginning, Suchness in its nature is fully provided with all excellent qualities; namely, it is endowed with the light of great wisdom, the qualities of illuminating the entire universe, of true cognition and mind pure in its self-nature; of eternity, bliss, Self, and purity; of refreshing coolness, immutability, and freedom. It is endowed with these excellent qualities which outnumber the sands of the Ganges, which are not independent of, disjointed from, or different from the essence of Suchness, and which are suprarational attributes of Buddhahood. Since it is endowed completely with all these, and is not lacking anything, it is called the Tathagata-garbha when latent and also the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 18th, 2014 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: So what is the Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Anders said:

As far as I am concerned, I think these debates about whether there really is a true self or not tend miss a big question, that is quite poignant for any Buddhist who accepts them as buddhavacana, even if only provisionally so: Is it useful to have such a view?

Astus wrote:

"The Buddhas have designated a self;

And have taught that there is no self;
And also have taught that
There is neither self nor selflessness."
(MMK 18.6, tr. Samten & Garfield)

I think those who teach about buddha-nature (true self) usually emphasise how it is both empty and not-empty. That is the case in both East Asian and Tibetan Mahayana, while at the same time there are not many Mahayana teachers who strictly distance themselves from the tathagatagarbha doctrine. Practically speaking, since the buddha qualities are inherent, it becomes possible to skip aeons of accumulating merit, so we have all the "enlightenment in this body" teachings as the mainstream of Mahayana.

Sherab Dorje said:

My opinion is that for westerners, this intense grasping to the concept, is just baggage from their Abrahamic past.

Astus wrote:

And that's why it is popular. And because of the promise of immediate liberation. As the wonderful Mazu Daoyi explained (tr. Ferguson, p 76):

A monk asked, "Master, why do you say that mind is Buddha?"

Mazu said, "To stop babies from crying."

The monk said, "What do you say when they stop crying?"

Mazu said, "No mind, no Buddha."

The monk asked, "Without using either of these teachings, how would you instruct someone?"

Mazu said, "I would say to him that it's not a thing."

The monk asked, "If suddenly someone who was in the midst of it came to you, then what would you do?"

Mazu said, "I would teach him to experience the great way."

And from Keys to Buddhism by Thich Thanh Tu (p 58):

"The Owner is the tranquil, aware essence that has never been agitated, changed, or eradicated. To experience it, try this contemplation: When meditating or sitting alone at a quiet place, note how your feelings, conceptions, mental formations, and consciousness calm down, yet your eyes, your ears, etc., are full of awareness. Then, ask yourself, "Who is it that is seeing, hearing, etc.? Is it the permanent, tranquil, aware nature inside?" Therefore, the theory of "the Owner" mentioned here does not contradict the Buddha's teaching about no self. When we have real experiences, we know it. It is useless to hang on to or argue over theories.

Question: In many sutras, the Buddha reprimanded views about permanence and annihilation while this section says, "the Owner is permanent and unchanging." Is this section similar to heterodox views of permanence?"

The heretic holds on to the idea that the five-aggregate body is permanent when, in fact,

it is impermanent, bound to birth and death. Therefore, the Buddha reprimanded their viewpoint. That which takes form and belongs to birth and death is impermanent. Since the Owner is formless, beyond duality, and free from birth and death, how can it be impermanent? We make efforts to express the Owner by saying that it is permanent and unchanging. In fact, when practitioners realize this aware nature in themselves, they will understand this sense of permanence that cannot be described. Therefore, when we say that the Owner is permanent and unchanging, it is not similar to heterodox views of permanence, and, as such, there is no contradiction."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 18th, 2014 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: So what is the Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Buddhaqualities may be inherent in the dharmakāya, but only buddhas can see the dharmakāya, just as only buddhas can see tathagātagarbha. Thus one cannot evade the two accumulations, whether it takes three incalculable eons as in common Mahayāna, or on one lifetime, as in Secret Mantra.

Astus wrote:

That may be so. But it would be hard to find any existing Mahayana school of the common type. Tiantai, Huayan and especially Chan teaches a sudden path, while Pure Land teaches liberation in the next life. Only those who deny buddha-nature, i.e. the followers of Xuanzang, talk about a minimal three aeons.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 20th, 2014 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Some of my confusions in a sutra

Content:

richardx888 said:

What is the meaning of that actually?

Astus wrote:

1. Dharma teachers should not fear.
2. Dharma teachers should not be attacked.

richardx888 said:

2. In some of the mahayana scriptures, the buddha suggest to rewrite the sutra out. The question is was there any written language during the buddha's life? If yes, was writing even that popular during that time? I thought the sutras was written later after the Buddha deceased.

Astus wrote:

As you may have heard, Mahayana scriptures are later than the Agamas/Nikayas, and most of them were transmitted in written form only. Or, if you want, you can think that

the Buddha advised his audience to write down the scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 21st, 2014 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: Vision going blurry?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If it happens only during meditation, you try to make something special of sitting there. You might be focusing somewhere for too long for instance. If it happens in other, everyday situations, consult with a medical expert.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 22nd, 2014 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Shin Buddhism: Amida's "Methodology" of Salvation

Content:

Astus wrote:

The sambhogakaya and the buddha-field are both the results of a bodhisattva's cultivation and accumulated merit. It is possible to conceive of any buddha as an active force that helps beings along the path to liberation, and also as a person full of compassion. Naturally, it is easier for ordinary beings to think of buddhas as superior humans, and that's fine. So, Amida saves beings as a result of his vows, as vows define the special qualities of buddhas. Connecting with Amida through faith one can be born in the Pure Land. But without that connection there is no way for ordinary beings to go to his buddha-field.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 23rd, 2014 at 8:11 PM

Title: Re: Which buddhism on this forum can be practised trough boo

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is up to you. There has been even outstanding teachers who relied primarily on the Buddha's teachings as contained in the sutras. In fact, only Vajrayana restricts itself to contact with teachers, and even then it is mostly for receiving empowerments. Otherwise, there is no such rule that you must have a teacher. Except for receiving ordination as a bhikshu, you can get everything from books. (Actually, there is a sutra in the Chinese canon that allows full ordination without a preceptor, but that's a different matter.)

"all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra"

(Diamond Sutra, ch 8)

"This sutra is the treasure house of the hidden essence of all the buddhas."

(Lotus Sutra, ch 10)

"Those who grasp at emptiness slander the Sutras by maintaining that written words have no use. Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

(Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, ch 10)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 27th, 2014 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Bankei and three nens question

Content:

Astus wrote:

This three nens system is fairly primitive and from Bankei's Zen perspective pointless.

It is primitive, as it shows how certain teachers know little to nothing about 'fundamental' teachings, Abhidharma and Yogacara, as both contain various explanations and systems for analysing mind and mind moments. (E.g. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/mendis/wheel322.html#citta>) But even before when turn to complicated Buddhist scholastic texts, the five aggregates explain quite well what the "three nens" tries to say. The first nen of direct sensual experience is the body aggregate, the second nen of judging and naming is the second and third aggregate, the third nen of reflection third and fourth aggregate. Now, according to the teachings, the problem is not with the aggregates themselves, but with attachment and wrong identification. Clinging to only bodily impressions (first nen) is not only pointless (does not lead to liberation) but also just another form of self view.

Zen in general, and Bankei in particular is not about setting up systems to explain how the mind works. First of all, there are already texts and traditions that do just that. So, if one wants an in depth teaching, there are sources and teachers to turn to. Bankei taught about the Unborn, that is, a mind that is not bound to any state but open and aware. It is unborn, as it is not born as this or that - e.g. angry, happy, mindful, senseless, etc. - in other words, without self, without identification. To say that one should practise with or stay in a particular state of mind, that is exactly giving birth to a mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 28th, 2014 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Understanding emptiness exercise

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is being empty of something permanent, real, solid. Appearances are not denied but seen for what they actually are, that is, conceptual constructs. In other words, a tree does not say it is a tree, we call it a tree. And with this single word we have a whole web of associated concepts to build an imaginary reality that we take to be factual. If you don't call it a tree, what is it?

Shuzan Osho held up his shippei [staff of office] before his disciples and said, "You monks! If you call this a shippei, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a shippei, you ignore the fact. Tell me, you monks, what will you call it?"
(Mumonkan, case 43 [cf. case 40], tr. Sekida)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 30th, 2014 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Tendai vs. Gelug: Problems with Syncretization?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I consider it a mistaken line of thinking to believe that there are actually "pure traditions". It is similar to the idea of other purisms: linguistic, ethnic, artistic, philosophic, etc. They are actually in contradiction with dependent origination and how life is organic on both material and spiritual levels.

Zhiyi organised the various teachings he had access to into a loose system. Tsongkhapa did the same. Today in English there is no complete translation of all the works of either of them, but we have access to both to some extent. Why couldn't they be combined? I think if one wants to cross the river, one has to make use of whatever kind of wood is available. As long as it floats it is a vehicle of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 9th, 2014 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

Astus wrote:

Somewhat confusing text, isn't it? But all it talks about is quite standard, that is, the seeing of the 18 dhatus for what they are and thus attaining liberation from attachment to phenomena.

"Those who don't understand don't understand understanding. And those who understand, understand not understanding."

凡迷者：迷於悟，悟者：悟於迷。 - The common confused (mi 迷) [people] are confused (mi 迷) about understanding. Those who understand (wu 悟) [enlightened ones] understand (wu 悟) confusion (mi 迷).

"form isn't simply form, because form depends on mind. And mind isn't simply mind, because mind depends on form."

色不自色，由心故色；心不自心，由色故心 - form is not form in itself, because mind makes form; mind is not mind in itself, because form makes mind

"Mind and form create and negate each other."

是知心色兩相俱生滅 - that is to know: mind and form are both just birth and death (samsara).

"When your mind doesn't stir inside, the world doesn't arise outside. When the world and the mind are both transparent, this is true vision"

若內不起心，則外不生境，境心俱淨，乃名為真見 - If inside mind does not arise, then outside [sense-]objects are not born. Objects and mind are both pure, that is called true vision.

"And such understanding is true understanding."

作此解時，乃名正見。 - When you are freed from it, only then it is called correct seeing/vision.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 10th, 2014 at 7:30 PM

Title: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

The unique teaching of Zen is sudden enlightenment. Here I try to translate that to the current language using the popular thought of mindfulness.

The mind is already mindful, it cannot be increased or decreased. Whatever occurs it is naturally aware of it. The mind is not born out of conditions, so it is free and independent, unaffected by appearances. That is, experience is known and inconceivable at the same time. Experience cannot be unknown, otherwise it would not be experienced. Experience cannot be conceived, otherwise it would stay for ever. Mind and experience are one and the same. As mind is necessarily mindful, so is experience necessarily known. As mind is necessarily nothing concrete, so is experience necessarily inconceivable. See the experiencing mind for what it is and mindfulness is perfected immediately.

Question is, is it an acceptable idea that mindfulness is not developed and there is no training for it?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 10th, 2014 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

Jesse said:

At least what I know from mindfulness from TNH's teachings, it is the ability to stay grounded in the moment by not being attached to the arising of phenomena in the mind-stream.

What your talking about is closer to zazen or dzogchens presence teachings isn't it?
Your basically saying if your enlightened your mind will already be mindful?

Astus wrote:

Experience always happens in the moment and there is nothing we can do to stop it in its arising and passing. Because that is already so, that's why the mind is already mindful. It cannot be unmindful.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 10th, 2014 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

Jesse said:

That's true, but it can be distracted. Isn't the ability to be un-distracted what allows us to see the mind for what it is? Otherwise we'd be lost in the illusions of thought, attached to the arising and passing of experiences, which is samsara in it'self.

Astus wrote:

In order to be distracted there must be a desired state one is moved from by some other state. And if that can happen, both states are temporary phenomena, different moments of experience. Attachment is believing that there is something lasting, something that can be grasped. Seeing experiences for what they are is not the rejection of something existing nor a creation of something new.

See what Dahui wrote (Swampland Flowers, p 69),

"You say that you have dull faculties. Try to reflect back like this: see if the one who can recognize the dullness is dull too or not. If you don't turn the light around and reflect back, you're just keeping to your dull faculties and adding more affliction. That would be adding illusory falsehood to illusory falsehood, laying on optical illusion on top of optical illusion. Just listen: the one who can know that sense faculties are inherently dull is definitely not dull. Though you shouldn't hold to this dull one, you shouldn't abandon it to study, either; grasping and rejecting, sharp and dull – these have to do with people, not with Mind. This Mind is one substance with all the buddhas of the three worlds: there is no duality. If there were duality, the Dharma would not be of even sameness. "Receiving the teaching" and "transmitting Mind" are both empty falsehoods. Looking for truth and seeking reality seem even further off.

Just realize that Mind, with a single essence and no duality, definitely does not lie within sharp and dull or grasping and rejecting: then you'll see the moon and forget the finger, immediately making a clean break. If you linger further in thought, calculating before and after, then you're still understanding the empty fist as if it held something real, falsely concocting strange things amidst the phenomena of the sense objects, vainly confining yourself within matter, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness, within the elements of sensory experience – you'll never get done."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 10th, 2014 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

rachmiel said:

This "mind" that is being talked about ... it is clearly not the particular mind, i.e. what appears say in my field of awareness and not in yours.

So if it is not the particular mind ... what IS it? Alaya-vijnana?

Astus wrote:

There is only one mind, one awareness. Talking about six, eight or more consciousnesses is only differentiating and categorising various groups of mental functions. Still, experience is experience for one and not many. The above summary discusses just this experiencing mind all beings have.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 10th, 2014 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

rachmiel said:

Is this a view that is shared by all schools of Buddhism?

I thought awareness/consciousness was a skandha, which would tie it to a particular body-mind.

Astus wrote:

That depends on how we present it. In a single moment there is a single moment of consciousness. That could be called one mind. Also, every being has a single stream of consciousness. That could be called one mind. Xuanzang says (Three Texts on Consciousness Only, p 64)

"Thus in many places in the scriptures it is said that there is only the one mind. "One mind" also includes mental activities. Therefore the mode of activity of consciousness is perception, and perception is the seeing part of consciousness."

But those are not exactly what is meant here, as the context is the teaching of buddha-nature. And as Huangbo says (Zen Texts, p 13, BDK Edition),

"It is only this One Mind that is Buddha; there is no distinction between Buddhas and sentient beings. However, sentient beings are attached to characteristics and seek outside themselves. Seeking it, they lose it even more."

The point is that when talking about buddha-nature teachings, the method is not really about dissecting experiences to reveal the illusion of solidity but to bring attention to

the mind experiencing phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 11th, 2014 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Experience cannot be conceived, otherwise it would stay for ever.

LastLegend said:

Can you explain this please?

Astus wrote:

If experience could be conceived, grasped, held, it would mean that it is some real thing on its own, that we can stop the flow of change and time. Normally that's how we think about everything, as distinct objects that we can manipulate in one way or another, or objects that impact our mind. That is the deluded belief in substantial appearances, in permanent things. However, if we care to look a little closer, it is quite obvious that the present moment cannot be grasped at all, the experience is inconceivable. It is only in the realm of concepts that we attribute a substance, a self to our experience. But thoughts are also experience, nothing permanent or real.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 11th, 2014 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

LastLegend said:

not understanding is the awareness; awareness understands everything but it does not arise thought arise form.

Astus wrote:

It is unclear to me what you mean there. Please elaborate.

LastLegend said:

So both extinguished what remains is an empty mind, but when Buddha manifests (not by mind/thought) there is appearance?

Astus wrote:

Buddha is not a manifest object or emanation but the nature of mind. When the text says that one should not generate mind and form, it means clinging to mental and physical phenomena. That mind and form depend on each other is like seeing a beautiful object and feeling desire for it. Purity means that one is not deluded by either mental or material appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 11th, 2014 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

LastLegend said:

Yes, I understand that. But Buddha isn't just mind that is separate from object. It would be outrageous to people to say that Buddha is object and object is Buddha. It is also outrageous to imagine that Buddha is just mind dangling somewhere. If you say Buddha has mental activities, i.e., thinking, like we do, then Buddha is deluded. If Buddha is empty mind, why does he need thought to arise since thought arises from arises.

Astus wrote:

Consciousnesses and their related objects (the whole 18 dhatus) are the functions of a sentient being. If there is identification, attachment, it is delusion. If there is no concept of self, no clinging, then it is seeing clearly. And the latter is what being buddha means. Both mind and objects are originally empty, it is through realising that that one can relinquish attachment and attain liberation. It does not mean that one should strive for a mind without mental functions (i.e. thoughts).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 11th, 2014 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

LastLegend said:

Not understanding-because there is no object to understand since no thought arises, no form arises. That is the awareness. Bodhidharma said what mortals understand is delusion because there is object to understand. So in theory, there is nothing to be mindful-awareness is awareness.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like a self-contained state of senselessness. What's the use of that?

LastLegend said:

If the nature of mind is the nature of form, and the nature of form is the nature of mind, there is no separation there. If there is no separation, what is to be aware of but aware itself?

Astus wrote:

The nature of mind is that it is empty. The nature of form is that it is empty. Just because both a bowl of rice and a pile of brick are impermanent it does not mean you could eat either of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 12th, 2014 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

LastLegend said:

Why does it sound like a self contained state if there is no intention to contain such a state?

Astus wrote:

Self-contained, as it is without anything else but itself, awareness of awareness.

LastLegend said:

The nature of mind is empty in what aspect? And what is nature?

If you look at brick, you think there is division between you and brick, then you make a separation between you and brick-the object of brick to be seen and the one who sees the brick- the observer and the observed. Right there is the problem. If you see that because of brick, there is you and because of you, there is brick, there should not be any object to observe. Why? Because you is void and not a thing in yourself, not anything of substance in any shape or form that you can see because if you can see yourself, you would not be void and a thing in yourself with substance. If you try to find you, you create a division between you and the "you" you want to find-division between subject and object. So then it said, "You become the thing itself." If you become the thing itself, there is no object to see. I think that's what meant by seeing isn't seeing, understanding is isn't understanding because there is no object/place for thought to arise.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means the lack of substance, a permanent self-essence. That's what they're empty of. That the nature of mind is empty means that there is no independent being or thing that is mind in and of itself. There are only interdependent mental phenomena.

Although there is no substantial mind nor substantial brick, one can still recognise a brick and use it for various purposes. That's the inseparability of essence and function, emptiness and interdependence.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 12th, 2014 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Bodhidharma's mind and form

Content:

LastLegend said:

If that's the case, one would be trapped in awareness of awareness and not going to work to pay bills.

Astus wrote:

In that case I misunderstood and we are in agreement.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 12th, 2014 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: Instant Mindfulness

Content:

Bakmoon said:

Translating sudden Enlightenment teachings into terms understandable to non-secular Theravadins for example would probably have to use a different terminology.

Astus wrote:

Ajahn Mun's lineage has mostly covered that, while the Burmese have bare awareness (or is that only used in English?). But instead of mindfulness we could call it non-attachment or non-grasping and point out that all phenomena are already impermanent and empty.

"Awareness, the awakened state, takes you out of ignorance immediately, if you'll trust it. As soon as you are aware, ignorance is gone. So then, when ignorance arises, you can be aware of it as something coming and going, rather than taking it personally or assuming that you're always ignorant until you become enlightened. If you're always operating from the assumption that 'I'm ignorant and I've got to practise in order to get rid of ignorance,' then grasp that assumption, you're stuck with that until you see through the grasping of that view."

(http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books9/Ajahn_Sumedho_Personality.htm)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 15th, 2014 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen smell, Zen stink and Zen pong

Content:

Astus wrote:

Comparing the "three Zen fragrances" with a traditional list of stages shows that while the ancient ones discussed traps of realisation, the pong and stink are fascination with outer rituals and labels. But it is not surprising that people are mesmerised by the illusion of Zen when what is being presented as Zen is the illusion. So, either attachment to robes, labels and ceremonies is a skilful means, or it is wrong to have them from the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 17th, 2014 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Zen smell, Zen stink and Zen pong

Content:

Meido said:

Yet it seems many folks are in a hurry to disparage or dump inherited forms...not because they've personally put them to the test over years of severe practice and found them lacking, but rather right at the outset. I can only think, therefore, that they do so because of personal prejudice and cultural allegiance, negative experience - or conflation with - other religious traditions, or just plain laziness and unwillingness to

look beyond surface appearances. All very unfortunate.

Astus wrote:

It has been repeated over the centuries by various Zen works that Zen does not require any of the usual Buddhist practices, that Zen includes them and at the same time is beyond them. There are even some well known lines explicitly criticising various practices, teachings and attitudes. Then it is quite a different thing when in a Zen group what one finds are rituals, rules, various practices and such. That is, there is a discrepancy between Zen teaching and Zen praxis. It is not surprising then that people may reject those traditional elements as cultural superfluity. At the same time, this topic itself was started with a criticism of attachment to outer elements and rituals.

Bodhidharma in Bloodstream Sermon (tr. Red Pine):

"If you don't see your nature, invoking buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings, and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking buddhas results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory; keeping precepts results in a good rebirth, and making offerings results in future blessings - but no buddha."

Linji (tr. Sasaki):

"You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma. Seeking buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do."

Dogen in Bendowa (tr. Nearman):

"When we speak of the correct Transmission in our tradition, the straightforward Buddha Teaching of direct Transmission is 'the best of the best'. From the very moment when a disciple comes to meet face-to-face with the one who is to be his spiritual friend and knowing teacher, there is no need to have the disciple offer incense, make prostrations, chant the names of the Buddhas, do ascetic practices and penances, or recite Scriptures: the Master just has the disciple do pure meditation until he lets his body and mind drop off."

So, it is not a strange question to ask for a reason behind all the things going on in Zen communities.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 17th, 2014 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Zen smell, Zen stink and Zen pong

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you see your nature, then it's useful to do these [rituals]? So which one do or don't?

Astus wrote:

Linji says (tr. Sasaki, p 15):

"Gain understanding such as this, and then you can read the sutras."

Jinul writes in Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind (tr. Buswell, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 2, p 217):

"It is like the maturation of an infant: from the day of its birth, [an infant] is endowed with all its faculties, just like any other [human being], but its physical capacities are not yet fully developed; it is only after the passage of many months and years that it will finally mature into an adult."

That is, with the view that one should initially attain a first hand realisation of the nature of mind and after that study the teachings and perform the numerous practices, one is in accord with the bodhisattva path where the skilful means (1-5 paramitas) are mingled with and based on wisdom (prajnaparamita). As the Diamond Sutra was quoted to Huineng, 'responding to the nonabiding, yet generating the mind' (tr. McRae), or as often repeated in the sutras, a bodhisattva saves all beings without conceiving any being to be saved. That is one way to approach this.

However, the Bodhidharma quote is in a different context. There, before awakening those practices are powerless, after awakening they are useless. Just before the previous quote in the same text you find the following:

"As long as you look for a buddha somewhere else, you'll never see that your own mind is the buddha. Don't use a buddha to worship a buddha. And don't use the mind to invoke a buddha. Buddhas don't recite sutras. Buddhas don't keep precepts."

That is how Zen is a direct pointing to the nature of mind and not a list of methods and practices to follow. One only needs to confirm personally that this mind reading and thinking, this very consciousness (awareness) is originally without anything to attain or anything to abide on, in other words, it is buddha. As Bodhidharma repeats again and again, there is nothing else transmitted but that the mind is buddha, and that is what can be called the Zen transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 17th, 2014 at 7:03 AM

Title: Re: Zen smell, Zen stink and Zen pong

Content:

Meido said:

Thus my earlier comment that we should freely use these things and not be used by them.

Astus wrote:

I think it is repeated regularly in all Zen communities that one vows to learn immeasurable Dharma-gates. Although that's true for all Mahayana groups, so it's nothing unique to Zen. In fact, the different names and styles give the impression of many distinct sects and paths, including (real/imagined) differences between Soto and Rinzai.

Meido said:

But I did generally explain the utility of ritual, and (since robes were mentioned) also gave a few specific examples of how practice clothing is used.

Astus wrote:

Such approach to physical practice and internal energy seems to me a Rinzai speciality. Monastic robes are (supposed to be) defined by the Vinaya for instance. In China for physical practice there are martial arts, and for rituals there are various tantric elements for instance. But they don't necessarily count as anything related to Zen.

There is a Heine & Wright collection of essays with the title https://books.google.hu/books?id=Q_qAZWejjD4C but I have not yet gotten to read it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 17th, 2014 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Interesting new book

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't see that this paradigm has changed, that is, the connection between meditation and teaching. Although there were reforms as the previous description has faded and lost power, but if someone looks around in current Buddhist teachings that are considered the "best and easiest", it is always strongly associated with meditation (Thai Forest Tradition, Burmese Vipassana, Pure Land, Zen, Vajrayana).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 19th, 2014 at 5:19 AM

Title: Top Ten Issues for Zen Today

Content:

Astus wrote:

Today's blog post by Dosho Port:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/wildfoxzen/2014/11/top-ten-issues-for-zen-today.html>

Topics:

1. Realization vs. Mindfulness
2. Aging white guys vs. everyone else
3. Thorough-going training vs. spiritual by-passing
4. Purpose vs. feeling
5. Ethical investigation vs. moralistic judgements

6. Public vs. private understanding
7. In-person vs. online
8. Monastic vs. householder training
9. Koan vs. shikantaza

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 24th, 2014 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Existence And Causation

Content:

Astus wrote:

All phenomena exist as experience. If it is not experienced, it cannot even be imagined. The nature of experience is that it depends on other experiences, is associated with various memories and concepts, hangs in the duality of subject and object. The very presence of experience is a causal event. So, if something existed outside of causality, it would be only a conceptual supposition, and thus existed only as a mental phenomena within a causal chain.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 24th, 2014 at 6:13 PM

Title: Re: Did the historical Buddha taught Vajrayana Tantra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the perspective of East Asian Mahayana - to what Zen belongs to - the validity of Vajrayana is rarely if ever questioned. There is even a "Secret Teaching Division" (volumes 18-21) in the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka that includes all kinds of Tantric texts. In China many Vajrayana works were translated, especially during the Yuan (Mongolian) dynasty, as the court favoured Tibetan Buddhism. In Japan the Shingon school has existed since the 9th century. So, Tantric teachings and methods are recognised as valid in Mahayana beyond Tibet.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 24th, 2014 at 9:48 PM

Title: Re: Did the historical Buddha taught Vajrayana Tantra?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes of course, Astus, this was never disputed.

Astus wrote:

Just meant as an extension of Meido's response.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 24th, 2014 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Did the historical Buddha taught Vajrayana Tantra?

Content:

Malcolm said:

As above, one cannot consider blessing protective amulets as falling under the heading of Vajrayāna practice, much less Yidam deity practice.

Astus wrote:

I did not mean yidams are used in practice by followers of Zen or other schools, it's just that I did not see people questioning the validity of it (except for some I have only heard of who despise Tantric/Tibetan Buddhism for some reason, but they are hardly if ever known among Western Buddhists).

Hanshan Deqing <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c>:

"You may also recite mantras to receive the secret seal of the Buddhas; it will alleviate your hindrances. This is because all the secret mantras are the seals of the Buddhas' diamond mind. When you use them, it is like holding an indestructible diamond thunderbolt that can shatter everything. Whatever comes close to it will be demolished into dust motes. The essence of all the esoteric teachings of all Buddhas and ancestral masters are contained in the mantras. Therefore, it is said that, "All Tathagatas in the ten directions attained unsurpassable and correct perfect enlightenment through such mantras." Even though the Buddhas have said this clearly, the lineage ancestral masters, fearing that these words may be misunderstood, have kept this knowledge a secret and do not use this method. Nevertheless, in order to derive power from using a mantra, you must practice it regularly after a long and extensive period of time. Yet, even so, you should never anticipate or seek miraculous response from using it."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 24th, 2014 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Did the historical Buddha taught Vajrayana Tantra?

Content:

Malcolm said:

If there is visualization of oneself as a deity, or you invite a deity in front of you, than this is exactly what yidam practice is.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that visualisation practices like those found in the Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra and the Amitayurdhyana Sutra count as yidam practice?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 25th, 2014 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Did the historical Buddha taught Vajrayana Tantra?

Content:

conebeckham said:

In addition to the parameters of "self visualization," or "inviting the deity in front," there

must be "empowerment" of some sort. That's clear in all Vajrayana schools and lineages, whether Tibetan or not--and it's clear in Malcolm's posts, as well.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's clear. My response was a result of a small surprised curiosity that came from focusing only on his short definition of yidam practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 25th, 2014 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Existence And Causation

Content:

Aemilius said:

There are several the buddhist examples of nonexistent phenomena: rabbit's horns, turtle hairs, crow's teeth, and a cloak of turtle hairs. All of these are found in sutras or commentarial literature.

Astus wrote:

"if something existed outside of causality, it would be only a conceptual supposition, and thus existed only as a mental phenomena within a causal chain."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 26th, 2014 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Existence And Causation

Content:

LastLegend said:

"if something existed outside of causality, it would be only a conceptual supposition, and thus existed only as a mental phenomena within a causal chain."

Astus wrote:

Can you explain this further sir?[/quote]

Being outside of causality would mean something not experienced. If it is not experienced, it is neither a physical nor a mental phenomena. And although we may speculate about such things, it amounts to nothing more than conceptual proliferation. For instance, one could draw a rabbit with horns, it is still just a drawing and not a living being. So, whatever we think, it is just a thought, and whatever we name, it is just a name.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 26th, 2014 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Existence And Causation

Content:

LastLegend said:

Does cause and effect still apply?

Astus wrote:

Causality always applies. Is there not a cause for a drawing, for a mental image, for a word, for a thought? Aren't they all impermanent and dependently originated? The only error is believing that they are more than what they are.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 29th, 2014 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Benefits of anthropomorphizing elements and aggregates?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhas are perfectly enlightened beings. Ordinary beings are made of elements and aggregates. That all beings are made of buddhas is a statement connecting the beginning (samsara) with the end (nirvana). It is not that one should see a toenail as a buddha with arms, legs and a golden aura.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 1st, 2014 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Benefits of anthropomorphizing elements and aggregates?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is not that one should see a toenail as a buddha with arms, legs and a golden aura.

Konchog1 said:

So we think "this a buddha with the appearance of a toenail"?

heart said:

No, it is a view where you see everything as inseparable purity and equality.

Astus wrote:

And

lorem said:

So, the heart of the matter is

To know that the dakini is your own mind.

Astus wrote:

So, on the path of means, is it through visualising a deity that one trains in the pure vision, because transforming the object of awareness also transforms the subject, while on the path of liberation one only changes the subject from deluded to knowing? In other words, one sees a shining buddha instead of a toenail on the vajrayana path, while in sutra it is just seeing the illusory nature of the toenail, but the result in both cases the relinquishing of the attachment to the toenail. Or is it in some other way?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 2nd, 2014 at 7:58 AM

Title: Re: Earthly Desires are Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a work with that title by Nichiren: <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Content/35> " onclick="window.open(this.href);return false;

At one point it says,

What is meant by this “wisdom”? It is the entity of the true aspect of all phenomena, and of the ten factors of life that lead all beings to Buddhahood. What then is that entity? It is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. A commentary states that the profound principle of the true aspect is the originally inherent Myoho-renge-kyo. We learn that that true aspect of all phenomena is also the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures [seated together in the treasure tower]. “All phenomena” corresponds to Many Treasures, and “the true aspect” corresponds to Shakyamuni. These are also the two elements of reality and wisdom. Many Treasures is reality; Shakyamuni is wisdom. It is the enlightenment that reality and wisdom are two, and yet they are not two.

These are teachings of prime importance. These are also what is called “earthly desires are enlightenment,” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo during the physical union of man and woman is indeed what is called “earthly desires are enlightenment,” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” “The sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” exists only in realizing that the entity of life throughout its cycle of birth and death is neither born nor destroyed. The Universal Worthy Sutra states, “Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses.” Great Concentration and Insight says, “The ignorance and dust of desires are enlightenment, and the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “At all times I think to myself: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?” The “Expedient Means” chapter says, “The characteristics of the world are constantly abiding.” Surely such statements refer to these principles. Thus what is called the entity is none other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

It seems to me he means the classic Mahayana doctrines of two truths and no-birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Request for something super specific

Content:

Astus wrote:

As an extension to Anders' post distinguishing wilful thinking and general mental activity, the fourth samadhi in Tiantai/Tendai of <http://www.tiantai.net/lit/mksk/v2/v2p2-1p5.htm> talks about the <http://www.tiantai.net/lit/mksk/v2/v2p3-1p1.htm>: "That not yet thought is called 'the mind that has not yet arisen'. The desire to be thought is called 'the mind

that desires to arise'. The thought is called 'remaining in direct connection with the object'. That already thought is called 'leaving the connection with the object'." This is one possible source you can use. The other is the satipatthana (vipassana) method and all the commentaries, as it mentions what mind objects are to be observed and that one should be aware of their rise and fall. A brief look into abhidharma works can also help to inform oneself of what counts as mental dharma, thus no need to make up one's own system. For instance, the http://store.pariyatti.org/Comprehensive-Manual-of-Abhidhamma-A--PDF-eBook_p_4362.html can be of some help, especially the discussion of mental processes and impulses (<http://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=Javana>) in chapter 4.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 4th, 2014 at 1:59 AM

Title: Re: Interesting new book

Content:

Astus wrote:

Robert Sharf:

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf1995,%20Buddhist%20Modernism.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 5th, 2014 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen all about "yogic action"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"When no activity whatsoever is performed" - that is not what Zen is all about. From Patrul Rinpoche's text it is the "direct practice" rather than the gradual one that comes close to Zen. But even then, in Zen there is no difference between "in meditation" and "post-meditation". Recovering the nature of mind means not only freedom from appearances but the unhindered functioning of buddha-mind as well, that is the inseparable unity of the two truths. Here's an illustration:

One day while they were picking tea leaves, Guishan said to Yangshan, "All day today I've heard your voice but I haven't seen your form."

Yangshan then shook the tea tree.

Guishan said, "You attained its function, but you haven't realized its essence."

Yangshan said, "What does the master say?"

Guishan was silent.

Yangshan said, "The master has attained its essence but hasn't realized its function."

Guishan said, "I spare you thirty blows with the staff."

Yangshan said, "If I receive thirty blows of the master's staff, who then will receive thirty blows from me?"

Guishan said, "I spare you thirty blows."

(Zen master Xuanjue said, "I ask you, who made the error here?")

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 146)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 7th, 2014 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What counts as treatment by a tradition? Is it the theoretical framework or the organisational status?

It should also be noted that Buddhist communities always exist within a society and the way the Dharma is interpreted is influenced by the culture. Thus, Westerners - at least those middle-class liberal people who are interested in Buddhism - want to see women as equal, and project that into the Buddha's teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 7th, 2014 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Is Dzogchen only accidentally Buddhist?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The teaching of Dzogchen is not confined to paeans of praise about our natural state. It consists of detailed instructions about the human body, its channels, functions and so on, all of which require ripening through empowerment. If Dzogchen were only about our natural state, it would not go beyond the Prajñāpāramita sūtras.

Astus wrote:

1. If Dzogchen necessarily includes teachings on the channels and such, does it mean that (a) public books on Dzogchen are actually sutra level teachings on emptiness and mindfulness, (b) whoever teaches/practises Dzogchen without deity yoga and/or togal only uses the name Great Perfection but not the real transmission, and (c) semde and longde, since they don't have togal as far as I'm aware, are not really Dzogchen or just preliminaries?

2. It is my impression that teachings where Dzogchen (and Mahamudra) is reduced to abiding in the natural state is practically no different from what is popularly understood as mindfulness, and similar or even identical instructions are given in modern Zen and Theravada. That is, all three of them matches the taste of similar Western practitioners who want a simple and practical technique and not a complete tradition/religion. Consequently the very question of this topic is so much like what can be seen in Theravada and Zen forums labelling Buddhism a cultural baggage, while the meditation practice is called the essence of the Buddha's teaching.

3. If the teaching on the natural state is no different from the Prajnaparamita sutras - that is, you seem to agree to the unity of Dzogchen, Mahamudra and Madhyamaka in terms of the ultimate view - is it your understanding that Dzogchen is a unique way because of its togal instructions and nothing else?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 2:19 AM

Title: Re: Is Dzogchen only accidentally Buddhist?

Content:

Malcolm said:

As far as tregchö goes, there is really no difference between tregchö, Kagyu Mahāmudra and the meditation the view of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana — all three have the same point and all three depend on the experiential view imparted during empowerment.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for your answers. You did not mention anything about the view reached in Madhyamaka, as I take the unity of samsara and nirvana here means Lamdre. Is that because you take it to be a purely intellectual thing, or for some other reasons?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Is Dzogchen only accidentally Buddhist?

Content:

Malcolm said:

because it is an intellectual based on analysis, it is not experientially equivalent with Mahāmudra and Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

I think I don't fully understand what you mean here. Is it that Madhyamaka does not include experiencing emptiness, or is it that their practice results in something different than what they actually teach?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 3:43 AM

Title: Re: Is Dzogchen only accidentally Buddhist?

Content:

Malcolm said:

it means that there is no method of experiential introduction in sutra.

Astus wrote:

You mean the lack of empowerment outside Vajrayana? So it's not that you disregard insight meditation, elements of what is used in Dzogchen, Mahamudra and Lamdre, is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

odysseus said:

How should we interpret this? It's not a "want to see" or projecting anything... It's about Lord Buddha's reality.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism does not control lay society, nor does it really have teachings on political matters. Monastic organisation is regulated by the Vinaya, and there women are somewhat subordinate to men. In terms of Dharma practice, sexual identity is of no concern, never has been.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 4:06 AM

Title: Re: Is Dzogchen only accidentally Buddhist?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The key difference between sutra and tantra is empowerment.

Astus wrote:

I see. Thank you.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As far as I'm aware, there is not one school or tradition that has a female lineage, nor is there any outstanding (or even not so outstanding) treatise by a woman author. All the founders, thinkers and leaders are men. Some may cite here Machig Labdron, however, she is not much more than the legendary transmitter in Tibet of a practice that was only later canonised by male teachers (we are talking about women's social status here, not "religious stories of the past").

Although nunneries enjoyed some level of autonomy, a monastery can exist only from lay support. As men more often receive education and are considered the leaders in society, they have better connections with lay patrons, thus more donations.

Consequently nunneries often depend on male monasteries. Without financial independence and recognition of their merits, it is inevitable that women are generally exist in a lower status as subordinates of monks. There were exceptions, of course.

[https://religiousstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/beata_grant:](https://religiousstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/beata_grant)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=3-X1o6hA53QC>

"Poetry writing assumes, of course, a fairly high degree of literacy. This is particularly true in the case of traditional Chinese poetry, which requires a mastery not only of the

classical language but also, because of the frequent use of intertextual references and allusion, of the larger literary tradition, including poetry, history, and philosophy. This is one of the reasons why women poets are considerably less represented in the Chinese poetic tradition. In China, literacy and literature were traditionally looked upon largely as a means to an end, the end being not so much self-expression and aesthetic fulfillment as an official post in the imperial bureaucracy. Because women were excluded from this career goal, it was not considered vital — indeed many felt it to be morally dangerous—that they be provided more than a rudimentary education, if any at all. Nevertheless, a significant number of women, mostly from elite families, of course, did manage to obtain the classical education that was necessary if they were to write."

(from the introduction to https://books.google.com/books?id=KP_7so49oA8C)

[http://religion.columbia.edu/people/Bernard%20Faure:](http://religion.columbia.edu/people/Bernard%20Faure)
<https://books.google.com/books?id=HidpRwrmx4AC>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 8th, 2014 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nonsense — Yeshe Tsogyal was prolific. There are many, many texts attributed to her.

Astus wrote:

Attributed to her as a terma? I don't consider that the same as being the actual author, although it is not negligible that she stands as an example of a female master.

Malcolm said:

This is also not so: Niguma, Sukhasiddhi, Siddhirajni, Laxminkara, etc., are just a few of the women authors whose works are prominent in Vajrayāna, who are also considered founders of lineages.

Machig is a historical person, and there is no reason to believe she did not author much of what has been attributed to her.

More recently there is Sera Khandro, Tara Lhamo and so on, twentieth century female authors.

They may be rare, but you are overstating the case by a considerable margin.

Astus wrote:

What level of use/importance do the writings (not the transmissions) of those four Indian female authors carry? What I could gather with a brief search is that the actual founder of the Shangpa Kagyu was Khyungpo Naljor, a male monk, who studied with two of the four yoginis. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that this is all irrelevant, but it seems to me that women had no better situation in Tibet than anywhere else. And even if there were some Indian woman siddhas, in their society they were not recognised as anyone important.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 10th, 2014 at 6:53 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I find most of the Mahayana arguments either fabricated or historically bound. Fabricated, as against fictitious sravakas. Historically bound, as to be interpreted within the context of struggle between interpretations and schools. As for the current Theravada and the nikaya texts, there are teachers I find inspiring and to the point, while the scriptures are really superb. I can see the nikayas as the foundational texts, and the rest of Buddhism is elaboration and commentary.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 10th, 2014 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

odysseus said:

Anyhow, most Buddhists (and even non-Buddhists) have heard about Green and White Taras. Just for an argument.

Astus wrote:

I think mostly Vajrayana Buddhists and Hindus may know about Tara, as she's not prominent in East Asia where they have Guanyin, while Theravada doesn't really have anyone beyond Shakyamuni. While the cult of Virgin Mary has been strong in Western countries for more than a thousand years, women did not fare very well within society until the 20th century.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 10th, 2014 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

Well, among the 18 to 20 or so Shravakayana schools of pre-Mahayana Buddhism there were a number of groups who probably did hold a lot of the views ascribed to them in Mahayana texts, in particular most in the Sarvastivada school held that individual Dharma are intrinsically existing.

Astus wrote:

Let's say dharma have self-nature, that they are the final elements of reality. If this is used for meditation, it means one should become aware of distinct categories of experience instead of viewing them as a "personal matter". This becomes quite understandable if one starts to use the noticing-labelling method. From "I am angry" it becomes "there is anger", or just "anger", or just "unpleasant", or just "feeling". The point

is that it loses its edge, its grasp on one's perception. And that's when one can see that it is impermanent, suffering and not self. Once their true characteristics are seen there is no more basis for attachment. If we were to claim that because dharmas are called svabhava there is still attachment it would mean that one has not actually seen the true characteristics of a given dharma, and that is contrary to the very insight gained. Concepts are within the realm of the five aggregates, just as every other possible experience, so they are necessarily released with liberation.

Dan74 said:

The view expressed by Astus is not really that uncommon among Zen practitioners, I think.

Astus wrote:

I think that's partially because if one considers a teaching authentic, i.e. the words of the Buddha, one tries to look at it from the view gained from one's school. That is, instead of interpreting a sutta based on Tsongkhapa, one just looks at it as a Dharma teaching, and tries to make sense of it as such. Practically speaking, many meditation methods used in Mahayana are identical to those used in Hinayana texts. Here's an example, a thesis on one of Kumarajiva's translation:

http://www.thichhangdat.com/files/Master_Thesis.pdf

Dan74 said:

"the rest of Buddhism is elaboration and commentary"

Astus wrote:

The following ideas play here:

- historical sequence of texts, that the nikayas are what the Buddha likely/actually taught
- one vehicle view, that there is only one message that is being transmitted
- teachings are skilful means, they are always adapted to the time and circumstances

So, the first manifestation of the one teaching is found in the nikayas, and then later generations had to apply it to various audiences. It is not that there are better and better teachings, rather only newer forms.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 10th, 2014 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Mind and Motion

Content:

Astus wrote:

Experience is motion and awareness. Motion means that there is change all the time, things come and go. Awareness means that there is consciousness present in experience. Whenever there is awareness, there is awareness of something, and that something changes.

There is no awareness found outside experience, therefore one should not strive for a

blank state where nothing happens. Awareness is not the same as what is experienced, so one should not identify anything as one's true being. Because whatever is experienced always changes, there is nothing that could be held onto, nothing to serve as an abode.

Provisionally it can be said that there is a subjective awareness and the various objects occurring. Such a separation can help initially to put a distance between mind and phenomena, and cultivate detachment and mindfulness. But it's better to see right now that all problems arise from not recognising that awareness and motion exist inseparably in experience every moment. Thus there is nobody (mind) to obtain anything (object).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 11th, 2014 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

it makes them the Sravaka vehicle. I shouldn't need to defend that notion on this forum.

Astus wrote:

That's right, sravakas are important. If one can save oneself, that's already great. I think that those of us exposed to Mahayana teachings (sutra and tantra) can be a little fooled by the rhetoric about how superior the bodhisattvayana is. Although here I might add that the majority of popular Mahayana lineages don't emphasise the bodhisattva career, instead they promise buddhahood in this life or the next.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 11th, 2014 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

the motivation of the bodhisattva path is infinitely superior to the motivation to become an arhat

Astus wrote:

By "bodhisattva career" I meant the aeons of walking the path and even delaying buddhahood intentionally. There is a difference between how buddhahood is interpreted in early and late Mahayana, and it is early Mahayana that focused on becoming a bodhisattva, while late Mahayana is focused on attaining buddhahood as soon as possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Sherlock said:

Delaying Buddhahood is an odd concept if you accept a non-abiding Buddhahood, you can benefit beings on a far greater scale as a fully enlightened Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is odd if buddhas can stay eternally to help beings. But here's a difference between early and late.

"It is noteworthy that, although the term apratisthita is found in the Prajnaparamitas as mentioned above, the compound word consisting of both apratisthita and nirvana is, in all probability, an innovation by the Yogacaras around the time of Asanga or by Asanga himself in his Mahayana-samgraha."

(Nagao & Kawamura: Madhyamika and Yogacara, p 223)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The reality is that there are three different kinds of bodhisattva motivations spoken of in the sūtras, king-like, captain-like and shepherd-like. There really is no evidence to suppose that the shepherd-like motivation existed first, and the other two were taught later. The way this is taught in the Mahāyāna itself is that the King-like bodhicitta is for those with average capacity, with the shepherd-like motivation being for those of best capacity.

Astus wrote:

My knowledge is limited, but I have not yet encountered those three kinds of motivations in East Asian Buddhism, only Tibetan. Could you specify in what sutras, or even shastras (preferably those already translated to English) it is explained?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Becoming a Buddha in Mahayana IS the greatest help to others. It's not as if you stop helping beings once you become one, and just hang in nirvana, that is actually describing personal liberation only, which again is the real big difference here to my mind. That goes for modern Theravada too. Personally most Theravadin teachers I've read are teaching the model of simply getting out of Samsara, this is not the same as Mahayana, and you see that even in context of things like Mahayana refuge vows, and things like nirvana being seen as merely the cessation of samsara, and not full Buddhahood. But yes, despite these differences, I can agree that renunciation of

samsara, the FNT etc. from Sravaka teaching are indispensable, and that Sravakayana is important.

Astus wrote:

If the best choice were becoming a buddha then there would be no bodhisattvas mentioned who intentionally stay to help beings. They don't stay because they have not yet reached the point where they could become buddhas, but because they want to help all beings. As I have posted above, the option for non-abiding nirvana (and the trikaya doctrine) is a somewhat later development. It is no accident that the seventh vow of Samantabhadra is to request the buddhas to remain in the world.

"Again, O Noble-minded Man, what is meant by "beseeching the Buddhas to remain in the world"? The Buddhas are infinite in number as the minutest dust-motes of the ten quarters and three generations throughout the Dharma-realms and cosmic void; and so are the Bodhisattvas, the Sravakas, the Pratyeka-Buddhas, the wholly learned ones, the partly learned ones, and the well learned laymen. When they set their minds on the attainment of Nirvana; I entreat them all to remain in touch with mankind, instead of entering Nirvana; even to the duration of kalpas of Buddha-lands, equal to the minutest dust-motes in number, in order to benefit all living beings."
(http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/samantabhadra.pdf)

But if we consider the case where someone becomes a buddha, ultimately there is no distinction between the buddhas, as the dharmakaya equals the dharmadhatu, and from that appears all the other kayas. Thus the teaching that all buddhas are the manifestation of a single buddha (Vairocana). As the dharmadhatu is eternally present, whether a hundred more beings attain buddhahood or a thousand, it makes no difference in terms of buddha-bodies appearing in infinite number of worlds. In that sense, from the perspective of the individual practitioner, nirvana without remainder and non-abiding nirvana are the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

LastLegend said:

Can you briefly explain how Mahayana and Sravakayana are identical in methods? From my understanding, Zen texts and Sutras such as Diamond and Shurangama have a very distinctive understanding of mind. For example, Bodhidharma's texts say knowing without knowing, seeing without seeing. It sounds like a lot of non-sense there. But I understand that to mean knowing without seeking to know, or contrive to know, or trying to actively to analyze any object/thought in order to know, this way we use not much effort because chasing thought/thinking/mind is delusion. That itself is awareness. Linji said let the mind be ordinary is the Way. While in Sravakayana, it is taught to concentrate a specific point or object, i.e., at the nose or behind the brain or mindfulness of breathing.

I don't think such understanding is conveyed in Sravakayana. Mahayana is hardcore with emptiness and manifesting in practice. To travel without traveling is because the mind has never moved an inch, though there is motion.

Astus wrote:

From Mazu Daoyi's record:

“What kind of knowledge should one have in order to understand the Way?” The master replied, “Self-nature is originally perfectly complete. If only one is not hindered by either good or evil things, he is called a man who cultivates the Way. Grasping good and rejecting evil, contemplating emptiness and entering concentration—all these belong to intentional creation and action. If one seeks further outside, he strays farther away. Just put an end to all mental calculations of the triple world. If one originates a single deluded thought, this is the root of birth and death in the triple world. If one simply lacks a single thought, then he excises the root of birth and death and obtains the supreme treasure of the dharma-king. Since countless kalpas, the deluded thoughts of ordinary man — flattery, deception, self-intoxication, and arrogance — have formed the one body. Therefore, the sutra says, ‘It is only by many dharmas that this body is aggregated. When arising, it is only dharmas arising; when extinguishing, it is only dharmas extinguishing.’ When the dharma arises, it does not say ‘I arise’; when the dharma extinguishes, it does not say ‘I extinguish.’ The former thought, the later thought, and the present thought—all successive moments of thought do not wait for one another, and all successive moments of thought are quiescent and extinct.

(Jinhua Jia: The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- through Tenth-Century China, p 126)

Putting an end to mental calculation, that is the cessation of mental proliferation (Pali: papanca). The description of arising and disappearing dharmas is virtually the same as what you find in the various insight meditation instructions in Theravada. Zen does not really discuss methods, it points to the final insight one needs to realise, that is: emptiness. The basic instruction for zazen is to let things come and go just as they are, because there is nothing to fix or modify. Insight meditation is not exactly like that, but it does come to the point where perceiving the rise and fall of dharmas brings one to liberation. That is, once it is seen clearly that dharmas are impermanent there is no more clinging to them, in other words, no abiding.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Mind and Motion

Content:

LastLegend said:

I pretty much I agree with what you said there, but it sounds like like mindfulness of thought. The real disagreement here is using effort to be aware/mindful of thoughts/motion.

Astus wrote:

If one thinks of something one necessarily knows about that. However, there are different levels of awareness of thoughts, as most of the time they are forgotten the next moment and we end up not understanding the source of the resulting emotions and actions. Thoughts themselves are mostly governed by beliefs and assumptions, and the most fundamental view of them all is that thoughts have essence. The insight required then is to see that thoughts are insubstantial. And even if one can gain that understanding in a single moment, it doesn't mean it cannot be forgotten in the next moment. So, effort may be required both before and after. Before one strives to see the nature of mind. After, one works on reminding oneself of the original realisation.

"Leaving the mind as it is in a relaxed ordinary state without trying to contrive thoughts or create motion in it", isn't that a choice, an effort?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 12th, 2014 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is a very rash assertion — you are posting the opinion of one modern scholar as a fact when he himself in the very quote you cite is clearly guessing. This exemplifies exactly what is wrong with modern Buddhology.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how it is incorrect what the quote says. Can you find the term in a PP sutra or early Madhyamaka? Just did a quick search for it (無住涅槃) in the Great PP Sutra (大般若波羅蜜多經) and no match. Then I continued and found the followings (Taisho volume, number of texts): 16 (2), 18 (2), 19 (7), 20 (4), 25 (3), 26 (2), 30 (1), 31 (8), 32 (3), 33 (5), 34 (2), 35 (2), 36 (1), 38 (1), 39 (3), 40 (5), 42 (2), 43 (3), 44 (2), 45 (4), 46 (1), 48 (1). Here's a guide to what the various volumes contain:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 13th, 2014 at 1:29 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Such teachings as this are the basis for the term "non-abiding nirvana."

Astus wrote:

No question about that, that from one developed the other. My point is rather that first it was the bodhisattva that was perceived as a being possessing the active force to stay in samsara, while buddhas eventually attained parinirvana, although before that they did teach and were superior to bodhisattvas. The Mahaprajnaparamitasutra says that once a bodhisattva attained irreversibility, he has a choice whether to stay with beings until the end or go for buddhahood. However, if buddhas were superior and could have also

stayed with beings, then choosing to remain a bodhisattva is indeed pointless. Nevertheless, Mahayana has a number of such bodhisattvas who intentionally stick around, although interestingly (or logically) some of them are regarded as buddhas in Vajrayana (e.g. Chenrezig and Kuntuzangpo).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 13th, 2014 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Furthermore, if what you say is the case, how do can you reconcile that with the fact that Śakamuni Buddha in fact attained Buddhahood eons and eons ago?

Astus wrote:

And the Nirvana Sutra has a similar chapter as well on the Buddha's adamantine body. I don't see why there is a need for reconciliation. It is one of the first examples of transferring the eternal dharmakaya to an eternally active buddha, although it still says that Shakyamuni never goes extinct (nirvana), that is, it is either this shore or the other.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 15th, 2014 at 7:51 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana opinions of Theravada?

Content:

Malcolm said:

However, you grandly claimed a few posts ago that non-abiding nirvana was a "late" development. But we see here that the Buddha taught it. So?

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra does not say non-abiding nirvana, nor even contains the idea that there is any other nirvana than what was taught in the agamas and PP sutras.

['s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tao_Sheng) commentary (completed in 432) on the life-span chapter equates the Buddha with ultimate reality. His introduction to the chapter says,

"There is no way that the Sage can be in that category. Only the deluded would count the actual life-span of the Buddha as a hundred years. Now such a [mental] impediment is driven out. [The Buddha] relies on [the theory of] longevity to dispel it. Thus this chapter is titled "Life-Span."" (tr. Young-Ho Kim, p 294)

As the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html says,

"What the World-honored One has explained as the view of self, view of person, view of sentient being, and view of life span, are actually not a view of self, view of person, view of sentient being, or view of life span. Therefore they are called view of self, view of person, view of sentient being, and view of life span."

And the 31st chapter of PP8000,

"Tathagatas certainly do not come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. Because Suchness does not move, and the Tathagata is Suchness. Non-production does not come nor go, and the Tathagata is non-production. One cannot conceive of the coming or going of the reality- limit, and the Tathagata is the reality-limit." (tr. Conze, p 291)

The Lifespan chapter agrees with the above when it says,

"Because the Tathāgata perceives all the marks of the triple world as they really are: that there is no birth and death, coming or going; that there is also no existence or extinction in the world, truth or falsehood, sameness or difference. The Tathāgata does not view the triple world as sentient beings in the triple world see it." (tr. Kubo & Yuyama, p 225)

This chapter of the Lotus Sutra also says,

"Although my Pure Land never decays,
The sentient beings see it as ravaged by fire
And torn with anxiety and distress;
They believe it is filled with these things.
Because of their misdeeds
These erring sentient beings do not hear
The name of the Three Treasures
For incalculable kalpas.
But all who cultivate merit,
And are receptive and honest,
Will see me residing here,
Expounding the Dharma."
(p 230)

And this,

"The lifespan that I first attained through practicing the bodhisattva path has not yet expired."
(p 225)

So, the chapter actually tells us that on the one hand the Buddha eternally abides in no birth, that is the ultimate reality that can be seen by anyone who practises correctly. On the other hand, the longevity is the result of the merit from the bodhisattva cultivation that eventually expires. Or, the two sides actually stand for the same, that is, suchness as the Buddha's true nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 16th, 2014 at 12:14 AM

Title: Re: the lesser yogi and the greater yogi

Content:

Malcolm said:

Since the merit cultivated on the bodhisattva path is limitless, its effects will be limitless. Or are you saying there is some limit to objectless dedications and so on that is not mentioned in the sūtras.

In short, it is very clear that in Mahāyāna the nirvana enjoyed by the Buddha does not entail the absolute cessation of his continuum. Further, there are the five certainties of the Sambhogakāya, and in terms of the two rūpakāya, the Sambhogakāya is definitive, whereas the nirmanakāya shows up here and there like the illusion of an illusionist.

Astus wrote:

I have only followed what the sutra implies by stating that the merit gathered on the bodhisattva path has not yet expired.

It seems to me that such an absolute cessation, as it is attributed to Hinayana, is a misinterpretation even from a Nikaya perspective where the Buddha explicitly denies that option (SN 22.85-86; MN 72; AN 4.174, etc.). And similarly to Mahayana's view on the true nature of the dharmakaya, nirvana is considered beyond conceptualisation (MN 44).

Where this discussion has started was that I have stated that early Mahayana favoured staying a bodhisattva, and one of the reasons for that was the lack of the concept of non-abiding nirvana of buddhas. Once buddhas got the same active position as bodhisattvas, the goal has moved to attaining buddhahood. Then almost everyone started to regard the bodhisattva path too long and arduous and various means to attain buddhahood swiftly occurred. So, we could say that there has never been the case that people had a far away goal in mind, instead they aimed for being an arhat/bodhisattva/buddha in this very life, because then that was the best and highest goal.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 18th, 2014 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Which Buddhist tradition has treated women the best?

Content:

quote said:

The number of realized women and women lineage holders in Tibetan Buddhism far outstrips any other tradition.

Astus wrote:

To this I'd like to add that where bhikshunis still exist there have always been abbesses and women in various positions within the confines of their monasteries, and occasionally they could gather some lay support as well. But they have been neglected both by the mainstream tradition, while at the same time there are not many studies out there either.

Malcolm said:

I don't know about Gelug or Kagyu, but there have been many outstanding women masters in both Sakya and Nyingma.

Astus wrote:

Have you reviewed your 2012 view on women in Tibetan Buddhism?

Malcolm said:

What it has come to mean in the context of Tibetan society is that women are more suited to menial work. Off the top of my head, I can think of only five Tibetan women who authored texts prior to the mid-twentieth century -- Yeshe Tsogyal, Machig Labdron, Jomo Menmo, Migyur Paldron (daughter of Terdag Lingpa) and Sera Khandro. There are only four or so significant Indian women who authored texts too, Siddhirajni, Niguma, Sukhasiddhi, and Laksminkara.

The fact is that Tibetan Buddhism is completely patriarchal and sexist -- in fact it is pretty toxic for women in general and is in much need of reform (some of which is happening).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 19th, 2014 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: the lesser yogi and the greater yogi

Content:

Malcolm said:

The term "non-abiding nirvana" does not exist in sūtras, true, but it is a concept used to explain how nirvana explained in Mahāyāna sutras is different than Hinayāna nirvana.

...

Which I showed exists in the sutras such as the Lotus and so on, not merely in the Maitreya corpus.

Astus wrote:

The term is not in the early sutras and it is used in Yogacara works to explain the state of the buddhas. That is, before Asanga there was no such explanation for what the sutras contain, and the sutras themselves don't actually specify.

Malcolm said:

The criticism of Hinayanist nirvana-as-total-cessation is present in Mahāyāna everywhere.

Astus wrote:

Yes. And the idea of total cessation is rejected even in the Nikayas, not only in Mahayana sutras. It is actually among the set of questions not answered by the Buddha.

Malcolm said:

Since when were Buddhas ever inactive in Mahāyāna?

Astus wrote:

They do talk of parinirvana, and what people should do after the Buddha's demise, how stupas should be revered, etc. What sutras do you know that discuss the buddhas activities after their parinirvana? Besides the Lotus Sutra that does not actually say that as mentioned above already.

Malcolm said:

This is not what happened at all. No matter which Mahāyāna path one follows, one still has to gather the two accumulations via the bodhisattva path.

Astus wrote:

I see a significant difference between ideas that one should stay a bodhisattva indefinitely and that one can reach buddhahood even in this life. I don't see early Mahayana sutras emphasising that one should become a buddha, rather they talk about being a proper non-returning bodhisattva, someone who realises that there is actually nothing to attain, thus could become a buddha any time but chooses not to. Such a choice is nonsense if a buddha is simply a better bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 4th, 2015 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: To Study the Self.

Content:

Q said:

" To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. " ~
Dōgen Zenji 1200-1253

What does it mean to study the self?. To forget the self?. How does studying lead to forgetting?

Astus wrote:

There is no Buddhadharma outside the mind, outside one's own realm of experience. The path is not beyond the six senses. Studying is taking a new look at what happens right now, instead of following concepts learnt previously. To forget is not to make up views and ideas that project permanence on the ever changing flow of perceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 5th, 2015 at 12:56 AM

Title: Re: Request for something super specific

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shamatha is about manipulating one's experience, to bring the mind to a peaceful and lucid state. Vipashyana is about understanding one's experience, to bring the mind to a peaceful and lucid state. While manipulation has temporary benefits, understanding can be permanent. The difference regarding thoughts is not that they do not occur but how they disappear. During shamatha the mind is occupied with an object and that's

how everything else can freely come and go. During vipashyana one knows (learns) there is nothing to grasp, or rather there is no reason for attachment to arise, so everything can freely come and go. Being lost in concepts is an ordinary beings attitude. Blocking conceptualisation through meditative focus is a practitioners attitude. Seeing concepts to be mental fabrication without substance is the wisdom free from ignorance.

As long as there are states we want to keep or achieve the understanding of emptiness is missing. Once phenomena are seen to be without meaning or essence, what could be left to struggle for?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 9th, 2015 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: On uprooting samsara

Content:

Astus wrote:

As long as one perceives that there are beings there is inevitably the idea that all could eventually cease to exist. A bodhisattva has no such perception or idea, thus liberates all beings. Samsara is without a root.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 10th, 2015 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Can you purify past karma coming our way?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is an example of how past karma is experienced by a liberated one:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.3.01.than.html>

Explanation and commentary: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/39.3-Sabbakammajaha-S-u3.1-piya.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 12th, 2015 at 4:25 AM

Title: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could someone please sum up how the recitation of a sutra title relates to insight into interdependence? Recitation seems like good samatha, but where does vipasyana come into the picture?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 12th, 2015 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land Contradicts Buddha Teachings....

Content:

Astus wrote:

一食之頃 - short time of one meal

23rd vow:

"If, when I attain buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land who would make offerings to buddhas through my divine power should not be able to reach immeasurable and innumerable koṭis of nayutas of buddha lands in as short a time as it takes to eat a meal, may I not attain perfect enlightenment."
(Larger Sutra, tr. Inagaki, BDK ed. p 15)

設我得佛。國中菩薩。承佛神力供養諸佛。一食之頃 不能遍至無量無數億那由他諸佛國者不取正覺。
(T12n0360_p0268b15-17)

"The Buddha said to Ānanda, "By the Buddha's power, bodhisattvas of that land go to innumerable worlds of the ten directions, in as short a time as it takes to eat a meal, in order to pay homage and make offerings to the buddhas and World-honored Ones."
(p 37)

佛語阿難。彼國菩薩承佛威神。一食之頃 往詣十方無量世界。恭敬供養諸佛世尊。
(273c04-05)

未食之前 - before meal

"After thus worshiping the buddhas, they quickly return home to the Pure Land before their meal."
(p 37)

供養佛已 未食之前。忽然輕舉還其本國。
(273c14)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 13th, 2015 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thank you for your answer, Queequeg. So if I got it right, Nichiren did not particularly teach anything in line with Tendai's shikan, instead formed a teaching that focuses on faith and worship of the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni, similarly to the Pure Land teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 14th, 2015 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

LastLegend said:

It does not. It does not need to. Interdependence is within concept while what is taught in Lotus Sutra and other Mahayana Sutras such as Diamond and Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra by Manjusri is the inconceivable teaching. By upholding the Lotus Sutra, one is upholding the inconceivable teaching.

Astus wrote:

I think there is no need to explain a faith based practice as if it were anything more than that. As I understand Queequeg's posts, Nichiren intentionally taught the recitation of the sutra title and the worship of the mandala. He was a trained Tendai priest familiar with Chigi's Makashikan and other meditation techniques. However, it seems to me that Nichiren's reason for emphasising recitation of the title is his belief that on the one hand training in shikan is too difficult for most in the mappo, and on the other hand that the title bestows (the seeds of) the Buddha's merits and wisdom

(<http://fraughtwithperil.com/ryuei/2014/05/19/odaimoku-as-the-seed-of-buddhahood/>). So, reciting the title is not actually a practice of shikan, nor is it the realisation of interdependence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 15th, 2015 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

Queequeg,

My knowledge of Tiantai doctrine is superficial, and I am even less familiar with its Japanese permutations. I know a little more about Chan and Zen, a tradition that is explicitly (and perhaps even extremely) teaches sudden enlightenment. In Zen one directly goes to total liberation, to freedom from views and attachment, the very goals of the Buddha's teaching in any vehicle. So, if reciting the title equals enlightenment, in what way can repeating specific words bring that about? Don't take this the wrong way, but it sounds to me like attributing magical powers to a set of syllables. Pure Land's recitation of the name is said to be effective because one intentionally and consciously connects with Amitabha, and through that one gains birth in his land - this is understandable on the basis of how devotional activity creates karma. Thus what I can see so far in Nichiren's teaching is the way how devotion towards Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra forms a karmic bond. But being devoted to the ultimate truth is not the same as realising it, otherwise taking refuge in the Three Jewels is equal to becoming a buddha and then all Buddhists are buddhas. Can you tell me how it is then that Odaimoku includes becoming enlightened to interdependence?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 16th, 2015 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Queequeg said:

What does your superficial knowledge of Tiantai entail? What do you know about the Lotus and Mahaparinirvana Sutras?

Astus wrote:

I am aware of some general concepts in Tiantai, like the three truths, four samadhis, five periods and the six identities. I have also read the Smaller Calming and Contemplation (小止觀), the Six Wonderful Gates (六妙門), pieces of the Great Calming and Contemplation (摩訶止觀) that are available in English, and The Collected Teachings of the Tendai Lotus School (BDK publication). I have read the Lotus Sutra and some parts of the Nirvana Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 16th, 2015 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Depending Origination

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are clear and perfectly followable meditation instructions.

First of all, meditation on breathing is a fundamental one, and it is more than just watching it. It includes the whole path from ordinary being to enlightenment.

For the basics, look at the various instructions on "anapanasati", as it is presented in the suttas and the Theravada school. Lot of teachings. Vipassana in general is also about realising no self.

If you want the Mahayana version, one of the best is Zhiyi's http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm. But maybe it is a bit difficult because of the language used. So, as previously posted, there are quite a few books out there by modern authors giving you all the details. Some of those not yet mentioned:

Gen Lamrimpa: How To Realize Emptiness

The Dalai Lama: Stages of Meditation

Thrangu Rinpoche:

- Teachings on the Practice of Meditation
- Essentials of Mahamudra: Looking Directly at the Mind
- Essential Practice: Lectures on Kamalashila's Stages of Meditation in the Middle Way School
- The Middle-way Meditation Instructions: Developing Compassion Through Wisdom : Based on Mipham Rinpoche's Gateway to Knowledge

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 17th, 2015 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: Being introduced to the nature of mind -- ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Might be of some interest: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=100&t=5349>
(discussion in the Mahamudra forum)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 17th, 2015 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: sex and romance

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a number of answers for that out there.

1. Ideology and practical application rarely match.

in Buddhist terms:

- this is the Dharma ending age where few people can truly achieve liberation
- the path is only for a few exceptional beings

2. There is always a better ideology.

in Buddhist terms:

- bodhisattvas only manifest as worldly people with families to save beings
- desire is the path of a true practitioner

3. No ideology is the best ideology.

in Buddhist terms:

- desire is enlightenment
- it's all just illusion

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 17th, 2015 at 10:28 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Queequeg said:

From the Mohochihkuan

Astus wrote:

That quote is like the idea that the first arousal of bodhicitta equals buddhahood in principle. It does not mean one actually is a buddha.
(<http://www.tientai.net/lit/mksk/v1/v1p1-4p9.htm>)

Queequeg said:

One more question: have you ever undertaken to Chant the Daimoku as a daily practice? That will be another factor in this discussion.

Astus wrote:

No, I'm not a Nichiren follower, just curious about the teachings. I want to know if it is a school where they use chanting as the primary practice but at the same time they rely on wisdom.

Here is something from Nichiren's <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Content/1> (a section that originally piqued my interest):

A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality. Arouse deep faith, and diligently polish your mirror day and night. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

What then does myō signify? It is simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. When we look into our own mind at any moment, we perceive neither color nor form to verify that it exists. Yet we still cannot say it does not exist, for many differing thoughts continually occur. The mind cannot be considered either to exist or not to exist. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality. Myō is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and hō, to its manifestations. Renge, which means lotus flower, is used to symbolize the wonder of this Law. If we understand that our life at this moment is myō, then we will also understand that our life at other moments is the Mystic Law. This realization is the mystic kyō, or sutra. The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our life, which manifests either good or evil at each moment, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law. If you chant Myoho-renge-kyo with deep faith in this principle, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

My naive interpretation is that it connects insight into the nature of mind (empty and functional) with recitation. But there is no further discussion there on that. Do you know more like the above?

BTW, why is it that they translate dharma as life? It is pretty confusing and unusual.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 18th, 2015 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Being introduced to the nature of mind -- ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the relation between Lojong instruction on absolute bodhicitta and introduction

to the nature of mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 19th, 2015 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Either/Or <---> And

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rainboyo,

If I get you, you mean that while we have all sorts of concepts it is through mental reflection - and here I guess you mean conducting an analytical meditation as prescribed in vipasyana instructions, or putting oneself into the position of the watcher and observing emerging concepts - one can discover a non-conceptual perception that connects directly with reality and results in clear awareness and compassion.

If that is what you mean, then yes, that is kind of the idea, although it is rather the first step whence one has to move on to see that concepts themselves are just concepts and there is no need to remove them.

Ayu,

As LastLegend says, all four options are extremes.

1. Existence - this is taking something to have a permanent substance.
2. Non-existence - this is taking something to disappear completely or not exist at all.
3. Existence and non-existence - this involves both errors of the first two positions.
4. Neither existence nor non-existence - there is no third option besides something either as existent or non-existent.

The problem with the fourth option is that (1) it still tries to fix a real entity, (2) it is trying to wiggle out of logical constraints, (3) it can still serve as a view one attaches to.

Just consider the followings:

- I am neither alive nor dead.
- I am neither pregnant nor not pregnant.
- I am neither at home nor somewhere else.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 19th, 2015 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: emptiness wisdom, conceptual understanding, stepping sto

Content:

LastLegend said:

How does one go from conceptual understanding of emptiness to relinquishing of all views [even view of emptiness]? If conceptual understanding of emptiness is necessary, at which point it is no longer necessary? If conceptual understanding of emptiness is

not necessary, how is one be able to relinquish of all views?

Astus wrote:

Wisdom is gained from (1) learning, (2) understanding and (3) confirming.

1. First one learns that appearances are without permanent substance.
2. Next one understands through various explanations and arguments what a substance is and why it cannot exist.
3. Finally one observes in one's own personal experience that the teaching is valid.

Example:

1. Statement: all phenomena appearing within the six sensory gates are impermanent.
2. Explanation: everything sensed and perceived change, they appear and disappear, there is nothing that stays.
3. Confirming: in a comfortable place with a calm and attentive attitude one observes that indeed there is nothing seen, heard, sensed or thought that does not change.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 20th, 2015 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: emptiness wisdom, conceptual understanding, stepping sto

Content:

Astus wrote:

Learning, understanding and confirming are the various stages one has to go through to gain wisdom, not three separate ways. Prajnaparamita is the result, the wisdom attained at the end of the path of studying (i.e. learning, understanding and confirming).

Attachment is based on the thought that there is a substance. Through studying emptiness one's view is corrected and there is no more reason for grasping. Just as believing the rope to be a snake incites fear, correcting that belief removes fear. It is non-conceptual in the sense that the very attachment to concepts is what is corrected by learning that they have no true essence.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 20th, 2015 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: emptiness wisdom, conceptual understanding, stepping sto

Content:

LastLegend said:

According to the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu, each of us has the basic wisdom. He said, for example, when we see smoke from a far distance, we know all that something is burning. This basic wisdom is what we use to see the 5 skandhas as empty. I am not quite sure if this basic wisdom is different from conceptual understanding or separate from conceptual understanding. For example, when we see a tiger, is it the thought of "tiger" that knows that tiger or the know that knows the tiger along with the thought of "tiger"?

Astus wrote:

The example that from seeing smoke one assumes there is fire is a classic one for inference. Regarding the aggregates one does not need that as they are experienced directly, in fact, the five aggregates are what experience is. Still, one needs to reflect on one's experience and understand what it is and how it works. Without reflection there is no understanding and no wisdom. It is actually the lack of reflection why beings suffer. And yes, reflection is a conceptual effort.

If one sees a tiger, unless one knows what it is there is no way to discern whether it is a dangerous animal or not. Without knowing the difference between poisonous and harmless fruits one can happily eat both. There is no such thing as an inherent biologist in one's mind. But humans do have the ability to learn and understand.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 20th, 2015 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: emptiness wisdom, conceptual understanding, stepping sto

Content:

LastLegend said:

is it necessary to know emptiness conceptually?

Astus wrote:

No, there are quite a few other teachings one can learn and use for liberation, like suffering, impermanence, dependent origination, buddha nature, mind only. But there is always some level of conceptual understanding involved.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 22nd, 2015 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Queequeg said:

We generally don't break things down like that because we seek a direct connection to the True Aspect - not a circumscribed expedient. We are, as it is, inseparable from the True Aspect, so what can we do that is not involved in this path? Daimoku is an explicit statement of this teaching.

Astus wrote:

I think I still fail to see how a string of syllables and its recitation relates to any insight. Although theoretically it can be explained how the Lotus Sutra itself is the ultimate truth, I can't really put my finger on its actual and practical meaning.

For example, in the Six Wonderful Gates, there are clear stages: counting, following and stabilisation goes as the coarse, subtle and no object for calming the mind, gradually relinquishing objects. It is followed by contemplation, turning and purification where one recognises the emptiness of the object, the subject and thus gains liberation. If I want to consider the recitation of the sutra title as a practice, it fits into the same level as counting the breath. To say that recitation equals realisation, at least as far as I can

understand, means that the whole path is pointless. while at the same time there is no practical relation shown between recitation and realisation besides stating that one just has to believe it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 24th, 2015 at 1:36 AM

Title: Re: Impermanence

Content:

Astus wrote:

All beings want peace and happiness. Things are impermanent and thus they provide neither peace nor happiness. Once no stability is sought for there is nothing else left to achieve. Then and there is peace and happiness.

Life with meaning is samsara. Life without meaning is nirvana.

(See previous topic: <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=15425>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 24th, 2015 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Odaimoku and Insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see no problem with the theory that the title represents the essence of the sutra, and the sutra contains the essence of the whole Buddhadharma. The whole world in a single atom, the three-thousand world in a single thought. And this all can be learnt and understood if one has the time and capacity to study the teachings. But, (1) that's not yet the direct realisation of interdependence, and (2) without actually going through the scriptures and treatises the title itself bears no meaning. Even in Pure Land Buddhism one needs some level of knowledge of Amitabha and Sukhavati, develop faith, and only after that has the recitation of the buddha's name any value. For the recitation of the sutra title to become a perfect practice and not just chanting some foreign words there has to be perfect realisation. To connect recitation and realisation it is not enough to explain how theoretically it could be one, as even a single letter can be the expression of the whole teaching, but just because almost every language has the 'A' sound doesn't mean people understand it as the ultimate truth. So, is there any teaching in the Nichiren tradition where they put down how insight is included in the practice, not in terms of theorising about the ultimate nature of things, but how the very act of pronouncing something contains insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 25th, 2015 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Impermanence

Content:

Konchok Namgyal said:

However ultimate reality is a bit different.

Astus wrote:

What separate reality do you say there is besides impermanent phenomena? It is because things are impermanent that they can be called empty, and there is no emptiness besides appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 26th, 2015 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: eradicating defilements

Content:

Astus wrote:

"According to this teaching, simply the awareness that you are deluded, which comes from practising zazen, makes you, in reality, a Buddha. It's zazen that teaches us that we too are deluded, and hence delivers us from this delusion. When we actually practice zazen and look carefully at all the deluded ideas that keep popping up, we realize how ordinary we are and how little we have to be proud of or to brag about; nothing to do other than quietly hide away. This is, after all, what we truly are."

(<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/yokoyama.html#2>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 28th, 2015 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: "Gateless Gate" a correct translation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm> answers the question.

From the preface:

Buddhism makes mind its foundation and no-gate (無門) its gate (法門).

The Great Way is gateless (無門),

Approached in a thousand ways.

Once past this checkpoint (關)

You stride through the universe.

From the comment on the first case:

In order to master Zen, you must pass the barrier (關) of the patriarchs. To attain this subtle realization, you must completely cut off the way of thinking. If you do not pass the barrier (關), and do not cut off the way of thinking, then you will be like a ghost clinging to the bushes and weeds. Now, I want to ask you, what is the barrier (關) of the patriarchs? Why, it is this single word "Mu." (無) That is the front gate (關) to Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 28th, 2015 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: "Gateless Gate" a correct translation?

Content:

LastLegend said:

What does " Mu" mean?

Astus wrote:

http://cojak.org/index.php?function=code_lookup&term=7121 - not to have / no / none / not / to lack / un- / -less

Regarding the koan, start here: <http://blog.oup.com/2012/04/four-myths-about-zen-buddhisms-mu-koan/>.

The complete work: <https://books.google.com/books?id=1eLUAAAAQBAJ>

Might also look into this one as well:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=BGpH1Q3zK74C>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 29th, 2015 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: "Gateless Gate" a correct translation?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I wouldn't go down that road. Heine is a scholar, not a teacher. When working with the Mu koan, it is far better, IMO, to work with a teacher and follow teachers' instructions, like Dahui's instructions. Later, it can be valuable to look at scholarly contributions, but early on, they are bound to just introduce more confusion.

Astus wrote:

That depends on how one approaches Zen. If you mean following the method of using the word or the story as an object of meditation, that does not require much explanations, the Mumonkan itself gives the basic instructions. However, that is not the only path in Zen, it is just one of the many options. Of course, it is a matter of personal taste.

Here's one from the Korean tradition on the 10 faults of hwadu practice, generally applied to the Mu koan:

There are ten kinds of faults for the points of stories (hwadu):

to ponder it with the faculty of intention (manas);

to estimate (subtle movements of the mind such as) where you raise eyebrows and blink eyes;

to seek your livelihood on the path of language;

to draw evidence from writings;

to try to be enlightened only where it is raised up;

to toss it away into a casket of no concerns;

to make understanding (of it in terms) of (it as) existence or non-existence;

to make an understanding of (it as) the truly non-existent;
to make an understanding of it as reason;
and to hold onto delusion and wait to be enlightened.
(Mirror of Seon in Collected Korean, vol 3, p. 80))

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 30th, 2015 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Experience itself is change. If there were no change, either it would be constantly experienced or never at all. Because there is change there cannot be any permanent essence, substance, self or true being. Change itself is emptiness, because whatever changes must be empty of self (permanent entity). Change is experience, and experience is awareness. If we are not aware of it, it is not experienced, and if it is not experienced we cannot say there is or is not any change. All change happens because of causes and conditions, that is, because of previous changes, thus past, present and future form a single causally conditioned continuity.

So, based on the above:

"But, are these movements intrinsically empty/void, and thus illusory?"

Movement is necessarily empty. What is it empty of? A permanent essence.

"Or, are stillness and movement one and the same, with movement being intrinsically pure and real? Does the old analogy of the lake with ripples hold true? Are the ripples illusory and to be discarded, or are they one with the lake and share the same substance?"

Stillness is a passing experience, so it is actually movement. There is nothing that could be kept or discarded. Holding on and rejecting both contain the idea of a real thing, an essence, that one should manipulate. The will to manipulate, the desire for control, is the cause of suffering based on the ignorance of the true nature of reality, that is, that everything changes.

"If all suffering, joy, creativity and phenomena arise from conditions, and those conditions arise from movements in the mind, how does mind initiate the movement? If mind is essentially still and pure, how can movement arise?"

Still and pure means not deluded about the nature of reality, thus not grasping and rejecting. That the mind is originally pure and still means that grasping and rejecting comes from the belief that experience is the experience of substantial phenomena. It is not that there was first a pure mind that got contaminated, rather that one should turn one's attention from meddling with phenomena and see that there is no substantial entity anywhere, that everything changes according to causes and conditions.

"If there is nothing to be aware of, then there is no self. This seems to agree with some Zen teachings, I read about the senses being pollutants - as soon as I see something, I am polluted (can't remember the exact text). When I close my eyes, I can't see anything, so I am not being 'polluted' by visible things."

Pollution is attachment, not the object of attachment. Whether you open or close your eyes, attachment is still there. Realise that all experience comes and goes, then there is nothing to attach to.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 31st, 2015 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Kwan-um: How to work with a koan?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Number one favourite answer: discuss it with your teacher. But let's put aside that for now.

Phrase investigation (ganhwa) is a great method. If you want some general info, start here: http://koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020.

To sit with a gongan simply means "work on it". Working on it is carrying it with you all day long, asking questions, constantly knocking on the gate of no gate (i.e. using thoughts to realise what is beyond thinking). That is, exhausting all the possible answers until you arrive at the point where only a big question mark remains. Then you keep going on with that great doubt. Because great doubt is without conceptualisation but at the same time it is vivid and aware. Then comes a point where you realise for yourself that this whole process is just your own making, that problems and solutions are all just mental games, and once you don't grasp at an idea there is no further complication.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 1st, 2015 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Non-abiding awareness is no different from your present experience, just as it is. The mind can be in any state, it does not matter. What matters is the ideology you come up with for your situation, for your actions. It is not that you cannot have thoughts, you cannot theories about any and every thing. Just consider the volumes of teachings by the Buddha and Dharma teachers throughout the ages. Non-abiding awareness is not establishing oneself in any ultimate truth, in any final reality, in any definite self.

Dissatisfaction comes from the conviction that one's present situation should be something different, from hoping for something better and fearing something worse. Underlying that conviction is a set of values and preferences, an ideology of how things

should be. Not abiding anywhere is to see that such ideologies are conceptual constructs, mental fabrications without ultimate value or essence.

When one has to do the dishes there are various ways to go about it. Feeling bored, annoyed, motivated or perhaps even elated. All of those feelings can occur depending on one's thoughts about doing the dishes. Then there is the idea that one should do them mindfully. As long as being mindful means the exclusion of feelings and thoughts, concentrating only on the present moment, failure is guaranteed. That is because there is still the concept that one should remain in a specific state, that something should last for ever. However, when one is mindful of whatever thoughts, feelings and sensory inputs come up, there is no wish for a specific state, something to be, something to become, then there is no abiding in an idealised concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 1st, 2015 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes, there is awareness and there is acceptance. If by those words what is meant is on the one hand the primal awareness that is inherent in every experience, and on the other acceptance is the basic openness of the boundless consciousness that allows anything and everything to occur and also disappear as experience. It is not a special state to cultivate or discover but the original quality of life as it is. For example, hearing can happen because there is not a single sound that is constantly there, so all sounds can come and go without hindrance. You don't have to force hearing, you don't have to wish it, concentrate on it, there is simply hearing. Same goes for the other five senses. What brings us astray, what creates an abiding awareness is taking a mental image, a thought, as the ideal state we want to identify with. Like thinking of a single voice we want to hear and being agitated by all the other sounds. Again, it doesn't mean that one should not have any intention or direction. It is idealising a present, past or future state and holding to it as the truth, as a self that binds us and clouds our perception.

We can play with how we look at things, what kind of attention we cultivate, and we do that all the time. At the same time, attention is conditioned by our personality and our environment. When we are driven by an idea we forget to reflect on the situation, both inner and outer conditions, and go blindly. When we recognise our idea as an idea, as a mental figment, then we gain the freedom of awareness and see our situation.

"Can it be said also that non-abidance would be a state where you notice distractions? This includes thoughts and emotions - so that you're attention is not pulled away from what you are doing?"

That is just being attentive to one's present state. Non-abidance is just seeing oneself as one is, distracted or not. It does not limit one's mental functions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

Dan74 said:

In Tibetan Buddhism many texts are restricted and I sometimes wonder if the same would be good for Zen because we are liable to misunderstand things or if not misunderstand, misuse. All Zen teachings are aimed at seeing our original nature and attain liberation from delusion. They are not concepts or truths. They are pointers to be utilised and not to be clung to.

Astus wrote:

Zazen is open to all, anyone can practise it. It is nothing difficult either. Complications occur when one loses the correct posture of not grasping thoughts or the lack of thoughts. So, one should simply return to the right view. Then everything is clear and obvious.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Astus, from Zhiyi to Hakuin and modern masters, you must surely know the admonitions about wrong practice and the many who practice wrongly. The masters would not have wasted their breath if it was a trivial matter. Are you sure you're on the right track?

Astus wrote:

It is possible to give names of people who propagated a long and arduous path, and people who talked about an easy and direct entrance. Zhiyi was actually both, who covered gradual and sudden equally. For instance, Dogen travelled to China when he was 23, met Rujing when he was 25 and after two years went back to Japan to start his own school at the age of 28. Then among his first writings, in the http://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html, we find: "The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment." And in the <http://www.zc.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>: "This is the practise of realization, and so from the beginning practice is the whole body of original Awakening. ... Practice is always already inseparable from realization. Because practice, even from the beginning, Transmits an endowment of wonderful practice, we fortunately and naturally receive a share of original realization."

While there is a difference between correct and incorrect practice, it is hard to talk about stages in zazen without denying that it is practice-realisation. If there is no simple and easy access to zazen it is no use to anyone. That does not mean there is no effort or understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

LastLegend said:

I can say that in almost all Mahayana Sutras, there is no much emphasis on practicing meditation.

Astus wrote:

Sutras do talk about meditation. There are samadhi sutras like the Surangamasamadhi, Vajrasamadhi, Pratyutpannasamadhi and Samadhiraja Sutra. There are other such texts like the Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation, the Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra, the Contemplation on Amitayus Sutra, etc. Meditation itself is the fifth paramita, and one of the three trainings of the noble eightfold path is meditation. However, if you look at classical Zen teachings, like those of Bodhidharma, Huineng, Mazu, Linji and others, there is hardly any mention of meditation (on this subject <https://eubuddhist.blogspot.com/2011/03/instructions-needed.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 4th, 2015 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

Astus wrote:

You may check them yourself (I don't want to overload the thread with long copies):

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/39077716/The-Sutra-of-Sitting-Dhyana-Samadhi>

<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/meditationsutra.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0273.html>

<http://www.buddhisttexts.org/surangama.html>

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra22.html>

The <http://www.fodian.net/world/0277b.html> contains a repentance practice that is mirrored in the Platform Sutra's central chapter. The

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html> talks about the One Action Samadhi that is referred to in the early Zen texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 4th, 2015 at 7:40 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddha-remembrance and Chan has been practised together from the very beginning. Even before Huiyuan (334–416) and Bodhidharma (5th/6th century) the

Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra (translated to Chinese in 179) taught how one can meet Amitabha in samadhi and at the same time to realise that the whole visualisation is empty. Chan practitioners often aspired to be born in the Pure Land and buddha-remembrance practitioners often cultivated the mind-nature. There were many famous teachers who explained how the two are complementary methods.

Here's a saying, the fourfold summary, attributed to Yongming Yanshou (from "Yung-ming's Syncretism of Pure Land and Ch'an" by Heng-ching Shih in JIABS vol 10 no 1, p 118):

"With Ch'an but no Pure Land, nine out of ten people will go astray.
When death comes suddenly, they must accept it in an instant.
With Pure Land but no Ch'an, ten thousand out of ten thousand people will achieve birth [in the Pure Land].
If one can see Amitabha face to face, why worry about not attaining enlightenment?
With both Ch'an and Pure Land, it is like a tiger who has grown horns.
One will be a teacher for mankind in this life, and a Buddhist patriarch in the next.
With neither Ch'an nor Pure Land, it is like falling on an iron bed with bronze posters [i.e., one of the hells].
For endless kalpas one will find nothing to rely on."

Consider the following quotes from The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations (BDK edition):

"By intoning the ten sacred names, we have intended to assist [the deceased] in entering the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha."
(from the funeral ritual of the deceased abbot, p 135)

"From three o'clock in the morning until dusk, every sentient being must reflect upon himself with the following prayer: "Even if my life should end at this very moment, may I immediately be reborn in the Pure Land.""
(from the regulations of daily conduct, p 267)

"It is earnestly wished that Venerable So-and-so regain his health, as he has not lost the various supporting causes for his existence. If, however, it is unavoidable for him to come to the end of his life, may he swiftly realize the goal of rebirth in the Pure Land. Veneration to the Buddhas in the ten directions and the three times."
(from the prayer for ailing practitioners, p 294)

And these from <http://www.ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice>:

"To recite the Buddha's name is to recite the Buddha of the Self-Mind; the ears hearing the Buddha's name actually hear the Self-Mind. The sound comes from the Self-Mind and returns to the Self-Mind, turning around and around in a circle. Not even a bit of deluded thought remains, and as a result, all mundane dusts, all deluded realms disappear."

(aspect 28 commentary)

"As the sound of the Self-Mind surrounds you and the light of the Self-Mind shines upon you, the Mind-Nature naturally reveals itself. This True Mind is like a huge, round, bright mirror that nothing can obstruct. The Ten Directions, the Three Periods of Time, ourselves, the Buddhas and sentient beings, the cycle of suffering in the impure world, the lotus seat in the Pure Land - all are but images in the mirror. Thus, to recite aloud is to recite in the light, to recite in the mirror; it is neither the same nor different. This is the ultimate auspicious realm, completely free of the deluded mind. You should strive with all your might to attain it."

(aspect 31)

"Zen is Pure Land because both Zen and Pure Land aim at reaching one-pointedness of mind. Although two expedients are involved, the result is the same. However, Zen is ten times as difficult! "

(aspect 35 commentary)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 5th, 2015 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

From what you write it seems to me your priority is enlightenment in this life. Only repeating the name of Amitabha is not enough for that, but it can be used as something that can assist in seeing the nature of mind. See

<http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/essentials-pure-land/5-practice/four> and the

<http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/essentials-pure-land/5-practice/buddha> that describe how realisation can be integrated into buddha-remembrance.

Unlike in Japanese Buddhism (except for the Obaku school), there is no controversy between Chan and Pure Land. I strongly recommend you read

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf2003.%20TP%20Chan%20and%20Pure%20Land.pdf>. It can answer many questions you have about Chan and PL.

The source of this problem that Chan and PL are something totally different comes from Japan's Kamakura Buddhism when first Honen started the exclusive nenbutsu movement and then various Zen institutions started to emerge. But if you look into Honen's selection of the single practice, he intentionally excludes interpretations of buddha-remembrance that fall into the category of self-power. It was his invention, his innovation. That's why I find it particularly strange that there are certain people who are happy to mix Shinran's teachings with Zen. But if one looks into Chinese Buddhism "nianfo chan" is the general and most common practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 5th, 2015 at 7:17 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

DesertDweller said:

Wouldn't this be a possibility, though, if there is a one-pointed focus ("Buddha recitation samadhi") combined with a sort of opening of oneself to the deeper significance of "Namo Amitabha Buddha"?

Astus wrote:

That combination with opening to a deeper meaning is where insight practice comes in, where one has to learn to see thoughts for what they are instead of just following them. Reciting the name is focusing on a single thought, so it helps in not grasping other concepts. Then reflecting on one's ongoing experience can become easier. That is what the question "Who recites the name?" points at. Once it is clearly understood that appearances are without substance, without a fixed essence to hold on to, that is being enlightened to no-birth, the true nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 5th, 2015 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

If the goal is enlightenment in this life, that is not a Pure Land oriented attitude. Therefore, whatever practice one does, it is dedicated to one's own liberation now instead of awakening in Sukhavati. Thus the attainment of birth becomes a secondary matter at best.

<http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/essentials-pure-land/5-practice/four:>

"If we were to use Buddha Recitation to discover the Mind-Ground and awaken to our Original Nature, the Pure Land method would be no different from other methods. However, when we rely on Buddha Recitation to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, this method has unique characteristics."

That is:

"What is operative in the terms Holy Path and Pure Land Path is thus the realm where people attain salvation. The Holy Path is the path of the few who attain it in this life and on their own. The Pure Land Path is the path of the many who need the help of Amida Buddha to attain it after death."

(<http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/otherself.html>)

Buddha-remembrance combined with Chan can mean two things. Either it is aiming for the Pure Land supported by Chan, or aiming for enlightenment in this life supported by buddha-remembrance. If birth is the goal, then seeing the nature is understood as part of the bodhisattva path. If realisation is the goal, then recitation is understood as a meditation technique. We can see well from Honen's method of selection that there are those who aim for birth using various methods and work on accumulating wisdom and merit. Among them there are those who focus only on Amitabha and those who use other methods, but they equally dedicate merit towards birth in the Pure Land. In other terms, they have faith and vow but take a different stance on practice than those who only recite the name. On the other hand, those who do not have faith and vow may meditate on Amitabha but they will not be born in Sukhavati. As

<http://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/explanation-text/main-portion/seeking-rebirth-pure-land>:

"If your faith and vows are solid and strong, then even you recite the Buddha-name only ten times, or only once, as you are on the brink of death, you are sure to attain birth in the Pure Land. Without faith and vows, even if you recite the Buddha-name until [you achieve a level of concentration the Zen literature describes as] "wind cannot enter you and rain cannot wet you" and "you stand like a silver wall or and iron wall", you will still not have a way to be born in the Pure Land."

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/yin_kuang.pdf:

"With this method, as long as their Faith and Vows are true and earnest, even those who have committed the Five Grave Offenses or the Ten Evil Acts, may, on the verge of death, when the marks of the hells appear, follow the advice of a good spiritual advisor and recite the Buddha's name one to ten times. Then, thanks to the compassionate power of Amitabha Buddha, even they will be received and guided to the Pure Land – not to mention those who practice wholesome deeds and do not commit transgressions!"

(p 35)

"Rebirth in the Western Land thus requires, first of all, deep Faith and fervent Vows. Without these conditions, even if you were to cultivate, you could not obtain a response from Amitabha Buddha. You would merely reap the blessings of the human and celestial realms and sow the seeds of liberation in the future. Anyone who fulfills the conditions of Faith and Vows is assured of rebirth in the Pure Land."

(p 37)

As for the idea that recitation itself brings about wisdom, that would mean (1) there is no need for Amitabha's vows and (2) there is no need for the teachings and insight practices. Honen and all the other Pure Land teachers could not have said that they were ordinary deluded people as they had recited the name thousands of times in a single day.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 5th, 2015 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Gradual vs. Nongradual

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see it as a natural tendency throughout Buddhist history. There is a fairly simple teaching on the correct view (emptiness) and the practice (non-attachment) that emerges from it. Then it gets theoretically and mythologically complicated. Then again it is reduced to some simple instruction. It is not that people change radically during the centuries, but languages and cultures do, thus the need for newer and newer translations and explanations.

In terms of the actual time it takes to attain liberation, there are stories already in the Nikayas about those who directly understood from a single sentence and those who couldn't reach nirvana even after decades. In my opinion both are extremes and possibly literary elements, although at the same time there are very bright and very dull people.

The reason we almost always see only unenlightened beings is because we don't actually have a way to tell for sure who is what. Maybe some people behave very saintly, some people are really knowledgeable, some people have various impressive abilities, but none of that makes them enlightened unless we are so mesmerised by them.

What I think is a common phenomenon is that some may understand the meaning of emptiness (selflessness, nature of mind, whatever term you like) for a moment or two but then conceptualisation kicks in and it gets confused. So theoretically there could be people who don't fall back into their established thinking patterns, but it is very unlikely. Nevertheless, we could say that those who manage to get an initial glimpse are the sudden learners, while those who need some preliminary training are the gradual ones.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 6th, 2015 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: Gradual vs. Nongradual

Content:

Punya said:

This doesn't seem like non-gradual to me. Wouldn't the non-gradual be complete enlightenment, not just a glimpse?

Astus wrote:

That depends. As there is nothing more to realise than emptiness there is no development in what one learns or achieves.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 6th, 2015 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: How does movement arise?

Content:

LastLegend said:

In conclusion, meditation methods are actually secondary. Thus, by understanding the message of non-attachment, one is using less effort.

Astus wrote:

If one actually understands emptiness and drops all attachment, that is liberation. While it is possible to do that - that's what Zen normally aims for, directly introducing the nature of mind - often people cannot gain insight because of their strong delusions. That's when all the methods come in. Meditation is first of all to help calm the mind, as it is only once all the habitual inner monologues and disoriented jumping from one subject to another can people attain clarity and focus required for seeing the reality of their present experience. Studying the teachings is a different approach, it already requires a level of clarity and concentration, and then it is meant to generate trust in the Dharma and then reflection on one's views to be exchanged for correct ones. And there might be some individuals who can learn to let go of their attachments simply by realising that nothing lasts. But since practically all human beings know that things eventually decay and die, knowledge of the general impermanence of appearances is hardly ever liberating. In general people are also aware of the benefits of not attaching to this and that, but that is of little help most of the times.

On the other hand, what is hard to accept is that there is nothing at all that one could attach to. It's not "should not attach" but the actual impossibility of any attachment. That is what universal emptiness really means. Even for Buddhists that is not easy to accept, as you can see in numerous topics the regular arguments over whether there is some real self, real consciousness, or any ultimate truth that one can actually hold on to. The debates over methods and the repeated affirmations of the great distance of liberation are also about clinging to something tangible. So while it is easy to claim that all beings have buddha-nature, it rarely ever means that it is readily available right now. That's why we have all the teachings and meditations, just to keep us busy and allow us to remain convinced that not everything is empty yet.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 7th, 2015 at 4:26 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"The basis of my practice was mindfulness of the Buddha. I became patient with the state of mind in which no mental objects arise."

Focusing on the Buddha is a mental object. By the way, in the Surangama Sutra it was Guanyin's method that was announced as the best.

"Nembutsu is superior, and other practices are inferior."

If it is superior because of its connection to the infinite virtues of Amitabha, the same

could be said about any other buddha who all possess identically infinite virtues and wisdoms. Still, the practitioner of the nenbutsu cannot actually partake the Buddha's attributes, so I fail to see their relevance.

"When you consider that he himself, and a LARGE number of his followers (at least one while remaining illiterate) achieved Nembutsu Samadhi, that says something."

What does it say? That samadhi is a vision of Amitabha and his land. The Contemplation Sutra actually gives instructions for visualising it. However, neither the vision nor the visualisation turns one into a sage (arya).

"True Realization of beings and realms [No. 3] is the ultimate goal of Pure Land practitioners."

Yes, the ultimate goal is buddhahood. Something that is hardly ever attained by ordinary beings, thus the need for birth in the Pure Land.

"The first part of this statement displays (whether intentional or not) a complete and total misunderstanding of recitation"

I don't see how. I don't recognise any difference between what you and I say, that is, that for birth one needs faith, vow and practice.

"The second (bolded) part could lead one to believe that you've completely glossed over my repeated recommendations"

My point is that recitation of the name does not bring about insight. The three minds do not contradict that, nor do I see their relevance here.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 7th, 2015 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Duckfiasco,

"This isn't the contention of the Jodo Shinshu school, as far as I know."

Deep faith is being assured of birth, thus the stage of non-regression in a certain sense. But that is not the same as what the Vimalakirti Sutra says about the pure mind observing a pure land. Although through faith one has almost attained buddhahood, one is still an ordinary being who can only rely on the vow and not even a bit on his own wisdom.

"the nembutsu has been like a merit transfer from Amida, or a catalyst to insight."

I have not questioned for a moment the varied usefulness of the nenbutsu in this life. My statement is simply that only by reciting the name there is no insight (that is, realisation of emptiness) generated. It is something one will gain after birth in Sukhavati.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 7th, 2015 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

DesertDweller said:

I appreciate your posts and insight and truly don't wish to argue unnecessarily, but I find statements all over the place saying that nembutsu/Nienfo alone can indeed lead to Awakening in this life.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific please, like quoting from Ouyi's commentary?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 7th, 2015 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

DesertDweller,

"Those of the highest faculties cannot go beyond this level while those of the lowest capabilities are also able to reach it."

What nobody can go beyond and anybody can reach it is buddhahood, and that is what is guaranteed once born in the Pure Land. It doesn't say anywhere one reaches it in this life but rather through birth.

Although Ouyi writes:

"Thus, the name of Amitabha is the inherently enlightened true nature of sentient beings, and reciting the name of Amitabha reveals this enlightenment. Inherent enlightenment and the enlightenment as it is revealed [through cultivation and realization] are fundamentally not two different things, just as sentient beings and Buddhas are not two different things. Thus if we are in accord [with our inherently enlightened true nature] for a moment, we are Buddhas for a moment, and if we are in accord [with our inherently enlightened true nature] moment after moment, we are Buddhas moment after moment."

That is talking theoretically, what the name stands for, what it symbolises. This is shown by the following passage in the commentary:

"Although they are going to attain enlightenment in one lifetime, still, they must be

called ordinary people, and they cannot be called Bodhisattvas with enlightenment equal to the Buddhas."

The most relevant question to be asked, if recitation can result in insight, how so? What is the process? How does the practitioner come to the patience of non-birth from repeating words? What are the actual steps?

"From a perspective of non-dualism, where does one level end and the other begin?"

That is a theoretical perspective. If one truly has left behind dualism there is no birth to attain, thus recitation is a pointless activity.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 8th, 2015 at 1:12 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's say the name recitation can generate insight into emptiness. My question is: how? How goes one from focusing on a word to realising non-birth?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 8th, 2015 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"First off you're not focusing on a word, you're focusing on a Buddha (which involves a very specific narrative)"

That is, a word with a specific set of associated concepts. It is not actually a buddha, as that would mean direct realisation of buddha-nature. But during recitation one does not think about all the teachings regarding Amitabha as that would be a distraction from focusing single-mindedly.

Hsuan Hua said,

"As you recite the Buddha's name, every sound of the Buddha's name is a thought of purity. When every sound is recitation, every thought is clear and pure. When every thought is clear and pure, you obtain the Buddha Recitation samadhi."

That is, only the name remains and nothing else. It is a relative purity resulting from concentration and it disappears once the concentration is interrupted. Insight is something that removes the causes of attachment, while concentration just covers it up for a while. That's why attaining various dhyanas result only in birth in higher realms but

not liberation. Similarly, focusing on Amitabha establishes the connection necessary for birth in the Pure Land, but it lacks the practices and methods required for insight, i.e. contemplation on the nature of reality.

Elder Master Liu Yu said,

"when he has exerted the utmost effort and reached the goal, right in the midst of present thought, worldly delusions suddenly disappear -- the mind experiences sudden Awakening"

It does not specify how one moves from concentration to insight, it only asserts that it happens.

The Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra teaches how buddhas can be visualised and that all visions are mind made and empty. It is not enough to visualise or recite the name, one has to reflect on the nature of one's experience and see them as insubstantial. And this is what I have said before, that recitation in and of itself is not enough to attain insight. Unlike the above quotes from Hsuan Hua and Liu Yu, this sutra is explicit about how one attains the patience of non-birth. And that way is contemplating emptiness.

When they reflect on the Buddha they ought not to reflect on [him as] an existing thing, nor should they have [the notion: it is something] set up by me. As they would conceive of emptiness so should they reflect on the Buddha standing there, like a precious gem set on beryl. In this way bodhisattvas will have a clear vision of the innumerable Buddhas of the ten quarters.

(p 20, BDK edition)

When the forms are clear, everything is clear. If one wishes to see the Buddha then one sees him. If one sees him then one asks questions. If one asks then one is answered, one hears the sutras and rejoices greatly. One reflects thus: 'Where did the Buddha come from? Where did I go to?' and one thinks to oneself: 'The Buddha came from nowhere, and I also went nowhere.' One thinks to oneself: The Three Realms—the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Realm of the Formless—these Three Realms are simply made by thought. Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathagata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha. The mind does not itself know the mind, the mind does not itself see mind. A mind with conceptions is stupidity, a mind without conceptions is nirvana. There is nothing in these dharmas which can be enjoyed; they are all made by thinking. If thinking is nothing but empty, then anything which is thought is also utterly nonexistent.' So it is, Bhadrapala, such is the vision of the bodhisattvas who are established in the meditation."

(p 21-22)

Those who reject this precious jewel of a sutra are stupid and unwise, they regard their own attainment of perfection in the trances as transcendence, they perversely claim that the world exists, they do not immerse themselves in emptiness or know nonbeing.

(p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 8th, 2015 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

LastLegend said:

Buddha is the inconceivable. The inconceivable is prajnaparamita. By reciting Buddha is reciting the inconceivable, prajnaparamita. That is the practice of 6 paramitas because at the moment when one recites Buddha, one is truly taking refuge in the 3 jewels and not in Samsara.

Astus wrote:

On that Huineng says in the Platform Sutra (p 28, BDK edition):

"people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all."

The sutra you quoted says,

"they should first hear prajñā-pāramitā and next train and learn it accordingly. Then they will be able to enter the One Action Samādhi"

It is the same paragraph quoted by Daoxin (4th Chan patriarch), who wrote (tr. David W. Chappell in Early Ch'an in China and Tibet, p 107):

"i-hsing san-mei means that the mind which is aware of the Buddha is the Buddha, whereas [the mind which] does false thinking is the ordinary person,"

And Huineng said (p 42):

"If you speak of the samādhi of the single practice with your mouth, you will not practice the straightforward mind. Just practice the straightforward mind, and be without attachment within all the dharmas."

That is, the practice of yixing-sanmei is based on one's study of the prajnaparamita teaching and only after that can one enter it. It is more than just reciting a name and visualising a buddha as it comes from understanding emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 8th, 2015 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: The Mahayana idea of karma and vegetarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

It sounds accurate to me. At least some think like that.

The Surangama Sutra argues:

"To wear parts of a being's body is to involve one's karma with that being, just as people have become bound to this earth by eating vegetables and grains. I can affirm that a person who neither eats the flesh of other beings nor wears any part of the bodies of other beings, nor even thinks of eating or wearing these things, is a person who will gain liberation."

(BTTS new translation, p 269)

On the other hand, the Nirvana Sutra says (tr. Yamamoto, p 52, 53),

"Kasyapa said again to the Buddha: "If the Tathagata means to prohibit the eating of meat, such things as the five kinds of flavours as milk, cream, fresh butter, clarified butter, and sarpirmanda, all kinds of clothing, silk cloth, horse-shoe shell, hide and leather, bowls of gold and silver should not be received." "O good man! Do not muddle things up with what the Nirgranthas [Jains] say."

"When one eats meat, this gives out the smell of meat while one is walking, standing, sitting or reclining. People smell this and become fearful. This is as when one comes near a lion. One sees and smells the lion, and fear arises. O good man! When one eats garlic, the dirty smell is unbearable. Other people notice it. They smell the bad smell. They leave that person and go away. Even from far off, people hate to see such a person. They will not come near him. It is the same with one who eats meat. It is a similar situation with all people who, on smelling the meat, become afraid and entertain the thought of death. All living things in the water, on land and in the sky desert such a person and run away. They say that this person is their enemy. Hence the Bodhisattva does not eat meat. In order to save beings, he shows [pretends] that he eats meat. Though he [seems to] eat meat, in actual fact he does not. O good man! Such a Bodhisattva does not even take pure food. How could he eat meat?"

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"Again, you're spouting Ch'an interpretation as if it was universal law."

True, I take Chan as the default doctrine. At the same time, it looks contrary to what I find in instructions on reciting the name that one should not only focus on pronouncing clearly the syllables but at the same time think about all the merits and virtues of Amitabha. Although there are such complex practices, like the one taught by Zhiyi as the walking samadhi, but teachers like Honen have a different interpretation of buddha-

remembrance. Still, if there are thoughts about other things than the name, it is not single-minded.

"You recite, thinking about the narrative, you receive a vision of the Buddha, from there the wisdom arises for Awakening. You don't actually engage in a separate practice other than recitation/mindfulness of the Buddha for this to happen. In the meantime, you treat the Buddha just as real as anything else."

It is not the vision that gives wisdom, rather it is what one learns from the Buddha there. But even before that one should know that all appearances are empty.

The sutra itself says in that chapter (Rulu's translation): "All are impermanent and all are unstable. Recognize that there has never been an everlasting ruler in one, Only convergence and divergence of causes and conditions. Understand and know that nothing in existence is real." Also, once one has the vision of Amitabha, "He teaches, in the assembly of Bodhisattvas and bhikṣus, that dharmas [in true reality] are empty and, therefore, indestructible. Why? Because indestructible are all dharmas, such as form, pain, itch, thinking, perception, birth, death, consciousness, spirit, earth, water, fire, wind, the human world, and the heaven world, including Great Brahma Heaven. By thinking of a Buddha, one attains the Samādhi of Emptiness."" and the chapter concludes: "The mind with perceptions is saṃsāra; the mind without perceptions is nirvāṇa. Dharmas as perceived are not something pleasurable. They are empty thoughts, nothing real. This is what Bodhisattvas see as they abide in this samādhi.""

So, although it teaches visualisation, it is also strong in affirming the importance of contemplating emptiness and how the vision itself is mind made, like a dream.

"Nowhere in that passage does it mention that."

It is there on p 20: "Through reflecting on emptiness, that man then and there attained happiness in dharmas which do not come into existence from anywhere [anutpattika-dharma-ksanti], and straightaway attained non-regression."

"Sorry, don't have access to that translation. It doesn't exist in the one I have."

You can read that version

http://lirs.ru/lib/sutra/Pratyutpanna_and_Surangama_Samadhi_Sutras,1998,BDK25.pdf.

It is that Rulu translated T417 (one fascicle), while Harrison translated T418 (three fascicles). You can also read Harrison's

<https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/10662> on the sutra where he translated the Tibetan and compared it with three Chinese versions. The referenced section there is on p 34-35.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: The Mahayana idea of karma and vegetarianism

Content:
Astus wrote:
The Surangama Sutra argues:

"To wear parts of a being's body is to involve one's karma with that being"
(BTTS new translation, p 269)

Based on these two Sutras it does not sound accurate.
See above. The Surangama Sutra actually says that somehow those who consume animal products or use them in other ways are involved with that being's karma. On the other hand, the Nirvana and the Lankavatara talks about the bad smell that frightens others, and that somehow eating meat changes the mind of the person.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 7:36 PM
Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land
Content:
Astus wrote:
PorkChop,

"This is a description in Pure Land terms of the result of Nembutsu/Nianfo as a direct experience of emptiness. ... The practice starts with subject "I" thinking of object "Buddha".
Eventually, subject falls off (no more I, me, mine), object falls off (no more external object Buddha), all that's left is the name."

That is not an experience of emptiness, it is the result/level of concentration practice, at best the fourth dhyana.
Inka means that one person thinks the other person has a correct view of the Dharma. It is far from a general approval as a Zen teacher can dismiss entire Zen lineages as false, or schools can call each other deficient.

"To be clear, I'm not arguing some complex compendium of all of the teachings with each recitation, just the basic narrative that all Pure Land teachers cover. "

There is a difference between the reason one recites the nenbutsu and what happens during recitation itself. If the reason, the motivation is birth in Sukhavati, that is the definitive PL attitude. But during recitation itself one does not have to remind oneself about the PL doctrines.

"By the final stage, one is Awakened to the true nature of mind."

And the original point was that recitation itself does not include insight. The practice described in the Pratyutpanna Sutra goes well beyond oral buddha-remembrance, thus it is not a text often quoted by PL teachers who follow Shandao or Honen. Such so called higher level practices as visualisation and contemplation of the true

mark/emptiness is normally left in the realm of theory as they are considered out of scope for most in the Dharma ending age.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

duckfiasco said:

one does not realize non-birth; that is the Holy Gate, beyond my personal limitations. One is grasped by Amida and birth in the Pure Land is a matter of course

Astus wrote:

And that's then primary topic here. How Chan and Pure Land can be put together, how one can attain enlightenment in this life through recitation of the name. And, as you say, such an approach belongs to the Holy Gate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

LastLegend said:

They are two different things. First one is study prajnaparamita and train. The other is Buddha recitation

Astus wrote:

They are not separated.

"Mañjuśrī asked, "World-Honored One, what is called the One Action Samādhi?"

The Buddha replied, "The dharma realm has the one appearance. Focusing one's mind on the dharma realm is called the One Action Samādhi. If, among good men and good women, there are those who aspire to enter the One Action Samādhi, they should first hear prajñā-pāramitā and next train and learn it accordingly. Then they will be able to enter the One Action Samādhi"

LastLegend said:

Merit from reciting Buddha is immeasurable and boundless.

Astus wrote:

Merit is still within samsara. One needs wisdom to go beyond ordinary merit accumulation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:
Astus wrote:
PorkChop,

My questions are the following then:

1. Honen writes in his famous <http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>: "In China and Japan, many Buddhist masters and scholars understand that the nembutsu is to meditate deeply on Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. However, I do not understand the nembutsu in this way. ... they should not put on any airs and should sincerely practice the nembutsu, just as an illiterate fool, a nun or one who is ignorant of Buddhism"

That is, simply reciting the name leads to birth in the Pure Land. It is not a visualisation or contemplation but an oral repetition of Namu Amida Butsu. One does not even have to have a focused mind for it to be effective. In fact, Honen considered most incapable of doing the simplest of meditation practices:

"Let devotees of the present day give up their so-called meditations as if they were required by the Law. Even though a man would meditate upon the images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Paradise, the fact is he is incapable of picturing to himself the Buddhas as represented in the images made by such famous sculptors as Unkei and Kokei. Even though he tries to meditate upon the things which beautify the Land of Bliss, he finds it hard even to picture to his mind the beauties of the flowers and fruit of the cherry, plum, and peach of this world with which he is so familiar."
(Fitzgerald: Honen the Buddhist Saint, p 33)

And on the Pure Land methods themselves he says:

"But if we inquire into the essential nature of these various disciplines, we find that the number of the meditative reaches thirteen, and of the nonmeditative nine, and they are all difficult to practice. Anyone who would enter the gate of the meditative will find that his mind races about like a horse among the six objects of sensation, and when he wants to get near to the gate of the non-meditative, he is like a monkey that sports on the branches of the tree of the ten evils. Try as he will to quiet his mind and subdue his heart, he finds himself unable to do so."
(p 72)

Since it is considered difficult to do anything but the simplest form of recitation, how could then one perform the type of buddha-remembrance you talk about?

2. There is a difference between the Holy Path and the Pure Land Path where only the Holy Path includes liberation in this life.

"By the Holy Path is meant the way a man even in this corrupt world can get free from his evil passions, and attain enlightenment, while by the gate of the Pure Land is meant the way to secure this by being born into the Land of Bliss at death."

(p 71)

If recitation itself brings about enlightenment in this life, is it not the Holy Path?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 9th, 2015 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

LastLegend said:

There are two types of merit. One is with limit (in anticipation of rewards or holding rewards) and one without limit. One without limit is Buddha.

Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, what actions can one take to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi quickly?”

The Buddha replied, “Mañjuśrī, those who practice prajñā-pāramitā as explained will quickly attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Furthermore, there is the Samādhi of the One Action. If good men and good women train in this samādhi, they will also quickly attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.”

Pay attention to the bolded word.

Astus wrote:

Limitless merit is when one knows and sees that it is empty. And that is wisdom. Without wisdom, it is limited merit.

All it says that those who practice the One Action Samadhi will also quickly attain perfect enlightenment. It does not specify what such a samadhi involves. And as it says later, it involves learning and understanding prajnaparamita. The difference is that while some can manage just with learning prajnaparamita, others require some further practice, or even gaining birth in the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"Now you want me to bend Honen's teachings to say something they never intended to, the idea that Enlightenment is capable through one's own efforts in this lifetime?"

Not at all. Honen and his followers explicitly say that enlightenment happens only in the Pure Land. That is the whole point of the entire Pure Land teaching, that one aspires for birth because that's where one can gain liberation and not in this life. So it is strange to me how you seem to defend the idea that the Pure Land path includes insight into

emptiness now.

"most likely an image will arise"

That sounds like a measurement to me, or a promise that eventually one will get a vision. But while there are stories about Honen attaining it, I have not encountered any statement by Honen that would hint at such an experience for nenbutsu followers. Also, if the meaning of the recitation samadhi is equalled to becoming an enlightened being, then again it seems to go against the whole difference made between the Holy and the Pure Land path.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

LastLegend,

"Great faith is as just powerful as wisdom. ... recitation is the practice of prajnaparamita"

The two problems I see with that:

If faith equals wisdom, it is enough to believe in liberation to be liberated, and all those who believe in buddha are in fact buddhas.

If recitation is practising prajnaparamita then there is no point in translating it or studying it, we can all just read the words in Sanskrit.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"On the other hand, the idea of giving up the entire idea of Self Power in order to receive Other Power is part of the method."

As I see it, there are various ways to approach attaining birth in Sukhavati. All methods there are within the context of that goal, therefore, attainments in this life can go from none to the highest bodhisattva stage. However, recitation itself is one of the possible methods, and it is at best a type of calming meditation. Buddha-remembrance can mean other things as well, including realisation of buddha-mind. But when it is in the realm of reciting a buddha's name, contemplating a buddha's virtues and attributes and visualising him, then generally it may not even fall within the category of meditation but

it is a form of motivational practice. Part of that motivation is thinking how blessed one becomes just from thinking about a buddha.

Saying that one should rely on other power instead of one's own practically means that birth in the Pure Land is not because of one's achievements but because of Amitabha's vows. The level of effort required from an aspirant is regularly remembering him, because that is how one conditions the mind. Deep faith itself is simply that, changing one's way of thinking. Through remembering Amitabha there is a reconditioning of the mind and one's direction is changed from samsara to the Pure Land. Technically it is not much different from non-Buddhist devotional religions where people want to be born in a heaven or some other state. The important difference is that being born in the Pure Land is for eventually attaining buddhahood. Because of taking the Pure Land as one's goal and Amitabha as the ideal form of existence there can be many beneficial changes in this life as well, no doubt.

It can even happen that one attains the stage of a noble being, an enlightened one, from insight into emptiness during one's path to Sukhavati. However, the recitation method as it is does not include that function. And that has been my only argument here from the beginning.

"It's not equal to Enlightenment, just a signpost to mark that one is forming a strong karmic relation with Amida and considered a necessary step for the other realizations explained by the Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, which culminate with Enlightenment. I imagine it's kind of like a kensho for the Self Power schools."

Although it sounds good and fascinating to experience such visions, and can be relevant for certain individuals, I'm of the opinion that hearing about Amitabha and believing is proof enough of one's connection. If someone started to question why there has been no visions and such it could lead to losing faith, or at least to some bad feelings and anxiety over the uncertainty of birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 7:22 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

DesertDweller said:

Astus, I think you are simply not acknowledging the numerous statements regarding the dynamic power of the nembutsu itself that have been posted from page 1 of this thread. And you are sticking to a single valid but limited view of Pure Land as a "devotional religion."

Astus wrote:

I have replied to various statements raised here and gave my reasons. Reciting the name is just reciting the name, repeating the same words over and over. The difference between various kinds of recitations is the ideology associated with it but not the act - and I do not mean that theory does not matter, in fact, that is what really matters. Using

a single object as the focal point of concentration is the basic form of calming practice. While calming the mind is required for gaining insight, in and of itself it is not enough. That is why meditation is described in Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana within the categories of calming and insight, both are necessary for liberation. The Pure Land path includes various methods aimed for birth in the Pure Land. It is part of the Mahayana branch of the religion called Buddhism. It is devotional in the sense that its practitioners devote themselves toward a single buddha's land mostly through devotional practices for a single buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

PorkChop said:

This interpretation is a straw man.

No Pure Land school anywhere would recognize this as a valid interpretation of Buddha Name Recitation.

Yet you won't let this straw man go no matter how many times it gets burned down.

Hence no more point in debating.

Astus wrote:

Let me start with some quotes regarding that straw man first. This is to show the general Chan approach to buddha-remembrance. After all, the topic here is Chan and Pure Land.

"Don't use a Buddha to worship a Buddha. And don't use the mind to invoke a Buddha. Buddhas don't recite sutras. ... If you don't see your nature, invoking Buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings, and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking Buddhas results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory; keeping precepts results in a good rebirth, and making offerings results in future blessings-but no buddha. ... All day long they invoke Buddhas and read sutras. But they remain blind to their own divine nature, and they don't escape the Wheel."

(Bodhidharma: <http://www.fodian.net/world/dmhml-e.html>)

"The sutras say that someone who wholeheartedly invokes the Buddha is sure to be reborn in the Western Paradise. Since is door leads to Buddhahood, why seek liberation in beholding the mind?

If you're going to invoke the Buddha, you have to do it right. Unless you understand what invoking means, you'll do it wrong. And if you do it wrong, you'll never go anywhere. Buddha means awareness, the awareness of body and mind that prevents evil from arising in either. And to invoke means to call to mind, to call constantly to mind the rules of discipline and to follow them with all your might. This is what's meant by invoking. Invoking has to do with thought and not with language. If you use a trap to catch fish, once you succeed you can forget the trap. And if you use language to find meaning, once you find it you can forget language. To invoke the Buddha's name you have to understand the Dharma of invoking. If it's not present in your mind, your mouth chants

an empty name. As long as you're troubled by the three poisons or by thoughts of yourself, your deluded mind will keep you from seeing the Buddha and you'll only waste your effort. Chanting and invoking are worlds apart, Chanting is done with the mouth. Invoking is done with the mind. And because invoking comes from the mind, it's called the door to awareness. Chanting is centered in the mouth and appears as sound."
(Bodhidharma: <http://www.fodian.net/world/dmpsl-e.html>)

"The deluded person recites the Buddha's [name] and seeks for rebirth in that other [location], while the enlightened person purifies his mind. Therefore the Buddha said, 'As the mind is purified, so is the buddha land purified. ... If you recite the Buddha's [name] and seek rebirth [in the Pure Land] without being enlightened, how will you ever be able to travel such a long road?'"
(Huineng: Platform Sutra, ch 3, p 38, 39, BDK edition)

"To strive for the Way of Awakening by moving the mouth thousands or tens of thousands of times is like steering a cart north but intending to go south. It is like putting a square peg in a round hole. Looking over words and phrases but not practising is as worthless as reading a prescription but forgetting to take the medication. Ceaslessly repeating the Buddha's Name is as worthless as a frog in a spring field, croaking day and night."
(Dogen: <http://wwwzc.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>)

"Is it not the innate self-nature with which you yourself are endowed, standing bright and clear before your eyes? If you have not seen into your own nature it will not be easy for you to see this land. Yet nowadays those who practice the Pure Land teaching recite the name daily a thousand times, ten thousand times, a million times, but not one of them has determined the Great Matter of salvation. Don't they realize that Amida Buddha refused to accept true enlightenment? Still more, don't they realize that one instant of thought is this very Paradise of Salvation?"

...

"But if you are looking for something that will help you attain continuous uninterrupted true meditation and insight into your own nature, then calling the Buddha's name is fine, but you could as well recite the grain-grinding song instead. Do not think you are going to become a Buddha by deliberately discarding the essentials of seeing into your own nature and turning instead to the virtues gained from calling the Buddha's name."
(Hakuin: Orategama Zokushu in "The Zen Master Hakuin: selected Writings" tr P. Yampolsky, p 127, 133)

From the above it is quite clear that the common Chan view of buddha-remembrance is that at best it can be used as an object of focus to generate concentration. At least that's what Hakuin came up with, who otherwise criticised those who mix Chan with Pure Land, like the famous Zhuhong Yunqi. Others just emphasise that one should first and foremost should see the nature of mind or else all practices are just mundane activities. Here is the same sentiment by Xuyun:

"Reciters of the Buddha's name should never cling to that name for it can become as harmful as poison. We now recite the Buddha's name because our habits are deeply

rooted from time without beginning and our thoughts cannot be easily stopped. So we use his name as a prop in our striving to wipe out all rising thoughts until they eventually vanish completely and give way to the Pure Land which will then manifest itself. So why should we seek it from outside?"

(http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/two_discourses1.html)

As I see it, this kind of Chan approach to buddha-remembrance is contrary to the whole concept of the Pure Land path that aims for birth through the vow of Amitabha. That is why in this thread from the beginning I have been against confusing the two. And if one were to use recitation for training the mind in concentration and cutting off conceptual proliferation, that is neither Chan (seeing nature) nor Pure Land (attaining birth).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Dan74 said:

Basically I can very easily see a strong Pure Land practice leading to insight in the presence of the right karmic disposition. So at the end of the day, there is just a question of what works better and this will surely depend on many factors, chief of which probably being one's karmic disposition.

Astus wrote:

Where lies the difference between practitioners of other faiths who focus on a single object and attain various levels of absorptions and Buddhist meditators doing the same? Probably none, and they can both attain birth in specific heavens related to their achievements. Theoretically both types of practitioners could attain insight, however, it is generally believed that only through learning of the Buddha's teachings can one engage in correct contemplation and gain insight into no-self and emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

LastLegend said:

You are right recitation is not practicing prajnaparamita directly. It's practicing One Appearance Samadhi which will lead to prajnaparamita.

Astus wrote:

One Act Samadhi is explained in the sutra that has the prerequisite of learning and understanding prajnaparamita teachings. Without that, it is just a devotional practice of recalling a buddha and his virtues.

LastLegend said:

If by wisdom you mean conceptual knowledge of emptiness, then I disagree. If wisdom

is defined as understanding itself that is leading to liberation, then conceptual knowledge of emptiness is not wisdom. However, knowledge of emptiness can lead to wisdom. If one has to come back to the conceptual knowledge of emptiness from time to time to remind oneself of non-attachment, then how is that different from the practice of coming back to reciting Buddha. That's still playing with antidote. Liberation is defined by Bodhidharma Wake-Up Sermon as:

To see form but not be corrupted by form or to hear sound but not to be corrupted by sound is liberation. Eyes that aren't attached to form are the gates of Zen. In short, those who perceive the existence and nature of phenomena and remain unattached are liberated. Those who perceive the external appearance of phenomena are at their mercy. Not to be subject to afflictions is what's meant by liberation. There's no other liberation. When you know how to look at form, form doesn't give rise to mind and mind doesn't give rise to form. Form and mind are both pure.

Astus wrote:

First one needs to hear about the teachings, then understand it, then it can be confirmed in one's experience. Without the first two steps there cannot be the third one.

Afflictions arise from the misconception that there is a substance. Such misconception is eliminated by learning, understanding and confirmation. If one only holds a single object in mind to block the occurrence of afflictions, that can be a temporary state, but once one has to engage in daily activities one reverts to the afflicted mind. In other words, even gods of the highest (dhyana) heavens eventually fall to lower realms. That's why the Chan practice is being aware of everything without attachment, and not being aware of a single thing, attached to that one thing, and barring everything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

There seems to be some gap between what I say and comes through.

"Chanting and invoking are worlds apart, Chanting is done with the mouth. Invoking is done with the mind."

If this refutes what I say then that is not what I say. The question was whether recitation of the name can bring about enlightenment in this life. Recitation is what is called chanting in the Bodhidharma quote. Buddha means "awareness of body and mind that prevents evil from arising in either" and invoking it means "to call constantly to mind the rules of discipline and to follow them with all your might" and "As long as you're troubled by the three poisons or by thoughts of yourself, your deluded mind will keep you from seeing the Buddha and you'll only waste your effort." That is a description of

the Holy Path, of realising the buddha-mind. Contrary to that, the oral recitation - that is called the easy path what has been emphasised by numerous Pure Land teachers as the essential method - is the chanting.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Dan74 said:

In Pali canon alone there are many examples of people who were liberated after very brief teachings, Astus. You must surely remember them? Bahiya comes to mind, then there is the lovely sutta quoted above, etc etc

Astus wrote:

Sure, they did not follow any meditation practices or pursued studies but realised directly from the Buddha's utterance. Usually those were teachings asked as summaries of his Dharma, similarly to what were later called direct instructions and upadeshas. I don't think I have denied that option anywhere.

Dan74 said:

But in other faiths, wrong view might be the obstacle on the way to liberation, whereas Pure Land practitioners are not encumbered by wrong views. Whether prajnaparamita or any other aspect of the Dharma, they are all pointers, as we know, not the 'thing' itself. So they are not something one needs to 'possess' as a prerequisite. The dharma doors are many!

Astus wrote:

Wrong views are what we all have from birth, an even from before that. That's why one needs the teachings. The only question then is whether within the practice of recitation the teachings on non-birth are included or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

plwk,

"And how convenient in forgetting that when deliberating on your pet topic of how nian fó is done the Chán way, the opposite on Pure Land within the dynamics of a dual practice is neglected and even when mentioned, it's oft made to look inferior or subservient to the former, when it should not be the case."

Dual practice either means that one does both nianfo and canchan in separate sessions, or they are practised together either in the form of real-mark buddha-remembrance. or

applying phrase investigation and raising the great doubt. Done in separate sessions is fairly universal, as most monastic rituals include name and sutra recitation of Amitabha. Practising with "Who recites?" is the most common form in Chinese Buddhism, while awareness of the real-mark seems rare. If the practice is with the question, then it is no different from kanhuachan. If it is with the real-mark, it is abiding in buddha-mind and no different from wunian. In both cases recitation serves only as the basis upon what is built further practice, thus we arrive at the usual calming and insight formula.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

The only question then is whether within the practice of recitation the teachings on non-birth are included or not.

Dan74 said:

Could you spell this out for me, please?

Astus wrote:

It is by realising non-birth, i.e. emptiness, that one gains liberation. Normally such attainment is through insight meditation where one contemplates the lack of self in both people and dharmas. If someone only recites the name then it can produce concentration and calm, but somehow one also needs to learn about dependent origination, etc. in order to be able to think about them and investigate their validity in one's present experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 12th, 2015 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

The question asked from Bodhidharma is about the point of contemplating mind (觀心) if one can attain liberation through buddha-remembrance (念佛). The entire Breakthrough Sermon is about this single practice of contemplating the mind and throughout the text it is explain how it is enough in itself, how it includes and at the same time surpasses all other practices. What Bodhidharma does with the term buddha-remembrance is simply turning it into the practice of contemplating the mind, just as it is explained for other common terms like the six paramitas, six realms, meritorious actions, three immeasurable aeons, etc. Contemplating the mind itself is the same as seeing nature, the enlightenment of the buddha-mind, the realisation of emptiness.

So, buddha-remembrance is explained in a way that buddha stands for being conscious (覺察) of body and mind and thus not raising any evil (惡), while remembrance is keeping in mind (憶持) and not forgetting (不忘) to observe the precepts. This is related to what is written at the beginning of the text that there are the pure and the impure minds, one is occupied with good (善) and the other with evil (惡). In other words, good is buddha-mind, evil is samsara. That way buddha-remembrance is keeping the buddha-mind. When it says that remembering (念) lies in the mind (心) and not in words (言) he emphasises contemplating mind. And that in order to recall the name (念佛之名) one already has to know the recalling of the way (念佛之道), what is meant is not that one should recite with understanding but that one should have realisation in order to properly remember the buddha. That is because unless the three poisons are removed one cannot see the buddha. He differentiates recitation (誦) and recalling (念), that one is a verbal while the other is a mental act. That is again strengthened by the statement that all the enlightened beings of the past (過去諸聖) practised exclusively mentally (唯只推心) and never verbally (皆非外說), as that would have been grasping at external phenomena.

"Now your entire straw man rests on this fictional idea that there is a Buddha Recitation that does not involve thinking of that Buddha and the associated narrative."

No. It rests in the difference between calming and insight practice.

On the Fukeshu I recommend this essay:

https://web.archive.org/web/20130408103143/http://www.japanese-religions.jp/publications/assets/JR32_a_Deeg.pdf

(I will continue my response later)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 12th, 2015 at 4:50 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"Now your entire straw man rests on this fictional idea that there is a Buddha Recitation that does not involve thinking of that Buddha and the associated narrative."

If by that you mean one recites the name with the intention to attain birth based on the faith in the vow, I have not questioned that. What I said is that during a single-minded recitation one does not think about anything else but the name, otherwise it is not a single-minded but a distracted recitation. But the main point, that is, the difference between calming and insight practice, is that contemplation of the nature of phenomena, of dependent origination, of emptiness, is not included in reciting the name, or even in visualisation. The topic of no-self is not one of the common Pure Land

narrative, but I don't see you would argue for that either. Naturally, all Pure Land schools teach buddha-remembrance within a specific context, that's what makes them Pure Land schools. Vajrayana can explain buddha-remembrance in a quite different fashion, just as it happens in other sects. Although all may recite the name, they do it with a different perspective. But that has not been questioned by me at all. It is still and only the lack of contemplating the nature of reality that I have brought up as the reason why recitation in and of itself may not bring about enlightenment in this life. To repeat, I do not question the validity and functionality of buddha-remembrance as effective in getting one to the Pure Land. It is just its relation to enlightenment in this life that would require insight into the nature of reality that I have talked about before and now.

"You've made the claim that Recitation falls under the first with absolutely NO PROOF"

Yes, my claim is that recitation is calming without insight. Should I prove the lack of contemplating emptiness in recitation how? If you have a specific work where a Pure Land teacher actually describes how emptiness is to be meditated upon within the frame of recitation then right there you can disprove my claim. Note that I have already mentioned how recitation can be connected with what is called real-mark buddha-remembrance and investigating who the reciter is.

"you made the claim that there is nothing inherently Buddhist about the Pure Land path"

I presume what you refer to is the part where I say that calming practice is common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. It is not about what the Pure Land path is or is not.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 12th, 2015 at 8:46 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

Last Legend,

"I want to discuss how Chan works exactly if one is doing the gradual practice because it is still within the conceptual framework."

Chan is sudden enlightenment. Following a gradual path is common Mahayana. If you want to clarify the gradual process, the best sources in English are from the Tibetan tradition (e.g. <http://www.dharma-friends.org.il/libitem/the-middling-stages-of-meditation-by-acharya-kamalashila/> and <http://kagyumonlam.org/Download/TEXT/Lamp%20For%20the%20Path%20to%20Enlightenment/English%20Root%20Text%20Bodhipathapradlpa.pdf>), or you can try to go through such works as Zhiyi's http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm and the http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm.

In short, the basis of ignorance is conceptual attachment, that is, believing in essentially existing things and beings, from that comes emotional attachments and from that all sorts of deluded actions. One can go gradually by first restricting one's actions with the precepts, calming emotional states with meditation and eliminating false ideas through insight. Or one can go directly to the root cause of clinging to thoughts and see that there is nothing to grasp. The result is the same.

All learning is necessarily conceptual as our primary communicational form is through words. But just as one can understand through instructions how to ride a bike or set the air conditioner, similarly one can understand the teachings and confirm it in one's experience. For instance, it is taught that within the five aggregates there is no self, nor is there an self beyond nor between the two. So one has to learn what the five aggregates are, what a self is, and then search for that hypothetical self within the aggregates. Once it is definitely confirmed that no such self can be found, the belief in a self is refuted and dissolved.

"If during recitation, one is be able to hear one's own recitation, that's hearing without distortion. That's practicing Zen because hearing without distortion is Zen."

That is concentration and calming. Zen is no-thought, where although everything appears but there is no attachment. A peaceful mind induced by focusing on a single object is temporary and conditioned. If the basis of attachment is removed and there is no delusion, then attachment cannot happen in any situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 12th, 2015 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

PorkChop,

"Vasubandhu clearly states that the visions of the Pure Land (and it's adornments, which are clearly linked to mental qualities) that arise are Vipassana (觀), that's even in the name of the Visualization Sutra."

What <http://www.euroshinshu.org/www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/jodoron.htm> means by insight "is to contemplate wholeheartedly those glorious adornments and so practice vipashyana; by this one can reach that Land, where one will enjoy various flavors of the Dharma." and "The contemplation is of three kinds: (1) contemplation of the glorious manifestations of the merit of the Buddha-land; (2) contemplation of the glorious merit of Amida Buddha; (3) contemplation of the glorious merit of various Bodhisattvas."

What I have written <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=270911#p270911>: "the difference between calming and insight practice, is that contemplation of the nature of phenomena, of dependent origination, of emptiness, is not included in reciting the name, or even in visualisation." still holds for what is contained in the Jodoron.

"So what do you mean there's no Emptiness in Pure Land?"

I mean that reciting the name, visualisation or the other commonly used practices do not include contemplation on the absence of self. Impermanence and suffering is considered to the point where one can renounce samsaric existence as undesirable, but the solution to that is birth in the Pure Land instead of removing the obscurations. Otherwise there would be no need to attain birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 13th, 2015 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

plwk,

"the name of Amitābha Buddha is recited slowly, and the mind is emptied out after each repetition. When idle thoughts arise, the phrase is repeated again to clear them. With constant practice, the mind is able to remain peacefully in emptiness, culminating in the attainment of samādhi."

That kind of dual practice is not that emptiness is achieved during recitation, but it uses recitation to assist in cutting off thoughts and arrives at the total cessation of recitation. There was a Chan school similar to that in the Tang era.

From the Chan Notes by Guifeng Zongmi (in Zongmi on Chan, p 186, 187):

"South Mountain Buddha-Recitation Gate's practice is "maintaining the buddha-recitation consisting of the one syllable for 'buddha.'" This is a musical buddha-recitation in which the practitioners sing the single syllable for "buddha" in a gradually lowering pitch, until their voices die out. Eventually they reach no thought.

...

At the beginning they chant this buddha-recitation as a gentle [or slow] song. Later they gradually lower the sound to a finer and finer sound, up to and including no sound. They are dispatching the "{hut" to [the seventh consciousness,] the manas, but in the manas the buddha-recitation is still coarse. They go on to dispatch [the "fhut"] to [the eighth consciousness,] the citta [that is, the storehouse consciousness], maintaining thought recitation after recitation. They have the "{hut" constantly inside the citta, up to and including the nothought concentration. [By such a practice] how could they not attain the path?"

"every Buddhist practice comes with a contemplation on śūnyatā ultimately"

The argument I proposed was that within recitation there is no contemplation of emptiness. But even within visualisation and other common practices used in one's devotion to Amitabha there is no emptiness contemplation. Still, the original question is whether with recitation one can attain liberation in this life, and that is to what I have

said no, with the condition that it is only recitation practice. But if you have a source where there actually is contemplation of no-self within recitation, please quote that.

"From the Anguttara-Nikaya: Ekanipata: Ekadhammapali: Pañhamavagga Bhikkhus, if you develop and make much this one thing, it invariably leads to weariness, cessation, appeasement, realization and extinction. What is it? It is recollecting the Enlightened One. If this single thing is recollected and made much, it invariably leads to weariness, cessation, appeasement, realization and extinction."

From Bhikkhu Bodhi's note to that section where he quotes the commentary (Numerical Discourses, p 1614, n161):

"But one can also use this meditation subject directly for the purpose of developing insight. After recollecting the Buddha, one dissects the act of recollection into the five aggregates and defines them thus: 'These five aggregates are, in brief, the truth of suffering. The craving that produced them is the truth of the origin. The cessation of craving is the truth of cessation; and the practice that understands cessation is the truth of the path' Thus one has defined the four truths in the preliminary portion [the stage of insight] and one step by step reaches the stage of the noble ones."

As it can be seen from the above, it is not the recollection in and of itself that leads to insight. The sutta itself only gives a general point regarding how the six forms of recollection can boost one's practice ("The first six recollections — of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, virtue, generosity, and the devas — are meant to induce a sense of joy and confidence (pasada) in the practice. The first two induce a sense of confidence in the practice itself;" from <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/recollections.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 14th, 2015 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

plwk said:

Hence, I tend to be much more attracted to the Chinese approach to Chan and Pure Land.

I totally forgot to recommend you this fabulous work as found

<https://www.google.com.my/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjournals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de%2Findex.php%2Fjiabs%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F8711%2F2618&ei=hfeVPjHAoeGuATstYDYAQ&usg=AFQjCNE8u6QXkTJkMDuTCiNdCbFKaARrBA&sig2=ZYzx4mAWtQLeDAPJ-kj6aA>. A bit on the author's profile http://www.peterlang.com/download/datasheet/42913/datasheet_61681.pdf and one review <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2528>. What I have failed to present in this thread, this work does it by leaps and bounds. Take your time to digest it...

Astus wrote:

More on Yongming Yanshou:

Online:

<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Yongming3.pdf>

<https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/16409/1/Keenan%20Cox%20MA%20Thesis%20Final.pdf>

<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Yongming1.pdf>

<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Yongming2.pdf>

Books:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=2Kc-zsuweBoC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=ZBzlqhA7m1QC>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 14th, 2015 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

DesertDweller said:

is this attitude really characteristic--or "required"--for Shin Buddhism, or is it merely a polemical distortion?

Astus wrote:

A topic from 2010 related to your question:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=60&t=1084>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 14th, 2015 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Daily Discipline: Chan and Pure Land

Content:

DesertDweller said:

The "totalitarianism" I was referring to in the passage above had more to do with the author's strident rhetoric and intolerance for other methods or even layers of meaning in Shin doctrine. To put it in a slightly more direct way, if this is what the Shin school really represents, I fail to see how it can serve as a saving means for any but the most literalistic fundamentalists--and this, again, seems contrary to my understanding of the spirit of Pure Land, which is mercy and compassion for ALL types of people, saints, sinners, fools and metaphysicians alike.

Astus wrote:

Any and every teaching says that it is the best of all. Otherwise why even bother with that path? The reason this approach may sound bad to some is that they associate it with religious intolerance and violence. Individualist relativism is a fairly modern thing

and it either means a lack a faith in anything or more often the disguised rejection of everyone else who do not agree with whatever idea one has and at the same time calling them intolerant thus blocking all meaningful discourse.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 24th, 2015 at 2:21 AM

Title: Re: Non duality for teenagers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Millions and millions of children have been taught magnificent and profound ideas before in practically every human society. But I have yet to see if it made any difference in people's day to day lives or on a historical scale. And this concept that kids should learn about non-duality or anything like that is not different from sending them to ecclesiastic schools. I wonder how many members here believe that religious education produces better humans.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 24th, 2015 at 3:22 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

Anyway, the point is that no amount of study of Buddhist "history" will get you any closer to the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

At the same time Buddhist schools are happy to establish their authority on historical claims and they regularly transmit stories about events supposedly happened in the past. The very idea of lineage is a claim for historical origins. If it is irrelevant to understanding the Dharma, why not leave all those out?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 25th, 2015 at 3:54 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

buddhology is forensics, lineage and tradition are living and breathing.

Astus wrote:

Tradition is the idea that certain patterns of thinking and activity are inherited through time without change. Historical research includes investigating such claims, looking into the origin and development of traditions. For instance, through findings in the 20th century it has become obvious that the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch is a later creation and not an account of actual events and teachings. Since all living Zen lineages originate from the Sixth Patriarch, and lineage is the single basis of authority in Zen, it is

not at all irrelevant whether the tradition has a historical validity or not, exactly because lineage is a powerful argument only as long as it can be perceived as true.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 25th, 2015 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

You conflate two things here: the Platform Sutra and the Sixth Patriarch.

Did Hui-Neng live? Yes? No?

It does not matter if all the details in the book about Hui-neng's life are "correct."

Astus wrote:

Yes, based on the available texts there was such a person, although there is nothing else known about him besides his name. Heze Shenhui was the first to claim that Huineng was the true heir of Hongren and not Shenxiu. However, no later lineages derive themselves from Shenhui - who might have been a disciple of Huineng - instead they probably made up two fake disciples to connect Huineng with later generations. So, even if Huineng might have existed, there is no lineage from him. On the other hand, it was the Platform Sutra that propagated Huineng as the true heir and made him the one true Sixth Patriarch.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 25th, 2015 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

Huh? You are proposing a speculation, "...instead they probably made up two fake disciples to connect Huineng with later generations" as a fact, "...there is no lineage from him."

Astus wrote:

Let's start with how Huineng was invented by Shenhui only to connect him to Hongren and establish a lineage separate from those of the so called Northern School, i.e. the disciples of Shenxiu. The earliest version of the Platform Sutra, written after the death of Shenhui, does not even mention Nanyue Huairang, who was later mentioned as the teacher of Mazu Daoyi in order to connect Mazu to Huineng. So, I could say that not only the name of Nanyue was added to the lineage of Huineng, but Huineng himself was added to the lineage of Hongren, both by people who wanted to establish their own authority. This is not to say that there might not have been people with names like that, however, it is clear that the lineage connections are later creations. That is, Huineng was not an outstanding disciple of Hongren and all we know about him from fairly contemporary sources is his name, and Nanyue was not a disciple of Huineng and besides his name we know nothing about from the earliest sources - and that source is actually the stele of Mazu.

So, yes, we can only speculate if they existed at all or not. What we can know is that the stories and their places in the lineage are creations of later generations, and such lineages were made up in order to claim authority.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 26th, 2015 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

So now you have moved from a tentative Huineng maybe existed to a full on "Huineng was invented."

Astus wrote:

On Huineng there is this work: <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=zTCoxPEXWNwC>. As I have said before, in the earliest sources there is only the name and nothing else. It was Shenhui who created the story of Huineng first and then it was further developed by later generations.

Malcolm said:

Then why do you say "However, it is clear that the lineage connections are later creations." Why is that clear, because you did not find another ancient book in which to confirm this? It seems to me that you are jumping to a lot of conclusions based on an astonishing lack of evidence for them.

Astus wrote:

There is evidence enough to tell that Shenxiu - later labelled as the founder of the Northern School - was the first Chan teacher to gain fame and he was recognised in the imperial records as well. Then Shenhui launched an attack on the disciples of Shenxiu by fabricating the transmission story of the robe to Huineng. Then other factions came up with their own versions of how the transmission happened, as shown in for instance Adamek's <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=dKgl-jPvHiUC>.

Malcolm said:

On the other hand, there is a clear narrative, and clear history. Just accept it and move on. That helps the tradition of Zen. The opposite undermines it. Is that what you want?

Astus wrote:

Yes, there is a story of transmission developed over a thousand years and debated by numerous factions. There is hardly any clear narrative unless we believe in a single account of our chosen lineage, in other words, we stick to a sectarian bias and accept whatever that group wants us to believe. How can that be called living up to the ideal of realising the nature of mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 27th, 2015 at 1:38 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some quotes from John McRae's *Seeing Through Zen*, a work that gives a general overview of the historical development of the Zen narrative. There are individual studies as well on the various eras from the early beginning up to the 17th century. This early era of Zen, the time of Huineng, has been reviewed quite completely 30 years ago in the works of McRae (<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=BTOsAAAAIAAJ>) and Faure (<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=BTOsAAAAIAAJ>).

On Shenhui and Huineng (p 55):

"Shenhui set up his own lineage hall in imitation of Puji, even as he worked to establish the transmission from Bodhidharma to Huineng (and then implicitly to Shenhui himself) as the sole lineal succession of Chan"

On the historical Huineng (p 68):

"It is probably fair to think of the historical Huineng as a reasonably conventional Chinese monk, whose teachings differed only slightly if at all from those of other members of the Northern school."

On Shenhui's knowledge of Huineng's life (p 67):

"if the matter had been known to Shenhui, who was a master storyteller dedicated to promoting Huineng's identity as sixth patriarch, he certainly would have included it in his writings. We have good evidence to show that in the late 730s Shenhui was ignorant of most of the details of Huineng's life."

On the Platform Sutra (p 60):

"The Platform Sutra appeared in about 780, over a century after the events it describes were supposed to have taken place. Many scholars have struggled to identify the contents of some "original" or "core" version of the text that might date back to Huineng himself, but the utter failure of these attempts has only confirmed the late provenance of the text as we have it. Barring some miraculous discovery, we must consider the text as we first discover it, in its Dunhuang version."

On Huairang and his connection to Huineng (p 82-83):

"In the case of Huairang, the little that is known about his biography definitely undermines the historicity of the filiation between him and Huineng. First, Huairang's epitaph was written in the year 815, some seventy years after his death, at the request of two of Mazu's disciples, so it can hardly be used to suggest that the connection between Huineng and Huairang was historical rather than legendary. In addition, the

paucity of detail concerning Huairang's biography—he is said to have been a mountain practitioner who did not “open the Dharma” to others— suggests that he was historically insignificant. And, needless to say, nothing like the story introduced above occurs in the epitaph. In fact, the *Transmissions of Treasure Grove [Temple]* (Baolin zhuan), the Hongzhou school's important contribution to the “transmission of the lamp” genre of Chan literature, written about 801, describes Huairang's enlightenment as having been gained under the guidance of the Northern school monk Lao'an. Actually, none of the men traditionally recognized as Huineng's most important successors—Huairang, Qingyuan, Yongjia Xuanjue, and Nanyang Huizhong—are mentioned in the Dunhuang version of the Platform Sutra."

...

"Ultimately, our main conclusion would be that Mazu had a typically variegated life of religious training, so that even if the interaction between Huairang and Mazu was historical in some sense—and it would be rash to deny this possibility out of hand—this would not be enough to make Mazu Huairang's successor, let alone a direct second generation successor to Huineng."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 27th, 2015 at 1:43 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding the mentioned criticism of academic studies, please consider

McRae's Rules of Zen Studies

(Seeing Through Zen, p xix-xx)

1. It's not true, and therefore it's more important.

The contents of Zen texts should not be evaluated using a simpleminded criterion of journalistic accuracy, that is, “Did it really happen?” For any event or saying to have occurred would be a trivial reality involving a mere handful of people at one imagined point in time, which would be overwhelmed by the thousands of people over the centuries who were involved in the creation of Zen legends. The mythopoeic creation of Zen literature implies the religious imagination of the Chinese people, a phenomenon of vast scale and deep significance.

2. Lineage assertions are as wrong as they are strong.

Statements of lineage identity and “history” were polemical tools of self-assertion, not critical evaluations of chronological fact according to some modern concept of historical accuracy. To the extent that any lineage assertion is significant, it is also a misrepresentation; lineage assertions that can be shown to be historically accurate are also inevitably inconsequential as statements of religious identity.

3. Precision implies inaccuracy.

Numbers, dates, and other details lend an air of verisimilitude to a story, but the more they accumulate, the more we should recognize them as literary tropes. Especially in

Zen studies, greater detail is an artifact of temporal distance, and the vagueness of earlier accounts should be comforting in its integrity. While we should avoid joining a misguided quest for origins, we should also be quick to distinguish between “good data” and ornamental fluff. Even as we ponder the vectors of medieval polemics.

4. Romanticism breeds cynicism.

Storytellers inevitably create heroes and villains, and the depiction of Zen’s early patriarchs and icons cripples our understanding of both the Tang “golden age” and the supposedly stagnant formalism of the Song dynasty. If one side is romanticized, the other must be vilified, and both subjects pass incognito. The collusion between Zen romanticists and the apologists for Confucian triumphalism—which has Song Neo-Confucianism climbing to glory on the back of a defeated Buddhism—is an obstacle to the understanding of both Chan and the Chinese civil tradition. The corollary is this: Cold realism eliminates dismissive misapprehension.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 27th, 2015 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: "Householder Chan"

Content:

Astus wrote:

First of all, I really like your question. It is the most important one for any householder who wants Chan.

As I see it, this idea that one should be free of all attachments is a misleading one. The solution is not in reducing one's life to the bare necessities. The source of suffering is the idea of permanence, substance, meaning, importance, etc. Attachment is wanting things to be in a specific way, and that desire is based on concepts that declare what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad ultimately. It is this projection of absolute reality that creates the duality between ordinary life and ideal life. Emptiness means that whatever supreme concept we have of ideal life is nothing but a passing thought.

It can be really difficult to know what "kleshas are bodhi" stands for. Either we are attached to something or not, there is no third option. Either we live a pure life or an impure one. But to see that this tainted realm is itself the pure land, that often feels nothing but clever sophism. What should be understood is there is nothing beyond this present reality. All humans can do are eat, shit and sleep. Whether you eat a seven course meal or a single bowl of rice makes little difference. Trouble comes when we want to force an ideal life on our ordinary one. And religious ideals are not much different from secular goals. We can dream about how sitting crossed leg facing the wall the whole day is the ultimate achievement, but that's just another false idea.

This existential unease that can drive us to philosophy and religion is the understanding that life is in general meaningless and without any real basis. The error most people make is that they look for some supreme truth beyond the present realm of experience. But as the Buddha taught, even the highest heavens are impermanent and unreliable. In

other words, even the deepest meditative trance and the most wonderful realisation are meaningless and without essence.

As human beings we have bodily senses, we have emotions and we have thoughts. That's our complete realm of experience, our life. Senses, feelings and concepts are all temporary. Whether we enjoy our situation or hate it, does not matter. It will pass anyway. In fact, right in this present moment we cannot hold on to a single experience even for a millisecond. It's all inconceivable.

So, instead of labeling one idea as true and arranging, measuring, judging everything else relative to that, we need to realise that there is always a network of associations without any true centre. Our attention constantly moves from one thing to another, and whatever happens to be in the focus, that becomes our true world, our self, the most important thing ever. Ignorance comes in the moment we explain it to ourselves as the only truth, that is, we build an ideology, a personal story.

Facing everyday events may give us the desire that we want only the good states, the good moments, the good situations. Actually, that's what we and everyone else wants. This cannot be helped. This is life itself. Life without this basic intention to want the good things is an imaginary dead state. Instead what we should see is that nobody else but us label things as good and bad, we are the ones driven by our conditioning to highlight one thing and forget about the rest. That is the work of our conceptual network of associations. It's not good or bad, it's just how we are. We may not like how our nose looks like, but that's just how it is. The moment we want an ideal nose instead of the present one, we fall into a big trap. Because while we can go for surgery. our actual problem lies in this feeling of "not good". Changing the object, reshaping our nose, our mind, whatever, does not change the cause of the problem, that the present experience is labeled as not good. However, the Buddha says that it is never good, it is unsatisfactory, it is suffering. It is never good because we want it to be something else, something ideal, meaningful, substantial, self.

Chan is seeing the nature of mind, that is, the reality of our present experience. What we can easily see is that it is changing no matter what we do. If we want it not to change or change in a specific way - i.e. want the ordinary to be the ideal - we only strengthen this feeling of unease and pain. Practising Chan is the practice of not setting up and following ideologies and personal stories. However, there is no clear recipe but just a general instruction. First one has to clarify the nature of mind, then go on from there and face whatever comes on the basis of that. That is, acting without raising the mind. Then life is just ordinary.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2015 at 3:03 PM

Title: Re: Written texts from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Chan Patriarchs

Content:

Loren said:

These would be the East Mountain Teachings? Guess one of the twenty-five disciples of

Guru Rinpoche, Namkhai Nyingpo, practiced this school.

What modern day tradition places emphasis on these?

Astus wrote:

Yes, the East Mountain school, the earliest era of Chan that later got renamed to Northern School. It has basically gone extinct by the 10th century. Only Sengcan's poem remained in circulation, but that is somewhat later than the others, and it is not exactly a central text either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2015 at 3:05 PM

Title: Re: Written texts from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Chan Patriarchs

Content:

Malcolm said:

Because after all, McRae is even more authoritative than Bodhidharma.

Astus wrote:

It depends on the topic. Texts attributed to Bodhidharma are good for studying Chan, McRae's works are good for studying Chan history.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

LastLegend said:

Give a good reason why they had to go through all the troubles to make things up? To protect the tradition? For selfish reason? What is the deal here what we are talking about involved Buddhist monks who held precepts right?

Astus wrote:

The reason: "prestige, patronage, and special privileges"

See also e.g.: <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=0D0IUv8NeWMC>

"The controversies that simmered in the Sung over the status of the Ch'an lineage as a "separate transmission", in short, were more about securing prestige, patronage, and special privileges within the Buddhist order than about practical matters of monkish training or spiritual cultivation. The "separate transmission" slogan was used successfully by proponents of Chan to argue that members of their lineage, having inherited the enlightenment of the Buddha in a direct line of "mind-to-mind transmission," were the monks most qualified for positions of leadership within the existing Buddhist monastic institution. The slogan was not used to promote any particular reforms of that institution, nor was it associated with any schismatic attempt to establish independent Ch'an monasteries that were "sectarian" in the technical

sense of splitting off from an ecclesiastical mainstream.

The success of the Ch'an school in the Sung was largely predicated on its bold, quasi-historical claim to represent an elite lineage of patriarchs or "ancestral teachers" (tsu-shuh) within the Buddhist order."

(Griffith Foulk: Sung Controversies Concerning the "Separate Transmission" of Ch'an in "Buddhism in the Sung", p 221)

Also, if we actually want to accept literally the Chan claim of transmission, it is an exclusive statement of the superiority of Chan above everyone else. And per definition every Chan teacher has to be viewed as a living buddha. Then it becomes a bit problematic when there are such controversies in the past and present, like Chan masters wielding political power, supporting war, seducing disciples, mismanaging wealth, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

LastLegend said:

If Chan is nothing more than what you just described there, then there should not be any real Chan practitioners today. How do you explain the surviving Chan today?

Astus wrote:

What practice is it you call Chan? What doctrine?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

LastLegend said:

There is a forum here called Chan. Why do you think that is?

Astus wrote:

My point is that it is not easy at all to tell what Chan practice and doctrine actually is. Actually, the word Chan is used in such a general way in Chinese Buddhism that virtually every monastery is a Chan temple and every abbot is a Chan master. Even when there is a monastic ordination people are automatically members of a Chan lineage. But in terms of the doctrine and practice monastics follow there can be great varieties. The most Chan-like practice is kanhua, but that was invented by Dahui Zonggao in the 12th century and not every lineage and teacher subscribes to it. As for some unique Chan doctrine there is not easy to find one that is on the one hand specific to Chan and on the other accepted by at least some majority of Chan teachers. So the question is, who qualifies as a Chan practitioner?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 4th, 2015 at 2:04 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sure it is, just read Nubchen Sangye Yeshe if you have any doubts.

Anders said:

Ah come on. You're eelwriggling now. The point is valid - If that is all there is to Chan, it wouldn't have the lifeblood of realisation in its lineage that it has.

Astus wrote:

There are ways to define Chan, no question about that. A common way to do that since the middle Song era (first appearance in the Zuting Shiyuan, 1108) is to quote the four lines attributed to Bodhidharma, although even Eisai (1141-1215) left out the first line (Zen Classics, p 92; Zen Texts, p 144).

There are those who say that buddha-nature includes insentient beings (e.g. Caodong teachers), and those who say it does not (e.g. Hongzhou teachers). There are those who teach scriptural study (e.g. Yongming Yanshou) and those who don't (e.g. Miyun Yuanwu). There are those who emphasise lineage (e.g. Dogen) and those who are not even parts of any (e.g. Jinul). There are those who teach a gradual curriculum (e.g. Hakuin) and those who have nothing like that (e.g. Bankei). Most likely we could find a similar diversity among modern teachers who associate themselves with the Chan school.

The mentioned "lifeblood of realisation" is similarly a problematic matter that can be clear just by considering the amount various Chan teachers complain, ridicule and reject other Chan teachers and lineages. Theoretically all members of the lineage should be equal, but then for instance Dogen should not have left Japan and Zongmi should not have put others on a lower level than himself.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 4th, 2015 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think the Western standard of what constitutes 'truth' is very different from the traditional one.

Astus wrote:

I don't see that the Chinese (or many other ancient civilisations) lacked historical consciousness. There were debates and studies related to the authenticity and historical truth of various texts and claims within the Chinese Buddhist community, similarly to how Tibetans tried to sort out the original from the false scriptures.

Here is a passage from the Blue Cliff Record (p 5):

"According to tradition, Master Chih died in the year 514, while Bodhidharma came to Liang in 520; since there is a seven year discrepancy, why is it said that the two met? This must be a mistake in the tradition. As to what is recorded in tradition, I will not discuss this matter now. All that's important is to understand the gist of the matter."

That is, Yuanwu recognises the error in the records, but it is not a topic he discusses in his commentary.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 4th, 2015 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Malcolm said:

Oh, it is pretty clear what Astus is up to. Next he will start attacking Vajrayāna lineages. Then, once he has satisfied himself that lineage is just a bunch of hokum, he will set himself up as a guru, indiscriminately mixing mahāmudra and Chan teachings.

Say it ain't so, Astus, come on.

Astus wrote:

You caught me. I've already ordered my guru hat from Amazon.

As for mahamudra + Chan, there was John Crook and we still have Ken McLeod. There might be others as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 4th, 2015 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Dan74 said:

Sure there are inaccuracies and even myths and hagiographies - plenty of grist for the mill of doubt. But what does that all have to do with practice?

Astus wrote:

It has, because as can be seen above in Indrajala's post, Chan can be defined as whatever a Chan teacher says. Without other measurements the only thing that matters is whether the teacher is a member of a lineage or not, and the lineage is held to be valid because it comes from Shakyamuni Buddha. Also, because Chan is often perceived as something ungraspable for ordinary humans and totally mystical, what any seeker can rely on are the credentials provided through the transmission. Even if you look at the various debates that happened during the history of Chan, they are mostly about lineage claims and not anything practical or doctrinal.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 6th, 2015 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Astus wrote:

A story is kept alive as long as people can draw something from it relating to their present situation. There are thousands and thousands of Zen stories, but only a few hundreds are regularly used. Not because of their historical value, because they have zero of that, but because they can be reused again and again. Same goes for the whole lineage idea. It was popular in China because it was actually copied from the imperial system of descendants and fit well with Confucian concepts. Same goes for Christianity actually that copied the Roman system. Since today in Western countries nobility plays almost no role in politics and family bloodlines are mostly irrelevant and even unknown, copying a feudal model is nothing else but romanticism, just like the again popular stories like the Lord of the Rings. But arguing that there was actually a Middle Earth or the planet Coruscant cannot be taken seriously, even if some claim to be followers of Jediism and such. Ever since the finding of the Dunhuang manuscripts more than a hundred years ago we can actually know that things did not exactly happened as later generations liked to describe. People can still believe that events like the flower sermon did occur, but that only shows their insecurity about the effective functioning of the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 6th, 2015 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

plwk said:

The latter? Legions of property, wealth, followers, guarded legacies and generations of heirs & disciples at stake... Is this not obvious to you and the academicians?

Astus wrote:

Sure it is. Actually, recent studies usually cover political and social aspects of various traditions, and how for instance Zen literature developed during the Song and Ming dynasty to cater to the needs of the literati, the people who could donate a lot. That again can give the wrong impression that everything is about money and power, and people are all hypocrites. But that would be the other extreme.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 6th, 2015 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: The Very Idea of Buddhist History

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I can fully accept it as apocryphal but the point of the simile is such that understanding

what the so-called real story or historical account of what really happened may amount to missing the point. In other words, you might unravel the actual history, but miss the metaphorical point, without which there would be no story to tell.

Astus wrote:

Even the meaning intended within the Zen tradition has different levels. The idea of a wordless transmission is not just pointing to the nature of mind but it is posited in contrast to the verbal transmission that "store of the true Dharma eye" originally meant. It is more a sectarian than a doctrinal statement, that besides all the sutras there is a higher level truth that only those who are members of this special transmission know. Otherwise the whole concept of "truth beyond words" has been there in numerous sutras, nothing special about that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 17th, 2015 at 6:57 AM

Title: Re: Master Hsuan Hua on garlic, onions, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't think it's a question of respect. People can say all sorts of things, some clever and some quite stupid. Take what you find sensible and leave the rest. Buddhist tradition has for this practice the terms neyārtha and nīrārtha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 20th, 2015 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Master Hsuan Hua on garlic, onions, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is interesting how the usual human obsession with food appears in religious contexts. Chan fitness diet.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 20th, 2015 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Master Hsuan Hua on garlic, onions, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mentioning that this is the Chan section of the forum, since when has Chan come to mean diet?

"In India, the twenty-seven patriarchs only transmitted the imprint of the mind. And the only reason I've come to China is to transmit the instantaneous teaching of the Mahayana: This mind is the buddha. I don't talk about precepts, devotions or ascetic practices such as immersing yourself in water and fire, treading a wheel of knives, eating one meal a day, or never lying down. These are fanatical, provisional teachings." (Bloodstream Sermon in "The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma", p 41)

The Governor of Hung-chou asked, "Master, should I eat meat and drink wine or should I not?"

The Master replied, "To eat and drink is your blessing. Not to do it is also a blessing." (Mazu Daoyi, in "Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism", p 152)

"There are people in every quarter who assert that the ten thousand practices and the six pāramitās constitute the buddhadharma. But I say to you that they are merely means of adornment, expedients for carrying out the buddha's work; they are not buddhadharma [itself]. Even those who keep the rules regarding food and conduct with the care of a man carrying a bowl of oil so as not to spill a drop, if their dharma-eye is not clear they'll have to pay their debts, and the day will come when the cost of their food will be exacted from them."

(Record of Linji, tr. Sasaki, p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 20th, 2015 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Establishing a Correct Understanding?

Content:

srivijaya said:

How crucial is it to establish a correct ontology of the two truths within Mahayana Buddhism. Is it a prerequisite for spiritual advancement and enlightenment - and if so, why?

Astus wrote:

In Indian Mahayana we have Madhyamaka and Yogacara. For Madhyamaka understanding the two truths is crucial. For Yogacara you have to comprehend the three natures (trisvabhava). In Chinese Buddhism you can find systems with two, three and four categories of truths. Tibetan Buddhism simply follows Indian Mahayana. And since the two truths go back to the four noble truths and the general path from samsara to nirvana it is very much a basic element of Buddhism.

"Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom."

(Kamalashila, in HHDL: Stages of Meditation, p 134)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 21st, 2015 at 2:24 AM

Title: Re: Establishing a Correct Understanding?

Content:

srivijaya said:

This is interesting Astus because for me, it would depend upon what is meant by "wisdom analyzing the entity of things". Does he mean a correct interpretation of the

tenets, or perhaps insight from within meditation? The point he makes about those who just seek to eliminate mental activity is spot on and does indicate that he is referring to meditative wisdom.

So, I think it may come down to how wisdom/knowledge is used as a term. As an ontology gained and refined via logic and debate - requiring acceptance and rejection, or direct insight within meditation. I realise it can mean both in different contexts, just don't see any necessary link between the two.

Astus wrote:

Analysis means conceptual investigation that is based on knowing the teachings. One learns the meaning of selflessness and then looks at one's present experience to confirm the doctrine's validity. Once one knows first hand that indeed there is no self to find anywhere the analysis ends.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 21st, 2015 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Master Hsuan Hua on garlic, onions, etc.

Content:

Malcolm said:

not even in your Brahmajala Sutra.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.ymba.org/books/brahma-net-sutra-moral-code-bodhisattva/brahma-net-sutra/secondary-precepts>:

3. On Eating Meat

A disciple of the Buddha must not deliberately eat meat. He should not eat the flesh of any sentient being. The meat-eater forfeits the seed of Great Compassion, severs the seed of the Buddha Nature and causes [animals and transcendental] beings to avoid him. Those who do so are guilty of countless offenses. Therefore, Bodhisattvas should not eat the flesh of any sentient beings whatsoever. If instead, he deliberately eats meat, he commits a secondary offense.

4. On Five Pungent Herbs

A disciple of the Buddha should not eat the five pungent herbs -- garlic, chives, leeks, onions, and asafoetida. (44) This is so even if they are added as flavoring to other main dishes. Hence, if he deliberately does so, he commits a secondary offense.

The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, ch 7, p 219, BDK edition:

One must not partake of improper food (buyingshi). (There are three kinds: 1) alcohol, 2) spicy vegetables, and 3) animal flesh. Onions, leeks, garlic, scallions, coriander, and so on, are classified as the second spicy food, whereas various meats are classified as the last one. One should not partake of these kinds of food.)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 21st, 2015 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Master Hsuan Hua on garlic, onions, etc.

Content:

PorkChop said:

Going back to an earlier statement that the Indian tradition is the only definitive tradition that all Mahayana schools should accept, ... In other words, instead of completely ruling something out as Chinese apocrypha, maybe the case could be made that China was a valuable source of Buddhist knowledge.

Astus wrote:

That is absolutely true. Chinese Buddhism gradually moved away from relying on Indian sources to stand on its own. Xuanzang (602–664) was probably the last monk who visited India and brought back new texts that had some level of impact on a larger scale, however, his Yogacara based Buddhism did not really gain followers and was put aside by the indigenous systems of Tiantai, Huayan and eventually Chan. It is telling that Chan itself, the dominant school during the second millennium, relies mostly on Tiantai and Huayan doctrines but not on Yogacara or Madhyamaka. Also, Chinese Buddhism did not rely much on Indian commentaries and they have started to favour their own scholars, like the disciple of Kumarajiva, Sengzhao (384–414), whose Zhaolun treatise is still quoted occasionally by Chan teachers. And the idea of Dharma transmission in Chan is another step in saying that Chinese teachers are very much the equals of Indians.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 25th, 2015 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If curing people magically is interfering with karma then there should be no doctors at all. Theories of physics, chemistry, medicine, etc. are proven through observation of the material world. Religions and some other beliefs claim magical powers but none can actually provide any proof besides hearsay and legends. As I take it, siddhis are literary tropes and spiritual experiences, not actual forces in the physical world.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 25th, 2015 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Karma_Yeshe said:

When people are becoming sick, it can be the fruit of past karma. The moment the fruit is there, the karma is ripend (if the sickness occurred due to karma). Then when a doctor cures the disease, the doctor may generate new karma for himself. All this has nothing to do with changing the karma of people.

Could you please show some Sutra that supports your idea of separating "spiritual

experiences" and the "physical world"?

Astus wrote:

Then using supernatural powers to cure another should not have anything to do with manipulating karma either.

There are the five eyes, particularly the distinction between ordinary human and the divine eyes, and there is also the separation of nirmana- and sambhogakaya. I think it would be harder to find a scripture discussing literary tropes.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 25th, 2015 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, and Edit

Astus wrote:

Powers appear from/in dhyana. Although in SN 51.22 we are told that the Buddha reached the Brahma world with both a physical and mind-made body, the description of that achievement says that he merged his mind and body to make what is heavy (the four elements) into something light (the mind), thus rising up to the heavens is easy.

Taking the position that anyone who practises the right type of meditation can manipulate the physical world in a supernatural way raises numerous questions, beginning with the apparent lack of anyone who can actually perform them. Common excuses, like that the Buddha has forbidden it, or that it is a distraction for practitioners, seems to have no relevance in thousands of well known Buddhist stories where we can read about the Buddha, his disciples and later yogis do all sorts of wonderful things. But if you have some explanation for that, please share it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, people are not properly cultivating dhyāna. But we have modern examples of people, like Dipa ma, who have. There are also a lack of experienced teachers, like Dipa ma's teacher.

And I still think it is a pity that you are going down the secular "buddhist" road.

Astus wrote:

There is no shortage of accounts of special powers both within and outside Buddhism. But I have not yet heard of any living teacher of some credibility to claim it for

him/herself (e.g. Ajahn Sumedho, Hsing Yun, Chokyi Nyima), although they are often accepted as enlightened masters. Scientists cooperate with several meditation teachers to investigate its effects, but there is no record of siddhis.

I don't see how secular it is that you see. I have had this view of magic for a while now (see this from 2012: <http://eubuddhist.blogspot.in/2012/09/buddhist-magic.html>). And as I quote there, it is not without precedent that superpowers are not taken literally in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nonsense Astus, your post shows no such things, quite the opposite, it merely shows that you do not take such things literally, and this is normal for those who subscribe to physicalist view of reality. But then, we already know that Zen people are throwing away rebirth, tossing out karma, reducing the Dharma to mindfulness techniques to make us better programmers and managers. In fact, the departure of many Zen and Vipassana teachers from Buddhadharma has hastened rise of so called secular "Buddhism".

Astus wrote:

I don't subscribe to physicalism, never did in my life. I simply have a logical and an evidential problem with powers. The logical is that even in Buddhism there is no explanation for how the human body could multiply or levitate, how someone could read another's mind, and if such abilities were available for the Buddha, why did he not use them in various situations, like when certain disciples committed suicide as a result of meditating on the foulness of the body. The evidential I have already explained.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But there is such a explanation, you merely seem immune to understanding it.

Astus wrote:

And that explanation is what?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Jesse said:

Not sure about some other siddhis but telepathy is probably just making use of shared consciousness, collective unconscious or whatever. There is actually quite a bit of evidence for this.

I guess it really depends on what you consider "real". Is this human body anymore real than the dream body or any other body we happen to be conscious of? If we are to believe this physical body is all that we are then sure. Otherwise this body is no more real than any other.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism does not recognise such a shared/collective consciousness. Mind-streams are individual and karma is personal.

To me the question is not whether there are supernatural powers but rather what they are and how they work. What I have ruled out is that they cannot exist on the same level as everyday physical forces but they are spiritual, inner experiences. That is, we don't see people flying and walking through walls because they are physically impossible, nevertheless, one can have such experiences during meditation (and other altered states of consciousness). And people can and do experience such things, it is not uncommon among certain groups of individuals (not only Buddhists). One just has to look into some New Age books and communities where they practise magical arts. However, there is not even one man who can perform supernatural powers in front of a group of independent observers, and those who pretend to do so are eventually disproved as frauds.

So we can say that once we move beyond defining reality as purely material there is ample evidence for higher powers and abilities. My argument is just that abhijñānas are not like electricity and steam power but more like friendships and love.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Research kashina meditation.

Astus wrote:

The Visuddhimagga is probably the most thorough in discussing the supernormal powers among works available in English, however, while it does contain instructions for attaining them, it does not and cannot provide an explanation that would satisfy modern critics. It does not discuss the powers relation to physical laws, primarily because the author could not have viewed physics the same way as modern people. But, as stated in my previous post here, that is not to say that it's all nonsense, rather that such powers exist in a different context.

When you say that I have fallen to some physicalist view, it only confirms that modern

physicalism knows nothing about spiritual powers. It also means that within the physical realm such powers do not exist. And that's why I say that they are spiritual and not physical. So, the counter-argument would be to say that it is actually possible within the physical world to transform matter according to one's wish (one to multiple, big to small, heavy to light, etc.), but then if that's not just an unfounded repetition of hearsay, one should provide reasons for how bones, flesh and blood can be changed in such a way.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Anders said:

The yogacarin in me would tend towards seeing many physical laws as being more akin to shared causal karmic "contracts" that we are more or less obliged to follow in our shared representation of "physical existence". Siddhis then being the ability to recognise this and how mutable they are.

Astus wrote:

Vasubandhu in the Vimsatika (verse 3-4) explains shared perception by similar karmic causes, but one mind does not restrict or influence the other, otherwise all beings would be stuck and one could not reach liberation in the human or heavenly realms.

"All these experiences are obtained inspite of the fact that in reality there are no infernal guards etc. [If, therefore, all the inhabitants of hells have similar experiences], it is owing to their own matured [seeds of] deeds of the same kind. Thus in places other than hells, too, the four factors, namely spatio-temporal determinations etc., should be understood as obtained."

(Kochumuttom, p 263)

"That is, even though in hell there are no real sentient beings that include such things as infernal guardians, still, because of the dominant power of the maturation of identical acts of those sentient beings, many [individual] mental continuities (scuntāna) in the same place, at the same time, all alike see infernal guardians, dogs, crows, iron mountains, etc., coming to them to inflict injury. As a result of this [example, I even though there are no real objects of perception apart from consciousness, still, the four concepts of restriction of place, etc., are demonstrated."

(Cook, p 393)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Ironically, you are actually supporting a positivist theory of reality, which holds that

physical laws are inherently real and impose inherent limitations which cannot be overcome. This is why I claim you have succumbed to physicalism.

Astus wrote:

How do you account for the lack of people who can perform supernormal powers, even though there are many who study and practice such methods? In fact, all those people who just want meditation out of Buddhism should have some experiences with siddhis, not to mention a perhaps even larger number of people who directly aim for higher powers. On what reasons can one accept the existence of magic as a physical force?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Anders said:

That's not really true though. Minds influence each other all the time. This is for example called, in one guise among many potential ones, "social interaction".

Astus wrote:

That is indirect influence. But seeds don't wander from one mind to another or can be shared. That is, interaction happens through the five senses. Or not even that, as all experiences are the products of one's own mental stream.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

As I already pointed out, very few people develop the level of concentration needed to develop the abhijñas, for example. But some people do.

Astus wrote:

Why are those few not known? The living ones. If they can control the four elements then they should come forward. It would definitely be a greater sensation than the discovery of radio waves. And it could definitely upset the current physicalist worldview. But again, there must be some excuses for them to stay hidden, like the Masters of the Ancient Wisdom in the Himalayas.

Once people like John Dee and Paracelsus were employed by European rulers as "court wizards", and East Asian imperial houses had their own army of Buddhist and Taoist magicians to fight evil forces and assure the continuation of the dynasty. However, gradually such people were removed and today governments have medical doctors and engineers as advisers and "miracle makers" who control the four elements. To me it seems that the old ways of ruling over matter have lost against natural science in every possible area. Once it was no problem for any religion to provide the required number of

"element controllers" to rulers and village people alike. Actually, it would take only one proper master of elements to demonstrate that there are other ways to raise tons of rocks than heavy machinery. Why don't we see any?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Anders said:

Well yeah, but that doesn't contradict any of what I wrote. If any, it reinforces it. We communicate through the shared frequencies of our 'shared' (or 'similar') contracts of manifesting a shared/similar 'saha world' environment as a product of our karma. But since there is only so much influence 'I' can have on 'your' part of the tapestry, though one may be able to manifest siddhis for himself, he might not be able to manifest them for someone else, due to the karmic circumstances of that person.

The only unusual thing here is that it considers even physical laws subject to karmic laws.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that I can agree with. People see what they are inclined to see. Supposedly that is what scientific experiments are meant to filter out.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who ever said that lifting tons of heavy rocks was possible for someone who had gained control over the four elements? Attaining control over the four elements does not mean omnipotence. You are venturing into lala land here. Why don't you study the matter and actually find out what these things actually mean.

On the other hand, when the Buddha levitated to the height of fourteen palm trees to prove a point, this means he had gained control over the four elements. And in fact he had forbid monks who had mastered siddhis to demonstrate them.

Astus wrote:

A few tons of rocks are nothing compared to the powers displayed openly for everyone in the Vimalakirti Sutra and others. Influencing the weather is significantly more difficult than lifting weight.

Vsm. quotes the Patisambhidamagga (p 378):

“What is success through the sciences? Masters of the sciences, having pronounced

their scientific spells, travel through the air, and they show an elephant in space, in the sky ... and they show a manifold military array”

I.e. it is no problem to have even an army in the air.

In the Samannaphala Sutta (DN 2 / D i 77) the stock passage includes: "he even touches and strokes with his hand the sun and moon, mighty and powerful as they are". Although I think it is noteworthy that the process begins by the creation of the mind-made body that performs the supernormal powers.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Anders said:

Supposedly. What such a cosmology would suggest though, is that if the karmic world the scientists inhabit/manifest won't budge that far, then the siddhis can not manifest to them. Kuhn's paradigm shift elevated to cosmological/karmic principle.

In other words, a universe designed to reinforce the preconceptions you came here with make its true nature as obscure to you as possible (or at least, it looks like it does that). Now what does that remind me of.... Oh, right. Samsara!

Whoever said avija was a most powerful siddhi is not too far off to my mind.

Astus wrote:

That sounds a bit too restricting as it does not allow changes in one's view and experience. Although we could say that the area science can investigate is somewhat limited, it is a basic principle to be open for new discoveries and be willing to review previous assumptions. It is an attitude that old traditions don't really have and they don't leave space for disproving any established doctrine. That is, just because the majority fails to attain siddhis and enlightenment the truth of the Dharma is not negated, while if an experiment cannot be repeated then it loses credibility.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Anders said:

Rejecting or even reviewing physicalism would represent a momentous paradigm shift. That is not to be expected from science at its current stage.

I can understand why too. The physical sciences have been enormously successful in describing and predicting the world. It's not that irrational to expect that they should be able to explain everything.

Astus wrote:

It took a few hundred years for science to overtake the place of religions, but even today it's not 100%. What I meant regarding science's openness is its theoretical basis, not how it happens on the ground where money, politics and other social conventions are involved. But as you know, Buddhism managed to gain popularity in Asia not because of its magnificent philosophy but because of other features, and the same goes for other religions as well. Siddhis are among those few elements that were once considered beneficial for the ruling class and the society in general. And just as science gained a foothold because of its success in the areas of medicine, engineering, social control, economics and warfare, something similar was true for Buddhism and other religions. Buddhism today can spread because it promises help with mental problems like stress and such, not because people are interested in the true nature of reality and similar abstract issues. So, if there were actually supernormal powers that people could learn, it would definitely be a big thing. But it's just not happening. Occult studies are very much marginal today and generally ridiculed as fake and nonsense. And that attitude is not totally without any reason.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Mahāyāna sūtras

Content:

Astus wrote:

East Asian Buddhism often uses the Five Periods system developed first in the Tiantai school as the explanation for various sutras. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiantai#Five_Periods.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 27th, 2015 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

That is because you are blind to it. I already pointed out to twice a master who definitely exhibited the ability control the weather. At this point, I have to concluded you are just too locked into the "scientific" worldview to be open to any such experiences.

Astus wrote:

What you cited were stories of two deceased people who have supposedly had the ability to change the weather. Stories like that and even more fantastic we have a lot from all over the world. For instance, canonised Catholic saints have performed various miracles, and there are thousands of them, including many from the 20th century. And while in all practical matters the veracity of such stories are at least irrelevant and not much different from superhero films, if someone claims for whatever reason that powers like levitation and weather changing exist, it is not a strong argument to say that only those with faith can perceive supernormal events. Although saying that actually fits

what we briefly discussed with Anders here that experiences of siddhis are a matter of mind set, and that matches what I have said from the beginning that powers are not physical but spiritual. Similarly, if I were to argue that there are pegasi, I would have to provide some evidence for that, and excusing the lack of proof would not make my argument any stronger, even if I called unbelievers materialists.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 27th, 2015 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Apparently you don't read well, I cited twice one master who had this capacity, someone I knew personally, someone who I watched die, actually.

Astus wrote:

Yes, Ngagpa Yeshe Dorje. And there was Dipa Ma you brought up before as an example as well. But I did misread you. Still, no living weather controllers or others to show yet. By the way, if there are people who can control weather, they could save whole countries from a lot of suffering. There can be millions who starve because of bad weather.

I've found a talk by Sheng-yen on <http://chancenter.org/cmc/1986/05/12/supernormal-power/> where he says,

"If there were a mantra that could really accomplish such miraculous cures, there would be no need for doctors and hospitals. All we would need is the mantra. But even famous lamas in Tibet can fall prey to death and disease. There is no mantra that can defend against every sickness."

"Supernormal power can be used occasionally, but it should not be used too often. If you do use it, it should benefit others, and hopefully it will bring some benefit to you. Using this power should not place you in jeopardy. If it does, it means that you are transferring someone else's karma onto yourself. Most practitioners refrain from using their supernormal power."

"The sage performs activities just like ordinary people. But unlike ordinary people, the sage no longer has a sense of self. As a result, there is no karmic consequence. Karma follows ordinary people like a shadow. No karma follows the sage."

"The power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas exists at all places and at all times, and far surpasses the power of other beings: Arahats, deities, and common people."

So, from that we can understand that:

1. Mantras don't necessarily work, at least not as some might expect.
2. Ordinary people can/should not use their powers because they take up others' karma.

3. Enlightened beings are free from karma, have unlimited powers and they are everywhere.

And that leads to the problems that

1. If the power of mantras/powers are limited, there couldn't be certain yogis and enlightened ones who can do almost anything, even creating entire worlds.
2. If it is possible to redirect people's karma, buddhas could save all without a problem and should not refrain from using their powers.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 28th, 2015 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Both you and Astus thus far have demonstrated only that you are basically materialists in your orientation towards these questions.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it you who claim that powers are physical phenomena, like in Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings? How is it anti-Dharma to ask for physical evidence then? And you call it materialism if I say that such powers are not physical manifestations, therefore cannot be observed in any ordinary, natural or scientific way, but rather spiritual. Is the reference to mental phenomena a materialist view?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 28th, 2015 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Gyurme Kundrol said:

If you show it off you attract people who just want to take it from you. In the same way, showing off Siddhi is likely to attract so called "students" who just want power.

Astus wrote:

It seems we should all feel sorry for film stars, celebrities, politicians, business people, bankers, and in general the rich and powerful. And if one lives in a rich country others will start to immigrate. Better be poor and unknown in a destitute state?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 28th, 2015 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

As to your contention that these things are merely mental experiences, well, that does

not save you from my charge that your orientation towards these questions is basically materialist. I am surprised in fact that you still accept literal rebirth, or is rebirth just another "spiritual experience", like recall of past lives, knowing the minds of others, seeing into deva realms and so on and so forth?

Astus wrote:

My orientation towards the topic of supernatural powers is materialist because the idea that they manifest within the material realm requires that. Natural science is what analyses matter, so physical phenomena falls within that area of study. Rebirth is the continuation of the mind-stream, and since mind is non-physical it is out of scope for material investigation. And for more than a hundred years experts of material sciences were unable to find any sound basis for supernormal powers, and not one person could actually https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_prizes_for_evidence_of_the_paranormal anything paranormal so far, I cannot see any basis for accepting such claims. It is another matter that even if there were such powers they would have nothing to do with the path of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Dechen Norbu said:

And mind doesn't manifest within the material realm? Really? How do you move an arm by will then?

Malcolm said:

It follows then that since rebirth manifests in the material realm, you therefore must also come up with an explanation for it according to natural science. ... The mind clearly interacts with matter every time rebirth occurs. How is this possible? How can a nonmaterial entity interact with a material one?

Astus wrote:

The material realm is what is within the experience of the five senses. Can the mind be seen, heard, smelt, tasted or touched? Does it have a form, a colour, a spatial or temporal existence? It does not. How could then we say it manifests as a physical object? On the connection between mind and matter, there are the 18 dhatus, abhidharma literature and yogacara works. That is, the four elements are solidity/extension, cohesion/fluidity, heat and motion, so they are what is experienced by consciousness and not a separate realm. Nevertheless, various experiences are categorised differently, thus the distinction between name and form, feeling and concept, etc. In other words, instead of choosing either that body and mind are one or two, the Buddha taught the five aggregates.

What various sources agree on is that powers are samadhi (Kosa, p 1168) and they are within the rupadhyanas:

"one enters into the fifth fine-material-sphere jhana occurring by way of the direct knowledge with respect to such objects as visible forms, etc."
(Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p 343)

"The first five supernormal knowledges exist in the Four Dhyanas, that is to say, they are obtained by an ascetic in any of these Dhyanas."
(Abhidharmakosabhasyam, vol 4, p 1159)

And such powers' production are in the mental realm:

"What is matter included in the sphere of mental objects [dharmadhatu]? It is of five kinds: ... [5] that which is produced by the supernormal powers."
(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 6)

However, it is stated that the powers' spheres are where they are developed and below that (Kosa, p 1161), that is, all can manifest within the kamadhatu. It is also said that powers can be obtained not only through meditation but other means like mantras and plants (Kosa, p 1176; MPPS 1, p 312).

Since those with power can create illusory beings and material objects (Kosa, p 1168-1173), it could be considered as actual magical power just as it is commonly understood. Then it raises a number of problems nobody so far has cared to answer. We don't even have to go as far as the problem raised at the beginning of the Vimalakirti Sutra regarding the buddha-lands - i.e., for instance Sukhavati is free from all suffering, and buddhas all possess powers in an unlimited fashion, therefore there should be no pain in this world either - but just consider stories where if Shakyamuni had used his supernormal senses and abilities the whole thing could not have happened (see e.g. this essay: "<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/buddha-omniscience.pdf>"). That's why regarding superpowers I take the position presented in the Vimalakirti Sutra, that it depends on one's perception, and there is no such power that could be demonstrated for everyone, thus my distinction between physical and spiritual powers.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

None of which really explain from a scientific point of view how this mysterious interaction between mind and body works.

Astus wrote:

Scientifically there are no non-physical objects to investigate or establish a connection with. Otherwise the duality of mind and body in Buddhism is only a conventional term as all phenomena are within the experiential realm and distinguished as form and names as a way to talk about categories of experiences. If we begin to analyse such

conventions in Buddhism then we gradually end up with mind-only and emptiness.

Malcolm said:

The four elements are clearly properties of material entities.

Astus wrote:

They are called material entities because they exhibit such properties and are experienced with the first five consciousnesses. Supposing a noumenal substance, independent object, beyond the phenomenal level is either a conventional approach or a substantialist philosophy.

Malcolm said:

You have not addressed my objection in the slightest, you have not explained to us how it is that consciousness, which is a non-material entity, functions through the sense organs via patches of atoms located on the various physical structures in their respective locations such as the eye, and so on.

Astus wrote:

Such distinctions as mind and matter are only nominal, thus establishing a connection between them is unnecessary. They form a single realm of experience.

Malcolm said:

Your contention however was that such things as levitation, manomayakāyas, and so on were simply subjective experiences of adepts, were not part of physical reality, and solely the domain of fantasy — even though of course Buddha, and other mahasiddhas displayed these miraculous events to others present.

Astus wrote:

Yes, supernormal phenomena are not part of our everyday physical reality, not part of what is commonly called physical - the area of study of physics - and cannot be explained with physical laws. They can happen only if conceived within a subjective experiential realm where one doesn't have to account for the conservation of mass and energy (small becomes big, one becomes many, etc.). In other words, the mechanism of supernormal powers cannot be logically described within the confines of the general laws of this physical reality.

But if you say that buddhas and ordinary beings as well can perform such abilities in the common physical world, then - as referred to before - there are a number of questions not yet answered, beginning with the first post of this thread.

Regarding this criticism that modern Zen is more and more materialist, in Korean Zen both Seung Sahn and Daehaeng taught about a stage where people experience supernormal powers, so it is not necessarily unknown for practitioners.

Malcolm said:

But despite all these things, you have not provided any reason at all that suggests that your acceptance of rebirth is rational and your rejection of iddhi-patis and so on is also

rational. Your acceptance of former is actually irrational because you reject the latter.

Astus wrote:

I do not reject supernormal powers. What I find problematic is the idea that they exist within the physical context. But instead of answering for the questions and problems pertaining to the view that they manifest as ordinary physical phenomena, there are only evasive responses and irrelevant comments.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: The Gelug/Kagyu Tradition Of Mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not sure what part you mean.

For instance http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/e-books/published_books/gelug_kagyu_mahamudra/pt3/mm_11.html:

"While in a state of total absorption as before, and, with a tiny (portion of) awareness, like a tiny fish flashing about in a lucid pond and not disturbing it, intelligently inspect the self nature of the individual who is the meditator."

Absorption is just the samatha/calming part.

And then,

"When you search and, like that, cannot find even a mere atom of a total absorption, someone totally absorbed, and so on, then cultivate absorbed concentration on space-like (voidness), single pointedly without any wandering."

This is single-pointed meditation on emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Wait, mass and energy are real? They impose hard, factual limitations? How you can escape the charge of substantialism by making this assertion?

Astus wrote:

Causality is still accepted as the way phenomena function, isn't it? It's not just anything goes and things appear out of nothing.

Malcolm said:

The common physical world is either substantially real or it is not. If it is not, then there should be no problem accepting such things as iddhi-patis even if they do not normally conform to conventional expectations of 20th century humans. There are certainly plenty of anecdotal evidence of yogis who leave their footprints and handprints in rocks and so on in the Himalayas and certainly plenty of people, even westerners who have observed such events. It is rank substantialism to claim that such events are impossible because some imputed "general laws of this physical reality."

Astus wrote:

There is no need for a substantial reality as it is against causality. And while even causes and conditions are nominal and conventional, without that there is no phenomena to talk about at all. True, plenty of anecdotal evidence, and there is no need to go far back in history or to exotic countries for those. But the problem is how such stories of supernatural events are explained within a systematic order.

Malcolm said:

Right, and you have this problem because you have realist tendencies, not unlike Sarvastivadins. The abhijñās are one thing, of course these are mental abilities, the iddhi-pattis/siddhis are something else again, they are not just mental abilities, though they come from having developed powers over the mind, having done so, they lend the ability to have power over matter, which according what you state above, is either a convention or mind-only.

Astus wrote:

You may call it a realist tendency to think that whatever occurs requires appropriate causes and conditions. Natural sciences study the way matter works, what conditions bring about what results. For something to float there needs to be a force to lift it up or it has to be lighter than air. Instructions to learn levitation say that one has to make the body light - I guess they had no idea of how animals can actually fly - however, there is no explanation or even the question where the lost weight/mass goes from the body. And that is why I have mentioned the principle of mass conservation.

On the other hand, if we take the position of considering the world as a purely mental realm of experience that is regulated only by the conditioning of the mind, it cannot be allowed for one mind to manipulate another one, otherwise we face the problem of buddhas not saving all beings and the confusion of the law of karma. Since minds cannot manipulate other minds, one man's experience is only his and not shared by others, as it exists exclusively within that stream of consciousness. This is why I say that only here can supernatural powers occur.

That is, within the realist/materialist view there is no place for magic. Only in the realm of subjective experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, so finally you admit it, your view is realist and materialist, as I have been maintaining for some time.

As far as your contention goes that minds cannot influence other minds, this is merely an assertion on your part, and not something you have proven.

Astus wrote:

As WeiHan pointed out, I don't reject supernatural powers. But I reject being a materialist.

If one mind can control another, how come buddhas cannot make everyone enlightened? Then one person could make another think (and feel, and do) whatever that one wants, rendering the other a mere puppet.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

They are self contradictory unless you mean you don't reject people who claim that they witness supernormal powers as long as they agree that it is only their own imagination.

Astus wrote:

How could I reject anyone's experience? It is the interpretation of that experience that can be debated.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2015 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You put too much faith in the delusion known as "relative truth," Astus.

Astus wrote:

Are you on the position that ultimate truth contradicts and/or negates the relative? That dependent origination is something else than emptiness?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 12:20 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

You said you reject materialist. Why so? Because everything is ultimately experience by mind?

Astus wrote:

Experience itself happens in the mind / it is the mind itself. Materialism is the idea that there is an independent realm of objects beyond/behind experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I said influence, you said control, there is a world of difference between these two words.

Astus wrote:

What form of influence do you mean?

Mental influence was already discussed a bit in this thread

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=275349#p275349>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Anything that dependently originates that is said to be empty, it is true.

But this does not mean that when someone has the ability control the element of air, etc., they cannot fly.

Astus wrote:

In what context do you mean controlling the air element and flying? Like someone can produce a wind strong enough to lift a human body? Produce it from where and how?

Malcolm said:

For example, the traces in the minds of sentient beings are sufficiently strong that they can influence the minds of others in terms of what appearances they see.

Astus wrote:

Is there then a direct contact between two minds? Like, two people have a single thought?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 12:41 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, an idea that you subscribe to by insisting that there are immutable physical laws.

Astus wrote:

Isn't karma immutable?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

Materialist also agrees that it is the mind that experiences. So I don't see why you reject them . What is the difference between your view and theirs?

You stated that there is a set of real physical laws that govern the physical world. that means that you are implying that this physical world (realm of objects) has an independent real inexistence of its own but then you reject it yourselves. This is self contradicting.

Astus wrote:

Materialism bases mind within the material world, I say that mind is non-physical and not derived from matter.

The physical world works on its own way and it can be observed that it is not without logic, that way certain laws can be established that can predict what happens within certain conditions. Similarly, Buddhism describes areas that are relevant for liberation and how that can happen. If there was no order whatsoever, then the physical and the mental realm were both unpredictable, and not only could we not tell if we take the same route as before that we end up at the same place as before, but there could be no path of liberation either, as it'd all be random. Just as mind has its patterns and chains of causes and effects, so does the physical world. While theoretically it is possible to adhere to various views on what comes from what, in almost every interpretation one must account for causality. In other words, without dependent origination there is no sensible view.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Karma is unerring, but it is not immutable.

Astus wrote:

Past actions cannot be changed. The effects of those actions, as they are present as causes, need to happen once the conditions are there. The difference is in how a person takes those results, with what kind of mind, so the fruits can be significantly milder or stronger. But to say that there are causes without effects is problematic. Also, as noted by Ayu, the question is if one being can change another's karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

But then, since there are also laws that must be obeyed in the mind realm, how did the Buddha then make the supernormal phenomena happens in some people mind but not others?

Astus wrote:

People experience what they are conditioned to experience. Even today numerous teachers, preachers, gurus and such are perceived by their followers as miracle makers.

"There is now a man in Korea who has proclaimed himself as Christ. Many people believe in him. After he washes his face and his feet, they take the water and drink it as medicine. And indeed, their sicknesses are miraculously cured. But it is their minds that are curing their bodies. They believe in this man so completely that he can do miracles. If they didn't believe, he wouldn't be able to do miracles. In the same way, when a boy and girl are in love, the first time they kiss, their lips are filled with magical energy. This man can touch his followers and it is as if his fingers were flowing with electricity. There are many religious leaders like this in India."

(Seung Sahn: Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p 100)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

kirtu said:

Even so karma can be purified as long as it hasn't ripened. This is also true from a sutric perspective.

Astus wrote:

Not taking up a separate topic (i.e. what is purification?), the question is whether it can be purified by others or is it something the owner has to manage?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

However, the Buddha's teaching held that whatever outer physical environment we experienced is also a result of our karma (which is somewhat a mind thing). ... If the Buddha can influence the mind of certain people so that he seem to witness a supernormal phenomena from his perspective in the outer world. It is almost the same as saying that the Buddha can influence change in the physical law since whatever physical laws that the world obeys depend on our mind and karma (as for the example of hell and heaven which I given).

Astus wrote:

And we arrive at the problem that if the Buddha can change others' karma then he can liberate them as well by the same power. Since nothing like that happened, and the whole point of the teaching is that everyone has to accomplish it on one's own, changing others' karma is not possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Gyurme Kundrol said:

The process can be accelerated by others in peaceful or wrathful ways. However without some effort on the owners part, the effects are temporary since karma will keep being created and strengthened if the person doesnt realize emptiness, practice, and so forth.

Astus wrote:

If it is possible once to manipulate others' karma, it is always possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

If the first were true, the second would not necessarily follow since liberation is freedom from afflictions, not freedom from karmavipaka.

In any case the Buddha has already instructed is that he cannot remove our suffering, nor can he hand us liberation, he can only instruct.

Astus wrote:

It is within the realm of action and result to walk the path of liberation. So, buddhas could put everyone on the way to nirvana, practically making everyone noble beings. It's then just a matter of time for everyone to reach total freedom. But as you cited, buddhas only show the way.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition Of Mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra can use both calming and insight. Here are some instructions from the 9th Karmapa:

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/mahamudra/karma_kagyu_mm/mahamudra_eliminating_darkness/part_2.html. However, it does not use the dhyana system as it exists in Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: What beliefs are prerequisite for practicing Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Essentials for Practice

The quoted "prerequisites/essentials" are actually for kanhua/kanhwa/kanna zen where they focus on the huatou or koan.

There is a short translation from Xuyun:

http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions1.html. But it is in http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html where you get an even shorter summary: (1) Firm belief in the (law of) causality (2) Strict observance of the rules of discipline (commandment) (3) A firm faith (4) Adoption of the method of training.

The difficult question lies in first defining what is meant by zen practice. The short answer could be that the only prerequisite is bodhicitta. But that actually covers the general elements like taking refuge, observing precepts, respecting the teachings and the teachers, renouncing samsara, aiming for buddhahood, having compassion for all beings, avoiding evil actions, and so on. Another, perhaps even simpler prerequisite could be belief in buddha-nature. Still, it could be argued that all those are just unnecessary traps and there are no prerequisites on a sudden path. At the same time, like Jinul explains it, the prerequisite is sudden enlightenment, then it is followed by gradual cultivation.

2. Progression of Beliefs

Zen - again, depending on how it is understood - is not about any set of doctrines but seeing the nature of mind. So, either there is already a basic Mahayana set of values and doctrines, or one just goes straight to buddhahood. There are some teachers who talk about levels of practice, stages that people may go through, but that is not about believing this or that, although it could be said that the levels are actually different

forms of incorrect views (where the correct view is no view). For instance, Zongmi mentioned the five dhyanas, Baizhang discussed the three levels of non-attachement, Linji the four relations/types of host and guest, Dongshan the five ranks, and so on.

3. Believing in the Sutras

What you mention as reinterpretation of the scriptures, that is the original zen way. You can find it from the early times, just look into Shenxiu's teachings. It does not mean questioning the content and doubting its validity. It is about bringing people back from fantasising about flying arhats and transforming dragons to the actual practice and investigating what their own mind is. It is about putting aside pointless debates and abstract theories and instead highlighting the truly important matter of birth and death. It is stated in the well known slogan: not relying on words and letters, pointing directly to the mind. That's why Bodhidharma went from India to China. There is no negation or denial of any established teaching, rather it is showing the true and essential meaning of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: What beliefs are prerequisite for practicing Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra is quoted mainly because of how the dragon girl transformed to a buddha as an example of sudden enlightenment. At least in earlier Chan texts. Otherwise it is not specifically Zen but rather general Mahayana. On the other hand, the Lankavatara Sutra has more a legendary value than as an actual source of teachings, since hardly anyone quotes from it or refers to it. Texts like the Vajrasamadhi Sutra, Surangama Sutra, Perfect Enlightenment Sutra are all "Chan sutras", that is, they contain teachings that are directly found in Chan. The Diamond Sutra is probably the most important of all, and it has many commentaries on it by Chan masters.

Just found this one: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_and_Sutras

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

But we can also see at a different angle. If how the external world sentient beings lived in depends on their karma, then there isn't any objective physical laws. It becomes unnecessary to differentiate that supernormal phenomena can only happened in mind realm but not in physical realm since afterall physical realm is a reflection of what is in the mind. In other words, you don't have to say that Buddha can only manifest supernormal abilities in some beings mind stream and not in the physical realm because there are fixed physical laws (this is your previous position), we just have to say

"some beings have the karma to see Buddha manifesting supernormal abilities while others don't have the karma.

Astus wrote:

Yes, some beings perceive one thing, others perceive something else. The problem with supernatural occurrences within the physical realm was raised regarding the original topic of this thread. And there I also wrote that powers exist on the spiritual level. If we say that the world is what we perceive it to be, that it is formed and governed by our mind, then that is the spiritual realm.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: What beliefs are prerequisite for practicing Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is what Korean monastics have to study before full ordination:

<http://chungamsa.org/eng/02/03.asp>. Special emphasis is on: Diamond Sutra, Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, Awakening of Mahayana Faith, Surangama Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra. More information on the system in general:

<http://phathoc.net//PrintView.aspx?Language=en&ID=5E5418>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: What beliefs are prerequisite for practicing Zen?

Content:

Matylda said:

Thank you for these links... however this is not traditional zen education I guess, since it was made in the 80's? and the content is unusual for zen studies I guess.. the so called chan sutras by the way are only for instruction purpose.... they are not this what may be considered to be a definitive meaning which had some importance in zen in the context of sutras only, but not absolute importance. In zen most important teachings were always zen teachings..

Astus wrote:

Different traditions have different approaches. Japanese Buddhism is not the same as the others. For instance, the Surangama Sutra has been very important in Chinese Buddhism at least since the 16th century, or even before that. The Korean monastic curriculum reflects the most important works there, and while the concept of a compulsory seminary for novices is a new thing, the content is traditional, that is, a result of centuries of development.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 at 8:46 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Which position still leaves you a realist, believing that there are inherently existing natural laws that govern physical phenomena. In other words, you accept that physical phenomena exist by virtue of intrinsic characteristics, a common tenet among Hināyāna schools.

Astus wrote:

I only make a difference between various interpretations. If we say there is a shared physical world then there are certain rules. If we say that perception is the reality we have, then independent laws are nonsense.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Now you are squirming, having boldly declared no such phenomena as siddhis or ṛddhi-patti can exist.

Astus wrote:

From the very beginning in this thread I have been saying that they cannot exist in the physical world but as spiritual experiences. Since in Buddhism the world is a product of one's mental conditioning and exists as a flow of personal experience, it is the second category (spiritual), thus there are powers.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 3rd, 2015 at 3:43 PM

Title: Re: siddhis--why aren't they used more?

Content:

WeiHan said:

Previously, you agree that rebirth is a phenomena of the physical world.

Astus wrote:

No, I did not. See <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=275674#p275674>: "Rebirth is the continuation of the mind-stream, and since mind is non-physical it is out of scope for material investigation."

WeiHan said:

As I said, adding a new category (i.e. spiritual) which requires much explanation itself but does not add to our understanding of the phenomena is actually quite redundant.

Astus wrote:

Don't we normally talk about "body and mind"? As Daehaeng Sunim used to say, there is the fifty percent seen and the fifty percent unseen (e.g.: No River to Cross, chapter 3:

Mind and Science). Conventionally we separate things to material and immaterial, mundane and spiritual, etc. I think the difficulty in making sense of supernormal phenomena lies in thinking about it in the wrong context, i.e. as material and mundane, and that is what makes it incredible. Or for those who just believe in the supernatural while still taking the physical realm as the primary one tend to mystify it to the extreme where only special beings can actually perform and experience them, while throughout the Buddhist (and other) tradition it has been fairly common, leading to such views that we are in a degenerate era and such.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 3rd, 2015 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: tantric sex real or form of abuse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Abuse can happen regardless of calling it tantric or anything else. As for the validity of using sex for practice, I don't see it as a problem in and of itself. Although Vajrayana provides a formalised version, practically any Buddhist in a relationship can reflect on and use sex for developing virtuous qualities and improving one's insight into reality. Same with any other everyday thing. Once one has internalised the Buddha's teachings they are there as part of one's personality in every decision and action.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 3rd, 2015 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: tantric sex real or form of abuse?

Content:

smcj said:

According to him the only time it is ever appropriate is for extremely advanced yogis to take them over the last hurdle to full enlightenment. That scenario is of course extremely rare.

Astus wrote:

Interestingly, Tilopa has a different view on who should utilise karmamudra:

"When your mind is less acute and does not truly rest,
Work the essentials of energy and bring out the vitality of awareness.
Using gazes and techniques to take hold of mind
Train awareness until it does truly rest.
When you practice with a sexual partner, empty bliss awareness arises.
The balancing of method and wisdom transforms energy.
Let it descend gently, collect it, draw it back up,
Return it to its place, and let it saturate your body.
When you are free from longing and desire, empty bliss awareness arises."
(<http://www.unfetteredmind.org/pith-instructions-on-mahamudra/0/>, 26-27)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 4th, 2015 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: tantric sex real or form of abuse?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two general reasons why not to disclose one's personal practice openly to everyone: 1. it is personal; 2. leaves too much for misinterpretation. Again, while Vajrayana has a specific instruction for this in a formal way, the same holds true for every other school. At the same time, if one is actually interested in what karmamudra and other methods are, there are a couple of books to look into (one already suggested here), and it is also possible to approach individual teachers and practitioners. So, I would say it is not really secret, it's just somewhat similar to the difference between discussing sex in general and your experiences from last night.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 4th, 2015 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: What beliefs are prerequisite for practicing Zen?

Content:

Matylda said:

As for chan sutras, one more thing, they were not yet popular in Tang or Sung dynasties, if they were, for sure there would be clear transmission of those texts within zen lineages to Japan. But it did not happen for over 300 years of intensive zen relation between China and Japan. They became more popular during Ming dynasty when in China zen was in decline and became more syncretic religion with strong pure land influence and other elements, which was strongly opposed before. And in fact they have hardly any connection to zen, though they may be used as some means of education.

Astus wrote:

The Perfect Enlightenment Sutra was commented on by Zongmi (780–841). Wonhyo (617–686) commented the Vajrasamadhi Sutra. The Surangama Sutra gained popularity in the Ming Dynasty because of Hanshan Deqing and his fellows, so in Japan the Obaku school should favour it, for instance Tetsugen Doko did lecture on it. Hakuin also taught it in 1756, and Torei makes reference to the sutra in his Inexhaustable Lamp.

As for the supposed decline of Zen during the Ming era, it is quite the opposite, there was actually a great renaissance of Chan (see e.g. <https://books.google.hu/books?id=Y7sueo8jsYwC>). One of the effects of that was the appearance of the Obaku school in Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 6th, 2015 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Is Vajrayana the best Buddhist sect for modern westerner

Content:

Astus wrote:

Unlike other Buddhist cultures, Tibetans were practically forced to come out from their

homeland, and as an exiled people what they have to offer (in exchange for material support) is sharing their religious and cultural heritage. Theravada and Japanese Zen have been modernised during the 19th century and they are more straightforward without all the "cultural baggage". Vajrayana is just catching up with Dzogchen being removed from preliminaries and other rituals to turn into another form of mindfulness practice.

It is a misrepresentation to say that Vajrayana is the party bus of Buddhism. Also, religious art exists everywhere in Buddhism, so again its nothing extraordinary in Tibetan Buddhism. As for products, just search for "zen" in any web shop.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 6th, 2015 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: Is Vajrayana the best Buddhist sect for modern westerner

Content:

Astus wrote:

Every Buddhist tradition has a larger lay community. If any, then Japanese Buddhism consists almost exclusively of family people, and of the Japanese schools the Pure Land traditions are particularly for householders.

On Chan and lay life, see <http://wenshuchan-online.weebly.com/master-jing-hui---dharma-words.html> from Ven. Jinghui:

"In reality it is the mind that decides whether the spiritual centre is continuously present, and which draws a distinction between worldly affairs and Buddhist practice in temples. In this deluded state the mind prefers the temple life and disdains the ordinary life. People are continuously worrying about what practice method they should use, or how much time per day should be spent practicing. ... It seems realistic that having children prevents the Dharma from being practiced. You need to gain good experience. If you believe that Buddhism can not be practiced in everyday life, then it will seem that the Dharma can not be applied in ordinary situations. This is incorrect. It is important to expertly cultivate Unified Practice Samadhi when walking, standing, sitting and lying down, and then the mind will be unified in purity. Then all situations become the Bodhimandala without exception, this is the true meaning and practice of Unified Practice Samadhi."

That is in line with the Platform Sutra, chapter 4:

The master said, "Good friends, if you wish to cultivate this practice, you may do so either as a householder or in a monastery. Householders who are able to practice this are like those persons of the East whose minds [harbor] good. Those in the monastery who do not cultivate it are like those people of the West whose minds [harbor] evil. It is only that the mind should be pure—then it is the Western [Paradise] of the self-nature!"

Theravada also has a substantial lay community, and lay people are not excluded from achieving enlightenment. Just consider the many Vipassana communities.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 7th, 2015 at 3:20 AM

Title: Re: Vajrayāna/Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It might be so that Dzogchen is an integral part of Vajrayana and the 9th vehicle. My statement that it's moving to a generic mindfulness practice is not a reflection on the teachings in the scriptures but how it appears to me among some who follow the Great Perfection, both on- and offline. That is, when it is simplified to the point of "just stay in the natural state". I assume you have noticed this trend as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 8th, 2015 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Zen vs Nichiren Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is the question?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 9th, 2015 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: Need help in guidance to find my monastic school

Content:

Astus wrote:

As Dan said, Theravada seems like the most direct choice. They also have a fairly strong presence in Western countries. You should also be aware that every monastery has its own style and aura, so it's less the organisation/church you should consider (unless it's a very centralised one) but the individual places and the residents there. In most cases monasteries are quite independent.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 10th, 2015 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Need help in guidance to find my monastic school

Content:

Astus wrote:

Becoming a monastic in any ordination lineage does not mean commitment to a specific school or doctrine. Monastics themselves move around to other places where they can and study what they like. Normally it is not a problem if you are interested in all sorts of Buddhist teachings and practices. But, it all depends on the actual community, so you should check them out one by one.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 11th, 2015 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma is completely individual. It means the separate mind-streams are self-generating and self-contained. It is a series of causes and conditions. At the same time, there is no "self" in the sense that the mind-stream is not a fixed permanent entity but a flow of mental states. That does not mean the mind-stream can somehow mix with others or totally dissolve. So, yes, the mind is individual. Just as our body is individual, although we consume food every day and cells constantly reproduce.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2015 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: Zen equivalent of Rigpa

Content:

Astus wrote:

Depends on what and how you define rigpa. If we go with the actual meaning, that is, knowing (vidya), then a similar Zen word with relation to the nature of mind, it is zhi/chi (知) as used in the Heze lineage. See this essay:

<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Tsung-Mi-and-the-Single-Word-Awareness.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2015 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Jesse said:

If mind is entirely self contained how do you explain other people's presences? They also exist in your mind. Your mind to begin with only exists by contrast of other.

The propagation of memes, personality traits we adopt and other forms of knowledge we share. The mind is not self contained. It is interdependent.

Astus wrote:

Look into the first few stanza's of Vasubandhu's Vimsatika (Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only) where he argues against the idea that there must be external references. The Lankavatara Sutra (e.g. 3.64) as well confirms that all perceptions are mental discrimination without real objects.

This idea of universal substrate is against interdependence and no different from views ascertaining a creator god, a view that has been refuted from the beginning in Buddhism. Buddhas don't have access to others' minds either, or they could just turn beings into enlightened ones that way. Rather, we are responsible for our own actions and no external force or being can save us from the consequences. We are the ones creating our own hell and heaven. To say that ultimately there is some common ground is

nothing but mere fantasising without any logical or experiential basis.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2015 at 9:37 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Jeff said:

Could you explain your logic to such a comment? Think of it more like overlapping concentric circles, where a buddha overlaps or has access to all circles.

Additionally, how can you describe a buddha of being all knowing or also as the Avatamsaka Sutra states...

...

They are able to shake infinite worlds in the ten directions by spiritual powers; their minds are broad, being equal to the cosmos. They know various explanations of truth, they know how many sentient beings there are, they know the differences among sentient beings, they know the birth of suffering, they know the extinction of suffering; while knowing all acts are like reflected images, they carry out the deeds of bodhisattvas. They sever the root of all subjection to birth.

Astus wrote:

If there were a universal ground, all things would come from that ground and it would be without a cause and would not depend on anything. As such an independent thing, it could not serve as a cause for anything else, and its very existence could not be possible either, since nothing occurs without a cause. More on the refutation of erroneous views of causality you may look into many madhyamaka teachings, like this one: <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>.

That buddhas don't have control over others' minds, it comes from the fact that we are not all liberated. What your quote says does not touch on the ability to manipulate beings. In fact, the quote mainly talks about the fact that buddhas are those who know the four noble truths and that all phenomena are empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2015 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Jeff said:

Where and why would it be without a cause and would not depend on anything? I have made no such statement and the statement definitely does not follow logically. Did you

not notice my overlapping concentric circles example?

On effecting other beings... Have you never felt your guru? Never felt the difference of group meditation? Also, why do you think there are all of stories of Buddha telling people to just stay with him for a year before he would answer any questions and by the end of it no one ever has a question? Finally, in your tradition is there no concept of a "buddha field"?

Astus wrote:

If it is a universal ground of all beings it doesn't have a cause, otherwise it would not be the final basis of everything.

The psychology of guru devotion and being in a group are fairly known phenomena. As for the Buddha not answering people's questions, I don't know what stories you mean. The concept of buddha-field is known everywhere in Mahayana, and as the Vimalakirti Sutra says, it depends on one's own mind's purity whether one sees it or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2015 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Jeff said:

I will take that response to mean that you have never actually experienced such a connection. How about feeling any energy flow (or chakra) while doing meditation/practices?

Astus wrote:

It's not a question of experience but of interpretation. It can very well happen that while we feel something similar, you take it to be some energy flow and I take it to be a bodily function or an emotion.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 1:21 AM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a quote from Huangbo on Transmission of the Mind with the Mind as stated in the famous Essentials of the Transmission of Mind (Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 36, tr. McRae):

The master said: To not attain a single dharma is called the transmission of the mind. If you comprehend this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma.

[The questioner] said: If there is no mind and no dharma, why do you call it a transmission?

The master said: You have heard me say "transmission of the mind" and have taken it that there is something that can be attained. It is for this reason that the patriarch said,

“When one recognizes the mind-nature, it should be called inconceivable. Clearly and distinctly without anything that is attained, when one attains it one does not speak of it as understanding.” If I taught this to you how would you be able to understand it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 3:09 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

dgomez said:

What is the difference between "non abidance", " choiceless awareness", and "mindfulness"?

Astus wrote:

It depends on the context, as always.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 3:18 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A story by Ven. Shengyan (<http://chancenter.org/cmc/1985/05/15/esoteric-and-exoteric-buddhism/>):

In Taiwan, I have a disciple who has been practicing with me for quite sometime. He has a good command of English, so when a certain Tibetan rinpoche was scheduled to lecture, he was asked to translate. He was very nervous. He had never practiced Tantra, and was afraid that he wouldn't understand what the rinpoche said. In a quandary, he finally decided that if he didn't understand, it was the rinpoche's responsibility to make him understand. With this thought he went to sleep. The rinpoche came to him in a dream, placed his hand on the disciple's head, and said, "You don't have to be nervous. You will understand everything I say tomorrow. You don't have to worry." He had a wonderful feeling when the rinpoche touched him. The next morning it was the rinpoche who woke him up. My disciple immediately prostrated to the rinpoche and thanked him for entering his dream. Curious, the rinpoche asked, "What happened last night?" The disciple told him, and after a few more questions from the rinpoche, he concluded that it might not have been the rinpoche but a "yidam," a Dharma protector, who came to him.

Later I asked him if he had ever dreamed of me. He said, "Yes, indeed, many times." Then I asked if he thought that it was me who had entered his dreams. He said, "No, because Shih-fu doesn't have a yidam." So then I said to him, "O.K., I will go and find myself a yidam so that the next time you dream of me, you will be sure that it is my yidam that is entering your dream." My disciple objected, "But in Ch'an there is no such thing as a yidam."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

dgomez said:

It seems to me that non dwelling is included in choiceless awareness and choiceless awareness is the same as mindfulness and they involve the non dual watching of sensations - including thoughts - that arises.

Astus wrote:

One should not dwell on non-dwelling.

http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf_Mindfulness%20and%20Mindlessness.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6Avs5iwACs>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

srivijaya said:

Nice thread Astus. Do your sources have anything to say about non-abiding awareness during sleep?

Astus wrote:

It is no different from when awake.

"If you stay awake, you stay awake. If you sleep, you sleep. When you sleep, you sleep in the same Buddha-mind you were awake in. When you're awake, you're awake in the same Buddha-mind you were sleeping in. You sleep in the Buddha-mind while you sleep and are up and about in the Buddha-mind while you're up and about. That way, you always stay in the Buddha-mind. You're never apart from it for an instant.

You're wrong if you think that people become something different when they fall asleep. If they were in the Buddha-mind only during their waking hours and changed into something else when they went to sleep, that wouldn't be the true Buddhist Dharma. It would mean that they were always in a state of transmigration.

All of you people here are working hard to become Buddhas. That's the reason you want to scold and beat the ones who fall asleep. But it isn't right. You each received one thing from your mother when you were born—the unborn Buddha-mind. Nothing else. Rather than try to become a Buddha, when you just stay constantly in the unborn mind, sleeping in it when you sleep, up and about in it when you're awake, you're a living Buddha in your everyday life—at all times. There's not a moment when you're not a Buddha. Since you're always a Buddha, there's no other Buddha in addition to that for

you to become. Instead of trying to become a Buddha, then, a much easier and shorter way is just to be a Buddha."

(Bankei in Waddell: The Unborn, p 57-58)

and

"Would someone whose mind is really somewhere else be inquiring whether it was or not? If your mind were somewhere else, you would hardly be aware of it. You wouldn't be asking questions about it. You're not even away from it when you sleep, because if someone calls to you and tells you to wake up, you will respond to him and wake right up. You've never been apart from your mind in the past, you won't be apart from it in the future, and you're not apart from it right now. None of you here has ever been separated from your mind, just as none of you is an unenlightened person. You've each been born with the Buddha-mind. It's your birthright."

(p 75)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2015 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: is the mind individual?

Content:

Jeff said:

Thank you for the story Astus. Does that mean that you disagree with Malcolm and such is possible in the Buddhadharma?

Astus wrote:

So far in this thread I have not seen anything from Malcolm that I disagreed with.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 15th, 2015 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Zen equivalent of Rigpa

Content:

frank123 said:

In Zen is there a distinction made between Shamatha and Vipassana? Is Zazen basically the two combined?

Astus wrote:

Zazen is supposed to be the two at the same time, the unity of samadhi and prajna, as stated in the Platform Sutra. What actually happens in a community is a different matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 16th, 2015 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Zen is No Secret

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Secrets-of-Cultivating-the-Mind.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 17th, 2015 at 5:06 AM

Title: What is Authorisation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is mentioned <http://www.charliemorley.com/full-bio/> that there was an authorisation given to teach. What form, if any, does such an authorisation take in Tibetan Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 17th, 2015 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: What is Authorisation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mostly it means you claim that some lama tapped you on the shoulder. Sometimes it means you are actually qualified.

Astus wrote:

You mean there are no papers and procedures - besides those given by educational institutions - in Tibetan Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 20th, 2015 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: Non-Abiding Awareness

Content:

dgomez said:

So as long as one attends effortlessly and choicelessly to sensations physical, mental, and emotionally (and not even identify these sensations like so but simply as sensations) then one is in choiceless awareness (also no mind? also non abiding awareness?)

Astus wrote:

How do you attend effortlessly? If you work on or want to do something, that is already effort. The Buddha taught

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca4/samma-vayamo/> and the

<http://blog.meditation-presence.com/jetsunma-tenzin-palmo-virya-paramita-or-effort/> as parts of the path to liberation.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aimlessness_%28Buddhism%29 is the result, it is liberation itself, when there is nothing more to do.

The problem lies in the concept that there is a state or mentality to achieve and maintain. That idea comes from believing in some sort of actual reality that one needs to manage. However, there is nothing you can do to make things impermanent and

empty. They are already such. What you can do is to understand and experience them as they actually are. How to do that? To understand, study the teachings of the buddhas and patriarchs. To experience, check for yourself if there is any bodily impression, emotion or thought that stays even for the shortest period of time.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 21st, 2015 at 3:09 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.mahamudracenter.org/>:

To support those interested in Mahamudra or working with Mahamudra study and practice groups, MMC's Meditation Manual is made available at:

<http://www.chagchen.com/index.htm>.

Also, it is recommended to look into the Jewel Ornament of Liberation by Gampopa and follow the practices of mind training (lojong). They are very useful for mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Astus wrote:

From Mahamudra the Moonlight (2nd edition):

"In recent times meditators of Mahāmudrā sought to make adjustments according to both the sūtras and the tantras. They have incorporated [in the Mahāmudrā tradition] many practices that require preparations, such as the mystical empowerment that sows the seed of a spiritual blossom, devotion to preliminary exercises, and methods of enhancing experiences. It is for that reason that it is not contradictory to regard Mahāmudrā as identical with the common and profound path of the sūtras and tantras, due to the fact that many superior and inferior minds are going to benefit from it."
(p 112)

"Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of Mahāmudrā], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the Mahāmudrā teachings."
(p 123)

"On the other hand, if one follows venerable Gampopa's system in elucidating Mahāmudrā alone, it is not necessary to bestow the empowerment upon devotees. In keeping with his system one should adhere to the preparatory exercises that he prescribed without incorporating the tantric meditation of Vajrasattva, the utterance of mantra, the transformation of oneself into the yidam, and the visualization of one's guru in the form of Buddha Vajradhara – the source of the empowerment."

(p 124)

"In the present age, Mahāmudrā and Mantrayāna [tantric mysticism] are being blended and meditated upon in order to enhance realization. Many tantric elements are also incorporated into the preparatory practices. For those who wish to practice these, the empowerment for actualizing the inner potentiality is certainly essential. One should receive either an elaborate or short empowerment, based on a genuine tantra, associated with a realization deity such as Chakrasamvara with his consort. Such a tradition must be sustained by the living masters of a spiritual lineage, for they are the source of blessing."

(p 125)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Astus wrote:

From a teaching by <http://www.samyeing.org/about/buddhism-and-meditation/teaching-archive-2/mingyur-dorje-rinpoche/vajrayana-and-empowerment/> (underlines added):

Within the Secret Mantra Vajrayana path there are two divisions. The first one is the path of skilful means and the second is the path of liberation. If we explain further what the path of skilful means is, there are various methods through which to realize directly our nature of mind. It is revealed to us through these various types of practice.

With skilful means we go indirectly to realize the nature of mind, we don't come directly to that realization.

...

When we practise the path of liberation, we have a direct method to realize the nature of mind, but there is no shape or colour for that. This is the mahamudra.

...

The Vajrayana path can be divided into three sections. There is the development stage, completion stage and path of liberation (kyerim, dzogrim and drollam). Within these three paths one can decide whatever one likes to do, whatever one is feeling positive towards. But the best actually is the path of liberation.

Malcolm said:

Yes, this is a mistaken tradition that cannot be defended in anyway whatsoever.

Astus wrote:

You mean you cannot accept the Dakpo Kagyu teaching of the white panacea, the method independent (and superior) of tantra, the path of liberation?

Johnny Dangerous said:

you can use Mahamudra techniques, but their result and function would be like sutra

meditation

Astus wrote:

If the techniques provided in Mahamudra cannot produce the results promised, how can they be even called Mahamudra?

Tsongkhapa said:

it is impossible to gain realisations without having a Guru and without receiving a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment and practising the two stages sincerely

Astus wrote:

From http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/e-books/published_books/gelug_kagyu_mahamudra/pt3/mm_08.html (underlines added):

As for the actual basic methods, although there are many ways of asserting mahamudra, there are two when divided according to the sutras and tantras.

The latter is a greatly blissful, clear light mind manifested by such skillful methods as penetrating vital points of the subtle vajra-body and so forth. The mahamudra of the traditions of Saraha, Nagarjuna, Naropa and Maitripa, it is the quintessence of the anuttarayoga class of tantra as taught in The (Seven Texts of the) Mahasiddhas and The (Three) Core Volumes.

The former refers to the ways of meditating on voidness as directly indicated in the expanded, intermediate and brief (Prajnaparamita Sutras). The supremely realized Arya Nagarjuna has said, "Except for this, there is no other pathway of mind leading to liberation." Here I shall give relevant instruction on mahamudra in accord with these intentions of his and discuss the methods that lead you to know the mind, face to face, in keeping with the exposition of the lineage masters.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Malcolm said:

These two ideas — that there is such a thing as mahāmudra in the sūtras, and that there is a mahāmudra path independent of Vajrayāna — are meritless delusions.

Astus wrote:

Do you think that the mahamudra instructions regarding seeing the nature of the mind are incorrect?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Malcolm said:

Whose instructions? Which ones?

Astus wrote:

E.g.: Wangchuk Dorje, Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Tsele Natsok Rangdrol, Traleg Kyabgon, Khenchen Thrangu, Tsultrim Gyamtso, Tenzin Palmo, Ken McLeod.

For instance this one: <http://www.lionsroar.com/meditating-on-the-mind-itself/>; or this short manual:

<http://s151421314.onlinehome.us/nbp/docs/PDF/7.%20Guide%20to%20Mahamudra.pdf> (PDF, or just the

http://www.thranguhk.org/buddhism_teachings/en_vipashyana.html?keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=600&width=1050 from p 30-35).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Malcolm said:

If someone asserts there is an actual mahāmudra result outside of the practice of the two stages or guru yoga, that person is mistaken, regardless of their title, position or rank.

Astus wrote:

Well, that one was Gampopa. See how in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation he included all practices within prajnaparamita

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=111558#p111558>.

Malcolm said:

If the introduction to the nature of mind occurs outside the context of having received the four empowerments, that instruction does not go beyond prajñāpāramitā meditation — which is a perfectly fine practice, but it is not mahāmudra. It is something like calling an ordinary geshe a "buddha" in order to arouse faith in his disciples.

...

However, meditating on the intimate instructions of mahāmudra divorced from completion stage practices and or the intense devotion of guru yoga is a slow path even if one has received the four empowerments in a proper way. If one has not received the four empowerments at all, the idea that one is going to realize mahāmudra is a completely hopeless fantasy, like wishing for a stone to be saturated with water because one leaves it in a pond.

Astus wrote:

If the view and the conduct are identical, how could the result be different because of the empowerments/guru yoga? Although, as above, all the empowerments and guru yoga are included in resting in the natural state, at least according to certain

Mahamudra teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 23rd, 2015 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, which "prajñāpāramitā" is he discussing? The practice of prajñāpāramita? Or the result, Prajñāpāramita?

Astus wrote:

Gampopa writes: "Setting the mind this way is the unmistakable method of practicing wisdom awareness." (p 249) and where he gives the list of all those things he beings with: "When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path." (p 252) In the commentaries by Ringu Tulku and Thrangu Rinpoche they both talk about resting in the natural state as taught in Mahamudra.

The difference between sutra and tantra in terms of Mahamudra are quite practical: "According to Mahamudra teachers, the sutric Mahayana approach uses external phenomena as the object of vipashyana meditation, whereas the tantric Mahayana approach of Mahamudra uses the mind itself as the object."
(<http://www.lionsroar.com/meditating-on-the-mind-itself/>).

Also,

"Gampopa said that there are three different paths with different practices, but these three paths have the same nature. These are taking inference as the path, taking blessings as the path, and taking direct experience as the path. Taking inference as the path refers to, for instance, the various reasonings set forth in the Madhyamaka that show that all things are neither single nor multiple. Taking blessings as the path refers to, for instance, meditation upon the body of a deity or the practices involving the subtle channels and subtle energies. Taking direct perception as the path is mahamudra. Mahamudra is pointed out to us, and we recognize it, become accustomed to it, and take direct experience as the path.

We can also classify the different paths into three groups: the paths that abandon the ground, paths that transform the ground, and paths that recognize the ground. The first path of abandoning the ground is the vehicle of transcendent action of the sutra vehicle, in which some things are abandoned and others are remedies for those things to be abandoned. The second path, transformation of the ground, refers to the practices of the Vajrayana in which we purify our body and mind by meditating on our body being a deity. Our body is thus transformed into the pure body of the deity, and our mind is transformed from discursiveness into wisdom. In the third path, recognizing the ground, is mahamudra. We know that we do not need to abandon or transform the ground; rather, we know it as it is. When we know the ground as it is, we recognize all appearances as the magical display of the mind. Thus, mahamudra is a matter of using direct perception as the path. This is also called the quick path."

(Thrangu: Essentials of Mahamudra, p 78-79)

As for the so called Sutra Mahamudra (that actually stands for Gampopa's Mahamudra):

"The meditation of Sutra Mahamudra essentially consists of resting one's mind, free of mental activity, in the state of nonconceptual wisdom. This is the fundamental definition of Sutra Mahamudra: mind resting in the state in which it experiences the dharmadhatu, which is the expanse or nature of all things. This resting is essentially a nonconceptual wisdom beyond all elaboration, or the unity of clarity and emptiness. In this context, one meditates in the following way: The object of one's meditation is luminosity free of any projections; the perceiving subject is the lack of mental engagement; and one meditates without mental engagement. There are many extensive explanations on meditating without mental engagement, found primarily in the teachings of Maitripa and Sahajavajra.

The Sutrayana approach to Mahamudra is seen as a very profound method because it does not require any of the sophisticated and complex tantric rituals, deity yoga visualization practices, or samayas. It is a simple sutra approach, yet it conveys the direct transmission of the tantric essence of awakening."

(Dzogchen Ponlop: Wild Awakening, 31-32)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 23rd, 2015 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: practicing alone

Content:

Malcolm said:

Settling mind in what way? In which path is everything included? How is this path introduced, can you just look it up on the internet?

Astus wrote:

Settling in the correct view, emptiness/prajnaparamita, and in that everything is included. It is introduced, in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation, through analysis of the two no-selves. Otherwise, Mahamudra vipasyana (and this is what the JOoL follows as well) has analysis (pandita) and resting (kusulu), very much like the Bhavanakrama, but, as quoted, teachers of the tradition say that the difference between Mahayana and Mahamudra vipasyana is in what is looked into first, phenomena or the mind.

Malcolm said:

How is that possible? Have these teachers never heard of Yogacara? And even here, why make a distinction between the tantric Mahāmudra approach and the sūtra Mahāyāna approach if in reality they are both "mahāmudra"?

Astus wrote:

The difference between the purely sutric method and the Mahamudra method lies in whether there is pointing out the nature of mind or not, as mentioned above.

Malcolm said:

Drogmi Lotsawa states that the difference between sūtra and tantra is that tantra uses direct perception as the path. This direct perception is the basis of all Secret Mantra meditation and is the experiential view introduced in the very beginning during the empowerment, this is why Secret Mantra is a quick path. But there is no separate means of introducing this experiential view outside of the empowerment, there is no mahāmudra that exists outside of Vajrayāna.

Astus wrote:

As noted earlier, tantra uses an indirect method with deity yoga and the channels to reach buddha-nature, while Mahamudra goes there directly. Also, the fourth empowerment is generally equated with the pointing out instruction.

Malcolm said:

It does not in any way shape or form go beyond Prajñāpāramita, and since there is no empowerment, there is no experiential view to be cultivated. As Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso told me, and as you can confirm by reading Kongtrul, sūtra mahāmudra was invented for those Gampopa deemed unready for Secret Mantra.

Astus wrote:

As above, the specialty of Gampopa's Mahamudra is the direct introduction without empowerment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 26th, 2015 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Few questions related to Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. It depends on how "full enlightenment" is understood. Zen generally views its own patriarchs/ancestors as enlightened beings. More importantly, every being has buddha-nature, so what really matters is whether you have seen this yourself or not.

2. Even in Japanese Zen - where they don't follow the Pratimoksha (Vinaya) - there are monasteries where they remain celibate and live mostly isolated from the mundane life, and there are also individuals who live like hermits. At the same time, the seriousness of one's dedication towards enlightenment (bodhicitta) is not a matter of ordination or monastic precepts.

3. It is not the robe or the title that makes one a good person. Also, being a Buddhist is a question of religious conscience, not moral behaviour. Once you take refuge in the Triple Jewel, you are a Buddhist. Even if you break all the precepts. On the other hand, you can live like a saint, but if you believe that salvation/liberation exists somewhere else than the Buddhadharma, you are not a Buddhist.

4. Mahayana is not a split from Theravada. Schism in the monastic community would be setting up a different set of precepts, however, nothing like that has ever really happened. Japanese Buddhism could be considered an exception here, however, they

did not actually made a new Vinaya but rather abandoned it for a different kind of rules.
You may read this work: <http://santifm.org/santipada/2010/sects-sectarianism/> by Bhikkhu Sujato.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 26th, 2015 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: The simplicity of Zen practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Related to "nothing remarkable in having learned to go with the flow" one interesting line:

"Trusting in the flow, what's needed comes."

or in Sasaki's translation:

"Trust in fate produces expedients"

originally (X69n1336_p0135c22): 任運生方便 - Allowing/Trusting (任) luck (運)

generates/gives birth to (生) skilful means (方便)

運 (luck) also means "to transport", thus it connects to the next line about "all together [travelling in the] prajna-boat.

It is very much like what is the central teaching of Daehaeng sunim on "entrusting everything to Juigong" (Juigong = buddha-nature). And that is really what Zen is all about. In some ways the difference between Buddhism and other religions is that others teach one should trust in some external force to manage things ("thy will be done"), while in the Buddhadharma it is only letting go based on understanding the nature of reality.

The difficulty is always the habit of trying to take control of events. But how can we not fear bad (黑闇女 - dark woman) and desire good (功德天 - virtue god)? When I get lost in a series of ideas of what should be done - and that usually happens when I have no inclination to any option - in the end I arrive at the same conclusion that there is nothing I can foresee or control. Sometimes that is just a few seconds, sometimes I pursue various activities and struggle for days with, but the inner tension and the frustration really ends when I can realise my own error of giving in to some unfounded idea. And ideas always turn out to be without any foundation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 26th, 2015 at 8:35 PM

Title: Re: The simplicity of Zen practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lazy_eye,

Very good question. I think the conflict comes from putting teachings in the wrong context. Zen is about internal attitude, not behavioural precepts. The instruction of "neither taking nor rejecting" cannot apply to physical activities, just consider how we

must be able to tell the difference between edible and inedible objects. Zen (and Buddhism in general) pertains to the problem of existential dissatisfaction generated by emotional and conceptual attachments. On the physical level of precepts, what one is recommended to follow are rules based on cultivating harmlessness, goodwill and compassion. Thus, one saves all beings without the concept of beings, gives without the ideas of giver, gift, and receiver. In other words: eat when hungry, sleep when tired. Daily activities and ordinary experiences are not the problem, people already know how to dress, wash the dishes, do their job - and if not, information and instructions are readily available from many sources. Problem arises if we feel dissatisfied with our life, when we are bothered by the weather, others, the colour of the sky, and such. Suffering is when we don't find our place, can't find the meaning of life, when we are stressed and frustrated by whatever event there is because we think it should be something else. Neither taking nor rejecting is opening up to whatever happens, not making issues out of non-issues.

If it itches, scratch it. Don't blame the world for the itch, don't be afraid of scratching, don't feel guilty because you scratched it. And if it is not the right time to scratch, don't get angry.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 27th, 2015 at 3:14 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra in the Modern World

Content:

bryandavis said:

What mechanism in empowerments makes it work when it is live and fail when it isn't? Im sure Loppon Malcom can elucidate much more clear but, the teacher (in theory) would be in a certain space while giving the empowerment; so during the 4th empowerment for example, the teacher would actually be in a state of non dual awareness. There is a real time transference or potential.

A recording is devoid of sentience, of a mind, of wisdom.

Astus wrote:

That assumes a type of mental connection that is bound by time (and perhaps space). First, such a direct connection of minds is a violation of the teachings on mind-streams and karma. Second, non-dual awareness is supposed to be beyond time and space.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 27th, 2015 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhas have the mind of sentient beings.

"to recognize the sentient being in one's own mind is to see the buddha-nature in one's

own mind. If you wish to see the Buddha, just recognize the sentient being [in your mind]. It is only sentient beings who are deluded as to the Buddha; the buddhas are not deluded about sentient beings. If you are enlightened to your self-nature, then the sentient being is the Buddha; if you are deluded as to the self-nature, then [what might be] a 'buddha' is [only] a sentient being."

(Platform Sutra, ch 10, p 89-90, BDK Edition)

"It is only this One Mind that is Buddha; there is no distinction between Buddhas and sentient beings. However, sentient beings are attached to characteristics and seek outside themselves. Seeking it, they lose it even more. Sending the Buddha in search of the Buddha, grasping the mind with the mind, they may exhaust themselves in striving for an entire eon but will never get it. They do not understand that if they cease their thoughts and end their thinking, the Buddha will automatically be present.

This mind is the Buddha; the Buddha is the sentient being."

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, ch 1, in Zen Texts, p 13, BDK Edition)

"Since there is neither more of it in the saint nor less of it in the ordinary man, how are the Buddhas and patriarchs any different from other men? The only thing that makes them different is that they can protect their minds and thoughts—nothing more."

(Bojo Jinul:

http://www.buddhism.org/board/read.cgi?board=Dharma_Talks&nnew=2&y_number=14)

"this very awareness or sentience is the bodhi mind that is originally pure. When enlightened, this mind is the buddha; this mind is the Way."

(Ven. Weijue: <http://www.ctworld.org/english-96/docs/DharmaLectures2.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 28th, 2015 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra in the Modern World

Content:

WeiHan said:

What assumes a type of mental connection that is bound by time?

Astus wrote:

That the mental state of the person giving the empowerment influences the receiver's mind, as if there were a direct connection between two mind-streams.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 28th, 2015 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra in the Modern World

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, that is never the case, it is more like a stamp and its impression. A recorded empowerment can never be a stamp, it can only be an impression. In this case, an inert

impression. A student, who receives an empowerment, is an animate living person upon whom an impression has been made, and when they have realized the meaning, they too can make impressions on others.

This is essentially why, for all who reading, the idea that one can receive an empowerment from a recording is a corrupt idea that will destroy lineages if people take it seriously.

Astus wrote:

How does the stamp meets the wax? Isn't it through the five outer senses?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 28th, 2015 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra in the Modern World

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course, who ever said it was otherwise?

Astus wrote:

Then there is no difference between a live broadcast and a recording in terms of visual and auditory impressions. Maybe even mass empowerments are similar as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 28th, 2015 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Malcolm said:

For example, a master has to create the mandala: there is the master's creation of himself as the mandala, the front created mandala, the mandala in the vase and so on and so forth.

Once the ritual has finished, all these mandalas and so on are dissolved so they do not exist anymore since they are not being maintained by the master's visualization, having been dissolved. I explained all of this already in the other thread on this point.

Not only that, but the recording generally only covers the activities for the disciple. All the activities that the master has to do before conferring the empowerment are not recorded.

Thus the recording is incapable of doing recreating these things since a recording has no mind, no volition and so on.

Astus wrote:

What the master visualises and does before the empowerment does not show for the receiver either when he is present physically or when it is through a live broadcast. How is it any different for the person watching a recording? Whether the master followed the prescribed procedure to give the empowerment or not, it cannot be known by the receiver. Whatever is received by the disciple exists only as physical sensory perception,

so anything beyond that does not have any role in receiving the empowerment. But if you say it does, then what and how?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The nature of mind is buddha. Any other buddha besides the mind itself is illusion. In other words, once you've dropped fabricating objects and identities to hang on to there is no new identity to make up.

"Bring to rest the thoughts of the ceaselessly seeking mind, and you will not differ from the patriarch-buddha. Do you want to know the patriarch-buddha? He is none other than you who stand before me listening to my discourse. But because you students lack faith in yourselves, you run around seeking something outside. Even if, through your seeking, you did find something, that something would be nothing more than fancy descriptions in written words; never would you gain the mind of the living patriarch. Make no mistake, worthy Chan men! If you don't find it here and now, you'll go on transmigrating through the three realms for myriads of kalpas and thousands of lives, and, held in the clutch of captivating circumstances, be born in the wombs of asses or cows.

Followers of the Way, as I see it we are no different from Śākya. What do we lack for our manifold activities today? The six-rayed divine light never ceases to shine. See it this way, and you'll be a man who has nothing to do his whole life long."

(Record of Linji, p. 8, tr. Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Wayfarer said:

And what was the context of Lin Chi's words there? What kind of audience was he addressing when he said that, and in what circumstances?

Astus wrote:

That section starts with "At the evening gathering the master addressed the assembly".

Note says (p 150):

"Evening gathering 晚參. We have no definite knowledge of what this term referred to during Tang times, but in the Song it was an evening meeting of the assembly held in the master's quarters 方丈 (see page 131, above). It was informal in procedure, in contrast to the formal service held in the morning in the main hall, when the master took the high seat."

But it's not very relevant, as the Linjilu is hardly an actual record of speeches, rather a

literary work. Also, the previously quoted teaching is among the central doctrines in the text and repeated regularly.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wayfarer,

You think there is a different instruction for lay people in Chan? Huangbo's records primarily consist of teachings given to and edited by a lay official, Peixiu. See how Huangbo's matches Linji's instructions:

"It is only this One Mind that is Buddha; there is no distinction between Buddhas and sentient beings. However, sentient beings are attached to characteristics and seek outside themselves. Seeking it, they lose it even more. Sending the Buddha in search of the Buddha, grasping the mind with the mind, they may exhaust themselves in striving for an entire eon but will never get it. They do not understand that if they cease their thoughts and end their thinking, the Buddha will automatically be present."
(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind in Zen Texts, p 13, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Malcolm said:

If one can achieve Buddhahood in a single life via Chan there is no reason to follow Vajrayāna at all, let alone Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

The Pure Land path promises not only buddhahood in a single life (i.e. either taking this birth and the birth in Sukhavati as one, or one lifetime in Sukhavati), but it is open for all capacities, offers practices from the simplest to the highly complicated, and most importantly, unlike other paths where fallback can only be avoided through strict adherence to the methods, it guarantees perfect liberation through the vow of Amitabha. In light of that every other teaching that cannot give buddhahood in this body for everyone are redundant and unnecessary.

It should also be noted that not only Chan teaches buddhahood in this life, but also Tiantai, Huayan, and Zhenyan (Shingon), so it is not particularly a uniquely Chan idea. What is a Chan specialty is sudden enlightenment/direct understanding, while Tiantai, Huayan, and Vajrayana all present a step by step path.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Wayfarer said:

No. I think that the word 'mind' has a different meaning in Mahayana Buddhism than it does in other contexts. So the instruction may not be different for 'Chan lay-people' - i.e. those who lived in Lin Chi's place and time - but it might be very different for 'modern urban lay-people'.

Astus wrote:

I see your point and I agree. Chan has its own language that should be translated to modern everyday speech when using to for teaching people unfamiliar with East Asian Mahayana literature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

You think there is a different instruction for lay people in Chan?

Anders said:

Often, that is the case.

Astus wrote:

That I consider a broader teaching of Mahayana. Baizhang discussed this a bit at the beginning of his longer record, although there he specified that the difference lies not in whether one is a householder or a monastic, but in their level of understanding the Dharma. Same sentiment goes for the Platform Sutra as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 8:35 PM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

According to the other thread you believe recognizing nature of mind is Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

"When one sees the Buddha-Nature, one attains unsurpassed Enlightenment."
(Nirvana Sutra, ch 9, p 93)

"Although innumerable Bodhisattvas may well perfectly practise the paramitas [spiritual perfections], they might only reach the stage of the ten abodes ["bhūmis"] and yet may not be able to see the Buddha-Nature. If the Tathagata speaks, they may see to some

extent. When these Bodhisattvas have seen all, they will say: "Oh, wonderful, O World-Honoured One! We have been repeating birth and death and have been worried by selflessness. " O good man! Such Bodhisattvas may well reach the stage of the ten soils ["bhumis" - stages of Bodhisattva development], and yet they cannot clearly see the Buddha-Nature. How could sravakas and pratyekabuddhas well see [it]?

...

The Buddha-Nature that one has is the deepest and the most difficult [thing] to see. Only the Buddha can know it well. It is not within the reach of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 12, p 110-111)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 29th, 2015 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

And those quotes are supposed to show what?

Astus wrote:

The basic Chan tenet is that the nature of mind is buddha. The quote says that seeing buddha-nature is attaining perfect enlightenment. Thus it is not at all unfounded that Chan teaches that one becomes buddha by seeing the nature of mind.

"To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness."

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, p 20, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 1:59 AM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Sherlock said:

Dharmata is not buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

"Dharmata is the Tathagata. Hence, the Tathagata is Eternal and Unchanging."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 8, p 84)

"For the Suchness of the Tathagata, and the Suchness of all dharmas, they are both one single Suchness, not two, not divided."

(PP8000, ch 16, p 193, tr Conze)

"‘Tathagata’ means thusness of all dharmas."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 17, p 198, BTTS Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

DesertDweller said:

if there is only One Mind, then how is it, first that I perceive "things" as separate from my basic consciousness? In other words, if I go back into my mind as far as I can to what seems like bare consciousness, then are the objects--mental, emotional, physical, etc--which that consciousness perceives merely "forms" of the one Mind showing itself to itself?

... am I correct to say that in Reality the dust is not separate from the Mirror, the Host is not separate from the Guest? If so, how can they seem so distinct? Even when the mind approaches no-thought in meditation, the distinction still seems apparent....

Astus wrote:

As long as you propose a "knower", a consciousness, there must be things that are "known". When you say you go back to your mind, can you really find a consciousness without any objects, or objects are always present? In fact, when you say you look at your mind, it is still the same dichotomy of knower and known. Rather than maintaining the idea of a perceiving subject, just take whatever is experienced - physical and mental - as simply experience. Investigate for yourself if there really is a duality of knower and known, or is it rather an interpretation with what you cut into two a unitary flow of experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Yamamoto translation says,

"Being based on Dharma means nothing other than basing oneself on the Mahaparinirvana of the Tathagata. All Buddhist teachings are none but "Dharmata" [essence of Dharma, essence of Reality]. This "Dharmata" is the Tathagata. Hence, the Tathagata is Eternal and Unchanging. Any person who says that the Tathagata is non-eternal does not know "Dharmata"."

Mark Blum's translation (p 194, BDK Edition):

"the dharma to be taken as one's refuge is none other than this mahaparinirvana of the Tathagata. As the dharma of all buddhas, it is the dharmata, the nature of reality. And as the dharmata, it is what the Tathagata is. This is why the Tathagata is a permanently abiding presence without change. If someone were to say that the Tathagata is

impermanent, that person would not understand, he has not seen the nature of reality."

Here's my simple version from the same 40-fascicle Dharmaksema translation (T12n374, p401c3-5):

依法者。即是如來大般涅槃。一切佛法即是法性。是法性者即是如來。是故如來常住不變。若復有言如來無常。是人不知不見法性。

Relying on the Law is [relying on] the Thus Come One's Great Parinirvana. All Buddha Laws are the Law-nature, the Law-nature is the Thus Come One, so the Thus Come One is eternal and permanent. If it were said that the Thus Come One is impermanent, that person would not know and would not see the Law-nature.

But to further clarify this section, a little later the sutra says:

Yamamoto:

"Basing oneself upon Dharma means basing oneself upon "Dharmata"; not basing oneself on man refers to the sravaka. "Dharmata" is the Tathagata, and the sravaka is the created. The Tathagata is Eternal, but the sravaka is non-eternal."

Blum:

"The dharma to take refuge in is the reality of dharmata; the person not to take refuge in is a sravaka disciple. The reality of dharmata is a tathagata; a sravaka disciple is a created phenomenon. A tathagata is permanently abiding; a created phenomenon is impermanent."

So, it is not really discussing differences between teachings, it turns it into the difference between unconditioned and conditioned. Same happens with the other three seals.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Malcolm said:

None of this changes my basic point that the passage in question concerns the four reliances (dharma, meaning, wisdom, definitive meaning), not the equivalence dharmatā = tathāgata, which is not found in the Indian version of the text.

Astus wrote:

The Chinese translation is from the early 5th century. Is there actually an original Sanskrit anywhere, or you call the Tibetan Indian? Still, it was not the only quote.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: What kind of mind do Buddhas have

Content:

Malcolm said:

If it's missing in the Tibetan text, it was not there in the Sanskrit original. But we can do a passage by passage comparison if you like. But it should be in another thread.

Astus wrote:

I don't think it's that important. If you say it's not in the Tibetan, it is not there.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 3:23 PM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

DesertDweller said:

Very true--it is basically impossible for me to get back to the Absolute Source of consciousness--and believe me, I've tried! There is always "awareness that I am aware," though this may be quite subtle. I suppose this awareness of awareness, when it is tranquil, is like the clear mirror in the analogy.

Astus wrote:

There is no such "Absolute Source" you want to find. As they say, the very fact of not finding any ultimate consciousness or self is the true insight into the emptiness of mind.

Huangbo says,

"Ordinary people all chase after the [sensory] realms and generate the mind, so that the mind [has feelings of] enjoyment and detestation. If you would have there be no realms, then you should forget the mind. When the mind is forgotten, then the realms are empty, and when the realms are empty the mind is extinguished. If you do not forget the mind but only eliminate the realms, because the realms cannot be eliminated you will only increase your [inner] agitation. Therefore, [you should understand that] the myriad dharmas are only the mind. The mind is also imperceptible (lit., "unattainable"), so how can it possibly be sought?"

(Zen Texts, p 24, BDK Edition)

Asanga quotes,

"In states of quiescence the bodhisattva
Understands that images exist only in his mind,
And, abandoning externalized ideas of objects,
He assuredly understands them to be only his own thoughts.
Abiding within himself, the bodhisattva
Understands that the objective realm does not exist,
And also that the subjective realm is empty.
He then directly experiences the unobtainability of both."
(Summary of the Great Vehicle, p 69, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So when Huangbo says that 'The mind is also imperceptible (lit., "unattainable"), so how can it possibly be sought?', the fact that it can't be sought, doesn't mean that it is non-existent, but that it is indeed never an object of knowledge or something that can be cognized.

Astus wrote:

The dual version of false and true minds is fine as long as they are not turned into extremes as if there were actually two minds. Beings have only one mind, this very mind that is conscious right now. The difference between false and true lies in grasping at phenomena or not. Unattainable means that there is nothing actually to grasp as all appearances are empty and baseless. But as long as we believe in solid, independent, external objects, we are hooked up on them and driven by them. So, better to just clarify for oneself right now that no matter what experience occurs, it cannot ever be held onto, as it disappears in the next moment. All that we can ever attach to are concepts and ideas, but even thoughts are ungraspable as they just come and go incessantly.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Like fish in a shrinking pond

Content:

Astus wrote:

是日已過 命亦隨滅 如少水魚 斯有何樂

"The day is already done. Our lives are that much less

We are like fish in a shrinking pond. What joy is there in this?"

The above is found in the Chinese translations of Dharmapada and the Udanavarga (T210 & T212), matches

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=71&mid=208325> but it has no corresponding stanza in the Pali Dhammapada.

當勤精進 如救頭然 但念無常 慎勿放逸

"We should be diligent and vigorous, as if our own heads were at stake.

Only be mindful of impermanence and be careful not to be lax."

Found in for instance the Ming era compilation "Admonishment for Monastics" (T2023).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

DesertDweller said:

What is meant here by "mind"? How can one "forget" the mind? He makes it seem like an act of will, but it seems impossible to forget anything intentionally, since the will to forget simply places renewed emphasis on the object of forgetting.

Astus wrote:

Mind means thinking. Something occurs, one grasps it and connects it with further concepts to create a string of associations and ideas. It is also called mental proliferation (prapanca). Grasping what occurs means identifying it as me or mine, like "I am angry" and "My head hurts". Forgetting the mind means not grasping phenomena and thus not making up whole series of concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: The Ātman-Brahman in Ancient Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

The argument that the Buddha only negated the self within the aggregates is clearly incorrect. The repeated statement is "assumes [X aggregate] to be the self, or the self as possessing [X aggregate], or [X aggregate] as in the self, or the self as in [X aggregate]." It excludes self 1. as the aggregates, 2. as the owner of the aggregates, 3. as outside the aggregates, 4. as inside the aggregates. Based on this well known instruction found all over the suttas there have developed numerous arguments and meditation guides to show anyone interested that there is nothing anywhere to identify as self.

So, it is difficult to see how a book on putting a self in the Buddha's teachings is any more sensible than The Gospel According to Biff where Jesus learns Zen in a Tibetan monastery.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Malcolm said:

The misconception which Astus has is the notion that an empowerment is merely communicating information received through the five senses, thus for him there is no difference between an empowerment and a recording of an empowerment, it is merely information. While it is true that information is being communicated through the five sense, that is not all that is happening, there are samadhis involved on the part of both the master and the students at the same time, there is the dependent origination which needs to be actively created between the master and the student at the same time, particularly in the lower empowerments; there are the samaya vows conferred and received and the agreement to follow them (Whatever you say boss, all that I will do....),

and so on — all of the things which I have now explained exhaustively.

Astus wrote:

Yes, my basic assumption is that what benefits one on the path must be learnt, understood and experienced personally. So for the disciple what can have any effect for him is what he visualises during the empowerment, not what the master. You say it is the rite that matters, and it can be completed only when both the master and the student works together at the same time. But isn't the very point of performing the rite is to benefit the disciple? The question then is how the presence of the master and what he visualises affects the disciple. How can one enter a mandala that is mentally created by another?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Tathagata cannot be defined as this or that, simply because there is no identification, no grasping as something. But just because there is no attachment to appearances/experiences does not mean there are no appearances/experiences at all. Thus the ultimate view is that appearances and emptiness are one and the same, that mind is clear and aware.

"Use all your might, my friends, so that you may attain liberation by Sudden Enlightenment. When your eyes see a form, clearly distinguish every form, and yet be unmoved by these varying forms. When in their midst, be unaffected, and among them attain liberation. Then you have attained the samadhi of forms. When your ears hear a sound... when your nose smells an odor... when your tongue tastes a flavor.... when your body feels a sensation.... when your analytic mind (manas) distinguishes a dharma, remain unmoved by these various dharmas. When in their midst attain liberation. Then you have attained the samadhi of dharmas. When in this manner all the organs are clearly seen, that is original prajna; when nothing arises, that is original samadhi."
(Shenhui: <http://www.purifymind.com/DiscourseSudden.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think I understand that for empowerment to happen the described procedures have to be followed, as that is the definition of what an empowerment is. Similarly to marriage that is defined in a specific way by the law, and regardless of how people live or what they do, they are not married as long as the correct procedure was not followed. However, people can do the same things both with and without a marriage certificate. That is, one can still live together and have children without marriage, while it is said

that without empowerment one cannot practise Vajrayana effectively. So, the disciple must obtain something during empowerment that makes him different from the uninitiated. That is why I first of all try to analyse from the perspective of the receiver and ask the question of what is transmitted from master to student. Everything delivered through the five senses can be obtained from a recording as well. The methods of the practice and the precepts to follow can also be learnt from other sources. What makes the recipient of a correctly performed empowerment different from the one who did not receive it when they both engage in the same practice and uphold the same precepts? Is it perhaps related to the knowledge that "I have the empowerment" in the former that is missing from the latter person?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Malcolm said:

And as I have written elsewhere, logic and inference are not authorities in Vajrayāna, scripture is. The Abhibodhikramopadeśa of Master Āryadeva states:

At the time of the ultimate view of secret mantra,
the direct perception by the mind and sense organs
as well as inferences are not authorities;
the profound scriptures and intimate instructions are authorities.

Astus wrote:

That clarifies it then for me why there aren't really works discussing the functioning of Vajrayana in a way that other Buddhist methods are usually discussed, describing the various mental elements and conditions at work. And thank you for the previous responses as well, you're really helpful.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Everything delivered through the five senses can be obtained from a recording as well.

fckw said:

Of course not. Only visual and auditory sense stimuli can. Or have you ever heard of a 5D-cinema?

Astus wrote:

If live broadcast and physical presence are equally valid, other senses don't really count.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 1st, 2015 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Mirror and Dust: different?

Content:

DesertDweller said:

if the objective world is an illusion or fabrication, then how do we understand "individual minds"?

Astus wrote:

Fabrication is to take ideas and concepts as if they were real or correspond to something real. Here real means something that exists on its own, independently of other things. When it is said that "external objects are only mind", it means that we take concepts to be more than just concepts. This is not an ontological or metaphysical view, an idealism, but an experiential observation with a very practical value, since grasping at ideas is the root of suffering.

"All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks."

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 2nd, 2015 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: The Ātman-Brahman in Ancient Buddhism

Content:

David Reigle said:

This quotation comes from Vasubandhu's own commentary on his Vijñapti-mātratā-siddhi Viṃśatikā, verse 10:

Astus wrote:

Perhaps check some other translations. Might turn out that the one presented in that book is somewhat (intentionally) misleading. Also, what does Vasubandhu have to do with the early texts? But if there are doubts about Vasubandhu's position on the matter, there are other works to read. For instance this work by https://books.google.hu/books?id=KWYcVO_kptMC

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 3rd, 2015 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Anders said:

This is just a sort of pseudo-essentialist assumption. I.e., 'my physical body may be greatly affected by interaction with other physical bodies but my mind can not be greatly affected by other minds'.

But it can. A turning word is not as physical as you imagine it to be, the energy field of the mind of an awakened master can have a profound impact on the minds of people in his or her vicinity (sometimes, you don't even need vicinity - I've heard of certain thera who, when sensing their students are in distress, will brighten their minds with metta samadhi, even across countries).

The idea that minds are isolated pockets within physical bodies that have no interaction except through the physical senses just doesn't hold up.

Astus wrote:

It's not because of some materialist assumption, but the problem of interaction between minds without the mediating role of the five senses.

If the mentioned thera can brighten his students' minds without the students knowing anything of that, other yogis could do the same, not to mention bodhisattvas and buddhas. But apparently not all people are brightened.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 3rd, 2015 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Anders said:

And why is this a problem?

Astus wrote:

A person's mental autonomy is the requirement for ethical responsibility for one's actions. Otherwise it becomes the same case as when one can blame a creator for one's fortune (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.061.than.html>). If a being can put thoughts in another's mind, that is practically taking control of how one sees things and acts in the world. Unlike external influences, it leaves no space for reflection, for inclination, and other mental factors that filter and select impressions. That's because the very act of reflecting, etc. is controlled by another.

Anders said:

In fact, you should consider the possibility that the buddhas and bodhisattvas are in fact already giving you an optimal amount of help that your karmic circumstances will allow them to (as opposed to the usual notion that they are 'out there', helping someone else luckier than ourselves).

Astus wrote:

If we suppose such influences that can take effect depending on one's mental conditioning, it is virtually the same as if there were no such influences at all, as in both cases it is only the individual's mind that matters. The argument for those influences are very much like when theists claim that a Creator and Lawgiver is necessary in order to have a world and ethical rules.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 4th, 2015 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

I can also imagine "mind to mind" influences, or whatever, that would leave such space.

Astus wrote:

What is your view then, how can there be direct influence without assuming control over another?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 4th, 2015 at 2:24 AM

Title: Re: More on recorded empowerments, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Gyurme Kundrol,

While one can readily tell the difference between sounds from outside and one's own thoughts, how could one tell that a thought is from somebody else?

If two rivers merge they become a single river and cannot be separated again. If two mind-streams meet at a single moment of thought, all subsequent thoughts are the results of that one thought, so they become a single mind-stream.

Energy is a different subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 4th, 2015 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Amida Is A Real Buddha

Content:

Astus wrote:

As mentioned before, there are different levels of meaning. The confusion comes from assuming that they are contradictory or exclusive instead of complementary and inclusive. That is, the reality of Amitabha and that all appearances are mind only are not opposing views. In fact, they perfectly support each other. For those who naturally incline for viewing Amitabha as a real entity, they are gradually introduced to the

teaching of emptiness, if they are open for it in this life. For those who prefer everything as empty, they definitely have to understand that there is no emptiness besides dependent origination, and the Pure Land path is real and effective exactly because reality is mind made. An important difference is that while relying solely on buddha-remembrance leads to birth in the Pure Land, failing to see that there is no emptiness besides appearances leads only to some higher heavens at best, or to lower realms if one also denies the functioning of karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 5th, 2015 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: On destroying Virtue VS Unable to exhaust others' Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

1.

The past is already gone, it cannot be changed. Effects in the present situation is subject to present conditions, internal and external. External conditions mean that one only feels craving when there is a desirable object (physical or mental). Internal conditions mean that one can view things with a narrow or with an open mind, with kindness or with hate. So, while one might normally like chocolate cakes, if one feels sick, even cakes can look disgusting.

Purification of the mind does not mean one can actually erase past events. It means learning to become open, caring, attentive, wise and kind. Then no matter what effect ripens, one can remain untainted by it. On the other hand, if one cultivates only greed, anger and ignorance, even the most insignificant situations can bring out one's inner evils.

2.

One can spend lot of time in a friendly environment where no harmful emotions occur, but once in a new situation those inner defilements bloom in no time. Then it becomes apparent that the previous peace was only temporary. That is, in a sense, there was no real merit accumulated during all that peaceful time, since there is no change in one's habits of how one acts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 6th, 2015 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: Zhiyi's Edonsho

Content:

Astus wrote:

Isn't it actually from Guanding's preface? So, it's not really a writing by Zhiyi.

Here's another translation from <http://www.tientai.net/lit/mksk/v1/v1p1-2p1.htm>:

The Total, Sudden Method:

From the beginning, there is the True Aspect of Reality. One creates an Object that agrees with the middle way and is not without the absolute truth. Being focused on the Spiritual Realm¹⁶, and with the Spiritual Realm being in each single thought, each form and fragrance is not without the middle way. It is one's own realm as well as that of the Buddha. In fact, it is also the realm of all living beings.

1. The aggregates of self and the senses are everywhere as they are, and so there is no suffering that may be discarded.
 2. With there being ignorance and the dusts from one's labors, so there is enlightenment Therefore there is no origination of suffering that may be detached from.
 3. Extremes and falsehoods are within the bounds of truth, and so there is no path that may be cultivated.
 4. With there being Life & Death, so there is Nirvana. Therefore there is no extinction that may be realized.
- Without suffering or origination, there is no being of the world.
 - Without a path or extinction, there is no leaving the world.

There is simply one True Spiritual Aspect of Reality. Beyond the True Spiritual Aspect of Reality, nothing is distinguished.

- The Nature of Spirituality is a serene tranquility called Calm.
- It is serene and yet it is always illumined, and so it is called Observation.

Although we speak of there being a beginning and an end, they are inseparable and indivisible, and it is called The Total & Sudden Calm-Observation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 6th, 2015 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Zhiyi's Edonsho

Content:

Astus wrote:

It reads quite well together with the <http://www.cttbusa.org/heartsutra/hs1.htm>:

Insight into the nature of reality.

When Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva was practicing the profound prajna paramita, he illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty.

The perfect and sudden [method of practicing cessation-and-contemplation] involves taking the true aspects [of reality] as the object from the very beginning. Whatever is made to be the object [of contemplation], it is the Middle; there is nothing that is not truly real.

That reality is the whole of our experience.

Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form.

Form itself is emptiness; emptiness itself is form. So, too, are feeling, cognition, formation, and consciousness.

[When one attains the state of contemplation wherein] reality itself (dharmadhatu) is fixed as the object [of cognition and contemplation], and one's thoughts are integrated with reality itself, [then one realises that] there is not a single color nor scent that is not the Middle Way. It is the same for the realm of the individual [mind], the realm of the Buddha, and the world at large [i.e., the "realm of sentient beings"].

Experience is itself such, nothing to grasp, relinquish or attain.

Shariputra, all dharmas are empty of characteristics. They are not produced. Not destroyed, not defiled, not pure, and they neither increase nor diminish. Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, feeling, cognition, formation, or consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas; no field of the eyes, up to and including no field of mind-consciousness; and no ignorance or ending of ignorance, up to and including no old age and death or ending of old age and death. There is no suffering, no accumulating, no extinction, no way, and no understanding and no attaining.

All [phenomena experienced through the] aggregates and senses are thusness [i.e., reality as it is]; therefore there is no [substantial] suffering that needs to be removed. Since ignorance and the exhausting dust [of passionate afflictions] are indivisible with bodhi-wisdom, there is no origin [of suffering, i.e., craving] to be severed. Since the extreme [dualities] and false views are [indivisible with] the Middle and the right [views], there is no path to be cultivated. Since [this cyclic world of] samsara is [indivisible with] nirvana, there is no extinguishing [of craving] to be realized. Since there is no [substantial] suffering and cause [of suffering], there is no mundane world [to be transcended]; since there is no path and no extinction [of craving], there is no transcendent world [to be gained].

Since experience is such, it is perfect enlightenment.

Because nothing is attained, the Bodhisattva, through reliance on prajna paramita, is unimpeded in his mind. Because there is no impediment, he is not afraid, and he leaves distorted dream-thinking far behind. Ultimately Nirvana! All Buddhas of the three periods of time attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi through reliance on prajna paramita.

There is purely the single true aspects [of reality]; there are no separate things outside these true aspects. For things in themselves (dharmata) to be quiescent is called "cessation"; to be quiescent yet ever luminous is called "contemplation." Though earlier and later [stages] are spoken of, they are neither two nor separate. This is called perfect and sudden cessation-and-contemplation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 6th, 2015 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: On destroying Virtue VS Unable to exhaust others' Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Regarding purification, please consider this discussion between the Buddha and some Jains (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.101.than.html>):

"So I said to them, 'But friends, do you know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist?'

""No, friend.'

""And do you know that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them?'

""No, friend.'

""And do you know that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past?'

""No, friend.'

""And do you know that so-and-so much stress has been exhausted, or that so-and-so much stress remains to be exhausted, or that with the exhaustion of so-and-so much stress all stress will be exhausted?'

""No, friend.'

As for what karma removes past karma

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.235.than.html>):

And what is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 7th, 2015 at 3:11 PM

Title: Re: the two truths

Content:

Astus wrote:

The teaching of the two truths is meant to point out that what common people believe to be absolute is relative. Once phenomena are understood as relative, that is the absolute truth. That is, as long as one grasps at words and concepts as something real and independent, that is taking the relative as absolute. Once it is obvious that words are just words and concepts are just concepts, that is seeing the absolute. It is not the case that we should find some absolute beyond the relative, rather just know that the relative is relative.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 7th, 2015 at 7:28 PM

Title: Re: the two truths

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I had the idea that the two truths were originally about how to interpret the teachings.

Astus wrote:

For interpreting the teachings, there is the distinction between neyartha (figurative) and nitārtha (literal). Literal is mostly where there is an explicit teaching on no-self and emptiness, figurative is the rest. The two truths of samvrttisatya (conventional) and paramarthasatya (absolute) are similar, however, conventional stands for dependent origination and absolute for emptiness. Still, there can be a literal teaching that talks explicitly about conventional reality, and there can be figurative teaching that means emptiness. Also, dependent origination and emptiness are actually one, but conventionally talked about separately.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 8th, 2015 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: Practice/Life difficulties - do you want to see more or

Content:

Astus wrote:

I voted 1. Practising Buddhism must be personal. There is nothing else but making it one's daily life. At least that's how I take it. The difficulty with a forum environment is mostly the same as in any situation: not listening to others as human beings but as if they were some schematic ideas. That is, one individual talking to another or "Soto Zen" versus "Drukpa Kagyu". At the same time, the large amount of personal remarks is quite harmful and discouraging in every conversation, when one "virtual member" tells another "virtual member" what s/he is like (e.g. "You don't understand this"; "You are not qualified for this"; "You need to grow up"). While we are all human beings (or some are nagas perhaps), even in meatspace it is rarely a good idea to be arrogant and presume one knows the other person. Still, I believe that it could work.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 8th, 2015 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Stabilising insight

Content:

Astus wrote:

I look at any experience or state of mind gained/developed during meditation or retreat with suspicion. When I tried to keep a specific mental state for a prolonged time, there was just more and more tension generated by the ups and downs of "I want to have it" and "I must keep it".

To me "stabilising insight" means reminding myself that the mind is never stable, and if it looks stable it is just wishful thinking and conceptualisation. Insight for me is that there is nothing to rely on. Stabilising that then is about removing the habit of I-making and my-making, that is, the usual craving for something nice and fearing all the bad stuff. Contemplating a bit the ephemeral nature of all experiences can be helpful. Or just looking at how things are at the moment. There are actually many other ways to remind oneself, but it's already available in the teachings anyway. Taking refuge itself is not getting bogged down in all the self-made hells and heavens.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 11th, 2015 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I voted no.

First of all, among the precepts and the ten evil acts there is no description of one's thoughts directly affecting others. Second, there are numerous problems that come from supposing that minds can make direct contact. Third, there is a lack of explanation in Buddhism for how direct mental contact could happen, as far as I'm aware.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 11th, 2015 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Ayu said:

So, what about practicing for the benefit of other beings? Prayers & wishes?

Only humbug?

Astus wrote:

There is ill-will as a negative, unvirtuous attitude. Goodwill is a positive, virtuous attitude. Naturally, one should cultivate the latter but not the former.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 11th, 2015 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Every being experiences the result of actions performed by that being. Karma cannot be switched with others where one being acts and another experiences the result. Also, in the case of merit transference, it works only when one being rejoices in and agrees with another's action. Even our physical actions' effects on another are defined by that being's conditioning, while the results of our actions remain ours, both good and bad.

See e.g. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.043.than.html> and

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.006.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 12th, 2015 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

I think the biggest assumption people make is thinking that emotions and thoughts that arise in the mind-stream belong to them. That thoughts are contained by anything, where does a thought exist? Is it in the mind? Where is the mind? etc.

So when a certain feeling arises in our mind, if it doesn't belong to us, to whom does it belong? "Belonging", is the creation of an I, and the assigning of some object to that 'I'. Which we all know is illusory, right?

Astus wrote:

Mind-stream means that current thoughts come from past thoughts, there is a causal sequence. Two streams connecting means that another's past thought causes one's current thought. This then invalidates both the causal system of mind-streams and karma in general. That is one of the main problems if such direct mental connection is assumed.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 12th, 2015 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Brad Warner Video Interview

Content:

Astus wrote:

Based solely on what was said in the interview: Zen sounds like "believe what you want" and "as long as you sit you do Zen". It is like a group of lazy yogis who try to master a single asana and nothing else. Wanted to say freethinkers instead of yogis, but even free thinking is not involved here. In a sense it is an interesting and strange phenomenon, this whole "sitting Zen". On the other hand, it takes Buddhism and even the Zen tradition as something completely marginal or irrelevant.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 12th, 2015 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

Why would that invalidate anything? If another person crashed their car into yours, whos karma is responsible? Streams of thought exist as casual processes, only their belonging to an individuals mind is invalidated. Our perception of these streams of thought as mine, or as representing 'me', is what's wrong.

Everything is relative, when you are reading a book by a teacher, who's thoughts are you understanding, yours or theirs? Are they different? How about when tibetan Buddhist's do deity visualization practices? The mind becomes its object, or something along those lines right? How is that so different than direct mental connection? Isn't that what makes guru practices so powerful? Your mind becomes one with your teachers etc.

Astus wrote:

What one being experiences, that is that being's experience only. Even if we drank from

the same cup, what I tasted and what you tasted could not be shared. I may read what you have written, but that only exists in my perception and my interpretation.

There is a difference between the sequence of experiences, i.e. the mind stream, and the habit of presuming a "doer", a "thinker", or an "owner". That is, there is the storehouse-consciousness, the basic mind stream, there is the manas that appropriates phenomena, and there are the six active consciousnesses. Direct mental connection would be like sharing not only a single eye between two beings, but a single eye-consciousness. And because eye-consciousness comes from the storehouse consciousness, that would have to be the same for both, consequently there would be only one being and not two.

While things are relative, that also means things occur based on causes and conditions. Two trees producing a single fruit is not possible. Whatever is the object of mind, it is not the same as the subject that perceives the object. The seer cannot become the seen, that is a basic condition for relative phenomena. And if we move on from the everyday appearances to the level of dependent origination, there is still a requirement for causal consistency. However, on the final absolute level, it is pointless to talk about one sharing with another.

As for deity and guru yoga, that happens in the practitioner's mind, it is his own imagination.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 12th, 2015 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Saoshun said:

What make you think that your thoughts are yours?

Astus wrote:

There are two things to consider here:

1. One does not need to think that the thoughts are his own, one simply follows whatever thoughts occur and acts on them.
2. The sophisticated, ideological view of a thinker comes from parents, teachers, the culture, reflection and learning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 12th, 2015 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

How about this one from Tenzin Wangyal rinpoche discussing "vision is mind":

"Now invite the image of your famous person to come into your awareness. They always come anyway, but this time you are inviting them so that you can look more deeply into this experience. What exactly is this famous person composed of? See the image of the person, the character of this person who bothers you so much. Sense the energetic or emotional presence of this person. When your famous person was born, he or she did not show any physical signs or marks of what you now see. And not all people share your view of this person. What you perceive is your mind, your karmic vision, which is more karma than vision."

(Discovering the True Nature of Mind, in

http://www.ligmincha.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3:ligmincha-magazine-no-05-summer-2012&catid=8&Itemid=117, p 27)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

More on connection between minds:

"Even if another mind is known in some sense by the yogins who have not completely abandoned the erroneous distinction of subject and object, the validity of their knowledge is limited to the fact that it does not betray them in daily life. As long as the yogins have not abandoned the subject-object distinction, they have not attained the full stature of the Buddha.

By the power of meditation the yogin can have such clear representations that they appear to him almost like the specific forms of the mind of another person, just as deities will bestow grace on a person by appearing in their dreams etc. So even the yogin does not directly grasp another person's mind through his representations. He can be said to know another person's mind only in the sense that the representations which appear in his own mind have the same form (akara) as those in another person's mind. Therefore yogi-pratyaksa is called perception only for the sake of convenience. As long as the essential distinctions are made, we go along with this way of speaking, for the representations which appear to the yogin are so clear that they look almost like the specific forms of another mind. The Buddha cognizes everything, but his cognition cannot be grasped by analytical thinking."

(Dharmakirti: Samtanantara-siddhi, in T. E. Wood: Mind Only, p 217-218)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

My entire point is that conventional reality, is completely relative on every level, and the way we view things completely changes that reality. There is no correct 'view', all views are equal in a place where all things are mere illusions.

Astus wrote:

That interpretation of relativity denies causality, thus negates both morality and the path of liberation. If there is no correct view, there is no noble eightfold path either.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Dan74 said:

The suttas and sutras contain many references to telepathy - knowing thoughts of another.

Astus wrote:

Please see my previous <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=283422#p283422>.

Dan74 said:

I don't think what you are saying, Astus, is supported by the tradition, or for that matter, by logic. Why should the thought-streams be completely isolated from direct contact? Well, obviously they are at least indirectly connected through action. And direct connection happens sometimes too, I believe.

Astus wrote:

Direct contact means that a single thought is produced by two mind-streams, and in that moment the two streams are one. It is not like shaking hands, it is two hands becoming a single hand. Every being experiences their own mental constructs, their own karma. To say that one person can put a thought in another's mind, that is equal to one committing a crime and another suffering its consequences. What is your reasoning for direct contact?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

astus, I don't think the relativity of reality dismisses karma, or causality. It just means even karma and casualty is insubstantial.

Astus wrote:

Insubstantial means that there is no permanent essence. It is exactly because there is no such eternal substance that there is causality. Based on causality action is followed by its fruit, every being is an heir to their own karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

The idea we are separated from everything else is delusional, that our karma is not everyone's karma is delusional. We can't move a muscle without effecting everything around us.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying that it is accidental that people are born where they are born, and it is not the result of their past actions that some are born in a pleasurable environment, while others in a bad one?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

I didn't choose to be born a human. I didn't do anything so far as I can tell.

Astus wrote:

I don't remember my last month's breakfast, but that doesn't mean I didn't have one. As far as the Buddha's teaching goes, birth is determined by one's karma.

Jesse said:

There is almost certainly individual and collective karma though.

Astus wrote:

Karma comes from intentional action and impresses one's mind-stream. A collective has neither intention nor mind, thus karma cannot occur.

Jesse said:

We can't be separated from the world no matter what.

Astus wrote:

The world is what and how we experience it. That experience is completely individual.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 13th, 2015 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swarm_intelligence

Astus wrote:

That does not establish a mind, just how certain beings behave in larger groups.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Jesse said:

If I throw a rock at someone's head, who did absolutely nothing to me. How did their karma cause it?

Astus wrote:

Then Ven. Angulimala, early in the morning, having put on his robes and carrying his outer robe & bowl, went into Savatthi for alms. Now at that time a clod thrown by one person hit Ven. Angulimala on the body, a stone thrown by another person hit him on the body, and a potsherd thrown by still another person hit him on the body. So Ven. Angulimala — his head broken open and dripping with blood, his bowl broken, and his outer robe ripped to shreds — went to the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw him coming from afar and on seeing him said to him: "Bear with it, brahman! Bear with it! The fruit of the kamma that would have burned you in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, you are now experiencing in the here-&-now!"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.086.than.html>)

"if there is a good son or good daughter who memorizes and recites this scripture, but is belittled by others, it is because this person committed crimes in a prior life which resulted in negative rebirths. Through enduring the disparagement of others in the present life, the bad karma from the prior lives can be removed, and one can attain peerless perfect enlightenment."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html)

What is the practice of accepting adversity? When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: "For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither the heavens nor other people can impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection."

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Dan74 said:

There is also plentiful mention of collective karma in the scriptures such as when Buddha's clansmen the Sakyas were about to be slaughtered and Mauggalana with his magic powers attempted to rescue some, etc etc.

Astus wrote:

Collective karma does not mean a separate karma from individual karma, only that there are mental habits similar to others. That is, karma does not exist outside of a mind-stream, and there is no such entity as a group mind. People on this forum may all like the Buddha's teachings, but that doesn't mean there is then a "forum mind". Another examples are language and culture that many people share, but it would be difficult to show where is a "nation-consciousness" and a "language-consciousness". Ideas - like the idea of a nation - does not obtain an existence on its own, it remains an abstract concept regardless of how many people believe in it.

Can you quote some teachings where "collective karma" is explained? First of all, what is "collective karma" in Sanskrit/Chinese/Tibetan?

Dan74 said:

Also, Astus, perceiving a thought of another is not akin to two minds giving rise to the same thought. A thought of another may be perceived as having a different 'flavour' to one's own thought. I'm sorry but telepathy, as you much know, is recognised as a siddhi, by all Buddhist traditions and I don't find your reasoning to be compelling at all.

Astus wrote:

As <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=283422#p283422>, perceiving another's mind is not the same as actually perceiving another's mind, there is no direct contact. But here's more:

"Who says that another person's mind is not the object of one's own consciousness? We only deny that it is its immediate and direct object. This means that, when the consciousness of another person's mind manifests itself, it (that other mind) has no real function in one's own consciousness. Thus, the case is different from that of the hands, etc., which directly grasp external things themselves, or the sun, etc., which directly spreads its light itself, thus shining upon external objects. (In its relationship to another person's mind,) one's consciousness is only like a mirror in which there appears what seems to be an external sphere of objects. One's mind is then said to understand the mind of the other person, but it cannot understand another mind immediately and directly. What it does understand directly is only what it itself develops. That is why 'the Samdhinirmocana Sutra says : 'There is not the least thing [one's own mind] that can apprehend (i.e., perceive) any other thing [other minds]. The only point is that, when consciousness is born, it manifests a semblance of another thing, and is then said to apprehend that thing. In this way, one's own mind seems like perceiving another person's mind as an object, as it perceives material things, etc., (which are evolved out of that mind),"

(Xuanzang: Cheng Weishi Lun, tr. Wei Tat, p 523, also in Three Texts on Consciousness Only, p 239; see comments in Buddhist Phenomenology on p 490)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

PorkChop said:

Perceiving the thoughts of another is not the same thing as directly perceiving the mind of another.

Astus wrote:

Mind and thoughts are not two separate things. Mind is just a series of mental dharma (thoughts and emotions in common terms).

As a summary:

First, here as in many other places in the Ch'eng wei-shih lun, the text is quick to point out that 'consciousness-only' (vijñāna-mātra, vijñapti-mātra, wei-shih) never means an isolated citta or a single solitary consciousness, but always includes the caittas, the felt, lived textures and cognitive fields within which cognition occurs and from which its characteristics (e.g., angry, doubtful, attentive, etc.) are inscribed. Consciousness is never apart from its caittas, and thus 'consciousness only' never means that only a subjective projector exists; what is discriminated, perceived, objective, etc., also exists, but the term 'exists' will be qualified to include only that which can be experienced (directly or indirectly), i.e., only that which exerts some efficient causal effect which is (in principle) observable can be said to 'exist.'
(Buddhist Phenomenology, p 485)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Numbered series

Content:

Astus wrote:

Personally, the four foundations of mindfulness. The first teaching I've encountered from the Buddha. Plus: "This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

PorkChop said:

Sorry, but luminous mind is not a thought, nor is it riddled with random thoughts when one is residing in cessation samadhi.

Astus wrote:

The point is that the quote from the Cheng Weishi Lun is not discussing perceiving "luminous mind", but just consciousness in general. During cessation there is no active consciousness anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 14th, 2015 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I'm saying is that there cannot be direct contact between minds. That's it. And just as the sight of a chair is a product of one's mind, so is whatever is imagined to be another being's mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 15th, 2015 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

PorkChop said:

"Outflow" in the sense of "leaks" or "faults" is probably not the right term here. But I believe that was the term used in the other thread.

Astus wrote:

Here's one on "leaking thoughts": <https://youtu.be/ZgBqqJyRaa4?t=326>

PorkChop said:

The stains are not the mind.

Astus wrote:

"Thoughts and dharmakaya are inseparable. We have this dualistic approach of seeing dharmakaya as pure and thoughts as impure, but we need to understand the inseparability of thoughts and dharmakaya."

(http://www.kagyumonlam.org/english/news/Report/Report_20130103.html)

Further explanation:

In the Kagyu Lineage Supplication, Jampal Zangpo says, "The nature of thought is dharmakaya." Some scholars may say this statement doesn't make sense. How, they ask, could confused thoughts and the pure dharmakaya be the same thing? They have a point, for if you look at all the different aspects you would have to say that in some respects thoughts are not dharmakaya. On the conventional level, mind and thoughts appear to be different. But in the context of meditative experience, the nature of thought is the dharmadhatu, and the dharmadhatu is the dharmakaya. Therefore, the nature of thoughts is dharmakaya. From this point of view thoughts are coemergent-there is no

difference between thoughts and mind.

Some people misunderstand the teaching "thought is dharmakaya" to mean that when a thought arises, it is pacified or dissolved, and then we are left with dharmakaya. Others misunderstand it to mean that if we realize thought to be dharmakaya, it is dharmakaya. The word dharmakaya, however, is made up of dharma meaning "the truth" and kaya meaning "embodiment." Thus dharmakaya refers to the ultimate mind of the Buddha. These two ways of misunderstanding the teaching stem from not understanding that, from the very beginning, thought is nothing other than the ultimate reality of the Buddha's omniscient mind. Thought doesn't become dharmakaya at some later time, and it doesn't depend on whether or not we are aware that it is dharmakaya. The first dharma in the Four Dharmas of Gampopa is, "May the mind be one with the Dharma;" the second is, "May the Dharma go on the path;" the third is, "May the path destroy confusion;" and the fourth is, "May confusion dawn as wisdom." The fourth dharma refers to thoughts. When we look into the nature of the thoughts, we see the union of luminosity and emptiness; in that way, thoughts are seen to be of the very nature of wisdom.

(Essentials of Mahamudra, p 158)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 15th, 2015 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

PorkChop said:

Now you can quibble over these passages and what they mean all you want, but they are extremely clear. You can let this drop, or you can continue, but after a certain point one of two things is going to happen - 1. people are just going to see it as obstinacy and 2. people are going to question your English capability - because not a single one of the passages you've posted asserts what you are asserting and not a single tradition would uphold it as such.

Astus wrote:

The passages you have cited I have no problem with at all. The six abhijnas were not questioned. The difference I have been emphasising from the beginning is between direct and indirect contact. And that's what the quotes I have provided before speak of. And why is it a relevant question if there is a direct contact or not? Because only direct contact would allow influencing others' minds in the way it was raised here as a topic for discussion.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 15th, 2015 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Or perhaps there can be no actual separation between minds. Any separation that appears to be there, is the separation between the streams of deluded habits.

Astus wrote:

Since minds are not physical objects, the way they are separated are by conditioning. That is, what is called a mind-stream consists of series of mental causal chains. Consequently, non-separation would mean one stream affecting another, becoming the cause of another stream. That then would mean a merging of two streams into a single stream, or rather the takeover of one stream by another, and other problems mentioned before.

I think one of the difficulties in this discussion is that if someone imagines mind to be some sort of box (or "infinite space", functionally the same) containing all the thoughts, one can think that no matter what happens to the contents of the box, the box remains the same. But that is practically supposing an atman that remains independent. On the other hand, regardless if we take the six or the eight consciousnesses, both are understood to be momentary instances of mental dharmas forming a causal stream, thus there is no space left for some higher consciousness to remain unaffected.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 15th, 2015 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Zhiyi's Edonsho

Content:

Jikan said:

It also makes some radical claims that should provoke some healthy discussion.

Astus wrote:

Apparently those claims are not radical any more to incite some debate.

Here's another one from a later Tendai master:

"Thus, if while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, or while performing any kind of action, you think, "I am suchness," then that is realizing Buddhahood. What could be an obstruction [to such contemplation]? You should know that suchness is to be contemplated with respect to all things. Clergy or laity, male or female - all should contemplate in this way."

(Genshin:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~jstone/Articles%20on%20the%20Lotus%20Sutra%20Tendai%20and%20Nichiren%20Buddhism/The%20Contemplation%20of%20Suchness%20%28translations%20from%20Shinnyokan.pdf>, tr J. I. Stone in "Religions of Japan in Practice", p 208)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 17th, 2015 at 6:49 PM

Title: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is there anything else to attach to beyond the five aggregates? If yes, what is it? If no, isn't there only one kind of liberation?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 17th, 2015 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As your quote says, there is nothing to objectify, nothing to attach to beyond the six sensory areas. The question raised here asks if there is anything else one could be attached to, what one would need to attain liberation from. If no, then there is only one kind of freedom, the cessation of clinging to the aggregates/senses.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 17th, 2015 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

seeker242 said:

I would say so. According to the "one vehicle" or "Ekayāna", yes, only one kind of liberation.

Astus wrote:

However, if it is just not being attached to the aggregates, sravakas attain that, not only buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, there is something beyond the skandhas, the āyatanas. Specifically, the skandhas include only conditioned phenomena, while space and the two kinds of cessations, the unconditioned phenomena, belong to the dharma-āyatana/dhātu.

Astus wrote:

Although "Unconditioned things are not named with respect to the skandhas, because they do not correspond to the concept" (Kosha, vol 1, p 81), there is a matching between the skandhas, ayatanas and dhatus (Kosha, vol 1, p 74; Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p 241). In that way, the aggregate of consciousness includes the dharmadhatu. The unconditioned dharmas are practically just absences, and as referred to before by the Khotthita Sutta, they need not be discussed, plus as you say, they are not related to attachment ("Thus unconditioned things, which are neither the cause of defilement, nor the cause of purification, cannot be placed either among the

upadanaskandhas nor among the skandhas"; Kosha, vol 1, p 82).

Malcolm said:

And yes, there is only one kind of liberation. Liberation is being free from the afflictions that cause rebirth in the three realms, there is no other kind of liberation beyond that. However there is something to attain beyond liberation, and that is omniscience. But there is only one liberation.

Astus wrote:

Omniscience is blocked by attachment to concepts, but concepts themselves belong to the aggregates, so if there is no attachment to the aggregates, there cannot be attachment to concepts either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 1:01 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Arhats and pratyekabuddhas are not at all attached to the aggregate of consciousness, or concepts, and yet still have non-afflictive ignorance. Because of this non-afflictive ignorance, they do not have omniscience. So it is pretty clear the attainment of omniscience is more than mere nonattachment to concepts and aggregates.

Astus wrote:

That non-afflictive ignorance is the cognitive hindrance, not knowing the emptiness of appearances, that is, considering phenomena to be real. Such reification is conceptual attachment. What more is there to it? Is there a third hindrance?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Do our thoughts effect others?

Content:

WeiHan said:

I don't see the statement above as true as indirect contact can also influence others' mind. I am actually thinking of interaction of minds through a medium and other factors. Why not? In science, interaction between particles are understood to be through a medium field, for example, charged particles through electromagnetic field.

Astus wrote:

Indirectly it happens all the time during all sorts of interaction between people. Like on this forum.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you disagree with Tsongkhapa when he asserts that the realization of emptiness in Hinayāna and Mahāyana is the same?

Astus wrote:

I'm rather questioning if there is a point in setting up two kinds of hindrances, as by not identifying with any of the aggregates there is no basis for any of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No one "set them up." They are there unless or until you can dwell in direct perception of ultimate truth 24/7/365.

Astus wrote:

If both are removed at the same time when freed from identification with the aggregates, then one cannot be free from afflictions but still limited by concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 3:01 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, what are you talking about? The emptiness of persons or the emptiness of phenomena? They are not the same thing.

Astus wrote:

This is just one of my thought experiments.

Premises:

1. The root of all hindrances and ignorance is conceptualisation.
2. Concepts fall within the area of the aggregates.
3. Arhats are free from the aggregates.

Conclusion:

4. Arhats attain complete enlightenment.

So the question:

Is there anything else beyond the aggregates to be free from?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: Liberation from the Six Realms & other Religions

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is the teaching of the Buddha from the beginning. Either one follows the correct path, i.e. the Buddhadharma, or there is no escape. Anyway, most of the other religions aim for heavenly birth, not nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 18th, 2015 at 8:28 PM

Title: Re: Liberation from the Six Realms & other Religions

Content:

Astus wrote:

It might be so that many Buddhists (ordained or not) have little interest in their own liberation - thus the common view that it is a far away goal beyond one's abilities - but that shouldn't concern those who aspire for the best of the best. At the same time, even those on the path of freedom can be on various stages, but that is already being within the community of noble practitioners.

Here is a definition of a "proper disciple" of the Buddha

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.035.than.html>):

"Now, Master Gotama, to what extent is a disciple of Master Gotama one who carries out his message, carries out his instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher's message?"

"There is the case, Aggivessana, where a disciple of mine sees with right discernment any form whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"He sees with right discernment any feeling... any perception... any fabrications... any consciousness whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"It's to this extent, Aggivessana, that a disciple of mine is one who carries out my message, carries out my instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher's message."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

If you are a Hinayānista, then yes. If you are Mahāyānista, then no.

Astus wrote:

If it is the conclusion you have a problem with, what else would you add where an arhat is still deluded?

daverupa said:

Well, except (1) isn't accurate & (3) should probably be unpacked... and, (2) goes without saying -anything will be within the All, not outside of it.

Astus wrote:

How is (1) inaccurate? (conceptualisation - vikalpa, prapanca)

That arhats are free from the aggregates means that they have no attachment, no identification with the skandhas. They have realised that whatever occurs (whatever aggregate it is), it is impermanent, suffering and without a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

First stage bodhisattvas realize two-fold emptiness, and yet still have to eliminate the two obscurations. I guess you better study Abhisamaya-alamkara.

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva's realisation is not completely stable until buddhahood, thus their attachments are not totally cut, unlike an arhat.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

daverupa said:

Papanca is not the root of ignorance, ignorance is the root of papanca. You have it backwards.

Astus wrote:

It is being ignorant of the emptiness of appearances that generates grasping, and from grasping comes proliferation. In other words, upholding that a concept has reality results in conceptualisation. Grasping at a concept and conceptualising something is practically the same, one does not happen without the other. Thus, realising the emptiness of mind (mental aggregates) ends proliferation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

An eighth stage bodhisattva has eliminated all afflictive obscurations, like an arhat, but they have not eliminated all knowledge obscurations, like an arhat.

As I said, time to get out the old Abhisamaya-alaṃkāra so you can understand the difference between the abhisamaya of a śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha and a buddha.

Astus wrote:

It seems that what bodhisattvas need to eliminate as cognitive obscurations are basically the conceptions of apprehender and apprehended, in other words, realising the emptiness of self and phenomena. The difference between the stages they go through is only a matter of depth of that realisation. Since it all ultimately depends on attachment to concepts assuming real phenomena, through relinquishing the identification with the mental aggregates arhats should be completely free as well.

From Gone Beyond, vol 1, appendix 2, page 673-674:

BOUNDARY LINES OF RELINQUISHMENT

afflictive obscurations

hinayana

a) afflictive obscurations that agitate the mind stream and those that are latencies—the nirvana with remainder

b) same plus karmic and maturational afflictive obscurations—the nirvana without remainder

mahayana

a) the afflictive obscurations that agitate the mind stream—first bhūmi (dharma readiness of suffering of the path of seeing)

b) the afflictive obscurations that are latencies (causes for taking birth in saṃsāra)

- those that are factors to be relinquished through seeing—simultaneously with the 108 conceptions that are the cognitive obscurations to be relinquished on the path of seeing

- those that are factors to be relinquished through familiarization—simultaneously with the 108 conceptions that are the cognitive obscurations to be relinquished on the path of familiarization

cognitive obscurations

pratyekabuddhas

the conceptions about the apprehended being substantially other than the apprehender— arhathood (starting from the path of familiarization onward)

mahayana

A) the conceptions on the path of preparation (in the manner of suppressing them)

- seeing that the apprehended in terms of afflicted phenomena is without nature—heat
- seeing that the apprehended in terms of purified phenomena is without nature—peak
- seeing that substantial apprehending is without nature—poised readiness
- seeing that imputational apprehending is without nature—supreme dharma

B) the conceptions about apprehender and apprehended (the conceptions plus their seeds that cling to characteristics and obstruct the thorough analysis of what is to be known)

a) the conceptions that apprehend by conflating terms and referents and cling to the duality of apprehender and apprehended—the dharma cognition of suffering on the path of seeing (starting with the dharma readiness of suffering)

b) the false imagination of dualistic appearances

- the latent tendencies that produce the false imagination of dualistic appearance and are factors to be relinquished through seeing— simultaneously with the obscurations to be relinquished on the path of seeing
- the latent tendencies that produce the false imagination of dualistic appearance and are factors to be relinquished through familiarization— simultaneously with the obscurations to be relinquished on the path of familiarization

C) the impregnations of negative tendencies (the alaya-consciousness or the latent tendencies of duality)—vajralike samadhi

In other words:

- the imputational clinging to real existence: bhūmi 1
- the innate clinging to real existence: bhūmis 2-10
- the imputational clinging to characteristics:
 - manifest: bhūmis 2-7
 - retaining a certain potency: bhūmis 8-10

Some definitions:

The innate clinging to phenomenal identity is the sheer clinging of thinking, “This is a sprout” when focusing on a sprout. [This clinging] is unaltered by philosophical systems. The imputational [clinging to phenomenal identity] refers to imputing all kinds of things onto the [innate clinging]. The classification [of the imputational clinging] is into

a) saying that the apprehended is really established

b) saying that consciousness is really established.

(Gone Beyond, vol 1, p 218)

For, in terms of general isolates, conceptions are cognitive obscurations, but they also represent the afflictive obscurations of bodhisattvas. Therefore, through primarily relinquishing conceptions, as a matter of course, [bodhisattvas] also relinquish the afflictive obscurations. With this in mind, venerable Vasubandhu declared [in his Mahayanasutralamkarabhāṣya on 1.5]: The afflictions of bodhisattvas are conceptions. (Gone Beyond, vol 1, p 589-590)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

seeker242 said:

Isn't it taught that arhats are still attached to something and thus have a fear and/or aversion to samsara?

Astus wrote:

Depending on which scripture you take up, you can find various lists of faults of arhats. At the same time, since arhats are at least free from attachment to the aggregates, it becomes somewhat problematic to point out what it is exactly where an arhat's view is obscured, if there are only the aggregates to what any being can rely on and identify with.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 19th, 2015 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are making the mistake of assuming that liberation = buddhahood. It doesn't.

Astus wrote:

They don't have to be. The question is, where is the difference? The Abhisamayalamkara (or at least what is in Gone Beyond, haven't checked other works) follows the Yogacara interpretation, that with the complete transformation of the basis cognitive obscurations are completely removed and thus buddhahood is attained. Since the hindrance to knowledge is a set of attachments to concepts, basically various forms of subject-object duality, and that should no longer exist for an arhat who does not identify with any aggregate, there should be no difference.

What could make a difference - if it is accepted that an arhat has no clinging at all - is just the time spent with accumulating merit that generates the karmic force for the buddha attributes. But then there cannot be a tathagatagarbha. Or if we want there to be buddha-nature, then there is the Lotus Sutra model where arhats don't actually reach nirvana, only a temporary stay in nothingness, therefore they are not totally free from the aggregates, but that's contrary to some other teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2015 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

daverupa said:

But it seems like one trouble you might be having is the lack of perfect overlap between these various schools of Buddhism. You're just going to have to find a criterion that sets some of it aside, so you can get to work (I chose text criticism & history, etc.). Otherwise you're going to end up with spools of Astus-Abhidhamma, which might not be ideal.

Astus wrote:

In some ways I like to think that all vehicles are actually the ox-vehicle. Not because eventually sravakas are removed from their nirvanic slumber to move on as bodhisattvas, but because all the teachings of the Buddha bring about the same result: i.e. freedom from identification with the aggregates.

"those who are stupid talk of the trinity of vehicles and not of the state of Mind-only where there are no images."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.18, tr Suzuki)

"There is really no establishment of various vehicles, and so I speak of the one vehicle; but in order to carry the ignorant I talk of a variety of vehicles."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.56)

"All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks."

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2015 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

zengen said:

According to Mahayana, the stage of an Arhat is that of partial enlightenment, not the complete enlightenment attained by the Buddhas. There are many stages of realization beyond the stage of Arhatship. These stages are mentioned in Mahayana sutras such as the Lotus Sutra, Shurangama Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra etc.

Astus wrote:

Hsuan Hua says in his commentary to the 9th chapter of the Diamond Sutra (p 117-118, http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/prajparagen2.pdf):

The Arhat of the Small Vehicle kills the thieves of affliction. The Bodhisattva should not only kill the thieves, but should also kill that which is not the thief, that is to say, ignorance. At the realization of Arhatship, ignorance is not considered a thief, but at the culmination of Bodhisattvahood it is, because of the realization that all affliction comes from ignorance.

Although the Arhat has realized The Position of No Study, he still has ignorance. Even

equal enlightenment Bodhisattvas still have one last particle of ignorance which acts as a thief and which Bodhisattvas recognize to be the greatest thief. Therefore it is said that they must kill that which for the Arhat is not a thief.

Subh ti was asked if an Arhat can have the thought that he has obtained Arhatship, and he replied, "No, because although he has certified to the fruit of Arhatship, it is just a name and nothing more." Not only upon certification to the fruit of Arhatship is there no realization, but even upon attainment of Buddhahood there is none. There is no tangible dharma which can be called Arhat. It is an empty name. If one thinks it exists, one has an attachment to dharmas and has not realized the emptiness of dharmas.

If an Arhat did have the thought that he has obtained Arhatship, he would be attached to self, others, living beings, and a life. He would not have realized the emptiness of self or of dharmas, nor would he have obtained Arhatship. The thought of obtaining Arhatship carries with it the mark of self, which in turn produces its partner, the mark of others. Having the paired dharmas of self and others creates the mark of living beings, which in turn leads to the mark of a life. He would therefore be attached to the four marks.

That is, according to Hsuan Hua, an arhat does realise the emptiness of self and the emptiness of dharma. The sutra itself uses the often repeated lines here, that an arhat is free from the "attachment to self, to others, to living beings, and to a life", that is, the four marks/characteristics. At the same time, he says that an arhat does not destroy ignorance. But what else ignorance could be than grasping at the four marks? See further from his commentary:

Ch 6 commentary, p 100:

"If those living beings' hearts grasp at marks, if they hold to the mark of people, they still grasp at the four marks and have not obtained liberation. They have not genuinely put everything down. If they grasp at the mark of dharmas they are still attached to the four marks; if they grasp at the mark of the non-existence of dharmas, they are also attached to the four marks, because they have not seen through and smashed them. They have not realized the emptiness of people, of dharmas, and of emptiness itself."

Ch 14 commentary, p 161:

"Such people will. Have no mark of self, meaning they have no greed. No mark of others, meaning they have no anger. No mark of living beings, meaning they are not stupid. No mark of a life, meaning they have no desire. They have no greed, anger, stupidity, or desire — these four kinds of attachments. The four marks are without a mark. No mark is real mark. Real mark is no mark. And why? Because real mark is also distinct from all which has no marks. If you can obtain real mark, that is obtaining the principle substance of the self-nature of all Buddhas. Those who have relinquished all marks are called Buddhas. Therefore you too can certainly become a Buddha."

So there is a contradiction here in a single commentary. The same problem raised by this thread, that if an arhat is free from the aggregates, then what else could be left to relinquish?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2015 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

And yet there is a difference.

You might be better off securing Sparham's four volume translation of Vimuktesena and Haribhadra's text.

However, it is mostly covered in chapter two and three the AA and its commentaries.

This issue is deep and not easy to understand, it certainly cannot be summarized in internet sound bites.

Astus wrote:

I appreciate your suggestion to look further into the AA, however, the edition you recommend I have in a not that user friendly copy. Could you specify by page numbers perhaps the section you think is relevant here? Or quote here the arguments, if they are any different from what is listed in Gone Beyond regarding the 108 types of cognitive obscurations?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2015 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The differences are principally described in chapter two, and somewhat and three. I am afraid you are going to have to slog through it because it cannot be simply summarized. But for example, Pratyekabuddhas do not relinquish the subjective, but do relinquish objective entities.

There are many differences related to the path.

Astus wrote:

I've read through the chapters discussing the paths of sravakas, pratyekas and bodhisattvas (vol 2, p 4-18, 51-55, 82-135), and also searched for key words, but found nothing new and relevant. In fact, so far the Gone Beyond seems significantly more informative and extensive than Vimuktisena and Haribhadra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just on page four alone there is a significant difference. Also, Gone Beyond has the benefit of being a compilation of later Tibetan exegesis; however that is also its defect.

Astus wrote:

What significant difference do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 1:03 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

"The knowledge of the paths of bodhisattvas does not totally eliminate cankers"...etc., and so on.

Astus wrote:

"The enhancing factor is to have the nature of not relinquishing the afflictions that are the causes for rebirth in [samsaric] existence for the sake of accomplishing the welfare of others." (Gone Beyond, vol 1, p 332)

I thought you meant difference between those two works, not differences between the paths. As for the differences between arhats and others, <http://dharma wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=284151#p284151>, and that's when you directed me to check the Indian commentaries, but so far you have not answered how can there be something left for arhats to be attached to.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Thus, it is as I already explained to you. Arhats and pratyekabuddhas have an species of non-afflictive ignorance. There are other differences, but this is the main one.

Astus wrote:

And that non-afflictive ignorance has been taken up before. What does that ignorance consist of? It is the mentioned 108 types of cognitive hindrance, that is basically the ignorance about the emptiness of dharmas and the delusion of apprehender and apprehended. So the question: how can there be such an ignorance if an arhat has no attachment to mental phenomena?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: What is shikantaza?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you know, it is "just sitting". And that is what it is, although it is not restricted to the

seated position. As for what happens during sitting, it can be anything. The only thing that matters is whether one is sucked in by the ongoing events or not. It is not deliberately thinking of something (shiryō 思量), nor is it deliberately not thinking of something (fushiryō 不思議), but simply being aware of thoughts coming and going (hishiryō 非思量). Or in other words, not a busy mind, not a sleeping mind, but an aware mind.

In zazen we simply allow any thought, feeling or emotion to come up and then we simply let them go away; we actually do nothing. In sitting, any thought or condition of mind is like a cloud in the sky. Somehow clouds appear in the sky, changing form as they stay for a while, and then they disappear. Similar to clouds in the sky, any thought that appears in zazen simply stays for a while and then disappears. I have been practicing this style of meditation for more than 35 years, and in my experience, no thought stays in the mind forever. Everything is coming and going, and we just let things come up freely and let them go away freely. We don't try to fight against our thoughts or any other mental condition, and we don't try to interact with them, either. The intention is not to grasp what is coming up from your consciousness. We actually do nothing but let the things happening within the mind just flow. Yet when you become aware that you are interacting with what is happening in your mind, just stop interacting and return to the zazen posture while breathing with the eyes open. That means you let go of whatever thoughts come up, and you also don't sleep. This is the point in our sitting practice.
(<http://antaiji.org/dharma/okumura-mind-and-zazen/?lang=en>)

Zazen means to clarify the mind-ground and dwell comfortably in your actual nature. This is called revealing yourself and manifesting the original-ground. In zazen both body and mind drop off. Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down. Free from considerations of good and evil, zazen transcends distinctions between ordinary people and sages, it goes far beyond judgements of deluded or enlightened. Zazen includes no boundary between sentient beings and buddha. Therefore put aside all affairs, and let go of all associations. Do nothing at all. The six senses produce nothing.
(<http://antaiji.org/dharma/english-zazen-yojinki/?lang=en>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Absence of attachment does not equal knowledge.

Astus wrote:

In one way, that is very true and spot on. On the other hand though, the obscurations in question are hindrances to knowledge and not lack of knowledge. Not seeing the emptiness of dharmas means being attached to dharmas, so without attachment there is seeing. In tathagatagarbha terms, one needs to remove the dirt and not add more gold. So, in this case, the absence of attachment does equal knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

daverupa said:

The arahant is asekha; the training is complete; the arahant has done what needed to be done. This later sort of slander is intriguing, but not worth tying yourself in knots over, Astus.

Astus wrote:

As Malcolm said, even sravakayana teachings talk about non-afflictive ignorance in case of arhats, although I'm not aware if Theravada has anything to say about it. What it is meant to explain is the various behaviours and odd actions by arhats. So, in a sense, it is a very human thing. Mahayana, as it is used to do this, idealises the enlightened being and considers it a fault that arhats are not as perfect as buddhas. Or rather we could say that almost from the beginning the Buddha has been seen as somewhat superior to the others, and Mahayana simply follows this trend in Buddhism.

I think an important thing to note here is that while arhats are "blamed" for still having human traits, in other traditions as well we can find that those who are considered the enlightened ones of the tradition (bodhisattvas, zen masters, siddhas, etc.) look and act very much like human beings. So, while theoretically the title arhat got demoted in Mahayana, practically only the name changed to something else.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: The 'Neither One Nor Many' argument (partless particles)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Partless particles are impossible. If it is a particle, it exists in space and has extension. That extension, no matter how small, can be divided. If it can be divided, it is not partless.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nevertheless, arhats have subject-object conceptualization and pratyekabuddhas have subject conceptualization. Buddhas, of course, have neither subject nor object conceptualization and so their awakening is superior to that of the former pair.

Astus wrote:

This kind of conceptualisation is what I don't see how can be there while there is no attachment to the aggregates. Where does that conceptualisation reside, what does it come from, what keeps it going on? It cannot be the aggregates, but there is no conceptualisation outside them either.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2015 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What Sanskrit term to you mean by "attachment"?

I think the problem lies with your definitions.

Astus wrote:

I think upadana is very appropriate here, like in pancopadanaskandha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 3:07 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Upādāna means "addiction", not attachment.

Astus wrote:

I have not seen that kind of translation yet.

<http://dsal.srv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:1:3973.pali> (nt.) [fr. upa + ā + dā] -- (lit. that (material) substratum by means of which an active process is kept alive or going), fuel, supply, provision

<http://dictionary.buddhistdoor.com/en/word/4365/upadana> is the common rendering for upādāna, though 'grasping' would come closer to the literal meaning of it, which is 'uptake'; s. Three Cardinal Discourses

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/wheel017.html>), p.19.

<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/indexes/term-sa-u.html> of it include: 取 (take, receive, obtain), 受 (receive, accept, get), 依 (rely on, be set in), 執 (hold in hand; keep)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: What is shikantaza?

Content:

zenman said:

I wonder how thoroughly they study buddhist psychology in the Soto-tradition? I think

shikantaza can very easily become mere shamatha which is not bad but in the long run doesn't manage to put an end to dukkha.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by Buddhist psychology? Abhidharma and Yogacara texts are certainly not unknown, but not directly relevant either. Komazawa University offers "Zen psychology" and "Introduction to psychology" in its http://www.komazawa-u.ac.jp/cms/gakubu_bukkyo/bukkyo_cur/ and http://www.komazawa-u.ac.jp/cms/gakubu_bukkyo/zen_cur/ Studies curricula, but I don't know what those cover, plus it is not a requirement to get a degree in order to do zazen.

Shikantaza is not shamatha as there is no object to focus on nor concentration to maintain. Nor is it vipashyana as there is nothing to analyse or clarify. As Dogen writes:

"Zazen is not a meditation technique. It is simply the Dharma gate of joyful ease, it is practicing the realization of the boundless Dharma way. Here, the open mystery manifests, and there are no more traps and snares for you to get caught in."
(<http://antaiji.org/dharma/fukanzazengi/?lang=en>)

In other words, zazen is the same as prajnaparamita, not abiding anywhere. When there is no mind abiding anywhere, there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose. Here are two well known stories as illustration (from Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 22, 26):

Huike said to Bodhidharma, "My mind is anxious. Please pacify it." To which Bodhidharma replied, "Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it." Huike said, "Although I've sought it, I cannot find it." Bodhidharma then said, "There, I have pacified your mind."

Daoxin said, "I ask for the master's compassion. Please tell me of the gate of emancipation." Sengcan said, "Who has bound you?" Daoxin said, "No one has bound me." Sengcan said, "Then why are you seeking emancipation?" Upon hearing these words, Daoxin experienced great enlightenment.

zenman said:

I'd be really interested to know if this formula actually works to put an end to suffering.

Astus wrote:

Suffering is from grasping at phenomena, making up a self, engaging in a narrative. When there is nothing accepted and nothing rejected, how could there be any problem?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Upādāna means "to take again."

Hence, we have craving, addiction, etc. We are addicted to the aggregates, hence they

are "addictive aggregates."

Astus wrote:

In any case, it is clinging to / taking up / relying on / identifying with / grasping at the aggregates that one is bound and deluded, while relinquishing that hold is being free from all that one can be free from. So this does not seem to solve the problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, you really do seem to miss the point here — arhats etc, do not have bodhicitta to become buddhas, they do not have knowledge necessary to teach the whole path, they do not know the entire path, this is what is meant by non-afflictive ignorance, they have subject-object conceptuality and so on.

Astus wrote:

I'm clear about that list. What is missing for me is that all that non-afflictive ignorance must be there because of some clinging, but there is nothing else to cling to but the five aggregates.

Malcolm said:

But none of this means they do not realize the emptiness of persons. It simply means their realization of emptiness is not sufficient for buddhahood, but only for liberation.

Astus wrote:

The realisation of the emptiness of persons means that whatever phenomena is experienced by an arhat it is not grasped, whether it is a bodily or a mental dharma. Although in Mahayana there is the teaching of the emptiness of dharmas, practically it means not grasping at, not relying on dharmas. So what is it that arhats still hold on to?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 3:27 PM

Title: Re: What is shikantaza?

Content:

zenman said:

There is dokusan but there is no transmission of experience from master/teacher to student. Of course the teacher would have to have reached twofold emptiness/somplete end of suffering due to confused mind before being able to guide his students to this same state, whether with or without tantric transmission or dokusan.

Astus wrote:

"In the conventional Soto Zen world (meaning temples and teachers who do not use koans as teaching tools), there is no such thing as dokusan. I'm sure there are some

exceptions to that, but in my 12 years in Japan, I have yet to find even one. A student can always meet formally with a teacher — structures exist for that. But even then — even if the meeting opens and closes with prostrations, even if it produces all the intensity we might expect — it is also more likely than not that tea will be served, and that the conversation will stretch on for an hour or more. There will not be a line of students waiting their turns; there will not be an attendant guarding the door."

(Koun Franz: <http://nyoho.com/2012/11/26/behind-closed-doors/>)

As for such a thing as "transmission of experience", that does not really exist. Experience is per definition personal. Buddhas cannot feed the Dharma to beings, they can only give instructions and serve as examples. But it is for each and every student to taste the truth. You may read this from the same Soto priest:

<http://nyoho.com/2012/12/12/teacher-student/>

And here's this one:

"There's an ongoing discussion about whether or not Zen is therapy. And I know that for many in the West, the experience of relating to a teacher is very much like a form of counseling. But speaking in terms of the Soto tradition, I would say this: Zen is therapy only if your idea of therapy is spending years in the same room as your therapist silently observing your therapist; if, after all those years, there's a very real possibility that your therapist might turn to you, prostrate three times, and say, "Now we're both therapists," then yes, Zen is therapy."

(<http://nyoho.com/2013/08/31/my-teacher-doesnt-get-me/>)

As for the effectiveness of shikantaza, besides quoting others, what I can say is that it is the cultivation of the enlightened view. And since one practises with the Buddha's eyes and ears, there is nothing more to gain or lose. It is not polishing the mirror but the mirror is naturally unbound by the reflected images.

Here is a totally non-Zen and non-Soto citation, that nevertheless explains the same:

"The realization of samsara is the condition of Nibbana. As we recognize the cycles of habit and are no longer deluded by them or their qualities, we realize Nibbana. The Buddha-knowing is of just two things: the conditioned and the unconditioned. It is an immediate recognition of how things are right now, without grasping or attachment. At this moment we can be aware of the conditions of the mind, feelings in the body, what we're seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling and thinking, and also of the emptiness of the mind. The conditioned and the unconditioned are what we can realize. So the Buddha's teaching is a very direct teaching. Our practice is not 'to become enlightened', but to be in the knowing, now."

(<http://www.buddhanet.net/nowknow2.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, let me ask you a question: are arhats in a state of equipoise 24/7/365? Are pratyekabuddhas in a state of equipoise 24/7/365? Are bodhisattvas in a state of equipoise 24/7/365? Are buddhas in a state of equipoise 24/7/365?

The answer to those four questions is your answer to how someone can be liberated from rebirth in the three realms and yet, still have some nonafflictive ignorance, conceptuality about subject and object and so on.

Astus wrote:

Arhats have cut all bonds, so they cannot fall back from being unfettered by the aggregates. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, are still in training, and only with the attainment of buddhahood are they eternally free. So, both arhats and buddhas have the stage of non-meditation, while bodhisattvas are still working on reaching that.

As noted before, the superior qualities of a buddha can be explained if we consider them the results of merit accumulation, and that is the model found in both Theravada and basic Mahayana. But once the tathagatagarbha is introduced, the doctrine fundamental to later Mahayana whence the still living traditions of Tiantai, Chan, and Tantra come from, buddhahood becomes available in this life exactly because all the buddha-powers are readily available in every being's mind, and one just needs to be free from the obscurations to reach it. That's where emptiness is inseparable from compassion, so even an arhat must have compassion if s/he has wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Notice, Astus, that you did not answer the question. The answer is of course that only buddhas are in equipoise on reality 24/7/365, this is because they free of all obscurationNs.

Arhats are at a stage of a kind of no more training, but whoever said they were at the level of non-meditation? Only a buddha is at that stage.

Astus wrote:

With the complete elimination of conceptualisation there is no grasping at subject or object. That is the level of non-meditation (e.g. Direct Path to the Buddha Within, p 385-386). Since an arhat does not grasp any mental dharma how could there be distraction from the perfect view? That's why I started with saying that an arhat has nothing more to train in, there is nothing more to be free from, and at the same time does not fall back to attaching to phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 23rd, 2015 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Ayu said:

Reading through this wonderful topic, I have some doubts here and there if these both thinking-systems are really comparable. A bodhisattva from mahayana view is maybe different than a Bodhisattva from palicanon view.

Astus wrote:

It is different, because in Theravada there is only one kind of nirvana for all. Difference between arhats and between arhats and buddhas are not in what they are free from, not in their wisdom (see:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.058.than.html> that equates the Buddha's and the arhats liberation by wisdom (paññāvimutti)), but in abilities that come from merit. So, one can become an arhat without any powers or special attainments, just simply by mastering the basics of calming and insight (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.070.than.html>), very much like what is commonly practised everywhere in Buddhism.

Once it's been introduced in Mahayana that there are two kinds of hindrances, primarily in the mind-only sutras, it is not any more just the accumulated merits that count but the level of wisdom as well. And that's where the problem raised here arises, that if arhats are free from the aggregates then there is nothing else left to let go of.

Ayu said:

What you stated about Bodhisattvas is true for the lower bhumis. But according to Prasangika teachings a bodhisattva attained liberation from the 8th bhumi on.

So this discussion - sometimes - is a bit like comparing apples with carrots.

What do you think of this overview about the differences of the shravaka paths and the bodhisattva paths?

http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level4_deepening_understanding_path/path/five_pathway_minds_five_paths/5_pathway_minds.html

Astus wrote:

That description of the paths and stages are like what's been discussed here, as it also separates arhats from buddhas by the cognitive hindrance.

Ayu said:

As far as I understood, the difference between an arahat and a bodhisattva is bodhicitta. Which means the intense wish to liberate all beings. This is considered to be of prime importance for the attainment of buddhahood. Reaching nirvana, like an arahant, is something different.

Astus wrote:

That would be fine to say the difference is in intention, however, once we move on to say that arhats are limited not only by the merit accumulated but by wisdom as well, it is

more than just intention.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 24th, 2015 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is not a problem, as has been explained to you now several times: arhats, pratyekabuddhas as well as bodhisattvas on the bhumis are subject to varying degrees of conceptuality when not in equipoise. And in the Agamas/Nikayas it is recognized that the knowledge of arhats is in no way equal to that of a Buddha.

The two obscurations are mentioned in the Āryāṣṭasāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra.

Astus wrote:

How is an arhat subject to conceptualisation if there is no grasping of mental dharmas? This is the question not answered yet.

Although the Great Prajnaparamita Sutra in the Chinese canon (Taisho 220) is not necessarily the same, but that is the only one to contain the term "two hindrances" (二障) among the prajnaparamita texts, and even there it is just one section repeated at three different places where the qualities of the bodhi of great bodhisattvas are described, and contains no explanation what the afflictive and cognitive hindrances (煩惱所知二障) mean. It is also noteworthy that it was translated by Xuanzang, who brought many Yogacara works to China.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 24th, 2015 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: What is shikantaza?

Content:

monktastic said:

The "Mind and Zazen" quote you give sounds like what we might call "objectless shamatha" in my tradition. It sounds like there's still a divide between "me" and "my mind", and I am engaging it in a dualistic manner. But probably I am just misunderstanding?

Astus wrote:

If it is objectless, one should have no object occur at all, thus thoughts are considered a fault. In zazen, whether there are thoughts or not is not a problem.

But compare it to these instructions then:

"Simple recognition of thoughts as they arise breaks their flow. Release thoughts within that recognition. When you remain in that state, arising thoughts will all be liberated equally within awareness, the expanse of dharmakaya."

(Wisdom Nectar of Dudjom Rinpoche, p 50)

"Whenever a thought arises, whether positive or negative, one should avoid deliberately concerning oneself with it, and let the mind rest spontaneously in the nature of the thought; without being sidetracked by the thought one should rest in the mind of nowness."

(Cloudless Sky, p 45)

As for the duality of the watcher/knower and the watched/known, it is still somewhat artificial but not that big a problem. One just has to learn to trust that the mind does not slip away if one stops trying to uphold it. Whatever is experienced is already known. No need to add another awareness. At the same time, experiences don't stay even for a second. No need to forget about them or chase them away. Thus reality as it is is buddha-nature. In other words: mind is buddha. So, just relax.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 24th, 2015 at 2:55 AM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Where does it say that arhats are free from all grasping?

Astus wrote:

All that can be grasped are included in the aggregates. Arhats do not grasp the aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 24th, 2015 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

While arhats do not grasp the aggregates as a self, that is not mutually exclusive with still believing in ultimate atoms, subject and object, etc.

Astus wrote:

Believing in any view is itself contrary to not identifying with the aggregates. Like establishing a duality of subject and object when it is perfectly clear for an arhat that there is no subject to establish anywhere.

Malcolm said:

Anyway, it is very clear that the Buddha has taught in the PP and other sūtras that Arhats etc., are not completely free of all traces of affliction. And why? Because they do not have all-knowledge.

Astus wrote:

Sure, Mahayana has all sorts of distinctions like that. This is a nice collection that discusses theories on the two hindrances: <http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-8624-9780824835736.aspx>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

According to PP and AA, arhats view nirvana as real. Moreover, there is no contradiction between understanding there is no self in the aggregates, and nevertheless, regarding the twelve āyatanas as real.

In this case, the subject is not a self, it is simply a consciousness which cognizes an entity, which is nevertheless, not a "self" or an identity. Arhats regard that consciousness and its object as real, pratyekabuddhas only regard the subject as real.

Astus wrote:

What does it mean that they regard it as real? If no aggregate is grasped, then no views of eternity or annihilation are held.

Malcolm said:

I was going to mention it, but I forgot, but Bryan Davis's post elsewhere prompted my memory — according to you, there is no difference between stream entrants and buddhas, since even stream entrants are free from a view of self in the aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Stream-entrants are convinced that the Buddha's teaching is true, but they have not yet abandoned grasping at the aggregates. This section illustrates the difference (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.035.than.html>):

"Now, Master Gotama, to what extent is a disciple of Master Gotama one who carries out his message, carries out his instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher's message?"

"There is the case, Aggivessana, where a disciple of mine sees with right discernment any form whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"He sees with right discernment any feeling... any perception... any fabrications... any consciousness whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"It's to this extent, Aggivessana, that a disciple of mine is one who carries out my message, carries out my instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher's message."

"And to what extent, Master Gotama, is a monk an arahant, one whose mental effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis?"

"There is the case, Aggivessana, where a monk — having seen with right discernment any form whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am' is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released.

"Having seen with right discernment any feeling... any perception... any fabrications... any consciousness whatsoever — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness as it has come to be — as 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am,' he is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released.

"It's to this extent, Aggivessana, that a monk is an arahant, one whose mental effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

monktastic said:

Didn't read through the whole thread, but found this perspective interesting. It's from Ajahn Pannavado's "Uncommon Wisdom." Not Mahayana, of course, but then again the Thai Forest tradition isn't exactly traditional Theravada either.

Astus wrote:

As a practical instruction it is often said that there is a mind/awareness beyond all phenomena. But it is not the final teaching, otherwise it is no different from teaching an eternal soul. See <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.001.than.html> how one is taught to move into an unafflicted mind, and what that actually means. And <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.086.than.html> on how it is not OK to posit an enlightened being as beyond the five aggregates. And on the Mahayana part, there is the http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Sevenfold_reasoning_of_the_chariot.

There are 20 kinds of personality-belief, which are obtained by applying 4 types of that belief to each of the 5 groups of existence (khandha):

(1-5) the belief to be identical with corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations or consciousness;

(6-10) to be contained in them;

(11-15) to be independent of them;

(16-20) to be the owner of them (M.44; S.XXII.1).

(<http://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/sakkaya-ditthi/index.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Eurovision Songcontest

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I see it, Belgium was the best. Second Serbia, third Israel, fourth Sweden (but only because of the graphics). The rest was too generic and nothing interesting.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 9:17 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Thus there is the contradiction in your thinking that I mentioned before. Arhats abandon ten fetters, but as the view of self is the one of the three lower fetters, it is abandoned only once, at stream entry, and at that time, it is abandoned totally.

Astus wrote:

Knowing that there is no self, that is, obtaining correct view, and abandoning all clinging to the aggregates are not the same. A stream-enterer is convinced of the four noble truths, an arhat has completely realised the four noble truths. See also:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn48/sn48.053.than.html>.

"In the same way, friends, it's not that I say 'I am form,' nor do I say 'I am other than form.' It's not that I say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' nor do I say, 'I am something other than consciousness.' With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'

"Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual 'I am' conceit, an 'I am' desire, an 'I am' obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origin, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.' As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual 'I am' conceit, 'I am' desire, 'I am' obsession is fully obliterated.

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.089.than.html>)

"My friend, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it actually is present, that 'The cessation of becoming is Unbinding,' still I am not an arahant whose fermentations are ended. It's as if there were a well along a road in a desert, with neither rope nor water bucket. A man would come along overcome by heat, oppressed by the heat, exhausted, dehydrated, & thirsty. He would look into the well and would have knowledge of 'water,' but he would not dwell touching it with his body. In the same way, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it actually is present, that 'The cessation of becoming is Unbinding,' still I am not an arahant whose fermentations are ended."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.068.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, and the point is that, according to the Buddha in Mahāyāna sūtras, arhats have not abandoned "a lingering residuum", i.e. the traces I mentioned in a previous post. Also here it is clear that distinction between the noble disciple with these lingering residuums is precisely the difference between equipoise and post equipoise, as I also stated above, the idea being that arhats in this instance have nothing left to remove so that whether they are in equipoise or not is a matter of preference, not of liberation.

Astus wrote:

I don't really understand what is a matter of preference here.

As for the other part, do you mean that from a Mahayana perspective it is fine to say that arhats have not actually gave up all clinging to the aggregates? So, the very assumption that arhats are completely free from grasping the skandhas is not true in the Great Vehicle?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

They are not free of all traces of affliction and have no path to realize complete freedom from all traces of affliction because they do not possess sarvakārajñāna, knowledge of all aspects. And, according to AA, they "take a stand" in nirvana, believing it to be real.

Astus wrote:

Then we could say that sravakayana teachings say that arhats are free from the aggregates, bodhisattvayana teachings say that they are not completely free from them. Rather, from the Mahayana perspective, arhats grasp at calmness, have some inclination to annihilation, thus are attached to an imaginary nirvana. And from this it is

clear that the interpretation of arhatship is quite different in the two doctrines.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 25th, 2015 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Anything Beyond Skandhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

And since when was this ever in question?

Astus wrote:

No, it wasn't. Although since I have started from the beginning with stating that arhats are free from the aggregates, the counter-arguments toward their being still bound by various things did not actually apply to the arhats that are free, simply because the Mahayana-type arhat is not free from the beginning. As Ayu <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=284539#p284539>: "a bit like comparing apples with carrots". Then the total freedom from the aggregates in Mahayana is only for buddhas, while in Theravada for arhats and buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2015 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Why no Tantrism in Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Similarly to what Matylda said, there is some contact between various schools in the West. Zen teachers like <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/about-the-western-chan-fellowship/lineage-of-the-teachers/chan-master-john-crook/> and <http://www.wz.org/ven-anzan-hoshin-roshi> studied Mahamudra and even taught it to some extent, while for instance <http://www.unfetteredmind.org/ken-mcleod/> incorporated some Zen in his teachings. And I think the ultimate example is http://www.yogichen.org/gurulin/gc/gc_e.html, who was both a Vajrayana and Chan teacher at the same time.

In Dogen's Bendowa there is a question about the relationship between his teachings and those of the Shingon and Kegon schools. He writes in answer:

"Remember, among Buddhists we do not argue about superiority and inferiority of philosophies, or choose between shallowness and profundity in the Dharma; we need only know whether the practice is genuine or artificial. Some have entered into the stream of the Buddha's truth at the invitation of grass, flowers, mountains, and rivers. Some have received and maintained the stamp of Buddha by grasping soil, stones, sand, and pebbles. Furthermore, the vast and great word is even more abundant than the myriad phenomena. And the turning of the great Dharma wheel is contained in every molecule. This being so, the words "Mind here and now is buddha" are only the moon in water, and the idea "Just to sit is to become buddha" is also a reflection in a mirror. We should not be caught by the skillfulness of the words."

(Shobogenzo, vol 1, p 9-10, BDK Edition)

Although, in the same text admonishes against combining zazen with mantra:

"[Someone] asks, "Is there nothing to prevent a person who practices this zazen from also performing mantra and quiet-reflection practices?"

I say: When I was in China, I heard the true essence of the teachings from a true master; he said that he had never heard that any of the patriarchs who received the authentic transmission of the Buddha-seal ever performed such practices additionally, in the Western Heavens or in the Eastern Lands, in the past or in the present. Certainly, unless we devote ourselves to one thing, we will not attain complete wisdom."

(p 16)

As noted before already, it is only Vajrayana followers who believe Vajrayana to be the best. Others believe it is theirs that is the best.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2015 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Why no Tantrism in Zen?

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

And that is totally natural. Why would anyone, ever, continue to follow a path which they thought was not the best?

Astus wrote:

Exactly. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that what the official books say and how it goes in daily practice hardly ever match. There are too few Buddhists out there to isolate oneself from everyone who does not wear the preferred colour of robe. Same goes for publications. Those who don't read in the traditional languages but in English or other European ones normally encounter the Nikayas as the basic teachings of the Buddha, Zen stories as entertaining Buddhist riddles, films with Tibetan monks doing strange things, etc. I consider that true Mahayana spirit, that encompasses everyone and learns all paths.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2015 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva sees that there are no beings to liberate, that is how all beings are liberated. By the way, do you have some other plans for the next billions and billions of uncountable aeons?

<http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/The%20Zen%20>

Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/THE%20ZEN%20TEACHINGS%20OF%20BODHIDHARMA.htm:

But the Buddha said, "Only after undergoing innumerable hardships for three asankhya kalpas did I achieve enlightenment," Why do you now say that simply beholding the mind and over-coming the three poisons is liberation?

The words of the Buddha are true. But the three-asankhya kalpas refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call asankhya in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts, And every thought lasts a kalpa. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three asankhya kalpas, Once the three poisons obscure your real self, how can you be called liberated until you overcome their countless evil thoughts? People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three releases are said to pass through the three asankhya kalpas. But people of this final age are the densest of fools. They don't understand what the Tathagata really meant by the three-asankhya kalpas.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm>, case 9:

A monk asked Kōyō Seijō, "Daitsū Chishō Buddha sat in zazen for ten kalpas and could not attain Buddhahood. He did not become a Buddha. How could this be?"

Seijō said, "Your question is quite self-explanatory."

The monk asked, "He meditated so long; why could he not attain Buddhahood?"

Seijō said, "Because he did not become a Buddha."

Record of Linji (tr Sasaki, p 29):

Someone asked, "[The sutra says:]

The Buddha of Supreme Penetration and Surpassing Wisdom

Sat for ten kalpas in a place of practice,

But the buddhadharma did not manifest [itself to him],

And he did not attain the buddha-way.

I don't understand the meaning of this. Would the master kindly explain?"

The master said, "'Supreme Penetration' means that one personally penetrates everywhere into the naturelessness and formlessness of the ten thousand dharmas.

'Surpassing Wisdom' means to have no doubts anywhere and to not obtain a single dharma. 'Buddha' means pureness of the mind whose radiance pervades the entire dharma realm. 'Sat for ten kalpas in a place of practice' refers to [the practice of] the ten paramitas. 'The buddhadharma did not manifest' means that buddha is in essence birthless and dharma (dharmas) in essence unextinguished. Why should it manifest itself! 'He did not attain the buddha-way': a buddha can't become a buddha again.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you mean, you are not responsible for your own liberation? When someone first stage bodhisattva sees your emptiness, you are liberated.

Were it so easy...

Astus wrote:

That wouldn't make much sense, would it?

All the different types of sentient beings, whether they be born from eggs, born from a womb, born from moisture or born spontaneously; whether or not they have form; whether they abide in perceptions or no perceptions; or without either perceptions or non-perceptions, I save them by causing them to enter nirvana without remainder. And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so? Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva.”

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 3)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Zen sutra study?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Diamond Sutra covers both wisdom and compassion, and it is the basic scripture in the Zen tradition. Whether it is easy or difficult, that's up to you.

As for the list so far I'd like to add the Vajrasamadhi Sutra and the Awakening Faith in Mahayana.

As a template, here is a description of the basic training in the Jogye Order:

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=0010&wr_id=154&page=35

In terms of practical instructions it is the Platform Sutra, the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra, the Shurangama Sutra and the Vajrasamadhi Sutra that stand out, since they are products of East Asian Mahayana. But if you want those that are definitely of Indian origin, go with the Diamond Sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra, the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html> and the Lankavatara Sutra.

Regarding the Lotus and the Avatamsaka, the former one contains little actual teaching, the latter one is very long. The Nirvana Sutra also falls into this category, as it contains some fundamental teachings, but otherwise a long text with so much repetition.

Otherwise, it is recommended to read and study all available scriptures, especially as there are not many of them available in English, and those that are are usually the popular and important ones.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

zengen said:

<http://www.khenposodargye.org/2014/04/attainment-in-a-single-lifetime-and-cultivation-for-three-great-countless-eons-asamkhyeya-kalpa/> is an interesting article on this topic. In the article, the "incalculable" eon is taken to be literal.

Astus wrote:

It is interesting indeed, especially that this is the first time I see a Tibetan teacher accepting not only the Tibetan but also the Chinese canon, to the level that he actually quotes the same Bodhidharma passage cited in this thread already.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Dan74 said:

Perhaps it is holding to the notion of stages that makes the path take aeons and aeons? Sounds like the good old polishing the brick into a mirror story...

Astus wrote:

The sutras themselves give some indication on one's state.

"If good men and good women, having heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā, can come to resoluteness in their minds, not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, know that they stand on the Ground of No Regress. If those who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, but believe, accept, appreciate, and listen tirelessly, they have in effect achieved dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, dhyāna-pāramitā, and prajñā-pāramitā. Moreover, they can reveal and explicate [the teachings] to others and can have them train accordingly."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>)

Having presently heard the teaching of this scripture, I do not have difficulty in adequately grasping its point. But if there is someone five hundred years hence who is able to hear this scripture, and believe, understand, and commit it to memory, then this person will be most rare. Why? This person will not be abiding in the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of life span. And why? Because the notion of self is not a notion. The notion of person, the notion of sentient being, and the notion of life span are also not notions. And why? Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas."

The Buddha said to Subhūti: "Yes, yes. You are right. You should know that if someone

hears the teaching of this scripture and is neither shocked, afraid, or alarmed, this person is extremely rare. And why? Subhūti, what the Tathāgata calls the greatest transcendence, is not the greatest transcendence. Therefore it is called the greatest transcendence.”

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

the above refers to a thought that bodhisattva has, not an actual fact of his or her saving anyone

Astus wrote:

I did not intend anything else with it, just to demonstrate what I have referred to.

Malcolm said:

You left out the next passage

Astus wrote:

It's part of the whole point. Even encountering the Dharma is a sign of previous good karma. Thus it fits Dan's remark: "Maybe we've already been on it for incalculable kalpas minus one lifetime!"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that to attain full buddhahood it takes three asaṃkhyakalpas (asaṃkhyā does not really mean incalculable, it is the name of a large number). The point of knowing where one is on the path is to know that, for example, if one is not yet on the path of seeing, one has a long way to go in common Mahāyāna terms. Even if one is on the path of seeing, one has a long way to go in common Mahāyāna terms.

For example, when it is says that bodhisattvas can attain full buddhahood in seven lifetimes, this is not referring to bodhisattva on the path of accumulation, it is referring to bodhisattvas on the eighth bhūmi, etc.

Astus wrote:

What number asaṃkhyā is?

Schools like Huayan, Tiantai and Chan do not consider themselves common Mahayana, and they don't fit the system Tibetan's use.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

1×10^{56} , i.e. 1 followed by 56 zeros.

Astus wrote:

That is, the minimal time to complete the entire bodhisattva path is 3×10^{56} years?

Malcolm said:

Vajrayānists, including Indian Vajrayānists, consider everything that is not Vajrayāna part of common Mahāyāna. Huayan. Tientai, etc., are all schools based in Mahāyāna sūtra.

Astus wrote:

Just like those schools have their own classification systems. For instance, from a Huayan perspective Vajrayana would fall into the category of Final Mahayana, that is above Madhyamaka and Yogacara but below the Sudden Enlightenment teaching. And from the Chan view Tantra is still a gradual path based on temporary skilful means.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes. And that is just an an eye blink in time.

Astus wrote:

I'm curious, what is the source for that number?

Malcolm said:

Chan lacks the direct introduction found exclusively in Vajrayāna

Astus wrote:

Do you mean empowerment here? How about pointing out the nature of mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is pointing out the nature of mind even in Hinayāna.

Astus wrote:

Is one directly introduced to a different nature than what is pointed out?

(<http://www.khenposodargye.org/2013/11/attaining-buddhahood-by-revealing-the-nature-of-reality-and-attaining-buddhahood-in-a-single-life/> seems to say no.)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is the same nature, the mind that recognizes it however is much more subtle.

Astus wrote:

How can non-conceptual wisdom have levels?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

Don't you distinguish between the nonconceptual wisdom of a first stage bodhisattva and a tenth stage bodhisattva? The object is the same, but the degree of subtlety is not.

Astus wrote:

There can be only one state that deserves the name non-conceptual wisdom, in other words, non-abiding awareness. Anything else would be conceptual, would be abiding somewhere. What do you mean by difference in subtlety?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 4:55 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

So as far as you are concerned the non-conceptual wisdom of a first stage bodhisattva and the non-conceptual wisdom of a buddha is exactly alike?

Astus wrote:

Yes. What difference do you see?

"a Bodhisattva gives alms in the same way as would a Tathāgata, without any difference. This is how a Bodhisattva takes Bodhisattva actions. Likewise a Bodhisattva observes the precepts, endures adversity, makes energetic progress, does meditation, and develops wisdom in the same way as would a Tathāgata, without any difference. This is

how a Bodhisattva takes Bodhisattva actions."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra46.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

frankc said:

I don't know how much relevance this talk of compassion and helping people will be if we end up in the hell realms having our tongues cut out, being impaled by spears, kicked off cliffs, our organs being shattered by the cold, etc. If you are not enlightened and are in the lower realms then compassion and helping people I think will be the opposite of what you will be doing. Feeling pain and making others experience pain is more likely. Of course compassion and helping people will make it less likely for you to fall downwards but we all have bad karma from the past, even good people fall.

Samsara is dangerous. I don't understand how anyone can be satisfied being here for anymore than one life. What if you forget your religion in your next life and end up a Satanist? Staying here for anymore than one life is completely dangerous I feel and if you're not getting out in this life than who knows where in the world you will end up.

Astus wrote:

There is an easy and safe path to escape samsara for everyone:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html:

"suppose there is a man who learns this teaching for the first time and wishes to seek the correct faith but lacks courage and strength. Because he lives in this world of suffering, he fears that he will not always be able to meet the Buddhas and honor them personally, and that, faith being difficult to perfect, he will be inclined to fall back. He should know that the Tathagatas have an excellent expedient means by which they can protect his faith: that is, through the strength of wholehearted meditation on the Buddha, he will in fulfillment of his wishes be able to be born in the Buddha-land beyond, to see the Buddha always, and to be forever separated from the evil states of existence. It is as the sutra says: "If a man meditates wholly on Amitabha Buddha in the world of the Western Paradise and wishes to be born in that world, directing all the goodness he has cultivated toward that goal, then he will be born there." Because he will see the Buddha at all times, he will never fall back. If he meditates on the Dharmakaya, the Suchness of the Buddha, and with diligence keeps practicing the meditation, he will be able to be born there in the end because he abides in the correct samadhi."

Karma Chagme, A Spacious Path to Freedom, p 200:

"For individuals with mental afflictions, there is a loophole that can enable them to take birth in a Buddha realm. The Protector Amitabha promised that one may take birth in his pure realm due to the power of his prayers. Thus with your body, speech, and mind

focus on this goal; it is good to offer prayers from the stitras and hidden treasure teachings to be reborn in Sukhavati. Many such prayers are found in each of the four orders of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. Like prepared food and drink, they are ready to be eaten and drunk."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Dan74 said:

Of course the Sutras speak of liberation. Malcolm spoke about stages though. The gradual enlightenment path is one of the paradigms, not the only one. That was the only point I was trying to make.

Astus wrote:

I quoted those because they specify a level of attainment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: bhuddist dharma versus buddhist practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharma is actualised in one's life. Practice is about actualising it more and more. That actualisation is leaving behind greed, hatred and ignorance. Once the causes of suffering are gone, actualisation is complete, one is the very embodiment of the Dharma. Thus there is nothing more to achieve, practice, actualise, or leave behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2015 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, one difference I see is the translation of this passage you refer to seems to be an abbreviation when compared with the same passage as translated into Tibetan:

Astus wrote:

What about the difference regarding non-conceptual wisdom?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2015 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

I don't see that passage as pointing out the nonconceptual wisdom of a bodhisattva and a tathāgata are the same.

It is not actually a very common term in the sūtras, occurring in only three sūtras in the bka' 'gyur.

Astus wrote:

Nirvikalpajñāna (無分別智) should be a fairly common term in sutrayana, at least in yogacara and tathagatagarbha works. According to the Cheng Weishi Lun, this is what a bodhisattva gets at the path of seeing, what a bodhisattva practises with on the path of meditation, and it is the great mirror wisdom's perception of suchness.

Malcolm said:

The difference between the nonconceptual wisdom of bodhisattvas of one stage and another, as well as buddhas, is the degree to which they have developed sarvakārajñāna.

Astus wrote:

However, I still don't see how can there be any difference between not abiding anywhere for a bodhisattva and a buddha.

Thanks for the recommendation of Aryadeva's Lamp.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2015 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Aeons and Aeons and Aeons

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is only a difference in the coarseness or subtlety of the mind that apprehends suchness.

Astus wrote:

And what does that stand for? How can non-abiding be coarse or subtle? There is nothing to grasp or apprehend in suchness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 1st, 2015 at 6:33 AM

Title: Empty House

Content:

Astus wrote:

Mazu Daoyi said:

"The mind can be spoken of [in terms of its two aspects]: birth and death, and suchness. The mind as suchness is like a clear mirror which can reflect images. The mirror symbolizes the mind; the images symbolize the dharmas. If the mind grasps at dharmas, then it gets involved in external causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth and death. If the mind does not grasp at dharmas, that is suchness."

(Sun Face Buddha, p 67)

A dharma is an instance of experience. Grasping at a dharma means making it one's own self and interacting with everything else from that perspective. That is when the true mind is not known, when a thief is taken to be one's own son. If it is known that an instance of experience is just an instance of experience that does not abide even for a moment, then there can be no grasping. There the true mind is known to be originally pure, it is like an empty house where there's nothing to steal.

Paichang asked, "What is the direction of the Buddhas?"

"It is the very place where you let go of your body and mind." replied the Patriarch.

(Sun Face Buddha, p 69)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 1st, 2015 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Empty House

Content:

seeker242 said:

Does he say how to not do that? What if the mind already grasps at dharmas? What do you do then? How are you supposed to not grasp at dharmas? Isn't Mazu's teaching itself a dharma? If we don't grasp Mazu's teaching, then how can it help?

Astus wrote:

As I have commented there, grasping is not knowing what a dharma is, grasping is not knowing what the original mind is. One just has to realise that the mind, the present fact of awareness, is itself without a single dharma. Dharmas themselves are just coming and going. It is similar to a mirror that itself contains no objects, while reflections pass through unobstructed. A mind that does not grasp is seeing that the six sensory areas always change, there is not a single thing that could be taken to be real, solid and substantial. One can observe this at any moment, as sights, sounds, feelings and ideas are by themselves unstable and transitory. So dharmas are actually ungraspable, taking them to be one's self is completely an unfounded illusion. The only difference between an ordinary being and an enlightened one is whether one chases the six kinds of impressions or by reflecting on one's mind of this present experience one realises it to be without anything to hold on to.

"It is because of not knowing how to return to the source, that they follow names and seek forms, from which confusing emotions and falsehood arise, thereby creating various kinds of karma. When within a single thought one reflects and illuminates within, then everything is the Holy Mind."

(Sun Face Buddha, p 64)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 2nd, 2015 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Empty House

Content:

Astus wrote:

Paichang asked, "What is the direction of the Buddhas?"

"It is the very place where you let go of your body and mind." replied the Patriarch. (Sun Face Buddha, p 69)

Nothing said:

The coloured bits are very interesting.....anyone knows what it means?

Astus wrote:

It means that the buddha is letting go of body and life. That's what buddhas want all beings to reach.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 4th, 2015 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Poll: Should Zen/Chan/Seon have a separate Forum?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. There are separate sections for 'Tibetan Buddhism' and 'East Asian Buddhism'. That is in recognition of their different historical development.
2. There is no Vajrayana forum in and of itself anywhere here, unless one counts Shingon as that, but that is in the EA section, exactly because it is an EA school.
3. Sub-forums in the Zen area were created years ago because at that time people thought it is worth trying. It might be reconsidered, but I don't think it makes a difference in any way.
4. ZFI is a different type of forum that focuses mostly on Zen, not even EA Buddhism.
5. I cannot account for the low traffic in the Zen area here, but I don't see either how setting up a Falun/Hourin 法輪 (i.e. Law Wheel) forum separately could bring in more people, unless perhaps by drawing in more English speaking Asians.
6. Just because there is not the same amount of interaction in the Zen area as in other parts does not mean there is a problem. Dogen was happy with training only a couple of monks in the countryside, just as Zhaozhou spent his teaching years in a small remote monastery.
7. As perhaps mentioned already, it is better not to think of all the traditions as separate Buddhisms but as various skilful means. Both EA and Tibetan Buddhism developed a fairly unified set where every section of the Tripitaka has its place. The difficulty is that the Tibetan and the East Asian systems have not yet been harmonised. And to this process I'd add Theravada as well, since all three major parts of Buddhism meet in the West and also globally.
8. There are at least a few of us who have benefitted from studying various traditions. And for everyone on the Mahayana path there is a universal vow: "Dharma-gates are measureless, I vow to learn them." (Famen wuliang shiyuan xue 法門無量誓願學)
9. It may seem that Zen has a sectarian approach, and certainly there are examples for that. But if we take a closer look, in China, Korea and Vietnam it was and still is mostly a unifying idea and not a dividing one. As for Japan, its modern history is different, but Dogen's words should be remembered: "Those who randomly call themselves by the

name "Zen sect," which has never existed in India in the west or in the Eastern Lands, from the past to the present, are demons out to destroy the Buddha's truth." (Butsudo, in Shobogenzo, vol 3, p 88, BDK Edition) Those who believe otherwise have yet to find out that the <http://www.tricycle.com/web-exclusive/green-koan-50-d%C5%8Dgen%E2%80%99s%C2%A0eyes-and-nose>.

10. As I see it, this forum provides space both for discussions among Zen followers and among followers of different paths. Conflicts are inevitable, the question is whether one can solve them or not. Monasteries are rarely defined by what doctrine they follow, and people can live together simply by observing the precepts in general and the local rules and customs in particular. I think that should be the example here as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 4th, 2015 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Good introductory books to Buddhist meditation/mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

General Mahayana:

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm

<https://books.google.com/books?id=y6HzxLUC7rQC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=5VuSpV3plz0C>

Zen:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=okE6AwAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Tz46AwAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ov7DAwAAQBAJ>

https://books.google.com/books?id=bQcmoHqW_AIC

Mahamudra:

https://books.google.com/books?id=_C8qAwAAQBAJ

<https://books.google.com/books?id=aiiMI0WpKRcC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=lKd9CAAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 5th, 2015 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Why no Tantrism in Zen?

Content:

Dan74 said:

If anyone here has experience with both Zen and Tantra, could you suggest how Tantra could be helpful in a Zen framework?

Astus wrote:

It depends on the person, but any practice can be helpful both on its own and combined with another. If we want to look at it really strictly, Zen is nothing else but immediate realisation of buddha-mind. Anything besides that is only skilful means. And there is no special reason why only practices like counting breath and contemplating phrases can be used to assist practitioners. Visualisation is not a foreign idea, since there are many methods described in various sutras, like Amitayus' Contemplation Sutra, a scripture quoted in the text of Hongren. It is also well known that Japanese Rinzai uses some energy practices at least since Hakuin introduced them. And in terms of doctrinal and practical studies, Tibetan sources are easier to find in English, since the major works of Chinese Mahayana have not yet been translated fully.

Keizan, a Dharma successor three generations after Dogen, is credited, along with his successors, with widely popularizing the Soto school in Japan. Keizan actively developed forms for extending Zen practice to the general lay populace. He incorporated into the Soto tradition the earlier Japanese spiritual context and was personally strongly influenced by Shugendo, the mountain ascetic tradition, as well as the Shingon school of Vajrayana Buddhism. Much of the ritual Keizan developed, which is still used in Soto temples, was derived from the Shingon tradition.

(Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A Translation of Eihei Shingi, p 23 - although Bodiford in "Soto Zen in Medieval Japan", p 87, says that connecting Keizan with esoteric practices is often exaggerated)

In Kamakura Japan, the question was not about pure Zen versus Zen syncretism, but about the degree and kind of Zen syncretism in which one engaged. Eisai's disciples, Gyoyu and Eicho, for example, practiced forms of Buddhist syncretism that hardly distinguished them as "Zen." As head of the Kongozammai'in, Gyoyu was a devoted practitioner of Shingon ritual and the study of Zen. Eicho, too, lacked interest in an independent Zen tradition, and preferred to absorb Zen into the general structure of Mahayana Buddhism. He was especially devoted to Daimitsu, or Tendai esotericism. In addition, Enni Ben'en, who transmitted the Yangqi (Yogi) Linji lineage to Japan, was an avid proponent of syncretic zen, melding Tendai and Shingon rituals with Zen practice. He was an avid proponent of Yanshou's Zongjing lu, on which he often lectured, and his model for Zen syncretism. Although the Soto school generally regards the syncretistic process as initiated largely through the evangelical efforts of the fourth patriarch, Keizan, and his disciples, who readily assimilated Tendai and Shingon elements and folk religious customs, is clear that Soto zen teaching in Japan was highly syncretic from the outset. The teachings of Dogen, as seen above, were highly accomodating - even preferential - toward the scriptural tradition, as the "word of the Buddha". Throughout Kamakura Zen, Zen teaching and practice were not conceived as something separate from, different from, or antagonistic toward scriptural teaching. If anything, Zen was regarded as the "value added" component that gave Buddhist practice an intensity and richness it otherwise may have lacked. This is essentially the same perspective that Yongming Yanshou held with regard to Chan, and it was this spirit that infiltrated and animated many of the practice halls of Song Chan monasteries. It was this spirit that was transmitted to Japan by Zen pioneers in the Kamakura period.

(Dogen: Textual and Historical Studies, p 191-192)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 7th, 2015 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: How effective are liberation-upon-seeing dharma doors?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Things have no power, karma is made by the mind. When something is seen, the effect depends on the seer. It might be the Buddha himself, but a mosquito sees only a source of blood. People may read as many teachings as they like, but correctly understanding them is up to the individual. While the Diamond Sutra (ch 8, tr Muller) says that it is the source of all buddhas, it is of course not the physical book or the words themselves that are the source. As Huineng says in the Platform sutra (ch 2, tr McRae): "people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all." Liberation can happen when seeing, when hearing, or with any other object, as the Surangama Sutra explains in detail. But as long as one is lost in words and ideas, even as obvious objects as the sun and moon are invisible for the deluded.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 9th, 2015 at 2:51 AM

Title: Re: Distraction in shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

You don't have to be aware of your body or the environment. Whatever comes, comes. If you try to regulate your experience then there is a grasping at an idea, a vision of what and how things should be. And that is exactly what should not be done. Where there is no meaning given to whatever occurs then phenomena are unobstructed and the mind is unbound.

Sometimes a bodily feeling is the most prominent, sometimes a thought. It is a distraction only when you take it to be something important, when you try to keep it or push it away. Sitting is just sitting, nothing special. Like sitting on a bus and watching the landscape pass by. The moment you want to hold onto a sight, it is already gone. Remembering that sight is just another landscape passing by. Worrying about remembering is again a new vision coming and going. Distraction is to think that there is something that stays. But is there such a thing?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 9th, 2015 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Distraction in shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

A daydream is being lost in a series of thoughts, following a story. That is delusion, and it can happen because we are lured into it by giving meaning and importance to the initial thought. That is what ordinary people call life, that is the monkey mind. Awakening is seeing that thoughts are without basis, without essence, without anything to grasp.

Zen is about cultivating awakening / awakened cultivation. While it is normal that the mind drifts off, at the moment one remembers (becomes mindful) of what is going on - that is, there is a reflection on the mind/thoughts - then the chain of thought is released and one has regained awareness. This returning to/of awareness during zazen in Soto is called kakusoku (覚触/覺觸), i.e. awareness or becoming aware. It is not a question whether there are or are not any thoughts, but whether one is aware of it or sucked into a story. It is in some ways similar to the type of meditation when one focuses on an object, then gets distracted by various experiences (thoughts or anything else), but then one realises that and returns to the object. That point where one realises the distraction is when one is mindful. The important difference is that in zazen what one should be mindful of is that there is nothing to be mindful of, because every experience is ungraspable. That is the awakened awareness that one cultivates, awakening again and again.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 15th, 2015 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are so many ways to observe and watch the mind, they all come with various feelings and views that one can try to maintain and practise. But that is still not accepting the simple truth that there is not a single thing that could be grasped. In order to accept that, one just has to confirm in one's personal experience that all the six sensory areas are utterly unstable. That is called seeing the nature of mind.

Platform Sutra, ch 7, p 62, BDK Edition said:

Not seeing a single dharma but maintaining the view of nonbeing

Is much like floating clouds blocking the face of the sun.

Not knowing a single dharma but maintaining one's knowledge of emptiness

Is just like the great void generating lightning and thunder.

When such perceptual understanding arises for the slightest instant,

How can mistaken recognition ever understand expedient means?

You should understand the error of this yourself, in a single moment of thought,

And the numinous brilliance of the self will be constantly manifest.

Platform Sutra, ch 5, p 45, BDK Edition said:

In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness. If one is to concentrate on the mind, then the mind [involved] is fundamentally false. You should understand that the mind is like a phantasm, so nothing can concentrate on it. If one is to concentrate

on purity, then [realize that because] our natures are fundamentally pure, it is through false thoughts that suchness is covered up. Just be without false thoughts and the nature is pure of itself. If you activate your mind to become attached to purity, you will only generate the falseness of purity. The false is without location; it is the concentration that is false. Purity is without shape and characteristics; you only create the characteristics of purity and say this is 'effort' [in meditation]. To have such a view is to obscure one's own fundamental nature, and only to be fettered by purity.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 15th, 2015 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Which type of Buddhist tradition do Shaolin monks belong

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shaolin monastery has belonged to the Caodong Chan

https://shaolinchancity.blogspot.com/2008/12/three-lineages-of-shaolin_11.html

since https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xueting_Fuyu (1203-1275) became the abbot there.

But practically speaking it is simply Chinese Mahayana as being a member of this or that lineage is only nominal. It should also be noted that those who actively pursue martial arts are not ordained monks, they only take novice precepts (see

https://shaolinchancity.blogspot.com/2008/12/shaolin-monasticism-discipleship_944.html).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Which type of Buddhist tradition do Shaolin monks belong

Content:

Astus wrote:

State influence in Chinese Buddhism has been present for the last 2000 years. Just like in probably all the other Asian countries. It doesn't mean that they're illegitimate. At the same time, mainland Chinese Buddhism does not seem to try to invite foreign followers anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

If ending suffering is a matter of seeing our nature, and our nature is impermanence, and seeing our nature is seeing impermanence, then why in the world do even people who see impermanence (e.g. meditators) fall back into self-views, and why do ordinary people inexorably driven by impermanence fail to see the nose on their face?

Astus wrote:

Ordinary people know that eventually things decay and die. But at the same time they

believe that for a while it can stay, that there are actually eternal things like truth, laws, love, soul and God. Meditators can be of all kinds, so that itself does not mean they are not common people. Those who have actually confirmed for themselves that phenomena are empty and impermanent have eliminated the concept of self, but that's still not the same as getting rid of the habitual grasping at appearances. That's why training with the correct view is the path of liberation where one bases one's practice on the insight into emptiness. And that practice is simply not abiding anywhere, and when there is something grasped, mindfulness reminds oneself not to be fooled. So it is practising enlightenment, it is enlightened practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

So in short, the practice is remembering, a billion times if need be, to stop fooling oneself?

To repeat the question, why are a billion times necessary instead of just a few, or even one?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha had all sorts of disciples. There were those who could understand his teaching just from a few sentences and realised complete liberation in a short time. And there were others who required many years. Giving up attachment to body and mind is a decision. And that decision depends on seeing the drawbacks of grasping. It does not need explanation why one shouldn't hold on to a burning ball of iron. But a nice ball made of gold is apparently desirable to keep. So one has to come to the insight that attractive things cause suffering. Then one has to understand that by letting go one is free (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn35.71>, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.nypo.html> and <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.015.nypo.html>). Practising mindfulness should not be restricted to occasionally sitting comfortably and trying to figure things out. At the same time, habits can stay because one has not yet uncovered the actual centres of holding on to something as one's self. But once it is clear that no phenomena whatsoever is graspable, it is quite natural that one falls into deluded states less and less.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

There is the one that looks through those two eyes. That's the one that participates in it's activity.

Astus wrote:

Just beware of what Dogen calls the Srenika view.

"Who said that the buddha nature has knowing and comprehending? While perceivers and knowers may be buddhas, the buddha nature is not knowing and comprehending."
(<http://stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/translation.html>)

"According to that non-Buddhist view, there is one spiritual intelligence existing within our body. When this intelligence meets conditions, it can discriminate between pleasant and unpleasant and discriminate between right and wrong, and it can know pain and irritation and know suffering and pleasure—all [these] are abilities of the spiritual intelligence.

...

we should realize that living-and-dying is just nirvana; [Buddhists] have never discussed nirvana outside of living-and-dying. Moreover, even if we wrongly imagine the understanding that "mind becomes eternal by getting free of the body" to be the same as the buddha-wisdom that is free of life and death, the mind that is conscious of this understanding still appears and disappears momentarily, and so it is not eternal at all. Then isn't [this understanding] unreliable?"
(Bendowa, SBGZ, vol 1, p 14-15, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

"Why don't they see it?"

Astus wrote:

When ordinary beings want to see something it means perceiving an object, looking at something outside. It is based on the incorrect view that subject and object are separate. But if we examine the present realm of experience there is neither subject nor object, only passing moments of phenomena. Examining means not looking for anything outside, not grasping at anything inside. Examining also means first contemplating the concepts relating to self and other, refuting them, and confirming in experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you don't know don't understand, would you not be like a rock? What's there to be attached about looking through your two eyes? Walking? Sitting? It appears to be

spontaneous as such when you turn your head or lift your finger or hear a sound.

Astus wrote:

The point is not to take some sort of constant subject or active agent as the real self. Also, spontaneity, as something without a cause, cannot exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 17th, 2015 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

So you are not real and impermanent, then what makes Buddhahood permanent? Why are you always present?

Astus wrote:

What is real cannot be impermanent. What do you call Buddhahood? As for always being present, please clarify that.

LastLegend said:

By 'appears to be spontaneous,' I mean something like you scratch when you itch.

Astus wrote:

That is satisfying a desire. It is quite conditioned and intentional.

LastLegend said:

Whether you recognize that you walk or not, you still walk. Whether you recognize your mind and its activity or not, they still happen. Your aware activity is your mind your nature. You are not maintaining your aware nature. Why do you maintain something that happens naturally? Your nature is aware. Your awareness is always present whether you see it or not. Is your awareness your true self? Well your awareness does not question itself whether its real or not real true or not true because it is not within the domain of language and does not operate within it.

Astus wrote:

How do you know it happens if there is no awareness of it? Is there an awareness separate from an object?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 17th, 2015 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

There is awareness of it, but you are not constantly aware. If you are, you are Buddha. Why is it important that awareness is separate from an object or not? Suppose that it is or suppose that it isn't, so what?

Astus wrote:

<http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=288641#p288641> you wrote: "Your aware activity is your mind your nature. You are not maintaining your aware nature. Why do you maintain something that happens naturally? Your nature is aware. Your awareness is always present whether you see it or not."

If it is always and unintentionally aware, how could one not be constantly aware?

If there were a separate awareness, then it could not be aware of anything, thus it were not awareness at all. If awareness were the same as the object, it would cease once the moment of consciousness of something has gone.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 18th, 2015 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

Your subtle mind does not need to be intentional aware. While you are driving your car, are you always intentional aware that you are driving? Your subtle mind is not concerned with language because it does not operate within the domain of language. If your subtle mind is conditioned by language, then it is conditioned by appearance or object since language is referring to appearance or object. If it's conditioned, it will disappear when object is not present. That's like saying your mind is present because a table is present. If I remove the table, does your mind disappear?

Astus wrote:

Where is the difference between aware and intentionally aware? If there were no intention to be conscious during driving, one could as well start reading a book or fall to sleep, not to mention that drinking and driving could pose no problem either.

What is the difference between mind and subtle mind? The Buddha talks about six consciousnesses, and neither of them are permanent nor independent. He also said: "It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self." (<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>) That is because the mind apparently changes moment to moment. Assuming an unaffected awareness looming above passing phenomena is the same as assuming a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 18th, 2015 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: Beholding the mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

You have not answered the question: are you always intentional aware that you are

driving while you are driving?

Intentional aware is with the intention to be aware. When you are not intentional aware, it does not mean your awareness disappears. If it does, you cannot function at all.

Astus wrote:

When driving does one intend to be aware of what happens on the road? Yes. Otherwise why look forward? Unintentional awareness would be something like hearing the birds in the morning. And on the same level every sensory impression can be called unintentional most of the times, since we cannot manipulate every impression that occurs. We can also ask whether intention is intentional, or is it rather just another thought that comes up and then disappears? What we get in the end is just a series of conditioned processes without any overseer or controller.

LastLegend said:

The sensual mind is affected by language. The subtle mind is not affected by language, how can it be self if self is a construct of language? You only assume a self because you operate with language and you are concerned with self.

Astus wrote:

If there are two minds, one linguistic and one non-linguistic, then they cannot know of each other. Consequently the subtle mind you talk about is still the sensual mind. Also, since the subtle mind is originally free from language, it cannot be realised through any teaching, thus it cannot be the goal of the Buddha's teachings.

LastLegend said:

I have a problem when you say mind is conditioned. If mind is conditioned, it will disappear when conditions for it to arise are not present. I am not concerned if it's conditioned or not conditioned. Attachment is within the realm of language. Whether there is self or no self, I don't if that is true. There is a problem only when you become attached to a statement.

Astus wrote:

An unconditioned mind cannot be aware of anything conditioned. Thus it is either always aware of the same thing, or not aware at all. Because all experiences are conditioned, there cannot be an unconditioned mind that experiences any of that. What is the point of even supposing such an unconditioned mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2015 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: Homage to Wonhyo

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some resources:

<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Wonhyo.html>

http://ftp.buddhism.org/Publications/IABTC/Vol02_02_Sung-bae%20Park.pdf
http://ftp.buddhism.org/Publications/IABTC/Vol07_03_Pyeong-rae%20Lee.pdf

http://international.ucla.edu/media/files/01_Wonhyo_web-sz-ujs.pdf
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=k1l9dUewsKgC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Aio1KQEACAAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=MGEkmAEACAAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2015 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: Right View

Content:

Astus wrote:

Right view is the middle way. The middle way is what is free from taking something to be eternal or to be annihilated (see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.015.than.html>). There is rebirth but no eternal soul. There is dependent origination but no substance. There is experience but no self. There is reading but no reader.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 30th, 2015 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Homage to Wonhyo

Content:

muni said:

Whether dream or awaken. The good news is that our dream is not actually existing - not true, while Buddha is always. Courage given!

Astus wrote:

It does not talk about such a duality that only the Buddha is real and the phenomenal world is unreal. It is quite the opposite, there is no other reality, no Buddha outside of sentient beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 1st, 2015 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Homage to Wonhyo

Content:

Simon E. said:

it takes considerable loyalty and commitment to a particular tradition and lineage to make progress.

Astus wrote:

"In those days different sects were never established; just to clarify the three vehicles and the twelve divisions of the teaching was accepted as the customary way of learning the teaching. That many people today, out of stupidity, individually establish principles

and suppose the Buddha-Dharma, is not the legitimate standard in Buddhism."
(Dogen: Inmo, Shobogenzo, vol 2, p 158, BDK Edition)

All the founders of the traditions and many outstanding teachers studied directly and widely the teachings of the Buddha and his descendants. Wonhyo is one example. That doesn't mean it is wrong to focus on a single teaching or system, just as the Buddha's disciples often concentrated only on a few utterances of Shakyamuni and thereafter gained liberation. But it is a narrow view to say that practising with the five aggregates is better than with dependent origination. Progress on the path depends on one's commitment and effort towards enlightenment, not on extensively praising this or that teacher. Don't we all take refuge in the Triple Jewel? Aren't all teachers only representatives of the original teacher Shakyamuni Buddha? People like Gampopa and Tsongkhapa were not bound to the feet of a single master.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2015 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: No, the external world is an illusion, right?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://online.sfsu.edu/rone/Buddhism/Yogacara/basicideas.htm>

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro.html>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=1C4qAwAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 5th, 2015 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Help contribute Quotes for 'Just dharma quotes' blog & A

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are such collections of sayings in the canons. In the Pali Canon the most well known is the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.intro.budd.html>. The other collection is called the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/>. Zen has many similar collections, in English probably the biggest one is

https://books.google.hu/books/about/Zen_s_Chinese_Heritage.html?id=qWrYGZG2yd4C.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2015 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

In terms of liberation from suffering, the difference is made between arhats and buddhas by saying that arhats only remove afflictive emotions (klesha), while buddhas remove also conceptual hindrances (jneyavarana). This difference lies in recognising

the emptiness of self (atmasunyata) or no-self of person (pudgalanairatmya), and the emptiness/selflessness of dharmas (dharma-sunyata/dharmanairatmya). In other words, arhats see that there is no self in the aggregates but still take the skandhas themselves as substantial (svabhava), while buddhas also see the aggregates as without substance, that is, empty. That is the wisdom part. The bodhisattva path also emphasises the practice in skilful means, as that is required to be able to liberate sentient beings. Thus while an arhat may or may not have various abilities, a buddha necessarily has a complete set of skills. For instance, look at the qualities described in the <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.012.ntbb.html>.

This is a general description of the usual Mahayana interpretation. You can find it in many sutras, like the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2015 at 2:38 AM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

Can we say that one is an arhat at the level of stream enterer once one has had a direct perception of emptiness?

And if so which emptiness?

And if so then mustn't one become an arhat in order to become a buddha?

Astus wrote:

A stream-enterer is not yet an arhat, it is the first arya level on the sravaka path. Insight on the sravaka path is into the emptiness of the self (only Gelugpas say otherwise, but it's their business). The sravakayana is not the same as the bodhisattvayana, so one does not have to become an arhat to reach buddhahood. Actually, one view is that sravakas can never reach buddhahood. The other view is that eventually arhats switch to the bodhisattva path.

(It should be noted that in Mahayana sravakas and arhats are generally symbols/representatives of practitioners who misunderstand the Dharma.)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2015 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Vimalakirti Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

That small quote talks about:

- Distancing oneself from appearances is still conceiving appearances as real.
- The female form is just a concept like the male form
- The problem ultimately is being bound by concepts and ideas

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2015 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Modus.Ponens said:

Can you explain, from the point of view of tibetan buddhism, what is it that is missing in the arahat to be a Buddha? And what would the arahat have to do to arrive at that level?

Astus wrote:

The key is bodhicitta: the wish to attain complete enlightenment in order to liberate all beings. Bodhicitta has two aspects: compassion and wisdom. Compassion is what is required for the development of skilful means and for that purpose accumulating merit. Wisdom is required for perfect liberation and insight into the emptiness of all phenomena. Combining the two as a single path is the Mahayana view.

An arhat is free from afflictions, but lacks compassion for all beings, thus has not developed the skilful means necessary to liberate all. Also, while an arhat is liberated, there is still the view that samsara is suffering, nirvana is peace, and does not realise that samsara is empty and there is nothing to escape from. So, arhats have a reified view of both nirvana and samsara as a duality.

An arhat cannot on its own switch to the bodhisattva path as there is the belief that the path is complete and there is nothing more to do. It is only because of the compassion of the buddhas that an arhat is eventually aroused from the nirvanic slumber to move on, and it is at that point when bodhicitta is developed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2015 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

bryandavis said:

First you would have to let us know what school view of Theravada you are positing your position from, as there is not one Theravada school. As well there is not only one interpretation of Tibetan Schools.

Astus wrote:

Theravada is neither Vaibhasika nor Sautrantika. Theravada was mostly unknown to Tibetans, as it's existed in Sri Lanka and other far away lands, not Northern India. So, it'd be difficult to find arguments that actually deal with specific Theravada views. Also, Theravada is one of the many Sravakayana schools, not a proper euphemism for Hinayana as some people happen to use it.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, July 10th, 2015 at 5:54 PM
Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism
Content:
maybay said:
...

Ayu said:
This assertion is illogical. An arahat has no conceptual hindrances anymore.

Astus wrote:
Except for the Gelugpas, the general view is that arhats do have it. As for the Gelugpas, they came up with some unique terminology and ideas to explain it in an even more complicated way.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, July 11th, 2015 at 12:27 AM
Title: Re: Spread of Buddhism
Content:
Astus wrote:
The classic work:
https://books.google.com/books?id=_9yvCQAAQBAJ

A summary:
https://books.google.com/books?id=kr_M1e7ylmoC

Later events:
https://books.google.com/books?id=blBTHAY_A4wC

The mixing:
<https://books.google.com/books?id=pSazfSorJzgC>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=VF4R8rfZ9QkC>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=xP0QBQAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=4GH7oQEACAAJ>
<https://books.google.com/books?id=u0BTahwalocC>

Something modern:
<https://books.google.com/books?id=FqOpAgAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, July 11th, 2015 at 3:39 AM
Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism
Content:
bryandavis said:
Do you know of any good philosophical text on Theravada proper in English? I would like

to be more educated in that area.

Astus wrote:

If you want something very philosophical, you can start with this one:

http://store.pariyatti.org/Comprehensive-Manual-of-Abhidhamma-A--PDF-eBook_p_4362.html

A more extensive and generally accepted classic work:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/PathofPurification2011.pdf>

At the same time, Theravada has its own varieties. In the West the two common traditions are those from Myanmar/Burma and from Thailand, and there are others as well within and without those "lineages". Many don't rely on the above mentioned two works at all but prefer using directly the suttas. I don't know of any single work that sums up all that there is to know about Theravada (for that matter, Mahayana doesn't have one like that either). So, keep in mind that just as there is no such thing as Mahayana proper, there is no Theravada proper either.

However, if you are fairly new to Buddhism and Vasubandhu is not among your favourite authors yet, visit: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>

And this site gives a good summary of the whole path: <http://measurelessmind.ca/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2015 at 1:26 AM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Modus.Ponens said:

I already got a partial answer: it involves bodhicitta and eliminating the cognitive obscurations. How is the latter done?

Astus wrote:

Cognitive obscurations are removed by investigating the dharms and seeing that they are all empty.

This is how the Buddha rouses arhats, as stated in the Lotus Sutra, chapter 7 (p 132, BDK Edition):

If sentient beings hear only about the single buddha vehicle they will then want neither to see nor approach a buddha. They will think that the buddha path is long and attainable only after enduring severe and protracted suffering. The Buddha, knowing their minds, knowing that they are weak-willed and of lowly aspiration, teaches them the two nirvanas through skillful means in order to let them rest halfway to the goal. If there are sentient beings who abide in either of these two stages, the Tathāgata immediately teaches:

What you have accomplished is not complete. The stage you abide in is close to the wisdom of the buddhas. You should observe and consider that the nirvana you have obtained is not the true one. It is only through the power of the Tathāgata's skillful

means that the single buddha vehicle is explained as three.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2015 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: About enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

fckw said:

How do you proceed with the practice after initial stream entry?

Astus wrote:

Simple and straightforward:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.122.than.html>. Some more in the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.001.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2015 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened yet fat

Content:

Astus wrote:

Recommended book:

<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=0LZRt8i7Xq8C>

Info:

The androgynous, asexual Buddha of contemporary popular imagination stands in stark contrast to the muscular, virile, and sensual figure presented in Indian Buddhist texts. In this groundbreaking study of previously unexplored aspects of the early Buddhist tradition, John Powers skillfully adapts methodological approaches from European and North American historiography to the study of early Buddhist literature, art, and iconography, highlighting aspects of the tradition that have been surprisingly invisible in earlier scholarship.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 22nd, 2015 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen does not result in Buddhahood. Zen is Buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 22nd, 2015 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: Loss of Japanese traditions

Content:

Queequeg said:

Once the opportunity to make converts was precluded, and once the congregation is locked in by law, there is no institutional motivation to minister to the congregation or adapt in response to the changing needs

Astus wrote:

If the only reason to make Buddhism alive is to gain more and more adherents, and it cannot do anything with existing followers, then it is quite a faulty system.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 22nd, 2015 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: Loss of Japanese traditions

Content:

Queequeg said:

human nature tends toward complacency, laziness and stagnation.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it the very meaning of Buddhism to go beyond those defilements? Blaming conditions for the lack of will to aspire on the path sounds more like an excuse to me than a valid reason. At the same time, Dharma taught just because they cannot make a living otherwise may not be a Dharma that's worth spreading.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 25th, 2015 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: A question about stream entry in Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is mentioned as part of the sravaka path - for instance in the Diamond Sutra. But if one has bodhicitta - aims for buddhahood - then it is not relevant. Sravakas eventually turn to the bodhisattva path according to the one vehicle scheme as presented primarily in the Lotus Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 27th, 2015 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: A question about stream entry in Mahayana

Content:

Phenomniverse said:

Stream entry may not be relevant but if already attained does it undermine the bodhisattva path?

Astus wrote:

No. If there is a desire to follow the bodhisattva path, it can be done at any time. The very fact of that desire is proof of being capable of raising bodhicitta.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 28th, 2015 at 1:39 AM

Title: Re: Section of my favorite sutra that is bewildering

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a common theme of the Vimalakirti Sutra, it is present right at the beginning where Vimalakirti's actions are described.

Here's another translation of the same section:

"He manifests acting out of lust but forsakes both internal and external and does not begrudge his own life; manifests the practicing of moral infractions but peacefully resides in the pure precepts, even unto harboring great fear about even minor transgressions; manifests acting out of anger but is always sympathetically forbearant; manifests acting out of laziness, yet vigorously cultivates merit; manifests acting out of a disturbed mind, yet is always mindfully concentrated; manifests acting out of stupidity, yet penetrates both mundane and supramundane wisdom." (tr McRae, BDK Edition, p 133)

See also Lankavatara Sutra 2.58, and further discussion with other references:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=2882>.

The point is, no matter what happens, don't take it to be anything but empty. This is not the case of " <http://www.adelaideshinbuddhistdojo.com.au/shinranwasan/kw40.htm> " (as they call it in Japanese Pure Land), but freedom from all dharmas and the complete use of skilful means.

Actually, karma cannot be removed, actions of infinite births affect our every moment. Either we realise that experiences themselves are empty, or we remain dissatisfied no matter what happens.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 28th, 2015 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: A question about stream entry in Mahayana

Content:

seeker242 said:

Although, it's said that a theravada defined stream enterer cannot fall back to a non-ariya stage and is only capable of 7 more rebirths. Can First bhumi fall back to pre-bhumi stage?

Astus wrote:

No, they can only fall into the sravaka path if they abandon bodhicitta.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 28th, 2015 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

This clearly worded work contains teachings on both theory and practice of emptiness:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=8zeh8VAFcVAC>.

If that's not direct enough, go for <https://books.google.hu/books?id=uoCa1aEVAzwC>

and possibly the commentary <https://books.google.hu/books?id=pYT5Eww5gdIC>.

And in case you want something utterly direct:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=okE6AwAAQBAJ>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 28th, 2015 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Does Chan/Seon/Zen practice mudra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you mean by "practising mudra". As far as I know, in Chinese Buddhism it is a ritual element of certain ceremonies.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 29th, 2015 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

First we need a definition of enlightenment. Then we can see how that definition matches the definitions by others.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 29th, 2015 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's one from the Buddha

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.011.ntbb.html>):

"Bhikkhus, only here is there a recluse, only here a second recluse, only here a third recluse, only here a fourth recluse. The doctrines of others are devoid of recluses: that is how you should rightly roar your lion's roar."

...

"Though certain recluses and brahmins claim to propound the full understanding of all kinds of clinging... they describe the full understanding of clinging to sensual pleasures,

clinging to views, and clinging to rules and observances without describing the full understanding of clinging to a doctrine of self. They do not understand one instance... therefore they describe only the full understanding of clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, and clinging to rules and observances without describing the full understanding of clinging to a doctrine of self."

Is there any other doctrine where no-self is taught?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 29th, 2015 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: A question about stream entry in Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aemilius,

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.24.budd.html> 344 talks about people who abandon the monastic life, not people falling back from enlightenment. Can you give exact references to Sarvastivada sources, or anything in the Abhidharmakosha for instance?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Luck and Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Don't Tibetans pray for numerous reasons, like good weather and dispelling harmful spirits? Or the long life of Garchen Rinpoche.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Luck and Karma

Content:

MalaBeads said:

Sorry but I don't understand your response. Are you saying Tibetans pray for luck? How does your response relate to my question?

Astus wrote:

Prayer is an expression of one's wishes. Buddhism has incorporated that common human behaviour in various forms. Thoughts and words are not without consequences, although it is true that often magical beliefs contradict the view of karmic causality. At the same time, karma is not exactly the same as fatalism, so even simple utterances can count. While anyone can pray for good luck and long life, it doesn't mean it will have any effect. But what matters is the type of mental attitude that it strengthens. If it is about greed, fulfilling one's desires, then it is unwholesome. If it is about renunciation,

good will and compassion, it is wholesome. Otherwise, it is just a fairly neutral habitual activity that can make someone feel better.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Could it be a Western mentality that wants to force a culturally foreign view on every aspect of one's interpretation of the world?

As Buddhism spread it has adapted to the local beliefs. It's not the same pantheon in different countries that ordinary Buddhists believe in, even if the ancient Indian gods are integrated to some extent.

Should those who follow Japanese Buddhism erect altars not only for Shakyamuni and Amitabha but also for Amaterasu, Hachiman and the current emperor?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Buddhadharma has always recognized the existence of bhumipatis and granted them respect, and occasionally forceful conversion.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism has a very good system that describes the "spiritual/other" world. Therefore it is adaptable. One can posit various pantheons there, like Indra can be exchanged to Zeus any time. Perhaps one could fit in various angels for devas. My point is that currently many who turn to Buddhism in the West are virtually materialists in their ordinary perception of the world, since the brahmans of this era are the scientists. Also, in cultural terms one may also have a Christian/Jewish background, but then it's unlikely that they would choose Buddhism while still accepting that world view. Less likely is a New Age type of background, however, that is fairly internaliser/psychological (everything is mind-made) as well.

So, if there are any local spirits to be integrated/converted to Buddhism, that spirit is science. That is what influences people the most and has a strong effect on everyday activities and rituals (e.g. washing hands, cleaning the house, all sorts of medical and dietary stuff).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Urgyen Dorje said:

If by science you really mean science then this might be possible. If you mean, which most people do as a default, scientific materialism or scientism, then this would be one of the most destructive things possible to the dharma. As I see it, the greatest hindrance to the transmission of the dharma in the west is scientific materialism and the impoverished worldview it provides everything.

Astus wrote:

By "real science" I presume you mean the type of philosopher-scientists who are open and curious about discovering the world and may even have some form of metaphysical/spiritual inclination. Not those who are somewhat closed in their view of the world and what they regard as truth, i.e. physicalism. However, that's similar to differentiating between monastics in terms of whether they have the intellectual capacity to reflect on the Dharma and the world or they just go along and follow whatever the tradition says. I think it is quite normal that there are significantly more of the latter than the former in both science and Buddhism. Thus, if there is science and scientism, then there is Dharma and Dharmism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, you are really off your rocker here.

Astus wrote:

How so?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Urgyen Dorje said:

So dharma marrying science-- I think that's already been done. Buddha was the greatest physicist ever.

Dharma marrying scientific materialism or scientism-- disaster. We're already seeing that as dharma comes west and comes modern. Buddhism Without Beliefs.

Astus wrote:

I don't see it as easily separable. It's like distinguishing Dharma and cultural elements. Theoretically there is a pure Dharma, actually it's not that easy to find it.

Urgyen Dorje said:

Science has a more limited ontological scope than scientific materialism.

Astus wrote:

And that's why I say it's not really a worldview, but more a technology, a method. As such it has little influence on one's take on life. Because it leaves the philosophical and religious questions unanswered, that vacuum is naturally filled by physicalism or some other views. That's how it can be that Buddhism has nothing to do with science, just like it has nothing to do with building roads and computer programming.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2015 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Science is not an invisible sentient being.

Astus wrote:

And it doesn't believe in one either. Isn't that the whole issue here?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 31st, 2015 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Urgyen Dorje said:

Dharma takes its view very seriously, but not its methods. The methods change and adapt as the dharma moves from culture to culture and from time to time.

Astus wrote:

It depends on what level you mean that. The path of discipline-concentration-wisdom is what makes Buddhism. As the Buddha says in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta: "In whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, there is not found the Noble Eightfold Path, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness. But in whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline there is found the Noble Eightfold Path, there is found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness."

Also, it is questionable how much of Buddhist cosmology and theology is an essential part of the view. As I see it, the general rules of karma, rebirth and the three worlds are essential, but not the specifics, like the names of various gods.

Urgyen Dorje said:

What we seem to have are Buddhist dilettantes who extrude dharma through the view of scientific materialism and who keep what is left. A less extreme is to find oneself in a limbo where one can not completely commit to the dharma because of one's

commitment to the narrow view of scientific materialism.

Astus wrote:

That materialist re-interpretation of Buddhism results in a limited view where the teachings are used for therapeutic purposes. But how much it actually restricts one's capability to gain insight into the emptiness of oneself and all phenomena is debatable. I think that the bigger problem is not in denying rebirth and the existence of various realms but in maintaining the assumption that one is identical with one's body.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 31st, 2015 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan worldview.

Content:

Urgyen Dorje said:

Is the most direct insight into the nature of reality scientific method or the valid cognition of a Buddha? What makes us a "buddhist" isn't relying on the three higher trainings or the three principle paths or whatever outline of path we might want to use. It's refuge. Refuge is a bit meaningless without committing to rely on the valid cognition of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how Buddhism and science share the same area of investigation to even give rise to a debate about whose cognition is valid. The Buddha wanted and attained freedom from suffering. Science is about understanding how the physical world works. Buddhism offers a path of liberation, science a path of learning. As such, Buddhism is internal, subjective, personal, while science is not supposed to be like that. How can there be a meeting point?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 1st, 2015 at 2:38 AM

Title: Re: Did the Buddha teach about the The Five Skandhas directl

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

The whole third book of Samyutta Nikaya is about this.

Astus wrote:

I.e. the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#khandha>.

It is also found in the basic definition of the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca1/dukkha.html>:

"Birth is dukkha, aging is dukkha, death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are dukkha." ()

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 2nd, 2015 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Ratnagotra & Bhagavad Gita verses

Content:

Astus wrote:

Gaudapada - a pre-Shankara teacher of Advaita Vedanta - uses Madhyamaka and Yogacara reasoning in his most well known work, the Mandukya Karika. It doesn't make him a proponent of Buddhism, and the text itself rejects such an assumption.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 3rd, 2015 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Help with the Mahāyāna Sūtras Please?

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www2.fodian.net/world/index.html> - lists Mahayana scriptures according to the
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 6th, 2015 at 5:51 AM

Title: Re: Dharma or Law?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I've seen it only in translations from Chinese, and there it is fairly sensible, since there they translate the Chinese word law (fa 法) into English. For instance, "saddharma" in Chinese is miao-fa (妙法), thus what can be translated as true/correct teaching becomes wonderful law.

"Good man, the recondite language of the Tathagata is profound and difficult to understand. It is analogous to what happens when a great king tells his retinue to bring him saindhava. The one word "saindhava" refers to four different products [from Sindhu] : salt, a drinking cup, water, or a horse. Since the same word is used to designate four different things, only the wise attendant understands what the king means when he calls for it. If the king seeks saindhava when he is bathing, he is to be given water. If the king is eating and asks for saindhava, then he is to be given salt. If the king asks for saindhava when he has finished a meal and wants to drink alcohol, then he is to be given something to drink with. And if the king requests saindhava when he wants to travel, then he is to be given a horse [of the type bred in Sindhu] . In this way the wise attendants are able to decipher the four ways this abstruse word is used by the king." (Nirvana Sutra, vol 1, 9.4.6, p 297, BDK Edition. Yamamoto-Page tr: ch 16, p 133. see also: Shobogenzo, vol 4, "O-saku-sendaba - A King's Seeking of Saindhava")

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 10th, 2015 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana/vajrayana abhidharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=CkChrAwwsvGkC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=wHHAmVPmrEC>
https://books.google.hu/books?id=KWYcVO_kptMC
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=xa0VBgAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=bnCdJgvaWrQC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=W1JbBAAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=uYwyLgEACAAJ>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=1C4qAwAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Aio1KQEACAAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=jdxRTxqaTicC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=jk8lmgEACAAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=QMrKAqAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 10th, 2015 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana/vajrayana abhidharma

Content:

zenman said:

Thank you Astus. Which book would you recommend?

Astus wrote:

All of them. But you can start with:

- A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience
- Seven Works of Vasubandhu, the Buddhist Psychological Doctor
- Living Yogacara: An Introduction to Consciousness-Only Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 11th, 2015 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana/vajrayana abhidharma

Content:

zenman said:

Which one of those three? I am a terribly poor reader!

Astus wrote:

Then go for Living Yogacara: An Introduction to Consciousness-Only Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 11th, 2015 at 8:40 PM

Title: Virupa's Mahamudra Doha

Content:

Astus wrote:

Is <https://awakeningtoreality.blogspot.com/2014/02/virupa-treasury-of-doha.html> known among Sakyapas? If so, how do they explain it, especially the following stanza:

"Some are completely tortured with empowerment rites,
some always count their rosary saying hum phat!
some consume shit, piss, blood, semen and meat,
some meditate the yoga of nadi and vayu, but all are deluded."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 11th, 2015 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Virupa's Mahamudra Doha

Content:

Malcolm said:

Since this is my translation, I will answer. Until you are realized, you are deluded.

Astus wrote:

The poem seems to advocate entering Mahamudra directly and not through various stages, so the question if this is interpreted in a different way.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 at 2:52 AM

Title: Re: Virupa's Mahamudra Doha

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is not about that, it is about being attached to methods.

Astus wrote:

Thank you.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Infinite past

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are the words of the Buddha:

complete: <https://suttacentral.net/sn15>

selection: <http://www.accesstinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#sn15>

And from Nagarjuna (MMK 11.1):

When asked if the beginning is known,
The great sage said “no.”
Cyclic existence is without origin or terminus.
Because there is no beginning or end.

Tsongkhapa's commentary:

Various non-Buddhist teachers, including Purana, held a discussion and decided to ask the Buddha whether he knew that this cyclic existence has a beginning or end. They said that if he says that he does, this would contradict the many statements that there is no creator and that nothing arises without a cause, but if he says that he does not, he would contradict his statement that he is omniscient. Then they asked him “Hey, Gautama! Do you know that this cyclic existence has a beginning?” The great sage replied, “There is no knowledge of a beginning.” Thus, having said that cyclic existence has no beginning or end, he said clearly that it does not exist essentially. Therefore, since the origin and terminus are not seen, cyclic existence does not exist essentially; cyclic existence is like the circle made by swinging a glowing ember.

(Ocean of Reasoning, p 266-267)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Using floating tank as part of meditation practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some words from Huineng (Platform Sutra, BDK Edition):

there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these. These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings are greatly mistaken!
(ch 4, p 43)

if you cultivate motionlessness, just see all people: when doing so, do not see the right and wrong, the good and bad, the transgressions and disasters of people. This is the motionlessness of the self-nature. “Good friends, the deluded person may be motionless in body, but he opens his mouth and speaks of the right and wrong, the strength and weakness, the good and bad of others. This is to go against the Way. If you concentrate on the mind or concentrate on purity, this is to impede the Way (i.e., enlightenment).
(ch 5, p 45)

If you are sentient, then you are able to move;

That which is insentient is immobile.
If you cultivate the practice of motionlessness,
You become identical to the immobility of insentientcy.

If you are seeking the true motionlessness,
[Then realize that] there is a motionlessness of motion.
Motionlessness is motionlessness;
Insentient [objects] lack the seeds of buddhahood.

If you are able to discriminate well characteristics,
The cardinal meaning [of Buddhism] is motionlessness.
Just to have such a view
Is to have functioning that is suchlike.
(ch 10, p 85)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: purest meditation practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Purest by what standard? And what form of nenbutsu do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Using floating tank as part of meditation practice?

Content:

Anders said:

Meh. I love Huineng but this is such a stale context to quote him in. The discussion has been about the effects of technology Huineng never knew and has been well based in questions of conditions, circumstance of the practitioner, results and outcomes. Attempting to situate it in a context of orthodoxy is just... whatever floats your boat I guess.

Astus wrote:

The point of being in a floating tank or anechoic chamber is sensory deprivation. Similarly, one can block external stimuli on the cushion in a meditation hall or any ordinary place. And that approach is what is criticised by Huineng, don't you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 13th, 2015 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: purest meditation practice

Content:

amanitamusc said:

Purest as in the most highly regarded and that one practices. Any form of Nembutsu

compared to any other Buddhist meditation practices one has done.

Astus wrote:

Those who regard it most highly are often called Pure Land practitioners. Others regard other methods as the best.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 13th, 2015 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Using floating tank as part of meditation practice?

Content:

Anders said:

I think attachment to it is. Quoting Huineng in a discussion like this to me just comes across as close-minded and unwilling to explore different avenues of practise.

Astus wrote:

The point I have intended to deliver via those quotes is that there are certain reasons against using sensory deprivation, not unlike to what was said about body posture previously.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 14th, 2015 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: Direct introduction. What is it?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zenman,

Regarding your experience with Dzogchen transmission, it should not be forgotten that it happens within the context of guru yoga. As they quote from Padmasambhava in Beyond Words (p 71-72): "If a practitioner views the master, the transmitter of the lineage, as a totally realized being - a Buddha - then he can become a Buddha. If the Guru is seen as a normal teacher, then the one who sees him this way will realize the state of normal person. If seen as a little dog, he will obtain the realization of a dog."

Also, comparing Zen with Dzogchen is problematic on many levels, basically because very few know enough of both. And even if one has studied Zen in depth at one place, there are numerous other Zen lineages and traditions to study.

It could be said that in the end various teachings lead to the same realisation of suchness. The difference lies in the method, however. Dzogchen has guru yoga, Zen does not. Zen teaches sudden enlightenment, Dzogchen does not. Dzogchen is based on tantras, Zen is not. Zen has nothing to transmit, Dzogchen does. Etc.

I recommend you read the book Beyond Words, as a basic introduction to ChNN's tradition of Dzogchen. See the following quote:

Julia Lawless and Judith Allan: Beyond Words - Dzogchen Made Simple, p 76-77 said:
Direct Transmission

Frequently, direct transmission takes place in a most unorthodox way. With Tilopa and Naropa, Naropa was awakened by being slapped on the face with a wet fish. Patrul Rinpoche, the much-loved Tibetan vagabond saint of the nineteenth century, was awakened by his master Do Khyentse, whom he took to be a drunk! Do Khyentse, guessing his thoughts, spat in his face. Insulting him, he showed him his little finger and called him an Old Dog. At that point total clear realization of the luminous state of intrinsic awareness dawned in Patrul Rinpoche's mind: his mind and the non-dual mind of his master, the Buddha's mind, were completely merged.

Symbolic Transmission

Symbolic transmission means that the transmission is done in a wordless fashion or without direct explanation. Generally it is done through a crystal, a mirror or even a peacock feather. Both the mirror and the crystal are symbols of the primordially pure state of mind, able to manifest infinite reflections without changing their own intrinsic pure nature. A peacock feather is a natural manifestation of infinite potentiality, symbolized through a circle or thigle of five colours.

Oral Transmission

Oral transmission takes place when the teachings are explained orally by the teacher so that the student can understand their primordial and perfected state of mind. It also includes methods of practice which are taught to enable the experience of this state of knowledge.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 14th, 2015 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Direct introduction. What is it?

Content:

zenman said:

Is Guru Yoga so far off from what takes place between a zen roshi and a student? From what I have experienced in both, I'd say no. And what is it then that takes place at each dokusan/sanzen if not direct dharma transmission?

Astus wrote:

I have not met any teaching in Zen telling students to see teachers as buddhas.
Teachers are teachers.

What do you call direct dharma transmission? Transmitting the Dharma means teaching it. If you talk to someone about the Triple Jewels, you transmit the Dharma. If you post a quote from a sutra, you transmit the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 14th, 2015 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: Direct introduction. What is it?

Content:

zenman said:

No, no, that is not what I meant, that zen students should see their teachers as Buddhas. To put my comment in that context, the student should have reverential attitude his teacher, that's all.

This thread is about direct introduction, originally in the dzogchen context. Let's stick with that. In short, mind to mind, heart to heart transmission of dharma whether in the form of a shout, explanation or a poke in the eye.

Astus wrote:

Every student should have some reverence towards a teacher, that's not even anything specific to Buddhism. If you agree that Zen does not teach seeing the teacher as a buddha, then clearly it cannot be like guru yoga.

Using a shout or other unconventional methods cannot really be categorised as anything, that's why they are unconventional.

Mind to mind transmission simply means that the student understands what the teacher understands. In a Zen context, that means seeing buddha-nature. However, buddha-nature is inherent in everyone, so it is not literally transmitted in any form.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 18th, 2015 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: "If you can understand the mindfulness of no mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

In vol 30 of the Jingde Chuandeng Lu it is quoted from Shenhui:

無念念者即念真如。無生生者即生實相。無住而住常住涅槃。無行而行即超彼岸。

Mindfulness of no mindfulness is the mindfulness of suchness. Birth of no birth is the true character. Nature and no nature is the eternal nature of nirvana. Movement and no movement is to cross to the other shore.

Compare that to what is said in chapter 4 of Platform Sutra:

真如即是念之體，念即是真如之用。

Suchness is the essence of thought, thought is the function of suchness. (tr. McRae)

Note: I took the term "no mindfulness" from Broughton's "Zongmi on Chan", as he translates wunian that way. From p 88:

"Knowing is no mindfulness and no form. Who is characterized as self, and who is characterized as other? When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 18th, 2015 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: "If you can understand the mindfulness of no mindfulness

Content:

Unknown said:

where do you find all these interesting passages?

Astus wrote:

I searched for "mindfulness of no mindfulness", came up with a quote from Shenhui in the book Zongmi on Chan where the endnote contained the original in pinyin, then searched for the Chinese equivalent on the internet and in CBETA.

Unknown said:

Do you read chinese? How did you learn all this stuff?

Astus wrote:

I can cope with Chinese Buddhist texts, but I'm not proficient in the language. I learn by being curious of what the original passage says using online dictionaries.

Unknown said:

Is the Jingde Chuandeng Lu the same as Record of the Transmission of the Lamp? Or a volume within it?

Astus wrote:

Chuandenglū means "record of the transmission of lamp" and there are various collections that contain that title. Jingde is an era (1004–1007 AD) within Chinese history, and the Jingde Chandeng Lu itself was published in 1004, the first of its kind followed by several others.

Unknown said:

What % of chan texts do you think are translated into English so far? What % are available on the internet in English do you think?

Astus wrote:

Perhaps about 5% of texts are available in English of the entire Chan corpus, but that

percentage is significantly higher if we consider only the most important records attributed to Tang era masters. You can find a lot online of the English materials, but not everything.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 20th, 2015 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: Looking for Online Trisvabhava Nirdesha

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-EPT/garfie.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 20th, 2015 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

A Zen story about the importance of holy books.

Astus wrote:

I guess it's not about scriptures in general - i.e. canonical texts of sutras, shastras, etc. - but about the practice of keeping secret notes of teachings.

In Japanese Rinzai they're called missan-roku (密参録 - records of secret interviews), in Soto it is monsan (門参, from monto hissan 門徒秘参 - secret instructions of the lineage) and there are also the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirigami_%28Soto_Zen%29 (切紙 - strips of paper, i.e. secret instructions on pieces of papers).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 21st, 2015 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I interpreted it as in line with the basic Zen idea of 'transmission outside scriptures' and so of non-attachment to externals. As the last line says, 'Sho-ju had no attachment to possessions', i.e. had no wish to rely on a material form. I would have thought there was a similarity to the well-known drawing of Hui Neng tearing up sutras:

although as you observe in this case the book in question was not a sutra.

Astus wrote:

In what story does Huineng actually tear up a sutra? By the way, teachings attributed to him are recorded in a text with the title Platform Sutra. The expression "special transmission outside scriptures" is itself in scriptures.

There was a tradition of keeping secret records and such within various Chan communities. See this essay:
https://www.academia.edu/7858031/Who_Has_the_Last_Word_in_Chan_Transmission_Secrecy_and_Reading_During_the_Northern_Song_Dynasty

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 21st, 2015 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

seeker242 said:

As long as you look for a Buddha somewhere else, you'll never see that your own mind is the Buddha.

If you don't see your nature and run around all day looking somewhere else, you'll never find a buddha.

The "somewhere else" in this case would be "in the sutras". In other words, you don't find a Buddha in the sutras, you find the Buddha in a mirror, so to speak.

Astus wrote:

How come then that the phrase is interpreted instead of "look at your own mind" as "go see a teacher"? Thus modern people who favour Zen seem often reluctant to study the words of the Buddha and rather spend years and decades listening to a person whom they believe to be the holder of all the teachings supposedly originating from the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 22nd, 2015 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

seeker242 said:

Because it can't be a transmission "outside the scriptures", if it's inside the scriptures?

Astus wrote:

Quite the opposite. Whatever is transmitted cannot differ from the scriptures.

"There is no mystery in the authentic transmission from the ancestral Master that differs from the Buddhist sutras, or even from a single word or half a word therein."

(Dogen: Bukkyo, in Shobogenzo, vol 3, p 148, BDK Edition)

"The sutras are buddha word, while Chan is the intention of the buddhas. The mouth and mind of the buddhas cannot possibly be contradictory. The lines of descent of all the [Chan] patriarchs go directly back to the disciples of the Buddha."

(Zongmi: Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 109)

Also in the same text Zongmi basically says that Chan is a direct and simplified form of the teachings aimed for its Chinese audience:

"The teachings are the sutras and treatises left behind by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Chan is the lines of verse related by the various good friends [on the path]. The buddha sutras open outward, catching the thousands of the beings of the eight classes, while Chan verses scoop up an abridgment, being oriented to one type of disposition found in this land [of China]. [The teachings,] which catch [the thousands of] beings [of the eight classes], are broad and vast, and hence it is difficult to rely upon them. [Chan,] which is oriented to dispositions, points to the bull's-eye and hence is easy to use."
(p 105)

seeker242 said:

True, but the masters of old like Huangbo kinda did both, before they became masters themselves. IIRC, it was the traditional custom to travel around visiting other masters. I don't think it's appropriate for a student of zen shun the Platform sutra, etc.

Astus wrote:

Even before people could receive ordination they had to memorise various sutras and learn the rules of monastic life, not to mention that ordinary lay people had the basic teachings karma and accumulating merit taught to them since childhood.

seeker242 said:

But at the same time, recognizing that you don't get enlightenment just from reading books or hearing speeches. Some people of course put too much stock in teachers, but that's really still just "looking somewhere else" IMO.

Astus wrote:

Huineng himself attained enlightenment simply by hearing the Diamond Sutra and nothing more. Jinul read the Platform Sutra and a commentary on the Avatamsaka Sutra when he experienced enlightenment. Hanshan Deqing studied the Surangama Sutra. And see what Yongming has to say:

"All [the patriarchs] are descendants of the Buddha. I now cite the words of the original teacher [Śākyamuni] to train and instruct disciples, encouraging their practice by having them follow his statements; to know the implicit truth [zong] through reading the Dharma, and not rush around searching for it elsewhere; to personally realize the Buddha's intention. After they understand the message, they at once enter the ranks of the patriarchs; none of them argues over sudden and gradual methods. When they see their nature, they exhibit evidence of their perfect comprehension; how can they advocate ranking one patriarch over another? If this is the case, what contradiction is there between the scriptural teachings and the message of Chan patriarchs? In the case of the twenty-eight patriarchs of former ages in India, the six patriarchs in this land, as well as Great Master Mazu of Hongzhou, and National Preceptor [Hui]zhong of Nanyang, Chan master Dayi of Ehu, Chan master Benjing of Mount Sikong, and so on, all of them perfectly awakened to their own minds through thorough knowledge of the scriptures and treatises."

(Yongming Yanshou: Zongjinglu, in Conception of Chan, p 249)

seeker242 said:

But, I know you want to blame the teachers and the institution of the lineage for that. Because that's what you always do! I partially agree with that, but not completely. I've personally found my one to one encounters with Zen Master Dae Kwang Sunim to be more helpful than anything I've ever read in a book. Mostly because he says things like "Sorry, nothing I can say can help you!" LOL A good teacher will know when to cut a student off and force them to go out on their own. But of course, not all teachers are like that.

Astus wrote:

Teachers are important as they can teach in today's language. I have myself benefited from numerous teachers in various ways. My point is, however, that teachers are not wizards or fairies to magically transform people into buddhas. They can be great examples and explain things lucidly. On the other hand, the scriptures and treatises can serve the same purpose as well. The Chan idea is not that one should cling to the words and actions of teachers instead of the Buddha. It is to attain realisation right now.

"Bodhidharma came from the West only to transmit the One-Mind Doctrine. However, since the mind of all sentient beings is the same as original Buddha-Nature, there is no need to practice; for if one recognizes one's own Mind and sees one's own Nature, there is nothing at all to seek outside oneself. But how is one to recognize one's own Mind? Just that Mind itself that wants to perceive the Mind that is your own Mind, which is as void as Original Mind and is without words and function."

(Huangbo: Wan-Ling Record, tr Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 22nd, 2015 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I think the teacher's role is so much more than this, Astus. For instance no scripture can diagnose the particular student's obstacle and device just the right treatment - the old hen pecking from the outside as the hatchling is trying to break through the shell.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like projecting psychotherapy on Buddhism. The very meaning of meditation is looking at one's own mind, exactly in order to see how it works. If the practitioner cannot see what goes on, nobody else will be able to do that either. That's why both sutras and meditation instructions contain information on various types of hindrances and how to tackle them. Do you know of any sutra or treatise where it is taught that people should get examined by someone else in order to identify unwholesome qualities?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2015 at 2:01 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I would've thought you'd know the answers to your question, Astus, as well as recognise the reference to the chick breaking out of the shell.

Astus wrote:

I am not aware of any sutra or instruction that tell people to be analysed by someone else. Except perhaps the late idea of koan practice that contains stages to go through. But otherwise on the gradual path it is the practitioner's job to cultivate the factors of enlightenment, like mindfulness and investigating phenomena, not to mention the general role of right effort.

In case 16 of the Blue Cliff Record this teaching style of breaking in, breaking out is said to be from Jingqing Daofu. If it meant cooperation between teacher and student, it's the same as the teaching of skilful means, nothing particularly noteworthy. He is quoted there: "foot-travelers must have the 'simultaneous breaking in and breaking out' eye and must have the 'simultaneous breaking in and breaking out' function". Break in and break out is according simultaneously, meeting face to face, that is, realising that one's mind is Buddha. How could it be about the mundane matters of social interaction? Even if it were, what is the shell, and why should travelling monks have both eye and function of it?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2015 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

As noted earlier, Tendai includes both the Lotus Sutra and Amitabha. Also, both Nichirenshu and Jodo (Shin) Shu are explicitly exclusivist sects, while schools preceding them were generally inclusivists. And once you move from Japanese Buddhism you can find that such strict separations between schools don't actually exist. For instance, Chinese monastics recite mostly the same every morning and evening, regardless of what their preferences are in doctrine and practice. And that can be because the organising factor in Buddhism is primarily the Vinaya, and it is only secondary whether you prefer reciting a specific sutra, or a name of a buddha, or maybe neither.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2015 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: the place of creativity in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Creativity can be used in the service of the Dharma or as an indulgence in one's passions. For instance, there are works of art made by Buddhists in order to express the Dharma, and there are works of art made by artists influenced by Buddhist ideas to

express their own world view. So the difference lies in the author's view behind the work whether it accords with the Dharma or not. It should also be noted that creativity is not that easy to define, since it is a basic mental function to adapt to various situations and come up with new ideas. In a way every human being is necessarily creative. Liberating the mind from attachments to entrenched thinking and following habitual patterns naturally brings about creativity.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2015 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: New schools in early buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

How can one differentiate 'attained' people from simple philosophers? Rather, the question should be if a given teaching accords with the fundamental doctrines of the four noble truths, dependent origination, etc. The Buddha himself taught in various ways to instruct people.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 6:19 AM

Title: Re: New schools in early buddhism

Content:

lostitude said:

By knowing if what they say is based on direct knowledge or on intellectual speculation...

Astus wrote:

How do you know that?

Here's an example. Is the teaching of the five aggregates based on direct knowledge or speculation? It was taught by the Buddha himself, so we could say it must be direct experience. But that assumption itself - that it is based on experience - is based on speculation. So one has to see if there are really such five aggregates. Only then it is confirmed in direct experience that the teaching is valid. However, the five aggregates are also theoretical categorisations, educational devices, so actually the "five aggregates" cannot be experienced at all.

There are numerous early schools. There are also many later schools. And even within schools there can be many lineages, groups and factions. Look at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nichiren_Buddhism#Major_Nichiren_Buddhist_schools_and_organisations for instance. Could it be that among all the schools there is only one that is true? Or maybe a couple? There is actually a way to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable teachings within Buddhism, and it is called the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Dharma_Seals.

You mention that those schools have "theories about reality, existence and so on". That

is not necessarily so. Buddhism is not about making up definitions to believe in but guiding people to liberation. Some say that one should meditation on the ugliness on the body to remove attachment, others may say that it is better to contemplate the four elements, or perhaps the five elements. All three versions are perfectly valid and can be used. It all depends on one's inclinations.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I don't think I mentioned psychotherapy or 'mundane matters of social interaction'. I spoke of the importance of the teacher knowing the student's mind and helping clear just the right obstacle.

Astus wrote:

If it is the teacher (who is required / who helps) clearing the obstacles, how is it not like psychotherapy and social interaction? Also, if it is about teacher-student interaction, why should people have the eye and function of both break in and break out? They should only have the function of break out, and not even its eye.

Dan74 said:

What is the shell? The shell is of course ignorance and delusion and the right teacher helps us break free. Not half of the holly life, the Buddha said, all of the holly life is the companionship of spiritual friends.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is unawareness of emptiness, equally for all beings. Zen teaches that people should look at their mind right now, instead of following appearances. Once the mind is seen the obstacles are gone. What else is there to do?

As for good friends being the whole of holy life, the Buddha advises associating with and emulating wise and virtuous friends

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.054.nara.html#friendship>),

who have good qualities, like revealing their secrets and keeping your secrets

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.035.than.html>). Also, the

scripture where you cited the saying from

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.002.than.html>), identifies the

Buddha as the friend of all beings, because he showed the noble eightfold path, and the sutta also says that the one who has good friends follows the eightfold path. That is, the

student's delusions are cleared to the extent of knowing what the path is, but the path is followed on one's own after that, since no other person can be ethical, concentrated

and wise for another. As the Dhammapada (v 276) says, "You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: New schools in early buddhism

Content:

lostitude said:

The reputation of the author maybe? If he is known by his peers to have reached a level giving him direct knowledge of the things he discusses, or not.

Astus wrote:

Schools recognise their own teachers as enlightened. As noted by Malcolm, the debates on the nature of arhats happened between arhats. Otherwise, as you have observed, who cares?

lostitude said:

You can also tell from the style, with on one hand the highly logical, if x is true then y is true then it follows that z is true, and on the other hand, a more intuitive phrasing like 'as your insight improves you will see clearly that x and y and z.

Astus wrote:

That doesn't really apply to Buddhism. The same person can compose very logical texts and also "intuitive" poetry. One of the most highly regarded master in Mahayana is Nagarjuna who wrote a number of works that may sound overly theoretical to outsiders, but actually they are precise instructions for practitioners.

lostitude said:

none of those who debated it were Arahats themselves, otherwise the answer would be obvious to them

Astus wrote:

How could anything be obvious if first that thing needs to be defined? For instance, can a genius tell if he's a genius if the meaning of "genius" is not clear?

lostitude said:

it's about knowing on what/whose authority exactly they have been expounded and used to oppose other similar theories.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism doesn't have a single leader to tell who is right and who is wrong. So, practically anyone can go on and teach. Then either he gains followers to support him or not. The various early schools were all well established and recognised as valid by many people for centuries.

lostitude said:

Who taught him and trained him? Did his teacher(s) certify that he has reached an advanced enough level to discuss what he discusses?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha didn't have a teacher and was authorised by nobody. That is actually part of him being a buddha and not a disciple. And there were and are several generally respected teachers who did not claim anyone in particular as their teacher, although at the same time it is only natural for any Buddhist, and especially for monastics, to be members in a community and learn from several people. Here's a teaching from the Buddha on how to recognise a teacher:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.192.than.html>.

lostitude said:

The kind of argument I read about sounded so much like hair-splitting (like, can an arahat produce semen while sleeping) that I asked myself this question which is a very natural question to ask in an islamic context.

Astus wrote:

My view on that kind of experience is that if it feels like irrelevant theoretical debate, it is because of the lack of thorough understanding of the topic and the lack of personal connection with it. The debate itself normally shows that for at least a couple of people it was important, since before the time of full-time academic employment people were not paid to publish new materials every month.

lostitude said:

Everything you have all written makes sense, but does not really answer my question

Astus wrote:

That is likely because of the difference in premises. Ultimately, one has to find the answers on one's own.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 7:45 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

The way I see it, the interaction that clears obstacles is intimate, no separation, that's what the koan refers to, if I understand correctly. In that interaction, there's no gap between the student's action and the teacher's response. ... I don't quite get your question about the eye and the function. Naturally, the student should have the eye and the function to break out of the shell and the teacher to sync with him/her to break in.

Astus wrote:

If you look at the commentary in the BCR, there Jingqing is quoted saying "foot-travelers must have the 'simultaneous breaking in and breaking out' eye and must have the 'simultaneous breaking in and breaking out' function". That is to show how this break in and break out was used in his community. That is, this is a teaching device, not a description. Otherwise, as you say, the itinerant monks should only have the break out part, but Jingqing says they should have both the ability to go in and go out.

Dan74 said:

But in a more mundane way, being with a teacher who knows you well, can be very helpful as your habitual patterns of unawareness and sloppiness comes into sharp relief.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's not questioned at all. And that's similar to how therapy works.

Dan74 said:

As for 'once the mind is seen, the obstacles are gone. What is there to do?' That's for you to figure out.

Astus wrote:

I mention that as what I see as the basic idea of Bodhidharma's coming from the West. Isn't that repeated all over again and again in Zen teachings? Of course, there's the option to say that it's just rhetoric (the rhetoric of immediacy), but then the whole Zen school is a bad joke.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I'm not following - 'a teaching device'? How?

Astus wrote:

Yuanwu comments: "From this we see that they did have the device of 'simultaneous breaking in and breaking out' in Ching Ch'ing's school." Even the original case itself displays how the monk raised the topic of breaking in and out, so it's not like it is a description of what went on, but a saying to look into. Thus Xuedou's first line: "The Ancient buddhas had a family style", and Yuanwu's comment after quoting Yunmen on killing the baby Buddha: "devices of breaking in and breaking out are all in the family tradition of the Ancient Buddhas".

Dan74 said:

The intention was not to go into the koan, but to illustrate that the importance of the teacher is a well-established teaching in Zen. I bet you know many more and more convincing instances of it.

Astus wrote:

Platform Sutra, ch 2 (BDK Edition):

You should each contemplate your minds and each see the fundamental nature. If you do not become enlightened by yourself, then you must seek a great spiritual compatriot, someone who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle, to indicate directly the correct path for you. This spiritual compatriot will have a great background and will, so

to speak, lead you to the attainment of seeing the nature. This is because the spiritual compatriot is able to manifest the causes of all the good dharmas. All the buddhas of the three periods of time and the twelve divisions of the canon are fundamentally and naturally immanent within the natures of people, but if you cannot become enlightened yourself, you must seek a spiritual compatriot's instructions in order to see [the nature]. If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking—don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself. This is not the case! Why? Within your own minds there is a spiritual compatriot [who will help you] become enlightened by yourself! If you activate the false and deluded, you will become all mixed up with false thoughts. Although some external spiritual compatriots may be teachers, they cannot save you. If you activate the correct and true and contemplate with prajñā, in a single instant [all your] false thoughts will be completely eradicated. If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood.

So here Huineng says that either one obtains assistance from a good friend or works on his own. However, it should be recognised that just by reading the Platform Sutra one is already relying on a good friend, a presentation of the Dharma. In fact, only pratyekabuddhas and samyaksambuddhas can be said to be without teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 24th, 2015 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

That makes no sense to me at all. Of course it is a description. Or do you suppose it's a made up phrase referring to nothing?

Astus wrote:

What would be the point of a story like that just to say that teacher and student work together? How is that information conducive to liberation?

What I propose is that it is a phrase to say the same thing that is always said in any Zen work: enlightenment is seeing the nature of mind. The shell is broken not through stages of discussing age old stories but at the very moment of meeting Shakyamuni face to face. See Xuedou's poem: "Chick and mother hen do not know each other; / Who is it that breaks in and breaks out together?"

Dan74 said:

Whether you look at the actual case, Koun Yamada's commentary I quoted from above, Meido's brief comment or also a talk by Subhana Barzaghi online, they are all talking about actual interaction between teacher and student. Or do you think all those koans and mondo were put on performances or fictional stories with no relation to actual practice and we all go it terribly wrong?

Astus wrote:

Yes, they have everything to do with one's actual practice. But is the practice about figuring out teacher-student relationships or is it about clarifying the fundamental matter?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 25th, 2015 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

seeker242 said:

I don't know about that. It seems to me that the value of a teacher is them being able to see things about you, that you yourself cannot see. If they can't do that, then what's the point of having them?

Astus wrote:

Teachers are those who know more, who have a clear understanding and realisation of the teaching. That way they can transmit the Dharma according to the needs of the listeners. It is no different from learning various things where an instructor can help the student. But that doesn't mean a teacher has to be informed about people's personal lives. In a monastery with hundreds of residents it is not like that every monk talks to the abbot weekly, monthly, or even in a decade.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 26th, 2015 at 6:52 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Meido said:

Finally, it is why I wince whenever someone refers to zazen as "the primary practice of Zen" without mention of sanzen or other encounter which is at least another equal wheel of the cart.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for your post.

I think it is always difficult to restrict Zen to this or that. Here's a Soto perspective (and not mentioning now anything from Korea, China or Vietnam):

"In the conventional Soto Zen world (meaning temples and teachers who do not use koans as teaching tools), there is no such thing as dokusan. I'm sure there are some exceptions to that, but in my 12 years in Japan, I have yet to find even one. A student can always meet formally with a teacher — structures exist for that. But even then — even if the meeting opens and closes with prostrations, even if it produces all the intensity we might expect — it is also more likely than not that tea will be served, and that the conversation will stretch on for an hour or more. There will not be a line of students waiting their turns; there will not be an attendant guarding the door." (source: <http://nyoho.com/2012/11/26/behind-closed-doors/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 28th, 2015 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.khenposodargye.org/2015/05/the-relationship-between-chan-and-dzogchen/>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 28th, 2015 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Khenpo Sodargye, in the video posted

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=298833#p298833>, around the 44th minute compares Chan's view of the nature of mind to Semde. He is probably the closest among Tibetan teachers to make any comparisons between current Chan and Dzogchen, as he actually lectures on the Platform Sutra. But probably the most well known practitioner of both Chan and Dzogchen is (was) Yogi Chen.

Further on Khenpo Sodargye's presentation, it is quite clear he approaches Chan from a very Tibetan interpretation, like saying that Chan is based on the Platform and the Surangama sutras, plus it transmits an oral tradition of upadesa based on those two scriptures. An interesting view, but hardly representative of anyone. Nevertheless, it shows how difficult it is to make any comparisons when the fundamental elements are not clarified. But in order to do that, the person should be aware of not only some Chan and Dzogchen teaching, but the larger history of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. Alas, Khenpo Sodargye is explicitly against any scholarly study of Dzogchen, claiming that it should not be subject to critical investigation and logic.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 28th, 2015 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

DGA said:

to practice zazen is to practice Zen is their assumption--and hence what one needs is a democratic practice group with no authoritative leadership. Is Zen practice possible in the absence of a competent teacher-student relation, regardless of what the apparent role might be?

Astus wrote:

"Zazen is the most venerable and only true teacher."

(<http://antaiji.org/services/english-the-seven-points-of-practice-uchiyama/?lang=en>)

Zazen is practice-enlightenment, according to Dogen. What is there to improve? What else is there to teach?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 28th, 2015 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Crypto-Buddhism, Crypto-Taoism, Crypto-Dzogchen...

Content:

DGA said:

My point is that it's not always so easy to determine what is Dharma and what is not by name alone. It can take some probing.

Astus wrote:

"Those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion — their Dhamma is well-taught. Those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion — they have practiced well in this world. Those whose passion... aversion... delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: they, in this world, are well-gone."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.072.than.html>; also see:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.21.2x.than.html#goal>,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.078.than.html>)

"Bhikkhus, only here is there a recluse, only here a second recluse, only here a third recluse, only here a fourth recluse. The doctrines of others are devoid of recluses: that is how you should rightly roar your lion's roar."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.011.ntbb.html>)

"In whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, there is not found the Noble Eightfold Path, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness. But in whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline there is found the Noble Eightfold Path, there is found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness." (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html#fnt-54>)

DGA said:

My other point is that I'm not satisfied with this concept of "crypto-" anything in this context. I don't think ancient yogis were attempting a kind of Dharmic trojan horse to smuggle Buddhist concepts into tribal regions along the silk road. I think you had people doing their best with what they had, engaging with people as best they could, and now we have the outcome of that.

Astus wrote:

So-so. If they had seen Buddhism as something they want to follow, they simply could have become Buddhists themselves. Otherwise it is the same as now with New Age and

such, cherry picking.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 28th, 2015 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Crypto-Buddhism, Crypto-Taoism, Crypto-Dzogchen...

Content:

DGA said:

I'm not sure it's quite so straightforward as that.

Astus wrote:

Then we can follow the criteria set in MN 11 - either they teach no-self or not. That sutta is relevant also because it lists many elements of the Buddhist path that are found in other teachings as well, and that is not a problem for anyone. Similarly, if you look at the various Mahayana traditions, they may teach all sorts of things, but they all end up contemplating and realising emptiness, i.e. no-self. So, if there is a teaching that does not call itself Buddhist but contains the path of ethics-concentration-wisdom, it is practically in agreement with the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 29th, 2015 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Crypto-Buddhism, Crypto-Taoism, Crypto-Dzogchen...

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

That's true, but if the resultant hodge-podge is good enough (useful enough, exciting enough) to attract others it eventually becomes a well-defined 'school' of Buddhism, Taoism or whatever, and the original cherry-picker becomes a revered teacher and founding father.

Astus wrote:

Of course, just as you say. Mutual influence is natural, so for instance "Taoist" elements are found in Chinese Buddhism, and Buddhist elements are found in Taoist teachings. But what makes a Buddhist is first of all refuge, which practically means accepting the frame of Dharma-Vinaya as presented in the Tripitaka, and from that comes accepting a number of fundamental doctrines, i.e. karma, rebirth, dependent origination and no-self - in other words: the four noble truths and the noble eightfold path. On the other hand, if it is for instance a Taoist implementing some Buddhist techniques, while it may use various meditation practices and even follow certain ethical principles, in terms of doctrine he will have to negate, disregard or transform those fundamental teachings to fit into his own frame of world view. Similarly, people today who like mindfulness and meditation are happy to practice but at the same time they're happy even to ridicule the teachings, although most of the time they just simply don't know and don't care, thus the popular view that Buddhism is not a religion but a method, that actually means "no study, only meditation", and the common term for "real Buddhists" as practitioners. On this very forum it is apparent how people regard meditation as the most important element of the Buddha's teachings and they may believe most of the scriptures to be

just philosophy, while actually what they see as philosophy is the most emphasised method that brings about liberation: insight. No wonder many waste their time trying to focus on their breath without ever moving on to seeing it as unstable.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 29th, 2015 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Meido said:

Not to mention those who refuse to engage with a tradition as a whole , but believe they can strip out some essential method and use it on their own terms or for their own purposes.

Astus wrote:

Isn't that the very essence of Zen, reducing the immeasurable methods of Mahayana to seeing nature? From Bodhidharma through Linji to Dogen, they all taught that the six paramitas and ten stages are included in direct realisation of mind. Although that is not the same as denying the gradual path of methods, but it is how they set the difference between the usual bodhisattva career and sudden enlightenment. How do you see it?

Meido said:

there could be zazen practice without a teacher, but not Zen.

Astus wrote:

What do you say about the <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=298372#p298372> from Huineng? What about people like Bojo Jinul, Hanshan Deqing, Zibo Zhenke, Xuyun, Gyeongheo, Seongcheol, Daehaeng and Thich Thanh Tu - all of whom are considered outstanding Zen masters who did not really study under or receive confirmation from a Zen teacher?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 30th, 2015 at 12:20 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Meido said:

Zen is not a reduction of myriad methods to one of seeing nature. It is a way of approaching myriad methods with seeing nature as the basis of practice. This approach is what marks it as a One Vehicle school, and ultimately without fixed methods.

Astus wrote:

In order to practice the paramitas, a bodhisattva has to realise prajnaparamita. In other words, what you say seems no different from how Mahayana is generally taught. On the other hand, several ancestors - although not all (e.g. Zongmi) - taught that "To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood." (Platform Sutra, p 34, BDK Edition) and "Awakening is to awake to one's original nature.

Once awakened, one is awakened forever, there being no more ignorance." (Mazu Daoyi, in Sun-Face Buddha, p 67-68). And there is of course Linji:

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma. You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma."

(Record of Linji, p 17, tr Sasaki)

also:

"people everywhere say that there is a Way to be practiced, a dharma to be confirmed. Tell me, what dharma will you confirm, what Way will you practice? What is lacking in your present activity? What still needs to be patched up?"

(p 18)

Do you consider them relative teachings that were meant to motivate beginner practitioners who were lacking determination and had been frightened by the long path of the bodhisattva? Is it all rhetoric and skilful means? Or is it that they were meant only for the best of the best, a few people of the highest capacity?

Meido said:

But glancing at the people you name I see a number of people who went to be ordained, who entered into communal practice, who received crucial practice advice from teachers, and so on. Most if not all, I expect, took the role of teacher to others, and most transmitted to successors?

Astus wrote:

Yes, everyone listed there were (are) ordained monastics, and eventually took up teaching. Naturally, the very meaning of a monastic community is preserving and passing on the Dharma. Technically it is not possible to become a monk without a teacher, it is how it works everywhere. In that sense, talking about a lineage that goes back to Shakyamuni is redundant, as ordination necessarily goes back to him, and the same goes for the Dharma as well. And so we can see how the idea of a lineage as developed in Chinese Buddhism (first in the Sanlun, then the Tiantai, and after that in the Chan school), is about something else than authenticity or legitimacy, but that's a different topic.

Meido said:

i think the mainstream and traditional understanding is worth emphasizing very strongly. There is also the issue of the rarity of people with sufficiently great ability to progress far on the path without guidance.

Astus wrote:

Does that traditional understanding include monastic life? If I understand it correctly, the Zen teachers (shike), who are actually authorised to train monks, in Rinzi are celibate monks.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 30th, 2015 at 6:50 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Meido said:

I would argue that both are theoretically possible, but the former is so rare as to not be worth talking about much. On the ground, past and present, people were living together and practicing-even in these monasteries where Rinzai and others put on robes each day, engaged in ceremony and monastic activity, conducted periods of retreat, met with and guided students, traveled to test themselves under other teachers, and so on- in order to not only awaken, but to clarify and test that awakening over periods of years. Or such is the (here comes that word again) traditional understanding.

Astus wrote:

Isn't that how it goes among Buddhists throughout the world? Do you then consider Zen, or Rinzai Zen specifically, simply a matter of choice from all the other equally viable paths? That is, instead of believing in the ultimate superiority of Kanna Zen (like people claiming http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=56), do you see it as 1 of 84000 methods? Or, as you mentioned before, Zen being a One Vehicle path without fixed methods, isn't that contrary to maintaining a "traditional understanding"? And since the teacher-student relationship is a crucial element of Rinzai Zen, these questions apply to that aspect as well. Like if it matters at all whether someone studies Buddhism with a Rinzai teacher, a Nichirenshu teacher, or a Sakyapa lama?

Here's another from the same text by Huangbo: "If you can just [attain] no-mind, then that is the ultimate [state of enlightenment]. If a trainee does not instantly [attain] no-mind but spends successive eons in cultivation, he will never achieve enlightenment. He will be fettered by the meritorious practices of the three vehicles and will not attain liberation. In spite of the length of time it takes them to [attain it, once they] reside in no-mind there is nothing else to be cultivated or realized. Truly without anything to be attained, true and not false [is no-mind]. Whether it is attained in a single moment of thought or at the tenth stage [of the bodhisattva], its efficacy is identical." (tr McRae, BDK Edition, p 16)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Meido said:

It is a distinctive approach granting great freedom because the essence of all methods can be grasped right at the outset. And in this approach the teacher is seen to necessarily play a role.

Astus wrote:

What is that essence of all methods, and how is a teacher necessary to grasp that?

As White Lotus mentioned, no-mind is practically the realisation of impermanence, a core teaching of the Buddha found in every tradition, although it is also true that traditions approach impermanence and its realisation in various ways. So, what do you say is the Zen/essential way, and how is a teacher has an important role there?

(I'm asking for your views/teachings, not debating.)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Towards a Buddhist Fundamentalism: Part II

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sounds very misled. If they want to go hard core Buddhist, become dhutanga bhikkhus in some remote jungle or mountain and stop wasting their time on the internet. Also, Buddhism has Fundamentalist Non-violence as well, maybe they should start there.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: 'What are you saying'?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Do you want to open another thread, Astus? I think it would be better.

/

Astus wrote:

Sure, why not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Devotion??

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems to me you try to maintain a warm feeling all the time (or at least in relation to your practice). And as you can see for yourself, feelings are neither permanent nor obedient to your will. At the same time, because of this view that feelings should be in a specific way, you are dissatisfied. And that is three out of three universal characteristics: unstable, unsatisfactory, not owned.

Faith in the Three Jewels is simply the established understanding that this is the path that leads to liberation. Determination is the established understanding that liberation

is the only true happiness that oneself and all beings desire. If you know that those two qualities are present, there is no need to long for any specific feelings, since regardless of your physical and mental condition, you are certain of the Three Jewels' immeasurable value, just like you may have fluctuating emotions toward a friend, but you remain sure that the other person is your friend.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Why Buddhism over Vedanta?

Content:

coldmountains said:

1. how one can know who is right (since the high attainments of both are not exactly easily accessible or common experiences)?
2. What does Buddhism say specifically about the pure/infinite/absolute consciousness that Vedantic masters claim to achieve?
3. What persuaded you that Buddhism has got it right over Vedanta?

Astus wrote:

1. Knowing which one is right is already accepting one and rejecting the other. There is no objective - third point of view - measurement.

2. An absolute consciousness is the mistaken view of grasping at self within a sophisticated teaching. That is, unlike ordinary beings who don't philosophise, in this case it is a cultivated view. And it is a wrong view, since it contradicts dependent origination and results in dissatisfaction. Also, since nobody ever experiences a permanent self, it is just a conceptual fantasy.

3. "When one reaches the height of the second stage, he realises that the concept of the 'I' does not exist. But he has only abandoned the small 'I' and has not negated the concept of basic substance or the existence of God; you may call it Truth, the one and only God, the Almighty, the Unchanging Principle, or even the Buddha of Buddhism. If you think that it is real, then you are still in the realm of the big 'I' and have not left the sphere of philosophy and religion." See:

[http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/lib/wcf////what-is-chan/; summary:](http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/lib/wcf////what-is-chan/;summary:)

http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/chan_garden/chan_garden3.aspx?sn=48.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 8:58 PM

Title: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a topic coming from <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=299242#p299242>, to give a new thread to the idea that Zen is the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

First, here are a few words from Shengyan:

"To the extent of my knowledge, I believe that Chan Buddhism as developed in China is the core of the Buddha's message.

...

Since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, the teaching of Chan—whether it is found in Mahāyāna teachings or the earlier teachings, whether the teaching is gradual or sudden—has consistently been focused on the realization of no-mind, the mind free of self-attachment. In all the various teachings, the essence is still the same.

...

Broadly speaking, all forms of Buddhadharma can be said to be Chan Buddhism. "The teachings stem from Chan; from the teachings one realizes Chan." All Buddhadharma is inseparable from the teachings of Chan. Specifically, "Chan Buddhism" refers to the Chinese Chan School; and even though the Chan School encompasses the foundation and essence of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna traditions of Buddhism, all of these teachings are precisely the teachings of silent illumination and critical phrase."

(http://www.shengyen.org/e_content/content/about/about_04_06.aspx)

Shengyan's point is to show not only that Chan is not only the essential teaching of the Buddha, but by that it is the best and most authentic school. He also mentions that "Chinese Chan Buddhism is the only tradition that was institutionalized as a corporate entity with a community of monastics who developed a system of transmissions from master to disciple." - although that is historically

<http://eubuddhist.blogspot.in/2011/05/undisputed-lineages.html> at all.

The main topic to look into here, however, is to identify what the essence of Zen is, and how that could be taken as the essence of the whole of Buddhadharma. There was a thread here on the <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=145499#p145499>, and both the Platform Sutra and Shengyan confirms that no-thought is that central teaching of Zen that also equals prajnaparamita, and prajnaparamita is claimed by many sutras to be the essential teaching for both sravakas and bodhisattvas.

Question is: if Zen teaches the same as any other tradition, why say that it is anything special?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

DGA said:

perhaps the better question is: best for whom, and for what purpose...

Astus wrote:

The purpose cannot really be a question, unless we go outside the boundaries of Mahayana. There are (triumphalist) answers in various traditions for the whom:

1. for those with little dust on their eyes / best capacity
2. for everyone

3. for those with the worst capacity

Zen is usually said to be either the first or the second answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

seeker242 said:

I would not say that is the same as any other tradition.

Astus wrote:

Killing as a metaphor for removing defilements already occurs in the early scriptures (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn01/sn01.071.than.html>), plus it is discussed in the Lankavatara Sutra (3.58) in a similar way as well.

Negating the various stages of the path is a classic theme in the prajnaparamita sutras. That the Linjilu has developed its unconventional style over the time does not mean it has new content.

Or would you say that Zen is special because it offers sudden enlightenment? (Although that was "invented" before as well, particularly in Tiantai.)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 31st, 2015 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

seeker242 said:

Even with all that, I don't think one can say, conventionally speaking, that it's the same. Ultimately speaking, perhaps you could say it's the same because the "ultimate truth" is the same regardless. Also, I don't think it has to be brand new or unique, to be "special". But of course, that all depends on how one defines "special" to begin with.

Astus wrote:

What is it then that you consider Zen's own unique approach?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

DGA said:

I was thinking of Pure Land practice with regard purpose. The immediate purpose of practice is different there.

Astus wrote:

See this from the same text by Shengyan quoted in the OP: "“pure land” can be said to be the final destination—the final goal—of all of Mahāyāna Buddhists. Why? Because the construction of a pure land, or buddhaksetra, is the goal of all bodhisattvas and buddhas. ... The pure land is a generalized Mahāyāna goal. All schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism recollect buddhas’ names, including the Chan School."

DGA said:

Another factor is time: many schools promote their approach as being the best and most appropriate for this historical moment (the Kali Yuga or mappo argument). It's not unusual to see Zen and Dzogchen in particular described today as being especially relevant to the "modern world." (frankly there aren't enough questions about what the word "modern" means in this context.)

Astus wrote:

I have rarely seen that kind of argument in Zen. If the topic of the Dharma-ending age is raised at all, it is pointed out that all beings have buddha-nature and that past ancestors were no different from today's people. Although there are some Chinese teachers who say that while people in the past could gain enlightenment simply by hearing a few words, humans' capacity had declined and for that reason teachers invented skilful means like sitting meditation and huatou.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: What does it mean to be a "traditionalist"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Ishmael_Ford calls himself a http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-ishmael-ford/faith-of-a-liberal-buddhist_b_3059820.html. You can read one of his latest posts <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2015/08/the-karma-and-rebirth-debate-within-contemporary-western-buddhism-some-links-to-follow.html> on karma and rebirth.

Since the realisation of either a stream-enterer or a bodhisattva necessarily includes the understanding and acceptance of rebirth, what kind of transmission is it that authorises annihilationists/materialists to appear as Zen teachers? From a "traditionalist" perspective they are more like manifestations of Mara.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

DGA said:

Yes, there is a long historical connection between Pure Land practice and Ch'an

practice. Is that also so in Zen? I'd thought we were discussing Zen in the strict sense.

Astus wrote:

Zen in the strict sense? Do you mean Japanese Zen? The OP itself has quotes from a Chinese teacher. But even if it's only Japanese Zen, they do have nenbutsu practices, plus there's the Obaku school.

DGA said:

it's not unusual for contemporary Zen teachers to claim that Zen practice is especially suited to the "modern" mind, as I was saying. But the sense there is that the "modern" mind is an advanced, rational one, not a symptom of a degraded Dharma-ending-age.

Astus wrote:

How does that fit into Zen being the essence of Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and the Nembutsu

Content:

PorkChop said:

this passage is talking about the merit of the Bodhisattvas of the Pure Land (you know, the Bodhisattvas that all Pure Landers are aspiring to become...)

Astus wrote:

It seems the Lotus Sutra (ch 23, BDK Edition, p 285-286) agrees:

"If there is any woman five hundred years after the parinirvana of the Tathagata who hears this sutra and practices according to the teaching, she will immediately reach the dwelling of the Buddha Amitayus in the Sukhavati world, surrounded by great bodhisattvas, and will be born on a jeweled seat in a lotus flower. Never again troubled by the [three poisons] of greed, anger, or ignorance, by arrogance or jealousy, he will attain the bodhisattva's transcendent powers and the acceptance of the nonorigination of all dharmas. After attaining this acceptance, his faculty of sight will be pure; and with this pure eye faculty, he will see all the Buddha Tathagatas, equal in number to the sands of seventy-two million kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers. At that time all the buddhas will praise him from afar, saying:

Splendid! Splendid! Son of a virtuous family! You have preserved, recited, and contemplated this sutra from the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni and taught it to others. The merit you have obtained is immeasurable and limitless. Even fire cannot burn it. Even water cannot wash it away. Even thousands of buddhas cannot give a complete description of your merit. You have already destroyed the maras. You have already conquered the armies of birth and death. You have defeated all enemies. O son of a virtuous family! Hundreds of thousands of buddhas together protect you with their transcendent powers. There is no one equal to you among the devas and humans of the entire world. With the exception of the Tathagata, the wisdom and meditation of all

sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas can never equal yours."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

DGA said:

I didn't know contemporary Zen schools taught nembutsu outside of Obaku. That's good to know.

Astus wrote:

I meant nenbutsu as buddhanusmrti, not specifically oral recitation of Amida's name. It is generally part of various ceremonies and rituals.

DGA said:

By this logic, zazen, which is Zen in this context, is the most essential practice for the most essential people: hurried, bustled, "modern" man, who can't be bothered with holdovers from "premodern" cultures. "Zen goes to the essence" in this milieu. Many of the claims made for mindfulness now have also been made on behalf of Zen.

Astus wrote:

I think it could be for lay people if the emphasis were not on seated meditation but cultivating no-thought. Second best is maintaining great doubt, as an entry practice to no-thought. Seated meditation is often either a limited practice that many view as a challenge to do regularly, or it is simply not done at all. It also tends to be a quietist practice. Mindfulness is similar to seated meditation in that it is taken as quietism or something even less beneficial (i.e. "living in the moment"). That not just fails to be Zen but has very little to do with Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Wayfarer said:

An 'essence' is the 'is-ness' of something - that which remains whilst all the characteristics change. ... The whole point of Zen teaching was, I thought, non-attachment to form.

Astus wrote:

That essence is no essence, that is, there are just changing characteristics without anything remaining. That's how there cannot be attachment to anything.

Wayfarer said:

I admit, it has to take some form, even to be spoken of, otherwise we can't say anything whatever. But to then say 'this is the essential form of Buddhism', seems to me not

necessarily in keeping with the intent of the tradition - 'the Buddha twirls a flower'.

Astus wrote:

Change is the essence, understanding change yields non-attachment. The difference between Buddhist schools is about how to bring about that understanding. Not prescribing any set methods is possible when there is a teacher who can give guidance on the spot. But once such personal instructions become subjects of study - i.e. koan practice - it is not any different from learning from the Buddha's own teachings. So, while on the one hand, as seeker242 said, koan/huatou is uniquely Zen, on the other hand, it is falling back on written materials and fixed methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 1st, 2015 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Caodemarte said:

I wonder if the unique feature of Zen would be its stress on existential (not intellectual, not academic) doubt (Great Doubt) that characterizes all forms of Zen.

Astus wrote:

Great doubt is one of the three important qualities of huatou practice. But those who do not use that method don't cultivate great doubt either.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

seeker242 said:

Except that koan/wato practice is not study or learning. And its crux is found in the encounter between teacher and student - on the spot - rather than between student and text.

Astus wrote:

This I what I think of when someone says "outside the scriptures". Personal, private dharma combat with the teacher, where he swings at you and sometime you duck, and sometimes you get your head chopped off! I don't think a book can bring that level of "aliveness" I guess you can call it. Especially if you have a good, clear, high energy teacher who gets right up in your face. Nothing I have ever read in a book can compare to that.[/quote]

Teachers of other traditions can and do the same, while at the same time such "Dharma combats" can and do become mere formalities.

The method described by Wumen contains no reference to any interaction between teacher and student, nor is there such a requirement mentioned in Dahui's letters (note:

he communicated with many lay disciples through letters, so face-to-face encounter did not really happen) or Jinul's teachings. Interestingly, while in Japanese sanzen (参禅) means interview with a teacher, in Chinese canchan (参禅) means to practise meditation. But this is not what I have referred to when I compared studying koans to studying sutras. The Wumenguan itself is a literary work, just like the Blue Cliff Record and others. It has its own name actually: Literary Zen (文字禅 wenzichan). Heine writes (Like Cats and Dogs, p 6) that Dahui's phrase-watching zen (看话禅 kanhuachan) was his way of bringing the focus away from linguistic sophistry to mental cultivation, and that way allowing ordinary lay people (or actually higher class literati) access to what is normally a monastic training by providing a short-cut path. But it still remains that whoever wants to know what Chan/Zen is about, they have to read a lot of stories as well. And even if they don't read, they will hear them every time during lectures and discussions among fellow practitioners. Similarly, if one learns for instance the Heart Sutra, one can go through various stages of doubt, perplexity, confusion, over conceptualisation, internal investigation and others before it becomes somewhat clear. One can also have lively discussions with teachers. And in order to be completely clear, one needs to arrive at true realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Caodemarte said:

"In Sôtô Zen the focus is spoken of as "[untainted, uncontrived] just sitting," shikan-taza [只管打坐]. Not mere sitting in blankness or clarity. Dôgen [道元; 1200-1253], the father of Japanese Sôtô Zen, struggled with this Doubt since his youth, and had it resolved through a decisive Awakening he described as "body-mind fallen off," shinjin-datsuraku [身心脱落].

Astus wrote:

That is a story written by Keizan and nowhere mentioned by Dogen himself. On the other hand, Dogen criticises Dahui in several chapters of Shobogenzo:

in Sesshin sesshō: "He had never seen thusness nature. Because of this, he had a mistaken view of buddha dharma."

in Jishō zanmai: after lots of criticism, Dogen sums up: "ignorant people think that Zonggao was not less than earlier masters. But those who see and know agree that he did not have clear understanding. Without clarifying the great dharma, he merely chattered groundlessly."

in Ō saku sendaba: "there was someone called Zonggao, Zen Master Dahui of Mount Jing, a remote descendant of Nanyue. People all over Song China think he equaled or even excelled Xuedou. This mistake was made because monks and laypeople in Song China are shallow in their studies and their eyes are not clear; they do not discern true persons, nor do they have the power to discern themselves."

in Jinshin inga: "People in China nowadays regard Zonggao as an established ancestor.

However, his view does not equal even the expedient teachings in the buddha dharma. It resembles a view of spontaneous enlightenment by people outside the way."

How could then Dogen had embraced Dahui's approach?

Caodemarte said:

He even states in his work, Bendôwa [辨道話]: "With this, the one great matter of my entire life was resolved." [一生 参学の大事ここにをはりぬ]"

Astus wrote:

The full sentence actually is: "Finally, I became a student of Zen Master Rujing of Taibai Peak and completed my life's quest of the great matter." (つひに太白峰の浄禅師に参じて、一生参学の大事ここにをはりぬ。) No mention of resolving great doubt. However, the "great matter" (大事) is an important expression in the Lotus Sutra: "For this one great reason (大事) alone the buddhas have appeared in this world." (是爲諸佛以一大事因縁故出現於世)

Caodemarte said:

and in Exhortations for Those Unable to Arouse the Doubt, Boshan, one of the founders of the Caodong tradition that Soto claims descent from, drives home the fact that if Great Doubt is not allowed to arise, Zen practice sinks into a sickness.

Astus wrote:

<http://terebess.hu/zen/boshan.html>, aka Boshan, was a Ming era Caodong monk. However, by that time huatou was practised in China regardless of one's lineage affiliation, just like today.

Caodemarte said:

Korean Seon, of course, strongly stresses its importance.

Astus wrote:

And it was introduced to Korea by Jinul, who had read it in Dahui's works.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

"the dharma of the exoteric and esoteric schools will be as clear as the palm of one's hand" (I paraphrase here, as I'm away from texts at the moment). The point is simply that the gate of Zen is the experiential, rather than intellectual or conceptual, grasp - in a shallow manner or deeply - of that realization to which it may be said all methods point.

Astus wrote:

Would you say that it works the other way around as well? That is, if someone learns fully an exoteric or esoteric school, that person clearly knows what Zen is all about. Also, can you identify what that common essence is?

As for Zen being experiential, this applies to Buddhism in general as well. At the same time, Zen has produced a large number of sophisticated texts, not unlike any other tradition, and the way Zen works are different from other Buddhist materials is a matter of style.

Meido said:

I expect you have read the introduction to the Mumonkan, where Mumon Ekai's interaction with students is indeed described

Astus wrote:

It shows well how literary materials were actively used by monastics, and that apparently had inspired Wumen to write a collection and his own commentary, that again got used by other monastics and further commentaries were written.

Meido said:

I would say that the lack of mention comes from that fact that such interaction was commonly understood to be a given, as demonstrated time and again in so many of the writings and stories you mention.

Astus wrote:

The history of the development of koan collections from the early 11th century on shows how those so called records are more literary works than actual accounts of past events. Supposing that such encounters happened just like it's written is unfounded. And that's not the same as saying that there was no teacher-student relationship or interaction between people, but if you look into works like <https://books.google.com/books?id=sNhj17-DNNGC>, it becomes clear how the Zen style of the Song era was projected on stories and teachings from the Tang, for instance that Zhaozhou's No and the whole huatou practice idea was put in Huangbo's record by editors centuries later.

Naturally, Dahui had been in close contact with the monks in his monastery. But maintaining a direct relationship with lay disciples who live all over the country is a different matter. It is not a given at all that face to face meetings happened.

Meido said:

Koan collections, both in their content and their use, were treated as practice documents - accompanied by a great deal of oral practice instruction - rather than literary works (except when misused that way, which would bring immediate scolding...a criticism Tahui also leveled when he prevented publication of Hekiganroku due to its misuse by the literary-minded).

Astus wrote:

Koan collections are writings. Taking them to be practice documents shows how said

writings are highly valued, virtually like holy scriptures that convey something more than words. I didn't mean any scholarly or intellectual analysis of those books.

Meido said:

Really, if you want to say that in Zen practice there exists a kind of mandatory literary engagement with koan and other Zen works, yet the centrality of teacher-student interaction - of which, most often, koan and Zen works tend to be records - is not certain, I really can't follow what you're getting at here. In any case, the reality of what I have seen Chan, Zen and Son practitioners actually doing on the ground has always, without exception, been centered within relationship with the teacher.

Astus wrote:

I don't question the centrality of the teacher's role. As you say, the Zen texts are all about teacher-student interaction, not to mention the importance of lineage. And from that comes that because lineage is one of the central concepts of Zen, the stories that retell crucial elements of the lineage (e.g. the so called flower sermon) are inevitably known by all Zen students. And both the lineage and the stories - lamp records - are written materials preserved and kept alive by Zen communities.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Caodemarte said:

So, from you quotes, are you saying that Chinese Zen, Korean Zen, and other forms of Zen EXCEPT Japanese Soto stress or use the idea of Great Doubt?

Astus wrote:

What I say is that great doubt is a method of kanhuachan/kannazen only. It is used if one engages in investigating a huatou or koan as taught by Dahui and his later followers. Dogen, on the other hand, taught that zazen itself is practice-enlightenment, so there is no place to raise any doubts about. For instance, in Keizan's Zazen yojinki he advises that in case the mind wanders during zazen, one can use koans as a countering technique against that, among other methods like counting the breath. That is quite different from the idea of kanhuachan. Others, like Daehaeng, say that there is no point in artificially generating doubt with a huatou, and it may come naturally from personal questions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

If someone attains experiential insight using the methods of their school, at that time they should certainly understand what the essential point of Zen is. I do not say they will

grasp how to use Zen methods, nor do I say that by seeing nature in Zen one grasps how to use the methods of other schools which one has not learned.

Astus wrote:

If we say that Zen teaching comes directly as the function of buddha-mind, every realised person can teach the Zen way. There are stories like Naropa hitting Tilopa on the head with a sandal and Ajahn Chah kicking Nyanadhammo in the chest. On the other hand, when you say that not just anyone may know how to use Zen methods, it shows that there are certain techniques within the Zen tradition. And that is what I was pointing to by referring to koans as literature and how it is not that different from using sutras.

Meido said:

The approach of Zen, again, is that this understanding is meant to come at the beginning of the path. I have described elsewhere the teacher's responsibility for this, and (in a general way) some of the means by which it is accomplished.

Astus wrote:

I think one of the greatest appeal of Zen is its sudden enlightenment approach. On the one side, there is the view that it is more a rhetoric than reality, since first one has to work for years with a single koan until the initial breakthrough, and after that one has to refine that realisation for many more years. Thus, sudden enlightenment there actually means that a reliable and clear path is exchanged for a mostly circumstantial and naturalist view of insight. And this is something I don't really see the value of, as it's neither faster nor easier, but at the same time has difficult to meet requirements, like a so called clear eyed teacher, attending regular sessions and retreats, etc. On the other side, if sudden enlightenment means gaining insight to the nature of mind in a simple and easy way, then it is of course highly recommendable.

Meido said:

To Buddhism, I agree. But not necessarily to the approaches taken by Buddhists.

Astus wrote:

Do you have a couple of non-experiential approaches in mind as examples?

Meido said:

"Inevitably" goes too far here.

Astus wrote:

It sounds like a very hypothetical case where someone practises Zen in a community without knowing a single thing about it. But, not impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: knowledge of a bodhisattva and/or stream enterer

Content:

DGA said:

Would a stream enterer or bodhisattva necessarily have direct knowledge of how rebirth works? (as distinct from accepting karma/rebirth as a doctrine, or understanding it doctrinally)

Astus wrote:

Direct knowledge of how it works on what level? Seeing one's own past lives and the process of rebirth of others' is a matter of possessing the super-knowledges (abhijna) of past lives and the divine eye. Those abilities are not necessarily possessed even by an arhat, while non-buddhists may also have them. On the other hand, because of gaining insight into how the mind works, they know clearly how dependent origination works.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

Again, the way koan texts and sutras are actually used in Zen differs from one another.

Astus wrote:

What difference do you mean? There are a couple of sutra passages in koan collections, so it's not that a koan is necessarily an encounter dialogue.

Meido said:

Sudden enlightenment rhetoric aside, all the so-called highest/most swift traditions require a great deal of practice to actualize promised results.

Astus wrote:

And that's the problem. It negates the whole point of a sudden path, a supreme vehicle. It goes contrary to the teachings of Bodhidharma, Huineng, Mazu and Linji. How do you reconcile it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: knowledge of a bodhisattva and/or stream enterer

Content:

DGA said:

Does it follow, then, that someone who does not "get it" with regard to dependent origination / rebirth lacks the characteristics of a first-bhumi bodhisattva or stream enterer?

Astus wrote:

I like <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/tsongkhapa/three-principal-aspects>:

"Yet when they arise at once, not each in turn but both together,
Then through merely seeing unfailing dependent origination
Certainty is born, and all modes of misapprehension fall apart—
That is when discernment of the view has reached perfection.

When you know that appearances dispel the extreme of existence,
While the extreme of nothingness is eliminated by emptiness,
And you also come to know how emptiness arises as cause and effect,
Then you will be immune to any view entailing clinging to extremes."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

How do you understand "beholding" in this case?

Astus wrote:

Beholding the mind (觀心) is awareness of one's thoughts and emotions, thus seeing that they are empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 6:32 AM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

I personally reconcile things for myself through the mainstream path which we see in Chan, Zen, and Son today: seeing one's nature as the entrance and then - if such proves to be not total and sufficient, as is almost always the case - continued cultivation based upon that recognition in order to dissolve remaining traces/habit-energy (essentially, endlessly repeated recognition in unity with samadhi, until it is fully clarified and seamlessly embodied 24/7).

Astus wrote:

That is exactly how <https://books.google.hu/books?id=bUgg9aWaAH8C> taught it: sudden enlightenment, gradual cultivation. However, he is not recognised as anyone important by most, and he is outside of the later patriarchal lineages. He had two influential followers: Yongming Yanshou, author of the Zongjinglu (a great collection of Chan teachings, only the first fascicle is <https://books.google.hu/books?id=2Kc-zsuweBoC> yet), and Bojo Jinul. Of them, Yongming is mostly forgotten as a Chan teacher, but Jinul remains one of the most important Korean teacher.

It might interest you that Zongmi argued against the Hongzhou school that he considered too subitist. As we know now, the Hongzhou approach had become the orthodox eventually by the Song era.

Meido said:

Certainly, though, I think it fine to re-examine and challenge the mainstream. I wonder, actually, if you've read Jia's or Poceski's works on the Hongzhou school (I've not, but the discussion brought them to mind).

Astus wrote:

Yes, I have read both of them. Jia's book also contains a fine translation of Mazu's teachings based on early sources.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 7:14 AM

Title: Re: knowledge of a bodhisattva and/or stream enterer

Content:

DGA said:

Yes, that is very good. Do you think it rebuts the assertion Malcolm made above? And if so, how?

Astus wrote:

I agree with Malcolm's responses. My point with that quote was simply to show that dependent origination is the correct view, the middle way. And seeing how dependent origination works is understanding how rebirth works.

I think the difficulty for many is that they don't see themselves and the world as an experiential realm (see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.023.than.html>), they lack the insight into the often repeated teaching of "all phenomena are mind only". As Hanshan <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c>: "The Buddha has said, "The three realms are mind-only and the myriad dharmas are mere consciousness." All Buddhadharma is only further exposition on these two lines so everyone will be able to distinguish, understand, and generate faith in this reality." And because of that they cannot accept a non-material mind, the six realms, and basically the whole spiritual world. This is a symptom of the view that only objective things exist, so people disregard their subjective experiences. Another symptom of that same assumption is the strong emphasis on authorisation and confirmation of one's experiences by a certified person. These are all cultural things, neither Buddhist nor necessarily logical.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Slow server problems?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yes. But it seems to be getting better now.

Proof: I could log in and post this.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

Buddhahood in the classic sense of the term, (not just experiencing the Buddha Nature) is very possible in Zen.

Astus wrote:

The sutras themselves say that experiencing the buddha-nature is buddhahood. Just as Dogen often likes to quote the Lotus Sutra: "No one but the buddhas (yuibutsu yobutsu 唯佛與佛) can completely know the real aspects of all dharmas"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

The sudden awakening-gradual cultivation approach has been the mainstream Rinzai path from the earliest arrival of Rinzai lines in Japan, including the line brought over by Nanpo Shomyo which became the foundation of the surviving Otokan lineage. Naturally Zongmi's writings were known in Japan in the Kamakura period, but I have not heard there was any real Japanese Zen debate centered on this issue.

I'm not so clear how things developed in later China into the Ming. In the writings of modern Chan teachers we do find the same understanding

Astus wrote:

While the sudden-gradual set up confirms to how things seem to happen for practitioners, at the same time it is equivalent to admitting a defeat, since it means that Zen cannot meet its own ideals emphasised primarily in the Platform Sutra. Apparently many have forgotten how early teachers argued why Zen is not just about a sudden glimpse but instant buddhahood - that's what "mind is buddha" actually stands for. It is not just some general statement of buddha-nature hidden somewhere, that doctrine of tathagatagarbha is common to all schools. It is "this very mind is buddha", that practically means seeing that experiences (phenomena) are ungraspable and inconceivable just as they are. And that's how Zen can not only take part in the essence of the Dharma but point directly and transmit only that essence.

Mazu explains what "mind is buddha" means very clearly (all quotes from <http://terebess.hu/zen/mazu.html>):

"The self-nature is originally complete. If one only does not get hindered by either good or evil things, then that is a person who cultivates the Way. Grasping good and rejecting evil, contemplating sunyata and entering Samadhi-all of these belong to activity. If one

seeks outside, one goes away from it. Just put an end to all mental conceptions in the three realms. If there is not a single thought, then one eliminates the root of birth and death and obtains the unexcelled treasury of the Dharma king. Since limitless kalpas, all worldly false thinking, such as flattery, dishonesty, self-esteem, and arrogance have formed one body. That is why the sutra says, 'It is only through the grouping of many dharmas that this body is formed. When it arises, it is only dharmas arising; when it ceases, it is only dharmas ceasing. When the dharmas arise, they do not say I arise; when they cease, they do not say, I cease.' "The previous thought, the following thought, and the present thought, each thought does not wait for the others; each thought is calm and extinct. This is called Ocean Seal Samadhi."

And an interesting "lost fragment" from Mazu found in the Zongjinglu:

"Why does [the Lankavatāra sūtra say] 'Buddha taught that mind is the implicit truth?'" As for "Buddha taught that mind is the implicit truth," mind is Buddha. Because the words currently [attributed to the Buddha] are mind-words (i.e., designations for mind; xinyu), when it says, "Buddha taught that mind is the implicit truth, and 'gatelessness' is the dharma-gate," [it means that] they understood the emptiness of the inherent nature [of things] (benxing), on top of which there is not a single dharma. Nature itself is the gateway. But because nature has no form and also lacks a gateway to access it, [the sūtra] says "'gatelessness' is the dharma-gate." Why is it also known as the "gate of emptiness (kongmen)," and as the "gate of physical forms" (semen)? Emptiness refers to the emptiness of the dharma-nature; physical forms refer to the physical forms of the dharma-nature. Because the dharma-nature has no shape or form, it is referred to as "empty." Because the dharma-nature is known and seen in everything without limit, it is referred to as "physical forms.""

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

MiphamFan said:

Buddhas can display all the 6 abhijnas, different powers etc.

Astus wrote:

"You say, 'A buddha has six supernatural powers. This is miraculous!' All the gods, immortals, asuras, and mighty pretas also have supernatural powers—must they be considered buddhas? Followers of the Way, make no mistake! For instance, when Asura fought against Indra and was routed in battle he led his entire throng, to the number of eighty-four thousand, into the tube in a fiber of a lotus root to hide. Wasn't he then a sage? Such supernatural powers as these I have just mentioned are all reward powers or dependent powers.

Those are not the six supernatural powers of a buddha, which are entering the world of color yet not being deluded by color; entering the world of sound yet not being deluded by sound; entering the world of odor yet not being deluded by odor; entering the world of taste yet not being deluded by taste; entering the world of touch yet not being deluded

by touch; entering the world of dharmas yet not being deluded by dharmas. Therefore, when it is realized that these six—color, sound, odor, taste, touch, and dharmas—are all empty forms, they cannot bind the man of the Way, dependent upon nothing. Constituted though he is of the seepage of the five skandhas, he has the supernatural power of walking upon the earth."

(Record of Linji, p 20, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

seeker242 said:

It seems to me that it's not admitting defeat of the sutra, but simply confirming that it varies for different people. Although, if one can say sudden is impossible for anyone and everyone, then perhaps you could say it's admitting defeat. However, if one takes the view that very few people are "sharp", then maybe not. One could say that zen can meet the ideals of the sudden, but only with people who are sharp, which are few and far between. -

Astus wrote:

Yes, people are different, thus there are different teachings. One of the popular description of that is from Zongmi's " <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/zongmi.html#a> " where he talks about the "five types of zen".

Platform Sutra, ch 2:

"This teaching is the Supreme Vehicle: it is preached for those of great wisdom, it is preached for those of superior capacities. Those of small capacities and small wisdom who hear it will generate doubt."

further explanation in ch 7: "To penetrate all the myriad dharmas and to be equipped with all the myriad dharmas, without any defilement at all; to transcend the characteristics of the various dharmas, without anything that is attained: this is called the Supreme Vehicle."

Huangbo explains the relevance of the difference between capacity:

"Some students attain the state of liberated Mind quickly, some slowly. After listening to a Dharma talk, some reach "no mind" directly. In contrast, some must first pass gradually through the ten grades of Bodhisattva faith, the Dasabhumi of Bodhisattva development, and the ten stages before attaining the Perfectly Awakened Mind.

Whether one takes a long or a short time, however, once attained, "no mind" can never be lost."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Meido said:

Just to add that honestly I don't think it much of a defeat to say that if one doesn't complete the path in an instant, one may do so within this life or a handful of lives.

Astus wrote:

I don't see it as a matter of personal competency or ability, but rather as how the path and its goal are understood. The sole realisation required is to personally confirm that dharmas are unattainable. From that it is obvious that there is nothing to gain or lose, take or drop, grasp or relinquish. The main obstacle is that the instruction should be in a language that the listener understands. That's where the importance of a proper teacher comes in. As Zongmi writes, the difference between Chan and the sutras is that Chan uses a simple and direct language appropriate for Chinese people. However, reading even Zongmi - who does not use later Song era Chan lingo known from koans - takes some level of specialised knowledge to make sense of.

For instance, the <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html> given in Soto can be very simple and direct: "When various thoughts arise in your mind, do not become caught up by them or struggle with them; neither pursue nor try to escape from them. Just leave thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely." or even <http://antaiji.org/dharma/okumura-mind-and-zazen/?lang=en>: "you let go of whatever thoughts come up, and you also don't sleep." That is already no-thought, abiding nowhere, manifesting the buddha-mind of empty awareness. How could it not be called practice-enlightenment? Alas, many who attempt zazen get bogged down in maintaining a physical posture they assume to be the correct one.

And something similar could be said about kannazen (note: this is just my pet idea, so you can openly criticise it as foolish, if you think so). That is, maintaining the great doubt is already not abiding in any view or interpretation, but actively letting go while at the same time being aware. Although there are normally stages described as taking up the question, generating doubt and then shattering the great doubt, but from another perspective, taking up the question immediately brings doubt with it (or it's not a question but a statement) and that doubt is without the question (or we're just using it as some mantra), it is also without an answer (otherwise there is no more doubt), so one is basically forced into independence (although the traditional examples are a rat trap and a stuck ball), and that way maintaining doubt is not getting lost in names and concepts (not clinging to names and concepts is freedom).

Meido said:

A defeat to me would rather be to think that the masters quoted had means only for those rare individuals with the most deep, sharp roots...and that everyone else has to complete the common path of 3 eons.

Astus wrote:

On the one hand, there is the view that Chan gives a direct access only to the first of the 52 stages, or the first of the 10 stages. There is also the view that whoever gains sudden enlightenment (buddhahood) in this life must have been on the bodhisattva path for a long time already. On the other hand, it shouldn't be a problem to follow the common

Mahayana path. In fact, I'm in favour of letting people know more about the traditional gradual practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: The Mahayana idea of karma and vegetarianism

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Hevajra Tantra, a Mahāyāna Scripture, the teaching of the Buddha, is also very clear: "Those with compassion eat meat."

Astus wrote:

Couldn't find that in either the Snellgrove or the Farrow-Menon translation. Could you give its location please?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Does the Chinese/Japanese canon contain sutras that make this kind of assertion? I know this is present in Indo-Tibetan Mahayana, not sure about East Asian Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

"Having gone forth, enlightening beings instantly attain a hundred concentrations and see a hundred buddhas and acknowledge their power; they stir a hundred worlds, go to a hundred lands, illumine a hundred worlds, mature a hundred beings, live for a hundred eons, penetrate a hundred eons past and future, contemplate a hundred teachings, and manifest a hundred bodies, each body manifesting a company of a hundred enlightening beings."

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avatamsaka_Sutra, p 710-711)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

there's a difference between experiencing your Buddha Nature (A direct experience of the Unborn) and Being a Buddha (someone who will not be reborn again.)

Astus wrote:

"If sravakas, pratyekabuddhas and the Bodhisattva of the ten abodes do not see the Buddha-Nature, we say "Nirvana". It is not "Great Nirvana". If they clearly see the Buddha-Nature, there is Great Nirvana."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 29, tr Yamamoto)

"The Buddha-Nature of beings is what all Buddhas can see; it is not what sravakas and pratyekabuddhas can know. All beings do not see the Buddha-Nature. That is why they are all bound up by defilement and repeat birth and death. When one sees the Buddha-Nature, no bonds of defilement can tie one up. Emancipation comes and one attains Great Nirvana."

(ch 34)

"To see the Buddha-Nature is to attain unsurpassed Enlightenment. To attain unsurpassed Enlightenment is to arrive at unsurpassed Great Nirvana."

(ch 36)

"Whoever sees his nature is a buddha; whoever doesn't is a mortal. But if you can find your buddha-nature apart from your mortal nature, where is it? Our mortal nature is our buddhanature. Beyond this nature there's no buddha. The buddha is our nature. There's no buddha besides this nature. And there's no nature besides the buddha."

(Bodhidharma, Bloodstream Sermon, tr Red Pine)

"To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharms without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

"If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

"If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."

"To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, tr McRae)

"since the mind of all sentient beings is the same as original Buddha-Nature, there is no need to practice; for if one recognizes one's own Mind and sees one's own Nature, there is nothing at all to seek outside oneself."

(Huangbo, Wan-ling Record, tr Lok To)

Sara H said:

The Buddha Himself experienced His first kensho as a child. That's not the same as Full Enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

'I recall once, when my father the Sakyan was working, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, then — quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful mental qualities — I entered & remained in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Could that be the path to Awakening?' Then following on that memory came the realization: 'That is the path to Awakening.' (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.036.than.html>)

The first level of absorption is quite far from seeing buddha-nature, but it is not unheard

of that people confuse it with enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Doesn't Zen follow the Mahayana tradition that Shakyamuni was an emanation of the "Eternal Buddha" as explained in the Lotus sutra?

Astus wrote:

Yes, of course it does.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

You don't become free from suffering, and rebirth, just because you have a kensho.

Astus wrote:

Kensho means literally "see nature". There are a number of possible interpretations what it could mean to see nature.

1. An intellectual understanding of emptiness.
2. Attaining stream-entry.
3. Attaining the 1st bhumi.
4. Attaining the 8th bhumi.
5. Attaining buddhahood.

There is a well known phrase in Zen: see nature and become buddha. It seems to point to the 5th option. Just as it is stated in the Nirvana Sutra and by numerous ancestors, as quoted previously. Which one is your interpretation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

I think you guys are being a little too in your heads about this.

This is something that has to be directly experienced. Speaking as someone who's had more than one kensho, I can tell you that I am not a Buddha. I still have a great deal of training left to go before that happens.

Astus wrote:

Could you please define what exactly you mean by kensho? What is actually realised in/with kensho? What is the nature that is seen? Please be specific, maybe then the differences can be sorted out.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 7:08 AM

Title: Re: The Mahayana idea of karma and vegetarianism

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Taisho Tripitaka both the Surangama Sutra (<http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T19n0945>) and the Hevajra Tantra (<http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T18n0892>) are in the same category of Esoteric Teachings (密教).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 4th, 2015 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

Well it wouldn't work. The only way to understand a kensho is by having one. It's not something you can understand intellectually.

Astus wrote:

If one does not know what an apple is, one can eat dozens of apples without knowing that they are apples. That is, how can one tell if it is a kensho if one has no idea what a kensho is?

Sara H said:

I mean this is why, in a lot of Zen traditions, traditionally they wouldn't even teach you any Dharma until you've had a kensho.

They'd just wait until you've had one, and then they'd be like "Okay, now we can actually teach you something."

Astus wrote:

One can have kensho without knowing any Dharma? I think the following applies to this situation, from chapter 27 of the Nirvana Sutra:

"If one can see the Buddha-Nature even without having heard this Great Nirvana Sutra, all beings must also be able to see it, even though they have not heard it."

However, even bodhisattvas on the highest level cannot see the buddha-nature:

"Although innumerable Bodhisattvas may well perfectly practise the paramitas [spiritual perfections], they might only reach the stage of the ten abodes ["bhumis"] and yet may not be able to see the Buddha-Nature."

"Such Bodhisattvas may well reach the stage of the ten soils ["bhumis" - stages of Bodhisattva development], and yet they cannot clearly see the Buddha-Nature. How could sravakas and pratyekabuddhas well see [it]?"
(Nirvana Sutra, ch 12)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 5th, 2015 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Sara H said:

Yes, they can. Children can have kenshos. Christians can have kenshos.

...

There were lots of mystics in His time that had had kensho's and lots of other spiritual experiences, even some higher ones.

Astus wrote:

Then it seems you really mean by kensho something like the 1st jhana.

Sara H said:

Buddhism does not have a license on experiencing the Unborn. It's a natural part of life.

Astus wrote:

Again, it depends on what you mean by "the Unborn". In Buddhism that stands for the emptiness of appearances, and that is something that one can achieve only via the path taught by the Buddha. Also, that insight into the insubstantiality of the dharmas means one at least stands on the level of a 1st bhumi arya-bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 5th, 2015 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

D T Suzuki translates the Sanskrit term 'paravrtti' in the Lankavatara Sutra as 'a turning-around in the seat of the mind'.

Astus wrote:

Asraya-paravrtti is when one becomes a buddha and the eight consciousnesses become the four wisdoms. Hakuin has an essay on the subject and describes how he connects Zen with this teaching: <http://terebess.hu/zen/hakuin-works.html#i>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 5th, 2015 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: POTUS 2016

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sanders sounds almost like a European, except for his accent. Plus he's of Polish-Jewish descent. So it's him.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 6th, 2015 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Hosso/Yogacara vocabulary

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wei Tat's Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun is a bilingual book and usually mentions the Sanskrit expression in the English translation. Can be used as a good source for terminology.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 6th, 2015 at 6:14 AM

Title: Dogen & Kensho

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Some people think mind to be permanent and body to be impermanent. In this case, mind was considered to be atman; that is, pure and permanent. And the body was considered to be the source of delusive desire and impermanent. In this case, mind was called shinsho (mind nature) and body was called shinso (bodily form). And this mind-nature was often used as a synonym of buddha-nature. This is the reason Dogen negates the idea of kensho (seeing the nature)."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Dogen_Teachings/Genjokoan_Okumara.htm)

"Seeing the mind and seeing the nature is the animated activity of non-Buddhists."
(Sansuigyo, SBGZ, vol 1, p 219, BDK Edition)

"The essence of the Buddha-Dharma is never seeing the nature. Where has any of the Seven Buddhas or the twenty-eight patriarchs of India said that the Buddha-Dharma is only "seeing the nature"? The Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra contains the words "seeing the nature," but that text is a fake text; it is not the writing of one to whom the Dharma treasury was transmitted, and it is not the words of Sōkei. It is a text upon which descendants of the Buddhist Patriarch absolutely never rely."
(Shizen-biku, SBGZ, vol 4, p 269, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 6th, 2015 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: Dogen & Kensho

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

I feel Dogen may be criticizing some kind of quietism where you "view" the mind and feel the matter of life/death is thereby resolved, or that one has some permanent

buddhahood simply from having a mystical experience, or for doing religious practice at all.

Astus wrote:

It is not quietism but the separation of practice from enlightenment that is the problem addressed here, that is, when one uses a method in order to attain kensho. Dogen teaches the unity of practice-enlightenment, thus the complete realisation is already present in zazen. There is no other nature to be seen besides the ungraspability (不得) of appearances.

"Study thusness as ungraspable. Inquire about ungraspability in thusness. This thusness, this ungraspability, is not merely concerned with buddha thoughts. Understanding is ungraspable. Enlightenment is ungraspable."
(Inmo, SBGZ, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi)

Therefore positing a kensho to be gained or realised through a process is a mistaken approach. Actually, that's the same thing the Platform Sutra says, and that's the very meaning of the sudden teaching.

"Dogen was critical of kensho oriented practices such as the kensho jobutsu practice of the Nihon Daruma-shu."
(Okumura: Realizing Genjokoan, p254, n14)

"One difference between Dogen's use of koan study and a stereotypical modern view of koan practice can be found in his critique of kensho as a goal. This term, which means "seeing the nature," has been understood at times to refer to an opening experience of attainment of realization, going beyond conceptual thinking. Dogen believes that this is a dualistic misunderstanding and such experiences are not to be emphasized. For Dogen, Buddha nature is not an object to merely see or acquire, but a mode of being that must be actually lived and expressed."
(Taigen Dan Leighton: Introduction, in Dogen's Extensive Record, p 30)

"Because the one mind is the supreme vehicle, we speak of 'direct pointing into the human heart' and 'seeing the nature and becoming buddha.'" This expression is never about the everyday conduct of the Buddha-Dharma: it lacks the vigorous road of getting the body free, and it has no dignified behavior throughout the body. Fellows like this, even hundreds or thousands of years ago, were proclaiming themselves to be leading authorities; but we should know that, if they had such talk as this, they neither clarified nor penetrated the Buddha's Dharma and the Buddha's truth. Why not? Because of not knowing "buddha," not knowing "the teaching," not knowing "the mind," not knowing "inside," and not knowing "outside."
(Bukkyo, SBGZ, vol 2, p 70, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 6th, 2015 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Hakuin, in the essay you mention, Astus, talks about 'seeing the ox'. This is kensho.

Astus wrote:

Sheng-yen says in his <http://terebess.hu/english/oxherd5.html> on the third picture: "This is also described as seeing the face of pure mind, or the momentary disappearance of self-centeredness. This picture is sometimes described as seeing one's intrinsic nature, but it is only a glimpse of something -- only the tail of the ox."

And that is what <http://terebess.hu/english/oxherd0.html#Trungpa> identifies as the 1st bumi, quite logically. After commenting on the pictures, Sheng-yen says,

"Going through these stages in order is not considered sudden enlightenment. It is best called gradual enlightenment. People who experience sudden enlightenment may share some of these experiences, but not necessarily in this order. The Sixth Patriarch (638-713), who taught before the Pictures were developed, never made reference to such a progression."

Practically, it is equal to the concept of polishing the mirror in the Platform Sutra. However, what Huineng means by seeing the nature is not that. Thus my <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=293657#p293657> in this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 7th, 2015 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: Dogen & Kensho

Content:

Caodemarte said:

could you clarify "and that's the very meaning of the sudden teaching.?"

Astus wrote:

the very meaning: "the unity of practice-enlightenment, thus the complete realisation is already present in zazen. There is no other nature to be seen besides the ungraspability (不得) of appearances."

In other words, instead of gradually following a process to reach enlightenment, one goes from ignorance to wisdom in a single step.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 7th, 2015 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I apologize to Astus for my posting above.

Astus wrote:

No problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 7th, 2015 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Dogen & Kensho

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

How then to stop the habit of grasping, even if grasping is ungraspable?

Astus wrote:

Grasping is the result of ignorance about the nature of experiences. Seeing that appearances are originally thus - i.e. no matter what you do, the aggregates and the six sensory impressions come and go - the unfounded, illusory quality of a substantial reality is revealed right there. The point is, you don't stop anything, you directly enlighten that there is no permanent entity to liberate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 7th, 2015 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Dogen & Kensho

Content:

Dan74 said:

The thing is the delusive habits of old don't suddenly dissipate and the practice must continue to sweep them clean. At the very least. Isn't that what Hongzhi taught too?

Astus wrote:

Practically speaking, if it is clear that phenomena are without substance, thus they don't move you, they are not defilements any more. If one had to wait for habits to dissipate it would never end. In fact, life is a huge mass of habits. It is within habits that one should find liberation. Or as I was once told: within the fixed posture of zazen one has to find total freedom. When Hongzhi seems to talk about is not the "polish the mirror" type, but rather stabilising one's practice. See for yourself:

From <http://terebess.hu/zen/shoyo-roku.html#p:>

"From the beginning the clouds leisurely release their rain, drifting past obstacles. The direct teaching is very pure and steady. Nothing can budge it. Immediately, without allowing past conditions to turn you, genuinely embody it."

"The practice of true reality is simply to sit serenely in silent introspection. When you have fathomed this you cannot be turned around by external causes and conditions. This empty, wide open mind is subtlety and correctly illuminating. Spacious and content, without confusion from inner thoughts or grasping, effectively overcome habitual behavior and realize the self that is not possessed by emotions. You must be broad-minded, whole without relying on others."

"Emptiness is without characteristics. Illumination has no emotional afflictions. With piercing, quietly profound radiance, it mysteriously eliminates all disgrace."

"Spiritual and bright, vast and lustrous, illuminating fully what is before you, directly attain the shining light and clarity that cannot attach to a single defilement. Immediately tug and pull back the ox's nose. Of course his horns are imposing and he stomps around like a beast, yet he never damages people's sprouts or grain."

"From the beginning it is altogether complete, undefiled and clear down to the bottom. Where everything is correct and totally sufficient, attain the pure eye that illuminates thoroughly, fulfilling liberation. Enlightenment involves enacting this; stability develops from practicing it."

"Immediately you follow conditions and accord with awakening without obstruction from any defilements. The mind does not attach to things, and your footsteps are not visible on the road. Then you are called to continue the family business. Even if you thoroughly understand, still please practice until it is familiar."

"Open-minded and bright without defilement, simply penetrate and drop off everything. Today is not your first arrival here. Since the ancient time before the empty kalpa, clearly nothing has been obscured. Although you are inherently spirited and splendid, still you must go ahead and enact it. When doing so, immediately display every atom without hiding a speck of dirt."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 8th, 2015 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I don't think it is equal to polishing the mirror, Astus. How do you figure that??

Astus wrote:

Look at the poems:

Shenxiu:

The body is the bodhi tree;

The mind is like a bright mirror's stand.

Be always diligent in rubbing it—

Do not let it attract any dust.

That is, it confirms buddha-nature and its realisation, but says that one should regularly purify it. In fact, they had a practice called "concentration on purity" that was directly criticised by Huineng.

Huineng:

Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing—
Where could any dust be attracted?

In other words, instead of cleansing, purifying, etc., i.e. the usual gradual elements, it says there is nowhere to go. It is truly just "see nature, become buddha". Or, as it says in ch 2:

"Those with deluded minds appear to be cultivating and seeking buddhahood, but they are unenlightened to their self-natures. Hence are they of small capacities. If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature."

Dan74 said:
I have a deja vu feeling, haven't we discussed it before?

Astus wrote:
Possible. This is a great topic to discuss.

Dan74 said:
So, what is the relevance of this to your practice, if I may ask?

Astus wrote:
It is a matter of defining what practice is. On the one hand, I think that the so called gradual path of ethics-meditation-wisdom is very powerful but sadly neglected in Zen. And I'm not talking about schemes like "sudden enlightenment / gradual cultivation" and going through a koan curriculum, but the traditional path established in the sutras and treatises. It is because of this concept of "sudden enlightenment" that things are messed up somewhat. On the other hand, the very teaching of suddenness is not taken seriously at all. There are various excuses to disregard the most popular works of the Zen tradition, and instead end up with a confused teaching and confused practice. I'm calling it confused, because while there is a strong feeling against systematic study and practice, the instructions are gradualist. That is actually a symptom of not understanding the scriptures nor maintaining the mind-to-mind transmission. Thus we can have Zen teachers who are not even Buddhists.

My practice is no-thought, and I deeply believe that it is not only immensely beneficial but also broadly available. Beneficial, that is, I can personally testify that it can be used daily from cleaning the toilet to debating the meaning of life. Available, that is, any being can learn it and use it, no special requirements. But if you want more details, please ask specific questions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 8th, 2015 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen result in Buddhahood as described in sutras?

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Astus, is the practice of no-thought expressed in this passage from Bodhidharma?
When mortals are alive, they worry about death. When they're full, they worry about hunger. Theirs is the Great Uncertainty. But sages don't consider the past. And they don't worry about the future. Nor do they cling to the present. And from moment to moment they follow the Way.

Astus wrote:

Yes. Huineng taught (Platform Sutra, ch 2): 'mahāprajñāpāramitā' is the most honored, the supreme, the primary. It is without abiding [in the present], without going [into the past], and without coming [from the future]. It is from this that all the buddhas of the three periods of time emerge.

For a detailed explanation, look at this passage from Dazhu Haihai's

<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment:>

If your mind is void of thinking, then there is no grasping. If you wish to recognize clearly the non-dwelling mind, then during your meditation just be aware that your mind does not think about any object or hold on to any dualities, such as good and evil, etc. Since past things are already past, you should not think about them anymore; and, thus, any thought about the past vanishes. This is known as being without the past. Furthermore, since future things have not yet arrived, you should neither seek nor wish for them; and, thus, any thought of the future vanishes. This is known as being without the future. Finally, since present things are already present, you should not grasp them nor allow a thought of love or hate to arise; and, thus, any thought about the present vanishes. This is known as being without the present. In summary, if no thought about these three time periods arises, then the three time periods do not exist. If a thought of moving arises, do not follow it; and the thought of moving will vanish. If a thought of dwelling arises, do not follow it; and the thought of dwelling will vanish. However, grasping at the thought of non-dwelling is abiding in non-dwelling. On the other hand, if you understand clearly that your mind does not abide anywhere whatsoever that is abiding, then you are neither abiding nor not abiding anywhere. If you understand clearly that your mind does not abide anywhere at all, then you are clearly seeing your Original Mind, which is also referred to as "clearly seeing the nature of seeing." Just this Mind, that abides nowhere at all, is the Mind of Buddha and the Mind of liberation, the Mind of Bodhi and the Mind of the Uncreate. It is also referred to as realizing that the nature of form is void. Finally, it is what the sutra calls "Attaining the patient endurance of the Uncreate."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 9th, 2015 at 10:17 PM

Title: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Astus wrote:

If, as Kamalashila states, analysis is a necessary element of the path, it excludes all other options to reach insight into the nature of reality. Consequently, there can be no direct methods (pointing to the nature of mind, empowerment, direct introduction, etc.) that avoid using analysis. How can it be argued that the popular methods lacking the conceptual methods of discerning appearances are valid?

"Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analysing individually the entity of things, but merely meditate on elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realise identitylessness because one lacks the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought."

(<http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/>)

"Thus it is on the basis of obtaining unobscured knowledge that one understands every single teaching of the Buddha. Hence without the discernment of reality there is no arising of perfect knowledge, nor also the abandonment of the afflictive obscurations."

(Necessity of Bhutapratyaveksa, Bhavanakrama 3, in Martin T. Adams: Meditation and The Concept of Insight in Kamalasila's Bhavanakramas (thesis), p 247)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 9th, 2015 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

He is talking about sutra. It does not apply to Vajrayāna. Apples and oranges.

Astus wrote:

How so? Vajrayana doesn't aim at a different emptiness, does it?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 9th, 2015 at 11:35 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

muni said:

There are many tools for that, isn't?

Astus wrote:

What other tool is there but correct analysis?

muni said:

Only when we cling to the analytical, then it is not a cure anymore.

Astus wrote:

That happens only when the analysis is not performed correctly and completely.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sūtra works with analysis, Vajrayāna works with experiences.

Astus wrote:

How can experience make one understand suchness, when the error lies not in what is experienced but in how that experienced thing is viewed?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

MalaBeads said:

When you view the rising or setting sun, do you analyze it or view it? Is that an experience or not? It is something like that. Wherein one experiences the sun instead of analyzing it. But it is only something like that.

Astus wrote:

One may watch the rising sun without a single thought, but it makes no difference in one's view of the world. Such thoughtless moments happen to everyone. But it does not bring about the realisation that appearances are without substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 5:55 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is no experience outside of suchness. Therefore, experiences can be used to introduce suchness.

Astus wrote:

Experiences are already such, but not everyone sees in such a way. What occludes such seeing are not experiences in general but the identification with some of them, thus establishing a self, and the habitual substantialisation of appearances, that is, attachment to concepts. If even temporary cessation of ideation cannot overcome that fundamental ignorance, what kind of experience is it that can?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

"What's next?" you may ask.

Astus wrote:

There is no next. The end of conceptualisation (grasping at a false essence) is the attainment of the ultimate view, prajnaparamita itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

DGA said:

Is it not plausible that analysis may be necessary at some points in the path, and other options necessary at other times?

Astus wrote:

Analysis is necessary to eliminate the wrong views of the two selves. Within analysis there are various forms of reasoning one can use. For other goals there are other methods.

Kamalashila <http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/> the Samdhinirmocana Sutra: "When the selflessness of phenomena are individually examined and meditations performed on the basis of that analysis, that is the cause of the resultant liberation; no other cause can pacify."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 6:30 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Caodemarte said:

Exactly how is analysis defined by Kamalasila in this context?

Astus wrote:

Read from " <http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/> "

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Hence, the purpose of introduction. For example, one may see faces in a crowd everyday and never recognize them; but when they are introduced to you, you will never fail to recognize them again.

Astus wrote:

If the face of prajnaparamita could be pointed at, it would have to be an object of mind, an experience, and as such it could be viewed both correctly and incorrectly. It wouldn't be the end of conceptualisation, but rather an opportunity for further proliferation. How is that avoided?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

DGA said:

I still don't see how this means, as you said before, "it excludes all other options to reach insight into the nature of reality"

Astus wrote:

Since ignorance is attachment to concepts, because they are thought to be substantial, the medicine is to realise that there is no such substance. If one does not address that ignorance, the root of delusion, it is not eliminated. It's like the story with the arrow wound. It is the arrow that must be pulled out, there is no workaround. Nevertheless, what other methods do you have in mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The face of prajñāpāramitā is not different than all appearances [this is fundamental tenet of Ati yoga, one of things that differentiates it from Chan/Zen, etc.], hence it is an object of mind, an experience. Therefore, it is viewed correctly and incorrectly. Hence, introduction is necessary. Without introduction, buddhahood is not possible.

Buddhahood is not a result of effort or analysis. The difference between a buddha and sentient being is just the difference recognition and nonrecognition.

Astus wrote:

All appearances are such. Are you saying that there is an appearance that is more such? If not, and what matters is recognising the suchness of any appearance, there are no special objects to be apprehended. As Kamalashila

<http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle->

meditation-stage/: "With the knowledge that the mind is without an end and a centre, no identity of the mind is perceived. What is thoroughly realised by the mind too is realised as being empty. By realising that, the very identity which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, etc., is also not ultimately perceived."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

If you're a Gelugpa, true. If you're a Kagyu, the prajnaparamita view is a provisional teaching and there is a "next".

Astus wrote:

It was intentional that I had not quoted Tsongkhapa on the requirement of analysis, although there is a whole chapter on it in his Lamrim Chenmo. As for the Kagyu, the Jewel Ornament of Liberation's chapter on prajnaparamita is fairly explicit in saying that not only there is nothing more to realise, but it even encompasses the entire path, and that is practically Gampopa's so called "Sutra Mahamudra".

"The term Mahamudra is described in a commentary to the Kalachakra Tantra written by Padma Chin. There, he explains the essence of Mahamudra as being the actual Prajnaparamita; that is, the wisdom which is the source of all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. They all arise from the Prajnaparamita, the ultimate wisdom, and that ultimate wisdom is none other than Mahamudra."

(Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche: The Practice of Mahamudra, p 26)

However, that's not really the topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

catmoon said:

if the goal is as ill-defined as, say, attaining a realization of suchness, then we enter a whole new arena that is much less deterministic than any tool-oriented paradigm. What analysis will produce is analytic results, theorems and hypotheses. Maybe even a proof or two. Enlightenment is ... a different breed of cat.

Astus wrote:

How could it be ill-defined? From the four noble truths on the teachings are quite specific in what is to be achieved and how. The analysis here is not about producing ideas but clarifying that ideas themselves are unfounded.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I don't really understand the meaning of 'analysis' in this context.

Astus wrote:

It is the investigation of appearances within the conceptual framework of the teachings. Early examples are the fourth section of the anapanasati and satipatthana methods. Or look into the Bhavanakrama to see what actually is meant by analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

DGA said:

notice that Shakyamuni gives an analysis of the situation, and delineates analytically which questions are helpful and which are not.

Put differently: I'm still not convinced that the use of analysis means that any or all other methods are foreclosed. I think "both/and" is entirely possible, and happens all the time.

Astus wrote:

If you look at <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.052.than.html> where various methods are mentioned, while the entrance parts vary, the step to insight is the same each time.

We can leave the possibility open for other ways to gain insight, and that's one of the things that should be debated actually. Especially since it seems that very few use analysis within various Mahayana schools. Also, Kamalashila was supposedly the one who debated with <http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Hashang> and defeated the Chinese approach. Plus in the Bhavanakrama the arguments against the non-analytical method is possibly there because of the popularity of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2015 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, there is no special object to be apprehended.

Your question was, "Is analysis necessary." In sūtra yes; in Varjayāna, no. As

Vimalamitra states in his Buddhahood in This Life:

If it is objected, "If afflictions are liberated into dharmatā without antidotes, there is no

need for purification on the path. Otherwise, liberation would require no effort," for what reason would those who do not understand be liberated? Asserting that those who understand are liberated merely by recognizing concepts as dharmatā is the fruit of one's wishes. As such, in order to recognize that concepts are dharmatā, the intimate instructions of the guru are important.

Astus wrote:

There is still no explanation given what kind of experience it is that can take one to realising suchness. Also, that quote is basically asserting the supremacy of Vajrayana and the ineffectiveness of analysis without giving a reason. And it misrepresents vipasyana as if it were mere intellectual exercise.

Thrangu Rinpoche says in

<http://s151421314.onlinehome.us/nbp/docs/PDF/7.%20Guide%20to%20Mahamudra.pdf>:

"The reason that the path of the sutras takes so long is that there are no direct or practical instructions in the sutras for cultivating the direct experience of emptiness, whereas in the Vajrayana there are these uncommon instructions for gaining direct experience." (p 31)

That seems to agree with what you say. It continues:

"What are these extraordinary instructions of the Vajrayana? Essentially the concept of emptiness in the Vajrayana is the same as that taught by the Buddha in the sutras. The only difference is the method which is used in the Vajrayana. In the Vajrayana method of Mahamudra we do not to worry about external appearances because external appearances, such as mountains and buildings are not our problem, nor do they particularly help us. In fact, they are empty as is logically proven in the sutras, but we don't meditate on them. Nor do we particularly meditate upon the emptiness or insubstantiality of the body. In the Vajrayana we meditate upon that which is most important, which is the nature of our mind because it is the mind creates pleasure and pain, it is the mind that gives rise to experience, it is the mind that experiences everything." (p 31-32)

That is, Vajrayana goes directly to the mind and does not bother with outer appearances and extensive study of reasoning. Practically, that still confirms the previous statement that Vajrayana works with experience and does not require analysis. So, what is the special Vajrayana method?

"Now, even in the midst of stillness, your mind still has a cognitive capacity, it still has awareness, so you will recognize the stillness. You will actually experience it, and that is the state of Shamatha. Then you look to see exactly what this stillness consists of, that is, what it means to say my mind is at rest. If you look, then the clarity or lucidity that is there will emerge. And you can experience what your mind is, and what your mind is like, and what your mind is doing, without needing to infer by deduction. Because you can simply, directly experience your own mind, nothing about it has to be deduced or

inferred in any way." (p 32-33)

Yes, it is very much experiential, no inference or deduction. But it does not end here.

"So within that state of Shamatha, you look at your mind, and you look to try to see what is resting. By saying your mind is at rest, we mean that it is free of thought. If the mind has some kind of substantial existence; then it must be at rest in some particular way in some particular location. If the mind is something, then it will be at rest somewhere. For example, if a car is parked, we can say this car is parked in this place.

But when your mind is at rest or parked, you can't find it anywhere. You don't find anything placed anywhere. Even if you try to go through the parts of your body to find where your mind is located, or where your mind is at rest when you're not thinking, you won't find it, no matter how finely you divide your body. And if you try to find the substantial characteristics of the mind, such as a color or shape, or even if it lacks those—some kind of evidence of substantial existence—you won't find anything. Now substance, for example a car, has all sorts of definite characteristics. The car could be parked facing east or west, or it could be parked wrong sticking out in the middle of the street. Nevertheless, even though your mind is somehow parked, your mind is still, you don't find it anywhere. It doesn't point anywhere. It doesn't rest anywhere. And yet, your mind is at rest, and you can experience that. This indicates that the nature of your mind is emptiness. The nature of the rest, is also emptiness; and the location of your mind at rest, is also emptiness.

In that way, when you meditate on the nature of your mind, you don't find the mind anywhere. Not finding anything, you initially think that you have somehow failed. Either you misunderstood how to look, or you just haven't looked enough. But in fact this is not true. The reason you didn't find anything is that the nature of your mind is utter insubstantiality, which is why, according to the Buddha, it is empty. To thoroughly comprehend this emptiness, we need to experience this directly in meditation." (p 33)

This is where, after a thorough investigation of the mind, one finally confirms that it cannot be found, that is: empty. And after that it goes on to similarly investigate thoughts and realise their emptiness as well. Let's see what Kamalashila
<http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/>:

"In this way when the identity of the mind is individually examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within or without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor of the present is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstratable and non-physical. If one asks, what is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstratable and non-physical? It is as Arya Ratnakuta states: "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly searched, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present." Through such analysis, the beginninglessness of the mind is not ultimately seen, the end of the mind is not ultimately seen and the centre of the mind is not ultimately seen."

So, the difference that actually is there is that while Kamalashila goes from outside to inside, Thrangu begins at the mind, and then the analysis is performed on the mind itself. As a result both arrives at the realisation that the mind cannot be found anywhere. Same method, same result.

As a side note, it could be said that actually one performs the investigation of the mind right where the skandhas are being looked into and the lack of any self is confirmed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The limitation of Madhyamaka vipaśyāna is that it is an intellectual analysis.

Astus wrote:

What does it limit? Unless it is argued that vipasyana does not result in wisdom, it works. Question then is: since vipasyana is the established method all over the sutras and shastras, what other methods can work and why? You say Vajrayana is different, and that's fine, but it has not yet been clarified how and in what way.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Vipaśyāna is conceptual. That is its limitation. Plus, Madhyamaka analysis is ultimately dualistic.

Astus wrote:

Of course it is conceptual, and conceptuality is dualistic. Every teaching is within the realm of the conceptual, and the point is to see that what are grasped as real, solid things are actually conceptual and dependent.

Malcolm said:

It has been clarified, you just refuse to listen:

As such, in order to recognize that concepts are dharmatā, the intimate instructions of the guru are important.

Astus wrote:

The question is about those instructions, that you say do not involve analysis.

As for directly accessing the view of suchness, Kamalashila writes,

"If it is said that one enters (nonconceptuality) through nonmindfulness and

nonattention toward all dharmas, that is not reasonable. For Without the discernment of reality it is impossible to undertake either nonmindfulness or nonattention toward all dharmas even though they are being experienced. And if one would (attempt to) cultivate nonmindfulness and nonattention toward those (dharmas) cultivating thus,"These which are called dharmas are not to be noticed nor paid attention to by me" then still more would.they have been noticed and paid attention to by him! Thus if the mere nonexistence of mindfulness and attention constituted the nonmindfulness and nonattention intended, then in what manner does the nonexistence of those two come about?"

(Bhavanakramana 3, tr MT Adam, p 245)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

If you want those instructions, you will have to go and get them.

Astus wrote:

You said that Vajrayana is exempt from analysis, but then did not support that with an explanation of how could that be. That doesn't mean you have to copy instructions here, the general description of its functioning should be enough.

Malcolm said:

Kamalashila's citation is completely irrelevant.

Astus wrote:

How so? The direct experience of suchness is what Vajrayana teaches, isn't it?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, actually I did.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how "the intimate instructions of the guru are important" is an explanation for it, but it seems there is nothing more than that.

Malcolm said:

Everyone is already experiencing suchness directly. It simply needs to be pointed out through experience. It is not discernible through analysis. The analysis itself is the obstacle.

Astus wrote:

Pointing out through experience - since one cannot directly transfer experience to another, there are only teachings one can follow to confirm reality for oneself. What blocks the vision of reality is conceptual attachment. Analysis removes that attachment, thus allows the experience of insight. Skipping analysis and going directly to insight is the idea that the <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=300777#p300777> section from Kamalashila argues against. What other version of "pointing out through experience" do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 6:42 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Analysis merely substitutes one conceptual attachment for another, thus blocking the seeing of the truth; which one already sees anyway without knowing that one is seeing it. The question is really, "what does one hope to find in analysis?" Is there something to find? If there is nothing to find, then the analysis itself is a deviation from reality.

Astus wrote:

Analysis results in the elimination of attachment, it does not go on indefinitely as a substitute, just as the desire to reach nirvana ends with attaining it
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn51/sn51.015.than.html>).

Kamalashila <http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/>:

"In this way when the person does not firmly grasp on to the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated with wisdom, then the practitioner engages in a non-conceptual single-pointed concentration."

And as quoted in the OP, "like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought."

Analysis cannot be a deviation from reality for two reasons. On the one hand, while one is bound by ignorance, one needs a path to escape that ignorance. On the other hand, saying that one is already in reality and ignorance itself is such, then analysis is such as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Is the consciousness that engages in analysis deluded or undeluded? Is the object of analysis delusive or non-delusive?

If either the consciousness or the object are respectively deluded or delusive, there is

no means by which the analysis can result in non-delusion.

If on other other hand the consciousness or the object is respectively non-deluded or non-delusive, the analysis is unnecessary.

Astus wrote:

That's some nice analysis you present.

Same could be said about any other teaching or instruction. Thus they are all skilful means used within a conventional context. Actually, there is just this conventional context to operate in, and supposing a separate realm is a mistake.

The reason analysis works is because it removes wrong views and eventually attachment to any view. Analysis is a means, not an end. And analysis is required because the wrong views that generate all the problems are conceptual.

But let's not stop there. Is there a consciousness to be deluded or undeluded? Is there an object to be deluded or undeluded? Since neither a consciousness nor an object can be established, talking about their state of ignorance and enlightenment is like describing the graceful stance of the son of a barren woman.

Gangottara asked in turn, "If this question were put to one who had never come into being, how should it be answered?"

The Buddha replied, "That which has never come into being is nirvana itself."

Gangottara asked, "Are not all things identical with nirvana?"

The Buddha replied, "So they are, so they are."

"World-Honored One, if all things are identical with nirvana, why did you ask me, 'Do you not seek the state of nirvana?' "Furthermore, World-Honored One, if a magically produced being asked another magically produced being, 'Do you not seek the state of nirvana?' what would the answer be?"

The World-Honored One told her, "A magically produced being has no mental attachments (and thus seeks nothing)."

Gangottara inquired, "Does the Tathagata's very question stem from some mental attachment?"

The World-Honored One told her, "I raised the question because there are in this assembly good men and good women who can be brought to maturity. I am free of mental attachments. Why? Because the Tathagata knows that even the names of things are inaprehensible, let alone the things themselves or those who seek nirvana."

(<http://www.purifymind.com/GangottaraSutra.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

plwk said:

But let's face it Astus, both Sutra & Tantra have divergent methods and criterias, no amount of force fitting will work... anymore than trying to convince Nichiren that

Shingon isn't Hinayana...

Astus wrote:

It's not just Tantra. As I have mentioned before, analysis is not a popular method, even neglected and looked down on to some extent in Mahayana.

At the same time, we can see in the works of Kamalashila and Vimalamitra for instance that they claim not simply superiority of analysis but exclusivity. So why not look into the veracity of that claim?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Can't explain ? Blame Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Blaming karma is not understanding what karma is and how to utilise that fundamental teaching.

1. There is the practice of accepting bad karma. It is not about blaming but not getting upset. It also reinforces one's motivation to avoid evil and do good.

2. Karma is not some force out there but one's mental habits. Thinking that bad things come from outside is not realising that the situations one goes into and the way those situations are interpreted are both the workings of one's habitual thinking, that is, one's personality. And one should not only exchange bad habits to good ones, but also see that the whole complex of mental attachments are based on false presumptions, otherwise known as ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

plwk said:

how many Buddhists and their teachers actually engage in analysis as recommended by the texts and teachers that you quote in here?

Astus wrote:

I am unaware of any research on that subject. I think it is natural that Buddhist communities eventually reflect the larger society in that only a few belong to the class of literati. And the majority of Buddhist texts are produced by them and read by them. As I have seen, most of the Westerners interested in Buddhism come from that class. Therefore it looks sensible to propagate analytical meditation, as it might be actually more fitting than other methods, although it is understandable that people who daily use their intelligence in their line of work are attracted to something that appears to be trans/non-conceptual. DT Suzuki thought that Shin Buddhism could match Western

people because of its similarity to Christian teachings, but it's turned out that exactly because of Shinshu's aura of religiousness many don't even accept it as Buddhist. Somewhat similarly to that, the teachings of Abhidharma, Madhyamaka and Yogacara are mostly subjects of academic studies and only recently has some books appeared with a Buddhist audience in mind.

plwk said:

And to what extent is that analysis utilitarian for most people here who are more interested if the stock market will plunge or if next week's astrology chart is favourable? Sounds like worldlings?

Astus wrote:

That is perfectly normal. There is a <https://books.google.com/books?id=hf1Sm6K6Ze8C> by Faure discussing common misconceptions about Buddhism. Among those the role of meditation is discussed, and how it is not at all as ubiquitous in Buddhism as many believe. In fact, it is practised mostly by only a handful of monastics. But as we can see, in the West the majority of Buddhist communities consisting of middle class people are centred around meditation. And there is the other side, often neglected when surveying the Buddhist scene, the Buddhist courses at universities. It's as if those who study Buddhism in established higher educational institution were non-existent or irrelevant.

plwk said:

No, I found them in many centres. Most people are struggling with bread and butter issues to even be bothered with much Dharma analysis, perhaps some taking an easier way out by relying on a teacher to do their homework for them and then taking it by 'faith' than cracking their skulls over it.

Astus wrote:

True, but they are not the only demographic group. And I am not saying everyone should immediately study Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. At the same time, since those you refer to have little interest in liberation, they are not the right audience for engaging in vipasyana.

plwk said:

Superiority, exclusivity Astus? In many places that I have been to, the vital importance of analysis is merely a nicely decorated poster slogan in the kitchen, even in Theravadin ones! But at the end of the day, nothing much of what I see pages of scholastic assertions on forums ever happens in real life Samghas, from my limited experience other than the usual housewife gossips. If you know of one that engages in compatible stringent analysis of Dharma & Vinaya in a real life Samgha practice and lifestyle, let me know.

Astus wrote:

You are right. Even monastic communities often have other things to busy themselves with. On the other hand, you might find such groups at universities. (note: it is a prejudice to say that all those who study texts are not practitioners)

plwk said:

Let's import what you quoted here say to the shores of Japan, say in the time of Honen and Shinran and even today amongst their adherents, what do you think?

Astus wrote:

Both Honen and Shinran belonged to the educated monastic elite from a good family background. As for preaching to the illiterate masses, they did a great job. I personally like their approach to the whole matter. Although others like to say as well that their teaching is available to everyone, actually I don't see any other tradition as open and embracing as the Pure Land path. In a sense, it is truly the original intention of Shakyamuni.

plwk said:

Will it work? And to what extent? I dare not say there's no analysis of Dharma at all but rather not to the point of what Kamalasila or Vimalamitra teaches. I am all for what you are advocating here but perhaps, it only works for a limited few. For the rest of us, there are other methods, apparently...

Astus wrote:

Buddhism as a whole works only for a limited few. Just consider the size of humanity. Then think about the percentage of Buddhists, and then the number of Buddhists who actually care about the Dharma. So, it's all very limited.

As for the applicability of analysis, I think it is mostly for those who are inclined to reasoning and study. And there are quite a few of them on this forum.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism too hard ?

Content:

Bodhidharma said:

The part that I say Buddhism is "too hard" is the 6th perfection - wisdom or the prajñā pāramitā. Attempting to understand the Two Truths and Emptiness is not something for the faint-hearted. Given that there are countless sentient beings, isn't it unfortunate that "reality" is beyond them when it is beyond even most of us.

Astus wrote:

I think there can be basically two difficulties.

1. Buddhism has its own terminology and it can take a while to learn what is meant by expressions like emptiness.
2. From an ordinary perspective it can be difficult to face that there is no fixed and permanent element in the world.

The first difficulty can be overcome by studying, and asking teachers.

The second difficulty can be overcome by recognising that there has never been anything that can be relied on, and the misunderstanding about the world only leads to

problems.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 11th, 2015 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka analysis is not required, it is merely the approach of sūtra.

Astus wrote:

As noted earlier, it is there in Mahamudra, although to that you might say "not in Tantric Mahamudra". Also, in vol 2 of Jigme Lingpa's Treasury of Precious Qualities at the end of the discussion of the path of Dzogchen he gives not only a direct but also an analytical method. So, even if there are other methods, it is considered quite efficient if Vajrayana masters have no problem including it in their teachings on the highest levels.

Malcolm said:

Therefore, since there is no consciousness nor object to be established discussing their analysis is like discussing the horns on a rabbit.

Astus wrote:

And to a similar statement Nagarjuna <http://www.fodian.net/world/1631b.html>,

"If any thesis does not bear on the totality of causes and conditions, or on them separately,

Is not emptiness proved because of the fact that there is no self-existence in existing things?

...

Just as a magically formed phantom could deny a phantom created by its own magic, Just so would be that negation."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

What page are you thinking of?

Astus wrote:

The practice of those who perceive appearances in the manner of sense objects, p 269-274.

That is within the section of "An explanation of the key points of the practice", within the chapter "The Extraordinary Path of Practice of the Great Perfection".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 12:54 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Here, what is being recommended is the intimate instructions of the guru

Astus wrote:

There is little difference between someone orally giving the instructions or handing over a book containing the same instructions. The discussion has been regarding the instructions, not its format. As the <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/sword-of-wisdom> says,

"Therefore do not rely on individuals,

But rely upon the Dharma.

Freedom comes from the genuine path that is taught,

Not from the one who teaches it."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 12:58 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

conebeckham said:

Well, what does it mean to "realise that there is no such substance?" Does it mean one analyses, using the rational, conceptual mind, and comes to the conclusion that there is no substance? Or does it mean something further?

Astus wrote:

Kamalashila clearly states that the result is not simply a conceptual understanding, a philosophical statement, but the direct, personal experience of emptiness, of suchness.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

conebeckham said:

You can read this description as a sort of "analysis," but it's really not. The last line, "experience this directly in meditation," is the key. Meditation, in this instance, is not a conceptual, analytical undertaking. It is a direct seeing. A direct experience. It cannot be illustrated in words and concepts, but there are methods which a skillful teacher can use to engender such direct experience. In fact, Thrangu Rinpoche is using some of those methods, here. You must apply them, though, and not merely "work through them" using your conceptual intellect.

Astus wrote:

Kamalashila's Bhavanakramas are instructions for meditation. I dare say that even the Middle Treatise of Nagarjuna is good for meditation, not to mention the many prajnaparamita sutras. Just as Vajrayana texts can be taken for purely philosophical writings, so can the teachings of the Buddha can and often are mistaken as theoretical matters. Analysis is not meant for achieving an objective statement but to attain insight. I'm not even sure why it happens that while it is obvious that the Dharma is for liberation, teachings are regularly dismissed as if they were products of a bored academic. It is another thing that philosophy is viewed with contempt, calling it idle talk. But once we rename it as ideology, it becomes more apparent how thoughts govern action.

For instance, when there is a teaching about the aggregates, it is not about abstract ideas with no relevance to one's personal life and experience, but instructions on what and how to investigate in order to see the true nature of reality and gain liberation. It is always about direct seeing, that's what vipasyana is. Reducing the words of the Buddha and numerous teachers to mere theorising is not just insulting but inconsiderate and ignorant. (And I'm not saying here, Cone, that you are like that, these are just my general observations.)

It is not a question of conceptuality but how those concepts are understood. Keeping a distance between oneself and some ideas is when it is mere theorising, fantasising about things that have no weight. On the other hand, when a concept is taken seriously, when it is reflected on and connected to one's experience, that is heeding the advice and following the teachings. It becomes a personal matter. Just like when one can listen to any teacher and not find anything noteworthy in his words, if that teacher is seen as one's guru, even the most innocent movements become Dharma instructions.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

oriented towards showing that this kind of analysis is just not necessary at all in Mahāyāna. That in fact, it is an obstacle to understanding the real meaning of Mahāyāna.

...

Why is this important? Because in general, the whole notion of direct perceptions, inferences, and so on are defined on the basis of of the conceptual cognitions of ordinary people.

Astus wrote:

The text itself you quoted is not only a heap of concepts, but goes through stating first the ultimate reality, that it cannot be analysed, then analyses the problem and its causes, then analyses appearances to show that they are false, from which it comes to the conclusion that because they are all false they are the ultimate. That is no different from how a sutra or a shastra teaches emptiness through reasoning and analysis. And after all that it states that for some unknown reason symbolic visual forms and devotion

are appropriate methods, although just before that it's argued a lot for the futility of methods.

So, while analysis may not be necessary and even an obstacle, Manjusrimitra could not avoid it either. In fact, we could say that he not only performs analysis but even posits a number of solid-looking elements when it describes the appearance of ignorance, similarly to Yogacara. In the end, he very much agrees with the Buddha's words and Nagarjuna's writings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 12th, 2015 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Can't explain ? Blame Karma

Content:

Bodhidharma said:

If not blame, then Buddhists have an annoying tendency to readily dismiss these circumstances as karma as if karma is sufficient explanation.

Astus wrote:

That is still mistaking karma for an external force. Karma is one's own mind's perspective on experiences, like calling a bowl of soup delicious or disgusting. It's not that your karma cooked the soup, but it is one's habitual conditioning (i.e. karma) that prompts one to love or hate something.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 13th, 2015 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point I am making is that intellectual analysis will only result in an intellectual apprehension of the object of analysis. Even when you are finished with the analysis, for example, the famous diamond sliver analysis, and so on, still in the end you are left with the concept "emptiness", "nonarising", "freedom from extremes" and so on, even though, as Mañjuśrimitra points out, since the conceptualized extreme does not exist, therefore the extreme to analyze does not exist. Therefore, conventional analysis by mundane minds cannot be used in an ultimate analysis because they cannot escape their own conceptual clinging, indeed they are always with concepts.

Astus wrote:

There are at least two problems with that view:

1. it supposes there is something to gain beyond concepts, instead of realising the nature of conceptuality.
2. it denies what is taught in the sutras and shastras: that vipasyana results in wisdom, practically negating the validity of all paths but the vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 13th, 2015 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

It does not matter how critically you examine a bicycle and the physics of riding a bike. Until you get on it, fall a couple of times, and then finally master it you cannot say you "know how to ride a bike". And, you can learn how to ride without any analysis whatsoever.

It's the experience that counts. Meditation is something you do, not just something you think about (Dzogchen rhetoric aside).

Astus wrote:

The type of abstract analysis you mention is not the vipasyana talked about. Analysis means that in order to ride a bike, one has to be aware of where to sit, what the pedals are for and how to steer. Insight without analysis would mean that a child would immediately know what a bike is and how to use it without having any previous information of it. Analysis is applying the teachings to one's experience, not pure theorising.

As for there being something beyond concepts, that is another concept. Non-conceptuality is not the lack of concepts but knowing concepts for what they actually are.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 13th, 2015 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

1. it supposes there is something to gain beyond concepts, instead of realising the nature of conceptuality.

How?

Astus wrote:

By saying that arriving at the conceptual understanding of emptiness is insufficient and it should go beyond.

Malcolm said:

2. it denies what is taught in the sutras and shastras: that vipasyana results in wisdom, practically negating the validity of all paths but the vajrayana.

How?

Astus wrote:

By saying that analysis does not result in insight into the nature of concepts and so in non-attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 14th, 2015 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you are claiming that the conceptual knowledge of emptiness, the conceptual knowledge known to a mundane authority, is sufficient?

Astus wrote:

Knowing that fire is hot is a conceptual knowledge. If one has never encountered fire, it is an unconfirmed conceptual knowledge. If one has encountered fire, it is a confirmed conceptual knowledge. Similarly, only hearing about emptiness without knowing what it means is just verbal information. Once it becomes clear what emptiness refers to in one's present experience, it is a confirmed conceptual knowledge. For example, one sees fire and knows that it is fire. If one sees fire without knowing what fire is, that has no power to inform one's knowledge (and therefore subsequent actions), while knowing fire without ever seeing one has no power to inform one's actions (as there is no use of that knowledge in any situation).

Malcolm said:

Here, when we should understand that the term "mundane" eye refers to exactly the kind of mundane authorities Mañjuśrimitra is critiquing.

It is this analysis with mundane authorities that goes exactly nowhere.

Astus wrote:

That mundane analysis is the view uninformed by emptiness, the thinking of an ordinary being (prthagjana). The Dharma is for ordinary beings to gain insight. That is, through the correct teaching ordinary beings can gain the correct view. Analysis is the method by what one can arrive at confirming what one has learnt and understood. That is, if one is told how to light fire, one is able to test it. Knowing how to make fire is not the same as using that knowledge, but without knowledge there cannot be any fire lit. So it is the mundane eye that has to be directed in the right way to turn it into a supramundane eye. The direction given is the teaching, and moving on the right path is when analysis is applied during vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 14th, 2015 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

Practice is something you do. Madhyamaka is something you think about.

Astus wrote:

If one only thinks about Madhyamaka, it has little use. Applying it is how one can gain the wisdom of emptiness, and that is what the practice of Madhyamaka is about. The Bhavanakrama is a great example for using the teachings of Madhyamaka. Or look into Brunnhölzl's The Center of the Sunlit Sky, especially the chapters under Madhyamaka Path - it includes a section entitled How Can Madhyamaka Be a Personal Practice? - and those under Madhyamaka Meditation that includes the section Why Is Analytical Meditation Necessary? where he writes:

"As was explained in detail, the main cause for all our samsaric problems is basic ignorance that expresses itself as our instinctive clinging to a personal self and really existing phenomena. The only means for eliminating this fundamental unawareness is to develop its opposite: an awareness through which we see our mind and phenomena as they really are. In technical terms, this is called discriminating knowledge, which is the seed for the omniscient wisdom of a Buddha.

As a sutra says:

If you discriminate that phenomena are identityless
And meditate by discriminating them in this way,
This is the cause for the result of attaining nirvana.
Peace will not come about through any other cause."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 14th, 2015 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: How dedication works?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dedication is a practice of rejoicing over and letting go of the consequences of one's good deeds. Partaking in another person's merit is rejoicing over another's good deeds. Similarly, agreeing with and rejoicing in another's evil deeds generates bad karma. It's not that there are some mystical merit particles travelling between beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 14th, 2015 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

HHDL weighs in. From "Dzogchen: Heart Essence of the Great Perfection"

Astus wrote:

That is the same as when one has reached, after analysis, insight into suchness.

Kamalashila <http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/>:

"In this way one who has entered in the suchness of the selflessness of person and phenomena is free from concept and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly

examined and observed. One is free from expression and with one-pointed mental engagement one automatically enters in meditation without manifest discrimination. Thus one very clearly meditates on suchness and abides in it. While abiding in that meditation, the mind should not be distracted.

...

If and when the mind is spontaneously engaging in meditative equipoise on suchness free of sinking and mental agitation, at that time it should be left naturally and the efforts relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind."

And HHDL comments on the preceding section of the Bhavanakrama:

"It is important to note that in order to enter into non-conceptual absorption it is crucial to engage in thorough analysis first. When the objects of imputation are sought by discerning wisdom, nothing is findable. The true meaning of understanding selflessness needs to be appreciated in perspective. Mere lack of mental activity does not constitute understanding selflessness. Mere absence of a misconception of self does not imply a knowledge of selflessness. Selflessness is understood by the wisdom that finds that both the perceiving mind and the perceived objects lack any self-identity in the ultimate sense. This knowledge dawns on the practitioner after thorough and discerning scrutiny and analysis."

(Stages of Meditation, p 136)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 14th, 2015 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

A conceptual knowledge of emptiness is still a mere concept, and results in being fettered. A simulacrum, not the real thing.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is based on the mistaken concept of self. Removing that is wisdom. Knowledge of emptiness as a mere concept is not knowledge of emptiness. The conceptual knowledge of emptiness is when the concept of substance is proven to be false. Just like if one were to think that there is a tiger in the house then there would arise fear from entering it. But if one actually goes and checks the rooms and find no tiger, from the confirmed knowledge of that the fear vanishes. We might say that "there is no tiger in the house" is a conceptual knowledge, but what it means is that the idea of there being a tiger is removed, so in that sense it is relinquishing the concept. It is not that one just sits far from the house and wonders whether there is or there isn't any tiger, one actually has to check it for himself. Same goes for vipasyana, it is not merely theorising about there being a self or not but actually looking for it. Although it could be said that searching the house for a tiger is still based on delusion, without actually doing a thorough analysis, one will not just enter the house.

Malcolm said:

Having a view of emptiness does not make one an ārya.

Astus wrote:

A view of emptiness is knowing that there is no view to uphold, otherwise it is a view of self.

Malcolm said:

But this contradicts the Saddharma-pundarika sūtra: ... And the...

Astus wrote:

The quotes talk about the attainment, not the path. In order to be free from conceptualisation of extremes one has to see that there is nothing to conceptualise about.

The Surangama Samadhi Sutra says (BDK Edition):

"If a Bodhisattva wishes to attain this samadhi, he should cultivate the dharma of ordinary people. If he perceives the dharma of ordinary people, the dharma of the Buddha will be neither conjoined nor dispersed. This is called cultivation of the Surangama Samadhi." (p 40)

and

"If a Bodhisattva is able to contemplate the dharma as empty and unobstructed, with each moment of thought completely extinguished and transcending like and dislike, this is to cultivate this samadhi." (p 77)

The Lotus Sutra (p 197, BDK Edition):

"A bodhisattva, at proper times,
Should enter a quiet chamber
And contemplate all dharmas
With correct thoughts,
According to the meaning."

Malcolm said:

That is fine if one thinks nirvana comes about from causes, which is a characteristic approach of the causal vehicle a.k.a, the vehicle of characteristics.

Astus wrote:

If realisation has no causes, there is neither path nor teachings. Nirvana is the elimination of ignorance, and that happens through correct understanding and correct contemplation. Vajrayana is no different, since it is itself a path with instructions and practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 15th, 2015 at 3:39 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Finding there is no tiger in the room is not a matter of analysis.

Astus wrote:

One checks each room if there is a tiger there. Similarly, one checks the aggregates if there is a self there. If this is not analysis, then what is called analysis is not analysis. And probably this is where the misunderstanding of analysis lies, mistaking it for theorising instead of informed observation and investigation of phenomena.

Malcolm said:

It is, providing you have ascertained there is no tiger. Otherwise, you can analyze whether there is or is not a tiger in a room until the end of time, without being one step closer to the truth. This is the problem with Madhyamaka analysis.

Astus wrote:

Again, as above, vipasyana is not theorising.

Malcolm said:

Yes, so it is not a matter of analysis. It is a matter of direct perception.

Astus wrote:

There is direct perception, yes. The analysis is pointing one's perception in the right direction. Otherwise the basic nature of emptiness is already apparent, suchness is not hidden even a bit. The reason it is not recognised is because of the lack of direction, and that is what the teachings and the analysis performed based on the Dharma helps with.

Malcolm said:

Thus, there is no real need for analysis. One does not need to understand mere that there is no tiger in a house, one needs to understand that tigers, houses, snakes and indeed all phenomena are completely equivalent with illusions — this is the real intention of Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

The tiger is a metaphor for substance, the house for the six sensory areas. Realising that the six senses are insubstantial, illusory, is all there is to know. The way to realise that is observing clearly what the six senses actually are, that is, looking through the rooms, and that is analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 15th, 2015 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

What you are essentially recommending is going through a conceptual exercise of

imagining that something is there, and then spending time to find out whether what you imagine is true.

If, on the other hand, someone tells you, "There are no tigers in that house", it may be the case that you have some doubt and need to confirm this for your self. Likewise, if someone tells you that there is no self in the aggregates, then you look and you will not find one. Of course it is up to you to look, and not leave it as a mere concept.

Astus wrote:

If there were no pre-existing concept of a tiger, someone saying that there is no tiger in the house would make no sense. In both cases one needs to have the assumption of a tiger. And that view of a real tiger is the mistake everyone has. Without seeing for oneself that there is no tiger, the mistake remains.

Malcolm said:

Well, the kind of vipaśyāna analysis you are now favoring is really, because unlike tigers and snakes, the absence of the four extremes is not something that really can be confirmed with ordinary thinking and cognitions because it is not an object. Therefore, you have to imagine something to negate and so on.

In other words, having seen a tiger, one can know what the absence of a tiger is because there are sign by which tigers can be apprehended. But there are no signs by which an extreme can be apprehended, and hence the analogy breaks down as it must.

Astus wrote:

One already has the view of substantial entities, conceiving things as independent objects. That is the misconception that needs to be eliminated. At the same time, one is normally unaware of the presence of wrong view, so it has to be highlighted as the source of the problem. Thus the structure of the four noble truths and the twelve links. So it is not the case that the extremes are not there, because they are the basis of all the problems.

Malcolm said:

Even if you think you have confirmed the absence of extremes, this is just an intellectual confirmation. In order to actually confirm this, you have to go beyond the conceptuality of the mind. Conceptual analysis will not get you there. Conceptual investigation will not get you there.

Astus wrote:

The extremes are conceptual assumptions. And just like with any other wrong view, it can be corrected through understanding it to be wrong. And that understanding requires concepts.

Malcolm said:

What you work with is the concepts themselves. They are your experiences. So you observe them: where does this thought come from, where does it go? You do this until you understand that concepts do not come from anywhere nor go anywhere. Then you can go beyond concepts. But even this is still a conceptual exercise. It should only be

done after receiving direct introduction on the basis having the experience of a moment of ordinary mind.

Astus wrote:

Similarly to samatha, in vipasyana one goes from the grosser to the subtler objects, simply because that is normally easier. But eventually one arrives at investigating the mind to see that thoughts are inconstant and unreliable. A moment of mind without concepts becomes a memory in the next moment and then serves as just another concept, thus people can even imagine it to be a real self and set up a duality of thoughts versus no thoughts. Then they need to look again and integrate all experiences to see that all has the same nature as the mind. That way it becomes an analysis in the reverse order.

Malcolm said:

As pointed out, mundane direct perceptions are deceptive.

Astus wrote:

All perceptions are inconstant and unreliable, and when that is recognised, there is no more basis for attachment. It doesn't matter whether it's an elephant or just the illusion of an elephant.

Malcolm said:

The reason it is not recognized is because of lack of introduction. Someone might, eventually exhaust their concepts through analysis, and understand. But this is a very slow route, it takes eons.

Astus wrote:

Analysis is directed investigation, that is: vipasyana. Not theorising or arguing. That "slow exhaustion of concepts" is a straw man.

Malcolm said:

No, you merely need look at the perceiver who uses the six sense media, and understand it is not established in any way, mere empty clarity. You do not need analysis, you need direct introduction through experiences.

Astus wrote:

Analysis is exactly like that, except it does not posit a perceiver but investigates the six areas as they are and confirms directly that there is nothing to grasp.

Malcolm said:

Since the kind of analysis used by Kamalashila and which are you now advocating involves coarse conceptuality, it is very difficult, virtually impossible through analysis to discover the nonconceptual empty clarity of the mind and go beyond mind. But when one works with direct introduction, it is very easy.

Astus wrote:

In a sense it is understandable that analytical meditation had been put away as too

complicated and more experiential methods were raised as the direct path. Madhyamaka had become a large heap of arguments and theories, so no wonder many felt that it is too slow and such. The same happened to abhidharma. But that doesn't mean it was always like that or that's how it was meant to be used. Dzogchen and Mahamudra emphasising that one should go directly to the nature of mind, however, is practically not different from analysis. It goes through the same steps of establishing a calm mind, then investigating that very mind to ascertain its emptiness, finally arriving at the unity of samatha-vipasyana. If the mind were not looked into it would be simply just samatha. Kamalashila arrives at the nature of mind as well:

"One analyses by thinking that just as the mind, the identity of all phenomena too is like mere illusion. In this way when the identity of the mind is individually examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within or without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor of the present is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstratable and non-physical."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The extremes are not there, they are not established, they never existed from the beginning.

Astus wrote:

The problem is that they are thought to be established, although they are not. And that's the basic mistake.

Malcolm said:

But you don't even need to make these conceptual assumptions and then go about eliminating them. This is a very dim-witted approach.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is already present, no need to establish it, only to point it out as the source of the problems.

Malcolm said:

No, really it is much simpler than that. They need to receive direct introduction — then they need to work with the instructions of the lineage, which in general do not involve any analysis whatsoever, at least in Dzogchen.

Astus wrote:

Same happens everywhere else. One learns the teaching, understands it, then applies it. Analysis is following the guidance of the teachings to confirm for oneself its validity, like

checking if there's a self in the sensory areas.

Malcolm said:

If all perceptions are inconstant and reliable, then all analysis is unreliable.

Astus wrote:

Yes, even the teachings are empty, conventional and conditioned. If there were a teaching of the ultimate nature, then it would really contradict universal emptiness.

Malcolm said:

Analysis is directed investigation, that is: vipasyana. Not theorising or arguing. That "slow exhaustion of concepts" is a straw man.

But above, you clearly indicate that you have to adopt a theory to investigate. So you are now contradicting yourself.

Astus wrote:

Analysis is using the teachings to do an investigation. So when it talks about checking if there is any permanent element within the physical area, it's not just theorising whether that is the case or not, but looking at one's own present experience. This is what I have said before and say now.

Malcolm said:

No one is positing an ultimate perceiver here — the point there are not six consciousnesses apprehending six different kinds of media. There is one consciousness functioning through the six sense organs. The point is that when one understands that the magician is not real, one immediately understands that his tricks are also false. Going through and analyzing the six external sense objects is a waste of time.

Astus wrote:

There are a number of problems with positing a single consciousness, as taught from the early texts on in the context of the 18 dhatus. Actually, that's what one should recognise during analysis, that the mind is not a single entity but a series of instances, and then one can go further to see that even instances are not graspable as distinct entities. That's how the emptiness of both self and dharmas are confirmed. Looking for that single perceiver is no different from looking for the self and not finding it anywhere.

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka, in reality, merely serves as a corrective to the realism of the three lower tenet systems. It has no tenet system of its own. This is why Madhyamaka has not independent path which is separate from the path of Yogacara. The path of Yogacara and Madhyamaka is the same path, five paths and ten stages.

Astus wrote:

This interpretation of "corrective to the realism of the three lower tenet systems" makes sense only in the Tibetan system where only Vajrayana is viewed as something practical, while the so called sutra teachings are reduced to mere theory. Kamalashila does not

seem to see that way, nor do other Madhyamikas. As for the path, why should it come up with a new one? It is a Mahayana teaching for bodhisattvas.

Malcolm said:

The kinds of analysis Madhyamaka engages in is meant to serve as a corrective to realism.

Astus wrote:

If by realism you mean the basic grasping at supposedly real entities, then yes. If by that you mean only a theoretical view, then it is limiting the scope of the teachings for no good reason.

Malcolm said:

This is not the nature of the mind. The nature of the mind is not only emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Saying that the nature of mind is "empty-clarity" does not really add anything. When it is said that the mind is empty, that's not the same as saying there is no mind. Since the mind is per definition aware, saying that its nature is empty is the same as saying that awareness is empty, but the awareness of it is not diminished by this at all. Similarly, saying that a ball is red doesn't mean it is not also round, since being a ball means that it is round.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

conebeckham said:

No, it's based on habitual patterns; concepts are just the tip of the iceberg, really. This is why replacing one concept with another conceptual understanding is not close to liberation.

Ignorance is based on a mistake, but it is a much more pervasive misapprehension than just a "mistaken concept of the self."

Astus wrote:

Non-conceptual wisdom is the correct view of prajnaparamita that liberates all beings. It is non-conceptual not because there are no concepts, but because concepts are not reified and grasped. If concepts were just the tip of the iceberg, freedom from them would be less than upholding the precept against murder. However, freedom from conceptualising is liberating because if there is no self grasped, then no matter what experience appears, they have no impact and generate no karma.

Although I think what you meant by concepts were not the basic personal truths governing all one's actions but rather superficial verbalisations.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think surely non-conceptual wisdom is associated with trance states or at least profound inner stillness. The reason it escapes 'conceptual formations' is because they are quiescent in those states. That is why in some sense it is not an 'analytical' process, at least in the sense of 'analysis' understood by modern thinking.

Astus wrote:

If it were bound to a specific state it had no effect on one's life in general where concepts are plenty. Also, it'd be just like one of the absorptions, not liberation but part of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, and as pointed out above, it is a very slow approach because it relies on a coarse mind.

Astus wrote:

How slow? If someone cares to study a bit, then follow through the instructions, it is not that difficult. And I'm not bringing up here the whole minimum three aeons schedule, just the fairly ordinary person interested in the Dharma with the proper conditions to accept the teachings, etc.

Malcolm said:

So you admit that all analysis is unreliable.

Astus wrote:

Is there anything reliable?

Malcolm said:

Well then, it is pretty clear your notion of impermanence is merely an imputation, because there are plenty of counterfactual experiences of permanence.

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure I follow you here. Are you saying that there are experiences of permanence?

Malcolm said:

There is only one stream of momentary consciousness. It functions through the six sense organs like a monkey jumping from one window to the next. For example, when it functions through the eye, it is called "eye consciousness", when it jumps to the ear, it is

called "ear-consciousness." But one does not possess multiple consciousnesses at the same time. To propose that one does contradicts the basic definition of vijñāna-skandha.

Astus wrote:

No, there was no mention of multiple consciousnesses at the same time. However, the mind-stream does not affirm a single consciousness either, rather a series of many. The monkey's simile means that consciousness occurs where the hand and the branch makes contact, but there is no monkey going from one place to another. As the sutta explains: "what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>), and in another speech: "Consciousness, monks, is classified simply by the requisite condition in dependence on which it arises. ... Just as fire is classified simply by whatever requisite condition in dependence on which it burns"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.038.than.html>).

Malcolm said:

In the contrary, Madhyamakas also take this stance, as Nāgārjuna states; "If I had a position, I would be at fault; since I alone have no position, I alone am without fault."

Astus wrote:

That is where one has to arrive at, after due analysis. You know, relative truth first.

Malcolm said:

The problem with Madhyamaka is that it has a theoretical view: the two truths.

Astus wrote:

That is called an expedient means, and it has its use. It does not stand alone as some statement of ultimate value.

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka analysis does not address the nature of the mind; it merely rejects claims for existing existents and that is all.

Astus wrote:

True nature is no nature. What other nature is there to address?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Why Buddhism over Vedanta?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Also, since nobody ever experiences a permanent self, it is just a conceptual fantasy.

lostitude said:

How do you know that? Maybe some people have?

Astus wrote:

If they had experienced a permanent self, then they must have had that all the time. Permanence does not allow an experience to arise or disappear, thus no path or teaching to reach it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Why Buddhism over Vedanta?

Content:

catmoon said:

What made the difference to me was exposure to the Baghavad-Gita. I just couldn't make any sense of it at all. Then I heard a little of one of the Dalai Lama's talks, and his clarity, humour and depth caught my attention immediately.

Astus wrote:

Interesting, I liked the Gita very much and turned to Buddhism partly because koans were hard to make sense of.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

And again, the mind of analysis is a very coarse mind. That itself is a block for realization. For example, with our ordinary eyes we cannot see very subtle things. Likewise, with our ordinary conceptual minds we cannot realize what which is subtle and hard to realize. The best we can do is generate a coarse conceptual simulacrum. Then, in order to generate the subtle mind necessary for realizing the true nature of things, well, it takes a long time through sūtrayāna methods, many eons, just to even realize the first bhumi.

Astus wrote:

What defines coarse and subtle mind for you? No simulacrum is mentioned in the Bhavanakrama or other texts I'm aware of.

Malcolm said:

Sure.

Astus wrote:

And what is reliable? Something one can grasp and hang on to?

Malcolm said:

Yes, just like people have convincing experiences of ropes as snakes.

Astus wrote:

Nobody sees snakes all the time, they at best think there is a permanent substance behind/within what they can experience in the six senses.

Malcolm said:

Again, here is your claim that you have to begin with a position, only to abandon it later. This is like believing that in order to walk barefoot, one must first put on shoes and then take them off.

Astus wrote:

As noted before, people are already in the state of assuming positions and it is not adding another to point out the error.

Malcolm said:

And yet, again and again, so-called Madhyamikas make strenuous efforts to defend what they know is not true. This is the problem with Madhyamaka, again identified by Rongzom:

Astus wrote:

So, there are three things not understood: homogeneity (unity of the two truths), non-duality (unity not conceived as 1+1) and non-arising (lack of substance to come or go).

The two truths are not established as anything real, so talking of their homogeneity and non-duality is meaningless. As for non-arising, that is no different from knowing emptiness. While it sounds interesting how to make up faults in various systems, and then eventually repeat the same teachings with different words, it fails to actually show any errors. Unless this is merely a critique of style and not content, but in that case it is an aesthetic question.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 16th, 2015 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Why Buddhism over Vedanta?

Content:

lostitude said:

I don't see why? You can experience something permanent but not always be in the right frame of mind to experience it. It is like perceiving background noise, you actually hear it only if you pay sufficient attention to it.

Astus wrote:

Permanence excludes causality. Being recognised is a change in conditions. Also, if it is one's permanent self, the self is the one that should recognise itself, and since it is permanent, it either always knows itself or never.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course there is, it is the conceptual emptiness meditated/cultivated during heat on the path of application.

Astus wrote:

Still, Kamalashila does not talk about conceiving emptiness but realising it directly.

Malcolm said:

An experience of permanence is going to a place and seeing the same rock there, year in year out. Does not mean the rock is permanent, but it is the kind of thing that provides common people with their notion of permanence and durability.

Astus wrote:

It is a notion of permanence, a concept, that can be removed by directing them to analyse what they actually experience.

Malcolm said:

No, actually they are not. A lot of Buddhist training involves planting ideas in people's heads that actually they don't hold.

Astus wrote:

Ideas, like the permanence of rocks and other objects? Like the endurance of a real self? Otherwise, yes, there is a teaching to learn, in order to become aware of one's incorrect presumptions and then overcome them.

Malcolm said:

No, Madhyamikas understand nonarising [It is Yogacaras who do not], their problem is clinging to true relative truth.

Astus wrote:

How could it be true if it is conventional? The very meaning of conventional is that it is not true.

Malcolm said:

it is a critique of grasping in different systems, as already explained above.

Astus wrote:

It does not actually address the systems but reinterprets them according to his preferences and thus criticises systems that never existed. It's like those non-Buddhists who attack the Dharma because they misconstrue it as nihilism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

you did not provide a very detailed presentation.

Astus wrote:

Kamalashila <http://www.preciousteaching.org/sutra/kamalasilas-bhavana-krama-the-middle-meditation-stage/>:

"What properly examines suchness from within a state of calm-abiding meditation is penetrative insight."

"When suchness is properly meditated upon with wisdom, purified transcendent wisdom is realised. Since wisdom alone can realise suchness and can effectively eradicate the obscurations, I shall therefore search for suchness through wisdom while engaging in calm-abiding meditation. And I shall not remain content with calm-abiding meditation alone.

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of person and the self of phenomena. This is understood by the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise."

"What is thoroughly realised by the mind too is realised as being empty. By realising that, the very identity which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, etc., is also not ultimately perceived. In this way, when a person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom he would not analyse whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or non-contaminated, produced or non-produced and existent or non-existent.

Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its particularities also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way when the person does not firmly grasp on to the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated with wisdom, then the practitioner engages in a non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus identitylessness of all phenomena is also realised."

"In this way one who has entered in the suchness of the selflessness of person and phenomena is free from concept and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. One is free from expression and with one-pointed mental engagement one automatically enters in meditation without manifest discrimination. Thus one very clearly meditates on suchness and abides in it."

"If and when the mind is spontaneously engaging in meditative equipoise on suchness free of sinking and mental agitation, at that time it should be left naturally and the efforts relaxed."

Malcolm said:

Obviously, this does not work — case in point, eternalists.

Astus wrote:

Nobody can be forced to do vipasyana.

Malcolm said:

Many people do not have this idea. They meet Buddhadharma and then spend lots of time refuting a self they never believed existed to begin with.

Astus wrote:

The general idea of self includes that it remains the same from one day to another. What not many people have is a more sophisticated soul/atman view.

Malcolm said:

Umm, no.

Astus wrote:

How so? That something is only a conventionally agreed name means that it has no basis beyond the concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But what I'm pointing out is not a 'special state' - it is seeing through or beyond the machinations of discursive intellect.

Just remind us all again, what is the derivation of the terms 'ch'an' and 'zen'?

Astus wrote:

The machinations of discursive intellect cannot be seen through when it is suspended during absorption (dhyana). So, the Platform Sutra, chapter 4, says (BDK Edition, p 43): "Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

This suchness is a generic image of suchness, it is not real suchness.

Astus wrote:

"Thus such a mind in the entity of ultimate bodhicitta included within the path of seeing, which apprehends the selfless nature of all phenomena is generated. Through this achievement one enters into the path focusing on the reality of things and one is then born in the family of tathagatas, enters the bodhisattva category without flaws, turns away from all migrations, abides in the suchness of bodhisattvas and attains the first

bodhisattva bhumi (spiritual level)."

Malcolm said:

Many commoners do not really have this idea — first they have to be brainwashed into refuting a self most of them will readily agree they do not have, unless they have a belief in a soul. Many atheists are quite happy they have no soul, and if you tell them their "self" is a cognitive imputation, they happily go along with this idea.

Astus wrote:

Materialists take the body as the self and they are mostly unaware of the mind. Taking something as a self basically means being attached to it and taking it as the centre of one's view of the world. So it is meditation on and the analysis of the body and the physical world that is taught for them. In Kamalashila's method:

"The aggregates, sources of perception and elements in the ultimate sense are nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is due to the reason that when these are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of the subtle particles are individually examined, there is no definite identity that can be found. Due to attachment since beginningless time to imperfect things like physical form, to an ordinary being these things appear separate and outside the realm of the mind. This is like physical forms appearing in dreams. In the ultimate sense, physical form and so forth are nothing other than aspects of the mind."

Malcolm said:

we cannot say a car is nonexistent, even though it is conventional

Astus wrote:

There is no negation of apparent phenomena, rather the pointing out that they are only apparent without any basis or foundation, in other words: empty. Since emptiness is dependent origination, causality is not a problem at all, as long as it is understood what interdependence means. Objecting against dependent origination is not recognising its emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

catmoon said:

A while back Malcolm equated suchness and emptiness.

Can anyone (Malcolm included) think of an example where this doesn't hold? I can't, but I'm a bit foggy on suchness.

Astus wrote:

Suchness emphasises reality as a whole, emptiness emphasises the lack of substance. They are synonyms, but they highlight different aspects. Similarly, no-self is the same as

emptiness, but it has a personal emphasis in it, while dharmadhatu is more a universal emptiness, and at the same time dharmakaya is the emptiness of the buddhas' realisation, etc. There are so many expressions that basically mean the same but are used in various contexts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Brev said:

Is the argument that analysis alone isn't the only route here basically analogous to the following? You could prove that the earth is roughly spherical by analysis by setting up big pillars, measuring their shadows, and roughly calculating the circumference of the earth based on that . . . but you still wouldn't have the exact shape of the earth because it's flatter on top and bottom and bulges in the ocean, so you'd then have to send expeditions to the North and South Poles, take measurements in the ocean, etc. In the meantime, continuing to insist that earth's not flat would be pointless because that was long ago established and you're onto finer measurements. Or . . . you could just see the shape of the earth from a shuttle.

Astus wrote:

Here's my perspective:

Analysis is measuring the Earth from all angles. Realisation without analysis is saying that measuring takes too long and one should just take a look from space. The problem with that non-analytical approach is that they don't have a spaceship.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2015 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

"This is the path of engaging in a union of calm abiding meditation and insight. Its focuses on the image conceptually and non-conceptually." pg. 140.

Thus, "This suchness is a generic image of suchness, it is not real suchness," as I said.

Astus wrote:

According to HHDL's commentary (p 141) it doesn't refer to some image but it's a synonym:

"Then once more continue your meditation on the union of special insight and calm abiding, which is also known as focusing on the reflection both conceptually and non-conceptually."

And Kamalashila continues:

"Thus, through this progress, a yogi should meditate on suchness for an hour, or half a session in the night, or one full session, or for as long as is comfortable. This is the meditative stabilization thoroughly discerning the ultimate, as taught in the Descent into Lanka Sutra."

It is on suchness, not some image of suchness. And that's what is in the text in every place, directly seeing suchness, not simply an image or concept of it.

The quote provided in my previous post states: "apprehends the selfless nature of all phenomena", and that's the very result of the vipasyana. It would be quite pointless to achieve simply a generic concept, since for that there is no need to perform any meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 12:20 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, Astus, this part of the text is not talking about the first bhumi. This is talking about heat on the path of application where in fact you reflect on generic concepts of emptiness.

Astus wrote:

That does not really fit with the description of what is performed during meditation.

"In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing; having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized."

Then that conclusion of vipasyana is false. Or in the following paragraphs it switches topic to describe the path from a different perspective.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The term " rtoḡs pa " in Tibetan means either "to realize" or "to understand." Here it means the latter more than former.

The conclusion is not false, it is merely a conceptual approximation that is cultivated on the path of application. And the text does not switch topics, you just are not following the gradualist perspective of Kamalashila correctly.

Astus wrote:

In Adam's translation (p 207):

"When a yogin does not actually hold firmly to the nature of any entity, then he enters nonconceptual samadhi. And he also understands the absence of inherent nature of all things."

And while he uses understanding there, the previous sentence says one realises nonconceptual samadhi, and it is because of that that one can understand emptiness. If the suchness there were just an imagined concept, it wouldn't be nonconceptual samadhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 3:05 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

Thus, still, this shows a yogin who has not yet achieved the path of seeing.

Astus wrote:

Here are some further clarifications then from Adam's translation of the 1st Bhavanakrama, key terms underlined by me:

From the section on moving from reasoning to meditation

"Thus having ascertained the real meaning by means of the wisdom of thinking, one should give rise to the wisdom of meditation in order to directly perceive it."
(p 134)

From the section on vipasyana

"When this is so, one is established in the practical realization of the lack of inherent nature of all dharmas. Because the one who is established there enters ultimate suchness, there is the entry into nonconceptual samadhi. And thus when the yogin is established in the knowledge that has no appearance of nondual knowledge, then, due to his being established in the ultimate suchness he sees the Mahayana."
(p 142)

From the section on meditation on the absolute

"Thus other conceptualizations definitely do not arise for him at that time because of the pervasion of all conceptualizations by conceptions of existence and nonexistence, and because when there is an absence of pervader there is no possibility of that which is to be pervaded. This itself is the yoga of the highest nonconceptualization."
(p 145)

From the section on the bhumis

"Thus in this stage, the bodhisattva is delighted on account of understanding for the first time the suchness that was not understood. Hence this stage is called 'delighted'."
(p 154)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Brev said:

Definitely makes sense that it seems fishy for analysis to be unnecessary in practice. How could you be sure that wrong views weren't sneaking in if you couldn't analytically identify them as wrong views and correct your view through one-pointed concentration on emptiness?

Astus wrote:

Correct view is first obtained by studying the teachings. Meditation is to confirm their validity and apply it to one's life.

Brev said:

However, aren't there experiences that are certainly within reach that would deepen just about any practitioner's understanding of this or that facet of emptiness?

Astus wrote:

Experiences of impermanence, dependent origination and emptiness are always there, as those are the very nature of experiences. The important thing is to recognise them. Thus no matter what experiences one may have, unless their's nature is realised, there is no insight.

Brev said:

is your objection to the approach of direct introduction that it too is only an approximation and must be supported by analysis, that it is a false path (i.e. not a "spaceship" to see "Earth" from), or something else?

Astus wrote:

If introduction means bringing one's attention to the nature of reality, then it is not different from what one does during analysis. However, if it means simply putting oneself into the realised state, it lacks the cause for insight, therefore it's not possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

conebeckham said:

Shall we say that the taste of honey can be adequately grasped by the intellect? Or must one have first hand experience of the taste of honey to actually experience it? To paraphrase one of my favorite quotes, "analyzing the taste of honey is like dancing about architecture."

Astus wrote:

It is the intellect that tells one that a certain group of experiences are what can be called honey. But that's not the same as not tasting honey. It's just that without intellect you can never know if that's honey or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

conebeckham said:

And without the experience of tasting honey, all intellectual conceptualizations are inadequate.

Astus wrote:

And that's the point of vipasyana, to bring the teachings to the level of experience. Similarly, knowing of the precepts but not abiding by them has little use in generating merit.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

And a counterclarification from the same text, pg. 153.

Unshakable by the likes of Mārā, when one cultivates suchness with the power of zeal, then the stage of zealous conduct is distinguished on the basis of intense zeal. The bodhisattva existing in this stage, although still an ordinary person, has completely passed beyond all the calamities of a fool and is endowed with innumerable qualities like samadhis, spells, freedoms, superknowledges and so on.

Astus wrote:

And the preceding sentence says: "as long as one does not directly experience the suchness (tattvam) of the selflessness of the personality and of dharmas, (there is) only a very intense zeal"

However, as shown in my previous collection of clarifying quotes, meditation is about direct perception, and through vipasyana that is what is achieved. The zealous stage is about aspiring to that direct experience, it is the time of practice on the basis of the instructions, required before realisation is attained.

The text continues in the section on zealous conduct:

"But when one would ascertain the non-dual knowledge which is devoid of the forms of the object and subject, then this is the degree of penetration designated "The best (worldly) condition" (agradharma). And this is called "The samadhi without interval" because, in fact, immediately following it one enters into suchness."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that you kept denying there was a conceptual meditation on suchness and thus, were quoting passages not in accordance with their meaning.

Astus wrote:

The point here is that vipasyana's aim is not just gaining a theory but attaining an understanding through insight into emptiness, and thus it qualifies for at least the first bhumi.

And from previous posts:

Malcolm said:

Vipaśyāna is conceptual. That is its limitation. Plus, Madhyamaka analysis is ultimately dualistic.

Astus wrote:

Of course it is conceptual, and conceptuality is dualistic. Every teaching is within the realm of the conceptual, and the point is to see that what are grasped as real, solid things are actually conceptual and dependent.

Malcolm said:

A conceptual knowledge of emptiness is still a mere concept, and results in being fettered. A simulacrum, not the real thing.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is based on the mistaken concept of self. Removing that is wisdom. Knowledge of emptiness as a mere concept is not knowledge of emptiness. The conceptual knowledge of emptiness is when the concept of substance is proven to be false.

Malcolm said:

Anyway, such analysis is not necessary in Dzogchen practice, not in any sense at all.

Astus wrote:

At this moment, you are free from all fixed notions of what mind might be, and liberation itself is actualized: "There is nothing there: transfixed in wonder,"
(<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/tsik-sum-nedek-commentary>)

In the 3rd Bhavanakrama, (tr Adam, p 246), Kamalashila writes:

"And if the yogin's mindfulness and attention towards dharmas can't proceed because of being bereft of mindfulness or in a state of stupefaction, then how could this completely stupefied one be a yogin? And in that circumstance, by practicing nonmindfulness and nonattention without the discernment of reality, ignorance itself would become one's habit! Precisely on account of that, the light of knowledge would recede. But if this [yogin] is not bereft of mindfulness, nor stupefied, then how in that circumstance could he undertake nonmindfulness and nonattention without the discernment of reality? For it is not logical to assert that it is precisely in being mindful that one is not mindful, and that precisely in seeing one does not see."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

DGA said:

At this point, I'm having a hard time tracking what is meant by "conceptual" and "analysis" in this discussion. In regard to suchness: it seems to me that The Awakening of Faith of Asvaghosa is precisely a series of contemplations, analytical in nature, delineating suchness. This text uses a kind of analysis in order to point the reader toward something in particular. is this an example of analysis, or nothing, or both?

Astus wrote:

Analysis in the context of meditation, i.e. vipasyana, means investigating one's experiences based on the teachings to confirm their emptiness. It is a conceptual process (involves thinking), as one relies on the teachings. So, if one has to consider whether the self is found in the eyes, the seen or the eye-consciousness, one has to be aware of the meanings of eyes-seen-seer, and then observe whether there is anything stable or graspable. The observation part is informed by the teaching - i.e. the instruction to check if there's anything permanent - but at the same time it is also related directly to one's experience of seeing. It is not merely theorising, as some like to think about it, but it is also not suspending one's thoughts.

The AFM contains instructions for both samatha and vipasyana, although it is not in the usual Indian format. There it is during the practice of samatha/cessation that one directly enters suchness:

"All thoughts, as soon as they are conjured up, are to be discarded, and even the thought of discarding them is to be put away, for all things are essentially in the state of transcending thoughts, and are not to be created from moment to moment nor to be

extinguished from moment to moment; thus one is to conform to the essential nature of Reality (dharmata) through this practice of cessation. And it is not that he should first meditate on the objects of the senses in the external world and then negate them with his mind, the mind that has meditated on them."

And in chapter 1:

Question: If such is the meaning of the principle of Mahayana, how is it possible for men to conform themselves to and enter into it?

Answer: If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks, nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks, nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it. And when they are freed from their thoughts, they are said to have entered into it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

I don't know why you bother citing Patrul Rinpoche, as he merely illustrates my point.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is clear that there is no contradiction between what you and what Patrul Rinpoche (and others) say. I did not mean to imply that you are misrepresenting Dzogchen or Vajrayana.

What I have tried to highlight is that the amazement/wonder/shock technique in Dzogchen seems to be what's addressed by the quoted passage from Kamalashila.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Brev said:

When Kamalashila mentions becoming stupefied, is he talking about engaging in shamatha without vipasyana? If so, then I think the heart of the disagreement might just be about whether resting in the natural state is equivalent to shamatha.

Astus wrote:

The necessity of vipasyana after samatha is discussed elsewhere. The state of stupefaction is used as an example of the suspension/cessation of concepts in order to experience nonconceptuality, as a kind of short cut to realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

I don't think so. He is addressing a different problem.

Astus wrote:

How so?

Patrul Rinpoche:

"introduced in and upon the very dissolution of conceptual mind"

Kamalashila:

"If it is said that one enters (nonconceptuality) through nonmindfulness and nonattention toward all dharmas, that is not reasonable."

...

"when nonmindfulness and nonattention occur, without the discernment of reality how could dharmas' lack of independent existence come to be realized?"

...

"And if the yogin's mindfulness and attention towards dharmas can't proceed because of being bereft of mindfulness or in a state of stupefaction, then how could this completely stupefied one be a yogin?"

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2015 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

I really think it means mental torpor or dullness. It's a faulty attempt at shamatha, like a cow not thinking much as it stands in it's field.

Astus wrote:

The word used is "mūḍha".

<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/tamil/index.html> mfn. stupefied , bewildered , perplexed , confused , uncertain or at a loss about (loc. or comp.) AV. &c.&c. ; stupid , foolish , dull , silly , simple Mn. MBh. &c. ; swooned , indolent L. ; gone astray or adrift As3vGr2. ; driven out of its course (as a ship) R. ; wrong , out of the right place (as the fetus in delivery) Sus3r. ; not to be ascertained , not clear , indistinct A1past. R. ; perplexing , confounding VP. ; m. a fool , dolt MBh. Ka1v. &c. ; pl. (in Sa1m2khyā) N. of the elements Tattvas. ; n. confusion of mind Sarvad.

<http://spokensanskrit.de/>: at a loss about, not to be ascertained, confounding, foolish,

uncertain or at a loss about, gone astray or adrift, uncertain about, out of the right place, silly, indistinct, confused, perplexing, wrong, indolent, perplexed, swooned, driven out of its course, simple [dull-witted], stupefied, not clear, bewildered, idiotic.

<http://dictionary.buddhistdoor.com/chi/word/256041/m%C5%AB%E1%B8%8Dha%E1%B8%A5>: 癡者 (imbecile / sentimental / stupid / foolish / silly), 呆子 (fool / sucker); tib. glen pa

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 19th, 2015 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Brev said:

Ah, I see. Isn't it possible that the wonder that Patrul Rinpoche referred to is an awareness beyond concepts that induces wonder?

Astus wrote:

It is an awareness without concepts. Just like when you are frightened by something, there is a moment of strong/bright awareness without being busy with ideas. Or when you are amazed by some fine piece of art or natural phenomenon. But perhaps Malcolm is willing to elaborate.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 19th, 2015 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

smcj said:

Those definitions seem to support my post.

Astus wrote:

It is used in the context of directly accessing non-conceptuality. It is mistaking a vacant mind as the realisation of emptiness.

So, Patrul Rinpoche writes that when the mind is shocked, there is a mind without concepts, and that is the insight into suchness. And there is another approach, looking at the gap between thoughts, as for instance Dudjom Rinpoche taught:

"In the gap between the last thought's cessation and the next's arising, isn't there a fresh, present knowing that has not been modified even in the slightest—luminous, naked awareness? That itself is awareness's abiding state!" (Wisdom Nectar, p 49)

I think that is the approach Kamalashila criticises.

However, Dzogchen does not stop at that point, and it moves on to integrating movement and appearances in general into the view of the natural state, that way

learning gradually that phenomena are not to be grasped, because they are the display of that pristine awareness. Thus it is not enough to have an experience of mind without concepts, but one needs to diligently apply the teaching that experiences arise and dissolve, in other words: self-liberate; or in traditional terminology: they are impermanent. At this point we arrive at the very basis of vipasyana as it's been taught since the Nikayas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 19th, 2015 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Analysis or Nothing

Content:

Malcolm said:

All that was said was that Dzogchen is not a path of analysis and that Kamalashila's objections were rejected.

Astus wrote:

When I wrote "the very basis of vipasyana as it's been taught since the Nikayas", I meant that it teaches the primary form of analysis. True, not like going through all the arguments of one-many, cause-effect, production-extinction, etc., however, those are not used with mind-only either that Kamalashila also writes about.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 20th, 2015 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

Astus wrote:

Turning buddhas into gods creates a large number of theological problems that are not particularly addressed in any meaningful manner. That is because while on the surface people pray to Guanyin for health, wealth, good weather and such, for those who look for a deeper meaning she becomes the heroine of compassion and wisdom to emulate, and ultimately a manifestation of the nature of mind.

"the Tathagata isn't concerned with whether all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it will be led to release by means of that [Dhamma]. But he does know this: 'All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led [to release] from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances — those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment — having well-established their minds in the four frames of reference, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for Awakening."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.095.than.html>)

"There is a great castle, which has only one gate. Many people come and go, and pass through it, without hindrance. And no one destroys it and takes it away. That is how matters stand."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 36, tr Yamamoto)

Some works on buddhahood:

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/buddha-omniscience.pdf>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=50pEORtu4jQC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=1vGzvLkYs2MC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=uNiW2YElyQYC>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

smcj said:

it creates problems for us because anything that even remotely reminds us of Christianity sends us into hysterics.

Astus wrote:

I meant theological/philosophical problems, not general materialist antipathy towards spiritual entities. Buddhism is polytheist, but gods are not the saviours of humanity, nor do they really care about them. Also, they are neither omnipotent nor omniscient. A pantheon of powerful benevolent deities who are supposed to help all beings is fine as long as one does not question the various inconsistencies. Since even buddhas are unable to make the slightest change in beings' karma, it's all up to each individual to correct their errors and attain liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

smcj said:

That depends on what you mean by "savior". Do you think they have not soteriological function? Plus you've just dismissed a whole lot of literature about the compassion of Chenrezig, etc.

Astus wrote:

Is there any sutra or even some school of Buddhism where they say that a buddha or a bodhisattva can actually put a being into nirvana? I have not yet to see one. Although when I write gods I mean gods, not buddhas. Chenrezig is not a god.

smcj said:

But I don't have a problem with the idea of an omniscient Sambhogakaya or Dharmakaya. Do you?

Astus wrote:

If omniscient is understood as literally knowing everything, then yes, there are problems with that. To begin with, it is in conflict with choice, i.e. the classic philosophical problem of fate/predetermination vs. free will. Also, <http://metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/2Majjhima-Nikaya/Majjhima2/076-sandaka-e1.html> contains a number of objections against people claiming omniscience.

smcj said:
Such as....?

Astus wrote:
First and foremost, that there is no clear manifestation of superhuman beings interfering with humans. While innumerable sects and religions claim that it is their god/s doing this and that, none can put forth anything beyond unfounded claims.

smcj said:
If so, then why are all my teachers telling me to do 111,111 Vajrasattva mantras?

Astus wrote:
You do the practice, not Vajrasattva. And there is a nice term in Buddhism for that: skilful means.

smcj said:
Their intention and efficacy is to transform the sentient being into an enlightened being. The sentient being must choose to practice. In the Vajrayana deity practice it is a joint effort, there is a lot more "oomph" to it. Think of it like the difference between an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar. The amplification is coming from somewhere other than the willpower of the guitarist.

Astus wrote:
If buddhas cannot modify beings' minds they cannot make them enlightened or even bring closer to them directly. That does not mean there can be no interaction, it only excludes one's karma being in any way modified by external forces. So, Amitabha cannot put beings into Sukhavati, beings have to establish the required conditions in their minds in order to gain birth there. Same with other buddha-lands.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 5:22 PM
Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood
Content:
pothigai said:
How do they benefit beings then?

Astus wrote:
In terms of liberation, gods (Indra, Brahma, etc.) are mostly useless. Nevertheless, just like one person may build a bridge that others use, it is not impossible for gods to be of some assistance. In a similar way, bodhisattvas and buddhas can provide help using

numerous means. But in the end it's up to each and every person to develop the factors of enlightenment and attain bodhi.

On the other hand, if one understands that whatever one experiences depends on one's karma - mental conditioning - it becomes clear that even what appears the work of buddhas or maras are only one's own concepts. At the same time, because those are one's own concepts, they are the works of buddhas or maras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

pothigai said:

I meant, how do Buddhas/Bodhisattvas benefit beings?

Astus wrote:

It is through giving that bodhisattvas and buddhas benefit beings. There are three kinds of giving (dana paramita): material objects, reverence, Dharma.

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-03.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

smcj said:

I am doing the practice. Vajrasattva is doing the purifying. Otherwise I might as well be visualizing Mickey Mouse and chanting M-I-C-K-E-Y-M-O-U-S-E, because there actually is no Vajrasattva doing the cleansing of my karma, right? Mickey too would be just as much "skillful means" as anything else, right?

Astus wrote:

It all depends on one's beliefs. A buddha can't do anything unless one has faith, but a dog's tooth (nb. a dog is traditionally a very lowly animal) can bring immense blessings if one is devoted enough. Apparently the object is irrelevant.

"If you have no faith and devotion at all, you will get absolutely nothing. Without faith, even meeting the Buddha himself and being accepted as his disciple would be quite useless, as it was for the monk Sunaksatra ... and for the Buddha's cousin, Devadatta.

...

When one has confident faith, the Buddha's compassion can be present in anything. This is illustrated by the tale of the faithful old woman who was helped towards Buddhahood by a dog's tooth."

(Patrul Rinpoche: The Words of My Perfect Teacher, p 173)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 22nd, 2015 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

Astus wrote:

The object is irrelevant in determining the efficacy, because what matters is devotion. At the same time, devotion is conditioned normally by how an object is perceived. There is the common metaphor of a child in a temple who knows nothing about the various buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities, but is simply awed by the colourful pictures and statues. But once one learns things like who is Vajrasattva, who is Chenrezig, who is Padmasambhava, then those exist within a net of associated attributes, just like other objects of the world. Similarly, while most people know nothing about John of Nepomuk or Gerard Sagredo, to others they are not only people of the past but also active spiritual entities they can interact with. However, while Guanyin and Mary may share some attributes outwardly, they exist in very different contexts and represent different values, therefore, religious practices involving one or the other strengthen distinct mental qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 22nd, 2015 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

smcj said:

He certainly created an unnecessary hornet's nest by banning one particular practice, which according to you is completely irrelevant.

Astus wrote:

Irrelevant in terms of efficacy. Not irrelevant in what things symbolise and people associate them with.

smcj said:

you might actually be saying that there is no "source of Refuge" in couched terms.

Astus wrote:

People take refuge in all sorts of things and beings. What makes the Triple Jewel special is that it leads to freedom from all forms of reliance, in other words, refuges. If there were an ultimate refuge it would mean a permanent thing/being.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 23rd, 2015 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: The Nature of Buddhahood

Content:

BrianG said:

The blessings are dependent on one's devotion. It is difficult to develop devotion towards an ordinary dog's tooth. The reason it brought blessings in the story is because

someone thought that it was a relic of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Exactly as you say. It is one's perception (judgement) of the object that made it something to be devoted to and worshipped. I did not say that ordinary objects are themselves inspirational, quite the opposite. That's why there is Vajrasattva practice and no Mickey Mouse puja. Although it could be said that Mickey has probably more followers/devotees than Vajrasattva, it's just that the philosophies involved are different.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 23rd, 2015 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: How dedication works?

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

dedication is watering the seeds on the alaya. there are no 'all beings' and no merit. so in other words: yes

Astus wrote:

The storehouse-consciousness (alayavijnana) is individual and not universal.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 24th, 2015 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: How dedication works?

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

of course it is individual and not universal... but other beings and their suffering is coming from our mind. without the seeds for suffering we would not even see suffering or hear suffering.

Astus wrote:

If that were so, buddhas could not know about beings who suffer.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 24th, 2015 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: How dedication works?

Content:

kirtu said:

And in fact there are schools that assert that Buddhas do not see the suffering of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

Since the earliest scriptures it is taught that a buddha knows his own past lives and sees the way beings are reborn according to their karma. Not seeing that beings suffer would mean being oblivious to their karma. Also, it seems clear from the stories of

Shakyamuni that he was very much aware of the mental conditions beings are in. It might be said that dharmakaya and sambhogakaya are not in contact with ordinary beings, but not the nirmanakaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 25th, 2015 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Short answer: no.

Although Buddhism teaches that ignorance distorts one's sense of reality, it primarily refers to the assumption of a permanent self, because based on that one grasps at experiences and thus generates dissatisfaction. Removing that ignorance does not mean the collapse/disappearance of the world but the liberation from suffering. Although one being may attain liberation, it does not mean everyone else becomes free at the same time. Thus the Buddha taught the path to nirvana to others.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 25th, 2015 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Oriander said:

So, how I must to understand the diamond sutra?

Astus wrote:

Regarding appearances as illusory means not assuming a substance within them, or a substrate behind them. In other words, one has experiences, but there is no solid self to experience them. From one moment to another there are instances of consciousness, but no enduring, unchanging mind to be aware of them. Seeing that experiences are without substance and without a solid experiencer, there is nothing left to be attached to. Again, in different terms, one calls things this and that, but those names are just names, they don't represent or address anything solid. Therefore one should know that concepts are without any ultimate reality and they are used only according to conventions.

Here is the origin of that stanza, with the Buddha's explanation:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.095.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 25th, 2015 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Oriander said:

My understanding about yogacara is correct?

Astus wrote:

Not really.

What Yogacara describes as the teaching of mind only (cittamatra) or cognition only (vijñaptimatra) means that what we experience is given meaning within a mental framework that projects identity and substance, setting up both subject and object. This conceptual framework of defining experiences is habitually maintained from moment to moment and from life to life, as one bases one's actions on one's judgements about one's perceptions, and those perceptions are interpreted according to the mental framework that conceives them. Thus there is a continual feedback between framework - perception - action, establishing habits. As long as one is unaware of this process, one keeps following those habits. The realisation that appearances are cognition only means that one understands how one's concepts about oneself and the world are unfounded, and that they are the products of one's own mind, thus there is no more reason to cling to the conceptual framework as if it were real.

As you can see, it is not about setting up some universal mind or a solipsist metaphysics. It is the point out the processes going on in one's mind in order to attain enlightenment.

Recommended readings:

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro.html>

<http://online.sfsu.edu/rone/Buddhism/Yogacara/basicideas.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 26th, 2015 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: 11th Tantric Vow and Shikantaza?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is the ultimate reality. Shikantaza is embodying prajnaparamita. It does meet the requirement to be called "meditating on voidness", unless what is meant in that samaya is some "let's give some thoughts to the general concept of the lack of substance".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 26th, 2015 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Oriander said:

Thank you. Please, could you evaluate this 25-years experienced buddhist monk? What he say about? He say about 65 frames/seeds per moment - they create whole world.

Astus wrote:

Besides what DGA mentioned, what he seems to say there is just the general teaching of momentariness mixed with the Yogacara teaching of seeds. However, what is metaphorically called a seed is not just anything but habitual impressions stored in the mind. It is not just any activity, but things that one is conditioned to and thus conditioned by. It can also be added that this is not simply memory or knowing a skill, but what is primarily referred to are karmic attachments, that is, those charged with emotional values that can be simply summed up as things we like and things we dislike.

Here is an example for how habitual conditioning (seeds) affects our perception:

"This is also exemplified by a particular beautiful physical form. When a lustful person looks at it, he takes it to be pure and marvelous and so his mind develops a defiling attachment. When a person who practices the contemplation of impurity looks at it, he perceives all manner of disgusting discharges and finds that there is not a single part of it that is pure. When one who is also a woman looks at it, she may be jealous and hateful to the point where she is filled with disgust, cannot bear to look upon it, and is of the opinion that it is impure. The lustful person contemplates this same thing and regards it as pleasurable. The jealous person contemplates this and takes it as a cause of bitterness. The yogin contemplates this and gains the Path. A person with no particular interest contemplates this and finds nothing either attractive or repellent in it. It is the same for him as looking at earth or trees."

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-03.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 26th, 2015 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

Sixty five seeds per second is a traditional teaching

Astus wrote:

In what tradition? What treatise?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 27th, 2015 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Niu-T'ou Fa-Jung & Oxhead School of Ch'an

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no English language study devoted mainly to the Niutou school, only bits and pieces in other works. For instance: Robert Sharf: Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism, p 39-51.

"By far the most cited Chan master was Niutou Farong, who is cited a total of thirty-three times (including fifteen times as Rong Dashi; and six times each to Niutou

Farong's Notes to the Vimalakīrti and Huayan sūtras). If we add the nine references to the work of Niutou Farong's disciple Niutou Foku (Wusheng yi), over 10 percent of all references to Chan faction masters (not including the generic references to Gude, Xiande, etc.) in the Zongjing lu are associated with the Niutou lineage. The appearance of the Niutou faction in the Zongjing lu is attributable to the strong presence of Niutou lineage masters, like Foku*, on Mt. Tiantai."

*Foku: "Foku established the Foku Chan Cloister 佛窟禪院 on Mt. Tiantai, and Foku's senior disciple, Yunju Puzhi 雲居普智, propagated Niutou teaching from the Yunju Cloister 雲居院, revived through the efforts of Deshao."

(Conception of Chan in the Zongjinglu, p 116-117; p297n9)

"fascicle 4 of the Chuandeng lu devotes considerable attention to the collateral Niutou (Oxhead) lineage descended from Daoxin. The Niutou lineage is charted through six generations: Niutou Farong, Zhiyan, Huifang, Fachi, Zhiwei, and Huizhong.

In total, the names of seventy-six masters are mentioned in association with the Niutou faction, seventeen with records included."

(Monks, Rulers, and Literati, p 129)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 27th, 2015 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Pyrokinesis, demonstration. Siddhi in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you are looking for practices to attain powers, look into the Visuddhimagga, ch 12-13 (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/PathofPurification2011.pdf>).

As a side note, looking for powers can come from insecurity. It is natural that beings want to take control and feel certainty. However, it is also a reason for suffering and feeling dissatisfied. Things change and we cannot manipulate them as we wish to, as everything depends on numerous causes and conditions. Even what we call our thoughts, feelings and body are often beyond our control. To contemplate this is how to gain insight into the true nature of the way things are.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 29th, 2015 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Care to critique this notion for me?

Content:

Brev said:

I've long thought that virtually any explanation for existence is nonsense because most fail to be ultimate explanations and hence are themselves unexplained.

Astus wrote:

That's a fine beginning of building up some philosophical system, but it's not relevant to Buddhism. In what way does it relate to the four noble truths, to bodhicitta?

Brev said:

And our mindstream is a dependently designated fiber running through this ocean or static of awareness that only exists in a particular way once it is designated so.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean here that mind-stream exists within a larger mind? That would be a pointless supposition of a larger mind.

Brev said:

the natural way to stop the endless circling is to purify our karma and cultivate the roots of virtue.

Astus wrote:

Cultivating virtue is good, but does not end rebirth.

Brev said:

the only way to permanently free our mindstream from cycling through the various realms of minds is to undo our ignorance of the actual manner in which we exist, i.e. to perceive emptiness.

Astus wrote:

The mind-stream is what is generally called mind, there are no two minds for one being. Perceiving emptiness is realising the emptiness of the mind, that it is without any basis or substance. It is just a stream of experiences that are themselves nothing solid or reliable.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 29th, 2015 at 5:35 AM

Title: Re: Care to critique this notion for me?

Content:

Brev said:

I meant that the mind-stream is within the basic space of phenomena.

Astus wrote:

Phenomena are what occur as the mind-stream, instances of experiences that make up a series, i.e. the mind-stream.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 29th, 2015 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: Care to critique this notion for me?

Content:

Matt J said:

There's a thought experiment about a color theorist who lives in a (literally) black and white world. The walls are black, her clothes are white, and so on. She learns everything there is no know about color: the physics, the science, how it is used in language and

poetry. But this doesn't really tell her what color is even like.

Astus wrote:

Blue Cliff Record, case 88:

Hsuan Sha, teaching the community, said, "The old adepts everywhere all speak of guiding and aiding living beings. Supposing they encountered three kinds of sick person, how would they guide them? With a blind person, they could pick up the gavel or raise the whisk, but he wouldn't see. With a deaf person, he wouldn't hear the point of words. With a mute person, if they had him speak, he wouldn't be able to speak. But how would they guide such people? If they couldn't guide these people, then the Buddha Dharma has no effect."

A monk asked Yun Men for instruction on this. Yun Men said, "Bow." The monk bowed and rose. Yun Men poked at him with his staff; the monk drew back. Yun Men said, "You're not blind." Then Yun Men called him closer; when the monk approached, Men said, "You're not deaf." Next Yun Men said, "Do you understand?" The monk said, "I don't understand." Yun Men said, "You're not mute." At this the monk had an insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 29th, 2015 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Anti-semitism at DW

Content:

Astus wrote:

Read through the thread. Still no sign or citation of anti-semitism present on DW.

As some may notice, I live in Budapest (one of its nicknames, coming from far-right people but embraced by some Jews: Judapest). I generally recognise anti-semitic statements and attitudes when I see them, although how it happens in other countries/cultures might be different. As why there are still those who have a general negative attitude towards Jews, it's a cultural heritage. It's now moved to the level of myth, at least in my region of the world where Jews are mostly invisible (no special robes, hats, etc., and even if one or two wears them, nobody recognises them to be Jews). At the same time, Muslims are fairly visible, especially women, so nationalist people do have a group of people to recognise as the enemy, they're easy targets.

Still, as mentioned before, presence of anti-semitism at DW has not yet been demonstrated.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 30th, 2015 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Care to critique this notion for me?

Content:

Brev said:

Would it be correct to say that the mindstream is an illusion, there being no arising, and each moment of experience is an expression of the Dharmadhatu?

Astus wrote:

Arising, duration and cessation are concepts. Even a mind-stream is just a concept. Nevertheless, it is a useful description. As for "expression of the Dharmadhatu", no. The mind-stream is the Dharmadhatu.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 30th, 2015 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Care to critique this notion for me?

Content:

Brev said:

The mindstream is a useful concept, absolutely. Does that contradict it being illusory? We ordinary beings don't recognize it as an illusion, but it is, right?

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by illusion? If you mean that it's without a permanent substance, then yes, it is illusory.

Brev said:

And a single moment in the mindstream is the Dharmadhatu in the sense that each phenomenon reflects all others, but an individual recognizes in that moment phenomena in an obscured way and not the Dharmadhatu proper, right?

Astus wrote:

The dharmadhatu is the ultimate nature. That phenomena are empty, that is called the ultimate truth. There is no emptiness outside of phenomena. Phenomena themselves are empty. Whether one realises that or not is a different matter.

Brev said:

Doesn't one only recognize it upon enlightenment? Do you mean that the mindstream is the Dharmadhatu in that the true nature of experience is the emptiness of phenomena?

Astus wrote:

Yes, experience itself is empty. It cannot be anything else.

Brev said:

Or that one inevitably attains enlightenment, upon which omniscience is achieved and the Dharmadhatu is recognized and hence the mindstream itself really is at that point the Dharmadhatu proper?

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is not inevitable unless one is already on the path.

In the Huayan school they talk of

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Dharmadh%C4%81tu.

1. discrete objects (excluding emptiness - 'this is a vase')
2. emptiness (excluding objects - 'there is no vase')
3. mixing of objects and emptiness (but still thought of as two sides - 'conventionally vase, ultimately no vase')
4. non-obstruction of objects (single reality of suchness - 'a vase is just a vase')

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 1st, 2015 at 5:52 PM

Title: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"zazen is just to become present in the process of zazen itself ... Whatever happens, all we have to do is to be constantly present right in the middle of the process of zazen. This is the beginning and also the end. You can do it; it is open to all people, whoever they are. This is shikantaza." (<https://naturalmind.wordpress.com/2009/03/13/to-live-is-just-to-live/>)

"Mindfulness meditation is unique in that it is not directed toward getting us to be different from how we already are. Instead, it helps us become aware of what is already true moment by moment. We could say that it teaches us how to be unconditionally present; that is, it helps us be present with whatever is happening, no matter what it is." (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-courage-be-present/201001/how-practice-mindfulness-meditation>)

"Mindfulness is meeting the moment as it is, moment after moment after moment, wordlessly attending to our experiencing as it actually is. It is opening to not just the fragments of our lives that we like or dislike or view as important, but the whole of our experiencing. ... It is the active recognition that any perceptions you have of "you" are just details rising and falling within countless other details, shifting and changing moment after moment. Mindfulness means please, please, please shut up and pay attention to this life as it really is, opening attention again and again through remembrance to some aspect of present experience in order to open past that to the context in which experiences rise and fall as such." (<http://wwzc.org/dharma-text/meaning-mindfulness>)

What difference is there between the ever more popular mindfulness practice and zazen? Or are they actually the same?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 1st, 2015 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

DGA said:

conflates Zen, a Mahayana Buddhist tradition, with Zazen, which is a meditation practice that is characteristic of Zen Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

In a sense, yes. Although, as you can see in my signature, I'm not really convinced by the popular view that meditation is a central thing, nevertheless, it is regarded as such, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else.

"In Zen, the emphasis is on zazen. Whether we are talking about Soto school or Rinzai school, whether we are dealing with koan introspection or silent illumination, the cornerstone of Zen is zazen." (<http://www.mro.org/mr/archive/18-4/articles/stillpt.htm>)

And there is Dogen's view how Zen is really just zazen: "Nowadays, dropping the word "za," they talk of just the Zen sect. This interpretation is clear from records of the patriarchs." (Bendowa, SBGZ, v 1, p 11, BDK Edition)

DGA said:

Are those objectives the same or different?

Astus wrote:

Both mindfulness and zazen are described as practising without specific goals. Although the larger context can be different, here the topic is what happens during meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2015 at 6:13 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

Could someone explain in plain English for me how these types of meditation are practiced?

Astus wrote:

"If the body is motionless, it won't create a heavy flow of physical sensations that stir up big waves. even though we may have some discomfort, or itches, or runny noses, it is worthwhile to relate openly to these in sitting, and not shift, or scratch, or sniffle as we otherwise might. To relate openly means to take each experience as just itself, neither clinging to our opinions or feelings about it, nor trying to avoid it. ... in zazen we sit as still as we can, maintaining stillness even in the eyes, regardless of the sensation that arise. We are simply aware of and accepting of what comes up, just as it is - without running away from it or clinging to it. This is what sitting is."
(Zen Meditation in Plain English, ebook p 65)

"Do not concentrate on any particular object or control your thought. When you maintain a proper posture and your breathing settles down, your mind will naturally become tranquil. When various thoughts arise in your mind, do not become caught up by them or struggle with them; neither pursue nor try to escape from them. Just leave

thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely. The essential thing in doing zazen is to awaken (kakusoku) from distraction and dullness, and return to the right posture moment by moment."

(<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>)

"Noise, light and darkness, ache, pain, drowsiness, heat and cold, hunger, worry, past, future, fantasising and associating, leave them as they are."

(<http://www.enryouji.net/zazen.html>)

"Keep your lower abdomen relaxed. Do not think of "good" or "evil." When a thought arises be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will disappear. If for long periods you forget all ties, you will naturally become One. These are the essential techniques of zazen."

(<http://zen.rinnou.net/zazen/sitting.html>)

"In zazen we simply allow any thought, feeling or emotion to come up and then we simply let them go away; we actually do nothing. In sitting, any thought or condition of mind is like a cloud in the sky. Somehow clouds appear in the sky, changing form as they stay for a while, and then they disappear. Similar to clouds in the sky, any thought that appears in zazen simply stays for a while and then disappears."

(<http://antaiji.org/dharma/okumura-mind-and-zazen/?lang=en>)

"The state in Zazen is without intention and is different from thinking. This statement sounds strange as we normally believe that we are always thinking. We avoid intentionally following a train of thought during Zazen by concentrating on maintaining the posture. Of course spontaneous thoughts and images arise in our consciousness during Zazen, but they are not important. When we notice that we are thinking about something, we should simply stop. If we correct our posture, the thought or perception will disappear and our consciousness will slowly become clear and we will feel peaceful. In this peaceful and balanced state, we are in the state that is "different from thinking.""

(Introduction to Buddhism and the Practice of Zazen,
<http://www.dogensangha.org.uk/IBPZ/IBPZ-English.pdf>)

Now compare those to the following instructions on mindfulness practice:

"The key is not to stop the thoughts, but to acknowledge them. They'll float away on their own. And then the many benefits of mindfulness practice — from reduced anxiety and heart rate to increased memory and awareness — can start to follow."

(<http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-practice-mindfulness-meditation-2015-4>)

"Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing."

(<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/>)

"Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future."

(<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>)

"So what is mindfulness, and how does it work? Unlike mantra meditation, which involves focusing concentration on a particular word or sound, mindfulness aims to achieve a relaxed, non-judgmental awareness of your thoughts, feelings and sensations ... direct knowing of what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment"

(<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2014/jan/07/mindfulness-beginners-guide-meditation-technique-treatment-depression>)

"Start this activity with mindfulness of the breath. Allow yourself to notice any thoughts that come into your head as you are aware of your breathing. Notice, pay attention to and accept these thoughts, without judgment. Thoughts are not bad or good, positive or negative, they just are what they are – the thought that you happen to be having at this particular moment. You may become aware that you are having difficulty thinking about your thoughts – so think about that. You may be thinking: "I can't do this very well." Well, that's a thought too. Allow yourself to think about that. Some people like the metaphor of allowing the thoughts to just float like leaves on a stream, or clouds in a sky, noticing each passing thought and then the one that comes after it, and then the one that comes after that. A Buddhist idea is to think of thoughts as pages written on water. You may notice that just at the moment you become aware of a thought, it passes and is replaced by another thought. That's what happens – thoughts come, and they go. Finally, bring yourself back to awareness of the breath."

(<http://www.livingwell.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/8-MindfulnessofThoughts.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2015 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

DGA said:

when does meditation start or stop? Does Zazen begin or end? Does mindfulness? is meditation even comprehensible without considering the frame in which it is presented and practiced?

Astus wrote:

Meditation starts when one consciously beings to apply the given instructions, and stops when one stops applying them. Same goes for zazen, unless one is a buddha. Mindfulness as well has a beginning and end, since it is a method consciously used.

Meditation is comprehensible as a mental exercise. It is also an important element, since it is believed to bring about certain results, exactly because of what and how is done as a meditation. Cause and effect. It should not matter what we believe outside of the meditation practice, if it is only what is practised during meditation that should generate the desired achievements.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2015 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Pyrokinesis, demonstration. Siddhi in Buddhism?

Content:

Jesse said:

So, even under the assumption they exist, it'd be a bad idea to make it public.

Astus wrote:

As ClearblueSky said, the numerous stories that are supposed to show that magical powers are real talk about public performances, starting with the accounts of the Buddha's miracles. So, if anyone thinks s/he possesses superpowers, please step forward and show it. Otherwise it's better to keep that claim confined to D&D sessions.

Regarding government use of magical powers, I recommend this fine study:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=9MbONFbWlmYC>, It contains accounts of Vajra-masters using mantras and deities in warfare.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2015 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I guess Zen is a lot more like mind less ness than mind ful ness. Dropping the mind rather than filling it with non-existent objects.

Astus wrote:

Can you point out how that difference appears in practice?

"Even if it is understood that Zen practice is not physical or verbal, there still arises a question about the statement that Zen is not mental performance either."

and

"The various formal teachings and practices of Buddha are designed as expedients to guide people according to their individual needs and potentials. They are formulated to lead people into the realm of enlightenment and are applied to the state where unenlightenment and enlightenment have already been distinguished.

Zen, in contrast, aims for the fundamental state, which is prior to this distinction.

Therefore it does not admit of practices based on an existing dualism but points directly to the primordial unity underlying fabricated dualities. As the third patriarch of Zen said,

"It is a mistake to apply the mind to the mind." The abstruse teaching of Zen is to "neither strive nor neglect."

(Musō Kokushi – Dream Conversations on Buddhism and Zen)

And there is this essay:

http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf_Mindfulness%20and%20Mindlessness.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 3rd, 2015 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Dropping the mind, as far as I can tell, is the recognition of emptiness of all phenomena, so we don't 'take them up' as real, as an 'object', with ourselves as 'the subject'.

Recognising it all as empty, both subject and object dissolve and in practice this is no-thought, just responding to causes and conditions as they arise and not making anything.

Mindfulness, on the other hand, is cultivating attention to objects, external and internal and not necessarily seeing into their empty nature. Mindfulness doesn't imply insight and liberation, though of course it is very helpful, even necessary, for both.

Astus wrote:

So the difference is like this:

mindfulness: being aware of the present experiences without judging them - one has to actively focus on the moment, avoids falling into daydreaming about past and future

zazen: not holding on to whatever experience presents itself - there is nothing to do with anything, avoids creating streams of thoughts (thinking) or blocking thoughts (not thinking)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 3rd, 2015 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

When one practices Zen meditation in this way, when objects arise to the mind, what does it mean that they are left alone? In mindfulness practice, this would mean that the object is simply observed but not altered or pushed away or drawn in. It is passive in the sense that the meditator doesn't try to change or push away the object, but at the same time, one is actively watching and being aware of the object. Is this the same in Zen?

Astus wrote:

To leave things as they are means not meddling, not manipulating. You don't even

observe things, as that would be an attempt to make something. So, for instance, when you sit at home, you hear people talking from outside. There is no need to actively turn to it, listen to it, as you already hear them. When you turn to it, that is already adding something, grasping at an object. While if you feel disturbed by the noises - the feeling itself coming from grasping the noise - and you try to shut them out, that is rejecting.

There is also a way to learn leaving things alone through using an object to hold on to, and that is usually the process of breathing. When you concentrate on your breathing, although you can still see, hear, feel and think, you don't do anything with them. Here it is possible to avoid manipulating because one's attention is fixed on an object. But that's only a temporary method with limited use. It should be understood that no matter what you do, no matter how much you struggle, experiences still just come and go, they are without anything to keep or improve. So, even leaving things as they are is not something that needs practising or holding on to, simply because things are already as they are.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 3rd, 2015 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Serenity509 said:

It's interesting to see that both Shinran and Nichiren, despite their differences, see Amida as the Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Astus wrote:

In your quote: "they mistake the reflection of the moon on the water for the real moon shining in the sky" That is, for Nichiren Shakyamuni is the true buddha, others are reflections. While for Shinran it is Amida who's the true buddha and Shakyamuni is a manifestation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2015 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: Pyrokinesis, demonstration. Siddhi in Buddhism?

Content:

BrianG said:

Siddhis are well within the realm of what is natural, from the viewpoint of Buddhism. From the point of view of Charvaka's like James Randi, the mind is "supernatural".

Astus wrote:

They are natural if that nature is within the realm of personal experience, i.e. subjective. From that comes that it does not appear as anything objective, thus not measurable through scientific methods. It also means that those who claim to be able to perform magical feats within the realm of what is commonly called the physical world are necessarily frauds.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2015 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: How to eliminate self-cherishing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One must see things as they are, dependently originated without a single essence. Agnosticism or verbal repetition of "there is no self" are useless.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2015 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Lack of inherent non-existence

Content:

Astus wrote:

When one thing cannot be established as real, many things cannot be established either, as many means several ones. Thus dependent origination is only a conventional expression, without existence or non-existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 5th, 2015 at 4:52 AM

Title: Re: Lack of inherent non-existence

Content:

Brev said:

I seem to have misinterpreted Madhyamaka, thinking it implies universal conventional existence of sorts. Would it be more accurate to say that all dharmas are conceptual constructions but that any particular conceptual construction only exists if it has a basis of designation in experience?

Astus wrote:

Although some thinkers may involve himself in the areas of epistemology and some general analysis of conventional reality, Madhyamaka is primarily about relinquishing attachment to views and bringing about insight into emptiness. And that exists within the larger context of the bodhisattva path. At the same time, the path exists within the context of ordinary, conventional world.

As for the relationship between concepts and experience, actually neither of them are particularly reliable. Experiences in the six sensory areas are completely ungraspable, as they don't remain even for a moment. What we generally operate with are mental creations of stories of events, and so they are conceptual. Such conceptual constructs can include various values and judgements about what is true and what is false depending on various conditions. But debating those values does not generate liberation from attachment to concepts, thus not a topic for Madhyamaka analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 5th, 2015 at 4:54 AM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

It's all just a bunch of attachments to names and concepts...it is not very important.

Astus wrote:

What is?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 5th, 2015 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

It's all just a bunch of attachments to names and concepts...it is not very important.

Astus wrote:

What is?

Malcolm said:

The meaning.

Astus wrote:

And what meaning is that here?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Serenity509 said:

Since there are so many different sutras that appear to contradict each other on so many things, what should we do when the literal meaning of one sutra contradicts the literal meaning of another? One possibility is to compare and contrast divergent sutras, and then hopefully come to a middle ground between them.

Astus wrote:

The common rule: differentiate between figurative (neyartha) and literal (nitartha) statements.

"To know the categories of the scriptures,
Understand that sutras explaining other than the meaning of suchness,
Teach expedient truth, – these are to be interpreted,
While those explaining emptiness teach certain truth."
(Madhyamakavatara, 6.97)

There are also the so called

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=22185#p22185>.

<http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/publish/321/vbs321p024.htm>:

If one accepts [only] one's own dharmas, honors [only] one's own dharma, and cultivates [only] one's own dharma, while refusing to accept or honor another's dharma, and while maintaining that [other's dharmas] are faulty, if one maintains that this is pure and has attained the benefit of the supreme meaning, then among all of them, there are none which are impure. How is this so? Because they all [exclusively] love their own dharma.

Question: If all views possess faults, then what is [the status] of the supreme-meaning siddhanta?

Reply: It goes beyond the path of all discourse. The locus of thought activity is extinct in it. Nowhere is there anything upon which it relies. It does not proclaim any dharma. The actual characteristic of all dharmas has no beginning, has no middle and has no end. It is inexhaustible and indestructible. This is what is meant by the "supreme-meaning siddhanta."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 9:12 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra (Split)

Content:

DGA said:

importance of learning the Dharma from a capable teacher.

Astus wrote:

Who counts as a capable teacher depends on whom one likes. Thus both the best and the worst can gather a large community where both call the other incompetent. How to tell which one is correct? That's when one has to start learning from the Buddha himself by reading his words. And if that's not enough, there are numerous traditionally approved masters, like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga and Vasubandhu to consult with. And if even that's not enough, there are quite a few generally reliable works by modern teachers, like the Dalai Lama, Thrangu Rinpoche, Thich Nhat Hanh, Hsing Yun, Sheng Yen, etc.

DGA said:

Buddha Dharma is described as an oral tradition to the present, even with all these texts available.

Astus wrote:

By whom? There are teachers, true. But hardly any of them could recite even just a few major Mahayana sutras, not to mention the whole canon of the Buddha's words.

Buddhism has been a scriptural tradition for over two millennia. It doesn't mean there are no explanations given orally, on the spot. But even the most important commentaries

are textual.

DGA said:

What little understanding I have comes primarily from listening to teachers teach, and watching their example.

Astus wrote:

That can show how worthy teachers are important and beneficial. Or that you prefer to listen to people instead of reading. Or both. Or maybe neither.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are like a person who mistakes the leaves for the trunk, in this respect.

Buddhadharma has always been, and will always be, a tradition in which the meaning of the Dharma is communicated orally.

Astus wrote:

There are several cases where a tradition was revived/reformed/established based on scriptural materials. Recent cases include most of modern Theravada, the Soto Zen reform of Menzan Zuiho in Japan and the reforms of Taixu, Yinshun and others in China/Taiwan.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Hearing, Astus, not reading...

Astus wrote:

Where is the difference?

"Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

(<http://www.cttbusa.org/6patriarch/6patriarch20.asp>, ch 10, tr BTTS)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

DGA said:

He didn't advocate for everyone to just read Dogen and avoid hearing the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

Neither did Dogen, nor do I. What I object against is the primacy of oral transmission, when the teachings are actually preserved in written form. Like for instance the teachings of Dogen that were generally forgotten but they have returned to the mainstream in their textual form.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

PorkChop said:

Maybe I'm reading this wrong but this seems like a fairly bold statement that's almost certainly false.

Astus wrote:

Yes, there are smaller sutras and excerpts that are used for daily recitation. There are also some who focus on a single text (Lotus Sutra, Diamond Sutra) or a group of texts (the three Pure Land sutras). What is missing is the oral transmission of those sutras, not to mention the rest of the canon. On the other hand, the practice of copying texts is still preserved (e.g. <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/shakyo.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: If 5 skandha are empty, why would you need to save being

Content:

Astus wrote:

As long as there is this idea that there is someone to save someone else, it is paramount to do all the saving activities. Once it's clear that the aggregates are empty, there is nobody to save anyone.

Here the Bodhisattva, the great being, thinks thus: 'countless beings should I lead to Nirvana and yet there are none who lead to Nirvana, or who should be led to it.' However many beings he may lead to Nirvana, yet there is not any being that has been led to Nirvana, nor that had led others to it. For such is the true nature of dharmas, seeing that their nature is illusory. Just as if, Subhuti, a clever magician, or magician's apprentice, were to conjure up at the crossroads a great crowd of people, and then make them vanish again.

(PP8000, 1.4, tr Conze)

Gods: Beings that are like a magical illusion, are they not just an illusion?

Subhuti: Like a magical illusion are those beings, like a dream. For not two different

things are magical illusion and beings, are dreams and beings. All objective facts also are like a magical illusion, like a dream. The various classes of saints, from Streamwinner to Buddhahood, also are like a magical illusion, like a dream. Gods: A fully enlightened Buddha also, you say, is like a magical illusions, is like a dream? Buddhahood also, you say, is like a magical illusion, is like a dream? Subhuti: Even Nirvana, I say, is like a magical illusion, is like a dream. How much more so anything else! Gods: Even Nirvana, Holy Subhuti, you say, is like an illusion, is like a dream? Subhuti: Even if perchance there could be anything more distinguished, of that too I would say that is like an illusion, like a dream. For not two different things are illusion and Nirvana, are dreams and Nirvana.
(PP8000, 2.3, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2015 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

PorkChop said:

Since you bring up Pure Land, the Nembutsu has always been an oral tradition. It's always been passed on by a teacher.

Astus wrote:

Didn't Honen base his teachings on Shandao and other texts, without anyone transmitting anything orally?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 3:20 AM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

But the Dharma has always been communicated through the medium of the voice, not the medium of the page, and even Huineng's awakening story bears this out.

Astus wrote:

Not sure what exactly you mean here. People have been studying the Dharma through texts for ages. Also, teachers have been teaching from texts for ages. Many have composed treatises and other written materials in order to preserve what they want to communicate. Textual communication has also been used for a long time now to disseminate the teachings, communicate it to those one has never met. And the process of translation has not even been addressed.

Malcolm said:

The oral transmission for all the Sūtras in the Tibetan Canon still exists and is given at regular intervals.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the practice that someone reads out loud what is written? It's not exactly like when one person knows a teaching by heart and transmits it in a way that the other memorises it from hearing. But then perhaps the

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBDtAhLxpLQ> of the Great Prajnaparamita Sutra (大般若經轉讀) could be called oral transmission as well, even if they only shout the title and volume number of 600 fascicles of text.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra (Split)

Content:

PorkChop said:

Actually no. Honen's monk name on Hiei was "Genku". He was in the lineage of Genshin. The Nembutsu had already been transmitted via Tendai. Yes, Honen modified his understanding of the Nembutsu from the writings of ShanTai and from personal experience. This is also the reason for such a big deal made about the dream encounter Honen had with ShanTao.

Astus wrote:

If by that transmission you mean Honen must have heard people reciting the nenbutsu, then probably most East Asian Buddhists (and even non-Buddhists) are members of that lineage of buddha-remembrance. But it seems to me that Honen did not consider oral transmission reliable, since already in his life many misinterpreted his teachings, so he composed his <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/ichimai.html>. His <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/WRITINGS/senchakushu.html> consists mostly of quotes from scriptures, similarly to the <http://shinranworks.com/the-major-expositions/>. I would be surprised if there were even one reference to some oral teaching he had personally received.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

What I mean exactly is that meaning of the Dharma is always learned from a teacher, not a text. A text cannot convey even its own meaning. In order to learn the meaning of a text, one must have a teacher. And also the Dharma does not depend on texts. One does not need books and texts to communicate its essentials.

Books do not communicate, only people do. Books may support that communication, but they are entirely incapable of replacing human transmission of the Dharma from mouth to ear.

Astus wrote:

Words can be communicated both through voice and letters. What is the difference between you telling me the above words over the phone or over this board? The meaning is something I have to derive from the words in both cases, so it is not communicated in either way.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra (Split)

Content:

PorkChop said:

It's not the same thing as just having 'heard people reciting the nenbutsu' whatsoever.

Astus wrote:

Then what is it? Honen had his own unique interpretation of the Pure Land teachings and did not rely on Tendai doctrines for that, otherwise he would have remained a Tendai priest. He himself set up the differences between various interpretations of nenbutsu, and he did not establish a continuity with Tendai. What was then transmitted?

PorkChop said:

the Nembutsu is transmitted orally from teacher to student

Astus wrote:

How does that define the efficiency of the practice of nenbutsu? Are people who have no contact with Jodoshu priests excluded from following Honen? And I'm not asking if they can be considered members of the church, that's a different matter. If those with no connection to a recognised Jodoshu teacher can still attain birth according to the Jodoshu doctrine, what is the role of oral transmission besides maintaining a community?

Your quote from <https://bffct.org/bff/what-is-shin-buddhism/>: "Such an encounter can come through direct listening to that teacher, or through "listening" by hearing or reading the teacher's written words"

And from <http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/OFUMI.html>: "it is evident [in the received texts]"

That is, listening can happen through spoken as well as written words, and Rennyo bases his statement on texts in a text.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism as type of agnosticism

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But I think it only applies to a minority.

Astus wrote:

I think it's the opposite. It's just that they don't show up on weekly pujas except when there is a rather famous teacher handing out Dharma-bites. It's similar to how most Christians don't regularly attend services, but if the Pope comes thousands show up, although probably many know very little of the doctrines of the church (not to mention following the commandments), and likely some are not even Catholics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

DGA said:

He was part of a living culture. He was not a consumer.

Astus wrote:

Very true. It might as well be emphasised that he was a fully ordained monk. Plus he could read literary Chinese. And he was male. Those are all qualities that is true for almost every recognised teacher within East Asian Buddhism in the last 2000 years. But - understandably - the common requisites of leaving home and being male are not often brought up on the forum.

Since it's not been debated that whatever words that can be pronounced through the mouth can also be written down, there can be no difference made between the actual communication of the teachings through the two media. What may count are other factors that have not been mentioned. For instance, the teacher's ability to quickly adapt to the disciple's needs, respond to questions, explain difficult points in a way that is easily comprehensible, and other similar elements that make a living teacher beneficial in all sorts of studies.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Caodemarte said:

Of course Chinul was a great scholar, thinker, and monk (not the reader of Internet forums like us). The point is that literally hearing the words was not necessary in his case. The other activities (years of meditation, study, etc.) were what helped prepare him.

Astus wrote:

You could add Wonhyo, Chengguan, Dushun, Jizang, Huisi and probably every Buddhist teacher who did not belong to a specific lineage, but rather studied the Dharma, listened to various people, contemplated the teachings, came to a realisation, then started to teach publicly and write some treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, Chinul had a Seon master, Jonghwi of Sagulsan.

Astus wrote:

Jonghwi was his ordination master. Jinul gained realisation and developed his teachings on his own, particularly he introduced the huatou/hwadu method - propagated by Dahui Zonggao - to Korea without ever having visited China.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Malcolm said:

Jonghwi was also a Seon master.

Astus wrote:

Apparently Jinul was not satisfied with the teachings provided by him or others, so he did not continue their tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2015 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Words do not communicate, people communicate. ... The transmission of the Dharma does not lie in words themselves, it lies in the interaction between two people.

Astus wrote:

And what is the means of interaction between two people? Words.

Malcolm said:

Words cannot adapt with circumstances.

Astus wrote:

That's a matter of hermeneutics.

Malcolm said:

Words cannot estimate your level of understanding.

Astus wrote:

If there are levels of understanding - as defined in scriptures - then even teachers can only use that for reference. If there are no clear definitions, then it is arbitrary and unreliable.

Malcolm said:

Words cannot answer your questions.

Astus wrote:

How does a non-verbal question look like

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2015 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sūtras and tantras are not written documents. The written documents that record them are merely a shadow of verbal discourse that took place at some time. The meaning of those documents is not contained within the documents.

Astus wrote:

Either you say that the texts are incomplete - in which case you'd need to be in possession of some original audio record - or you claim that words as voice are significantly different from words as letters - in which case you either imply meta-communication or something else that I hope you can demonstrate. If meaning exists outside of the means of communication, it cannot be communicated, so even a living teacher is of no use. Finally, if meaning cannot be derived from scriptures, the whole literary corpus of mankind is literally meaningless, so it is truly a miracle that such a pointless method has been in use for such a long time.

"If, Mahamati, meaning is different from words, it will not be made manifest by means of words; but meaning is entered into by words as things [are revealed] by a lamp. It is, Mahamati, like a man carrying a lamp to look after his property. [By means of this light] he can say: This is my property and so is kept in this place. Just so, Mahamati, by means of the lamp of words and speech originating from discrimination, the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas can enter into the exalted state of self-realisation which is free from speech-discrimination."

(http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-nondiacritical.htm, 3.65)

Malcolm said:

We can certainly come to understand the meaning of the Dharma by studying with a teacher. We can never come to understand the meaning of the Dharma merely by reading books.

Astus wrote:

Does a teacher gives any Dharma not contained in the sutras? If yes, then his teaching

fails to follow the Dharma of the buddhas. If no, then sutras are both valid and beneficial sources of the Dharma.

"all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra"

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 8)

Malcolm said:

For example, the name of a teaching like Kalacakra, does not mean that the real Kalacakra can be found in the book called Kalacakra. Just as the real Prajñāpāramitā cannot be found in all the books that bear that name. The meaning of Kalackara and Prajñāpāramitā can only be learned from a teacher, never from the books themselves.

Astus wrote:

Prajnaparamita is not obtained from anyone or anything. How could a person today instruct in that better than the Buddha?

"Wherever this sutra is taught, read, recited, copied, or wherever it is to be found, one should build a seven-jeweled stupa of great height and width and richly ornamented. There is no need to put a relic inside. Why is this? Because the Tathāgata is already in it. ... the highest, complete enlightenment of all the bodhisattvas is within this sutra. This sutra opens the gate of skillful means and reveals the marks of the truth."
(Lotus Sutra, ch 10, p 161, 162, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2015 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

DGA said:

he was part of a living culture of Dharma. Peter Hershock, a contemporary Ch'an master and scholar, makes the point that awakening in East Asian Buddhism is fundamentally social in nature. It's collaborative.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is a religion, and religion means communal faith and practice. In other words, pratyekabuddhas exist only when there is no Dharma in the world. Also, Buddhism is mostly focused on ordained monastics, thus one of the meanings of sangha stands only for monks and nuns. Even lay communal activities are centred around monasteries most of the times. So it could be argued that without monasteries there is no Buddhist practice.

DGA said:

transmission outside the scriptures (and hence available only from a relationship with a teacher).

Astus wrote:

Zen is neither a scriptural nor an oral lineage. Enlightenment is not bound to texts or people, while both can function as catalysts. At the same time, all other schools besides Zen are called Teaching Schools (教宗), as they are based upon specific scriptures or treatises, not some sort of oral transmission. Still, see what Yongming has to say about sutras and enlightenment:

"All [the patriarchs] are descendants of the Buddha. I now cite the words of the original teacher [Śākyamuni] to train and instruct disciples, encouraging their practice by having them follow his statements; to know the implicit truth [zong] through reading the Dharma, and not rush around searching for it elsewhere; to personally realize the Buddha's intention. After they understand the message, they at once enter the ranks of the patriarchs; none of them argues over sudden and gradual methods. When they see their nature, they exhibit evidence of their perfect comprehension; how can they advocate ranking one patriarch over another? If this is the case, what contradiction is there between the scriptural teachings and the message of Chan patriarchs? In the case of the twenty-eight patriarchs of former ages in India, the six patriarchs in this land, as well as Great Master Mazu of Hongzhou, and National Preceptor [Hui]zhong of Nanyang, Chan master Dayi of Ehu, Chan master Benjing of Mount Sikong, and so on, all of them perfectly awakened to their own minds through thorough knowledge of the scriptures and treatises. Whenever they preached to their followers, they always referred to real documented evidence. They never speculated beyond what was in their own hearts, or expounded on the basis of false presuppositions. Consequently, even as the years pass uninterrupted, the winds of truth do not abate. By regarding the words of the sage [the Buddha] as the true measure, you will not be deceived by perverse and false claims. By using the teaching as your guide, you will have something to rely on." (Yongming Yanshou: Zongjinglu, in Conception of Chan, p 249)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2015 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

DGA said:

One of our limitations is that a connection to an authentic source of Dharma is indispensable to our awakening. And that takes the form of an oral tradition. I'm not discounting the value of books here; I value study as much as anyone does, even if I'm not very good at it. My point is merely that pratyekabuddhas are extraordinarily rare, and for the overwhelming majority of us, working in a tradition is the only viable way up the mountain.

Astus wrote:

Reading the sutras and treatises is part of connecting with the authentic tradition.

Pratyekabuddhas don't have access to any of that kind. On the other hand, dissemination of texts is an important way of spreading the Dharma (e.g.

http://www.buddhiststudies.net/print_culture_dissertation.html -

academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:161474/COCONTENT/Scott_columbia_0054D_11367.pdf). Also, consider the impact of Kumarajiva in

Chinese Buddhism.

Hongren wrote: "whosoever practices in harmony with the text will be the first to attain Buddhahood". That's one of the closing sentences of his only known work, the <https://sites.google.com/site/blinddharmainsamsara/home/useful-and-important-english-teachings/the-secret-heart-of-the-chen-forest/losseis-maestros-del-lanka-tradicion/5-ho/treatise-on-the-supreme-vehicle>.

Here's an illustration of how it is neither an oral nor a scriptural matter (sidenote: koans are literary works):

One day, Guishan said to Xiangyan, "I'm not asking you about what's recorded in or what can be learned from the scriptures! You must say something from the time before you were born and before you could distinguish objects. I want to record what you say." Xiangyan was confused and unable to answer. He sat in deep thought for a some time and then mumbled a few words to explain his understanding. But Guishan wouldn't accept this.

Xiangyan said, "Then would the master please explain it?"

Guishan said, "What I might say would merely be my own understanding. How could it benefit your own view?"

Xiangyan returned to the monks' hall and searched through the books he had collected, but he couldn't find a single phrase that could be used to answer Guishan's question.

Xiangyan then sighed and said, "A picture of a cake can't satisfy hunger."

He then burned all his books and said, "During this lifetime I won't study the essential doctrine. I'll just become a common mendicant monk, and I won't apply my mind to this any more."

Xiangyan tearfully left Guishan. He then went traveling and eventually resided at Nanyang, the site of the grave of National Teacher Nanyang Huizhong.

One day as Xiangyan was scything grass, a small piece of tile was knocked through the air and struck a stalk of bamboo. Upon hearing the sound of the tile hitting the bamboo, Xiangyan instantly experienced vast enlightenment.

Xiangyan then bathed and lit incense. Bowing in the direction of Guishan, he said, "The master's great compassion exceeds that of one's parents! Back then if you had explained it, then how could this have come to pass?"

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 191-192)

What do Zen students do then? Here's the answer (sidenote: <https://books.google.com/books?id=JkGTSWEUCeUC>):

One day the Councilor Wang visited the master. When he met the master in front of the Monks' Hall, he asked, "Do the monks of this monastery read the sutras?"

"No, they don't read sutras," said the master.

"Then do they learn meditation?" asked the councilor.

"No, they don't learn meditation," answered the master.

"If they neither read sutras nor learn meditation, what in the world are they doing?" asked the councilor.

"All I do is make them become buddhas and patriarchs," said the master.

The councilor said, “Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts.”
“I always used to think you were just a common fellow,” said the master.
(Record of Linji, p 38, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 9th, 2015 at 1:29 AM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Malcolm said:

What I am claiming is that oral communication and teaching is different than reading. For example, our conversation here is dry and logical [at least my side of the conversation is]. If we were talking, or I was listening to you teach Dharma, there is a qualitatively different sort of communication happening.

Astus wrote:

That is meta-communication, all those other things that go on during a face-to-face conversation. It is not a matter of words being pronounced or written. Then there are two options to maintain that orality is the only way of communicating the Dharma: either that words combined with other signifiers/expressions transmit the whole, or that words are irrelevant and only the other expressions convey the meaning. It also raises the question if anything can be communicated at all through the written form.

One of the advantages of texts is exactly their "dry and logical" nature (although I wouldn't dismiss the literary arts as capable of more than that). Unlike spontaneous verbal communication, writing generally requires some focus and organising of thoughts, except perhaps instant messaging.

Malcolm said:

The Buddha also addresses this issue later on in the text, beginning on folio 212/a of the Lhasa edition:

That being the case, therefore Mahāmati, apart from spoken explanations, the Buddha and the other bodhisattvas have taught "The Tathāgatas have never explained and will never explain even a single letter." Why? For this reason, because in all Dharmas there are no letters, in absence of the meaning [the Dharma] cannot be explained. There is an explanation through taking hold of concepts. Mahāmati, if Dharma is not explained, the doctrine will perish. If the doctrine perishes, there will be no buddhas, pratyekabuddhas and śravakas.

Astus wrote:

"For this reason, Mahamati, it is declared in the canonical text by myself and other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that not a letter is uttered or answered by the Tathagatas. For what reason? Because truths are not dependent on letters. It is not that they never declare what is in conformity with meaning; when they declare anything, it is according to the discrimination [of all beings]. If, Mahamati, the truth is not declared¹ [in words] the scriptures containing all truths will disappear, and when the scriptures disappear there will be no Buddhas, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas; and when

there is no one [to teach], what is to be taught and to whom?"
(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.76)

There is no mention of an exception for "spoken explanations" in Suzuki's translation. In T670 it says "我等諸佛及諸菩薩，不說一字、不答一字。" (We, all buddhas, and all bodhisattvas, don't say a word, don't respond a word.), in T671 it says "是故我經中說，諸佛如來乃至不說一字不示一名" (It is because I say in the scriptures, all buddha-tathagatas don't go as far as saying a single word or giving a single name.), , and in T672 it says "我經中說，我與諸佛及諸菩薩，不說一字不答一字。" (I say in the scriptures, I, and all buddhas, and all bodhisattvas, don't say a word, don't respond a word). So, neither of the three Chinese Lankavatara translations speak of such an exception.

As for the rest of the quote and its general meaning, it simply warns about attaching to words, just as the sutra does at other places as well. Also, it clearly says that the teachings are necessary, because without them there is no realisation of any kind. So, while not a word's spoken, the teaching must be said anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 9th, 2015 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Tibetan text is extremely clear on this point. I don't much care what the Chinese translations or Suzuki's incredibly inaccurate paraphrase state.

Astus wrote:

The discourses in the sutra are supposedly spoken explanations. Since Mahamati and the Buddha are talking to each other, it is out of place to say that "apart from spoken explanations". Making an exception of verbal communication is problematic whether the sutra is meant as a spoken discourse or as a written text. If it is a spoken discourse, the whole sutra is an exception, like any other sutra. If it is a written text, it negates everything found there, including the stated exception. So, unlike other versions of the Lankavatara, the Tibetan seems to be in error.

Malcolm said:

Then of course there many, many statements like the following from the Ārya-niṣṭhāgantabhagavajjñānavaipūlya-sūtrarātñānanta-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra: Maudgalyāyāna, the awakening of a bodhisattva is connected with the virtuous mentor

Astus wrote:

There are several statements on the importance of good friends already in the early discourses (e.g. "the whole of the holy life" in the <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.002.than.html>). However, it does not address the difference between written and oral communication. That sutta itself explains that the importance of a good friend is visible in the fact that the Buddha himself taught the noble eightfold path, based on which beings can attain liberation. In

another discourse

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.054.than.html>) the Buddha teaches that lay people should learn virtue, generosity and discernment by associating with good lay friends. But that doesn't mean they could not learn the same qualities by listening to the Buddha and his monastic disciples, since there are quite a few cases where people gain faith and insight from a single teaching. Good friends are also said (<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an09/an09.001.than.html>) to be a prerequisite for developing the wings to self-awakening, because through them one learns the Dharma. The reason for it being a prerequisite is because one has to learn of the teachings. It does not say that the source is limited to face to face communication using voice.

By the way, what is that sutra you quote from? Any English translation? Any other title (Sanskrit/English/Chinese)?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 10th, 2015 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is absolutely no precedence in the sūtras for the idea that you can learn Buddhadharma by reading books.

Astus wrote:

Several Mahayana sutras contain their own "advertisement", saying things like knowing just a single stanza gives immeasurable merit and bring about enlightenment.

This matches well with my previous quote about how the Lotus Sutra itself is the Buddha:

"The Lord: If, Kausika, on the one hand you were given this Jambudvīpa filled up to the top with relics of the Tathagatas; and if, on the other hand, you could share in a written copy of this perfection of wisdom; and if now you had to choose between the two, which one would you take?

Sakra: Just this perfection of wisdom. Because of my esteem for the Guide of the Tathagatas. Because in a true sense this is the body of the Tathagatas. As the Lord has said: "The Dharma-bodies are the Buddhas, the Lords. But, monks, you should not think that this individual body is my body. Monks, you should see Me from the accomplishment of the Dharma-body.""

(PP8000, 4.1, tr Conze)

And others:

"If all bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas, and even tirthikas hold this sutra, read, grasp and expound it to other persons, or copy or have others copy it, all such actions will become the cause of Enlightenment."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 16, tr Yamamoto)

"If beings are dying for wealth, I shall give it to them, and later recommend this Nirvana Sutra and have them read it. With the nobility, I shall use loving words, follow them and later, by degrees, recommend this Mahayana Great Nirvana Sutra to them and get them to read it. With the dull, I shall force them to read it"

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 20, tr Yamamoto)

"You should accept, uphold, and read and recite this sūtra. Kauśika, suppose that a good man or woman trains to attain bodhi and practices the six pāramitās for kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Then suppose that a good man or woman hears, accepts, reads and recites, and upholds this sūtra. The merit acquired by the latter surpasses that of the former, not to mention that the latter widely expounds it to others. Therefore, Kauśika, you should read and recite this sūtra, and widely expound it to gods in your Thirty-three Heavens."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra51.html>)

"there are three kinds of sentient beings that will be reborn there ... Second, those who read and recite Mahāyāna vaipulya sūtras. ... Those who wish to achieve a middling rebirth in the high rank need not read or recite vaipulya sūtras. However, they should have a good understanding of their tenets, and their minds should not be upset by the highest truth."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra24.html>)

"If they have heard this Dharma Door, whether they copy this sūtra, read and recite it, or explain it, whether they persuade others to copy it, read and recite it, or explain it, I can see that these individuals will not go down the evil life-paths. Their three kinds of hindrances—afflictions, karmas, and requitals—will all be annihilated. In a future life they will acquire the five eyes. They will have nectar sprinkled on their heads by all Buddhas."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra05.html>)

"To remain untainted by worldly dharmas,
To acquire the affliction-free wisdom,
To take every action to benefit sentient beings,
And to be reborn in a pure Buddha Land,
One should hear, copy, and uphold
This wondrous sūtra treasure.
One should read, recite, ponder, and propagate it,
In order to understand the Buddha Ground."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra48b.html>)

Malcolm said:

I generally translate my citations myself directly out of the canon. As far as I know, there is no other translation of this passage. But the Tibetan of this one is extremely simple and straight forward.

Astus wrote:

I was simply curious, because a search on the title does not give any results.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 10th, 2015 at 2:07 AM

Title: Re: Importance of a Dharma Teacher/Oral Transmission

Content:

conebeckham said:

Isn't it obvious that words are always approximations? Two people can read the same passage and gain different conceptual understandings. This should be obvious--I mean, right here in this thread, there are examples of various interpretations of the very same source text!

Astus wrote:

It's not just texts people can have problem with.

"Three hundred years ago in Korea, there was a monk named Sok Du, which means 'Rock Head.' He was a very stupid man. The sutras were much too difficult for him, so he decided to study Zen. But sitting Zen was also too difficult. So he only did working Zen, in the kitchen and in the monastery fields. Twice a month the Zen Master would give a Dharma Speech, which would always fill Sok Du with confusion. One day, after the Dharma Speech, he went to the Zen Master and said, 'Master, I'm tired of being so stupid. Isn't there some way I can understand?'

The Master said, 'You must ask me a good question.'

Sok Du scratched his head and thought for a few minutes. Then he said, 'Okay. You are always talking about Buddha. What is Buddha?'

The Master answered, 'Juk shim shi bul,' which means 'Buddha is mind.' But Sok Du misunderstood, and thought that the Master had said, 'Jip shin shi bul,' which means 'Buddha is grass shoes.'

'What a difficult kong-an!' Sok Du thought, as he bowed to the Master and left. 'How can Buddha be grass shoes? How will I ever understand?'

For the next three years, Sok Du puzzled over this great question as he did his working Zen. He never asked the Master to explain; he just kept the question in his mind at all times. Finally, one day three years later, he was carrying a large load of firewood down the hill to the monastery. His foot hit a rock, he lost his balance, the wood fell, and his grass shoes went flying into the air. When they landed on the ground, they were broken, and he had attained enlightenment."

(from Seung Sahn: Dropping Ashes on the Buddha)

conebeckham said:

Dharma is a living tradition, no book has ever been enlightened. Anyone who has met a genuine master and made connection understands the benefit of doing so, and the dimensions of Dharma that cannot be obtained through reading or study.

Astus wrote:

If it were so simple that genuine masters produced genuine masters, there would never

have been any disagreement within Buddhism. On the contrary, the disciples of the same teacher establish different schools and have different ideas. And when one group starts to debate another group, all they can do is to pick up the written records of the teachings of the original teacher as a reference.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 12th, 2015 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Scientific, Non-Mystical Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

What may seem mystical and supernatural in Buddhism are generally about the inner world. Just consider how the various heavens are connected to different levels of absorption (see <http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sagga/loka.html>). The various visions of the world can be summed up in what is called the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/glossary.html#eye>, where the first one is our ordinary eye, and the second one is where all the supernatural things can be seen, while the other three are actually different levels of wisdom. Karma also is something that operates within one's inner world, defining one's perception of things and what could be called one's personality.

With a materialist ideology the entire inner world of one's mind is disregarded as if it had never existed. But we all experience thoughts, emotions, dreams, visions and various mental states. In fact, the concepts of materialism are also mental creations. Every experience one can have is within the mind, otherwise there is no consciousness of the experience and as such it cannot be called an experience. Since suffering/dissatisfaction exist within experience, it is within the realm of experience where one needs to look for solutions. Similarly, dreams and visions are also experiences, no different from ordinary events, like drinking a cup of tea. The difference is that while common people rarely encounter anything beyond the everyday worldly experiences, those who engage in spiritual cultivation - like meditation - can and often do have so called other-worldly experiences. Those other-worldly events are then reflected in the teachings and numerous stories that modern people easily and unthinkingly disregard as myths.

It is actually not particularly difficult to get in touch with the mystical side of our world. What it takes is to move our attention from the outside world of ordinary experiences to the inner realm. Normally the path to do that in Buddhism is to gain a firm foothold within the basic levels of absorption, that is, to be capable of maintaining a stable, calm and attentive mind at your will. There are other ways as well, generally not used by Buddhists, because those are not really conducive to liberation. Once one has a fairly good command of one's mind, it is then a matter of directing one's attention toward a particular topic or area of investigation. It can be used for the cultivation of the six supernormal powers (e.g.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.028.than.html>), while in Mahayana it is applied to so called visualisation practices, where one can visit buddhas and buddha-lands (e.g. <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra22.html>). Used properly,

one can gain the benefits of both concentration and insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 13th, 2015 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Scientific, Non-Mystical Buddhism

Content:

PorkChop said:

Your meteorite falls under the first, which is mechanistic and falls under physical laws.

Astus wrote:

The meteorite's path falls under a natural process. The meteorite crushing a being or a being's possessions is the third one. At the same time, the realms are created by the beings' karma, so it's hard to say that there are non-karmic forces. Also, consider the Yogacara description of how appearances emerge from karmic seeds stored in one's consciousness.

Here's this from Bodhidharma:

"What is the practice of accepting adversity? When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: "For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither the heavens nor other people can impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection." The sutra says, "Face hardships without distress." How? With thorough insight. With this understanding in mind, you are in accord with the Principle, advancing on the Way through the experience of adversity. This is called the practice of accepting adversity."

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 13th, 2015 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wisdom and samadhi cannot be separated, just as wisdom and compassion cannot be separated. The wisdom that is without samadhi and/or compassion is not the wisdom of the buddhas, but rather some ideology, emptiness grasped incorrectly.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 13th, 2015 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Nothing can be separated or even established ultimately, but it can be useful to speak of such things.

Astus wrote:

I didn't mean 'ultimately'. It is more a matter of how those words are defined. On the one hand, there is the path of sila-samadhi-prajna. On the other hand, there is the unity of samadhi-prajna in the Platform Sutra, or <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml> 's statement "Zazen is also not based upon discipline, practice, or wisdom. These three are all contained within it." And even the PP8000 (3.4) says, "The five perfections are in this manner contained in the perfection of wisdom, and the term 'perfection of wisdom' is just a synonym for the fulfillment of the six perfections. In consequence, when the perfection of wisdom is proclaimed, all the six perfections are proclaimed." At the same time, <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment> writes, "People who are confused or deluded do not understand that the other five paramitas all evolve from the dana-paramita.

Therefore, in practicing the dana-paramita, one also fulfills the practice of the other five paramitas." How does all this work? Nagarjuna explained it in the http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf (p 41-45) that one can cultivate any one of the six that includes all the others, or can focus on one or two paramitas and thus cultivate the rest, or it is also possible to cultivate none and thus realise all.

In the case of the immediate enlightenment of Zen, there are no stages or levels, everything is included in the single realisation of no-mind. Talking of the general teachings for bodhisattvas is another matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 14th, 2015 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

seeker242 said:

I think you could say that is true, IF that is how you are defining "mindfulness" to begin with AKA "actively focus on the moment". However, if you don't define mindfulness like that, then perhaps that's not the case because the difference is entirely dependent on how you are defining it to begin with. John Kabat-Zinn doesn't really have a monopoly over the definition of mindfulness IMO

Astus wrote:

That definition seems to me like the general idea of what mindfulness is understood to be. Other definitions are possible and welcome.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 15th, 2015 at 6:35 AM

Title: Hong Kong nun accused

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hong Kong nun accused of embezzlement and sham marriages

Hong Kong officials have arrested four people from the scandal-hit Ting Wai Monastery, whose abbess has been accused of extravagant spending, mishandling donations and engaging in fake marriages.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-china-blog-34525474>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 15th, 2015 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Karma's "place" of effect

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma is how one sees everything. Karma is one's habitual inclinations and ideas. It could be said that karma is one's personality. Whatever one encounters, whatever happens, it's always perceived through one's concepts and feelings about oneself and the world. That way karma is also the driving force for one's decisions and actions. At the same time, that is why one can become free from karma by discovering the insubstantiality of the self and all experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 15th, 2015 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: Karma's "place" of effect

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Have a look at that source I cited, which says that 'karma doesn't explain everything'.

Astus wrote:

That sutta talks about considering only past actions is wrong. That's because one should take into account the present mindset as a factor.

Wayfarer said:

That seems rather at odds with 'karmic determinism', don't you think?

Astus wrote:

It is because of wholesome karma that one attains human birth. Similarly, it is because of the bodhisattva path that one attains buddhahood. This is not a matter of chance.

"For only stress is what comes to be;
stress, what remains & falls away.

Nothing but stress comes to be.

Nothing ceases but stress."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn05/sn05.010.than.html>)

"There is no doer of a deed
Or one who reaps the deed's result;
Phenomena alone flow on—
No other view than this is right.

And so, while kamma and result
Thus causally maintain their round,
As seed and tree succeed in turn,
No first beginning can be shown.

Nor in the future round of births
Can they be shown not to occur:
Sectarians, not knowing this,
Have failed to gain self-mastery."
(Visuddhimagga XIX.20)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2015 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Zen is No Secret

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Also, a bit of a comment on the the emptiness of the Bhumis perhaps, Astus? How did Chinul otherwise comment on the Bhumis?

Astus wrote:

From Cleary's translation:

"If you can practice this moment to moment, not neglecting to be attentive, seeing to it that concentration and insight are equally sustained, then love and hate will naturally lighten and thin out, while compassion and wisdom will naturally increase in clarity, sinful deeds will naturally end, while meritorious actions will naturally progress."

Jinul accords with the Hwaeom teachings of the first arousal of bodhicitta, the attainment of the first level of faith, includes all the attainments through the entire path of the 52 levels, so in terms of wisdom one is equal to the buddhas, but then one must gradually manifest the buddha qualities until perfection. This goes back to Guifeng Zongmi, who clarified this teaching of sudden enlightenment with gradual cultivation as the meaning.

"As for gradual practice, having suddenly realized fundamental essence, no different from Buddha, beginningless mental habits are hard to get rid of all at once. Therefore one cultivates practice based on enlightenment, gradually cultivating the attainment to perfection, nurturing the embryo of sagehood to maturity. Eventually, after a long time, one becomes a sage; therefore it is called gradual practice. It is like an infant, which has all the normal faculties at birth, but as yet undeveloped; only with the passage of years

does it become an adult."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2015 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: This is why you need a teacher!

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are instructional videos.

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

This is the <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6G9GVKpK20>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2015 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: What is Buddhism?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

Is Buddhism simply discernment? And all the kindness and compassion flows there after? For example, is there Buddhism 3000 years ago before the Dharma as we know it?

Astus wrote:

It cannot be simply discernment, since there are trainings to do before and realisations to attain after. Thus there are the threefold training, noble eightfold path, six paramitas, etc. Various good qualities (e.g. kindness) are both parts of training and results as well. Buddhism is the path to liberation, something that must be revealed. Although the path has always existed, there was no knowledge of such a path before Siddhartha (within the generally known past, not counting various buddhas).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2015 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: How can one's progress be tested?

Content:

zenman said:

How can one's progress in meditation and in the buddhist path be tested?

Astus wrote:

If it is a specific method of meditation, there are stages of progress. You may consult your meditation instructor and the relevant meditation manuals.

Progress on the Buddhist path has a number of traditional measurements already mentioned.

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=69&t=11885>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2015 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Bowing.

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Master Seongcheol once again began a pilgrimage participating in retreats at numerous meditation halls around the country. It was around this time, in a valley in front of Anjeong-sa Monastery in South Gyeongsangnam-do Province, that he constructed the Cheonjegul Grotto and led the believers who had come to see him in a practice of doing three-thousand prostrations. No matter who came to see him, young or old, business magnates or government officials, before he would do anything with them they first had to do three-thousand prostrations in front of the Buddha. The reason he ordered every one of his followers without exception to partake in this practice originated in the desire to get each of them to see themselves directly and to cultivate their minds to remove their own impurities. It was within the physical suffering felt in the knees and backs during the constant bending of the prostrations that this process could naturally take place."

(http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=1030&wr_id=52)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2015 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: How can one's progress be tested?

Content:

avisitor said:

What does the progress in meditation have to do with the progress in the Buddhist path? Are the two related in such a way as to be able to use one to gauge the other?

Astus wrote:

As amanitamusc wrote, it depends on the type of meditation used.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2015 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: What is superstition?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What is the clinging to mere rules and ritual? The holding firmly to the view that through mere rules and ritual one may reach purification: this is called the clinging to mere rules and ritual."

(http://what-buddha-said.net/library/Buddhist.Dictionary/dic3_u.htm)

"Endowed with these five qualities, a lay follower is an outcaste of a lay follower, a stain of a lay follower, a dregs of a lay follower. Which five? He/she does not have conviction [in the Buddha's Awakening]; is unvirtuous; is eager for protective charms & ceremonies; trusts protective charms & ceremonies, not kamma; and searches for recipients of his/her offerings outside [of the Sangha], and gives offerings there first. Endowed with these five qualities, a lay follower is an outcaste of a lay follower, a stain of a lay follower, a dregs of a lay follower."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.175.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2015 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: What is superstition?

Content:

DGA said:

if a practice or a view looks like a superstition to you

Astus wrote:

Likely most things that are culturally foreign look superstitious. Calling something a superstition is a roundabout way of rejecting its validity. But there is more to it than that, since people are also curious of strange things.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. ... And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

(1 Kings 18:21, 24)

That is, one's idea is invalid because it lacks effective power. Such a definition of valid perception is known within Buddhism, and that's how belief in rituals and charms are rejected in favour of karma. Also, within the context of enlightenment, all wrong views are superstitious, as they don't bring about liberation.

DGA said:

then the best course of action is to try to understand it from the perspective of the one who holds that view or undertakes that practice.

Astus wrote:

Most likely we cannot understand another's motivations, since that includes that person's entire mental and physical conditioning. It is always possible to come up with various explanations from our own perspective, but those are only good for placating our original rejection of unfamiliar phenomena.

DGA said:

insisting on cutting away or dismissing beliefs of past or present masters, such as the excellent Soto Zen masters described in the link at the top of this thread, is itself a kind

of superstitious act--a belief in one's own capacity of reason without adequately recognizing the limits of that reason.

Astus wrote:

There is this romantic idea that something old is valuable simply because it is old. And there is also the modernist idea that something old is necessarily wrong because it is old. Instead of discriminating based on temporal biases, there are other criteria one can use to discern the value of any given activity. The Buddha's recommendation is to distinguish what is wholesome and what is unwholesome (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.078.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2015 at 6:19 AM

Title: Zazen Easier Than Nenbutsu

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you practice zazen because you want to become plucky and courageous like Saigo Takamori or Katsu Kaishu (Japanese heroes), your attitude is totally different from the aspiration, practice, awakening, and nirvana of the buddhas and ancestors. After all, as a foundation for determined faith, there must be jijuyu zanmai, which actualizes the reality of life through just doing zazen. In that sense, the teaching of other-power (tariki) of Shinran Shonin is a good attitude for faith. It is grounded in buddha-dharma. However, there are a lot of people who are deeply deluded and cannot enter the faith of other-power. For those people, just sitting zazen is the easiest practice, because as soon as they sit zazen right now, right here, the world of zazen will open. Yet even if you sit zazen, it can be overturned into self-power (jiriki) practice, depending exclusively upon your attitude toward zazen. Realizing this thoroughly, you must practice zazen on the basis of letting go of thought.

(Kosho Uchiyama: The Wholehearted Way, p 90-91)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 25th, 2015 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Zen - The Essence of Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen's authenticity lies in the mind-transmission. That means: "To not attain a single dharma is called the transmission of the mind. If you comprehend this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma." (Huangbo, in Zen Texts, p 36, BDK Edition) Practically it means that the personal experience of the nature of life is what validates the truth of the Buddha's teaching. That nature of the world is universally understood among Buddhists as interdependent and empty. I am unaware of any tradition disagreeing with that. So it seems fair to say that what is labelled as the fundamental view has not been lost. As for everything else, they are skilful means to help beings attain liberation, i.e. realising the nature of appearances. Zen, similarly to other Mahayana schools, advocates freely

using various means, as it should be clear from the many stories preserved in the tradition. In the early texts themselves the Buddha is quite flexible in how he taught his disciples, using their inclinations to introduce them to the correct understanding. Because the methods are virtually unlimited, it is difficult to say how anything - especially when found in a traditional setting - is not authentic.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2015 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What do you call Zen?

There are certainly some elements where you need someone you recognise as a teacher, mostly to utilise the benefits of having discussions with a wise person.

Otherwise, if by Zen you mean counting your breath while seated, or other methods, you may learn them from various sources, including Pure Land teachers, especially those of Chinese and Vietnamese origin, since there isn't really such a sectarian separation in those traditions.

And if you call Zen the "buddha-nature" or "seeing nature", it cannot be taught even by the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2015 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

DGA said:

Are you speaking from experience, Astus?

Astus wrote:

Experience of what? Having a discussion with a teacher?

BTW, I was referring primarily to how Japanese Rinzai and Western Zen communities like including interviews in their programmes. Although probably it could be done online as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2015 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Matt J said:

Evidently, you've never experienced dokusan with a Rinzai teacher.

Astus wrote:
What makes that evident?

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, October 26th, 2015 at 10:59 PM
Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?
Content:
Matt J said:
That you think it can be done online, for one, and calling it a "discussion".

Astus wrote:
Why couldn't it be done online? As for calling it a discussion, I don't see it as anything worse than interview, and maybe even better in some aspects - an exchange of expressions.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2015 at 12:32 AM
Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?
Content:
Matt J said:
For the same reason that cybersex isn't the same as sex. Online interaction as we have it simply isn't as immersive as real-time, face-to-face confrontation.

Astus wrote:
That might be so for Rinzai teachers like Eido Tai Shimano and Joshu Sasaki. But otherwise it may still be manageable, even if not exactly the same, since it is not a requirement to have physical contact normally.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2015 at 12:57 AM
Title: Re: Multiple or Single Practices in Soto Zen
Content:
Astus wrote:

If we want to go to the essence that encompasses all, then even seated meditation is redundant. At the same time, what is generally perceived and transmitted are the various practices not only of sitting but many others, like funerary rituals for instance. Dogen himself was quite thoroughgoing in taking a large number of elements of Buddhism to Japan from precepts to architecture.

"The fact that neither the general public nor the Zen priests or parish members actually practice zazen in large numbers has become a truism amongst scholars of Zen Buddhism in Japan. According to surveys conducted by the two largest Zen sects, Sōtōshū and Rinzai-shū (as represented by Myōshinji), zazen is not a widespread

practice"

(Jørn Borup: Easternization of the East?, in Journal of Global Buddhism Vol. 16 (2015):79)

"It feels strange to say this as a Soto Zen monk, but I've always been uncomfortable with this all-or-nothing focus on zazen. Maybe it's the implicit suggestion that it's a return to what the ancient teachers (Dogen, or Bodhidharma, or maybe even the Buddha himself) really advocated. But more than that, I think it's my feeling (biased, I confess) that it's not really challenging. The discipline of zazen is challenging, of course. Zazen itself is hard work; coming back to it is hard work. But too often, the rhetoric around zazen-only practice feels like wish fulfillment: this is why I got into Zen, and this is something I like, so this must be the only thing that has any value or carries any authenticity. Even if every cell in your body resists doing zazen, philosophically, at least for many, I think it's easy to get on board with it. Other aspects of the tradition do challenge us, directly, on a philosophical level: a hierarchical student/teacher dynamic, bowing, ceremonies as expressions of "offering," robes.... It's easy to look at those practices that make us itch a little and label them as "extra.""

(<http://nyoho.com/2013/06/11/the-zen-toolbox/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2015 at 7:28 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

As for what I'm calling Zen, I'm using Kosho Uchiyama's book Opening the Hand of Thought as my primary source. In it, he describes One Zazen, Two Practices (vow & repentance) and Three Minds (joyful, parental, magnanimous).

Astus wrote:

In Chinese Pure Land you find the four types of buddha-remembrance (四種念佛), and among them the real-mark (i.e. ultimate) buddha-remembrance (實相念佛). See a brief explanation <http://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/essentials-pure-land/5-practice/buddha>.

The Zen explanation of that practice is from Daoxin, the fourth patriarch, in his "Fundamental Expedient Teachings for Calming the Mind Which Attains Enlightenment" (T85n2837p1286c19), who sums up the definition of yixin sanmei as "the mind which is aware of the Buddha is the Buddha, whereas [the mind which] does false thinking is the ordinary person" (tr. David W. Chappell), based on the <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>. After that he quotes the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue (T09n0277p0393b10-11): "The ocean of impediment of all karmas / Is produced from one's false imagination. / Should one wish to repent of it / Let him sit upright and meditate on the true aspect [of reality]." (tr. Bunno Kato) And here meditation on the true aspect is "念實相", i.e. (using the translation above) remembering/thinking real-mark. Further on repentance, or rather formless repentance, there is the 6th chapter of the Platform Sutra. Then Daoxin (tr. Chappell) continues:

"The Dapinjing [couldn't find what it actually refers to, but an almost identical teaching is found in the first volume of the Fozangjing T15n0653p785a25] says: "No object of thought (wu-suo-nian) means to be thinking on Buddha (nianfo)."

Why is it called wu-suo-nian? It means the mind which is "thinking on Buddha" is called thinking on no object (wu-suo-nien). Apart from mind there is no Buddha at all. Apart from Buddha there is no mind at all. Thinking on Buddha is identical to the thinking mind. To seek the mind means to seek for the Buddha.

Why is this? Consciousness is without form. The Buddha lacks any outer appearance. When you understand this truth, it is identical to calming the mind (anxin). If you always are thinking on Buddha, grasping [onto externals] does not arise, [and everything] disappears and is without form, and thinking is impartial without [false] discrimination. To enter into this state, the mind which is thinking on Buddha disappears, and further it is not even necessary to indicate [the mind as Buddha]. When you see this, your mind is none other than the body of the real and true nature of the Tathagata."

Uchiyama's zazen is letting go of thoughts, what Dogen calls hishiryo, what the Platform Sutra calls no-thought (wunian). It is the same as real-mark nianfo. Not anything complicated. But whether one manages to abide by not abiding anywhere is another question.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2015 at 7:52 AM

Title: Re: Multiple or Single Practices in Soto Zen

Content:

DGA said:

Meaning is necessarily limitation; meaning is built on a system of differentiation (x is not y, up is not down, cat is not dog). The idea of meaning being without limitations / differentiations, or "boundless meaning," seems confounding.

Astus wrote:

Not explaining what Jundo means, just replying to that confounding expression:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra20.html>. That sutra basically equates the realisation of prajnaparamita with immeasurable meaning, because "Bodhisattvas next observe intently that all dharmas arise and perish instantly, as thoughts, one after another, never stay. They also observe the instantaneous birth, stay, change, and death of all dharmas. Having made these observations, Bodhisattvas then penetrate the capacities, natures, and desires of sentient beings. Because their capacities, natures, and desires are immeasurable, Bodhisattvas pronounce immeasurable Dharmas. As the Dharmas pronounced are immeasurable, their meanings are also immeasurable. The immeasurable meanings are born from one dharma. This one dharma is no appearance, which is not apart from appearance." Since zazen is thoughts coming and going unhindered, it is no different from the "Dharma Door of Immeasurable Meaning".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2015 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: What did Nagarjuna mean?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the path perspective: Samsara is grasping things as if they were real. Nirvana is the elimination of the wrong view of substance.

From the correct view perspective: There is no substance within phenomena, thus grasping is based on ignorance. It is understanding how phenomena actually are that ignorance is eliminated, there is no new state to create or attain.

Therefore: understanding appearances incorrectly is samsara, understanding it correctly is nirvana. Samsara and nirvana are not two separate realms, so it can be equally said that all appearances are already nirvana and that nirvana is samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 28th, 2015 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"A student preparing for an entrance examination wants to pass; no one wants to fail. Yet the world in which there is no success or failure is the best. We cannot expect such a world in Japan today. It is possible only in the world of zazen. However, there is a group of people who try to put pass and fail into the world of zazen through satori. If you attain satori you succeed, if not you fail. This attitude has nothing to do with the buddha-dharma; it is samsara.

We only have to sit with the self that is only the self, without comparing it to others. It is not necessary at all to visit a Zen master to ask if one is enlightened or not. That is really a stupid question. First of all, to practice the buddha-dharma is to live out the self that is only the self. The truth is that one always has to live out the self that is only the self in any situation, so it is impossible to bring up the question of whether one succeeds or fails."

(Kosho Uchiyama: The Wholehearted Way, p 118)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 28th, 2015 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Multiple or Single Practices in Soto Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen says that it is only zazen that has been transmitted by the patriarchs. This idea expresses that not only is there a buddha-mind but it is manifest in actuality. Even more strongly: buddha-mind is actuality and there is nothing to find beyond what is apparent. Dogen stated clearly that he meant to transmit the whole package of Buddhism from

China to Japan, as he had seen it there. It would be perhaps better to say that his view was holistic, considering the complete religious culture. It should be noted that while his time in Tiantong under Rujing is important, he spent significantly more time travelling around.

When zazen is highlighted as the single practice, it is naturally a huge simplification. Like everything, zazen can only have any meaning within a context. If it is removed from that environment and put into another, inevitably it gains a new meaning. At the same time, with asserting that zazen is the bloodline of buddhas, it is stating that, no matter what, if one knows zazen one knows what the main message is and the rest is optional. Dogen was aware that customs in India were different from that in China, and Japan did not completely copy everything from China either. In fact, Dogen could be critical with Chinese Buddhism, like in the case of the use of toothbrush instead of twigs.

The reason that the question of "multiple or single practice" does not really apply to zazen is that it is not a practice. Zazen is not something to be perfected, developed or understood. It is buddha being buddha. It is not one or many. It is just oneself being oneself. Then whether one follows a monastic lifestyle of the Kamakura era or something else is quite another matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 29th, 2015 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:
to delve into Zen practice.

Astus wrote:

While I agree that Uchiyama's books are quite lucid and easy to follow, it should be kept in mind that he represents his own interpretation of one approach of Soto Zen. If you want for instance to familiarise yourself with Chan, i.e. Chinese Buddhism, there are other sources you may want to look into. For a start there is <http://www.ymba.org/books/fundamentals-meditation-practice> (or in http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chanmed1.pdf) by Ting Chen. That teaching shows very well how in Chinese Buddhism the methods of Tiantai, Chan and Pure Land are equally used and they form an organic whole. A similar teaching nicely summed up by the Vietnamese teacher Thich Thanh Tu can be found on the pages 41-58 in <http://www.thienvientuquang.org/kinhsach/english/KeysToBuddhism.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 29th, 2015 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As a practice without teacher, <http://www.ymba.org/books/fundamentals-meditation->

practice/varieties-chan recommends the <http://www.tientai.net/lit/mksk/v2/v2p2-1p5.htm>:

"The practices of The Maha-Chih-Kuan method are thorough, assuredly, but are too subtle to be done without the aid of an accomplished teacher. However, until such time as the reader may discover such a teacher, he might practice the following effective method of observing the mind. Sit comfortably in the lotus position or in any other position that is suitable for you. Lay down all things, and even give up the thought of laying everything down. In this way, thinking of neither good nor evil, close your eyes gently and lightly observe where your thoughts seem to issue from. This permits you passively to be aware of your false thoughts as they suddenly come and just as suddenly go, neither grasping at them nor driving them away; thus, in time, you can come to understand profoundly that false thought has no self-nature (is empty) and that it is originally void. When false thought is then illuminated by your mind, a stillness becomes evident, which then becomes suchness. Then if another thought suddenly arises, using the same approach, just observe lightly to see where the thought seems to come from. Do this at least once a day for at least half an hour."

Gishin in <http://www.bdkamerica.org/book/essentials-vinaya-tradition-and-collected-teachings-tendai-lotus-school> writes that it is the practice recommended for also for lay followers, while the other three samadhis are primarily for monastics. And as you may recognise, that is practically the same as zazen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 30th, 2015 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: pure land buddhism as anachronistic concept

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems a fairly common knowledge among those who study Chinese Buddhism now that the whole sectarianism of Japanese Buddhism has been projected on China, including not only PL but Chan as well. If you look at the four big schools of Taiwanese Buddhism you find that they are all inclusive of the "eight schools". Also, there has never actually been an independent Chinese PL church ever.

May check some works by Robert Sharf, like

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf2003.%20TP%20Chan%20and%20Pure%20Land.pdf> and

<https://books.google.com/books?id=pSazfSorJzgC>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 31st, 2015 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: pure land buddhism as anachronistic concept

Content:

PorkChop said:

Depends if you take Shan-Tao's teachings of Exclusive Single Practice seriously or not.

Astus wrote:

The Chinese monastic system is Vinaya based, followed by the way political forces influenced its operation. So even Chan and Tiantai were not as exclusive as in Japan, although they did establish a loose organisational structure based on lineage families. That resulted in today's situation where almost every monastery is nominally Chan. Pure Land practices did not form the basis of a similar monastic organisation, and it should be recognised that various forms of nianfo are ubiquitous. Monks and nuns have always enjoyed a relative freedom in what studies and practices they pursued, so even if one happened to reside in a monastery led by an abbot with a specific affiliation, they were not hindered by that.

PorkChop said:

Most everyone else who's actually read Shan-Tao's writings has repeated that he promoted exclusive practice. There's a <http://purelandbuddhism.org/> that solely follows Shan-Tao's writings in endorsing exclusive practice and 13th Pure Land Patriarch Yin Kuang references Shan-Tao as well when endorsing not mixing Pure Land practice with other methods.

Astus wrote:

While the list of the so called 13 Chinese PL patriarchs include Shandao, it begins with Huiyuan, who emphasised visualisation, and includes people like Yongming Yanshou, who was more like a well educated bodhisattva monk with an all around knowledge of Mahayana, Lianchi Zhuhong, who was similarly an educated monastic proficient in the teachings, Chan, and Pure Land, just like Ouyi Zhixu. They were definitely not exclusivists. And that is what you can find from modern luminaries as well like Yinshun and Shengyan.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 31st, 2015 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen Mindfulness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An example of how Zen practice and mindfulness looks fairly the same.

Watch <https://youtu.be/ooypUuwXf7Y?t=44> (2 mins) first.

Then compare the followings from a discussion in a Zen group:

A quote from Dan Leighton initiated the discussion:

"Zazen is not about something else - when we sit, in our regular daily practice, we just sit, it's not about reaching some other state of being or mind, or experience, or understanding in the future. Just this is it. We see what's actually happening in this body/mind here and now, quite apart from our stories about who we are or what the world is or what we want to get from practising - it's not about something else - we're not

practising to get some other place in the future - the point is just to enjoy the next breath, or the breath that's happening right now. To appreciate our uprightness or to appreciate our expression of Buddha's mudra right now. ... It's ACTUALLY this... we sit upright like buddha. and that's the point, we are not sitting to get something else, if that was the meaning of our zazen then it would just be another business transaction. It's hard to get this because that's how we think of our lives, we think we're doing something to get something else out of it. "

So I asked how it is different from blankness. Someone replied:

"this is not about 'blankness' this is about dynamically allowing ourselves to be present in every instant. It is very much part of the bodhisattva path. This was part of a talk on dogen and the lotus sutra - talking about the part of the sutra which discusses the myriad bodhisattvas coming up from under the earth - he quotes Dogen saying "the family style of all buddhas and ancestors is to first arouse the vow to save all living beings by removing suffering and providing joy. Only this family style is inexhaustibly bright and clear".

The things you bring up about feeling hungry and eating, or being mindful of others is not irrelevant at all, but during zazen... the most important thing is zazen.

I'm reminded of a thing Taisen Deshimaru infamously said "When you're doing zazen, don't think about sex, when you're having sex, don't think about zazen"

Another person's explanation:

"When you finish Zazen, take the Zafu with you.

I was once told that sitting is like a launching pad, once we get up from the Zafu, keep yourself in the buddhas space and being present all day.

Also, when you practice Gongfu tea you must be totally present in every single thing you do or you'll ruin your tea. Every single movement and gesture is vitally important. Bring the gongfu practice into every action in waking life is a lure expression of being "this just is" So, when doing gongfu, practice Gongfu. When taking a shit, shit gongfu. When brushing your teeth, brush gongfu. When eating, eat gongfu. When chanting, chant gongfu. When sitting, sit gongfu. When frak, frak gongfu."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 31st, 2015 at 2:16 AM

Title: Re: pure land buddhism as anachronistic concept

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pure Land devotionism could include a diversity of practices for a variety of purposes: for example, meditation on the heroic vows of Amitabha, visualization of his features, cultivation of one's desire to be reborn in the Pure land, visualization of the Pure land, invoking the name of Amitabha either to be reborn in the Pure land or as a means to calm the mind as preparation for other forms of meditation, etc. By way of contrast, what is unique about the outlook of Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao is the force with which they singled out Pure Land devotionism as the only practice needed and available to

Buddhists of that time which could guarantee salvation. T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o both were plagued by a lack of confidence in the effectiveness with which they could master other forms of traditional Buddhist training. T'an-luan distinguished between the "difficult path" and the "easy path of the Pure Land," while Tao-ch'o divided the "path of the sages" from the "path of the Pure land." In fact, the An-lo-chi of Tao-ch'o primarily consists of an extended argument demonstrating the appropriateness and necessity of Pure Land devotion as the only effective practice because of the trauma of the times and the decrease in man's capacities. Thus, the Shansi Pure land thinkers were concerned to stress the differences between Pure land practice and other methods, even though Chinese Pure Land never rejected these other methods as harmful in the way that occurred among Japanese Pure Land thinkers.

The ascendancy of Pure Land devotion as a necessary, sufficient, all-consuming and finally inclusive religious orientation is an extreme development in China. Even at its height, Shansi Pure Land activity never radically separated from a monastic, philosophical, and meditational base, nor did it form a distinctive institutional structure or formalized methods of succession, as it did in Japan. Chinese Pure Land sectarianism was neither based on an exclusive organization nor limited to particular religious practices, but was a loosely-knit association of those who were committed to single-minded devotion to Amitabha and rebirth in his Pure Land as the only guaranteed source of salvation. Although the names in the lineages highlight individual leaders, they also show that the separatist movement existed for a relatively brief period of time in Chinese Buddhist history, principally extending from the sixth to the ninth centuries. Approximately, it was during these centuries that Chinese Buddhism generally was specializing in many different directions and all the major "schools" were formed. It should be emphasized, therefore, that Chinese Pure land thinkers never went to the extreme of the Japanese Pure Land movement which actively rejected other practices as detracting from reliance on Amitabha. In China nien-fo (nembutsu) was decisive for salvation but not exclusive, and Pure Land thinkers always assumed that it would be supplemented by other forms of meditation and purifying practices. A good illustration of this difference between China and Japan is the fate of Hsuan-chung-ssu, the birthplace of Pure Land sectarianism in China. Unlike Japanese Buddhism or Christianity in the West, Buddhist schools in China are lines of practice and thought, not institutionally-strong, property-holding denominations. Accordingly, a monastery took its identity from the activities of its members, and especially its abbot. Because of its local autonomy, any monastery could include a number of "lines" or Buddhist schools, or change from one to the other as the attitudes of people changed. Accordingly, Michihata discovered that by the late T'ang Dynasty the Hsüan-chung-ssu was most famous for its ordination platform and expertise in rituals and precepts, and had become known as a Vinaya Monastery (lū-ssu). At other times, because of the prominence of its meditation hall, it was called a Ch'an Monastery (ch'an-ssu). In the early Sung, after the destructive losses suffered by Buddhism during persecution and war, the Hsüan-chung-ssu became active as a center for making metal buddha-images. Thus, the "ten-thousand practices" (wan-hsing) subordinated by Tao-ch'o as inadequate, which were renamed the "mixed practices" (tsa-hsing) and again deemphasized by Shan-tao, became the main focus of attention in the eyes of later generations as the rich symphony of Chinese religious eclecticism supplemented and absorbed the single sound of chanting Amitabha's name.

(<https://books.google.com/books?id=tztMqPReAYC>, p 144-146)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 31st, 2015 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: pure land buddhism as anachronistic concept

Content:

PorkChop said:

Sentence is self-contradictory and basically shoots down your entire argument up till now.

in fact the whole passage establishes; without a doubt, that there were Pure Land school(s) exclusively devoted to Amitabha. The OP never mentioned lineage, nor Nianfo, merely Pure Land, which is defined by exclusive devotion to Amitabha and the exclusive goal of rebirth in his Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

My argument has not been that there was no Pure Land Buddhism in China, since they have invented the whole thing and it is still the most popular teaching there. What I have been saying is that there was no independent organisation established, unlike in Japan, and that's what the quote talks about as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 1st, 2015 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Nature of mind vs. soul theory.

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is this misleading way of talking about a nature to be discovered or perceived, and even more misleading is the talk about manifestations of the nature. But actually it's like in the Heart Sutra, that the five aggregates are empty, and that emptiness is the nature of the aggregates, and the aggregates themselves are what the mind-body is. So, the emptiness of the nature is that there is no substance in the aggregates, luminosity is that there are aggregates as experience, and their unity is that experience has no substance. Then one can go on considering how the lack of an essence is eternal, especially since it's not a thing, and so on.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 3rd, 2015 at 12:05 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Monlam Tharchin,

Here are my comments to Jundo's comments. What do you think?

jundo cohen said:

One Universal Virtue is to drop (by non-dropping-dropping) all waves of karma, impediments and thoughts of "true or false" into and as this Ocean, Repent/Atonement as At-One-ment, sitting upright as True Aspect. All thoughts as waves just constantly non-arise and flow.

Astus wrote:

Thoughts are just thoughts. Don't imagine them something more or less, then they come and go without hindrance. And even if one tries to turn thoughts into something more or less, they come and go without hindrance. That is, they are impermanent no matter what.

jundo cohen said:

No object of thought and what thought to object to, not two. What "Buddha" can be thought or not thought and is not all thoughts? Sitting as Buddha is precisely Buddhastically Buddhasting.

Astus wrote:

All thoughts are Buddha (impermanent no matter what), thus sitting is Buddha-sitting, and "Buddha-sitting" is the Buddha sitting as Buddha.

jundo cohen said:

Sitting as Buddha is thinking no object. Apart from sitting, there is no mind and no Buddha at all. Apart from Buddha, there is no mind of sitting. Sitting as Buddha is identical to the sitting Buddha. To seek the mind or to seek for sitting is to seek for Buddha. The trick is to seek by not seeking, finding what cannot be found. The Form of Sitting is without form, the appearance of sitting lacks any appearance or in and out. What mind is there to calm? Never mind! In simply sitting, no internal or external to grasp or arise, all is without form or discrimination right in and as all form and discrimination ... nirvana is samsara, no nirvana no samsara from the startless start. The sitting mind disappears and re-emerges, what is there to indicate when all the world is free of directions in the pivot point of sitting? Sitting this, body-mind are none other than the real and true Tathagata.

Astus wrote:

That is: don't fuss about sitting. There is nothing to make up or discover, as things are already such. Such, that is, cannot be grasped. Cannot be grasped, because there is nothing to grasp. There is nothing to grasp, because they come and go naturally.

jundo cohen said:

How does one lay down without laying down? Open the Hand of Thought. There was never a thing to pick up from the start, nor a thing in need of letting go.

Astus wrote:

Letting go is not an act, it is in the recognition of things being such. And whether recognised or not, things are such anyway.

jundo cohen said:

Dropping all thought of good and evil, attraction and aversion, we do not observe (in our way) where thoughts arise or go, but simply do not grasp them as they come and go non-coming-non-going. False thoughts have no self-nature, and the same for true thoughts. There is no thought. Thought-no-thought. As human beings, we do our best (we have no choice so long as we are living beings in a complex world) to live in a world of thoughts, both true and false, doing our best to be free of the latter and to nurture the former (doing our best to be free of greed, anger and divisive thinking, seeking to nurture generosity, peace and unity). Nevertheless, all through all thoughts are no thought from the start. There is stillness to be heard at the heart of the greatest noise. A light shines, illuminating both false and true thoughts.

Astus wrote:

Things are such anyway, so we can freely do our best to be the force of compassionate buddhahood.

jundo cohen said:

Think about it! Or you don't. Yet Thinking-Non-Thinking It-No-It You-No-You

Astus wrote:

The X-notX formula of inseparable appearance-emptiness. That is, there are thoughts, just don't make a fuss.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

Tibetan Buddhists in general interpret all sūtra paths as gradual paths, generally considering other interpretations incorrect and baseless.

Astus wrote:

Only in order to legitimise their own sudden version of Vajrayana as superior. Similarly, Chinese schools have categorised gradual teachings to a lower position. E.g. the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiantai#Five_Periods.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 6:25 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

Let me modify my question - among active, living traditions?

Astus wrote:

Practically they all teach a gradual path. It's just that the <https://books.google.hu/books?id=LyfysMjKooEC> is naturally more popular.

If the unwise Bodhisattva counts the kotis of aeons,
And has the notion that it is long until the full attainment of enlightenment, he is bound to suffer,
And for a long time he will be suffering while moving unto Dharma.
Therefore he is inferior in the perfection of vigour, and essentially indolent.
(Ratnagunasamcayagatha, ch 30, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

It is a little hard for folks to fathom who are used to the "common sense" human idea that something can only be found by looking for it (rather than by transcending looking vs. not looking), attained by striving (rather than striving and non-striving at once), either yes or no, etc etc.

Astus wrote:

Teachings are meant to be read, studied and understood. Just like any other writings. Buddhism is not an exception. But to say that just because at first Spinoza or Kierkegaard seems difficult, doesn't mean one should suspend thinking and achieve some special state of mind. Zongmi was of the opinion that Chan is the summary of the Indian sutras and treatises, intended specifically for a Chinese audience to make things easier (see: Zongmi on Chan, p 105). However, already if we move on from the Tang era to the Song, once common colloquial expressions become obscure, and of course it is even more mysterious to non-Chinese. While it is a fine literary achievement to be able to reproduce sophisticated ancient East Asian word plays, it is likely more productive to use today's language, that way one can uphold the maxim of pointing directly.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

PorkChop said:

I know you're probably not looking for Pure Land input, but my impression is that Jodo Shu is more of a gradual teaching and Shin is more of a sudden teaching. Jodo Shu teaches the 9 grades of Pure Land birth straight from the sutras - most notably in the story of the samurai Kumagai Naozane wanting to be born in the highest grade so he could begin Bodhisattva work as soon as possible. Shinran talks about sudden, horizontal transcendence in the Kyogyoshinsho, thus setting the tone for Jodo Shin Shu.

Astus wrote:

The idea of enlightenment in one lifetime is present in all the Pure Land teachings, because once one is born in Sukhavati buddhahood is guaranteed.

"Suppose we have a worm, born inside a stalk of a bamboo. To escape, it can take the hard way and crawl "vertically" all the way to the top of the stalk. Alternatively, it can poke a hole near its current location and escape "horizontally" into the big, wide world. The horizontal escape, for sentient beings, is to seek rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha."

(Parable 62 in <http://www.ymba.org/books/thus-have-i-heard-buddhist-parables-and-stories/parables>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

No caveats in Dzogchen...just saying...

Astus wrote:

Do you mean it is explicitly gradual or sudden?

(Sam van Schaik has a <https://books.google.hu/books?id=0Tg6AwAAQBAJ> on that subject.)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

No. "Sudden" does not apply to Dzogchen, neither does "gradual." That's like asking the question, "Is a bar of gold suddenly gold, or gradually gold."

Astus wrote:

That's like saying Dzogchen lacks the path to liberation, while that is not actually true. In other words, one can get to that bar of gold either through the process of digging, clearing and melting (or something

http://www.miningandmetallurgy.com/gold/assets/images/Gold_Technology_and_Gold_Production_Plant.PNG); or by discovering it in its pure form. The former is the gradual, the latter is the sudden way. It is of no help to say that the gold is already gold regardless of its location or information of its whereabouts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

But not this lifetime. And birth in Sukhavati does not guarantee Sudden awakening, but rather infinite life and conditions conducive to awakening and complete absence of obstacles.

Astus wrote:

Not in this lifetime. But in the next single lifetime one can attain enlightenment, even if that time is fairly long. Although it is of little or no concern how long one stays in Sukhavati. And since in this life one can be guaranteed of birth and birth definitely brings about complete liberation, some Pure Land teachers were right to say that even now one is similar to a bodhisattva on the stage of no return.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 10:25 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Innermost Great Potentiality states:

The Soaring Garuda states:

The Cuckoo of Vidyā states:

Astus wrote:

"no suffering, origination, cessation or path; no gnosis, no acquisition and no non-acquisition. ... Due to non-acquisition, the bodhisattva, having relied on Perfect Wisdom, dwells without mental obstruction. From the non-existence of mental obstruction, he is fearless, he overcomes inverted erroneous views, and ultimately reaches Nirvāṇa."

([https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4-](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4-3ivsK5Q6MMWI3OGFjODctZTQ1Ni00NzU5LWJiOTgtMjdiNWM1YWE4N2Nk/view)

[3ivsK5Q6MMWI3OGFjODctZTQ1Ni00NzU5LWJiOTgtMjdiNWM1YWE4N2Nk/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4-3ivsK5Q6MMWI3OGFjODctZTQ1Ni00NzU5LWJiOTgtMjdiNWM1YWE4N2Nk/view))

"if the bodhisattva refrains from taking up the practice of any particular dharma, because he does not apprehend any dharma whatsoever, he may thereby succeed in realizing prajñāpāramitā. How can this be the case? All practices are essentially false and unreal."

(Nagarjuna: Realization of Prajñāpāramitā through no Seizing on Practices, in http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen pointless without a teacher?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Do you have a better way to approach this, Astus? I am an old dog always open to new tricks.

Astus wrote:

In the area of skilful means what qualifies better is whether it brings about realisation or not. That depends on the audience. As you well know, even a finger or a no-finger can work.

Otherwise, there is no need for lot of explanations. One just has to see what is "right in front of one's eyes", that is, that all experiences in the six fields change moment to moment, and even one moment cannot be grasped. Therefore, whatever's believed to be a reality is only a conceptual creation. Nevertheless, conceptual creations follow a certain pattern, that is, they are interdependent (network of associations).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2015 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who said the meaning of Prajñāpāramitā and Dzogchen were different? I merely said that in Dzogchen there were no caveats.

Astus wrote:

As you wrote, "Tibetan Buddhists in general interpret all sūtra paths as gradual paths". So, while there are five paths and ten bhumis, a bodhisattva does not get stuck by such conceptual fabrications.

"No caveats" here would mean that Dzogchen plays with open cards. How does it translate to the topic of gradual teachings?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 1:19 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

Shabkar Natsog Rangdrol wrote:

Rongzom Pandita wrote:

Astus wrote:

If there are no stages and practices, what are all those levels, stages, and practices in Dzogchen?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

Right, but that is still not a Sudden path. If you're a bad person, you're born in a lotus calyx and stay there for a time until your bad causes are exhausted - a purgatory of sorts. Then you emerge and continue purification and perfection. Its one life, but still the Gradual path.

Astus wrote:

Yes, they maintain the bodhisattva stages to follow. Another gradualist teaching is the Hosso school (Japanese Dharmalaksana, aka Yogacara).

Queequeg said:

Shinran (as little as I know), in contrast to Honen, seems to have more deeply drawn on Tientai theory. Honen's interpretation is literal and seems to push Tientai aside.

Astus wrote:

I have not seen Shinran actually diverting from Honen's interpretation of what happens in Sukhavati.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 1:36 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

Which levels, stages and practices?

Astus wrote:

Semde, longde, menngagde. Preliminaries, trekcho, togal and its visions. And probably there are others associated with or included in Dzogchen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 2:55 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

The three series are a literary division.

"Preliminaries, trekcho, togal and its visions" are not stages or levels.

Astus wrote:

So those literary divisions do not mean difference in the teachings, one superior to the other, etc?

If those are not stages/levels, then what? Gradual instructions maybe?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 3:37 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

My understanding is that the Hosso school, (and Kegon), exist in name only.

Astus wrote:

I have no information myself, but <https://books.google.com/books?id=1C4qAwAAQBAJ> is by a Hosso priest and it is proper Yogacara.

Queequeg said:

My impression of Shin is that its more philosophical and the idea of Pure Land is to an extent treated metaphorically.

Astus wrote:

There are various interpretations, similarly to how some may deny rebirth and still claim to be Buddhists. So perhaps it's better to just stay with the canonical works (Shinran and maybe Rennyo) or identify the sources of various views.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

Like this?

<https://www.google.com/maps/@34.9897763,135.7596349,3a,75y,270.75h,93.11t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1shD2gk8GHsb1e4xELypKTxQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656!6m1!1e1>

Astus wrote:

There is a sermon on that expression on their website.

http://www.higashihonganji.or.jp/sermon/radio/detail22_01.html It should also be noted that the Japanese uses two words, whereas <http://jisho.org/search/inochi> (命) is the subject and <http://jisho.org/search/ikiru> (生きる) is the predicate. In the sermon it is explained as 今、南無阿弥陀仏が私を生きている i.e. "Now, Namuamidabutsu is living me." That shows probably quite well how it is not some sort of "sudden teaching", but an expression of total relinquishment to Amitabha, very much in line with the general idea of other-power.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Queequeg said:

I don't read Japanese well, and I don't know enough about Shin to speak knowledgeably, but that way of characterizing what is happening now seems a departure from literal Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

There is a fuller explanation of the slogan: http://japanese-religions.jp/publications/assets/JR34%201_a_Porcu.pdf on p 61-64.

"In the English leaflet available at the head temple the meaning of the slogan is explained by dividing it into three stages: Now 1) "'Now' is only here while you are reading this leaflet;" 2) Life is living you means that "'Life' is constantly, continuously and pervasively in the infinite universe. As conditions emerge, 'Life' works as one's body, mind and spirit." And finally, 3) "Now, life is living you" is explained as a calling to live one's life as one is, "regardless if life is going along with [one's] wish or not—happy or sad." The constant saying of Amida's name, the nenbutsu, "is the constant reminder of this calling.""

(from p 62)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

Malcolm said:

The preliminaries are for those who have not yet understood what the primordial state is. Tregchö and thögal are inseparable: sometimes however, tregchö is parsed as "sudden" and thögal as "gradual", but this too is in reality misleading.

Astus wrote:

So, there is a gradual path for those who have not yet attained understanding. And once there is understanding, one should still follow through tregcho and thögal practices, so again, it seems gradual.

Malcolm said:

The long and short of it is that Dzogchen teachings did not fit in the mold of gradual and sudden dichotomy [which is a conversation is only tangentially relevant to Dzogchen due to the conflict in Tibet over Indian and Chinese approaches to Mahāyāna sūtra]. They also do not fit into the mold of ultimate and relative truths. They do not fit into the mold of paths and stages.

Astus wrote:

Sudden means direct access to the ultimate. If there are stages involved in the path, it is necessarily gradual. So, if Dzogchen were just recognising the primordial state, then it would be a sudden method. If preliminaries and follow up practices are also included, it is gradual.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

MalaBeads said:

I dont think you "get to" the gold, i think you discover you are the gold.

Astus wrote:

That makes no difference, as finding the gold is just a metaphor for the realisation of the nature of mind/world/reality. One still has to arrive at that discovery.

MalaBeads said:

But all that is left behind when you discover your true nature.

Astus wrote:

That discovery should happen at the so called introduction. However, one cannot engage in Dzogchen without that introduction, while at the same time all the teachings and methods come after it. So it doesn't look like as if all that were simply left behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 6th, 2015 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: Gradual Teaching

Content:

alpha said:

I am sure this has been said many times before but dzogchen is the path from mind to nature of mind and in that sense is direct and instantaneous.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism teaches moving from ignorance to knowledge, so in that sense it would all be sudden.

alpha said:

So all the Dzogchen practices are there to develop capacity to recognise and integrate with the primordial state which is already there and not to develop qualities, abilities and various accomplishments or go through various stages of development since all these aspects are already complete and perfected in the primordial state.

In other words doing dzogchen practices means developing capacity to recognise what is already there.

Astus wrote:

From the practical perspective it makes no difference at all whether one develops new abilities or lets hidden abilities surface. In both cases it means that one gradually gains new abilities, the only difference is a mostly irrelevant theoretical concept behind it that at best can serve as inspiration.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 10th, 2015 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: the idea of historicity and spiritual practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

I personally find very informative the modern historical scholarship on Buddhism. It can show well how certain concepts changed from one era to the other, and then how other concepts were added or modified in response to that. It also covers the way Buddhists adapted to their cultural and linguistic environments, e.g. the transmission from India to China, and then the sinification of Buddhism. It is also incorrect to think that people in Asia were unaware of textual changes and apocryphal texts, since there were various corrections made during the centuries, and historical verification of texts was among the cardinal issues in debates.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 11th, 2015 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: the idea of historicity and spiritual practice

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

But the rise of modern historical methods threw a wrench into that, by raising the possibility that a given concept of the Buddha and his teachings can be established (or refuted) independently, i.e. through avenues that are not linked to a tradition. So when a person goes for refuge in the Buddha, who are they taking refuge in? The Buddha who appears in the Dharma and taught, for instance, the Lotus Sutra? Or the Buddha identified by historians? And which Buddha is that, exactly -- Gombrich's Buddha, Harvey's Buddha, Schopen's Buddha?

Astus wrote:

I don't really see that happening. Those who fancy believing in whatever they find appealing are very much unaffected by academic studies. Scientific concepts are rapidly integrated into the weirdest New Age type beliefs. While a few theologians developed hermeneutics, Biblical studies and other more or less science-based methods, the masses don't know and don't care. Even Western practitioners who are mostly educated middle class people are happy to just go regularly to zazen sessions, pujas and empowerments without knowing a thing about Buddhist studies, or even sutras for that matter. As everywhere, the majority is content to listen once a week to some authority figure, then go home and watch TV.

Mahayana is quite clear in that the Buddha is not some ordinary being, or even an extraordinary being, but the ultimate truth/nature of mind. Just see how Vimalakirti educated poor Ananda:

"You should understand, Ānanda, the bodies of the Tathāgatas are bodies of the Dharma, not bodies of longing. The Buddha is the World-honored One, who has

transcended the triple world. The Buddha's body is without flaws, the flaws having been extinguished. The Buddha's body is unconditioned and does not fit the [conventional] analytic categories. A body such as this—how could it be ill, how could it be vexed?" (Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 3, p 95, BDK Edition)

As one way to see the historical evolution of Buddhist traditions and texts is that everyone of various ages realised the same truth of dependent origination and used expressions fit for their environment. Thus, there is really just one vehicle with 84k methods. This is also a good way to eliminate the ubiquitous sectarian biases many get lost in. Mahayana itself is such an ecumenical approach, encompassing every manifestation of the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 12th, 2015 at 11:55 PM

Title: Re: the idea of historicity and spiritual practice

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

are the Sravakayana and Mahayana vehicles actually headed to the same destination?

Astus wrote:

Yes. I think it is best illustrated by the five aggregates. They are already impermanent, dependently originated and without self. The difference between delusion and enlightenment regarding that is what results in either attachment and dissatisfaction or freedom and peace. So there are the "five aggregates with attachment" for the deluded, and the "five aggregates" (as they are) for the enlightened. This is true in every Buddhist system I'm aware of.

Lazy_eye said:

Nirvana according to...

Astus wrote:

This is where things can become difficult, as texts and people can use all sorts of poetic language to talk about nirvana for various reasons. To keep it simple, it's just as in the four noble truths: the end of the cause of suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 13th, 2015 at 6:13 PM

Title: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Whatever thing or being we perceive are concepts, mental fabrications.
2. There is no thinker behind concepts, no creator of ideas.
3. While there is no thinker, thoughts come and go on their own.
4. As thoughts come and go on their own, there is nothing to attain or release.

"Now all objective appearances are like water and waves, all are apparitions of the mind and in reality are unestablished. By realizing this, one recognizes all appearances as the mind. By analyzing the essence of the mind in terms of going, staying, and arising, it turns out not to be established as anything. So, like horses and elephants in a dream, it is unestablished in reality. By realizing this, one recognizes that the mind is empty. From the state of emptiness, clarity, and limpidity in unceasing great joy, it spontaneously arises as manifold appearances, like the moon's reflections in water. By realizing this, one recognizes emptiness as spontaneous presence. Thus, from simple spontaneous presence arising and release occur spontaneously, without wavering from immutable great bliss that is clear, empty, spontaneous, and free of elaboration, like a snake that unravels its own knots. By ascertaining this, one recognizes spontaneous presence as self-liberating."

(Wangchuk Dorje: Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, quoted in Spacious Path to Freedom, p 120-121)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 13th, 2015 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I am very interested in 'mind-only', but I find these teachings pretty hard to interpret on face value. If you are injured or hurt, that has consequences beyond the purely conceptual, doesn't it? How is that 'a mental fabrication'?

Astus wrote:

That area is covered under the topic of "attachment to body", right from the early teachings, as in Satipatthana for instance. It starts with the concept there there is such a thing as a "body", and goes up to "my body is injured". Consider the difference between seeing a stranger hurt, seeing a family member hurt, and feeling your toe hurt. Or the difference between a falling vase and the falling of your favourite vase from grandma.

Wayfarer said:

Same could be said for all manner of experiences, especially painful or injurious ones; we have to deal with the reality of such things. How can they be regarded as mental fabrications?

Astus wrote:

There are a number of teachings on handling pain, e.g.:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.004.than.html> and

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.than.html>. That is, when a sensory impression occurs, it is first of all experienced by the mind. Then it is judged and identified by the mind. Following that one associates the perception with a number of other concepts, thus integrating it in one's general view of oneself and the world.

After that intention arises about what to do, and that is followed by action. So, even if one were to say that the initial point of bodily impression is not a mental fabrication, following that they all are.

Wayfarer said:

I can see how it applies to many of the things that people assume are real, or to things that we attribute importance to. I get that, but I can't see how it applies to the raw truth of experience as such.

Astus wrote:

What is the raw truth of experience? Is it important? Is it personal?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 13th, 2015 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Merit -- how would you explain this?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Think good -> do good -> feel good -> see good.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 13th, 2015 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

Okay -- sorry to be thick-headed here -- how does this apply to daily interactions with others? Acquaintances, friends, relatives, significant others, etc? These are statements indicating how things are, but what do we do with this knowledge when we interact?

Astus wrote:

One usual source of suffering is interpreting others' actions as being personally addressed towards oneself. Instead of that one should recognise how one's own reactions, feelings and thoughts originate not from others but one's own mind. Thus the reason to be moved - conceptually and emotionally - by others is cut off, that way eliminating afflictions. It also prevents falling for stereotypes, assumptions and categorisations that one readily projects on people. Ultimately it shows the futility of relying on expectations and opens up one's mind to changing situations, at the same time giving insight into how people's minds function, where their suffering comes from, and hence compassion towards them becomes natural. So, it is not really that there is something in particular to do, but one should fully understand the meaning of the teaching in one's experience, then the effects manifest.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 14th, 2015 at 6:15 AM

Title: Re: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

florin said:

I would think that for the purpose of establishing the truth of this point one would have to be able to distinguish between an appearing object and an apprehended object because conflating the two can lead to various errors and deviations such as saying that the outer objects are created by mind, etc...

Astus wrote:

Whatever can be called an appearance is an experience. Experience can exist only within consciousness, as besides consciousness there is no awareness of anything, otherwise we would be experiencing things unconsciously. It is indeed a deviation to say that outer objects are created by the mind, since there are no objects outside the mind anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 14th, 2015 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

pothigai said:

What do you mean by 'consciousness' or 'mind'? They seem to have a meaning equivalent to 'experience' or 'appearance' in this context.

Astus wrote:

By consciousness/mind I simply meant the faculty of being conscious. It is inseparable from experience, as experience is necessarily an instance of consciousness. Similarly, whatever can be called an appearance is an experience. But for the sake of communication experience/consciousness can be divided to subject (mind) and object (mental event). In Mahamudra this is called "spontaneous presence" and "co-emergence", the unity of emptiness and awareness/appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 15th, 2015 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: The Big Bang and the Heart Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not a substratum whence things emerge, that is a very mistaken interpretation. The Heart Sutra is perfectly clear on this, saying that the five aggregates and emptiness are one and the same. So, turning emptiness into the source of the universe not only contradicts the established cosmology but also the basic principles of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 16th, 2015 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: The Big Bang and the Heart Sutra

Content:

Serenity509 said:

My Dharma friend, did you read this article, and if so, could you please tell me where, specifically, this article is incorrect?

Astus wrote:

It is wrong in its assumption that things come from or are created by emptiness. As it starts here:

"It has always been Buddhism's contention that all things are "One", as seen in the video from the previous post. This means that all physical phenomena, including human beings and everything that surrounds them, come from the same origin. They are different only in the way they are manifested, which is the result of nothing more than the differences in the type of atoms they have and the way these atoms are arranged. Despite their differences, they share the same "Essence"."

Not to mention that it fails to give a definition of emptiness, besides it being inexplicable, it takes it as some sort of substratum or even a creator deity. Naturally, from then on all comparisons it tries to make cannot actually apply to the Buddha's teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 16th, 2015 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: The Big Bang and the Heart Sutra

Content:

Serenity509 said:

If a Buddhist were asked what existed before the Big Bang, if it were shown the Big Bang as the universe's origin is actually true, the answer should be simple: Dharmakaya existed before the Big Bang. Very simple.

Astus wrote:

As I have already commented on the error in the referenced article, it seems redundant to repeat the same claims without establishing them in the Buddha's teachings. The very idea of a beginning is directly against such fundamental doctrines as dependent origination. Therefore, whatever scientific source you quote to claim a real beginning, has no relevance whatsoever to Buddhism.

There is an entire samyutta (the 15th) on the topic of no discernible beginning. Here is a quote from the first sutta (SN 15.1, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi):

"Bhikkhus, this samsara is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. Suppose, bhikkhus, a man would cut up whatever grass, sticks, branches, and foliage there are in this Jambudipa and collect them together into a single heap. Having done so, he would put them down, saying [for each one]: 'This is my mother, this my mother's mother.' The sequence of that man's mothers and grandmothers would not come to an end, yet the grass, wood, branches, and foliage in this Jambudipa would be used up and

exhausted. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, this samsara is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. For such a long time, bhikkhus, you have experienced suffering, anguish, and disaster, and swelled the cemetery. It is enough to experience revulsion towards all formations, enough to become dispassionate towards them, enough to be liberated from them.”

And from a definitive Mahayana source, Nagarjuna's Middle Treatise, 11.1 (tr Ocean of Reasoning, p 266):

"When asked if the beginning is known,
The great sage said “no.”
Cyclic existence is without origin or terminus.
Because there is no beginning or end."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 29th, 2015 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Can women become Buddhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Anyone who thinks 'I'm a woman' or 'a man' or 'Am I anything at all?' — that's who Mara's fit to address."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn05/sn05.002.than.html>)

"Good man, it is in this sense that good men and good women who listen to this Mahayana Great Nirvana Sutra will always decry the marks that characterize a female and seek to be male . Why? Because this Mahayana scripture has the characteristic of manliness (pauruṣa). I am referring to buddha-nature. If someone does not understand buddhanature, then he does not have male characteristics. Why do I say this? Because he cannot grasp the fact that the buddha-nature exists within himself. I would say those unable to know the buddha-nature are to be called women. I would say those who are able to know themselves that the buddha-nature exists are characteristically male. If a woman is able to know definitively that the buddha-nature exists within herself, you should know that this constitutes her as male."

(Nirvana Sutra, p 301-302, tr Blum, BDK Edition / p 135 in tr Yamamoto)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 29th, 2015 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Can women become Buddhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is clearly chauvinistic and merely perpetuates androcentrism and misogyny in the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

Yes, and before that section in the Nirvana Sutra it talks about how women are full of insatiable desire. However, the reason I quoted it is, that it can be taken as one way of Buddhist scriptures tackling widespread misogyny prevalent in texts and societies. Instead of reading the negative characteristics of female birth as referring to biology, it transforms that to a spiritual level. Sure, it's not that same as what one finds in the Soma Sutta and others claiming sex to be another mistaken self-identity, but as tathagatagarbha teachings are transitory teachings from self-view to no-self, it fits well into the scheme of gradually eliminating sexism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 30th, 2015 at 1:36 AM

Title: Re: Buddha-nature and Non-Self

Content:

Astus wrote:

To realise that there is nothing stable (self) in the six sensory areas is attaining buddha-nature (self). Thus no self is the real self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 30th, 2015 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Is doing art just a waste of time?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the question is: What is not a waste of time?

Time goes by no matter what. Is art more, less, or equally as valuable as sitting on the toilet? Are social and religious values better, worse, or the same as arbitrary personal judgements? Can we even judge something independent of already integrated views?

Buddhist morality puts emphasis not on the act but the intention. Intention can be wholesome, unwholesome and neutral. Maybe you should measure art that way.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 1st, 2015 at 12:21 AM

Title: Starting Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a geographical problem. Locate the nearest Zen group, then visit them.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 1st, 2015 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: Starting Zen Practice

Content:

Rita_Repulsa said:

I'm a bit drawn to Dogen. Is "Zen just Zen," in the sense that I shouldn't have to worry too much about sectarian differences? If that's the case, I'll just take a trip.

Astus wrote:

Probably the only time to worry about sectarian differences is when you want to win a sectarian debate. Otherwise, you need to look around and see what fits your taste. Likely it will have more to do with the individuals in the group than their affiliation with some bigger organisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 1st, 2015 at 3:08 AM

Title: Re: Starting Zen Practice

Content:

Caodemarte said:

If it is true Zen practice then won't you end up at the same place no matter what color robes are worn?

Astus wrote:

Rather it should be genuine bodhisattva practice. Teachers provide various means to help others, that's their bodhisattva activity. Disciples need to cultivate open ears and open mind, that's their bodhisattva activity. Teachers and disciples share the same vows and aspirations of saving all beings and attaining unsurpassed enlightenment.

Zen is pointing directly to the mind to see nature (kensho) and become buddha. What is the mind? The mind is buddha. Nothing to add, nothing to remove, just as it is: changing moment to moment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Places to Ordain in the Chinese Tradition

Content:

Astus wrote:

What kind of monasticism do you think there was until the mid-20th century? As far as I am aware, the great communities in Taiwan mentioned here are not that different at all, and in some ways even better because of the modern conditions and such. Still, if you want to ordain in Taiwan or PRC, you need to be able to speak Chinese (eventually). Most of the smaller Buddhist churches and even larger monasteries do not have English language websites, except for tourists.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the whole monastic realm is not like a restaurant chain where you can rely on some quality control and order whatever food you like. On the ground things might turn out to be quite different from what you would expect, for better or worse. Not because no information is available, but because there are aspects one may not think of beforehand, like all the rituals and ceremonies, or the kinds of food they have, etc.

A good thing about such organisations like FGS is that you can actually visit them, even spend some time there if you like, and they are not only prepared for that, but invite people.

I don't know what books you have read about Chan, but maybe you should read for instance Holmes Welch's work: <https://books.google.com/books?id=17PBC3e4dmMC>. And some other relevant works, like <https://books.google.com/books?id=rU5AgAAQBAJ>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=nYdOnj41h-AC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=dWL6EEkL8goC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=efwxhVSRJv0C>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=J1tZBMy52oYC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=0D0IUv8NeWMC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=pSazfSorJzgC>, and others that discuss the social history of Buddhism in China. It clarifies how the Chan world that may come through their own religious works (i.e. Chan books) is little more than a myth.

Also, Chan actually means Chinese Buddhism, with all its teachings, practices and rituals. There is no exclusive Chan school where monks sit all day long contemplating an old phrase. At the same time, one may find places where one can find certain practitioners who focus more on meditation than other matters. Even more so, if one is drawn to emulating the old masters of the Chan school, that means long solitary retreats, just as Xuyun did, and so did people like Shengyan (founder of Dharma Drum) and Weijue (founder of Chung Tai).

The best way to get information on places of ordination is to establish a personal connection with the people of the nearest Chinese Buddhist community. Then they can refer you to their home monastery.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 3rd, 2015 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.simplybeing.co.uk/about-james-low/> is an English Dzogchen teacher (so is <http://www.keithdowman.net/>, but he doesn't really go to the UK), and there are many fine teachings available on his website.

As for the whole status of the Vajrayana tradition from a Theravadin perspective, you can take it as similar to the individual teachings of people like Ajahn Mun and Ledi Sayadaw. Not exactly the words of the Buddha, but rather something that comes from insight based on the Dharma. What can be somewhat confusing at the beginning is the different terminology, but eventually you may find that essentially they teach the same thing of anicca, dukkha, and anatta.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 3rd, 2015 at 7:24 PM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Astus wrote:

Not exactly the words of the Buddha, but rather something that comes from insight based on the Dharma.

Vasana said:

Not exactly true within the context of Dzogchen. Not the words of the historical flesh-and-blood Buddha, but the words from the perspective of the primordial Buddha, which is timeless realization it's self. Something not far away, but temporarily obscured.

Astus wrote:

I don't really see the difference there. You call it "primordial Buddha, which is timeless realization itself". I called it "insight based on the Dharma". Insight = realisation. Dharma = primordial Buddha. Nevertheless, I meant it as a possible approach from a Theravadin perspective, not as Dzogchen's self-definition.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 3rd, 2015 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

fckw said:

With "countering" I did not mean that you do it during Vipassana practice. But there is a presumption that certain mind states are actually negative and others are positive, and as a consequence that you should avoid the negative ones and cultivate the positive ones. This simply does not hold in Dzogchen in the same way. In Dzogchen, to see things as primordially pure is an important meditation instruction. However, if they indeed are this way, there cannot be such a thing as "negative mind states".

Astus wrote:

Dzogchen maintains the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome, otherwise it'd be in denial in a way they accuse Hashang's doctrine. It's just that in terms of view one realises that all phenomena are empty, thus no need to grasp or reject. Same is taught in Theravada with the contemplation on the three characteristics.

fckw said:

Furthermore, another important difference is that according to the Theravadin tradition there's no such a thing as rigpa, whereas in Dzogchen rigpa is the "underlying mind" of all appearances (and the primordial ground, kun zhi, is again underlying rigpa), and the five skandhas are seen as five different forms of wisdom. In Theravada there's actually nothing beyond the 5 skandhas. A more informed discussion of the matter can be found <http://vajracakra.com/viewtopic.php?f=23&t=1342>.

Astus wrote:

Rigpa is the knowing of reality, and such knowledge is the goal of Theravada as well. Assuming a self (an absolute) beyond the five aggregates is denied not only in Theravada but in Mahayana as well. There is also no disagreement in that it's not the skandhas themselves that are the problem but the attachment to them based on ignorance. So once reality is seen (no self inside, outside or in between the aggregates), there is no clinging, and without clinging there is liberation. Although that doesn't mean that there is no difference in terminology and in some methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 3rd, 2015 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Starting Zen Practice

Content:

Rita_Repulsa said:

The necessity of a teacher, however, is my biggest concern. I suppose I'll have to read up and reach out.

Astus wrote:

You have to meet a teacher to see if you can become a student.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dzogchen maintains the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome...

Malcolm said:

Citation please, from an original Dzogchen text.

Astus wrote:

"It is the very state of unawareness, which is the cause of delusion. In that state you suddenly lose consciousness, and from that unclear state fear comes into being. From that arises clinging to self and clinging to other as enemy. This habitual tendency gradually grows, and from this a progressive entry into samsara occurs. Next, the five poisons of the passions develop, and the karma of these five poisons is unceasing."
(http://www.vajrayana.org/media/files/files/d74e3a90/Kunzang_Monlam_letter_format.pdf)

Malcolm said:

If you think Dzogchen can be summed up by the two kinds of selflessness [persons and phenomena], you have not understood Dzogchen at all.

Astus wrote:

"Mipham Rinpoche tells us that we should not understand what appears and what is empty in the way that we understand light and darkness. The proper way for us to

understand them is as fire and warmth. In this way, we become skillful at understanding emptiness and dependent arising, dependent arising and emptiness. There is no more profound understanding of the view of Dzogchen than this."
(Anyen Rinpoche: Journey to Certainty, p 134-135)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, but where is anything defined as wholesome or unwholesome? Something to be accepted as opposed to something be to be rejected?

Astus wrote:

The text goes on about the five poisons and how they're remedied by recognising the natural state. It also mentions the six realms here and there. Since it recognises the various types of births, as they depend on good and bad inclinations, it includes the system of the wholesome and unwholesome states. Of course, it is not really a text to get into the details of karma, but it is obviously presupposed.

Malcolm said:

[T]he emptiness arrived at through the power of analysis does not rise above a nonaffirming negation, it does not become the view of Mantra...Someone who maintains that emptiness is good and maintains that existence is bad places great importance on the nonaffirming negation. The Bhagavan said that it is better to abide in a view of the personality complex the size of a mountain. The view of the nonexistence of the personality complex is wrong.

Astus wrote:

The quote from Anyen Rinpoche talks about the unity of emptiness and appearances as the correct view, and not to take them separately. I see no contradiction between the two quotes.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 2:55 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

It describes the state of samsara, but it does not recommend some practice of accepting and rejecting wholesome and unwholesome things.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't have to, as pure view also means pure conduct, the natural manifestation of buddha activities. But, as I said before, the teachings do not say that within samsara there are no good and bad, it's just that for a dzogchenpa the solution to that is the

ultimate approach of neither grasping nor rejecting.

"Briefly, for the best practitioners,
Unwholesome thoughts are settled in the dharmakaya.
Good thoughts, bad thoughts — both are on a level.
Therefore there's no need for antidotes."
(Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 58)

Malcolm said:

In the Commentary on Liquid Gold, Ju Mipham asks the question: Also, in terms of the claim, “appearance and emptiness are nondual,” what is the single identity holding both appearance and emptiness together as one thing?

One can say that appearances and emptiness are 'du bral med, that is, they cannot be put together ['du] or separated [bral], in other words, they are whole and indivisible, but to say they are a union, well, that involves a whole other set of problems as Ju Mipham points out.

Astus wrote:

I used the word unity, as in "one" and "single". There is no selflessness or emptiness as a thing or being anywhere, it's just how appearances are. Otherwise it would be assuming a self outside the aggregates, or taking the aggregates as one thing and emptiness another.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 4:26 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

as the Soaring Great Garuda states:
Butchering, prostitution, the five uninterrupted deeds,
immoral behavior and that avoided by the world,
are totally perfect, the nectar of Dharma —
there is nothing other than great bliss.

Astus wrote:

It clearly says they are immoral behaviour. So there is awareness of a difference between good and bad. It's another thing that it claims that nothing can defile primordial purity, a logical consequences of the oneness of samsara and nirvana. Still it maintains that for the deluded beings of the world those are unwholesome activities.

Malcolm said:

Yup, but you did not answer Mipham's question.

Astus wrote:

"what is the single identity holding both appearance and emptiness together as one thing?"

The question assumes that appearances and emptiness are two and need holding together. I do not hold such an assumption.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Dzogchen point of view is that delusion is just delusion, and there is no liberation through engaging in deluded virtue, let alone avoiding deluded nonvirtue.

Astus wrote:

So says everyone else in Buddhism. Skilful and unskilful acts bring about karmic results within samsara, and I see no denial of that in Dzogchen either, since it does talk about the lower and higher realms.

Malcolm said:

You have not eliminated the reification of oneness and manyness, that is the point of the question.

Astus wrote:

Are we still on the subject of selflessness?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Therefore, it is shown that there is not the slightest difference between Buddha Samantabhadra and the King of Hell, Dharmarāja.

-- Vimalamitra

Astus wrote:

Yes, both good and bad dharmas are empty, kleshas are bodhi, and samsara is nirvana. That is not the same as refuting/denying the conventional existence of wholesome and unwholesome for deluded beings, as the driving forces behind the various forms of birth, as stated in the referenced aspiration prayer for instance. I did not say that Dzogchen uses specific antidotes, just that it recognises the function of various mental inclinations.

Malcolm said:

We were on your point about union of appearance and emptiness.

Astus wrote:

And they are so, nobody claimed otherwise. What you seemed to object against was summing up the ultimate view as the two kinds of selflessness, I guess because it may be mistaken for some annihilationist extreme, while Dzogchen likes to equally emphasise awareness and emptiness as the inseparable nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

What denial are you claiming would be a result if Dzogchen does not make this distinction?

Astus wrote:

The problem (Hashang and his black and white clouds) is detailed in e.g. Lamrim Chenmo, vol 2, p 87-89. At the same time, Longchenpa in the Way of Abiding, p 134-135, says that Dzogchen does agree with such a view that's criticised by Tsongkhapa and others. As I take it, they can be consolidated, if statements are put in the right context.

Malcolm said:

In point of fact, Ju Mipham, since you invoked him, is not comfortable with the idea that there is a "union" or "nonduality" of appearance and emptiness, this is why he questions the idea.

The ultimate view of Dzogchen is not merely the two kinds of selflessness. It goes beyond that. Mipham's perspective, again, since you brought him up, is that the view of sūtra does not approach the view of mantra.

Astus wrote:

Terms like appearance and emptiness are meant for guidance, not for getting hung up on them and splitting hairs. But as it usually happens, things can deteriorate to the point where terminology needs to be reviewed.

What higher view can be presented than not being bound by any view? It would be falling back to clinging to views.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 12:54 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Thus the view in Dzogchen is the direct perception of pristine consciousness introduced by the guru, it is not a result of intellectual analysis.

Astus wrote:

That's at best a difference in method, of how to relinquish attachment, but not in what is realised. Or it is about criticising those who mistake emptiness for a reified concept of

emptiness, a position already rejected by Nagarjuna and his followers.

Malcolm said:

What single entity ties them together? You still did not answer the question.

Astus wrote:

Tying together would need two things to be tied together. Who would consider that there is such a thing as "selflessness" on the one hand and "aggregates" on the other? It makes no sense. Even saying that there is a thing/being/object as "selflessness" is misreading the expression, like saying that one's pocket is filled with "pennilessness".

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Really? Than please tell us what is to be realized.

Astus wrote:

The emptiness of self and phenomena, what else?

Malcolm said:

That is exactly what "union" means, tying two things together, for example, the union of a man and a woman.

Astus wrote:

For educational purposes it is fine to talk of emptiness, appearances and their unity. Then eventually it becomes clear that all three terms are conventional expressions.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 2:05 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

What else is to be realized? Vidyā.

Astus wrote:

What more does vidya include?

Malcolm said:

Apparently not, otherwise, Mipham would not have taken it to task.

Astus wrote:

I am not familiar with Mipham's intellectual-cultural context, where such terminology was a problem, but I can imagine such a situation. Still, it doesn't look like that everyone

in Tibetan Buddhism stopped using it.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mipham writes in his Original Mind:

Once one has realized the meaning of the Great Perfection (the conclusion of the Dharma of the eight vehicles that make mind into the path) which makes pristine consciousness into the path, it is explained that buddhahood will not be attained until the vidyā of the Great Perfection, self-originated pristine consciousness, is realized. In other words, buddhahood does not come about solely from realizing emptiness, the dharmatā of emptiness, buddhahood requires realizing vidyā, the dharmatā of the mind.

Astus wrote:

And what is the dharmata of the mind? That it is without inherent existence. That is what should become clear to anyone investigating the aggregates and the sensory areas. How is that any different from simply calling it "realising emptiness"?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 5:23 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just that is, according to Mipham, "...the ultimate state of the sublime Dharma."

Astus wrote:

Seems to be no different from the Yogacara term citta-dharmata, that is actually the same as emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Unknown said:

they hold that as truly existent

Astus wrote:

I don't see that accusation valid, at least not against Vasubandhu.

Dzogchen: "empty knowing dharmatā of the mind of the eight consciousness"

Yogacara: "empty intrinsically knowing pristine consciousness"

Both sound to me like a non-abiding mind. Also,

"What is the difference between ordinary wisdom, which arises from a mind endowed with subject/object grasping, and individually self-cognizant wisdom? Ordinary, conventional superior wisdom arisen from intellect differentiates between subject and object, this and that, whereas these defining characteristics of ordinary mind are nowhere to be found in individually self-cognizant wisdom. There is no ordinary apprehension or conceptualization whatsoever. Thus, to recognize the level of wisdom that is being expressed by the mind, we must become skillful at noticing and cutting through any mode of grasping."

(Journey to Certainty, p 119)

and

"the perception of samsara is nothing more than the result of subject/object grasping. When grasping is not present, this is liberation."

(Journey to Certainty, p 146)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

it is definitely valid

Astus wrote:

That would mean that they still maintain a real subject, contradicting themselves.

Malcolm said:

No, the second is svasamvedana [rang rig] that is merely empty of subject and object, but truly exists -- standard Yogacara.

Astus wrote:

True existence of a mind without subject-object would be no different from some concept of a self, actually a subject without object. But they state explicitly that neither outer objects nor an inner mind is established as anything real.

"Through the perception

That there is only thought,

There arises the non-perception of knowable things;

Through the non-perception of knowable things,

There arises the non-perception of thought, too."

(Treatise on the Three Natures, v 36, tr Kochumuttom)

See also: Treatise in Thirty Stanzas, v 26-29.

Malcolm said:

There is an important citation in the Inlaid Jewels Tantra that clarifies the difference between these two:

Untainted vidyā is the kāya of pristine consciousness.

Since intrinsic knowing [rang rig, svasaṃvedana] is devoid of actual signs of awakening, it is not at all the pristine consciousness of vidyā [rig pa'i ye shes].

Astus wrote:

The reason I brought that citation is to show that the difference between knowing and unknowing lies in the presence or absence of dual vision. Self-awareness is another matter.

Malcolm said:

Might I suggest that if you are going to argue about Tibetan traditions, you do so on the basis of understanding Tibetan and the etymologies of Sanskrit terms in Tibetan?

Astus wrote:

Certainly a useful thing. But here it's just your quote's definitions that looked similar. I'm happy to receive clarifications.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 6th, 2015 at 7:58 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

With respect to the Yogacara school, they do indeed posit an ultimate consciousness — it is the meaning of line of Madhyantavibhaga, "The imagination of the unreal exists..." and so on, though I understand it is fashionable these days to try and rescue Yogacara from being hoisted on its own petard.

Astus wrote:

As I read it, the Madhyantavibhaga there says nothing different from what Nagarjuna writes about the equality between dependent origination and emptiness. It is also repeated in how the three natures are explained. If that means Yogacara is at fault, then so is Madhyamaka.

Malcolm said:

Yes, that is the whole point.

Astus wrote:

That's quite a huge point, putting Yogacara into the position of not only a less developed view, but actually means that they massively failed in setting up a coherent system. Then it is certainly strange how Yogacara has such a big influence on virtually every Mahayana (incl. Vajrayana) school. So, I'm still doubtful about that interpretation's validity.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 6th, 2015 at 8:07 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin looking for a bit of suggestion

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

(1) vidya = direct knowledge of the dharmata of the mind, and the dharmata of the mind = self-originated pristine consciousness.

(2) in Ch'an there is no realization of the dharmata of the mind (= self-originated pristine consciousness); instead there is the realization of emptiness, which is an entirely different (because incomplete) realization.

Does the difference boil down to the dharmata being understood differently in Ch'an and Vajrayana/Dzogchen?

If so, how are their understandings different?

Astus wrote:

Beings are made of body-mind, the five aggregates, the six sensory areas. To realise their emptiness is to see their true nature (dharmata). Not to see the true nature of the mind would mean that someone understands only that the body is empty but not the mind. A highly unlikely situation for a Buddhist practitioner. Unless Dzogchen posits something beyond the possible realm of experience (body-mind), the difference you mention is non-existent.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 6th, 2015 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Madhyantavibhanga is basically asserting that the perfect is the absence of the imagined in the dependent. The dependent however is never refuted. It is the emptiness that exists in which no duality exists.

Frankly, I am a little surprised that you don't understand the difference between Madhyamaka and Yogacara. Yogacarins and Madhymakas in India certainly understood the differences between their respective schools, and there is an extensive polemical literature which exists between them detailing the differences.

Astus wrote:

In the basic works of Asanga and Vasubandhu there is no attack against Nagarjuna's teachings or Prajnaparamita works in general. While there were people in the later centuries who thought in terms of opposing views, there were others who could put the two into a single system.

Just as the dependent is the ultimate without the imagined, so is seeing the

inseparability of interdependence and emptiness, the conventional and the ultimate, is called the middle way. Not reifying appearances is seeing their dependent-empty nature for both Yogacara and Madhyamaka.

Regarding their differences, Yijing's summary (quoted by Malcolm David Eckel in his "Bhavaviveka and His Buddhist Opponents", p 95; and "Undigested Pride" in "Madhyamaka and Yogacara - Allies or Rivals?", p 133) sounds nice and succinct: "For Yogacara ultimate (真) is (有), conventional (俗) isn't (無). They use the three natures as the foundation. For Madhyamaka ultimate isn't, conventional is. Indeed the two truths is primary [for them]. The Prajnaparamita's great teaching contains both ideas." (T40n1817p783a29-b1)

In East Asian Buddhism they talk about the two approaches to the Dharma in terms of existence/is (you/u 有) and non-existence/isn't (wu/mu 無), what appears in the popular question about the http://www.sanbo-zen.org/shoyoroku_18.pdf. But it's been synthesised early on in Tiantai's https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiantai#The_Threefold_Truth, so they likely did not miss the later Indian developments of first Madhyamaka and Yogacara attacking each other, then their coming together in the teachings of for instance Shantarakshita and Kamalashila.

Malcolm said:

Please give us a specific example of how Yogacara doxology influences Vajrayāna? You surely are aware that Tantras such as the Hevajra subordinate Yogacara to Madhyamaka? And are you sure that it is not merely a case of Madhyamakas using terminology found in Yogacara but repurposing it?

Astus wrote:

Look at this thread as an example:

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=100&t=13491>. There's also the whole Shentong teaching among Nyingmapas and Kagyupas, of which Brunnholz writes: "what is called Shentong is nothing other than the Yogacara (Yoga Practice) system of Maitreya, Asanga, and Vasubandhu, also called "the lineage of vast activity."" (Center of the Sunlit Sky, p 445)

Malcolm said:

As long as you think the unconditioned nature of the mind is merely emptiness, for that long you will never understand either Dzogchen or Mahāmudra.

Astus wrote:

Mind, per definition, is conscious. To say that the mind is empty is to say that awareness is empty. It's not denying awareness, nor is it reducing it to insentience. Awareness is the interdependent stream of experiences, and it is not separate from its insubstantiality. Mind is conditioned, that's why it is without essence, otherwise it would not function at all. So being conditioned is the unconditioned, and unconditioned is the conditioned itself. How is that wrong for Dzogchen?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 6:23 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sure there are.

Astus wrote:

Just as Madhyamaka affirms a conventional dependent origination and does not claim total non-existence, the same is stated by saying that there is a dependent nature.

"How should one understand the other-dependent pattern? It should be understood through the teaching on such similes as a magic trick, a mirage, a dream trace, a shadow, a reflection, a valley echo, the moon in water, a transformation." (section 26)

Candrakirti's critique does not apply, when it is understood that the lack of subject and object means the incorrect reification is no more, otherwise it would be self-defeating, asking for a self to perceive no-self.

Malcolm said:

For example? Who did do you gave in mind?

Astus wrote:

Yes, Shantarakshita and Kamalashila, as they go from mind-only to analysis of emptiness. Shentong seems like another good example. Or here's a modern one:

"We can look at these two views and take the stand that Nagarjuna's view is correct and Asanga's view is incorrect, or we can consider Asanga's view as correct and Nagarjuna's view as incorrect. Jamgon Kongtrul, however, says that this is not the way to look at this issue at all. We should not think, "One side is correct, therefore the other side must be wrong." Instead, we should realized these two views are a unity with neither side being right or wrong."

(Thrangu Rinpoche: "Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong", p 118)

Malcolm said:

Yogachara and Madhyamaka did not "come together" in Shantarakshita because the latter never uses the scheme of the three own natures, which is the key doctrine of the Yogacara school.

Astus wrote:

Why is that the key doctrine? They also have quite a few other unique ideas. I'd say the teaching of mind only is an equally important teaching for instance.

Malcolm said:

No, even Karl B recognizes that the system of the three own natures used by Maitreya,

Asanga and Vasubandhu [type a] is not the system used by the gzhan stong pas [type b].

Astus wrote:

What is the difference? Or if you have a book reference, that might be enough as well.

Malcolm said:

What Tibetan term do you mean for awareness? Rig pa?

Astus wrote:

It's nothing like that. You can change that word to consciousness or mind. What I try to highlight is that the quality of consciousness/awareness is already and necessarily present in the mind (mental aggregates), and generally in the whole realm of experience, since without being aware/conscious of something, one cannot say that it is experienced.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 4:38 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Yet there is a difference, since for Ch'an the fundamental root is to be sought, while for rDzogs-chen the intrinsic awareness is spontaneous.

Astus wrote:

The third practice as taught by Bodhidharma (from the same text that talks about wall-contemplation):

"Third, to seek nothing. Ordinary people, in their perpetual ignorance, crave and form attachments to everything, everywhere. This is called seeking. The wise are awakened to the Truth, and choose reason over convention; even though their forms follow the law of causality, their minds are at peace and empty of effort. Since all existence is empty, there is nothing to be desired. Blessing and Darkness always follow each other. This long sojourn in the Triple Realm is like living in a burning house; to have a body is to suffer, how can one attain peace? Those who understand this renounce all mundane existence, cease desires, and stop seeking. The sutra says, "To seek is to suffer, to seek nothing is bliss." It follows that to seek nothing is to truly follow the Way. This is the practice of seeking nothing."

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57)

Linji Yixuan:

"Bring to rest the thoughts of the ceaselessly seeking mind, and you will not differ from the patriarch-buddha. Do you want to know the patriarch-buddha? He is none other than you who stand before me listening to my discourse. But because you students lack faith in yourselves, you run around seeking something outside. Even if, through your

seeking, you did find something, that something would be nothing more than fancy descriptions in written words; never would you gain the mind of the living patriarch. Make no mistake, worthy Chan men! If you don't find it here and now, you'll go on transmigrating through the three realms for myriads of kalpas and thousands of lives, and, held in the clutch of captivating circumstances, be born in the wombs of asses or cows."

(Record of Linji, p 8, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

If it is the same text, how do you account for the seeming inconsistency?

Astus wrote:

The text (Two Means and Four Practices) is not inconsistent. The first means, entering via principle (理 - principle, ultimate reality), practically means the realisation of how things actually are, i.e. suchness, buddha-nature. It says that one moves from being deluded to enlightened by non-discrimination, as all appearances are now seen as without essence. The second means, entering via practice (行 - practice, action), describes four ways to cultivate in a way that induces entering the principle, or in a sense cultivating the principle. It could be said that the difference between the two means is like jumping and walking, or theory and practice.

treehuggingoctopus said:

In the first passage you quote, this bit seem actually to be one of the problems which according to the authors Dzogchen has with Ch'an: 'Since all existence is empty, there is nothing to be desired'. The difference would appear to be between all existence being emptiness and everything being luminous display, would it not?

Astus wrote:

What is the difference between emptiness and luminous display? Emptiness means that there is nothing to grasp. Luminous display means that all experiences are the emanations of buddha-nature, thus there is nothing to fix. In both cases one remains unaffected and free, and appearances do not induce afflictions. Furthermore, Zen does also talk about all phenomena being the buddha-nature as well, it is not limited to only one kind of teaching, neither is Mahayana in general.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

I think you are missing what the emotive difference between 'emptiness' and 'luminous

display' points towards. The difference is even more visible if you compare the early Ch'an's 'all existence is emptiness'

Astus wrote:

Emotive difference is important, that's how people with various inclinations select their favourite tradition. But since it is more a matter of style than content, it is a question of skilful means used for the same purpose.

Early Chan is not just about emptiness. Shenxiu - the first imperially recognised Chan teacher - was quite strong on buddha-nature. In fact, the only group that seems to have emphasised mainly emptiness and Madhyamaka-style rhetoric was the Niutou school.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Imagine your girlfriend's reaction when you tell her that she does not exist, is perfectly empty of herself, no girlfriend in the girlfriend, zero inherent existence in her -- and in everything else, for that matter, too, she and everything else being equally empty and bereft of self-nature.

Astus wrote:

Let's change that a bit. Instead of talking about insubstantiality, tell her that everything down to the cellular level changes in her. That's no surprise really, fairly common knowledge. Then say that emotions, thoughts and even memories change. Not particularly surprising either. Since both body and mind are inconstant, there is no single entity to call one's self. Sounds logical even to ordinary intelligent people.

treehuggingoctopus said:

Compare that with her response to you telling her that she is perfectly and consummately divine, luminous and imbued with all the radiant potentiality there is -- as, fair enough, is everybody else and everything else.

Astus wrote:

That's very poetic, but unless such terminology is clarified, it doesn't mean much. So, what is being divine? Not omnipotent, omniscient or immortal, is it? Rather, it is a synonym for buddhahood, and that stands for being free from all afflictions and attachments, while at the same time fully compassionate and insightful. Now, that's quite a high standard to live up to, especially when one is in the role of a girlfriend, who not only is involved in a romantic relationship full of clinging, expectations and all sorts of other entrapments, but also lives the life of an ordinary person with family, work, personal goals, consumerism, and so on. Or, if one were to say that one is divine with all that included, the word becomes just a hollow term used for ego-boost. And when one is explained that one has to realise being divine through following a set of methods, the story about being perfectly divine becomes a bait, in other words, a skilful device to get

people into Buddhism.

treehuggingoctopus said:

Maybe they understood the Buddhanature differently? That is what Malcolm suggested in the un/wholesome thread.

Astus wrote:

Without digressing into philosophical disputes, buddha-nature in Zen is just one's own mind. What is mind? This mind reading and thinking. Thoughts, emotions, impressions come and go. One doesn't have to do anything, as experiences are already ungraspable and naturally non-abiding. In other terms, the mind is free and aware just as it is.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

My point still stands: you have just introduced a third narration, which (if I read you correctly) you see as underlying the other two. OK. But the tension between the first two very much remains.

Astus wrote:

I meant it as another way to express the "no inherent existence" part, not a new narration. Wasn't intended to solve any tension.

treehuggingoctopus said:

That terminology does not mean much if you are looking at language the way Ayer or Carnap would

Astus wrote:

I'm no positivist, but I prefer accuracy (to a certain degree) over free style lyrics when discussing Buddhism in a written form.

treehuggingoctopus said:

and all of it is already divine, you do not have to work at it -- you need only recognise it.

Astus wrote:

Same with emptiness, impermanence, buddha-nature and the rest. However, recognising it is also changing it, as the very cause of clinging is ignorance. Remove ignorance and the whole illusory castle of samsara falls apart. And since rarely anyone can switch immediately from worrying about tonight's lottery numbers to "all is divine", there is a path involved.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

I would not agree that it is an accuracy vs 'free style lyrics' match. When you say that all appearances are divine, you may be absolutely precise and spot-on (as Vajrayana teachings claim to be). Your statement may not be intersubjective in the sense of the word logical positivists used, though.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it can be perfectly accurate. When there is a definition. What does divine mean then?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2015 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

DGA said:

Historical question:

Is there historical evidence to suggest that either Ch'an preceded Dzogchen historically, or that the reverse is true? I know that scholars prefer the former claim, but I'm increasingly inclined to the latter.

I'm not trying to claim that one is better than the other, merely to suggest that the influence may be stronger in one direction than the other. I'd be interested in a survey of the evidence going both ways.

Astus wrote:

What/Who is the first historically verifiable Dzogchen text and/or teacher?

John McRae (The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism, p 101-102) identifies a text from Dunhuang dated around 550-59 as the earliest of Chan work containing the Two Entrances and Four Practices attributed to Bodhidharma and some correspondence of Huike (see in English:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=BNfuSJ7cvnIC>). Other early notable people include Dayi Daoxin (580–651), Daman Hongren (601–674), Yuquan Shenxiu (606?-706) and Faru (638-689), and there is the famed Record of the Masters and Disciples of Lanka (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lengqie_shizi_ji) from 708 (see in English: <https://books.google.com/books?id=JlqVPwAACAAJ>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Unlike Yogacara, Madhyamaka removes claims for existing existents.

Astus wrote:

I don't follow you here. What is an existing existent? Either something exists or not; and if it does, there is no need to double it.

Malcolm said:

Of course it applies — he proves that the other-dependent is incoherent.

Astus wrote:

It is only as incoherent as dependent origination, since dependent nature is just that: causality.

Malcolm said:

Because that is how they attempt to explain the meaning of mind-only.

Astus wrote:

It's not even mentioned in the Vimsatika that talks about consciousness only.

Malcolm said:

Yes, and for this reason, you don't really get the sense of Dzogchen. Mipham writes:

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that Dzogchen posits a consciousness of the type that's independent, unconditioned, removed from the five aggregates? If yes, it's difficult to maintain how that's not like an atman. If no, then I see no difference between what I said and what Mipham talks about.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Anders said:

This might be a can of worms, but are you effectively saying Vasubandhu et al were not aryas?

Malcolm said:

There is no way for me to know this as there is no way for me to know what their actual view and realization was.

Astus wrote:

Nevertheless, if they taught an incoherent and incorrect teaching, that is intentionally misleading people, something that's unfit for any bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 4:23 AM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Some tentative answers here: <http://earlytibet.com/2008/01/24/early-dzogchen-iii/>

Astus wrote:

That makes it clear that Dzogchen occurred in its very early forms when in China Chan was already developing into various factions. Also, while Chan was very much

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=1Tu-rQEACAAJ> around that time, there is no sign of Dzogchen in China as far as I'm aware, although there were some Indian masters who brought <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tangmi> into the Tang empire during the 7th-8th century.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

For you, the dharmatā of the mind is only emptiness. For Mipham, the dharmatā of the mind is unconditioned jñāna.

Astus wrote:

Is jnana knowing, an active awareness of appearances? Or is it without knowing of objects? If the former, it is conditioned. If the latter, it is unaware. Or is it perhaps the stream of experiences that can be described as equally empty and conscious, but still without falling into being conditioned by subject and object?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 5:20 AM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Pretty defective buddhanature, I'd say.

Astus wrote:

What special features would you add?

Question: "What is called Buddha Mind?" Answer: "Mind's having no mark of variation is called Thusness. Mind's unchangeableness is called the Dharma Nature. Mind's not being connected to anything is called liberation. The mind nature's unimpededness is called enlightenment. The mind nature's quiescence is called nirvana."

(Bodhidharma Anthology, p 16)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Self-originated jñāna is the unconditioned essence of the eight consciousnesses, as Mipham puts it: [The] unconditioned self-originated wisdom of the original empty knowing dharmatā of the mind of the eight consciousness is the mind of luminosity. However, one needs to take care to understand what this "mind" is. Again, Mipham states: Here, dharmatā is called "original mind [ādyacitta]." Though it is explained with the name mind or vidyā from the aspect of being intrinsically clear, it is not the mind included with the conditioned eight consciousnesses.

Astus wrote:

All it seems to say is that the eight consciousnesses have the attribute of consciousness, and that is their inherent quality; and that quality is not any singular instance of being conscious of something, but it is true for all eight, so in a sense it is unconditioned and nothing in particular at the same time. Did I miss something?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: Tanaka & Robertson on Ch'an vs Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mipham might say: Since there is nothing to designate as being produced from a cause or generated by condition because the great emptiness that has always been self-originated is intrinsically luminous, it is self-originated pristine consciousness. That is the mind of dharmatā or the luminous pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

"Therefore, thought of the unreal from the outset is calmed, and sense objects from the outset are void. The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. This calm Knowing of voidness and calm is precisely the mind of voidness and calm that Bodhidharma formerly transmitted. Whether you are deluded or awakened, mind from the outset is spontaneously Knowing. [Knowing] is not produced by conditions, nor does it arise in dependence on sense objects. Even during delusion the depravities are Knowing, but [Knowing] is not the depravities. Even during awakening the divine transformations are Knowing, but Knowing is not the divine transformations."
(Zongmi: Chan Letter in "Zongmi on Chan", p 88)

"If you wish to differ in no way from the patriarch-buddha, just don't seek outside. The pure light in a single thought of yours—this is the dharmakāya buddha within your own house. The nondiscriminating light in a single thought of yours—this is the sambhogakāya buddha within your own house. The nondifferentiating light in a single

thought of yours—this is the nirmāṇakāya buddha within your own house. This threefold body is you, listening to my discourse right now before my very eyes."
(Record of Linji, p 9, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rigpa is a concept, so is One Mind. Concepts exist dependent on other concepts, they don't actually possess any meaning of their own. Concepts are also thoughts that just come and go. If one grasps at a thought, at a concept, that means taking it as something substantial, real, personal, important. From that single grasping occurs numerous other ideas and a view is formed, from the view actions come, and so on. Better just see concepts and thoughts for what they are: dependent and unreliable. Not abiding on a single thought, that is what the Buddha's path is about. Is it rigpa or one mind then?

See: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts (BDK Edition), p 14, 23-25, tr McRae

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: You Are Already Enlightened

Content:

Unknown said:

what is the role of cessation of thought in Ch'an/Zen?

Astus wrote:

See what is in the Platform Sutra (BDK Edition):

"If you empty your minds and sit in quietude, this is to become attached to the emptiness of blankness."

(ch 2, p 29)

"If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view."

(ch 2, p 34)

"Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts."

(ch 4, p 43)

"In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness. If one is to concentrate on the mind, then the mind [involved] is fundamentally false. You should understand that the mind is like a phantasm, so nothing can concentrate on it. If one is

to concentrate on purity, then [realize that because] our natures are fundamentally pure, it is through false thoughts that suchness is covered up. Just be without false thoughts and the nature is pure of itself. If you activate your mind to become attached to purity, you will only generate the falseness of purity. The false is without location; it is the concentration that is false. Purity is without shape and characteristics; you only create the characteristics of purity and say this is 'effort' [in meditation]. To have such a view is to obscure one's own fundamental nature, and only to be fettered by purity."
(ch 5. p 45)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

steve_bakr said:

You are very correct, of course. I was looking for a kind of ecumenical connection between Huang Po's Zen and Dzogchen, but your words transcend both sects, and are true in a more absolute sense.

Astus wrote:

There is connection, as both come from the perfect enlightenment of the Buddha, and both aim us toward the same liberation from suffering. Establishing a philosophical connection is a lot more complicated matter, as you can see for yourself in several threads on this forum debating the relationship between Zen and Dzogchen. But there is already a strong common basis for both not only in the words of the Buddha contained in the canonical scriptures, but also in the individuals' realisations preserved and passed on by the community.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

DGA said:

It would really help if someone who knows Huang Po's writings well and the context in which he wrote could give the characters that are translated as "One mind" or "universal mind" in English, and give a summary of how that is meant in the body of his teachings.

Astus wrote:

There are three translations out there:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=v5BxwNWlyfkC>,

<http://www.ymba.org/books/dharma-mind-transmission> and

http://www.bdk.or.jp/pdf/bdk/digitald/dBET_ZenTexts_2005.pdf. They are all fine, as long as one can see how and what various terms mean.

One Mind (一心): As often in Chan texts, and other Chinese works, the numerical one is used instead of non-dual. They mean the same. Although "one mind" can also mean a

one-pointed mind (concentration), that is not the case in Huangbo's work. As for its definition, it's already given in the text.

As for "universal mind", Blofeld writes (translator's intro, p 19): "In an earlier translation of the first part of this book, I ventured to substitute 'Universal Mind' for 'the One Mind', hoping that the meaning would be clearer. However, various critics objected to this, and I have come to see that my term is liable to a different sort of misunderstanding; it is therefore no improvement on 'the One Mind', which at least has the merit of being a literal translation."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 12:05 AM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

DGA said:

心 translates the Sanskrit citta, correct? if so, then there's some basis for working out a textual comparison between Dzogchen and Ch'an on the basis of "mind."

Astus wrote:

I wouldn't go there. Chan is mainly about translating the Dharma to common Chinese and not about transplanting Indian Buddhism, as that's already happened through other channels. Although Chan teachers were (almost?) exclusively educated elite monastics, so references to texts and concepts of Indian origin is not unusual, but it is not the main characteristics of the tradition. There is even a slight division between the so called eight schools to Chinese (Tiantai, Huayan, Chan, Jingtu (Pure Land)) and Indian (Madhyamaka (Sanlun), Yogacara (Faxiang), Vinaya (Lu), Mantra (Zhenyan)), that signifies mostly their origin in a sense.

Xin (心) can mean all sorts of things, even contradictory ones within the same sentence. Or as an illustration for its versatile use, here is the entry from the Soothill-Hodous dictionary of Chinese Buddhism:

心

hrd, hrdaya 汗栗太 (or 汗栗馱); 紀哩馱 the heart, mind, soul; citta 質多 the heart as the seat of thought or intelligence. In both senses the heart is likened to a lotus. There are various definitions, of which the following are six instances: (1) 肉團心 hrd, the physical heart of sentient or nonsentient living beings, e. g. men, trees, etc. (2) 集起心 citta, the ālayavijñāna, or totality of mind, and the source of all mental activity. (3) 思量心 manas, the thinking and calculating mind; (4) 緣慮心; 了別心; 慮知心; citta; the discriminating mind; (5) 堅實心 the bhūtatathatā mind, or the permanent mind; (6) 積聚精要心 the mind essence of the sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:
Malcolm said:
All of these usages map to sems [citta] in Tibetan.

Astus wrote:
Well, then maybe it can work.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 12:28 AM
Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen
Content:
Malcolm said:
If that were true, it would be a tautology and there would be no point.

Astus wrote:
Yes. Saying that consciousness is conscious is redundant.

Malcolm said:
It is saying that vijñāna/citta/manas has a dharmatā that is more than emptiness, which would render the dharmatā of the mind inert if all it was is emptiness. According to everything you have said, you maintain that the dharmatā of the mind is only emptiness.

Astus wrote:
The nature (dharmata) cannot be separate from the thing (dharma). To say that the mind is empty is meant to help one get rid of reified concepts and identities, not to establish an emptiness separately from the mind. The mind cannot be inert exactly because it is dependently originated and functional. To add a knowing/awareness as the source of the experiencing function of the mind sounds very much like denying the functionality of dependent origination and establishing a substance separately from appearances. How is that not the case?

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 1:21 AM
Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen
Content:
Malcolm said:
If the dharmatā of the mind is only emptiness, how then is the mind not something inert? How does consciousness arise? From itself? From other? From both?
Dependent origination is just the perception of the deluded.

Astus wrote:
Inert would be something unconditioned and without interaction. Consciousness is interdependent, changing, and that's how it can sense objects, how there can be perception. An independent knower is without any object, consequently it does not sense anything, it is unknowing, unaware, unconscious. As an interdependent

consciousness it does not need an origin, and that origin would mean an ultimate cause without a cause. Also, this original knower is a position discussed in the 9th chapter of MMK. Dependent origination is what the deluded does not realise, instead they assume inherent existence.

I assume you see that the above ones are common arguments against self-view. How come they don't apply to jnana?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 7:15 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, "inert" means "without sentience". Emptiness is not sentient. Thus, if emptiness were solely the nature of the mind, the mind could not be sentient.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means conditioned, interacting. Sentience is living, connecting with events, phenomena influencing phenomena. Mind is sentient, perceptive, because impressions, emotions and thoughts move. If consciousness were unconditioned, it had no effect on anything and could not sense anything, that is, it were insentient.

Malcolm said:

How is consciousness interdependent? Does it come from the sense organ or the object? Without either?

Astus wrote:

The 18 dhatus is a basic description of how consciousness is interdependent, further elaborations are found in abhidharma and yogacara materials. The mind-stream continues from the preceding mind to the present mind.

Malcolm said:

Who said anything about an independent knower?

Astus wrote:

What you called the unconditioned knowing, the core and basis of mind and all appearances. It is unconditioned, therefore independent. It is knowing, what knows, so it is a knower, pure awareness.

Malcolm said:

This still does not explain the origin of consciousness, that is, how there can be a mind/consciousness at all.

Astus wrote:

Is there a situation where there is no mind? Can consciousness occur from non-consciousness? Samsara is without a beginning, so is the mind-stream of beings.

Malcolm said:

Self-originated pristine consciousness is nondual emptiness and knowingness, termed "the nondual dharmadhātu and vidyā." Pristine consciousness [ye shes, jñāna] is the core of the mind, self-arisen, unconditioned, uncontaminated, unaffected by the three times. When it is not recognized, then through that ignorance its potentiality becomes mind, dependent origination and all the phenomena of samsara. When it is recognized, one is the peer of Buddha Samantabhadra.

Astus wrote:

Since it is unconditioned and unaffected, it cannot recognise or forget itself. So a second perceiver is required that is conditioned, and its core cannot be the unconditioned knowing. In what other way can pristine consciousness be recognised or ignored?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

DGA said:

Maybe so, but I think your caution bears repeating. Literary Chinese presents its own challenges and possibilities as a medium for Dharma transmission. Context matters tremendously, so someone attempting a comparative study would need to have a very firm grip on how Huang Po uses this concept throughout his known writings.

Astus wrote:

Choosing Huangbo is a good start. Now for comparison's sake we also need a single Dzogchen text to work with, one that's been translated a few times to English and contains enough information (e.g. definitions).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Buddha, true death and escape from reincarnation.

Content:

Techno Yogi said:

In fact there's <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#avyakata> devoted to discounting this view, and indeed any view of the status of the Buddha after death.

Astus wrote:

And as the suttas explain it very clearly, the reason it makes zero sense to ask whether there is or isn't a Tathagata after death, is because even before death the Tathagata cannot be pinpointed as this or that. This is a very important point that people seem to forget almost every time, or they just not have heard about it.

DGA said:

I don't think that's so for Mahayana, though. As I suggested earlier in this thread: Lotus Sutra, Chapter 16. It does not leave much room for interpretation on this point. Buddha Shakyamuni spells out his position clearly and directly.

Astus wrote:

There are a number of ways to interpret the meaning of an "eternal buddha". Even what a buddha is needs some clarification.

Chapter 22 of Nagarjuna's Middle Treatise (MMK) discusses the nature of the Tathagata. Here are some conclusions:

This stanza shows the error in the assumption of the OP:

"One who holds firmly
That the Tathāgata exists
Will have to fabricate his nonexistence
After having achieved nirvana."
(MMK 22.13, tr from Ocean of Reasoning)

And solves it by:

"Since he is essentially empty,
Neither the thought that the Buddha exists
Nor that he does not exist
After having achieved nirvana is tenable."
(v 14)

The following stanza (v 15) matches with the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html (ch 26):

"Someone who tries to discern me in form
Or seek me in sound
Is practicing non-Buddhist methods
And will not discern the Tathāgata"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 10th, 2015 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Wholesome and Unwholesome in Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

You mean there is no emptiness of the unconditioned? Emptiness means being free from all extremes, it does not mean being "conditioned." If it did, that would be a very inferior kind of emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means the lack of substance in appearances. Appearances - experiences in

the six sensory areas - are conditioned. Appearances lack substance as they are interdependent, so the state of being conditioned and being empty is practically the same. Sure, there are the so called 16/18/20 types of emptiness, but that's besides the point here, because it has little merit to analyse non-appearances and other theoretical categories for now.

Malcolm said:

Wind moves, but it is neither sentient nor perceptive. Waves move, they are neither sentient nor perceptive. Clouds move, they are neither sentient nor perceptive. So it seems you definitive of sentient and perceptive because of the movement of thoughts, and so on is inadequate.

Astus wrote:

Wind, waves, and clouds move, but they are still not one and the same thing. Sentience requires movement, i.e. changing as well, to know appearances coming and going. A static (unconditioned) perceiver perceives nothing or always the same thing, so it is useless.

Malcolm said:

Are thoughts the same thing as the mind or are they different? If they are latter, how can a mind move inside of itself? Of they are different, how does their movement give the mind sentience?

Astus wrote:

There is no independent mind to contain objects. Experiences in the six sensory area occur as experienced, that is, qualified as known, thus the six consciousnesses. And that stream of experience can then be divided to subject and object, container and contained, and other such common terms.

Malcolm said:

Did anyone say consciousness [vijñāna] was unconditioned?

Astus wrote:

If jnana is the source and presence of sentience, and it is unconditioned, it means all perceptions happen to/by an unconditioned knower.

Malcolm said:

The eighteen dhātus does not actually explain how the mind is interdependent. It is a hinayāna model that assumes that a consciousness arises from the contact of sense object with a sense organ. In other words, it does not explain perception, it merely provides a taxonomy of our sensory apparatus.

Astus wrote:

If by explaining perception you mean giving it an ultimate origin, there is no such absolute source. The eighteen dhatus describes a simple mechanism of experience whereby consciousness is always related to various sense objects. That is, a perceiver without anything perceived is not a perceiver. Also, the purpose of the 18 dhatus is to

eliminate the idea that there is a single, independent, unconditioned mind.

Malcolm said:

This fault does not apply, just as the mind of which it is the core is not established, also the unconditioned vidyā is not established, is empty by nature and is not something real or truly existent.

Astus wrote:

So vidya is not real, just a theoretically unconditioned knowing that is merely a figure of speech and not a source of all experiences and the whole world? Then I'm not sure why insist on it being anything other than emptiness, a conventional linguistic phrase, a utilitarian concept, a skilful means used according to the situation.

Malcolm said:

Is there a situation in which the mind can be found?

Astus wrote:

Conventionally it is very easy to find it: as thoughts, emotions, and impressions. It's only when one looks closer for anything substantial that it turns out to be ungraspable.

Malcolm said:

This presumes two things, one, that there is fact a distinction between sentient and nonsentient. Two, it presumes that time exists independently.

Astus wrote:

Ordinarily even animals can recognise whether it's an inanimate object or a living being. Otherwise, all appearances that are there are necessarily experiences, so they are sensed, they exist within the realm of sentience, and that way the only distinction one may make is on a conventional level. As for an independent time, I don't know what you mean there.

Malcolm said:

Since unconditioned self-originated pristine consciousness is the core of a conditioned mind, it indeed can be forgotten by that conditioned mind, or as it more accurately the case, not recognized. It is just like someone who looks for their keys all over the house not recognizing that they are holding those very same keys in their hand.

Astus wrote:

That sets up two knowers perceiving each other: one unconditioned and one conditioned.

Malcolm said:

Emptiness is unconditioned, but we have no problem describing it as the dharmatā of entities. Likewise, unconditioned, empty, self-originated pristine consciousness is the dharmatā of the mind.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not a thing, or appearance, so there's not much to make of it besides using as a way of clarifying how things are. If vidya is similarly a descriptive term to say that appearances are necessarily qualified by knowing, then it is fine. The problem comes up with vidya in the same way that it can with emptiness: when it is separated and positioned as an independent entity apart from appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 10th, 2015 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

Malcolm said:

We already have such a text, it is called *bsam gtan mig dgron* by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe. The advantage to that text is that it has many citations from seminal early Chan texts already translated into Tibetan by Tibetan and Chinese Chan practitioners during the 8th century.

Astus wrote:

Is there an English translation already? Although, it certainly has no information on Huangbo.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 10th, 2015 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a section Blofeld (*The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, p 46) comments about that "This paragraph is, perhaps, one of the finest expositions of Zen teaching, for it encompasses in a few words almost the entire scope of that vast and penetrating wisdom."

"When an ordinary person is about to die, he should merely contemplate the five skandhas to be all empty and the four elements to be without self. The true mind is without characteristics and neither goes nor comes: when one is born the [mind]-nature does not come [into one], and when one dies neither does the nature go [anywhere]. Peaceful, perfect, and serene, the mind and its realms are identical. If one can only right now suddenly achieve comprehension in this fashion, you will not be fettered by the three periods of time (i.e., past, present, and future) and will be a person who has transcended the world. You must definitely avoid having even the slightest bit of intentionality. If you see Buddhas of excellent characteristics (i.e., in their resplendent superhuman forms) coming to greet [and escort you to the Pure Land], with all the various phenomena [involved in such visions], then have no thought of following them. If you see various phenomena with evil characteristics, neither should you have any thoughts of fear. Simply forget your mind and identify yourself with the dharma dhātu, and you will attain autonomy. This is the essential gist [of my teaching]."

(Huangbo: *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind*, tr McRae in "Zen Texts", BDK Edition,

p 24-25)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2015 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: A good book on Jhanas

Content:

Astus wrote:

Jhanas are meditative states (not stages on the path to enlightenment). Mahayana contains mostly the same description of them as in the Pali Canon. Such states are part of the calming (samatha) practice, however, they are not really used in later Mahayana meditation manuals for various reasons. The closest thing you can find that is still in use is probably the Tibetan's nine stages system. See: <http://www.lionsroar.com/the-nine-stages-of-training-the-mind/>, <http://terebeck.hu/english/oxherd27.html>.

Otherwise, if you want to learn calming meditation, it is taught to a certain degree in every tradition and community as part of their meditation system.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2015 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: A good book on Jhanas

Content:

Techno Yogi said:

Well, the Sanskrit translation of the Pali jhāna is dhyāna, which was then translated into Chinese as 禪, which is pronounced as chán in Mandarin, but you may be more familiar with the Japanese pronunciation, which is Zen. Yes, there's an entire sect with a number of sub-sects named after jhāna!

Astus wrote:

But don't think the so called Chan/Zen school has anything to do with jhana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2015 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: "If you can understand the mindfulness of no mindfulness

Content:

steve_bakr said:

Yet surely there must be an "original"--i.e., undefiled--state of mind. I intuitively think so, and have had results from a slight variation of the instructions derived from a Koan:

"Return to the state you were in before your grandparents were born." This is the original nature without all the toxic mental garbage. But perhaps that state can be called, "No-Mind" in the sense that our mind (lower case "m") is nothing other than the toxic garbage.

Astus wrote:

Any state of mind it be, it changes. Because it changes, it is unreliable. When it is seen that all states of mind are unreliable, one does not abide in any. That not abiding is what

is sometimes called no mind. It is also the original mind, because mind changes all the time, no matter what, and it never abides in the same state for consecutive moments. That's also why trying to find a true mind, attempting to attain an ultimate state is actually pointless.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 12th, 2015 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Chan, Mahamudra, and Tibet

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are a number of studies on Mahamudra's sutra sources. E.g. Klaus-Dieter Mathes: <http://docslide.us/documents/klaus-dieter-mathes-bka-brgyud-mahamudra-chinese-rdzogs-chen-or-the.html>, or David Higgins: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8979/2872>.

Although texts like the Vajrasamadhi Sutra (an early Chan text, likely from Korea) and the Lankavatara Sutra (often used as reference in early Chan) appear in Mahamudra teachings, not to mention the Prajnaparamita texts that are equally important in both Chan and Mahamudra, it does not mean that a direct connection between the two traditions can be established.

For instance, the same chapter of the Lankavatara Sutra (2.37 in Suzuki) is used in Chan, Yogacara and Mahamudra to set up their meditation system. But that only means that the sutra is a common basis.

And as Anders mentioned, the "Daoism+Buddhism=Chan" is fairly unfounded, plus oversimplified.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 13th, 2015 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: Chan, Mahamudra, and Tibet

Content:

kirtu said:

Nor is it likely that there was that much interaction between Daoist meditators and Chan meditators since their views of enlightenment are quite different.

Astus wrote:

Daoism, similarly to Hinduism, is not a single religion, and at the same time it encompasses all sorts of indigenous beliefs and practices. There are "Daoist" elements found all over Chinese Buddhism, but it could be equally called simply Chinese. When it comes to doctrines and methods, it seems to me that Buddhists were very much aware of the differences, just as today a Westerner would not confuse Christianity with Buddhism, even when certain terms are of Christian origin.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 13th, 2015 at 7:36 AM

Title: Re: "If you can understand the mindfulness of no mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

The question is from the 1st chapter of the Platform Sutra (It also appears as case 23 of Wumenguan.):

不思善，不思惡，正與麼時，那箇是明上座本來面目？惠明言下大悟。

‘Do not think of good, and do not think of evil. At just such a time, what is Elder Huiming’s original face?’ At these words, Huiming [experienced] a great enlightenment.

This <https://www.dailyzen.com/journal/treatise-on-sitting-meditation> gives some clear explanations. The point is that when one is not caught by craving and hatred, one sees things just as they are. Seeing clearly is the original face, where experiences are not coloured by one's preconceptions and inclinations. It is not about a special experience - although in a sense it is special - but about discovering the defilements to be from one's ignorance of how the mind works.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 15th, 2015 at 7:33 AM

Title: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

What role do dhyanas have in Zen?

In the teachings by Huineng, Mazu, Linji and other classical teachers there is little talk of any kind of meditation, and no discussion of cultivating absorption. Although Dogen did emphasise seated practice, but definitely not in a gradual manner. In the teachings of later Chinese masters from Dahui Zonggao through Hanshan Deqing to Xuyun the method of huatou is the preferred way to enlightenment.

In whose teachings can we find something on the dhyanas?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 15th, 2015 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: Huang Po's One Mind & Dzogchen

Content:

tingdzin said:

But even aside from that, there is no real need to think that Huang po's teaching is at odds with devotion to Kwan Yin.

Astus wrote:

Not at odds, it's just mostly useless in terms of enlightenment.

[The teaching that one can] cultivate the six perfections and the myriad practices in order to achieve Buddhahood—this is the progressive [approach to Buddhahood]. Since beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha [who achieved that state] progressively. Just be enlightened to the One Mind and there will not be the slightest dharma that can be attained—this is the true Buddha.

(Huangbo, in "Zen Texts", BDK Edition, p 14)

If you can just [attain] no-mind, then that is the ultimate [state of enlightenment]. If a trainee does not instantly [attain] no-mind but spends successive eons in cultivation, he will never achieve enlightenment. He will be fettered by the meritorious practices of the three vehicles and will not attain liberation.

However, there is fast and slow in realizing this mind: there are those who attain no-mind in a single moment of thought after hearing the Dharma; those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten faiths, the ten abodes, the ten practices, and the ten conversions; and those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten stages [of the bodhisattva]. In spite of the length of time it takes them to [attain it, once they] reside in no-mind there is nothing else to be cultivated or realized. Truly without anything to be attained, true and not false [is no-mind]. Whether it is attained in a single moment of thought or at the tenth stage [of the bodhisattva], its efficacy is identical. There are no further gradations of profundity, only the useless striving of successive eons.

(p 16)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 15th, 2015 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

For example Faith in the Mind, verse 8 : "Stop speaking, stop thinking", which implies the second or above dhyanas, that are without thoughts or thinking.

Astus wrote:

Thinking for the dhyanas are vitarka (尋) and vicara (伺), while the verse says 慮. Also, it seems meaningless to talk about speaking in the context of calming meditation. And there are other problems with interpreting that line in your way.

Aemilius said:

And in verse 1: "stop loving and hating" means overcoming two of the five hindrances to dhyana. The practice of Dhyana is implied in the Faith in the Mind, otherwise it makes little or no sense.

Astus wrote:

Hate (憎) and love (愛) mean general preferences, something that's not come over until enlightenment.

Aemilius said:

The Sutra of Hui Neng is speaking of unified Prajñā contemplation, does this not mean unified Dhyana & Prajñā?

Astus wrote:

Not unified but one. The chapter on samadhi and prajna (chapter 4) explicitly criticises both the view that there is samadhi and prajna separately, and the view that one should sit calmly and attain tranquillity.

Aemilius said:

The Chapter Six in Hui Neng Sutra is called [i]Sitting Chan [/i], ie Sitting Dhyana! This chapter is certainly about sitting meditation and nothing else.

Astus wrote:

That chapter is actually not about any formal meditation in a seated posture but rather that "seated meditation" (zuo chan/zazen) means the mind's nature.

"In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness. ... To have such a view is to obscure one's own fundamental nature, and only to be fettered by purity."
(Platform Sutra, ch 5, BDK Edition, p 45)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 16th, 2015 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

That is misleading. The true path consist of ethics (shila), meditation (dhyana) and wisdom (prajñā). Zen is a true (Mahayana) path. You must understand that it necessarily consist of the three trainings. But You have constructed a fantasy that is divorced from the three trainings, that does not contain them, that is contrary to reality.

Astus wrote:

There is a difference between gradual and sudden. What you talk about is the gradual method, the one attributed to Shenxiu in the following paragraph:

The master said, "I have heard that your master teaches students about morality, meditation, and wisdom, but I don't know how he explains them. What are the characteristics of his practice? Tell them to me."

Zhicheng said, "Great Master Shenxiu teaches that 'not to do evil is called morality, to practice good is wisdom, and to purify one's own intentions is called meditation.' Thus does he teach. I wonder, with what Dharma does Your Reverence teach people?"

The master said, "To say that I have a Dharma for people would be to deceive you. I simply release people's fetters according to the situation. The samādhi of provisional names, such as your master's explanation of morality, meditation, and wisdom, is truly inconceivable. [But] my view of morality, meditation, and wisdom is different."

(Platform Sutra, ch 8, p 73, BDK Edition)

See also what Keizan wrote in <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml>:

Zazen is also not based upon discipline, practice, or wisdom. These three are all contained within it.

Discipline is usually understood as ceasing wrong action and eliminating evil. In zazen the whole thing is known to be non-dual. Cast off the numberless concerns and rest free from entangling yourself in the "Buddhist way" or the "worldly way." Leave behind feelings about the path as well as your usual sentiments. When you leave behind all opposites, what can obstruct you? This is the formless discipline of the ground of mind. Practice usually means unbroken concentration. Zazen is dropping the bodymind, leaving behind confusion and understanding. Unshakeable, without activity, it is not deluded but still like an idiot, a fool. Like a mountain, like the ocean. Without any trace of motion or stillness. This practice is no-practice because it has no object to practice and so is called great practice.

Wisdom is usually understood to be clear discernment. In zazen, all knowledge vanishes of itself. Mind and discrimination are forgotten forever. The wisdom-eye of this body has no discrimination but is clear seeing of the essence of awakening. From the beginning it is free of confusion, cuts off concept, and open and clear luminosity pervades everywhere. This wisdom is no-wisdom; because it is traceless wisdom, it is called great wisdom.

It agrees with Dazhu's teaching in the <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>:

Discipline is centered upon purity and non-defilement. Meditation is centered upon stilling the mind so that it is moved by no object whatsoever. Wisdom is reached when the knowing mind is agitated by no object, but yet does not hold any thought of being unagitated. Wisdom is reached only when the knowing mind is clear and pure but has no thought of being clear and pure. Wisdom is reached when you can discriminate between good and evil, as well as other dualities, but, grasping none of them, remain free. Finally, if you realize that the "substances" of discipline, of meditation and of wisdom, none of which can be possessed, are indistinguishable -- i.e., are of only one substance -- this, in itself, is equal to the three studies undertaken and completed separately.

Aemilius said:

Moreover, Zen/Chan tradition is known for its poetic style and poetic liberties, they often try to express the path in a fresh and poetic manner. They are not bound to a limited abhidharmic technical vocabulary!

Astus wrote:

And what Zen is even more famous about is sudden enlightenment, that is, immediate realisation.

[The teaching that one can] cultivate the six perfections and the myriad practices in order to achieve Buddhahood—this is the progressive [approach to Buddhahood]. Since

beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha [who achieved that state] progressively.
(Huangbo, in "Zen Texts", BDK Edition, p 14)

Aemilius said:

Mahayana dhyana is distinct from the sravakayana dhyana. You must not take the sravakayana tradition as a basis for evaluating the Mahayana dhyana, because they are not similar.

Astus wrote:

What are the differences between the 8/9 dhyanas of sravakas and bodhisattvas, and where are they described?

Aemilius said:

In the explanation of tripitaka master Hsuan Hua the Fifth Chapter of the Sutra of Hui Neng is unambiguously about sitting meditation

Astus wrote:

From his commentaries:

"Ch'an is not necessarily just sitting in meditation. One may practice Ch'an while walking, standing, sitting, and lying down."

"If you know how, you can practice Ch'an at all times, not just while sitting in meditation."
"

"You shouldn't just sit there and not move. You should cultivate nonmovement in the midst of movement; in the midst of your daily activities, do not move."

"Sitting in one place is not necessarily "sitting." You are said to be "sitting" when your mind is no longer disturbed by external conditions, be they good or bad."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 16th, 2015 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Dan74 said:

Astus, I doubt that Shenxiu and Huineng are truly two different paths. Rather, I believe they are parts of the same training. The error many of us make, IMO, is becoming seduced by the nondual teachings, while our dualistic habits and deep-seated clinging still rule the roost.

Astus wrote:

On one hand, I agree, and in that way I agree with Aemilius as well in that there is just morality, meditation, and wisdom. On the other hand, it is a cardinal point of the Zen teachings that unlike the so called gradual path, it is a direct one.

If we just go and break down the immediate path to the bodhisattva way, that's basically calling Zen's bluff and bursting its bubble of fancy rhetoric. That is, in my view, perfectly fine, but then it should also be accepted that once the veneer is blown away the whole Zen set up is untenable, and the so called masters of present and past are nothing more than clowns.

Or we can take the message seriously and consider the possibility that there is more to Bodhidharma's arrival than entertaining words. If the mind transmission actually means something, this is not found in historical records, written words, meditation practice, or nice robes with cool titles. It is simply realising for oneself that all experiences are empty and unattainable. That insight is of course no different from what the sutras and the gradual path teaches. The question then is: how can one go directly instead of by stages? That's what all the Zen teachings are the answer for. Anyone can easily confirm that no bodily or mental occurrence remains for a moment, and it is only out of ignorance of this simple truth that one pointlessly attempts to hold on to something and experience dissatisfaction. So the mind is indeed originally pure and can never be tainted. Therefore, engaging in any kind of cultivation is not only meaningless but actually contra-productive and misleading.

What may be lacking to put a finger on the subitism of Zen is the general context of everyday life either in a monastery or as a lay person. That's a false impression texts (and films) can make, as inevitably the whole picture cannot be included into a few pages, not to mention all the things that were evident for contemporary readers. Basically, Zen is not a separate school or organisation, but exists as a (small) part of the larger East Asian tradition where monastics follow the precepts and perform rituals, and the laity visits the monastery to gain merit and hear some chanting. It's like high brow theology for everyday church goers and parish priests.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 17th, 2015 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza can't really be equivalent to any state of absorption, as what absorption means is calming down through the exclusion of various mental states. That is, within even the first level of absorption such emotions as lust and hatred cannot occur, that's why one has transcended the realm of sensuality (but not the realms of form and formlessness). Also, a state of absorption is conditioned and impermanent, and it does not include insight into the nature of reality.

As for similarity between shikantaza and absorption, maybe in some very limited aspects, but then there are similarities with numerous other activities as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 17th, 2015 at 8:49 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

jundo cohen said:

So, I do not feel your description is the final verdict which closes the case in all its aspects.

Astus wrote:

Dogen says in the

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html that "The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice.", where "meditation" stands for 習禪 (T82n2580p1b1), and

<http://dictionary.buddhistdoor.com/chi/word/144136/%E7%BF%92%E7%A6%AA> to practise dhyana (禪那), i.e. calming (靜慮). The reason for it not being a meditation practice is given in the next sentence: "It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment." On the other hand, progression through the dhyanas is a method that has a number of preliminary requirements before and requires further training after in order to attain realisation.

What do you miss from the description (this one and the preceding one)?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 17th, 2015 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

BrianG said:

This is retarded. Are you omniscient?

Astus wrote:

This is basic Zen.

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma. You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma. Seeking buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do. Therefore, [for them] activity and the defiling passions and also nonactivity and passionlessness are 'pure' karma."
(Record of Linji, p 17, tr Sasaki)

"I say to you there is no buddha, no dharma, nothing to practice, nothing to enlighten to. Just what are you seeking in the highways and byways? Blind men! You're putting a head

on top of the one you already have. What do you yourselves lack? Followers of the Way, your own present activities do not differ from those of the patriarch-buddhas. You just don't believe this and keep on seeking outside. Make no mistake! Outside there is no dharma; inside, there is nothing to be obtained. Better than grasp at the words from my mouth, take it easy and do nothing. Don't continue [thoughts] that have already arisen and don't let those that haven't yet arisen be aroused. Just this will be worth far more to you than a ten years' pilgrimage."

(Record of Linji, p 22, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 17th, 2015 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

In whose teachings can we find something on the dhyanas?

seeker242 said:

Does it really matter if we can find them or not?

Astus wrote:

Since the question is about the role of dhyanas in Zen, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 18th, 2015 at 6:59 AM

Title: Sexism and the Singer

Content:

Astus wrote:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3364376/Hungary-cancels-Magyar-Telekom-contracts-sexism-row.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 18th, 2015 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

seeker242 said:

I guess what I meant to say is "Why does it matter?" Or "Does it really matter if we can find them or not? If so, why?"

Astus wrote:

First and foremost, there is a common trend to start explaining Zen by retracing the word's etymology. I consider that very misleading, but at the same time it fits the modern desire for meditation.

Secondarily, this is a way to look into what Zen is about. For instance: Are there specific

meditative states to be achieved? Is pursuing such states even relevant or helpful? How should one approach Zen practice?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 18th, 2015 at 7:48 AM

Title: Re: Buddha, true death and escape from reincarnation.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Furthermore, the Tathagata wisely knows, for what they really are, the tendencies of countless beings to make positive and negative statements about objects. For he knows that all these ideas arise in dependence on form, and the other skandhas. How has he discerned the dependence on the skandhas of those positive and negative statements? If we take such statements as –‘The Tathagata continues to exist after death,’ ‘The Tathagata does not continue to exist after death,’ ‘The Tathagata does and does not continue to exist after death,’ ‘The Tathagata neither does nor does not continue to exist after death’ – then these statements refer to the skandhas only [and they have no basis in the true reality of the Tathagata]. The same holds good of similar statements, i.e. when one says: ‘Eternal are self and the world, -just that is the truth, everything else is delusion.’ And so if one maintains that self and the world are non-eternal, both eternal and non-eternal, neither eternal nor non-eternal. Or, similarly, if one maintains that self and the world are finite, or not finite, or both finite and not finite, or neither finite nor not finite. Or, finally, if one says ‘that which is the soul, that is the body,’ or ‘one thing is the soul, another the body,’ all these statements refer only to the skandhas. It is thanks to the perfection of wisdom that the Tathagata knows those positive and negative statements for what they really are. The Tathagata cognizes the skandhas as identical with Suchness. That is why He knows, thanks to perfect wisdom, those positive and negative statements for what they really are. It is thus that the Tathagata makes known Suchness through the Suchness of the Tathagata, through the Suchness of the skandhas, through the Suchness of positive and negative statements. And just that Suchness of the skandhas, that is also the Suchness of the world. For it has been said by the Tathagata that “the five skandhas are reckoned as the ‘world.’”

(PP8000 12.3, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 18th, 2015 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

jundo cohen said:

I believe where I do not follow is the "either/or, yes/no" aspects of some of this conversation. Zen Teachers (especially the old dead ones) have a tendency to speak through both sides of their no sided mouth on these issues.

Astus wrote:

I don't see it as that complicated. Either it is a direct entrance or a gradual approach.

That's because if the immediate is something that one needs to cultivate or repeat, that is already gradual. For instance, the concept of sudden enlightenment with gradual practice, that is virtually just the gradual path. If there is a step by step practice to follow that results in a sudden realisation, that is again a gradual path.

jundo cohen said:

yet he also (from all the little available historical evidence) engaged in Zazen and other standard Buddhist Practices and believed that there is much to be gained, and the possibility to enlighten. Same with Dogen.

Astus wrote:

It is likely that he followed some kind of monastic routine, but there is no historical evidence besides the heavily edited and reworked Linjilu. So, there is no basis to assume such a belief of Linji, when the text itself speaks directly against it. Nevertheless, the text is not a rulebook but a collection of sermons and some anecdotes, so it is not about organising monastic duties and such. At best such daily tasks are not about brining enlightenment but simply keeping the community functional. I also don't see Dogen saying that following rules can generate some attainment. In fact, such a concept is directly against some basic doctrines of Buddhism and constitutes the <http://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=Silabbata-paramasa>.

jundo cohen said:

Certainly, there is both a sudden and gradual aspect (as well as that which is beyond before and after and all time) to Zen Training including Dogen's way.

Astus wrote:

What are those aspects? Either something is practice-realisation or not. The gradual aspect is the view that through practice one gains realisation. That is in opposition to the doctrine of practice-realisation. What is your interpretation that harmonises them?

jundo cohen said:

Linji is quoted ... "Better take your ease sitting cross-legged on a meditation platform in the monastery."

Platform Sutra quoted ... "Be the same as you would if I were here, and sit all together in meditation."

Astus wrote:

Both refer to the simplest and most comfortable daily activity of a monastery: sitting together and not doing anything. It's as if the office manager told the employees to just go and sit in the relax room and don't do anything. Although meditation may have this reputation of being heavy work and tiring, that's likely because of viewing retreats and Japanese training monasteries as if they were the norm.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 18th, 2015 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

The Lankavatara says that the Dhyanas of Sravakayana and Mahayana are different, Chapter XXXVII in D.T. Suzuki. It is discussed in other sutras too, like Samdhi-Nirmocana. Because the view is different the dhyanas differ accordingly.

Astus wrote:

From that section of the Lankavatara comes the term "Tathagata Chan", a name for Zen coming primarily from Guifeng Zongmi. It is the highest vehicle above both Hinayana and Mahayana that goes directly to buddha-nature.

"The Teaching of the One Vehicle That Reveals the Nature holds that all sentient beings without exception have the intrinsically enlightened, true mind. From [time] without beginning it is permanently abiding and immaculate. It is shining, unobscured, clear and bright ever- present awareness. It is also called the Buddha- nature and it is also called the tathāgatagarbha. From time without beginning deluded thoughts cover it, and [sentient beings] by themselves are not aware of it. Because they only recognize their inferior qualities, they become indulgently attached, enmeshed in karma, and experience the suffering of birth- and- death. The great enlightened one took pity upon them and taught that everything without exception is empty. He further revealed that the purity of the numinous enlightened true mind is wholly identical with all Buddhas." (<http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/zongmi.html#a>)

"If one's practice is based on having all-at-once awakened to the realization that one's own mind is from the outset pure, that the depravities have never existed, that the nature of the wisdom without outflows is from the outset complete, that this mind is buddha, that they are ultimately without difference, then it is dhyana of the highest vehicle. This type is also known by such names as tathagata-purity dhyana, the one-practice concentration, and the thusness concentration. It is the basis of all concentrations. If one can practice it from moment to moment, one will naturally and gradually attain the myriad concentrations. This is precisely the dhyana that has been transmitted down from Bodhidharma."

(Chan Prolegomenon in "Zongmi on Chan", p 103)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 21st, 2015 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

jundo cohen said:

You may have heard my own description of Practice-Realization as like a climb up a mountain, from the bottom to the top, changing vistas along the way, actually getting better and more skillful at climbing as we go, making progress step by step ...

(seemingly gradual on first impression perhaps)

Astus wrote:

That is exactly the gradual path, where a bodhisattva has to realise

emptiness/prajnaparamita and then, on the one hand, deepen it (implement it), and on the other, perfect himself in the other paramitas. But at the same time the wisdom of emptiness is the same, or in other words, the mirror needs cleaning even though the mirror is originally shiny as can be glimpsed at small spots whence the dirt's already been removed.

jundo cohen said:

All I might add is that, in a lovely Hua Yenny way, each sudden dot holds and intimately is every other sudden dot, every dot embodying all time and space and then some

Astus wrote:

It is a Huayan teaching, based on chapter 17 (Merit of the Initial Determination for Enlightenment), that at the first level (of 52) one already at the same time is equal to the buddhas. Tiantai has a similar teaching called the six identities. They basically say that one gradually accomplishes the full attainment/manifestation of buddha-nature that's found in all beings. Zen's sudden path is supposed to be instead the direct cut to buddha-nature itself rather than polishing the mirror.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 21st, 2015 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Jesse said:

Direct just means you experience awakening directly through seeing(I believe), and gradual is experiencing it through the elimination of karma along with all the other Buddhist training's. Just because the path is gradual doesn't mean instantaneous enlightenment isn't instant, because in that moment there is nothing left to do. It's not one or the other, it's both.

Astus wrote:

That kind of direct insight is the requirement to become a stream-enterer or a bodhisattva on the first bhumi. Such insight developed and followed up by gradual training is what has always been the teaching. If Zen is also like that - which is possible - then it is basically contradicting its own claims of uniqueness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 22nd, 2015 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

Caodemarte said:

What exactly is meant by "the Zen claim to uniqueness?" Was "sudden enlightenment" meant instead of "uniqueness?"

Astus wrote:

That Zen is a tradition on its own, separate from others like Tiantai, Huayan and

Madhyamaka, and therefore having its own methods and doctrines, like sudden enlightenment through direct pointing to the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 24th, 2015 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Dhyana in Zen

Content:

LastLegend said:

I speak of suffering and end suffering by removing attachment to all.

Astus wrote:

There is also a fourth truth: the path. How to end attachments?

LastLegend said:

I speak of medicine and illness, and medicine in this case emptiness to remove attachment which is the illness that causes suffering.

Astus wrote:

How do you obtain and apply that medicine?

LastLegend said:

I also speak of the direct clear knowing mind. Where clear knowing mind is present, there is no delusion and confusion.

Astus wrote:

The question is the same: how do you realise a clear knowing mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 26th, 2015 at 6:20 AM

Title: Re: What is wrong with feminists these days?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Where is all this anger from against the idea that women are as much human beings as men? We are all humans, and biological sex does not define most, if not every, qualities of one's personality. How is this view so dangerous?

Female privilege is not something I have seen anywhere. Certainly, it can happen to some men that they feel frustrated because it looks like as if women had it easier in getting sex and securing relationships, that is actually nothing else but the misguided projection of one's own desires - i.e. as one feels like he'd be happy with any woman (as long as they fit one's ideals of course, so it's not at all 'free for all', but that's not acknowledged), while at the same time women don't seem to be willing to accept him, thus the female privilege. Actually, that kind of 'female privilege' is simple male chauvinism and blaming others for one's own frustration and the feeling of inferiority.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 26th, 2015 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: What is wrong with feminists these days?

Content:

rory said:

Let's go back to the source - men. What should men do to prevent unwanted births?

Astus wrote:

As I understand the process, conception is generally the result of the activities of two consenting adults (not talking about criminal acts here). Blaming one or the other side is certainly not recognising the other person as a conscious agent. If there is such a thing as an 'unwanted birth', that means there were two people who had been ignorant of where babies came from.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 26th, 2015 at 8:35 PM

Title: Re: Ethics are more important than religion?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ethics do not exist in a vacuum, they are based on various views. Whether that view is religious or non-religious is a secondary matter, but there must be a set of ideas to have ethics. Since people with differing views do not agree, their ethics clash as well. How could there be then a universal ethics without a universal view? Sure, it seems that all could agree that violence is bad. But people do not attack each other because they argue about the importance of peace, rather they become violent over 'smaller' disagreements, like what marriage is, how people should be governed, which is the best sports team, etc. The same applies to other seemingly universal principles, like not stealing. So, while it may not necessarily be a religious one, but view is clearly more important than ethics.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 28th, 2015 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: Happiness from Buddhism is impermanence

Content:

umesh said:

Did we get too attached to the teaching ?

Astus wrote:

That's not really possible. One may get stuck with some wrong views of the Dharma, but if it is the correct view, it inevitably brings one to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 1st, 2016 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Devotional Practices to Kannon in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

All of East Asian Buddhism:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C4%ABlaka%E1%B9%87%E1%B9%ADha_Dh%C4%81ra%E1%B9%87%C4%AB

Chinese Buddhism:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=n86HQgAACAAJ>

Japanese Zen (and in other schools):

http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=ten_line_kannon_sutra

Kwan Um (and Korean) Zen:

<http://www.kwanumzen.org/?teaching=kwan-seum-bosal-chanting>
<http://www.kwanumzen.org/?teaching=thousand-eyes-and-hands-sutra>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 2nd, 2016 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Do you need to know what a mantra means, to get benefits

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the Zen side:

Good friends, people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all.
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, p 28, BDK Edition)

Another student said, "I've heard that certain mantras have power inherent in them-that Sanskrit sounds, for example, have some link to the energy of the universe. Does it make a difference which mantra you use?"

Soen-sa said, "Three things are important: first, your reason for doing the mantra; second, strong faith that the mantra works; and third, constant practice."

"So you can chant Coca-Cola all day long and it will work?"

"If someone tells you that the words Coca-Cola have power in them and you really believe that, then Coca-Cola will work for you.

(Seung Sahn: Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p 82)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 2nd, 2016 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Devotional Practices to Kannon in Zen

Content:

Taco_Rice said:

Is it permissible to have a statue of Kannon on one's altar?

Astus wrote:

Since Zen is not focused on a single buddha or bodhisattva, you can have whoever you like on the altar.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 2nd, 2016 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Do you need to know what a mantra means, to get benefits

Content:

Ray Rudha said:

The quote from the platform sutra does not reference mantra. It does mention prajna. The Heart Sutra is very very clear as to the effects of the Prajnaparamita mantra, saying it is the mother of all Buddhas and leads to enlightenment, cutting through everything.

Astus wrote:

If saying only the words were enough, there is no point in bothering with the teachings. Zen teaches enlightenment by seeing the nature of mind. Mantras may be helpful as a possible method to tame the mind, but it's not the same as seeing the nature.

Reciting mantras or contemplating mind

Are merely herbs for polishing a mirror.

When the dust is removed,

They are also wiped away.

(Hanshan Deqing: Contemplating Mind, in Getting the Buddha Mind, p 58)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 2nd, 2016 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Do you need to know what a mantra means, to get benefits

Content:

Ray Rudha said:

Since mantra is primordial, the primordial sound of Mind, there is no such thing as wiping away mantra. It is prior to wiping, and of the same nature as the Vajra Mirror.

Astus wrote:

All dharmas by their nature are no different from ultimate reality. In that sense, all sounds are mantra, from the chirp of birds to the vroom of motorcycles. Why would only certain syllables be special to be selected for practice?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 2nd, 2016 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Do you need to know what a mantra means, to get benefits

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see all that in much simpler and ordinary terms. There are experiences in the six sensory areas. Either one imagines them to be personal and permanent or not, thus forming attachment or not. Attachments bring about dissatisfaction, and the whole cycle of rebirth. Not being attached frees one from dissatisfaction and the rest. The goal of any method is to help one see experiences for what they are and therefore relinquish clinging. This, as I understand, is what the Buddha's teachings are basically about, and so the teachings of Zen patriarchs and others.

Mantra practically is a set of syllables and used for practice in the form of recitation. Sure, there can be a complete philosophy behind that, but that still does not change the activity. Or it does. That is actually what the original question is about in this topic. So, since recitation is at best a way of concentrating on an object, it does not generate in and of itself wisdom.

It is possible you understand something completely different as mantra. In that case, it is not a practice of repeating syllables and such, so the above may not necessarily apply. However, that's not what was asked about in this thread.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 4th, 2016 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two kinds of transmissions: scriptural and experiential. Scriptural is necessary for the tradition to live on, and it is generally easier to pass on, as monasteries can store the canon without anyone reading them. Experiential transmission is of two kinds: customs of the community and the individual realisations of the person. Customs are what anyone joining a community has to follow, both in terms of behaviour and theory. Customs are what is usually the "living tradition", and it is like any tradition in both carrying on old elements and integrating/developing new ones. The individual realisation is not something that can actually be transmitted, but often that's what the upholders of scriptures and customs claim to pass on. It's the realisation that is both the true goal of both kinds of transmissions and what keeps them truly alive.

Scriptural change happens through translation and interpretation, as both depend on one's present circumstances. Customs as well change according to upcoming situations and conditions. What cannot change is realisation. But as realisation does not just happen, there is necessarily a path, and thus we arrive at the four noble truths

as the ultimate template. There are three suttas where the Buddha states: "cannot be stopped by brahman or contemplative, deva, Mara, or God or anyone at all in the cosmos": <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.117.than.html>, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.141.than.html>. They teach and explain the four noble truths and the eightfold path. And what is realised is the very nature of phenomena (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.134.than.html>).

Other teachings beyond those can even be seen as elaborations and extensions, and at the same time all teachings can be traced back to the noble truths. Therefore that's what cannot be changed.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 5th, 2016 at 11:13 PM

Title: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Astus wrote:

The basic method:

There is a problem because you crave (for something else). In order to stop craving realise that all experiences are unstable, unsatisfactory, and impersonal. That is, no matter what you crave for, it will not be a solution, thus craving is pointless.

The empty method:

No problem is a real problem. It only looks real because you don't recognise it as a mere concept. To see it as a mere concept, analyse the problem in order to define it, then you shall see that it cannot be established in any way.

The mind method:

The problem comes from imagining it to be something beyond what is experienced, an independent object. Since only what is experienced can be called a problem, the problem itself is nothing but a thought. Once there is nothing to think of, thinking of the problem itself ends.

The direct method:

The thought of problem occurs, then it disappears. No need to do anything. It had been gone even before it had arrived.

What other methods are there?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 6th, 2016 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

boda said:

- 1) Define the problem.
- 2) Brainstorming and lateral thinking.
- 3) Forming a hypotheses.
- 4) Testing.

Astus wrote:

Where is that found in Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 6th, 2016 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

I think you need to specify what you mean by "problem".

Astus wrote:

It is intentionally vague, the focus is on methods. So we can go with "A matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome".

Queequeg said:

Is there a Buddhist physics or mathematics?

Astus wrote:

Probably not, so there are no methods for those, and that's fine.

Queequeg said:

Realizing the emptiness of my hunger will not solve the problem of my starvation.

Astus wrote:

At what point does one need Buddhism to solve hunger?

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Queequeg said:

The larger point I was making, the 'Buddhist' problem solving described above has a discrete scope and if applied beyond that scope, it is absurd.

Astus wrote:

That is very true, and the Buddha was quite clear on that as well: "Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.086.than.html>, also the famous <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html>).

At the same time, even if we were to restrict it to dukkha, one of its definitions is "not getting what is wanted", and that befits the general idea of what any problem is. Still, the question is about possible methods offered. As for whether it is good for a particular problem is another question.

Queequeg said:

I would posit that Buddhist problem solving is action flowing from wisdom

Astus wrote:

What kind of wisdom? And again, the method could as well be called the path to wisdom, but that definition would likely take us to a different discussion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 6th, 2016 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: What is faith?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Faith is accepting without understanding.

From <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn25/sn25.001.than.html>:

"One who has conviction & belief that these phenomena are this way is called a faith-follower"

vs

"One who, after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way is called a Dhamma-follower"

Faith in the Triple Jewel is the first and foremost

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn55/sn55.001.than.html>) of all objects of faith. Then it is followed by faith in particular teachings, like in SN 25.1 the faith in the impermanence of the six senses.

The treatise

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html is a seminal text in East Asian Buddhism. It writes:

"Now, in developing the aspiration for enlightenment through the perfection of faith, what kind of mind is to be cultivated? Briefly speaking, three kinds can be discussed. The first is the mind characterized by straightforwardness, for it correctly meditates on the principle of Suchness. The second is the mind of profoundness, for there is no limit to its joyful accumulation of all kinds of goodness. The third is the mind filled with great compassion, for it wishes to uproot the sufferings of all sentient beings."

That fits the idea, articulated extensively in Huayan doctrine, that the first moment of faith (it is also the first section of the bodhisattva path in the Huayan - and therefore the East Asian - system) is equal to buddhahood. Sung Bae Park wrote a book on faith in East Asian Buddhism, particularly in Patriarchal Chan:
https://books.google.com/books?id=_A2QS03MP5EC.

The Bodhisattva who has observed this foremost perfection,
When in the past he served [the Buddhas], is learned and does not doubt:
As soon as he has heard it he will again recognize the Teacher,
And he will swiftly understand the Peaceful Calm of enlightenment.

Though in the past he has honoured millions of Buddhas, and served them
If without faith in the Jina's perfection of wisdom,
Hearing of it, he will cast it away, one of small intelligence;
After he cast it away, he will go to the Avici Hell, and non one can save him.

Therefore, have faith in this Mother of all the Jinas,
If you wish to experience the utmost Buddha-cognition:
Let him be like a merchant, who has traveled to the treasure island,
And who, having lost his goods would [nevertheless] again return [to it].
(Ratnagunasamcayagatha, ch 7, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 1:09 AM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

The tradition I follow embraces the full scope of human experience and interexperience - I don't think its exclusive in this embrace, but is idiosyncratic. This scope of course includes disciplines such as maths and sciences, as well as every other conventional truth and circumstance; of course it incidentally embraces Boda's suggestion of the scientific method as a means of problem solving. We can be theoretical physicists and Buddhists and have both hats be the same.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism can exist besides all sorts of other skills, that does not make shoemaking

and calculus parts of the Buddhist tradition. What does such embracing mean then?

Queequeg said:

All of these are problems that must be addressed, and if your interpretation of Buddhism does not address them, it is not a complete teaching.

Astus wrote:

How many teachings do you know from the Buddha on agriculture, waste management and other common matters of society?

Queequeg said:

But even the Tripitaka embraces the conventional world - what is right livelihood if not addressing the right way to engage in the world?

Astus wrote:

The recommended livelihood is the celibate monastic life, even in Mahayana. I have not yet encountered a sutra or treatise advising people to enjoy the five desires (五欲) and be driven by the eight winds (八風).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Astus wrote:

That afflictions (klesa) are enlightenment (bodhi) (煩惱即菩提) is the same idea as samsara is nirvana, the commons (prthagjana) are nobles (arya), etc. It means that one has to realise that afflictions are empty and such, instead of trying to suppress them or remove them. It is a teaching meant to correct the view that one should use force instead of wisdom. This teaching is in a number of Mahayana sutras (e.g. Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 4: "The afflictions are bodhi [煩惱是道場], because of understanding according to actuality." (BDK Edition, p 100)), and an expression used in Chan as well.

"Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 30)

"Space and the Dharma body are without any dissimilar characteristics (lit., "characteristics of differentiation"). The Buddhas and sentient beings are without any dissimilar characteristics, samsara and nirvana are without any dissimilar characteristics, and the afflictions and bodhi are without any dissimilar characteristics. To transcend all characteristics is to be a Buddha. Ordinary people grasp at [their sensory] realms, while religious persons grasp at the mind. For the mind and the realms to both be forgotten is the True Dharma. To forget the realms is relatively easy, but to

forget the mind is extremely difficult. People do not dare to forget the mind, fearing that they will fall into the void (i.e., the emptiness of space) with nowhere to grab hold. They do not understand that the void is without void, that there is only one true Dharma body."

(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 21)

"In the Ultimate Vehicle, we neither transform our afflictions nor extinguish them; our mind is originally pure and lucid. This mind is inherent in everyone; we do not need to seek it externally. This is the Chan School's principle of "affliction is bodhi; birth and death (samsara) is nirvana.""

(Weijue:

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=219&Itemid=59)

"If you know how to use it, affliction is Bodhi; if you don't know how to use it, then Bodhi becomes affliction. Bodhi is analogous to water, and affliction to ice. Ice and water are of the same substance; there is no difference."

(Xuanhua:

http://www.drbachinese.org/online_reading_simplified/dharma_talks/kaishrlu-7/volume7-ce-25.htm)

"In Buddhism we say, "Affliction is Bodhi (enlightenment)." This means that when we encounter afflictions (distressful circumstances), we must use wisdom to perceive and understand them clearly, turning the afflictive outlook into joy, freedom, and tranquility. "Affliction" and "joy" are, in reality, within one single thought."

(Weijue:

<http://cthouston.org/Dharma%20Lectures%20by%20the%20Grand%20Master/Words%20of%20Wisdom%20from%20the%20Grand%20Master%20.pdf>)

"The mental formation is not our enemy. It is ourself and it is our duty to look after it. Many people think that meditation is a war, a struggle between good and bad, between the Buddha and Mara. But in the light of interbeing, rubbish makes flowers and flowers make rubbish. There is affliction and there is bodhi. Bodhi is not the enemy of affliction. Affliction is not the enemy of bodhi. If we don't know how to look after our awakened nature it will become affliction. If we know how to look after our afflictions they will become awakened nature. That is what is meant by saying afflictions are the bodhi nature, are awakened nature."

(Thich Nhat Hanh: [http://www.buddhist-](http://www.buddhist-canon.com/PLAIN/TNHSUTTA/1998%20Feb%2022%20%20The%20Four%20Establishments%20of%20Mindfulness%20%28part%202%29.htm)

[canon.com/PLAIN/TNHSUTTA/1998%20Feb%2022%20%20The%20Four%20Establishments%20of%20Mindfulness%20%28part%202%29.htm](http://www.buddhist-canon.com/PLAIN/TNHSUTTA/1998%20Feb%2022%20%20The%20Four%20Establishments%20of%20Mindfulness%20%28part%202%29.htm))

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. Rebirth is not really the problematic point, rather it is seeing the mind as a bodily function. Those who come to Buddhism with some concept of an independent soul have no problem with rebirth in particular, they rather fall into the other extreme view of eternalism.

2. The mind as a separate function from the body can be directly perceived and understood using the experiential-phenomenological (five aggregates, six sensory areas) model.

3. In the teaching on the five levels of Zen the first one is the kind of therapeutic, present life centred view embraced by agnostic/materialist beginners. So, it has its value, but it is certainly very far from the fifth level of the ultimate vehicle that is the teaching of Bodhidharma and his heirs.

4. Mahayana makes zero sense without rebirth, as the bodhisattva path goes through innumerable lifetimes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: What is faith?

Content:

Punya said:

It seems to me like they are generally talking about faith in the trust and confidence sense.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's the point of faith, to trust in the teachings, and therefore keep studying until one arrives to actual confirmation. It is like faith in any other kind of instructor, for instance when one learns a foreign language you accept that the teacher knows what he talks about and explains things correctly.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

There are many examples of practitioners whose daily activities are their practice - Vimalakirti for one. The integration is implicit in the bodhisattva ideal.

Astus wrote:

What makes everyday activities practice is the presence of wisdom. Thus for ordinary people activities are karmic, for bodhisattvas they are the path to buddhahood. Therefore, it's not the activity but the wisdom that makes it Buddhist.

Queequeg said:

There is indeed the teaching on klesa are bodhi... It goes hand in hand with Nirvana is Samsara.

Astus wrote:

Again, that is a matter of having or not having insight into the reality of afflictions. And once afflictions are seen for what they actually are, they are no longer afflictions.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 8:34 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

SeeLion said:

I think Right Concentration is a method, because the problem never arises in the first place.

Astus wrote:

Concentration is a very useful method to calm down. However, it is more like not facing the problem but putting it aside for a while.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Adamantine said:

from a Tibetan perspective there is also a view that one can take on residual obscurations (drip) from another, most especially through sexual union.

Astus wrote:

That very much contradicts the whole meaning of karma. Following that logic, hunger could be lost around well fed people. Afflictions reside in one's own mind, generated and maintained through one's own actions. One may agree with or imitate others' actions, but that's still not the same as obscuration-transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

how the commentators distinguished the Buddha's purported words here from his own Teachings on rebirth?

Astus wrote:

Speculations about the future involve wrong views of immortality (percipient, non-percipient, neither) or annihilation. The Buddha, of course, avoids both extremes, as he

does not posit an immutable self, nor complete destruction, but dependent origination. There are several suttas on the topic of kamma and rebirth (e.g. MN 41, 57, 101, 135, 136), and it is clear from the Buddha's debates with various ascetics, as described in the sutta right after the Brahmajala (i.e.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html>), that the interpretation of kamma and rebirth is very much a central doctrine that makes Buddhism unique, and the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sama%C3%B1aphala_Sutta#The_king.27s_questioning_of_six_ascetics represent views that are still held by various people today.

As for DN 1, here are some commentaries:

http://www.dhammadalks.net/Books11/Bhikkhu_Bodhi-Discourse-All-Embracing_Net_of_Views.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Here, the word is contamination ['grib] rather than obscuration [sgrib].

Astus wrote:

And what does contamination stand for? The description given sounds like 'ritual impurity', that might be relevant in Tantra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2016 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Malcolm said:

These are more connected with the Tibetan cultural ideas than the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

East Asian countries have their own versions of such contaminations (e.g. the <http://www.reed.edu/hellscrolls/scrolls/Aseries/A06/A06e.html>), as probably every culture.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Adamantine said:

I'm assuming this is a relic of Bramhanic ideas of orthodox purity

Astus wrote:

The whole idea of 'contamination' seems like that. But it is quite possible that there is no actual connection, it's just that every culture has its own set of superstitions and taboos (e.g. in Japan women were not allowed on whole mountains because of fear of contaminating the holy places, like monasteries).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

SeeLion said:

Concentration is a state of being, which can be cultivated during the daily life.

Astus wrote:

What do you call concentration, what method/technique/practice? What does one do to be concentrated? As I understand it, it is one-pointed attention to a single object where one disregards, or does not recognise at all, every other phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Jeff H said:

I think this discussion is missing the teaching on wisdom with compassion. All Buddhist methods invoke wisdom, but none lead to inaction. That's because of compassion.

Astus wrote:

Compassion is the intention to solve others' problems. Do you also consider it to be a method of alleviating their suffering, or is it just the willingness to do that?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

Are ordinary people categorically devoid of wisdom? This amounts to a denial of Buddhature, and is an inferior teaching. My understanding is that nescience and wisdom lie at the ends of an infinite spectrum in dynamic tension. Where is there wisdom without nescience, and vice versa? Wisdom can only be distinguished in relation to nescience, and the other way around. How do you separate them?

Astus wrote:

If ordinary people had wisdom there would not be ordinary any more. Buddha-nature is not relevant at all, because for ordinary people it is completely hidden and cannot make

any use of it.

As you say, since recognising ignorance is needed to posit knowledge, ordinary people are similarly the opposite of noble ones. But that doesn't mean that buddhas cannot exist without deluded beings, or that deluded beings cannot be without nobles, since only the terminology is dependent on each other, not the beings.

Queequeg said:

This dynamic interaction between wisdom and nescience is complete and any attempt to draw distinctions between wisdom and nescience is groundless except to illustrate a rather inferior point for people who still posit dualities.

Astus wrote:

There is no such coexistence. One cannot be literate and illiterate at the same time. Wisdom is not in any dynamic relation with ignorance.

Queequeg said:

The interaction between Bodhisattvas and ordinary people takes place in what we ordinary people call ordinary life. For the Bodhisattva, that interaction takes place in the Buddhafield. Both of these views are correct because ordinary life and the buddha field are the same thing.

Astus wrote:

If they were the same there would be either just one or the other.

Queequeg said:

Once you've been exposed to the Buddha dharma, to the Buddha's Mind (which has always already been accomplished), you are embraced in the Buddha's Mind - ie. nescience and wisdom perfectly complement, and all of your activities are activities on the Buddhist path that inevitably blossoms into full blown Buddhahood, even as you consciously have no inkling while you shovel poop in the Rich Man's latrines.

Astus wrote:

That denies any conscious effort of perfecting the paramitas, accumulating merit and wisdom, etc. All that would be required were to take refuge and nothing else. Thus it negates the entire path. In other words, it claims that it's enough to believe that problems will be solved, and that belief itself is the end of every attempt, or even consideration of handling anything.

Queequeg said:

Where exactly is the Buddha path tread? Where are the problems solved with Buddhist solutions? Where is Wisdom cultivated? In the Mind? Where is Mind abstracted from Form and the perpetual activity of life? What lies outside of the Buddha's Mind?

Astus wrote:

Phenomena are not the problem, attachment to them is. Just because one does not have to go/be outside of phenomena doesn't mean that the solution is found within

appearances, or that all will sort out themselves automatically.

Queequeg said:

They were never afflictions in the first place. Your position seems to be that Buddhism only solves misperception, as if that solution can be abstracted from all the other solutions to life's problems.

Astus wrote:

If afflictions are not afflictions, then there is nothing to do, no teachings to follow, and no liberation to gain. That again negates the whole path.

Misperception of how things are is the cause of afflictions, so that is what needs to be corrected. Does that help with every possible problem in the world? If yes, in what way? Those are the questions I have originally intended to discuss here.

Queequeg said:

Jeff makes an excellent point - another way to illustrate the full scope of Buddhism and Buddhist problem solving is to point out that wisdom implies compassion (action based on wisdom), and wisdom without action is not really wisdom at all.

Astus wrote:

I agree, they are very much connected. Action comes from intention, intention comes from perception/view. Correct view then also means correct intention and correct action.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: What is faith?

Content:

Punya said:

And, if you accept the advice of teachers like HH the Dalai Lama about the complexity of karma, and you content yourself with a more basic understanding, is that just accepting it on faith. (There are more than enough threads here on karma so please confine the discussion to the faith aspect).

I'd still be interested in responses to this part of the question.

Astus wrote:

It's fine to just accept it on faith:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.060.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: What is faith?

Content:

Vasana said:

That's not the same as accepting it blindly on faith. ... your example is more akin to trust in the testimony of reliable persons, witnesses & masters such as HHDL.

Astus wrote:

That is actually what accepting on faith is: trusting in what others say without gaining an understanding on one's own.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 9th, 2016 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: The "four methods" that prove the existence of future li

Content:

Astus wrote:

Those four reasons are likely to be found in pramana works. The second half of the reasons - and I'm just guessing here based on other sources - are about how a newborn baby can eat and other basic things of growing up (e.g. language acquisition) from what one could assume previous knowledge, practically what is now called instincts and explained by biology.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 9th, 2016 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: The "four methods" that prove the existence of future li

Content:

prsvrnc said:

How would you distinguish, "the logic that the mind has gained familiarity with things in the past" and "the logic of having gained experience of things in the past"?

Astus wrote:

No idea. Finding that out would require more information.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 9th, 2016 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Taco_Rice said:

So, if I understand all of this right... this means that when a given desire arises, we simply recognize that it is a part of ourselves and if its effects are constructive, we act on it, but if not, we recognize its emptiness and let it go or sublimate it?

Astus wrote:

Afflictions are unwholesome mental phenomena based on greed, hatred, and ignorance. Realising that they are enlightenment means insight into their nature as empty, thus ending the mistaken impulse of grasping and acting on them.

The differentiation between wholesome and unwholesome intentions is the practice of

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Right_Exertions, a part of the noble eightfold path and the thirty-seven factors conducive to enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 9th, 2016 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

What are Buddhas without ordinary beings? What is to distinguish the category "deluded being" without "enlightened being"?

Astus wrote:

For categorisation they are set up as opposites. Still, deluded beings are deluded regardless of the presence or absence of buddhas, and buddhas are enlightened regardless the presence or absence of deluded ones.

Queequeg said:

truth is infinitely refined; each refinement redefines the distinction between true and not true.

Astus wrote:

Something is either true or false within a given context, and without context there is no truth or falsity to talk about either. When a system of categorisation of teachings is set up, that system itself defines what is true and what is false. It's not that truth becomes more sublime, but rather it systematically rejects everything else but their own proposition of truth.

Queequeg said:

The best I can approximate my view of them is the connection between the wave and particle natures of light; they're the same thing, at the same time, of utterly exclusive characters. To be more specific and accurate, I'm referring to Zhiyi's Threefold Inclusive Truth - distinct from the various Two Truth formulations as well as Non-Inclusive Threefold Truth formulations.

Astus wrote:

The difference between delusion and enlightenment is attachment or lack of it to phenomena. The phenomena are the same, the relation to them is different. Since it cannot be that one is attached and not attached at the same time, ignorance and wisdom do not exist simultaneously. What the Three Truths mean is that emptiness is not the absence of appearances but the realisation of dependent appearances being insubstantial just as they are.

Queequeg said:

Being too hungry to contemplate dharma is a Buddhist problem with a Buddhist resolution - even as that resolution may seem very similar to the efforts of a preta to quench hunger. The circumstances are different, the end is different. Foraging for food

and water is a Buddhist activity because it supports Buddhist endeavor. Consider the difference between a monk's alms round and a beggar's begging round.

Astus wrote:

What makes it Buddhist? It's not that the activity is particular to Buddhists, but because it is also performed by Buddhists. I don't see how that definition is important or relevant here.

Queequeg said:

It's the principle underlying Samaya or the Direct Introduction of our Dzogchen cousins, as I understand it. I understand it as *adhimukti*, awareness that precedes understanding. Without being introduced to the Buddha Mind, it is not possible to penetrate it. This means the Buddha's teaching always precedes awakening. The standard example is a description of Chocolate Cake (Enlightenment) is not comparable to actually eating Chocolate Cake. In Eating it, you actually get to experience and come to an intimate understanding of Chocolate Cake that replaces any speculative notion about Chocolate Cake. On initiation, on introduction, you enter into the respective enlightened consciousness. You may not understand it fully, but now that you are in, (now that you have actually taken a bite) it's just a matter of becoming thoroughly familiar with it. Perfecting paramitas, if one wishes to structure one's practice that way, happens within this context of the Buddha's Mind. The goal of achieving the Buddha Mind is complete. That does not mean it cannot be perfected further, and there are myriad practices to do this, which, if we really get it, we do just because.

Astus wrote:

Bodhicitta is the intention to attain complete enlightenment. If that intention ceases before reaching the goal, that is falling from the path, but when the intention arises one steps on the path. Bodhicitta does not require the realisation of emptiness, so there are stages before becoming a noble or sage (i.e. reaching the first *bhumi*). Also, neither empowerment nor the theory of buddha-mind is required for aspiring to buddhahood. But when one experiences personally the true nature of the world, that is when one attains nobility. What is experienced is no different from what buddhas know as the real truth, the difference between a practising noble and one fully awakened lies in the remaining habits binding one to various phenomena. Practising could as well be called familiarisation with suchness, but it still does not mean the coexistence of ignorance and wisdom.

Queequeg said:

And, since Buddhas have appeared (if you believe it), that categorically means this reality is fully embraced in the Buddha Mind, and we're already, as we are, been embraced within it, and all of our "problems" are likewise embraced in it; all of our thoughts, words and deeds transpire in it, are it.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-mind is not a god or being to embrace anything. It is, as its name suggests, the mind of a buddha, one that is completely liberated. In the sense that a free mind is free

because of realising suchness, and suchness is the nature of all phenomena, everything is free, that is, buddha-mind. But that does not help anyone or anything, since all beings must realise this for themselves.

Queequeg said:

OK, Sure, but now we're back to you determining what problems Buddhism can address. There is nothing outside the scope of Buddhism, and that problems beyond the one's you posit are embraced in that scope even if they are not enumerated in the scriptures. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Astus wrote:

In a similar sense, there is nothing outside the scope of biology either, as we are all biological entities. Still, you wouldn't look for financial advice in an anatomy book. Therefore it is only misleading to say that there is nothing outside the scope of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 10th, 2016 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

pael said:

Why Vimalakirti Sutra says "by the equality of the five deadly sins, you reach the equality of liberation"?

<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln260/Vimalakirti.htm>

Are those sins empty?

Astus wrote:

The Sutra itself explains:

Lord, when I heard these words of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, I wondered what I should say and what I should do, but I was totally in the dark. Leaving the bowl, I was about to leave the house when the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to me, 'Reverend Subhuti, do not fear these words, and pick up your bowl. What do you think, reverend Subhuti? If it were an incarnation created by the Tathagata who spoke thus to you, would you be afraid?' I answered, 'No indeed, noble sir!' He then said, 'Reverend Subhuti, the nature of all things is like illusion, like a magical incarnation. So you should not fear them. Why? All words also have that nature, and thus the wise are not attached to words, nor do they fear them. Why? All language does not ultimately exist, except as liberation. The nature of all things is liberation.'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 10th, 2016 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

So there is some self existent aspect to deluded beings?

Astus wrote:

Delusion is not caused by wisdom, nor is wisdom caused by delusion. Rather, the end of delusion is when wisdom can occur.

Queequeg said:

Are you actually familiar with Zhiyi or is this your opinion? I'm not positing him as authority, but I think if you actually understood the argument you wouldn't flatly reject it like this.

Astus wrote:

As I understand it, the three truths of Tiantai is emptiness, appearance, and middle, meaning that things are inseparably empty and apparent. What does that reject flatly?

Queequeg said:

Zhiyi doesn't actually reject anything as untrue. Rather he teaches something of a radical contextuality. The teaching is actually a way to integrate all truth, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, into a single, encompassing system.

Astus wrote:

Can you show where he integrates non-Buddhist teachings, like a creator god and annihilation at death?

Queequeg said:

Of course you can be attached and unattached simultaneously. We all in fact are this way. I'm attached to my son at the level of my gross consciousness. At the consciousness level of my involuntary biological functions, I am not attached.

Astus wrote:

Attachment is a present mental attitude, actively grasping at an object. So to have both at the same time would mean loving and disregarding your son at the same time with the same mind.

Queequeg said:

Everything is defined by intension, right? So if an act is done for dharma, its Buddhist.

Astus wrote:

That would mean only a buddha's activity is Buddhist, as only he has pure intentions fully in accord with the Dharma.

Queequeg said:

Once aroused, bodhicitta never dissolves. And moreover, its intrinsic in the true aspect so what you are talking about is a rather shallow and gross level arousal. It could equally be said the arousal of bodhicitta at the gross level is nothing more than recognition of an intent that has been there all along. Losing intent at the gross level is just that - loss at that gross level where the construct "I" is found.

Astus wrote:

If bodhicitta were never lost why are there warnings against abandoning it in the sutras?

What are the gross and subtle minds? There are the inclinations present as latent conditioning, i.e. samskaras. Those are the basis of all afflictions and samsara. What else do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 11th, 2016 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Engrossing thoughts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thoughts are what we think. If you want to stay outside of thoughts, that means two thoughts. It also means you have an idea of what kind of a mental state is desirable while others are not. Thoughts exhaust themselves whether one wants it or not. Thoughts pop up whether one wants it or not. Trouble occurs whenever we think that one thought is good and another thought is bad. So the instruction says: "Don't think of good and evil."

What exactly is happening when we become lost in thought or emotion?

See for yourself what it's like to intentionally think through something, and what it's like when the process ends. What do you call lost then?

Why, given the thousands of times daydreams have vanished before my eyes, I don't seem to learn from the process or see through them more readily as time goes on?

You seem to have learnt that they vanish. What more do you expect?

And why can we notice some perceptions without becoming engrossed, yet others are engrossing? Thoughts pull me in often, yet sounds or touch rarely do. They're more scenery, while thoughts steal the show.

That sounds more like your own arbitrary criteria. How is it different to think of the wall and see the wall? They are both complete unstable experiences.

Does it even matter in terms of aiming our practice?

The practice is to see that there is no thought, emotion or any experience at all that one can grasp, rely on, and identify with. All of them inevitably and unstoppably come and go. To imagine that there is some state or position one can maintain or should cultivate is the wrong idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 11th, 2016 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Theravada aims for arhat status, says that arhats and buddhas do not affect beings after parinirvana.

Mahayana aims for buddha status, says that bodhisattvas and buddhas affect beings after parinirvana. And then it is further explained how that affecting occurs naturally from their vows, that the ultimate buddha dharmakaya is totally impersonal and ungraspable, plus all that beings can perceive are what their karma lets them to. So, the deity-like bodhisattvas and buddhas are eventually explained as very abstract ideas and inconceivable beings, very much like the nirvana of Theravada.

What happens is that Mahayana transformed devotional elements from non-Buddhist to Buddhist, so instead of some general mother-goddess people can instead pray to Guanyin, but when you go deeper you are taught how Guanyin is about practising and manifesting compassion, and so on. And in that fairly tangible sense Mahayana is more encompassing, as it embraces and transforms various religious elements, plus the teachings are often more flexible to a certain extent, following the idea of skilful means. So, if anything, then those aspects show how Mahayana is the Broad Vehicle.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Engrossing thoughts

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

It's this process of tangling/untangling in sensory phenomena that I'm asking about, just what is going on, and whether examining it in this way is helpful or not, in posters' opinions.

Astus wrote:

When there is a concept/feeling of what is correct meditation, in order to maintain that state takes practice and effort, and even then it is eventually lost. That idea of correctness occurs right when one thinks that there is a point where meditation begins. It becomes a unique activity. On the other hand, when one just sits around, like waiting on the corridor for someone, or sitting down on a bench to rest one's legs, at those times the mind is aware and calm without effort. True, after a few moments one can feel bored, or one automatically grabs something to serve as a distraction. But just before beginning to fiddle with something, it is nothing special. Is that what you would call an untangled mind? And then, out of habit, an impulse, one begins to take up something to play with. Is that what you call tangled? And right in that distinction of labelling tangled bad and untangled good the idea is established that one should be in one way but not another. In that way it is no different from any calming meditation technique where one has to return again and again to the object. In fact, it is probably just that. However, when ideas of good and bad mind states are put aside, what is there to awake from?

Consider these classic stories:

Huike said to Bodhidharma, "My mind is anxious. Please pacify it." To which Bodhidharma replied, "Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it." Huike said, "Although I've sought it, I cannot find it." Bodhidharma then said, "There, I have pacified your mind."

Daoxin said, "I ask for the master's compassion. Please tell me of the gate of emancipation." Sengcan said, "Who has bound you?" Daoxin said, "No one has bound me." Sengcan said, "Then why are you seeking emancipation?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 5:24 PM

Title: Re: Engrossing thoughts

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

What then, given your post, might "life fogged over by thought" be?

Astus wrote:

That is taking experiences to be substantial, to be self or related to the self, to be important. It is like seeing a shadow and mistaking it for a snake - there is a shadow, but it can appear as something solid and threatening (or attractive), because we quickly associate the sight with an idea, and with that idea comes other thoughts and emotions. That is only an example, and as such can lead to the wrong concept that one should not make mistakes and have no fears whatsoever, but that would be the idea of "thoughts are bad, no thoughts are good".

Monlam Tharchin said:

For what there is to awaken from, the answer to me is suffering.

Astus wrote:

Suffering is the effect of delusion, not the cause. The cause is the belief that experiences (five aggregates & six senses) are enduring, satisfying, and controllable; or simply that they are substantial and one can and should do something with them. However, samsara cannot be fixed. The very idea that one has to fix life is the cause of the problems. That's why in zazen there is nothing to keep or let go. Waking up is only waking up from the delusion of anything to attain or be free from.

Monlam Tharchin said:

As such, there is the distinction between zazen and daydreaming or sleeping, as seemingly described in book I quoted, and no amount of thoughts linked together has yet undone that.

Astus wrote:

We are dependent origination itself. Dream is the whole of life. Looking for nirvana anywhere beyond is like adding another head.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Queequeg said:

This is a mistaken gloss. This is the Separate/Special or Provisional Mahayana view I pointed out is wrong.

Astus wrote:

How so? Zhiyi does not seem to say anything contradictory, he only takes a different way in explaining it. As he is quoted:

"He comprehends that the realm of evil is itself the realm of actuality [i.e., the dharma-nature, the absolute], and thus can attain liberation even in the midst of the midst of the five unforgivable sins."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

kirtu said:

Of course Arhats and Buddhas affect people after their own personal Parinirvana. Go to any Theravadin temple (at least Thai and Cambodian, less Sri Lankan) and you will see pictures of Arhats and honored contemporary monks (who are not publicly acknowledged as Arhats). They affect people by their example and the stories about them.

Astus wrote:

That's quite different from how buddhas and bodhisattvas stay in samsara actively liberating beings. At least theoretically. And that's one of my points actually, that Mahayana has a scriptural and philosophical system to integrate such devotional practices, while I have not met anything like that in the Nikayas or treatises. Or do you know such Theravada sources?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Simon E. said:

So if we follow that logic the Mahayana should stop referring to itself as the Mahayana..after all it is not the Great Vehicle relative to something abstract. It is the great vehicle relative to less complete vehicles.

Astus wrote:

No "less complete vehicle" mentioned here...

PP8000 1.5 (tr Conze):

Subhuti: It is thus, O Lord, that a Bodhisattva, a great being is armed with the great armour, and becomes one who has set out in the great vehicle, who has mounted on the great vehicle. But what is that great vehicle? How should one know the one who has set out in it? From whence will it go forth and whither? Who has set out in it? Where will it stand? Who will go forth by means of this great vehicle?

The Lord: 'Great vehicle,' that is a synonym of immeasurableness. 'Immeasurable' means infinitude. By means of the perfections has a Bodhisattva set out in it. From the triple world it will go forth. It has set out to where there is no objective support. It will be a Bodhisattva, a great being who will go forth, -but he will not go forth to anywhere. Nor has anyone set out in it. It will not stand anywhere, but it will stand on all-knowledge, by way of taking its stand nowhere. [And finally], by means of this great vehicle no one goes forth, no one has gone forth, no one will go forth. [24] Because neither of these dharmas, - he who would go forth, and that by which he would go forth – exist, nor can they be got at all. Since all dharmas do not exist, what dharma could go forth by what dharma? It is thus, Subhuti, that a Bodhisattva, a great being, is armed with the great armour, and has mounted on the great vehicle.

Subhuti: The Lord speaks of the 'great vehicle.' Surpassing the world with its Gods, men and Asuras that vehicle will go forth. For it is the same as space, and exceedingly great. As in space, so in this vehicle there is room for immeasurable and incalculable beings. So is this the great vehicle of the Bodhisattvas, the great beings. One cannot see its coming, or going, and its abiding does not exist. Thus one cannot get at the beginning of this great vehicle, nor at its end, nor at its middle. But it is self-identical everywhere. Therefore one speaks of a 'great vehicle.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 13th, 2016 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

SpinyNorman said:

I've been involved in previous debates around the definition of "Buddhist", and the most pragmatic and inclusive answer I remember was: "anyone who is doing some form of Buddhist practice."

Astus wrote:

Not really.

"Venerable sir, in what way is one a lay follower?"

"Mahanama, inasmuch as one has gone to the Buddha for refuge, has gone to the Dhamma for refuge, has gone to the Sangha for refuge; in that way, Mahanama, one is a lay follower."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.025.kuma.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 13th, 2016 at 6:55 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Jundo,

Do you consider mind to be material, or produced by/from matter? If not - unless you conceive an independent mind, i.e. a self - then the causal, dependent nature of mind means there is rebirth. That's how dependent origination is interlinked with rebirth and called the correct view. As for the kinds of births, the six realms include all sorts of possibilities, and there is a certain logic to it as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 13th, 2016 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Should the Open Dharma forum continue in its present form

Content:

Malcolm said:

Why would we, as a Mahāyāna forum, wish to encourage a subforum where people can engage in the unmeritorious activity of criticizing Mahāyāna Dharma?

Astus wrote:

People have questions whether they can post it or not. They also have disagreements to various degrees. Since the sections for specific traditions are meant to accept and maintain the given school's tenets - that is, as I imagine it, in a discussion those are the sources that take primacy over other. Therefore, Open Dharma means that no source whatsoever have primacy. Although in a way that is a straight way to chaos and confusion, it could also mean a 'pure reason' arena, where only the very basics of perception and logic counts. Except that very few, if any, can uphold such argument rules. Still, we can try.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2016 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Klesas are Bodhi & dating 18 y/o girls.

Content:

Anders said:

Bhikshu dharmamitra has also translated the Mohezhiguan in full

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm

Astus wrote:

That is the Xiaozhiguan

(<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%A4%A9%E5%8F%B0%E5%B0%8F%E6%AD%A2%E8%A6%B3> - Small Calming-Insight), written before the MHZG.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2016 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

I do not know know if the mind is material or not or something else all together (and neither do any modern neurologists, nor modern and ancient Buddhist teachers in my opinion). I really do not care all so much with regard to Liberation. It is simply not important to my Practice. We sit and embody "what is" ... whatever that "is" is ... even beyond and right through "is vs. is not".

Astus wrote:

I think the mind and its nature is the central topic of Zen, so it is particularly important to be clear about it, on both the theoretical and the experiential level. After all, it is not the body that needs liberation.

"Throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, you operate and act in all sorts of ways, seeing and hearing, laughing and talking, raging and rejoicing, affirming and denying: now tell me, ultimately who is it that can operate and act in this way?

If you say it is the physical body operating, they why is it that when people's lives have just ended and their bodies have not yet decomposed at all, their eyes cannot see, their ears cannot hear, their noses cannot smell, their tongues cannot talk, their bodies do not move, their hands do not grip, their feet do not step? So we know that what can see, hear, and act must be your basic mind, not your physical body. "

(Jinul: Secrets of Cultivating the Mind, tr Cleary)

jundo cohen said:

However, I fail to see in any way why "unless you conceive an independent mind, i.e. a self - then the causal, dependent nature of mind means there is rebirth." I am glad that you see that.

Astus wrote:

The body dies and decomposes. If the mind is not a part nor a product of the body, then it does not die with it, but it follows its own causal continuum.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2016 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: "Right" for Buddhism, or need the right Gate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is certainly not for everyone, otherwise everyone would be a Buddhist. But we see right in the story of the Buddha's enlightenment that only a few people can understand it.

"Enough now with teaching what only with difficulty I reached.
This Dhamma is not easily realized by those overcome with aversion & passion.
What is abstruse, subtle, deep, hard to see, going against the flow —
those delighting in passion, cloaked in the mass of darkness, won't see."
(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn06/sn06.001.than.html>)

As for Zen:

"Out of thousands and thousands of Dharma students in the Dhyana School, only three or five attain the fruit."
(Huangbo: "The Chung-Ling Record", tr Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2016 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

I may suggest that the best and clearest knowing comes when one drops all these categories and characterizations. Matter or not matter, inside or out ... what does it matter?

Astus wrote:

That's highly unlikely. In such a state of mind one cannot even tell one's left hand from the right. It is completely non-functional, i.e. useless. That's not wisdom, just apathetic blankness.

jundo cohen said:

Need we know all of it and what it is? Of course not! For example, one may not know all the sea, where it begins or ends and shape of every shoreline on which it crashes, its chemical makeup and the latin name of each species of coral ... yet thoroughly taste the salt of the sea right here. That saltiness is all the sea, all the shores in every briny grain. Understand? So it is with Mind.

Astus wrote:

Similarly, just by seeing that thoughts are not sights, sounds or anything tangible, one can know that it is not material, but at the same time subject to dependent origination.

jundo cohen said:

When the old Zen Masters asked such questions they did not wish a considered response.

Astus wrote:

Jinul was not the type of Zen teacher who liked to play word games. He is quite sensible, direct and scholarly in his works, unlike others influenced by Song era literary Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 15th, 2016 at 12:56 AM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Another area which I believe is related to "How much should Buddhism Change" is the question "How much can Buddhism do without superstition?" That is certainly eye of the beholder, depending on such basic questions as what one considers "superstition". I personally advocate Buddhism abandoning much within it that is perhaps superstition and fallacy.

Astus wrote:

I consider that too extreme a view. It is undeniable that not only rebirth but also superpowers have always been very much elements of Buddhism. Seeing them as metaphors and superstitions is failing to understand what they meant to our ancestors and even to many contemporary practitioners. Instead of rejecting them out of cultural habit, there are two important areas where we can practise openness towards initially strange teachings. One is the anthropological and historical approach, considering the role of those teachings in the past. Second is the practical approach, in how we can actually make use of those elements of the path. I think both are possible, interesting and educational.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 15th, 2016 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: How much should Buddhism Change?

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Inner tools and inspiration, whether from insight to visions to voices, are also notably subjective and subject to anything from misinterpretation to simple hallucination to full blown mental illness mistaken for a pipeline to Jesus or the Buddha

Astus wrote:

That is a good example of common dismissal of subjective experiences. It is just like how foreign gods were demonised by preachers. However, as it is clear from various manuals for instance, Buddhists have been aware of all sorts of possible mistakes that can come from meditation. But as human beings we cannot avoid the subjective side - in a way, we can only be subjective. The extreme denial of personal, first hand experience is at the root of the difficulty some modern people have in fully understanding and appreciating Buddhism. Although that is not a universal phenomenon among today's men, only a certain segment bound by materialist/objectivist ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 15th, 2016 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Both Theravada and Mahayana aim for no attachment to the five aggregates and six senses, thus one is unbound. According to Theravada after parinirvana there is nothing to say, since even before that there is no individual to point to. Mahayana says that because of compassion bodhisattvas and buddhas do not leave samsara, nor do they enter nirvana, but because they have realised the emptiness of appearances they can function without being affected. So actually both affirm that there is no individual entity to be bound.

As we can see, they can accuse each other with wrong views: Hinayana is annihilationist, Mahayana is eternalist. But as everyone is aware, the topic of the existence or non-existence of the Tathagata after death is a question based on the incorrect assumption of self.

"There is really no establishment of various vehicles, and so I speak of the one vehicle; but in order to carry the ignorant I talk of a variety of vehicles."
(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.56, tr Suzuki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 16th, 2016 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Adamantine said:

And since a Theravadan is not likely to practice in Mahayana for a number of years to test it, the best attitude is one of giving "the benefit of the doubt". "Perhaps it is a faster, more efficacious path, but it may not be right for me, for my own karmic makeup and mindstream at this time. Because of that, the Theravada is supreme for me and others like me."

Astus wrote:

How is that the best attitude? Would you apply that to Buddhists who are told that Vedanta is a superior path?

Adamantine said:

So for followers of Shakyamuni Buddha, it is never a good idea to quarrel between traditions.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it in Mahayana sutras where one can find all sorts of arguments against sravakas?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 16th, 2016 at 2:51 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Adamantine said:

We are discussing people who have all mutually taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Followers of Shakyamuni Buddha. So your seeming parallel is a non sequitur.

Astus wrote:

It would be possible to point out that Mahayana has a different interpretation of all three of the treasures, so while on the surface they sound the same, they don't mean the same, just like Buddha is the ninth incarnation of God for Vaisnavas. And even if they are the same, it still seems illogical to give any "benefit of doubt", as that would also mean doubting one's own tradition.

Adamantine said:

However Mahayana sutras are addressed to those embarking on the Bodhisattva path, they're not intended to make sravakas feel bad about themselves. As I already said, these types of things are contextual teaching devices, not proclamations to be heralded on billboards or in a Theravadan forum.

Astus wrote:

Vimalakirti sutra, ch 3 is a good example of making sravakas feel bad. But if such instances are teaching devices, then there is no discussion of any Hinayana school, only a number of misinterpretations that do not represent any actual doctrine and discipline, therefore it not only has nothing to do with Theravada, but it's not relevant to the Agama scriptures either. Personally, I am sympathetic to that interpretation of the Mahayana supremacist rhetoric, but so far it has not really surfaced in this thread as an option.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 16th, 2016 at 8:10 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point actually is that if there is no Mahāyāna there could not be a Theravada or any other Hināyāna school because there would be no Buddha to teach śrāvakas the arhat path.

Astus wrote:

How is that the point? Theravada has its own version of the bodhisattva path, and in Mahayana there are several versions.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 17th, 2016 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

He never equates the attainment of arhatship with total awakening.

Astus wrote:

Thus the requirement of a bodhisattva accumulating merit on a grand scale over aeons. But then it's been overwritten by the inherent buddha-nature whereby anyone can reach buddhahood in a single lifetime. And how can the full function of buddha-nature manifest? By not being attached to appearances, thus removing all obscurations. However, since arhats are also without clinging to appearances, their buddha-nature should manifest in the same way.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 17th, 2016 at 6:43 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This latter statement of yours is false, the latter does not preclude the former.

Astus wrote:

Still, it made it possible and became the mainstream.

Malcolm said:

All obscurations are not removed merely through lacking attachment to appearances.

Astus wrote:

What obscuration is left without attachment?

Malcolm said:

Different people heard different things.

Astus wrote:

What different people? Numerous Mahayana sutras have the same disciples as the Agamas.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 17th, 2016 at 11:47 PM

Title: Removing Obscurations

Content:

Astus wrote:

This is a topic raised by the question

(<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=320501#p320501>) of whether freedom from attachments equals realising buddha-nature. Please tell if you agree or disagree and why. Here are some initial quotes.

Buddha-nature is hidden by the two obscurations:

"Buddhahood, spoken of as being luminous by nature [but] having been obscured by the massive web

Of the thick clouds of adventitious afflictive and cognitive [obscurations], just as the sun and the sky"

(Uttaratantrashastra 2.3, in When the Clouds Part, p 416)

What are those two?

"The barrier of vexing passions (Klesavarana) means the belief in what is wholly imaginary as being a real Atman; it gives precedence to the view that there is real individuality (Satkayadrsti). Its primary vexing passions (mulaklesas), with the other accompanying secondary passions (upaklesas), all perturb and torment the bodies and minds of sentient beings and act as a barrier to Nirvana. That is why they are all termed the barrier of vexing passions.

The barrier that hinders Absolute Knowledge (Jneyavarana) means the belief in what is wholly imaginary as being real dharmas ; it, too, gives precedence to the view that there is reality of individuality. Its false view, together with doubt, ignorance, desire, hate, conceit, etc., obscures the true nature of the known world and acts as a barrier to perfect Wisdom (Bodhi). That is why these are all termed the barrier that hinders Absolute Knowledge or Mahabodhi."

(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 671, tr Wei Tat)

What is required to be free from obscurations/hindrances (avarana)?

"Since generosity just leads to wealth,
Discipline [just leads to] heaven, and meditation [just] relinquishes the afflictions,
While prajna eliminates all afflictive and cognitive [obscurations],
It is supreme, and its cause is to study this [dharma]."
(Uttaratantrashastra 5.6, p 456)

"Since emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of afflictive and cognitive obscurations, how is it that one desiring omniscience does not promptly meditate on it?"
(Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, 9.54)

And a commentary:

"To be sure, emptiness is the only corrective for the darkness of the emotional obscurations (the principal obstacle to liberation) and of the cognitive obscurations (which obstruct omniscience). Therefore, those who wish swiftly to rid themselves of these two obscuring veils and thus attain omniscience should by all means meditate on emptiness."

(Nectar of Manjushri's Speech, p 345)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: Removing Obscurations

Content:

Malcolm said:

it does not remove the knowledge obscuration.

Astus wrote:

How do you define knowledge obscuration?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Removing Obscurations

Content:

Malcolm said:

See the Abhisamaya-ālamkara, etc.

Astus wrote:

Then it is the mistake of the grasper-grasped, the not seeing of the emptiness of appearances, just as already defined. Therefore once attachment is relinquished, no more obscurations remain of either kind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 7:56 AM

Title: Re: Removing Obscurations

Content:

krodha said:

The emotional obscuration is sustained by kleśas, which can only be exhausted by the force of prajñā.

Astus wrote:

All obscurations are eliminated by wisdom.

krodha said:

there are different causes, and hence cessation of different causes to be rid of either obscuration.

Astus wrote:

"In general, whatever is an afflictive obscuration is necessarily a cognitive obscuration, but cognitive obscurations are not necessarily afflictive obscurations."

(Groundless Paths, p 575)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: Removing Obscurations

Content:

krodha said:

The point is that only Buddhas are free of the knowledge obscuration. Only Buddhas see dharmakāya.

Astus wrote:

That's fine. It's not even been questioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land and the Lotus Sutra

Content:

Carlita said:

Given Nichiren was extremely against Pure Land teachings, how can one practice both without conflict even though they are both Meyahana teachings with the history you provided?

Astus wrote:

Go to schools like Tendai, or anything outside Japan, and such exclusivism is non-existent. Also, in real life, everyone is free to practice in whatever way one likes.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 19th, 2016 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Is it? In Dhammapada, the Buddha says: Just as a bubble may be seen,
just as a faint mirage,
so should the world be viewed

Astus wrote:

If we analyse a bit deeper than just repeating over and over the same things (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFKtl6gn9Y>) of superior or not, then it can be clear that on the wisdom side of things the Agamas teach the same complete freedom as any Mahayana or Vajrayana path (see <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=19609> and <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=21768>). However, it should also be recognised that the bodhisattva path is more extensive when it comes to other aspects, particularly the ability to teach beings, as that's the main quality a buddha has to possess. And when I say extensive, it doesn't mean one cannot find those qualities in arhats, but they are not requirements.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 19th, 2016 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: Saving all beings

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas should subdue their thoughts like this: All the different types of sentient beings, whether they be born from eggs, born from a womb, born from moisture or born spontaneously; whether or not they have form; whether they abide in perceptions or no perceptions; or without either perceptions or non-perceptions, I save them by causing them to enter nirvana without remainder. And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so? Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 3, also see ch 17)

As it states, it is a way to "subdue their thoughts". This is explained further by various Zen teachers:

"Good friends, now that we have done the repentances, I will express for you the four great vows. You should all listen closely: the sentient beings of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to save them all. ...

"Good friends, why don't we all say [simply] 'sentient beings are limitless, and we vow to save them all'? How should we say it? Certainly it's not me who's doing the saving!

"Good friends, the 'sentient beings of our own minds' are the mental states of delusion, confusion, immorality, jealousy, and evil. All these are sentient beings, and we must all [undergo] automatic salvation of the self-nature. This is called true salvation.

"What is 'automatic salvation of the self-nature'? It is to use correct views to save the sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of prajñā to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them. When the false occurs, it is saved by the correct. When delusion occurs, it is saved by enlightenment. When stupidity occurs, it is saved by wisdom. When evil occurs, it is saved by good.

Salvation such as this is called true salvation.

(Platform Sutra, ch 6, p 48-49, BDK Edition)

Question: "Does the Buddha really save or rescue all sentient beings?" The master said: "There are really no sentient beings to be saved by Tathagata. Since there is, in reality, neither self nor non-self, how then can there be a Buddha to save or sentient beings to be saved?"

(Huangbo Xiyun: <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang%20Po/Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang-po.htm>)

"Because he persevered in these three pure practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom, he was able to overcome the three poisons and reach enlightenment. By overcoming the three poisons he wiped out everything sinful and thus put an end to evil.

By observing the three sets of precepts he did nothing but good and thus cultivated virtue. And by putting an end to evil and cultivating virtue he consummate all practices, benefited himself as well as others, and rescued mortals everywhere. Thus he liberated beings."

(Bodhidharma: <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/THE%20ZEN%20TEACHINGS%20OF%20BODHIDHARMA.htm>)

"The Bodhisattva, thought after thought, never separates himself from sentient beings; and since he understands that the substance of the mind is void, that in itself is known as and called 'the conversion and delivery of all sentient beings.' Thus, the wise man converts and delivers himself and thereby imperceptibly converts and delivers all other sentient beings from either reincarnation or extinction."

(Dazhu Huihai: <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Agamas/nikāyas teach leading a path of freedom, but not a path leading freedom and omniscience, the latter is found only in Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

Omniscience is not an attribute of the Buddha in the Agamas. Quite the contrary, some gods and other teachers claim omniscience, but they are refuted and, to some extent, ridiculed for that. At the same time, there are events in the Buddha's life that could not have happened if he had been omniscient. See this essay:

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/buddha-omniscience.pdf>.

As for Mahayana, omniscience is really just the prajnaparamita, not abiding in any dharma whatsoever.

"It will not stand anywhere, but it will stand on all-knowledge, by way of taking its stand nowhere."

(PP8000 1.5, tr Conze)

"For that reason all-knowledge also is a state in which one neither takes hold of anything, nor settles down in anything."

(PP8000 13.3, tr Conze)

Furthermore, buddha-nature is completely revealed once there is no grasping at illusory appearances, and all possible buddha-qualities manifest. Since the Agamas teach not

relying on any dharma, that should also mean the accomplishment of all attributes of perfect enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

That is not all omniscience is for Mahāyāna. There are two kinds of omniscience a buddha possesses: the omniscience of just how things are and the omniscience of all things that there are.

Astus wrote:

And what are those two and three kinds of knowledges? The first is the knowledge of emptiness, thus the core of liberation. The second is the knowledge of paths, thus the ability to teach well. The third is the knowledge of things, that is the way appearances appear. Emptiness is not separate from dependent origination, so knowing the middle way covers the first and last knowledge. Also, since one just does not accidentally happen to earn the wisdom of buddhas, the path of how such wisdom is attained is known experientially, not to mention the wisdom coming from the fact of knowing how the mind works. So, while those three can be divided to arhats, bodhisattvas and buddhas, it seems logical to me that the full knowledge of one requires the other two as well.

Malcolm said:

So for you, arhats, first stage bodhisattvas, buddhas and pratyekabuddhas all demonstrate precisely the same qualities and realization. If not, why not?

Astus wrote:

Yes, from the wisdom side of things that's exactly what should happen. But there are a number of other factors that can be taken into account for such differences. The closest at hand is the explanation of establishing vows and accumulating merit. Vows separate people's aspirations - and that can even apply to buddhas with various features and buddha-lands - while merit accounts for differing abilities and qualities developed. That is basically saying that there is no tathagatagarbha and follows the other/older model of the bodhisattva path. But that's not the only option.

It is possible to keep buddha-nature with a one-vehicle explanation, where every level is only a stage on the path to buddhahood. And in order to explain the historical problem raised here by many, it can be said that while the Agamas are not at fault or lacking, the way they were interpreted by some is incorrect, thus we see that Mahayana apologetics are against Abhidharmic ideas primarily. Similarly, in Tibetan Buddhism they find the sutra teachings somewhat deficient as they actually view them through a number of treatises (while, for instance in some Mahamudra works quoting sutras that match with the highest teaching is fine).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But it is not the case. For example, even Maudgalyāyāna needed to ask the Buddha where his mother had taken rebirth.

Astus wrote:

Do you refer to the Ullambana Sutra? I don't find that story anywhere else.

Malcolm said:

But again, it isn't the case. Why? Because if it were the case, than even hinayāna stream entrants should have the same realization as a buddha, but they do not.

Astus wrote:

A stream-enterer is not yet free from ignorance, only an arhat is.

Malcolm said:

Or, the Agamas, as Nāgārjuna says very clearly, do not teach the path to Buddhahood, let alone buddhanature (which itself can only be seen by buddhas).

Mahāyāna sūtras provide details on a path that are not detailed in the Agamas. If they were detailed, the Mahāyāna sūtras would be unnecessary, not to mention the tantras and the Dzogchen tantras, etc.

Astus wrote:

As the Agamas teach freedom from appearances, and that means no obscurations, it is no different from realising buddha-nature. They do not describe any path to buddhahood and such, only the bare essentials. Mahayana teachings expand, clarify, and repeat the same teachings in different words, or sometimes with identical phrases.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Neither arhats nor pratyekabuddhas are completely free from ignorance, only a buddha is

Astus wrote:

I meant in the Agamas, an arhat is completely free from ignorance, otherwise he would still be stuck in samsara. Of course, in a one vehicle approach, only a buddha is truly wise and free.

Malcolm said:

Arhats have ignorance, and this means they possess the knowledge obscuration.

Astus wrote:

What are they ignorant of? Knowledge obscuration means being bound by the view of grasper and grasped, the concepts of agent, object, and action. They are free from clinging to the five aggregates and the six sensory areas, so there is nobody to grasp anything. What is left then to be obscured by?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

Well that's true. But every teachers introduction to Zen will be somewhat different. I didn't watch all of the video myself - did Harada Roshi actually get into shinkantaza or koan study in his short introduction?

Astus wrote:

Long talk on posture and breathing, then in the last few minutes mentioned how this calmness can eventually be brought out to everyday life and that is the "helping all beings" attitude. But mostly it's about detailing the basics of his style of zazen.

It is interesting how he explained the posture with chi, while there is Nishijima going on about the nervous system. However, neither of the two can be found in the sutras, treatises or even Zen classics. Nevertheless, apparently both feel the need to explain the posture with some non-Buddhist philosophy.

Still, all these nice physical and mental athletics, while perfectly fine and useful in a way, do not really touch the Zen of the buddhas and patriarchs, i.e. seeing into nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

jundo cohen said:

That is the case, that seeing the nature is where's its atlessly at.

Astus wrote:

Atlessly? Less likely? At least? Sorry, I don't get it.

jundo cohen said:

But what makes you think that the pure act of sitting and "seeing the nature" are necessarily two things?

Astus wrote:

Depends on what you mean by pure act.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You can read the Agama citations which detail the non-afflictive ignorance of arhats and pratyekabuddhas in the Abhidharmakośaṭīkālakṣaṇānusāriṇ, etc.

Astus wrote:

Such a category can be used to exploit otherwise ordinary stories and claim that arhats are not that perfect. At the same time, similar events in the Buddha's biography can be found as well, but those are explained in a very different light.

But still the source of such ignorance is not explained. Or maybe it's the expectation of fantastic omniscience - beyond what logically can come from clear seeing of appearances - of a buddha that would need to be established. Otherwise, such stories can only fall into the category of parables.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 12:26 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Glad you have placed it on such a subjective basis.

Astus wrote:

When there are such stories on both disciples and the Buddha, then some treatises come up with a way to explain those events in one way and another, that is those author's interpretations. As for my side, such theories are neither well established nor balanced, although they certainly serve a purpose. And again, as I have mentioned before, this is the case of divergences in exegesis.

As a footnote: those who are believed to have attained buddhahood (or something similar) in traditions like Zen and Vajrayana are at the same time added with an explanation for why they did/do not appear as magnificent and superhuman as buddhas are supposed to be. Unless they are people who lived long ago and have entire books of legends about their lives.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

All this amounts to saying is that you have no confidence in any sources, apart from the ones you like and serve your exegetical purposes.

Astus wrote:

I think the technical term for that is discerning direct (nitārtha) from indirect (neyārtha). However, that does not address any of the raised issues, particularly the ignorance of arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Ignorance... moha or avidyā ?

Astus wrote:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca2/avijja.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

they mutually cause each other. They are designations that have meaning in tension. To speak of wisdom, you have to speak of nescience, and to speak of nescience it must stand in contrast to wisdom.

Astus wrote:

They are relative terms, there's no disagreement on that.

Queequeg said:

If one being's experience is invoked then the intersubjective experience of every being from time without beginning to time without end, within the immediate present scope of experience to the extent of the dharmadhātu, are all invoked.

Astus wrote:

That sounds fine, but I don't see it as anything more than pure rhetoric. For instance, in order to include past and future appearances would require some Sarvastivada style eternal dharmas. Also, to mix the experiences of all beings would mean the denial of personal karma. Don't get me wrong, I'm familiar with Huayan's four dharmadhātus and the idea of non-obstruction of phenomena, but that is basically a nice way to say dependent origination.

Queequeg said:

In considering the learning in China before the introduction of Buddhism, Zhiyi saw them as preparatory teachings.

Astus wrote:

Guifeng Zongmi has a similar scheme he describes in the https://books.google.com/books/about/Inquiry_into_the_origin_of_humanity.html?id=HdQKAAAYAAJ treatise, a system otherwise known as the five levels of dhyana. I have no problem with that idea, although I don't find it particularly important either.

Queequeg said:

An expansive, integrative approach draws Buddhism into an engaged stance with the full spectrum of human experience. The more formalistic approach you advocate has an effect that I would describe as isolating.

Astus wrote:

There are lot of confusion about what is the Dharma and how to use it. So, I believe that that is what needs to be clarified. Matching it up with all sorts of philosophies and religions only adds to the confusion, especially because one would need to be knowledgeable about those other ideas as well as Buddhism in order to engage properly. There is no need to study Confucianism or any other philosophy in order to learn Buddhism. Rather, one should put aside whatever information one already possesses and open one's mind to the Dharma. But once one has a good grasp on the teachings, it is no problem to engage with whatever comes up. And that is where this topic was intended to start, from the perspective of using the teachings to tackle various problems in life. Because, as I think you say as well, one has to address all sorts of experiences. But it comes after one has taken refuge (actually, not just formally) in the Triple Jewels, not before.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

is definitely found in traditional instruction.

Astus wrote:

Which one? Can you point to some classic Buddhist meditation manuals discussing it?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It was addressed. I referred you to where you can find the Sarvastivadin discussions, as

well as Agamic sources, for the idea that śrāvaka arhats and pratyekabuddhas possess a nonafflictive ignorance.

Astus wrote:

Anything in English? Also, the question I referred to is the reason for it, since generally it's the knowledge obscuration attributed to sravakas, but such obscuration can exist only if they have attachment to something, however, they are free from the skandhas and dhatus, so there cannot be anything to be obscured by.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

kirtu said:

So it's more oral instruction (or more correctly included in oral instruction that I have received).

Astus wrote:

There are not that many meditation manuals in the canon, and almost none from the Zen school. It's quite another matter that certain teachers use old Chinese medical ideas in their oral instructions, but that's a cultural thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 1:54 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Asanga states in his commentary in the Uttaratantra: ...

Vasubandhu states in the Sūtra-ālambkāra, he states:

He provides a definition as well: That concept of the three wheels, is asserted as the knowledge obscuration.

Then of course there is the passages in the Lanka in which the Buddha states that due to not realizing selflessness in phenomena, śrāvaka arhats and pratyekabuddhas possess a knowledge obscuration.

Astus wrote:

All that are good and well. And in order to be obscured by agent-action-object and the emptiness of appearances one needs to maintain some attachment, an identification with the aggregates and sensory areas. So if such clinging is asserted in the sravakas, then they cannot even be called liberated, they are lost in some pseudo-nirvanic state (e.g. the apparitional city in ch. 7 of the Lotus Sutra). But if there is no such grasping, they cannot be obscured either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 6:15 AM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

Meido said:

Naturally on the Japanese Rinzai side the works of Hakuin, Torei and so on give a great deal of instruction in terms of energetic practices which are still transmitted (though again, the texts do not transmit the entirety of the oral instruction).

Astus wrote:

As you say, when such elements were included, you can find them in texts. Similarly, their lack in teachings mean that they were not considered important, mainstream, or did not exist at all.

Meido said:

However, I have yet to meet any Zen (Soto or Rinzai) or Chan teacher whose instruction did not contain references to ki/qi, directions on where the breath and energy should be placed and cultivated, instruction for recognizing energetic imbalances and exercises prescribed to remedy such, etc. So I would not say that it is simply a case of "certain teachers".

Astus wrote:

Remedying hindrances is part of any manual, like the <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml>. It could be an interesting research to find out when exactly such energy related elements started to occur.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 6:31 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, your qualm directly contradicts the Buddha's statement in the Lanka that śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas are liberated, but they have obscurations to full awakening.

Astus wrote:

I recognise it as well that there are contradictions. At the same time, the concept that sravakas are unbound (from attachment to skandhas) but still obscured (by conceptual attachments) is a contradiction in itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: Is Theravada an inferior and selfish vehicle?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, this is resolved by what the Buddha says, they retain the knowledge obscuration

because of traces they fail to eradicate. It is not the case that they have active afflictions. But they do not eliminate all traces and until they do, they still possess a knowledge obscuration, in addition to the fact that as the Buddha says, śrāvaka arhats and pratyekabuddhas do not realize the emptiness of phenomena, only the emptiness of persons.

Astus wrote:

What traces and where? Are those the effects of past deeds, what we can see (e.g. <http://www.buddhanet-de.net/ancient-buddhist-texts/English-Texts/Why-the-Buddha-Suffered/index.htm>) affecting the Buddha in the same way?

Knowledge obscuration is clinging to mental phenomena, dharmas that are within the skandhas. But if somebody is still bound by the skandhas, that is not liberation from samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 7:27 AM

Title: Re: Saving all beings

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

How does a Buddhist work in this life to save all beings?

Astus wrote:

As Malcolm said: the six perfections.

Monlam Tharchin said:

But if any sutra is used to make the medicine of emptiness into poison, it is this sutra (along with the Heart Sutra).

Astus wrote:

It is a poison when grasped as nothingness, as repression, as elimination. For instance, if you want to eradicate suffering, that is a mistake.

Monlam Tharchin said:

if beings lack physical and emotional health, how on earth will they practice the Dharma?

Astus wrote:

What gives beings well being according to the Buddha? Good deeds. Their own personally made merit. Similarly, bad fortune is the result of evil actions. That is why accumulating merit and so called purification practices are common.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2016 at 8:03 AM

Title: Re: Saving all beings

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

It's easy to interpret this as leaving others to their karmic retribution

Astus wrote:

It also tells you that if you want riches, you should be generous. If you need such motivational statements. It doesn't actually tell you what to do, but informs about the law of cause and effect. Apathy towards other beings is not exactly a positive mental factor, rather it's rooted in ignorance. At the same time, restlessness is also no good. Anyhow, not even buddhas can just put all beings into nirvana, they have to do it themselves.

Monlam Tharchin said:

So the proper response to others' suffering instead is the Six Perfections?

Astus wrote:

The six perfections constitute the path of the bodhisattva, the way to liberate all beings. It is also a wonderful summary of the path. The very first one is giving: benefiting others and practising letting go at the same time.

You can read extensively on them in

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 23rd, 2016 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: What's in simple, brief explanation, emptiness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ideas define the world and the self. To believe that the world and the self are like this and that on their own: that is delusion. To see that everything is defined by fictional ideas: that is seeing the emptiness of all phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2016 at 7:58 AM

Title: Buddha-Nature is Change

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Therefore, that the grasses, trees, thickets and groves are impermanent is the buddha nature; that humans and things, body and mind are impermanent — this is because they are the buddha nature. That the lands, mountains, and rivers are impermanent — this is the buddha nature. Annuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, because it is the buddha nature, is impermanent; the great parinirvāṇa, because it is impermanent, is the buddha nature."

(Dogen:

<http://stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/tra>

nslation.html)

"Buddhahood is emptiness, yet emptiness does not mean non-existence. Emptiness means that all things lack permanence. There is objective existence, but nothing is unchanging and eternal; everything that exists changes constantly. This ever-changing nature is Buddha-nature. Enlightenment is realizing the empty and impermanent nature of ourselves and the world. If you can live in emptiness without attaching to it, it is called "neither abiding in existence nor emptiness." Although everything continues to exist, there is no self that attaches to anything. Not abiding in existence and not abiding in emptiness is enlightenment."

(Sheng-yen: <http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-04p0056>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2016 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

tingdzin said:

This, I think, is a stunningly wrongheaded statement, based on my own experience. Up until the latter half of the twentieth century, for example, a lot of esoteric Tibetan stuff was passed on strictly orally. While Zen is not Vajrayana, it seems to me there are still many things in the latter that students just don't hear about until they have been around for some time and made a commitment. Also, by the way, teachings not being "mainstream" does not mean they could not be vitally important; it could be that a teacher wanted to evaluate a disciple thoroughly over a long period before imparting them.

Astus wrote:

There were a lot of oral/personal instructions in Zen, and they were included in the records if the circumstances were right. That's what a significant amount of Zen literature is made up of. There was the practice of taking notes during lectures and personal discussions, then they were shared in a smaller or larger circle. Besides those that eventually made it into official records, there are some still in private/monastic collections that survived (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirigami_%28Soto_Zen%29).

Also, if you note the point at which those explanations involving the body's energetic system in the video come up, it is a topic to be covered at the beginning. It is not some high level secret instruction at all. I'm not saying that it is incorrect, unorthodox, or anything of that kind. But the fact that the language and teachings used are not present within the canonical materials is not because of some conspiracy to hide them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2016 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-Nature is Change

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But I think "Buddha nature" ought to be put in quotes, or said with a wink.

Astus wrote:
Why?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2016 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-Nature is Change

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

In the Lankavatara the alaya-vijnana is designated as the tathagatagarbha. So grass, tress etc. being traces manifesting from the alaya-vijnana, could in a sense be designated as such, however grass obviously does not manifest the two kayas separately and so cannot be taken as tathagatagarbha in that sense.

Astus wrote:

Appearances are all mind itself, not external entities, nor products manifesting out of the mind. So, "when it is understood that there is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind itself, discrimination no more rises, and one is thus established in his own abode which is the realm of no-work." (Lankavatara Sutra 3.77, tr Suzuki) And the point of the teaching is realisation of buddha-nature, not to set up a theory of it. "Now, Mahamati, what is perfect knowledge? It is realised when one casts aside the discriminating notions of form, name, reality, and character; it is the inner realisation by noble wisdom. This perfect knowledge, Mahamati, is the essence of the Tathagata-garbha." (2.23) How do you do that? "If you simply transcend the various dharmas of being and nonbeing, so that your minds are like the orb of the sun—always in the sky, its brilliance shining naturally, illuminating without [intending to] illuminate—isn't this a matter that requires no effort? When you attain this, there is no place to rest. This is to practice the practice of the Buddhas, and it is to "be without abiding and yet to generate the mind." This is your pure Dharma body, which is called the unsurpassable bodhi." (Huangbo, in Zen Texts, p 38, BDK Edition)

So, why say that buddha-nature is change, is lifting a finger, raising an eyebrow, "earth, grass, trees, walls, tiles, and pebbles"? Because it is not dwelling anywhere. "There is no place to stand where ones leaves the Truth. The very place one stands on is the Truth; it is all one's being. All dharmas are Buddhadharmas, and all dharmas are liberation. Liberation is identical with suchness; all dharmas never leave suchness. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, everything is always inconceivable function." (Mazu, in Sun Face Buddha, p 66)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2016 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: Buddha-Nature is Change

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

Dependent nature (alaya-vijnana) sans imputed nature is the perfected nature. Neither the dependent nature nor perfected nature are "change".

Astus wrote:

Dependent-nature is causes and conditions, the way everything changes. Imputing fixed elements is the delusion itself to get rid of.

Mother's Lap said:

The point of the quotes from the masters in the first post and in your last are upaya for the realisation of buddha-nature; the alaya-vijnana being designated as tathagatagarbha is a tenet. Conflating the two is where e-Zennists go astray.

Astus wrote:

What is the meaning of a tenet if not to establish correct view and generate liberating insight? Therefore, the Lankavatara Sutra (2.28) states: "the doctrine of the Tathagatagarbha is disclosed in order to awaken the philosophers from their clinging to the idea of the ego, so that those minds that have fallen into the views imagining the non-existent ego as real, and also into the notion that the triple emancipation is final, may rapidly be awakened to the state of supreme enlightenment."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 26th, 2016 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Buddha-Nature is Change

Content:

Wayfarer said:

We don't want to be literalistic about such expressions. Otherwise you make a concept out of them, and then it becomes a matter of belief, like the kinds of ideas found in scholastic philosophy. And they're OK, in their own way, but they don't capture the living essence of Zen, which is ever elusive.

Astus wrote:

In that case everything should be put between quotation marks. Rather, it is http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_reliances all over Buddhism that the teachings serve a purpose and should be used on the path. The teachings are brought alive by learning them, understanding them, and confirming them in one's own experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2016 at 6:39 AM

Title: Re: Solving Problems the Buddhist Way

Content:

Queequeg said:

First, if you insist on just dealing with appearances, you're on your own, literally, isolating yourself into little more than the impressions of light you perceive bouncing off objects. We can disagree, but you need to acknowledge, we're not talking about the

same thing unless you are talking about not just appearances, but subjective experiences as well.

Astus wrote:

Appearances are everything that there is. All dharmas. They can be split to the categories of external and internal, physical and mental, etc. as they usually are.

Queequeg said:

The difference is the emphasis.

Astus wrote:

Agreed.

Queequeg said:

Emptiness doesn't get your laundry done, and not doing it because "emptiness" just makes you gross.

Astus wrote:

People usually know how to manage their laundry, otherwise they can ask for help from mom. What more often is the problem is being bored and fed up with doing the laundry every weekend. That's where a deeper understanding of emptiness comes useful.

Queequeg said:

Everything can be Buddhist Problem Solving - if I am a medical doctor ... If I am a plumber ... The idea here is turning our entire experience into Buddhist practice, and not just in an isolated way for ourselves

Astus wrote:

I can agree with being a Buddhist all day long. That's what actual practice is about, during all activities.

My daily activities are not unusual,
I'm just naturally in harmony with them.
Grasping nothing, discarding nothing,
In every place there's no hindrance, no conflict.
Who assigns the ranks of vermilion and purple?—
The hills' and mountains' last speck of dust is extinguished.
[My] supernatural power and marvelous activity—
Drawing water and carrying firewood.
(Pang Yun, tr Sasaki-Iriya-Fraser)

Queequeg said:

I think that approach of setting Buddhism apart pursued too zealously yields a bone dry Buddhism that is as appetizing as a bowl of chalk and of the most questionable efficacy

Astus wrote:

What I meant is to differentiate Buddhist methods from others. Regardless of a plumber

being Buddhist or not, the same tools and methods are required to fix the toilet. And not a word of Dharma comes up in a plumbers school. That doesn't mean Buddhism cannot be used by a plumber in his job, nor that functional pipes are not important.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2016 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's interesting how an "intro to Zen" easily turned into a question of belief in esoteric papers, astrology and cosmic energy. Until now I have not considered that they are related. So far the only time I have encountered qi related statements in classical Zen teachings - not modern teachers - was in Zongmi's Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity (原人論) criticising the belief in the "primal pneuma" (元氣) as the origin of the world.

The noted Indian origin of energy practices do not come up in the sutras, treatises or meditation manuals. The concept of prana and its yogic utilisation is a feature of Anuttarayogatantra, something not particularly related to Zen or even East Asian Buddhism. I am not really familiar with Shingon, but I don't recall that they have an energy system like that either. So, at what point has it become an element of Zen? There is Hakuin, so the origin in Rinzaishu is explained - and that also shows how such teachings were missing from the tradition before him. Shodo Harada is a Rinzaishu teacher after all.

The authenticity and validity of energy teachings aside, what do they have to do with Zen practice? What is their role? Is it only about obtaining a nice seated position? Is it an auxiliary practice to support zazen? Is it something more?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2016 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What counts as an oral tradition? The Tripitaka has existed in written form for quite a long time now. Mahayana sutras in particular are texts and not sayings, and they actively encourage people to read and copy them. Even nominally oral traditions like Zen have a huge literature. As an example, the famous koan collections (e.g. Blue Cliff Record, Book of Serenity) are purely literary works (wenzi chan 文字禪), and they were meant as such. As for enlightenment from sutras, there are a couple of famous examples even in Zen: Huineng (Diamond Sutra), Zongmi (Complete Enlightenment Sutra), Jinul (Platform Sutra), Hanshan Deqing (Shurangama Sutra). And even if we put aside Zen, there is no Mahayana doctrine that one should become a disciple and learn some sort of oral tradition. As Rory noted, the Huayan school is based on scriptures, so is every other school. And when it comes to commentaries, those are written as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Other examples are the 19th and 20th century reforms in Buddhism. Theravada was revived through returning to the Pali Canon as the primary source of authority. A strong example of such a reform is

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiribathgoda_Gnanananda_Thero and the

<http://mahamevnawa.lk/inenglish/> where they focus only on the suttas without

commentaries. Chinese Buddhism experienced something similar when they started to establish seminaries and began to study classical materials like Yogacara, and from that movement developed today's Humanistic Buddhism, and its founder,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_Shun, was a great scholar. Even in Soto Zen we can

see that the scholar https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menzan_Zuih%C5%8D brought Dogen and his works back into currency and his reform ideas, based on written materials,

define today's Soto in many aspects.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 7:27 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

That being said, even in such cases there is a big danger in going all on your own armed with a bunch of books. A teacher can monitor the student's progress and step in to correct misunderstandings.

Astus wrote:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Changlu_Zongze 's Zuochanyi states (tr. Bielefeldt): "The Śūraṅgama-sūtra, T'ien-t'ai's Chih-kuan, and Kuei-feng's Hsiu-cheng i give detailed explications of these demonic occurrences, and those who would be prepared in advance for the unforeseen should be familiar with them."

That is, a meditation manual - actually, the number one Zen manual from the Song era - recommends the study of three other texts if one wants to be familiar with further details, like hindrances and difficulties. It doesn't say: "ask the abbot" or "ask an enlightened master". That doesn't mean that teachers cannot be of assistance, but even they rely on the written works of the ancients.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

jikai said:

In fact I actually said that it must be accompanied by practice.

Astus wrote:

One can get all the instructions both in person and from scriptures, and it usually happens in combination. But the purpose is to confirm that information in one's own experience. And that's what Zen's mind-to-mind transmission means, and all the other similar statements. The sutras themselves are the words of the Buddha, so dismissing them or labelling them insufficient is almost like rejecting the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I think, Astus, Meido has previously disputed your interpretation of the mind-to-mind transmission in Zen. As someone who has not received it, do you think you are qualified to assert what it is and what it is not?

Astus wrote:

Has he? In which thread?

As for the definition, it's not simply my assertion.

The master said: To not attain a single dharma is called the transmission of the mind. If you comprehend this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma.

[The questioner] said: If there is no mind and no dharma, why do you call it a transmission?

The master said: You have heard me say "transmission of the mind" and have taken it that there is something that can be attained. It is for this reason that the patriarch said, "When one recognizes the mind-nature, it should be called inconceivable. Clearly and distinctly without anything that is attained, when one attains it one does not speak of it as understanding."

(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, p 36, BDK Edition)

Besides that, if what you refer to is the unbroken chain of transmission from Shakyamuni to the present day, that's another issue.

Dan74 said:

lets not go too far and argue that Zen has not been an oral tradition, even in your examples of Huineng...

Astus wrote:

What is an oral tradition? Where the teachings and stories are preserved in an oral format, not something written. However, not only Zen, but Buddhism itself has been a literate religion for at least two thousand years. The canonical materials are not

transmitted by memorisation, but in a written format. Buddhism in China established itself through written translations, not to mention that Chinese culture itself is strongly literate. What oral tradition is it you think there is?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 8:28 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

jikai said:

Of course it happens in combination. That was never really the issue. I also made no suggestion that one should dismiss or label sutra as insufficient. Nothing I've written suggests that.

Astus wrote:

Yes, I did not assume so either. My post was ambiguous to that extent, as I wasn't simply responding to you but rather following up on what you had written, continuing the line of thought.

jikai said:

I think part of what drives the either/or discussions about this is that the traditional accounts tend to come down as suggesting the importance of a teacher and thus oral transmission. But we live in a time in which many practice without teachers/ a sangha.

Astus wrote:

Surely the community is important and precious, that's what keeps the Dharma alive. What I object to is this idea that an "authentic teacher" is somehow the key to everything. And I'm not judging Vajrayana here, it's another business. If there is anything in the tradition that is regularly emphasised on the social level, that is monastic life. With monastic life comes not only the rules but also a number of teachers and Dharma-brothers. However, as people rather stay householders, and there are not many actual monks or nuns around, this idea of the teacher gained currency. But I think it is truly a modern view - not that there is anything wrong with that - that has a romantic baggage with it.

I am not an advocate of people following their own ideas and never contacting communities. But, as you say, there are new situations, and it is a fact that some are loners and/or have no access to communities. However, there is better access to fellow Buddhists than ever before, for instance through this forum. Saying that those who do not visit a teacher at regular intervals are not proper practitioners and their meditation leads only to their own damnation, that's harsh.

“Good friends, if you wish to cultivate this practice, you may do so either as a householder or in a monastery. Householders who are able to practice this are like those persons of the East whose minds [harbor] good. Those in the monastery who do not cultivate it are like those people of the West whose minds [harbor] evil. It is only that the mind should be pure—then it is the Western [Paradise] of the self-nature!”

Lord Wei asked further, “How can householders cultivate this practice? I hope you will teach us this.”

The master said, “I will recite a formless verse for this great assembly. Just cultivate according to this, doing exactly as if you were always with me. If you do not cultivate according to this, what benefit would it be to take the tonsure and leave home [to become a monk]?”

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, p 40, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dear Malcolm,

I appreciate your quotes (as always), and I can only agree with them. However, they don't seem to say the indispensability of teachers.

Malcolm said:

such a guru is to be praised

Astus wrote:

Certainly.

Malcolm said:

Rely on a virtuous mentor

Astus wrote:

An unvirtuous one definitely sounds like a bad idea.

Malcolm said:

should never be abandoned even at the cost of one's life

Astus wrote:

Since it's not that easy to find one, it seems logical not to abandon them after all the trouble.

Malcolm said:

give them respect.

Astus wrote:

Doesn't that go without saying?

These lines from the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra (http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html#div-10) are probably much closer to that intention:

"Good Sons, sentient beings of the degenerate age must arouse "great mind" and seek Genuine Teachers. Those who want to practice should seek out only someone with correct insight, whose thoughts do not abide in characteristics, who is not attached to the realms of the arhats and solitary realizers, and whose mind is constantly pure even while manifesting the world's afflictions."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

DGA said:

working with an authentic teacher is indispensable.

Astus wrote:

For what? There are the three trainings: discipline, meditation, wisdom. Discipline requires to keep the precepts. The precepts themselves are well explained in the scriptures. True, full ordination normally has requirements, but that's probably not what you meant. Meditation requires cultivation on one's own. As for the methods, stages and hindrances, they are explained in detail in texts. Wisdom requires studying the teachings. The teachings themselves are contained in the canon. At what point is a teacher indispensable?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 28th, 2016 at 11:35 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

...pretty much says a teacher is indispensable.

Astus wrote:

It's possible to read it that way. Or it can mean that once such a precious opportunity has arisen one better not let it slip away.

Malcolm said:

in Vajrayāna, a teacher, it goes without saying, is definitely indispensable

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is a good example. There is no doubt left about it, as it's repeated over and over. However, I don't see the same rule set up outside that tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Actually, what is means is that you need a teacher. There are a ton of other citations that make the same point.

And, of course, there is the story of Sadaprarudita in the 8000 PP sūtra.

Astus wrote:

In that story, Sadaprarudita is told that the teaching will be either oral or scriptural:

"When you progress like this, you shall before long be able to study the perfection of wisdom either from a book, or from the mouth of a monk who preaches dharma."

And then we see how the teaching is deposited in a stupa:

"Sadaprarudita replied: "Where is this perfection of wisdom, the mother and guide of the Bodhisattva?"

Sakra answered: "The holy Bodhisattva Dharmodgata has placed it in the middle of this pointed tower, after he had written it on golden tablets with melted Vaidurya, and sealed it with seven seals."

Following that, the Buddha entrusts Ananda with the prajnaparamita to be written down and spread through copying:

"Therefore then, Ananda, a Bodhisattva who wants to acquire the cognition of the all-knowing should course in this perfection of wisdom, hear it, take it up, study, spread, repeat and write it. When, through the Tathagata's sustaining power it has been well written, in very distinct letters, in a great book, one should honour, revere, adore and worship it, with flowers, incense, scents, wreaths, unguents, aromatic powders, strips of cloth, parasols, banners, bells, flags and with rows of lamps all round, and with manifold kinds of worship.

...

As long as this perfection of wisdom shall be observed in the world, one can be sure that "for so long does the Tathagata abide in it," that "for so long does the Tathagata demonstrate dharma," and that the beings in it are not lacking in the vision of the Buddha, the hearing of the dharma, the attendance of the Samgha."

And there are other sections in PP8000 where it is made clear that one can perfectly well obtain prajnaparamita from the book (sutra) itself. E.g.:

"The Lord: So it is, Kausika. Moreover, not only one who has learned studied and repeated the perfection of wisdom, will have those qualities, but also one who worships a copy of it, he also, I teach, will have those advantages here and now.

Sakra: I also will protect one who worships a copy of the perfection of wisdom, and still more so one who in addition learns, studies and repeats it."

and this section explains your quote about "should never be abandoned even at the cost of one's life.":

"If a Bodhisattva reacts in such a way to the perfection of wisdom, if he delights in seeing and hearing it, bears it in mind and develops it, keeps his mind fixed on it without diverting it elsewhere, feels an urge to take it up, bear it in mind, preach, study and spread it, if, once he has heard the perfect wisdom, he follows and pursues the reciter of dharma and does not let him go, until he knows this perfection of wisdom by heart or has got it in the form of a book, just as a cow does not abandon her young calf"

Malcolm said:

The Ārya-ratnākara-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra states: In order to fully enter the dharmadhātu, one must rely on a virtuous mentor, associate with them and honor them.

Astus wrote:

Now that is something, although without context it is still not that clear. When it says mentor, is it kalyanamitra, upadhyaya, or something else?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that even though he has a vision of the Tathāgatas before hand, he insists on finding Bodhisattva Dharmodgata to hear the PP directly from him.

Astus wrote:

That is a possible interpretation, not really emphasised in the sutra itself. However, it is stated repeatedly in this and other sutras that the scripture itself is the carrier and transmitter of the teaching - after the demise of Shakyamuni - worthier of veneration than relics.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 1:55 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Matt J said:

Classical Indian teachings

Astus wrote:

Which ones?

Matt J said:

The teacher prevents one from getting caught up in one's own delusions.

Astus wrote:

Only if one trusts in, listens to, and understands that teacher. But then carefully

studying the sutras can do the same.

Matt J said:

The scriptures prevent the teachers from making up their own stuff.

Astus wrote:

If they are faithful to the Buddha's teachings. That also means there is nothing new a teacher can say. On the other hand, as long as students rather listen to anyone who looks authentic, there is little chance of catching the master talking nonsense. That's where the role of a larger community comes in, fellow elders, monastic peers, and such.

Matt J said:

And personal experience prevents it from being a merely intellectual exercise.

Astus wrote:

That's not an easy one at all, since people usually see what they want to see. And that's what a clear eyed teacher should protect against, they say. Except that they can only do that to a good student who listens ("good sravaka"). So, right view comes first. Something that can also be learnt from books.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, you have not understood the colophons of this sūtra: once he has heard the perfect wisdom, he follows and pursues the reciter of dharma and does not let him go, until he knows this perfection of wisdom by heart or has got it in the form of a book, just as a cow does not abandon her young calf"

"Hearing" requires hearing it from someone.

Astus wrote:

That's in chapter 14, not the colophon. Also, the sutra has existed as a book as far as we can tell, not to mention that its translations are definitely textual works. Plus the sutra itself makes it clear that one should read and copy it, just like other Mahayana scriptures recommend the same for themselves. Why make copies if one needs to hear it? And what difference does it make if one reads it on paper or listens to the same text read out?

How about reading it loudly for oneself? Especially the sections of the Lotus Sutra that talks about the Lotus Sutra. That's some serious self-referential loop. It's like the Pure Land practice of mind reciting, mind listening (一心念一心聽): "The mind begins to think, which moves the tongue; the tongue in turn moves, producing sound, and that sound returns to the Self-Mind."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

the sūtra makes it clear that the doctrine of the PP must be heard from another.

Astus wrote:

The doctrine is contained in the sutra, and the sutra is a written text. What is there to be heard from another? It is pointless to have someone read it out, and nowadays even a smartphone can do that.

Chapter 4 not only states that a single copy is worth more than innumerable relics, but explains that the reason for that is it being the source of buddhahood. Similar statements are found in other scriptures - or possibly the majority of Mahayana sutras. It does not simply state that it is meritorious to copy them, it equates the text with the Tathagata himself, therefore the sutra can be used (venerated and studied) in the same way as if one had the Buddha in front of oneself.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 29th, 2016 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sūtras are not written texts. This idea is at the heart of your misunderstanding.

Astus wrote:

What non-written sutra do you know of? Even in Tibetan iconography Manjusri holds a book as a representative of the PP teachings.

Malcolm said:

How can the PP, which is inexpressible, beyond thought and concepts be contained in a book?

Astus wrote:

Since it is inexpressible, it is not obtained from buddhas or teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 30th, 2016 at 12:26 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Sakyamuni Buddha wrote so many books, eh? Good thing, too, for his followers, since there were no teachers to teach.

Astus wrote:

Very good point. Still, they were eventually penned down and preserved as scriptures. And there are some other things: Why do they refer to themselves as books? How can they be placed in a stupa? What was hidden by the Nagas and retrieved by Nagarjuna?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 30th, 2016 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

In Tibetan iconography, Dharma books are a symbol representing the enlightened speech of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Good to know. Then writing and speech are truly inseparable.

"Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language."
(Platform Sutra, ch 10, tr BTTS)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 31st, 2016 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

DGA said:

Does anyone know of an example of a contemporary or historical Buddhist master who has attained any degree of realization with nothing in support of his or her endeavors (in this lifetime) but a library card? (or audio/video recording for that matter?)

Astus wrote:

It's assuming that there could be a situation where the person knows not a single Buddhist. And if there were such a being, who would know about them anyway? On the other hand, there are famous historical masters who attained realisation from written works, as I have <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=322047#p322047> some of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Matt J said:

Let's examine your list:

Astus wrote:

Huineng:

"When he reached the words 'responding to the nonabiding, yet generating the mind' I experienced a great enlightenment, [realizing that] all the myriad dharmas do not transcend their self-natures."

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, p 23, BDK Edition)

That is a line directly from the Diamond Sutra, not an explanation.

Zongmi:

"Indeed, it would be difficult to over-emphasize the importance that the Scripture of Perfect Enlightenment had for Tsung-mi. It was, to begin with, the catalyst for his first enlightenment experience. Shortly after having become a novice monk under Tao-yi in Sui-chou (Szechwan) in 804, he came across a copy of the Scripture of Perfect Enlightenment for the first time at a maigre gathering (chai) at the home of a local official. After only reading two or three pages, he had an awakening, an experience whose intensity so overwhelmed him that he found himself spontaneously dancing for joy. (It is worth noting that Tsung-mi's initial enlightenment did not occur while he was absorbed in meditation. Nor, as in the case of so many well-known Ch'an enlightenment stories, did it occur as a sudden burst of insight at the turning words or dramatic action of a master. Rather, it came about as a result of reading several lines of scripture.)"

(Peter N. Gregory: <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Tsung-Mi-s-Perfect-Enlightenment-Retreat.pdf>)

Hanshan:

"Since I had no one there to consult with about my enlightenment experience, I read The Surangama Sutra, hoping to gain insight and verification. I had previously read the Sutra but I hadn't understood its main theme. Now, however, I absorbed its meaning effortlessly. As the months passed, my understanding deepened and expanded until I could grasp its profundity without a single doubt."

(The Autobiography & Maxims of Chan Master Han Shan, p 16)

"For Yunqi Zhuhong and Hanshan Deqing, training through self-cultivation was encouraged, and nominal and formulaic instructions from pretentious masters were despised. Eminent monks, who practiced meditation and asceticism but without proper dharma transmission, were acclaimed as acquiring "wisdom without teachers" (wushizhi), a laudable title for them but a misfortune in the eyes of the more orthodox Chan masters in later generations, for whom dharma transmission defined their identity as Chan monks in a certain lineage.

The negative attitude toward the role of teacher can be seen from Hanshan Deqing's perspective. Though never receiving dharma transmission, he was often asked to write prefaces to the records of transmission in some obscure lineages. His writings testify that although the practice of dharma transmission was revived, Hanshan Deqing questioned its value seriously. For him, the enlightenment of the mind was more

important than the nominal claim of dharma transmission. Because true enlightenment experience was valued, a few self-proclaimed Chan masters in the late Ming gained reputations as eminent monks without acquiring dharma transmission."

(Jiang Wu: Enlightenment in Dispute, p 41)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

DGA said:

My point is merely that study alone, or meditation alone, is inadequate to the path. Where do the masters quoted above disagree with that?

Astus wrote:

Nowhere, of course. The general idea is that one should obtain a solid level of training, and then one should practise on one's own, in a self-sufficient way. And even there practising alone doesn't necessarily mean leaving the monastery or the city.

Still, you might also consider this (i.e. they discard not only book knowledge, but oral sayings as well):

"Followers of the Way, don't have your face stamped with the seal of sanction by any old master anywhere, then go around saying, 'I understand Chan, I understand the Way.' Though your eloquence is like a rushing torrent, it is nothing but hell-creating karma. The true student of the Way does not search out the faults of the world, but eagerly seeks true insight. If you can attain true insight, clear and complete, then, indeed, that is all."

(Record of Linji, p 13, tr Sasaki)

"Virtuous monks, what are you seeking as you go around hither and yon, walking until the soles of your feet are flat? There is no buddha to seek, no Way to complete, no dharma to attain."

(Record of Linji, p 27, tr Sasaki)

"In reality, there is not the slightest thing that could be the source of understanding or doubt for you. Rather, you have the one thing that matters, each and every one of you! Its great function manifests without the slightest effort on your part; you are no different from the patriarch-buddhas! [But since] the root of your faith has always been shallow and the influence of your evil actions massive, you find yourselves all of a sudden wearing many horns. You're carrying your bowl bags far and wide through thousands of villages and myriads of hamlets: what's the point of victimizing yourselves? Is there something you all are lacking? Which one of you full-fledged fellows hasn't got his share?

Though you may accept what I am saying for yourself, you're still in bad shape. You must neither fall for the tricks of others nor simply accept their directives. The instant you see an old monk open his mouth, you tend to stuff those big rocks right into yours, and when

you cluster in little groups to discuss [his words], you're exactly like those green flies on shit that struggle back to back to gobble it up! What a shame, brothers!"
(Record of Yunmen, p 103-104, tr App)

DGA said:

Is that the behavior of someone who actively avoids oral instruction in Dharma?

Astus wrote:

That's fairly absurd. People are already conditioned to find enlightened masters as the direct source of knowledge. At the same time, because of that, looking for liberation from others is a mistake, just like the contempt of thinking oneself to be all-knowing.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

he loves taking indefensible positions merely for the hell of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

rory said:

also the great reviver of modern Korean Son Kyongho Song'u.

Astus wrote:

While he lacked the training from any particular teacher - like Hanshan or perhaps Xuyun - he was a strong meditator like the other two. Although, most interestingly, in his last seven years he just disappeared from the scene. An even bigger name in Korean Buddhism is Wonhyo, who not only did not go to China to become a student, unlike his friend Uisang, but had an interesting life story as well. But these people are more examples of individual effort rather than simply learning from scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: Clarification re: Dharmakaya and ...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Emptiness

- as the nature of all appearances: dharmadhatu

- as the wisdom of buddhas: dharmakaya

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Milarepa's secret to success

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a different approach:

Reverend Ma was sitting in a spot, and Reverend Rang took a tile and sat on the rock facing him, rubbing it. Master Ma asked, "What are you doing?" Master [Huairang] said, "I'm rubbing the tile to make it a mirror." Master Ma said, "How can you make a mirror by rubbing a tile?" Master [Huairang] said, "If I can't make a mirror by rubbing a tile, how can you achieve buddhahood by sitting in meditation?"

And a spin on that story by Dogen in Kokyo (SBGZ, vol 1, p 329-330, BDK Edition):

"Clearly, in truth, when polishing a tile becomes a mirror, Baso becomes buddha. When Baso becomes buddha, Baso immediately becomes Baso. When Baso becomes Baso, zazen immediately becomes zazen. This is why the making of mirrors through the polishing of tiles has been dwelled in and retained in the bones and marrow of eternal buddhas; and, this being so, the eternal mirror exists having been made from a tile. While we have been polishing this mirror—in the past also—it has never been tainted. Tiles are not dirty; we just polish a tile as a tile. In this state, the virtue of making a mirror is realized, and this is just the effort of Buddhist patriarchs. If polishing a tile does not make a mirror, polishing a mirror cannot make a mirror either. Who can suppose that in this “making” there is [both] “becoming” buddha and “making” a mirror? Further, to express a doubt, is it possible, when polishing the eternal mirror, to mistakenly think that the polishing is making a tile? The real state at the time of polishing is, at other times, beyond comprehension. Nevertheless, because Nangaku’s words must exactly express the expression of the truth, it may be, in conclusion, simply that polishing a tile makes a mirror. People today also should try taking up the tiles of the present and polishing them, and they will certainly become mirrors. If tiles did not become mirrors, people could not become buddhas. If we despise tiles as lumps of mud, then we might also despise people as lumps of mud. If people have mind, tiles must also have mind. Who can recognize that there are mirrors in which, [when] tiles come, tiles appear? And who can recognize that there are mirrors in which, [when] mirrors come, mirrors appear?"

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Clarification re: Dharmakaya and ...

Content:

smcj said:

the Dharmakaya the nature of appearances as well.

Astus wrote:

One better not fixates too much on words.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2016 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Taigen Shodo Harada Roshi Introduction to Zen

Content:

Caodemarte said:

If so, then please be the first one to cast your stones!

Astus wrote:

Dogen did not agree with the use of toothbrush in China - virtually called them idiots - and wanted people to go back to using sticks to clean their teeth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2016 at 9:34 PM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is this simultaneity important for? Certainly not for relaying teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2016 at 1:19 AM

Title: Re: All Buddhist traditions are oral traditions. Or...?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, it is important for relaying the teachings. We have already discussed this you and I. Not into a repeat.

Queequeg said:

Can you link the discussion?

Astus wrote:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=40&t=19445>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2016 at 3:04 AM

Title: Lay Chan Teachers

Content:

Astus wrote:

Inspired by the article: <http://www.buddhachan.org/en/en-learn/origin>.

There are two major records of biographies of lay students.

Jushi fendeng lu (居士分燈錄 / Record of the Division of the Lamp for Laymen;

X86n1607) in 2 fascicles (72+38 biographies), by Zhu Shi'en (朱時恩), published in 1610. Jushi zhuan (居士傳 / Biographies of Lay Buddhists; X88n1646) in 56 fascicles, by Peng Jiqing (彭際清), published in 1775.

I have looked up the names from the first fascicle of Shi'en's work and tried to provide some information in English. Most of them are quite famous historical figures, either as rulers, or as literati, or as both.

維摩詰 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vimalakirti>
傅大士 <http://terebess.hu/zen/fuxi.html>
楊銜之 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yang_Xuanzhi
向居士 Xiang jushi (disciple of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dazu_Huike)
李通玄 <http://gradworks.umi.com/34/83/3483183.html>
龐道玄 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layman_Pang
崔群 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cui_Qun
甘贄 Gan Zhi (disciple of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanquan_Puyuan)
陸亘 Lu Gen (disciple of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanquan_Puyuan)
白居易 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bai_Juyi
裴休 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pei_Xiu_%28Tang_dynasty%29
李翱 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Ao_%28philosopher%29
于頔 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yu_Di
王敬初 Wang Jingchu (disciple of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guiyang_school)
陳操 Chen Cao (disciple of <http://terebess.hu/zen/muzhou.html>)
陸希聲 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lu_Xisheng
張拙 Zhang Zhuo (disciple of Shishuang Qingzhu)
王延彬 Wang Yanbin (disciple of Changqing Huileng, governor of Quanzhou, nephew of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Shenzhi)
王隨 Wang Sui (disciple of Shoushan Shengnian, prime minister)
楊億 Yang Yi (disciple of Guanghui Yuanglian)
曾會 Zenghui (disciple of Xuedou Zhongxian)
李遵勗 Li Zunxu (disciple of Guyin Yuncong, military commissioner, son-in-law of emperor Taizong, brother-in-law of emperor Zhenzong, elder relative of emperor Renzong)
許式 Xu Shi (disciple of Dongshan Xiaocong)
夏竦 Xia Song (disciple of Guyin Yuncong, general, Duke of Ying)
范仲淹 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fan_Zhongyan
楊傑 Yang Jie (disciple of Tianyi Yihuai)
劉經臣 Liu Jingchen (disciple of Zhihai Benyi)
孫比部 Sun Bibu (disciple of Yangqi Fanghui)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2016 at 8:46 PM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Buddha said to Subhūti: "The bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas should subdue their thoughts like this: All the different types of sentient beings, whether they be born from eggs, born from a womb, born from moisture or born spontaneously; whether or not they have form; whether they abide in perceptions or no perceptions; or without either perceptions or non-perceptions, I save them by causing them to enter nirvana without remainder. And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so? Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 3, tr Muller)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 5th, 2016 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

DGA said:

Does this mean that such a one has no more afflictions? or does it mean that what had seemed to be trouble (the endless barrage of thoughts and emotions, the hurt of the world) has become indistinguishable from wisdom and compassion?

This matters in terms of method, because if it's the former, then the point is to cease thinking. If it's the latter, then you do something else with the mind--there's no use in ceasing thought if it's of the same stuff as wisdom.

Astus wrote:

Affliction is anything one has an emotional attachment to. Once there is no such involvement, it is not an affliction. But this might be mistaken for lack of emotions and apathetic detachment.

Afflictions are already empty as they are. So there is no need to do anything with them. But this might be mistaken for embracing delusion.

Realistically, we can neither turn into robots nor keep our dissatisfying mindset. Thus the usual resignation that buddhahood is something far far away, that we are all sinful humans who can only hope for salvation from some higher being. That is one valid solution in Buddhism offered in Mahayana.

But I like to believe that there is another way. And that way is total relinquishment of subject, object and action. In other words: there is nobody to do anything. With a positive tone: everything is fine as it is. Translating it back to the basic terminology: the answer to dissatisfaction is not in satisfying it but dropping the wish itself. Although that sounds like we need to do something (drop the wish), that is not exactly true. To give up all hope one only needs to see that the goal is false. And that is realising that nobody can do anything. As Guanyin says in the Heart Sutra: "Due to non-acquisition, the

bodhisattva, having relied on Perfect Wisdom, dwells without mental obstruction. From the non-existence of mental obstruction, he is fearless, he overcomes inverted erroneous views, and ultimately reaches Nirvāṇa."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 6th, 2016 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Thoughts and reflection serve the thinker. Who will serve the sea of beings?

Astus wrote:

How are beings served? Can they be served at all? To know that, we should ask the reason for the detriment of beings, and address the cause.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 6th, 2016 at 9:20 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Taco_Rice said:

rather than decide to leave all goals, instead decide to take up some Ultimate Goal like making the world into a Pure Land or something?

Astus wrote:

Hopelessness is not about despair, it is about seeing that there is nothing that can be wished for. It is already the pure land.

Vimalakirti sutra, ch 1 (BDK Edition, p 78):

"if a bodhisattva wishes to attain a pure land he should purify his mind. According to the purity of his mind is his buddha land pure!"

...

"Śāriputra, it is through the transgressions of sentient beings that they do not see the purity of the Tathāgata's buddha land. This is not the Tathāgata's fault! Śāriputra, this land of mine is pure, but you do not see it."

See also: Platform sutra, ch 3.

Taco_Rice said:

Doesn't Vimalakirti's non-attachment ironically account for so much of the opulence he was able to use for the benefit of others?

Astus wrote:

Is this a section in the sutra you refer to or your interpretation of something in it?

Taco_Rice said:

Similarly, isn't the Emptiness of all phenomenon all the more reason to take up the Way of the Bodhisattva?

Astus wrote:

It is the way, not the reason to take it up.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 7th, 2016 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Taco_Rice said:

Right, but not everyone knows that it's the way. That's same rationale for transforming the world into a Pure Land, (changing society in a way to foster that understanding,)

Astus wrote:

Changing society is a political goal. The pure land is when the world is perceived with a pure mind, and that's a bodhisattva's goal.

Taco_Rice said:

The layman unmistakably teaches emptiness, but his realization of emptiness (or at least, his actualization of his realization,) seems very different from that of the recluse.

Astus wrote:

It shows that the Dharma can be taught in any circumstances and even by an apparently ordinary layman. That's one of the main points of the sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 8th, 2016 at 5:36 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

Objective of the Bodhisattvayana or 'Mahayana' = The complete liberation of all sentient beings. (Buddhahood)

Astus wrote:

Sentient beings must seek to save themselves and not wait for the Buddha to do it. If the Buddha could liberate sentient beings, then, since there have been Buddhas as numerous as all the dust motes that have ever existed, surely all of them would have been delivered by now. So why do we still loaf about in these realms of birth and death, unable to become Buddhas? Everyone should understand that sentient beings must save themselves. The Buddha will not do it. Make an effort! Practice yourself! Do not depend upon the power of other Buddhas. Therefore, the sutra says appropriately: "To seek and find the Dharma, do not depend upon the Buddha."

(Dazhu Huihai: <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden->

enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 8th, 2016 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

No one ever said anything about Buddhas saving beings.

Astus wrote:

Hasn't the objective of Mahayana been defined as saving all beings?

Vasana said:

they can manifest to inspire and teach the methods of doing so.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, that's the job of every Dharma teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 8th, 2016 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

There's a difference between guiding and saving.

Astus wrote:

Does then the Mahayana resolve comes down to the will to spread the Dharma far and wide? That is, active proselytisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 8th, 2016 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

It kinda seems like you're grasping at straws here if that's your conclusion.

Astus wrote:

What else is there to it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 9th, 2016 at 1:53 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

Proselytizers try and recruit or convert people to their faith and beliefs. ... The resolve in Mahayana is to facilitate the natural liberation of all beings (in the sphere beyond subject, object & activity) , but it doesn't mean you go need to go screaming it from the roof-tops and handing out leaflets to anyone passing by. It's just not very skillful or effective and for the most part, completely unnecessary.

Astus wrote:

That's just a matter of efficiency in spreading the word. Marketing techniques, etc.

Vasana said:

If beings are ripe enough to want to explore the Dharma, then the conditions for this to happen will naturally come in to place by the force of their merit and spiritual inclinations. This is spoken of countless times in various sutras and again, is not exclusive to Mahayana as far as i know.

Astus wrote:

So, bodhisattvas do not need to pursue such course of action, there is no actively guiding beings, except for those who come and ask for it.

Vasana said:

Furthermore, trying to convert or benefit people is pointless unless you actually posses the wisdom and means for doing so,

Astus wrote:

That is, anyone not yet on the stage of nobility should not worry about all this saving all beings business.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 9th, 2016 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: What is the objective of Mahayana Buddhist practice?

Content:

Vasana said:

Not sure what point you're trying to make here.

Astus wrote:

That no matter the method, it's still about turning people to the Dharma, i.e. converting them.

Vasana said:

In this way, you share any merit you have amassed with all beings, thus multiplying it immeasurably and ensuring that even beings with very little or no merit at all with evil tendencies are not left out.

Astus wrote:

Dedicating merit is about letting go. But there is no benefit in it for others, unless they

recognise and accept such sharing, that is, knowingly agree to such good actions.

Vasana said:

Even if you can't help all beings, the intention and resolve to eventually be able to do so is what will make this an actuality.

Astus wrote:

The point I'm pursuing here is about how that helping happens. As you said, they cannot save them but only provide guidance through giving instructions, just like Shakyamuni, who travelled far and wide and established the four orders.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 9th, 2016 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Does Karma explain everything.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Also see this chapter in Dan Lusthaus' book Buddhist Phenomenology called <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=leiwsT-XqwQC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA175#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Astus wrote:

Lusthaus goes wrong there for three reasons.

1. See <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.021.than.html> to the quoted sutta.
2. In Yogacara all phenomena originate from the alaya-vijnana.
3. The whole of samsara and all the realms arise from the beings' karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 10th, 2016 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Does Karma explain everything.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma is all there is.

"What is the All? Simply the eye & forms, ear & sounds, nose & aromas, tongue & flavors, body & tactile sensations, intellect & ideas. This, monks, is called the All."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.023.than.html>)

"Now what, monks, is old kamma? The eye is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. The ear... The nose... The tongue... The body... The intellect is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. This is called old kamma.

And what is new kamma? Whatever kamma one does now with the body, with speech, or with the intellect: This is called new kamma."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.145.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 11th, 2016 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Does Karma explain everything.

Content:

Simon E. said:

Isn't part of the problem that we are conditioned to analyse everything ?
Our education systems value that analytical process without always teaching concomitant synthesis..so we see cetana, vipaka and karma as separate phenomena for investigation..in reality of course all arises together from Shunyata.

Astus wrote:

I would say it's the opposite. As long as one takes mind and mental phenomena without properly analysing them, they seem substantial. Once seen correctly - impermanent, empty, dependent - they turn out to be neither self nor related to self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 15th, 2016 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Master Keizan: The master of the house is "I" (Keizan: Denkoroku, case 1 on Siddharta Buddhas enlightenment: The Transmission of the Lamp(Light?))

Please look into what Dogen calls the Srenika heresy in Bendowa and Bussho. That will make it clear that there is no place for any self.

Master Zhao Zhu/Joshu: Take one look at me, I am nothing other than I am. The True Self is simply this. Right here what more is there to be sought for? (Zhao Zhu: The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu: James Green Translation: p 78.)

That is a misleading excerpt. Here's what's translated as "true self":

主人公 - hero (of a novel or film) / main protagonist

The Foguang E-dictionary (佛光電子大辭典) explains: It is a Chan term used to point to everyone's inherent buddha-nature. (禪林用語。指人人本具之佛性。)

Another interesting note is that Daehaeng's hallmark term is Juingong (主人空), and that's pronounced the same as 主人公 but the last character is changed to 空, i.e. emptiness, so it means "empty doer", because there is no constant element. Once one assumes a changeless thing or self, that's falling into the extreme view of eternalism.

The section the excerpt is from means that there is no other self to look for, buddha-nature is just what is. To suppose a "big/true self" behind a "small/false self", that is not Buddhism at all, much less Chan.

The preceding paragraph in Green's translation says:

"To hold on to self is corrupt, to not hold on to self is pure.' It is just like a mad dog who is always trying to get more and more to eat. Where is the Buddha to be found? Thousands and ten thousands of people are 'seeking-for-Buddha' fools. If you try to find one person of the Way [among them] there are none. If you want to become a disciple of the 'King of Emptiness', don't give illness to your mind."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 16th, 2016 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

The one caution I might offer is that many Zen folks might step right through and back on questions of either affirmation or denial. This is true with Dogen as well, where certain concepts and propositions might be rejected only to be turned on their head and reinvigorated again. That was a good way to avoid both the extremes of eternalism or nihilism.

Astus wrote:

Word play may have its time and place, but, especially on a forum, I prefer straightforward language. Avoiding extremes is not that difficult.

"when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, 'non-existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, 'existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.015.than.html>)

In practice that is quite simple as well. It is neither grasping/thinking, nor rejecting/not thinking, but seeing that all phenomena come and go. There the error of eternity is assuming that there is an independent witness/awareness, while the error of annihilation is the attempt to eliminate some/all experiences.

jundo cohen said:

Many Zen Teacher ancient and modern would speak of a "True Self" of some kind, but the danger was in reifying the concept.

Astus wrote:

There is no problem with talking about a true self, original nature and such. It's just that it turns out to be nothing more than this ordinary mind, even though it suggests something significantly more fascinating.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2016 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

In Zen speak, with all those wise-crazy Koans, sometimes the straight is crooked, and the crooked is the straightest non-way from A to B.

Astus wrote:

While it may seem so, that there is some strange Zen lingo, it is rather a literary product of the Song era, primarily known from the koan collections (e.g. Blue Cliff Record).

While there might be some Christian communities around who like to imitate the language of the original KJV, normally people use today's English. I think that a code language for Zen does not facilitate going beyond conceptuality, rather it is a hindrance people only waste their time on to figure it out. Thus Dahui put aside the literary style and offered the huatou method as a direct cut. Even today his letters are quite readable, especially when compared to Yuanwu's comments in the BCR or Dogen's Shobogenzo. Similarly, if you look at works from the Tang era (e.g.

<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment>, <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang%20Po/Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang-po.htm>), they lack the over complicated style and follow standard Buddhist terminology.

As for wise-crazy koans:

"Unfortunately, the majority of the exchanges or anecdotes composed in the encounter dialogue format are not very good stories, in any meaningful sense. In fact, a huge number of Chan stories or exchanges, included in texts such as Jingde chuan deng lu and Bi yan lu, can be viewed as little more than nonessential ramblings, a peculiar type of religious gibberish. Basically, we are confronted with countless examples of mass-produced textual materials that tend to be highly formulaic, numbingly repetitive, and ostensibly pointless. One of the things that keeps amazing me is how otherwise intelligent or sincere people can take this sort of stuff seriously, although the history of religion is filled with blind spots of that sort."

(Mario Poceski: The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature, p 170-171)

jundo cohen said:

It is our ordinary thinking, ordinary assumptions, common sense and ordinary ways of expressing it all in language which misleads and gets us into so much trouble. Only by twisting and reinventing the language can one express what is so hard to express, and straighten out what is crooked.

Astus wrote:

The problem is not with ordinary language or even ordinary thinking. It is taking all that seriously that makes us dissatisfied and craving for something else. A reinvented

language is still a trap, perhaps even more so, it is a double trap: looking for a second head, exchanging one dark pit for another, holding on the neighbouring branch instead of the current one.

jundo cohen said:

it is not that at all, and is through and through something "significantly more fascinating."

Astus wrote:

What is it then?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2016 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

DGA said:

So one can't assume that mimicking the complex dialectics of the debates at Nalanda, or the rhetoric-less rhetoric of eleventh-century Ch'an masters, in an environment like this will have the effect one intends.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, if there is any meaning behind "not relying on words and letters", that is using "live words" (活句,

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=30), i.e. expressing the Dharma in common language based on one's understanding. And that's not a new idea, since this is what wisdom is, and from wisdom arises skilful means. However, history seems to teach that ossification is inevitable. Much like what the Buddha said about old age. But the solution is not in creative terminology either (see: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn20/sn20.007.than.html>).

DGA said:

Peter Hershock's idea that Ch'an masters communicate much as improvisational jazz musicians do may be helpful here. It's situational, collaborative, of-the-moment--always something new, and because you don't have time to think about your next move, you have no choice but to open up and pour out whatever it is you got.

Astus wrote:

There are stories like that in every tradition. Chan only formalised it, thus turning it into a repetitive standard, therefore losing its vitality.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2016 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

The reason that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is so strange to read is not because of the unfamiliarity of individual words and sentences (most of which, individually, are quite short and simple), but because of the radical concepts (and non-conceptual concepts) being depicted which defy ordinary language and grammar. So it is with so many teachings of the Mahayana, especially through a Zen lens.

Astus wrote:

Just like any other work, the MMK is bound by its own context. The topics discussed is not difficult to read because of language and grammar - especially when we read translations - but the concepts involved. And that is what you seem to agree with. The concepts discussed do not defy language and grammar, they are simply foreign concepts. And the way they are discussed are also foreign. So it takes some learning to familiarise oneself with the relevant Buddhist teachings and that way learn ideas, like the the four conditions brought up in the first chapter. Eventually one can get a clear picture what the text is about, simply by going through a studying process no different from what one is already familiar with from one's school years. However, MMK is usually not the first Buddhist teaching one learns.

jundo cohen said:

Rather, it is that there is still a need today, as much as in Nagarjuna's time, to express what can barely be expressed, and certainly not with ordinary subject-predicate, past present or future tense grammar.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna, or Madhyamaka in general, is not a linguistic challenge but a philosophical. Also, it does not try to express some ultimate reality, rather it points out the problems with substantialist views. In turn, the insubstantiality of dependent origination is the ultimate view.

jundo cohen said:

Yes, my language is strange sometimes, and also inelegant (I am not a gifted writer), but neither do I repeat those old cliches;

Astus wrote:

What matters, to both of us I presume, is to be able to communicate. If what you intend to express requires a number of strange expressions, it is perfect as long as it delivers the required effect. My point about the artificially convoluted style many can take up mostly out of the habit of repeating the words, not only in Zen, likely happens either because of carelessness or lack of understanding. On the other hand, every group of people develop their own linguistic style, so there is nothing to do about some unique terminology. But that is far from avoiding the traps of communication.

jundo cohen said:

You do not hear me yelling KATZ! or MU! or giving blows or telling folks "The Cypress Tree in the Garden". That is just regurgitating the words of others.

Astus wrote:

Some could say you are neglecting the family style.

jundo cohen said:

I think it should be fresh, heart felt and relevant to the modern. But neither can you express these things in simple A is B sentence structure, because you are ultimately leaving so much out.

Astus wrote:

Expressing in simple sentences should be perfectly sufficient. Beyond that it is not different from plunging into sophistry. Especially from the Zen perspective where direct pointing is valued over gradual training. But if immediacy fails, one should follow the step by step method of the sutras and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2016 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But surely the ordinary man doesn't realise 'the extraordinary in the ordinary'? I am very much centred in the 'ordinary mind' teaching but an essential corollary of that is that 'the ordinary is extraordinary', which is something we don't realize. But if there were nothing whatever to realize, then why, as the koan has it, did Bodhidharma come from the West?

Astus wrote:

All we have is the ordinary. That we want something extraordinary is what blinds us and makes us look for it without success. So, in a sense, it is extraordinary to realise that there is nothing to search for, nothing to realise.

Someone asked, "What was the purpose of the [Patriarch's] coming from the West?"

The master said, "If he had had a purpose he couldn't have saved even himself."

Someone asked, "Since he had no purpose, how did the Second Patriarch obtain the dharma?"

The master said, "'To obtain' is to not obtain."

Someone asked, "If it is 'to not obtain,' what is the meaning of 'to not obtain'?"

The master said, "It is because you cannot stop your mind which runs on seeking everywhere that a patriarch said, 'Bah, superior men! Searching for your heads with your heads!' When at these words you turn your own light in upon yourselves and never seek elsewhere, then you'll know that your body and mind are not different from those of the patriarch-buddhas and on the instant have nothing to do—this is called 'obtaining the dharma.'"

(Record of Linji, p 28, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 18th, 2016 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So, why any teaching? Why is there anything called 'Buddhism' whatever? Why don't we all just carry on, doing what we generally do?

Astus wrote:

It is the teaching that there is no teaching.

Master Yunmen related [the legend according to which] the Buddha, immediately after his birth, pointed with one hand to heaven and with the other to earth, walked a circle in seven steps, looked at the four quarters, and said, "Above heaven and under heaven, I alone am the Honored One."

The Master said, "Had I witnessed this at the time, I would have knocked him dead with one stroke and fed him to the dogs in order to bring about peace on earth!"

(Record of Yunmen, p 194, tr App)

Why is that? Gold in the eye.

"All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks."

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

So it is stated in the sutras:

"what has been realised by myself and other Tathagatas is this reality, the eternally-abiding reality (sthitita), the self-regulating reality (niyamata), the suchness of things (tathata), the realness of things (bhutata), the truth itself (satyata). For this reason, Mahamati, it is stated by me that from the night of the Tathagata's Enlightenment till the night of his entrance into Nirvana, he has not in the meantime uttered, nor ever will utter, one word."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.LXI, tr Suzuki)

"there is no determinable phenomenon called peerless perfect enlightenment. And there is also no set teaching that can be delivered by the Tathāgata."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 7, tr Muller)

"Whatever is seen or heard or sensed
and fastened onto as true by others,
One who is Such — among the self-fettered —
wouldn't further claim to be true or even false.
Having seen well in advance that arrow
where generations are fastened & hung
— 'I know, I see, that's just how it is!' —
there's nothing of the Tathagata fastened."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.024.than.html>)

Thus we see there is no teaching and no attainment. Then is there anything special to do? Pang Yun does not write about turning chopping wood and carrying water into anything miraculous, rather there is no mystical phenomenon to be found beyond such ordinary, tedious activities.

"as to buddhadharma, no effort is necessary. You have only to be ordinary, with nothing to do—defecating, urinating, wearing clothes, eating food, and lying down when tired."
(Record of Linji, p 12, tr Sasaki)

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Zhaozhou said, "Buddha is affliction. Affliction is Buddha."

A monk said, "I don't understand whose house is afflicted by Buddha."

Zhaozhou said, "All people are afflicted by Buddha."

The monk asked, "How can affliction be avoided?"

Zhaozhou said, "Why avoid it?"

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 155-156)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 19th, 2016 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

As others have pointed out, Zen produces a lot of literature for 'a teaching which is no teaching'.

Astus wrote:

It's not just a Zen idea, as you can see from the referenced sutras as well.

Wayfarer said:

It is possible to read Zen as being about nothing at all, and I think you do that. But Zen is concerned with enlightenment, bodhi, liberation, Nirvāṇa. It is not simply 'nothing' or 'just being ordinary'.

Astus wrote:

We are bound by ideas of gain and loss. The Buddha teaches the way out of that. It would not be an escape if it were something to attain or get rid of. Hence it is seeing things for what they are: nothing more, nothing less. That is the insight into the nature of mind. The mind that is buddha. Even the third noble truth says that liberation is the end of craving, it is not about exchanging something wrong to something good. We may say that one attains health, but it is just returning to normal functioning. All appearances are already empty, there is nothing that can make them empty. The error is to assume that one needs to find something.

Enlightenment:

"Remember, there is really nothing to obtain, for the Bodhimandala is without any view whatsoever. To the enlightened ones, the Dharma is voidness and nothingness."
(Huangbo, Wan Ling record, tr Lok To)

Bodhi:

"Question: "How is it possible to develop the Supreme-Enlightenment Mind?" The master said: "Bodhi means nothing to attain. Even now, just as you allow a thought to arise, you get nothing. Thus, realizing that there is absolutely nothing to attain is the Bodhi Mind. The realization that there is nowhere to abide and nothing to attain is the Bodhi."
(Huangbo, Wan Ling record, tr Lok To)

Liberation:

"If anyone has a thought of attaining something, that is a false thought; he is then bound by grasping thought, which cannot possibly be called Liberation. One who truly realizes this stage understands clearly in himself that he cannot grasp this attainment nor even hold a thought of having attained something. This is true self-mastery and Real Liberation. Finally, if one allows the thought of vigorous perseverance toward attainment to arise, that is false, not real, vigorous perseverance. However, if one does not allow a false thought to arise regarding vigorous perseverance, then that is real, boundless perseverance."
(Dazhu Huihai: Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment, tr Lok To)

Nirvana:

"They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations!"
(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

+1 Buddha:

"there is no buddha to be obtained. Even the doctrines [including those] of the Three Vehicles, the five natures, and complete and immediate enlightenment—all these are but provisional medicines for the treatment of symptoms. In no sense do any real dharmas exist. Even if they were to exist, they would all be nothing but imitations, publicly displayed proclamations, arrangements of letters stated that way just for the time being."

(Record of Linji, p 31, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 19th, 2016 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"For the Chan school, understanding ... is instantaneous, now, not a matter of time!"

(Record of Linji, p 13, tr Sasaki)

To put back stages into Chan is turning it into general Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Matt J said:

Tell that to Zongmi, Chinul, and Sheng Yen for starters.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi and Jinul mixed Chan with Huayan, Shengyan with Tiantai.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

" nothing to attain " means that there is nothing to attain, that " no word is spoken " means that nothing wonderful is said, or that " You have only to be ordinary, with nothing to do—defecating, urinating, wearing clothes, eating food, and lying down when tired " means that the secret of Zen is to put on pants, crap and take a nap. In that case, I believe that, when building the old monasteries, they would have gone no further than the beds and privies.

Astus wrote:

Where Huangbo says in my previous post that "there is really nothing to obtain" is 實無一法可得, and literally translates to "really there is not a single dharma that can be attained". It rhymes with the Diamond Sutra's tenth chapter - the same chapter that contains the line that awakened Huineng - where it says "in the Dharma there is really nothing attained" (於法實無所得). And there is chapter 22 that says it clearly (tr Muller): "I have not attained the slightest thing. This is why it is called peerless perfect enlightenment." The concept of unattainability (不可得/anupalabdha or 無所得/apraptitva) is nothing new, can be found in the <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/heartv12.htm> and numerous others. It is practically another term for emptiness.

In simple terms, in the six types of experiences (sights, sounds, etc.) there is nothing that can be held on to. Generally speaking, all come and go according to conditions. And if we care to consider it further, there is no thing that can be pinpointed as arising and perishing, much less can we find conditions. What is then left to cling to? Thus one abides nowhere.

To further explain:

"To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness. The only thing trainees should fear is having a single thought that [such things] exist, which is to be alienated from enlightenment (the Way). For each successive moment of thought to be without characteristics, for each successive moment of thought to be unconditioned—this is Buddha. Trainees who wish to achieve Buddhahood [should understand that] it is completely useless to study any of the Buddhist teachings— just study nonseeking and nonattachment. Nonseeking is for the mind (i.e., moments of thought) not to be generated, and nonattachment is for the mind not to be extinguished. Neither generating nor extinguishing—this is Buddhahood. The eightyfour thousand teachings are directed at the eighty-four thousand afflictions and are only ways to convert and entice [sentient beings into true religious practice]. Fundamentally all the teachings are nonexistent; transcendence is the Dharma, and those who understand transcendence are Buddhas. By simply transcending all the afflictions, there is no dharma that can be attained."
(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, p 20, BDK Edition)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Caodemarte said:

Given the historical development of Zen I am not sure how you could take Hua-yen and Tiantai out of the mix.

From my readings of Zongmi, Chinul, and especially the more contemporary Sheng Yen all held that awakening "is instantaneous, now, not a matter of time." No stages of awakening although it may be useful to conventionally (and conventionally only) speak of "stages" in cultivation as in the 10 Ox Herding pictures.

Astus wrote:

The point I hastily referred to was that they matched Chan ideas with those of other schools. Regarding Shengyan, see "Orthodox Chinese Buddhism", p 100-103. There he explains enlightenment using the Tiantai concept of the six identities.

Sudden enlightenment in the Platform Sutra is seeing the nature of mind once and attaining buddhahood. This has actually made it into a Zen slogan (見性成佛 - see nature, become buddha). There were others who followed this view in the Chan school, and there were those who taught otherwise. Nevertheless, the Platform Sutra is one of the central sources of authentic Chan, and has been for a long time now.

Some quotes from the Platform Sutra (BDK Edition):

"bodhi is fundamentally pure in its self-nature. You must simply use this mind [that you already have], and you will achieve buddhahood directly and completely."
(p 17)

"To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."
(p 31)

"If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature."

...

If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.
(p 32)

"If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."
(p 33)

"To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."
(p 34)

"Eradicating the true and eradicating the false, one sees the buddha-nature. This is to accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood upon hearing these words."
(p 49)

"The self-natures are endowed with the three bodies.
Generating illumination, the four wisdoms are created.
Without transcending the conditions of seeing and hearing,
One transcendently ascends to the stage of buddhahood."
(p 60)

"The self-nature becomes enlightened itself, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the dharmas. The dharmas are quiescent—how could there be a progression?"
(p 75)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 6:13 AM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

It is completely about exchanging something wrong to something good. It is about the transformation from puthajjana to bodhisattva.

Astus wrote:

"Nothing real is meant by the word 'Bodhisattva.' Because a Bodhisattva trains oneself in non-attachment to all dharmas."

(PP8000, 1.3, tr Conze)

"The scripture also says that all ordinary beings are Thus, and all sages and saints are also Thus. "All ordinary beings", refers to us; "all sages and saints" refers to the Buddhas. Although their names and appearances differ, the objective nature of true thusness in their bodies is the same. Being unborn and undying, it is called Thus. That is how we know the inherent mind is fundamentally unborn and undying."
(Daman Hongren: Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle, tr Cleary)

Wayfarer said:

What is 'normal functioning'?

Astus wrote:

It is the ordinary mind, the buddha-nature.

Wayfarer said:

I think here you're making Buddhism into a means of adjustment, a coping mechanism, a way of dealing with the vicissitudes of life.

Astus wrote:

Samsara is the vicissitudes of life. The Dharma is the solution.

Wayfarer said:

But you're missing the vital point, the spiritual purpose of Buddhism, which is

awakening to an identity beyond the wheel of life and death.

Astus wrote:

"As I see it, there isn't so much to do. Just be ordinary—put on your clothes, eat your food, and pass the time doing nothing. You who come here from here and there all have a mind to seek buddha, to seek dharma, to seek emancipation, to seek escape from the three realms. Foolish fellows! When you've left the three realms where would you go?" (Record of Linji, p 22-23, tr Sasaki)

Wayfarer said:

Nirvāṇa is something indescribably good, greater than anything the mortal mind can imagine.

Astus wrote:

What is nirvana? The extinction of craving, the end of attachment. If there is also some wonderful experience involved, why wouldn't that be as impermanent as all other experiences?

Wayfarer said:

The texts you quote carry a double meaning, but you're reading them literally. When such verses say there's 'nothing to attain', that is meant to undermine the 'grasping mind' which is seeking for advantages and gain. It is the same idea as behind 'Cutting through Spiritual Materialism'. It doesn't literally mean 'everything is OK just as it is, go about your business'.

Astus wrote:

Yes, they are meant to undermine grasping. They are especially meant to show that the world is without any essence, any substance, any purpose, any meaning. That is, there is nothing that could be grasped in the first place, and all attachments are based on deluded ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 7:14 AM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The whole point of the practice is to give rise to compassion- bodhicitta and to a sense of interconnectedness to all beings. The delusion to be overcome is the 'illusion of otherness'. But overcoming this 'delusion' is overcoming egoic life altogether.

Astus wrote:

All appearances are dependently originated, no disagreement here. It means that everything is bound by causes and conditions, from the minutest impulses to the movements of stars. That is, there is no real agent (doer, thinker), only conditioned processes. Seeing that is liberation.

Wayfarer said:

Why, in the Wheel of Life, is the Buddha depicted outside the wheel of samsara? The answer is: because the Buddha is outside the wheel of samsara.

Astus wrote:

"when you can't pin down the Tathagata as a truth or reality even in the present life — is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.002.than.html>)

"All things that have characteristics are false and ephemeral. If you see all characteristics to be non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 5, tr Muller)

"Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas."

(Diamond Sutra, ch 14, tr Muller)

"The Thus-come One has no place from whence he comes, and no place to go. Therefore he is called 'Thus-come.'"

(Diamond Sutra, ch 29, tr Muller)

Wayfarer said:

The Deathless is the goal and consummation.

Astus wrote:

What is without death is without birth. Selflessness has never born and will never die. So it is with emptiness, suchness, dependent origination, unattainability, inconceivability, etc. All dharmas are unborn, so all dharmas are the deathless. That's how there is no difference between samsara and nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 21st, 2016 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Astus seems unwittingly to focus on a few quotes removed from surrounding context to offer his "nothing to obtain" and "just eat, just sleep, just piss." In doing so, he unwittingly overlooks the pages and pages of other quotes by the same teachers, in the same cited works, speaking of how subtle, wondrous and miraculous this "nothing to obtain" and "just eat" truly is.

Astus wrote:

What is it they call wondrous and miraculous? That there is nothing to obtain and one

should be ordinary. It is exactly to remove the dreams about supernatural worlds and powers that are beyond us. True, there is a poetic way to talk about the Dharma, to say that it is full of wonders and miracles. However, those are just "Empty fists and yellow leaves used to fool a child!" But actually "Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma." (Record of Linji, p 17, tr Sasaki)

jundo cohen said:

the phrase from the Diamond Sutra ... Passages point to the attaining which cannot be attained, the sublime which transcends small human notions of sublimity

Astus wrote:

All it says is that emptiness is the ultimate. Calling it the ultimate sounds nice, but does not mean there is something else besides emptiness. It exactly says that there is only emptiness. And because even the ultimate is empty, there is nowhere to abide and nothing to gain.

jundo cohen said:

you quote the Lankavatara Sutra ... immediately next words uttered by the Buddha ... like gold, silver and pearl

Astus wrote:

And the sutra reads: "been here all the time, like gold, silver, or pearl preserved in the mine". It is already there, not something new to be obtained. That is the very meaning of buddha-nature, of tathagatagarbha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 22nd, 2016 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Seeing the True Self and then Dropping it.

Content:

jundo cohen said:

The best way in ordinary language to describe such a state of total escape amid no escape is not by words like "rest" or "peaceful" or "pleasant", because that ordinary human term does not even begin to scratch the surface. Until it is experienced, folks find it hard to imagine.

Astus wrote:

The escape (nissarana) from the dangers (adinava) of gratification (assada) is to see that there is always arising (samudaya) and passing away (atthangama). In other words, craving and attachment can have only an object regarded as substantial, thus making it a personal (self or related to the self) object. Once the concept of substance is no more, the rest of the chain collapses as well. Hence the instruction to see appearances as illusions and dreams.

Saying that there is a Rest beyond rest and unrest, a Stillness beyond stillness and motion, a Silence beyond quiet and noise, etc., such language suggests a third option beyond ordinary things. However, that is no less misleading than using words without capitalising them. Liberation is the cessation of clinging, not an added dimension or special experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

What happens when the subject-object distinction becomes less and less convincing?
I suspect that the sentient being / insentient matter distinction does too.

Astus wrote:

Sentience is defined by experience, a mental continuum, thus the six realms. Plants do not appear to be sentient, unlike animals and humans. And while externally we can generally only observe physical properties (with the flesh eye), the definition of sentience is not physical. Approaching from a scriptural perspective, because neither the Buddha nor others described birth as plants and such, they are insentient. There are other possible problems with rectifying the karma of a tree or a stone, as they seem to lack any intentional action, although that part may not be so different from some heavenly realms.

Moving the definition to another level, it can be safely said that Buddhism can conventionally accept categories set up by a given society, to a certain extent. But getting bogged down in biological definitions and endless moral issues are unwholesome distractions that only hinder the understanding of the Buddha's intention and the meaning of the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

I'm not convinced that only animals (including homo sapiens) appear to be sentient. I think fungi and (less convincingly) plants appear to be sentient, but do so from a physical substrate that is significantly different from that of the animal kingdom.

Astus wrote:

That is a question of measurement. As far as I'm aware, mushrooms to most people appear to be no different from plants. It is only some form of biological education that tells otherwise. Nevertheless, I speak only based on my own small cultural sphere.

DGA said:

Does Buddhism have anything to say about birth as a plant or fungus? I'm not sure, but I don't think the four categories of birth (from an egg, from a womb, from moisture, or from spontaneous transformation) disallow it.

Astus wrote:

It is not included as a realm one can be born in, it is not a question of categories of birth. However, if we were to add it, all plant life would need to receive a similar position to other realms of birth, with all the ethical issues involved in treating other sentient beings.

DGA said:

Where I disagree is in how the conventional definitions and categories of a particular society ("ours" whatever that means) are at cross-purposes with Buddhist practice and conduct.

Astus wrote:

I consider social issues a fairly secondary and external matter relative to the path. That's why I say that there needs not be problem with any culture.

You are probably aware of the East Asian idea of universal buddha-nature, where it is attributed to both sentient and insentient. However, and while it has (almost) nothing to do with the question here, it could be used in some constructive ways perhaps.

<http://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/bookDenk02.pdf>, case 17 (Rahulata's story):

Ragorata was a man from Kapilavastu; the issue of the karmic cause from a past life arose in the following manner. Kanadaiba, after realizing enlightenment, was travelling about converting others when he arrived at Kapilavastu. In the city there resided a prosperous elder citizen named Bomma Jotoku (S. Brahmasuddhaguna, 'He Who Is the Pure Virtue of Brahma') in whose garden, one day, a tree had sprouted a large, ear-shaped mushroom with an exceedingly fine flavour; only he and his second son, Ragorata (S. Rahulata, 'He Who Has Been Seized') by name, picked and tasted it. From wherever they picked a piece, the mushroom would regrow; after they had picked it all, it sprouted anew; no others in the household were able to see it. Kanadaiba called on the family because of his awareness of the karmic cause of this mushroom from their past lives and, when the old man asked the reason for the mushroom's appearance, Kanadaiba replied, "Long ago your family gave alms to a monk but the monk vainly consumed the alms from the faithful without having succeeded in opening his Enlightenment-seeking Eye and, because of this, he became a tree mushroom in his next life as recompense. Since only you and your son have given alms with untainted sincerity, only the two of you have succeeded in acquiring this mushroom; the rest of your family have not."

...

Today's story is not about sentient and non-sentient beings; do not separate things into inner karmic tendencies and outer karmic conditions. A monk in a previous life duly became a tree mushroom in a present life. Whilst a tree mushroom, he did not know that he had been a monk and, whilst a monk, he did not know that he had manifested as a myriad things so, even though you are now sentient and have a bit of awareness and

comprehension of what you are doing and can distinguish somewhat between a pain and an itch, you have never been in any way different from a tree mushroom. The reason for this is that the tree's not knowing you is, beyond doubt, dark ignorance, and your not knowing the tree mushroom is exactly the same thing; this is why people make distinctions between the sentient and the non-sentient as well as between outer karmic conditions and inner karmic tendencies. When you clarify what TRUE SELF is, what is there to call sentient, what is there to call non-sentient? IT is not past, present or future nor is IT the sense organs, their fields of perception or their types of perceptual consciousness and IT neither cuts itself off from these nor can IT be cut off from them. IT is neither self-made nor made by others. You will see by training thoroughly, probing deeply and dropping off body and mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Trees, plants, fungi and so in in general, breath, grow, excrete, defend themselves, communicate within their own communities and other communities, an using fungi as as a web for other plants to communicate, they respond to stimulus, learn, and so on.

Astus wrote:

Then we might consider computers are already or about to be sentient as well. And maybe a number of other phenomena too, like memes.

Malcolm said:

Stones, and rocks, etc. in general exhibit no living properties whatsoever.

Astus wrote:

Then perhaps from a more higher perspective, like volcanoes, a whole living planet, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, computers merely mimic sentience, they are not self-organizing. Self-organization is the hallmark of all living systems and is the benchmark for sentience.

Astus wrote:

What counts as self-organising? Programs have organisation skills, they can even learn and reproduce.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

I think that problems ensue when the assumptions of a culture directly contradict the objectives of Buddhist practice when people who belong to that culture attempt to practice Buddhism. I'm arguing that the assumption that this is a sentient being but that is not based on the taxonomy of life kingdoms (plant, animal, monera, protist...) is problematic in just this way.

Astus wrote:

Every culture directly contradicts the objectives of Buddhism, as they serve the continuation of samsara.

DGA said:

The question of why Chinese Buddhism but no other Buddhist tradition tends to emphasize a meatless diet is one that is beyond my scope.

Astus wrote:

Chuan Cheng in Ethical Treatment of Animals in Early Chinese Buddhism (p 98-99) gives three main reasons: The traditional custom of zhaijie (斋节 - "vegetarian feast") coinciding with Buddhist practices. The efforts of Emperor Wu of Liang to spread vegetarianism through laws and propagation. The popularisation of the Brahma Net Sutra.

DGA said:

But I did have a follow-up question for you. If Buddha-nature interpenetrates and mutually subsumes all things, then how, ultimately, do trees, stones, and human beings differ?

Astus wrote:

All things are buddha-nature. It is not some kind of ubiquitous spirit. In fact, that is a misconception Dogen wanted to eliminate, so his works contain numerous statements on the matter. Like this one:

"In sum, there is buddha-mind as fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles, and all the buddhas of the three times experience this as "it cannot be grasped." There are only fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles, which are the buddha-mind itself, and the buddhas experience this in the three times as "it cannot be grasped." Furthermore there is the state of "it cannot be grasped" itself, existing as mountains, rivers, and the earth."
(Shin-fukatoku (latter), in SBGZ, vol 1, p 300; BDK Edition)

The moment we separate ultimate and conventional there is a lot to debate. But even then we can still go with the usual distinction between essence and function. That is, the essence of all things is buddha-nature, the difference lies in the function of how it appears, so there is a difference between sentient and insentient. However, the

function itself is the buddha-nature as well, so it doesn't really matter. Still, you don't piss in the kitchen and eat from the toilet, for functional reasons.

To make a more general point, all things are conditioned. A stone is as much bound by causes as a bird. To be blunt, everything is fully determined by their interdependency. In a sense, it's all mechanical.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is a difference between the self-producing (autopoiesis) self-organization of living systems and static, other-produced (exopoietic) "self-organization" of inanimate things, like crystals. The latter only appear to be self-organizing, but are incapable of sustaining themselves.

Astus wrote:

That reminds me of the teaching on the four nutriments (e.g.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.011.nypo.html>). That is, all

beings depend on food. Also, the Wikipedia article itself quotes instances of

mechanical and other phenomena that could be called self-producing. So, I think that is not sufficient either as a defining factor of living.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Therefore, the mere fact that plants are capable of metabolism implies directly that they are capable of cognition. Hence they are sentient.

Astus wrote:

OK, let's start there then, that plants are sentient beings. What brings a being to be born as a plant? Is that a separate type of birth, or should it be included among animals, considering that they could be taken as the dumbest form of existence? Why was that not recognised by the Buddha and his followers?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 5:51 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Matt J said:

If we reduce Buddhanture to impermanence, or more broadly, emptiness, I think that is

not accurate. For example, this completely ignores the Third Turning sutras, and simply promotes the Second Turning as supreme. Personally, I think that what Dogen is referring when he says all things are Buddhanature is the non-duality of subject and object.

Astus wrote:

What school advocates those ideas of turnings? East Asian schools have different categories for sutras, and at the same time the teaching of universal buddha-nature - therefore the related tathagatagarbha sutras as well - is generally accepted. Not to mention that the Samdhinirmocana Sutra's definitions of the ultimate teachings of the second and third turning are identical.

As I see it, Dogen's point is to have people realise the non-abiding mind, that's why he argued against the popular view that made buddha-nature into a soul. Neither subject, nor object: that is emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

This is an interesting point. "It's all mechanical" is an adequate description of samsara--the whole thing persists because causes and effects and conditions keep clicking into each other and reproduce the whole mess over and over without an out. when we talk about sentience, though, are we only talking about samsaric experience--that is, the experience of being bound & afflicted?

Astus wrote:

Samsara is the unsatisfying view that there is a real doer, a real subject. Nirvana is seeing that it's all interdependent. As the Diamond Sutra repeats over and over, to have the view of there being sentient beings is mistaken. It is like the <http://cext.org/zhuangzi/tree-on-the-mountain> 's story of the empty boat, people get angry as long as they assume there is somebody causing the problem.

The categories of sentience and insentience are primarily relevant in the context of ethics, not meditation nor wisdom. So, it is a matter of conventional views and not deeper analysis. That's why this can become a problematic topic, as we want to pinpoint a vague concept. While at the same time it is quite simple: we consider something a sentient being when we attribute it with similar subjectivity that we ourselves possess, that is, feelings and thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 7:02 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In the end, the basic failure of these conversations derives from the traditionalist urge to argue from some perceived "authority." It's like arguing that Meru Cosmology should be accepted at face value.

Astus wrote:

I thought you liked to refer to the authority of the tantras, sutras, shastras and occasionally transmission in debates. Still, shouldn't this fall into the matter of neyārtha and nitartha teachings? So it would require some integration into a general Buddhist framework.

Malcolm said:

Are planarians sentient beings? I think so. This then raises the question of how such consciousness that they possess individuates when a whole planarian is split into two or more viable segments. It seems that all creatures beyond the range of complexity of planarians lack this ability.

Astus wrote:

Government Minister Zhu asked Changsha [Jingcen], "When an earthworm is cut into two, I wonder which piece has the Buddha nature?"

Changsha said, "Don't have deluded thoughts."

The officer said, "What about when both pieces are moving?"

Changsha said, "That is only because the wind and fire has not yet dispersed."

After further discussion, Changsha said, "Ignorant people call this [consciousness that is the root source of life and death] the original person.

(Eihei Koroku, p 300; extended version: T51n2076_p0274c22-p0275a02)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

I've been taught that samsara means the situation of being bound by one's afflictive patterns of karma to the cycle of endless rebirth. It's a problem of being bound to affliction, particularly ignorance of what one is (here we agree).

One answer to the question, "what's a sentient being?" may well be "a cluster of afflictions that can't get its act together on its own"

Astus wrote:

Afflictions are the results of ignorance, ignorance is clinging to self. So I think we are on the same page. However, if we classify something a sentient being based on its biological qualities, even buddhas are like that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

seeker242 said:

I think you could say that a "sentient being" is a being who experiences dukkha.

Astus wrote:

There is a heaven of unconscious gods (asamjnisattva). What sufferings do they have?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Ayu said:

And Buddha himself claimed that he only taught a small amount of the knowledge he had.

Astus wrote:

And the reason for that was: "Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding." Then he continues: "And what have I taught? 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress': This is what I have taught."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

They get a temporary break from suffering, no? The suffering they have is waiting around the corner.

Astus wrote:

Of course, like for every god enjoying themselves for a while. It's just that such mindless deities have even less sentience than plants.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 11:24 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The suffering of being conditioned.

Astus wrote:

Even for that there should be some experience present. Unconsciousness means no experience whatsoever. Or it simply means the general attribute of appearances being unsatisfactory, but even then, for those without mind there are no appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2016 at 12:29 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The first two are based in sensations, the last is not.

Astus wrote:

That would make it a purely theoretical category. On the other hand, that "all fabrications/compounded are suffering", that is because they are impermanent and therefore do not provide stability, while at the same time one craves for something to rely on.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2016 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Whatever, this is how Shariputta teaches it in the Majjhima Nikāya.

Astus wrote:

Couldn't find that in MN. However, both Visuddhimagga (16.35, p 511) and Abhidharmasamuccaya (p 66) connect it with neutral feelings and other saṃskaras (except the pleasant and the painful ones), and they cause suffering because of what I've said above. But, as you noted, this is a very minor issue in this topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2016 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Matt J said:

If I've learned anything from Madhyamaka, it's that the notion of a line, border, or separation is based on faulty concepts.

Astus wrote:

Certainly all seemingly real are nothing but concepts. That does not mean that the concepts themselves do not establish categories. Rather, it is because concepts operate in a way that there appear to be separate things is a sign of their illusoriness. That is, they do not function without isolating objects. In this way we can talk of humans,

animals and plants as distinct groups. The question here seems to boil down to the size of the group contained in the category of sentient beings. But the cause of this problem is likely not a purely linguistic or philosophical one, but some personal inclinations toward other issues (e.g. vegetarianism).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2016 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But my approach to the 'nature of mind' is different, in that I say that mind is never 'an object of perception' - it is not 'out there' and can't be known as any kind of essence, substance, or in any objective sense. It is always the 'unknown knower, the unseen seer', which is a pre-Buddhist idea from the Upanisads.

Astus wrote:

That kind of inherent knowing is indeed the atman of the Vedanta. In Buddhism that is completely refuted, so it cannot really serve as a definition of sentience.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Matt J said:

I think it cuts much deeper than that. You all are proposing a duality, but instead of creation/created, or subject/object, it is sentient/insentient. But simply looking at how other dualities are handled shows that proposing dualities are always going to be problematic.

Astus wrote:

Dualities are fine, everyday matters. And they should not be put aside just because there can be no substance to back them up. It is not the topic that requires the ultimate analysis that dissolves concepts. Nevertheless, we can keep in mind not to take things personally and imagine them to be anything more than fictitious ideas.

Matt J said:

There are also some basic metaphysical assumptions at play here, primarily that there are phenomenon apart from sentience, which also has some logical errors involved in it.

Astus wrote:

Can't avoid logical difficulties. But as Kant realised this centuries ago, there is a place for practical reason. In Buddhism that's where there is a talk of nominal beings and their karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Matt J said:

I don't think that the problem of dualities is solved by multiplying dualities--- splitting the two truths, for example. I would further argue that allowing dualities to go unchecked in "everyday matters" simply reinforces habitual tendencies that lead to suffering.

Astus wrote:

You cannot avoid how language works. One can only clarify it for oneself that it is only a linguistic thing and does not mean anything beyond that. Since even such terms as "emptiness" can be understood as some sort of substance, or even the ultimate essence, why think that there is any chance of coming up with a better way of speaking?

Matt J said:

I would say a better question would shift from being to function. Instead of saying, where's the line between sentient and insentient, why not ask: which is more skillful from a Mahayana POV? Given that the evidence can be interpreted either way, and any definite tie breaker is unlikely to come along any time soon, is it more skillful to leave open the possibility that plants have sentience or not?

Astus wrote:

So you would go with the idea that the end justifies the means? Then I'd go with saying that it is a meaningless topic. It makes no difference what view one takes about sentient beings, because it's still just a view and grasping at it is only to generate more suffering. Even on a common level what matter are the cultivation of wholesome emotions and abandoning unwholesome feelings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I am interested in philosophical ideas. This idea is that mind is intrinsically aware or knowing. Otherwise, knowing or awareness must be a result or a consequence - in which case it is not fundamental.

Astus wrote:

Everything is dependent on causes and conditions. That does not leave space for anything inherent. However, because of the way causality works, there is always a sort of continuity, that is, the consistency that from an apple seed comes an apple tree. In that fashion there is a mind-stream, thoughts causing thoughts.

Nevertheless, there is a place in Buddhism to talk of awareness/knowing as the nature

of mind. It's important to see the term in a similar way that expressions like impermanence and emptiness are used. It does not signify an actual object or being, it is only a description, in this case of the aspect of phenomena that they are always experienced, i.e. whatever occurs one is necessarily aware of. In particular, it is meant to point to an impartial consciousness that is often compared to a mirror where everything comes and goes unhindered. The mistake people may make at this point is to interpret it as something independent, and thus conceive it as a self. In order to avoid that it is added that this knowing is empty - i.e. cannot be found as something, it is without form; at the same time it is not separate from appearances, it is not an independent witness. That way there is no contradiction with the teaching of interdependence.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

The suffering of impermanence. Viparinama-dukkha.

Astus wrote:

That is used to express the dissatisfaction about losing something pleasurable.

Unconscious beings cannot have any pleasure, nor can they be aware of any change, as QEII noted.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

I get the feeling that you are misinterpreting the term "unconscious". Regardless, when (during their death) they start to regain conscious awareness, then they are aware of their suffering. But I tend to picture them as being like accomplished practitioners that focus on a blank/empty state of mind: ie they have awareness of the environment but... when the causes and conditions that lead to their mental state wane, so does the state.

Astus wrote:

They are devoid of the mental aggregates. And the moment any idea comes up, they are not in that state any more. See here:

http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/ay/asannasatta.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Question about Genjokoan / Dogen classic Koan

Content:

MuggWortt said:

Does the following quote say something about - 1. Free will

Astus wrote:

No. Read this on <http://sweepingzen.com/karma-free-will-and-determinism/>.

MuggWortt said:

and also 2. Some kind of inherent responsive intelligence interacting with sentient beings as undivided universe?

Astus wrote:

No. Such a concept is repeatedly refuted by Dogen (and by Buddhists in general). He calls it the Srenika heresy. See his <https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/busho/translation.html> and question 10 in <http://www.zen.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 27th, 2016 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Everything conditioned is dependent on causes and conditions. Every object of perception is dependent on causes and conditions.

Astus wrote:

Perception is only a perception of something. They are mutually dependent. One has to realise both as empty. As Vasubandhu states:

"That indeed is the supramundane knowledge
When one has no mind that knows,
And no object for its support"
(Trimsika 29, tr Kochumuttom, p 259)

Every born being is dependent on causes and conditions. Yet 'there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade...if there were not that...there would be no escape from the born, become, made...' (ud 8.3)

That unborn is nirvana. Nirvana is the extinction of craving, the absence of attachment, the emptiness of self. Similarly, all appearances are empty, without a substance, hence samsara is no different from nirvana. To assume a realm/thing/state beyond impermanent appearances as the world of true permanence is only further grasping and a cause of dissatisfaction.

Wayfarer said:

It is not existent--even the Victorious Ones do not see it.

It is not nonexistent--it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.
This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.
May the ultimate nature of phenomena, limitless mind beyond extremes, he realised.

Astus wrote:

That one, just like the Heart Sutra, Nagarjuna, and many others, talk of the middle way, where you don't find any ultimate outside conventional, no buddhas outside sentient beings.

Dependent origination is emptiness
Phenomena are there but no substance
Experience goes on without abiding
Therefore
Conventional believes itself ultimate
Ultimate knows conventional as conventional

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 27th, 2016 at 7:42 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Everything is dependent on causes and conditions.

Sherab Dorje said:

Well, actually, apparently the Dharmakaya is not.

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is interdependence itself.

"Whatever is the essence of the Tathagata,
That is the essence of the transmigrator.
The Tathagata has no essence.
The transmigrator has no essence."
(MMK 22.16, Ocean of Reasoning, p 451)

"Thoughts and dharmakaya are inseparable. We have this dualistic approach of seeing dharmakaya as pure and thoughts as impure, but we need to understand the inseparability of thoughts and dharmakaya."
(http://www.kagyumonlam.org/english/news/Report/Report_20130103.html)

"Some people misunderstand the teaching "thought is dharmakaya" to mean that when a thought arises, it is pacified or dissolved, and then we are left with dharmakaya. Others misunderstand it to mean that if we realize thought to be dharmakaya, it is dharmakaya. The word dharmakaya, however, is made up of dharma meaning "the truth" and kaya meaning "embodiment". Thus dharmakaya refers to the ultimate mind of the Buddha. These two ways of misunderstanding the teaching stem from not

understanding that, from the very beginning, thought is nothing other than the ultimate reality of the Buddha's omniscient mind. Thought doesn't become dharmakaya at some later time, and it doesn't depend on whether or not we are aware that it is dharmakaya." (Thrangu Rinpoche: Essentials of Mahamudra, p 158)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 3:29 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is interdependence itself.

Sherab Dorje said:

In which case it cannot be dependently arising since (according to Nagarjuna) something cannot arise from itself as a cause.

Astus wrote:

Change does not come from change, it is merely a concept. Dharmakaya is the nature of buddhas, dharmadhatu is the nature of everything, and both are emptiness, and emptiness is dependent origination.

Based on statements made in

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.028.than.html> and

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.087x.wlsh.html> we read this in the Shalistamba Sutra (tr N. Ross Reat, p 32):

"How, then, does one see conditioned arising? In this connection, it is said by the Lord: 'Whoever sees-this conditioned arising (which is), always and ever devoid of soul, truly undistorted, without soul, unborn, not become, not made, not compounded, unobstructed, inconceivable, glorious, fearless, ungraspable, inexhaustible and by nature never stilled, (he sees Dharma). And whoever sees Dharma (which is) also always and ever devoid of soul... and by nature never stilled, he sees the unsurpassable Dharma-body, the Buddha, by exertion based on right knowledge in clear understanding of the noble Dharma.'"

Thus we see that it goes back to the earliest texts. May also check "Pratityasamutpada and Dharmadhatu in Early Mahayana Buddhism" in

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=9a7qBgAAQBAJ>, p 11-28. And there is also some East Asian teachings, in particular those of the Huayan school, where they discuss the dharmadhatu as total interdependence being the ultimate reality. As Sung-bae Park sums up: "In the final analysis, the patriarchal faith which affirms that "I am Buddha" is the realization of the dharmadhatu of dependent origination." (Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment, p 26)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

They are concerned with transformation, with entering a different realm or mode of being. There is something remarkable and amazing in Buddhism, which you're consistently deprecating and rationalising away by saying it is 'just ordinary'.

Astus wrote:

I'm calling it ordinary not because it could not be called extraordinary, but because after raising faith and enthusiasm for practice it becomes misleading and generate false expectations. As it is stated by the Buddha of himself:

"When cognizing what is to be cognized, he doesn't construe an [object as] cognized. He doesn't construe an uncognized. He doesn't construe an [object] to-be-cognized. He doesn't construe a cognizer."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.024.than.html>)

Therefore:

"you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.1.10.than.html>)

This is no different from Chan's no-mind:

"Having no-mind anywhere whatsoever means being free of love and hate. Being free of love and hate means that when you see good things, you do not allow a thought of love to arise, which is known as the "no-love" mind. Conversely, when you see evil things, you do not allow a thought of hate to arise, which is known as the "no-hate" mind. A mind that is void of love and hate is also known as a non-defiled mind, wherein the voidness of all forms is realized. This is also known as the termination of all conditions, and the termination of all conditions means attaining Liberation naturally and spontaneously."

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Is there something extraordinary? Although calling it ordinary is not really appropriate either, but as I write above, it feels more skilful. Nevertheless, the difference before and after enlightenment can be recognised. As Zhuhong wrote: "The line in this self-narration to the effect that it's just a matter of eating when hungry and sleeping when tired is a matter for after you have produced enlightenment." (Chan Whip Anthology, p

96)

And here is Shenhui's differentiation between coarse and subtle obscuration:

"What does self-deception mean? You, who have assembled at this place to-day, are craving for riches and the pleasures of intercourse with males and females; you are thinning of gardens and houses. This is the coarse form of self-deception. To believe that it must be discarded is the fine form of self-deception. That you do not know. What is the fine form of self-deception? When you hear speaking of bodhi you think you must have that bodhi; and so when you hear speaking of Nirvana, of irreality (sunyata), of purity, of samadhi, you think you must have that Nirvana, that irreality, that purity, that samadhi. These are all self-deceptions, these are fetters, heresies. With that in mind you cannot attain salvation. If (unaware of the fact that) you are saved, that you are guiltless from the very beginning without anything additional required - you think of (leaving the world and) abiding in Nirvana, this Nirvana becomes a fetter (binding you to life) in the same way purity, irreality, samadhi, become fetters. Such thoughts impede your progress to bodhi."

(Sermon of Shenhui, tr Liebenthal, in Asia Major, New Series, III (1953), part II, pp. 144-145.)

Baizhang follows the same idea:

"The complete teaching discusses purity; the incomplete teaching discusses impurity. Explaining the defilement in impure things is to weed out the profane; explaining the defilement in pure things is to weed out the holy. Before the nine-part teaching had been expounded, living beings had no eyes; it was necessary to depend on someone to refine them. If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. You should not speak this way to a worldling beyond measure, someone like Vimalakirti or the great hero Fu."

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 29. tr. T. Cleary)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is merely one, and very incomplete definition. And here, it clearly refers to realization of the nature of things, not to the things themselves.

Astus wrote:

Please clarify what problem you see there.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

What are you saying now? That oranges grow on apple trees?

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that interdependence is not a product of interdependence, so it is not the case of something arising of itself.

Sherab Dorje said:

Are we confounding the finger for the moon here?

Astus wrote:

Interdependence is a concept, as there is no such thing or even phenomenon that is interdependence itself, rather it is a description of how appearances are.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What I mean is that interdependence is not a product of interdependence, so it is not the case of something arising of itself.

Sherab Dorje said:

So, if everything you say is true, then what is the cause and/or condition for interdependence, given that it is conditioned?

Astus wrote:

Interdependence is a teaching of the Buddha intended to liberate beings from ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

DGA said:

Does that teaching correspond to anything outside the conceptual? Does it describe a phenomenon? If not, why would Buddha Shakyamuni mobilize this particular concept? If so, then to what does it correspond?

Astus wrote:

The teaching is conceptual meant to address the misconception of taking experiences to be substantial. Beyond that, since there is no thing to depend on another thing, how could there be real interdependence?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

There is something to be attained, but something that can only be attained by non-attainment.

Astus wrote:

In a sense there is something (nirvana) to be attained, otherwise no point of a path.

Wayfarer said:

'First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is '....I think, all due respect, you're speaking from an exclusively 'no mountain' perspective.

Astus wrote:

I'm saying it's just a mountain in the first, the second, and the third time as well. The difference lies in that first one adds grasping, second time one adds not grasping, and the third time there is nothing added or taken away.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You defined dharmakaya as dependent origination. This is a clear error.

Astus wrote:

Why is that? Is there perhaps an emptiness outside of appearances? Or is it some inherent knowing maybe that makes it independent? Please elaborate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Dharmakāya is a result of seeing the nature [dharmatā] of those things, it is the subject.

Astus wrote:

True, it is a term used for the nature of buddhas. Still, their nature is not different from the nature of appearances. How could they be separated, since beings themselves are appearances?

Malcolm said:

Further, the dharmakāya is defined as unconditioned

Astus wrote:

And appearances are unborn.

Malcolm said:

Now, on the other hand, dependent origination is clearly defined as conditioned

Astus wrote:

Being conditioned is how/why all is unconditioned. Because of emptiness can there be interdependence.

Malcolm said:

Thus, if you call dependent origination "dharmakāya," you are making a fundamental error in judgement which leads to dharmakāya being impermanent, etc.

Astus wrote:

It is simply a different wording of the concept of the non-differentiation between samsara and nirvana.

"Therefore, Śāriputra, not apart from the realm of sentient beings is the dharma body; not apart from the dharma body is the realm of sentient beings. The realm of sentient beings is in effect the dharma body; the dharma body is in effect the realm of sentient beings. Śāriputra, these two dharmas under different names have the same meaning."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>)

And here Dogen states it clearly:

"Therefore, that the grasses, trees, thickets and groves are impermanent is the buddha nature; that humans and things, body and mind are impermanent — this is because they are the buddha nature. That the lands, mountains, and rivers are impermanent — this is the buddha nature. Annuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, because it is the buddha nature, is impermanent; the great parinirvāṇa, because it is impermanent, is the buddha nature."
(<https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/bussho/translation.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What is the difference between space and mind?

You are missing this point.

Astus wrote:

There is no space outside the mind, so I do not propose some inanimate thing. Appearances are experiences - i.e. the five aggregates (PP8000 12.2), the six sensory areas (SN 35.23). In other words, the emptiness-awareness of the mind is emptiness-interdependence, where awareness is consciousness of appearances (not an independent awareness without phenomena). Using basic terminology, no-self is that there is no self in the aggregates, it is a description of the aggregates, and not an entity called no-self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 1:44 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So appearances are outside the mind?

Astus wrote:

No. There is just mind/experiences. From what did you conclude that?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 3:39 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I see, so you are proposing a nondependent consciousness then, since experiences are just mind, are indivisible from the mind, and are therefore, caused by the mind itself, without reference to any other cause or condition. You just argued yourself into the Vedanta corner.

Not even yogacara abandons external objects conventionally.

Astus wrote:

That would apply if I talked of a single mind. What I said, however, is that dependent appearances - all dharmas - occur as experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

experiences supported on what? Are those experiences the same as or different than the subject experiencing them?

Astus wrote:

Experiences are streams of phenomena on what we project subject and object. It is like

paratantra of the three svabhavas.

Malcolm said:

And what the three dharma that be construed of as experiences, or even as appearances, at all?, space and the two cessations; four if you add emptiness to the those three.

Astus wrote:

All four denominate types of absences, and as such they are not different from common concepts like the blankness of a screen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This does not solve anything, since you have effectively ruled out all causation for the mind, you are effectively left with an inherent causeless mind, which is also insentient since there is no objects which it can cognize.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how, unless you mean a cause for the mind-stream that is something else than mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In general, you have asserted that all objects are merely projections of the mind itself.

Astus wrote:

In the sense that it is through categorisation that we set up things and relations between them.

Malcolm said:

But there is no way these projections of the mind can be projected, there is also no basis for their impression.

Astus wrote:

I don't see your point here.

Malcolm said:

Since you have rejected subject and object even conventionally

Astus wrote:

I don't recall doing so. Just look back at the first quote in this post and my response to it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

And we set them up from what cause? How does this setting up even happen? How can there be relations if there are no entities apart from the mind?

Astus wrote:

Whatever we perceive are what we experience. To imagine something behind/beyond what is experienced is only conjecture and irrelevant. At the same time, attributing independence to perceptions, separate existence from experience, is how substantiality is established and suffering ensues.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

So there are phenomena existing outside of mind that are apprehended via the sense organs (given the existence of certain conditions like light, space, etc...) and then defined by the mind(s). It's the classic abhidharma/abhidhamma approach.

Astus wrote:

Appearances are what is experienced. While we may assume external phenomena, it does not change that all we have are perceptions, but it splits (categorises) the experiences to internal (subjective) and external (objective).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is the "whatever" that is under scrutiny here. You claim experiences are the mind, and at the same time, deny they are the mind.

Astus wrote:

It all depends on what you mean by mind. Here I used it simply as another term for experiences in general.

Malcolm said:

In order for there to be dependently originated appearances, there must be conditions.

Astus wrote:

Conditions are between appearances, i.e. appearances are conditioned by appearances.

Malcolm said:

actually what you have said is that appearances are the experiences themselves. This can only be the case if the mind is its own appearances, appearing to itself, independently of any other cause or condition.

Astus wrote:

Again, what do you call mind? You seem to use it as if it were a single entity ("appearing to itself"), and that I do not do.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But according to you, there is nothing experiencing experiences. In this case then, experiences are impossible.

Astus wrote:

There is no need to establish such a duality. On the contrary, if there is a separate experiencer, there is no connection between subject and object.

Malcolm said:

So, there can't be any invisible conditions?

Astus wrote:

What's the point of theorising about that? While we can use such ideas (e.g. storehouse consciousness) as explanations,

I see, so for you one mind appears to another mind, unrelated?

An experience is already what is later conceptually separated to subject and object, viewer and viewed, but there is actually no need to establish various minds or even one mind. For example, there is a sound, that's an experience, an appearance. The sound is then followed by thoughts identifying the sound. Again, thoughts are experiences,

caused by the sound. Then we have an idea of what kind of sound we heard, and further thoughts (feelings, intentions, etc.) come based on that idea. Like when the sound is identified as the doorbell and then we are happy because somebody we were expecting has arrived. That is a chain of conditioned appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 1:26 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Does that mean (for example) that a sound is not a sound?

Astus wrote:

What do you mean? Why is a sound not a sound?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So there is no sound which is not an experience? And what is thinking about that sound? Then "we have ideas?" etc.

Astus wrote:

Have you encountered any sound that you have not heard? I haven't. Thinking of a sound is another matter, and one can mentally listen to whole symphonies, but that's a function of imagination (can't think of a better word now).

Malcolm said:

Seriously? Are you drunk?

Astus wrote:

As far as I can tell, I was simply giving a description of a kind of epistemological phenomenology, i.e. appearances as experience, in line with the teaching that the scope of Buddhism is within the boundaries of the five aggregates and six sensory areas. But either I'm doing a really bad job at expressing myself, or you think in very different terms.

Malcolm said:

That chain of conditioned appearances is conventional, and depends on conventional dualities to function. To bring it back around — dharmakāya is unconditioned, and so it can never be a conditioned chain of appearances.

Astus wrote:

If you set up that separation, as unconditioned it does not have any function nor any

relation, and that makes it as inert as space.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

By appearances do you (also) mean phenomena or are you saying that there are just appearances?

Astus wrote:

Phenomena, appearances, experiences, dharma - I use them interchangeably.

Phenomenon is simply a Greek word appearance. Also, "In the philosophy of Kant, an object as it is perceived by the senses, as opposed to a noumenon." - hence experiences, perceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 6:30 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So unless you hear it, a sound is not a sound? Unless you see it, a tree is not there?

Astus wrote:

Sound is what is heard. What is an unheard sound? What is seen are forms and colours, it is the interpretation of those impressions that make it a tree.

Malcolm said:

The five aggregates, 12 sense gates and 18 elements all include external and internal phenomena.

Astus wrote:

What is external in the five aggregates? Even the four elements are experiences of solidity, fluidity, heat, and movement. As for the elements of object-organ-consciousness, because experience exists only with consciousness, objects and organs are merely conceptual assumptions.

Malcolm said:

Dharmakāya can never be a conditioned chain of appearances. But I suggest you go and review the Samdhinirmocana Sūtra and the dialogue where it is explained how dharmin and dharmatā are neither the same nor different. Your assertion that dharmakāya = dependent origination is not only wrong, but it also violates this principle.

Astus wrote:

Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 2 (BDK Edition, p 18, 19):

Not identical

"It is not the case that at this very moment all the common worldlings have already gained insight into truth, are already capable of attaining the quiescent cessation of supreme skill, or have realized full, perfect awakening. Therefore the opinion that the descriptive marks of the truth of ultimate meaning are not different from the descriptive marks of conditioned states of being is not reasonable."

Not different

"It is precisely because they have been capable of liberation from these two obstacles that they have been able to attain the quiescent cessation of supreme skill and to realize full, perfect wisdom. Therefore, the opinion that the descriptive marks of the truth of ultimate meaning are entirely different from the descriptive marks of conditioned states of being is not reasonable."

As you say, equating dharmakaya with interdependence seems to contradict that, and also if I were to say that the two are different.

How do you define dharmakaya?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 6:37 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

I can understand what you are saying, but just because I haven't encountered it, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. You may have encountered it.

Astus wrote:

That is besides the point, because what I'm pointing to is that it is one's own experiences that requires investigation. As it's often repeated in Zen, don't look for buddha outside your mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 9:14 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The five sense objects, one half of the material aggregate.

Astus wrote:

And those objects exist when they are sensed, that is, they exist in the continuum of experiences. So, while nominally they are external, it does not mean they are somewhere out there.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

How can we have compassion (for example) if we ignore the validity of the others experiences? Wisdom is fine and dandy, but if you are missing compassion, then it becomes a very self-centred affair. So the experiences of others are not "beside the point".

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva should not have the concept of sentient beings anyway. Also, when seeing phenomena as they are - occurrences of experiences - there is neither self nor other. At the same time, it makes no difference in how everything is ordinarily experienced, as it's only meant to remove attachment to experiences, and not eliminate them altogether.

I assume you're familiar with Mahamudra teachings on co-emergent appearances (e.g. <http://www.unfetteredmind.org/milarepas-song-to-lady-paldarboom/>) and that appearances are the dharmakaya (e.g. Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 41). And because you quote Milarepa in your signature:

"Do you know what appearances are like?

If you don't know what appearances are like

Whatever appears is an appearance

Not realized, they are samsara

Realized, they are Dharmakaya

When appearances as Dharmakaya shine

There's no other view to look for

There's no other view to find"

(KTGR: <http://www.ktgrinpoche.org/songs/milarepas-six-words-sum-it-all>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 1st, 2016 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But no, this is not the case, the five sense objects exist independently of the body as objects for the five senses, conventionally speaking.

Astus wrote:

There is no disagreement on the conventional concept of independent external objects.

Malcolm said:

But the form is not something that only exists when it is seen.

Astus wrote:

What makes a form form? That it is seen. What is it when not seen?

"What is the characteristic of the form element? The form element is that which becomes visible when it is seen by the eye, and over which is exercised the supremacy of the eye element. The characteristics of the elements of sound, odor, taste, tangibility and the mental object are like that of the form element."

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 4)

Let's take an apple as an example. We can agree that conventionally an apple does not come from any of the faculties, but it's grown on a tree whence it reaches our kitchen table in a complicated way, and during that time there is the apple travelling from there to here. Once we have that apple, it can be sensed by all five physical faculties. When we look at it, we see the form of the apple. Is that form what's come from the orchard to the kitchen? Is that form even the apple? The answer to both are now, because even by abhidharma terms the apple is conventional, and dharmas, like form, are momentary. So, it seems to me that form is only what and when it is seen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

A thing must be visible, a priori, in order to be seen.

Astus wrote:

Visibility is a quality attributed after it is seen to the concept of the object. That is, a form exists either as a concept produced by the bifurcation of experience to subject and object, or as a subsequent concept about the object.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 2:05 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

This statement is figurative, not literal.

Astus wrote:

And what is its figurative meaning?

Here are a number of commentaries to chapter 3 (where it's stated: "If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva.") of the Diamond Sutra:

Te-ch'ing says, "The primary method taught by the Buddha to liberate beings is to realize that there is no self. Once there is a self, the other concepts follow. In liberating beings, a bodhisattva should realize that there is no self. Once there is no self, there are no beings. And if there are no beings, then all beings are naturally liberated. And once all beings are liberated, the fruit of buddhahood is not far off."

Tzu-hsuan says, "Belief in a self is the most basic of all beliefs. All other perceptions arise from this. Once there is no perception of a self, there is no perception of other beings. When there is no perception of other beings, self and other beings become the same."

Ting Fu-pao says, "The perception of a self refers to the mistaken apprehension of something that focuses within and controls the five skandhas of form, sensation, perception, volition, and cognition. The perception of a being refers to the mistaken apprehension that the combination of the skandhas creates a separate entity. The perception of a life refers to the mistaken belief that the self possesses a lifespan of a definite length. Finally, the perception of a soul refers to the mistaken apprehension of something that is reborn, either as a human or as one of the other forms of existence." (Red Pine: The Diamond Sutra, p 81-82)

"If a Bodhisattva crosses living beings over and yet attaches to a self who takes them across, the four marks are not yet empty, and the false heart is not yet subdued. Such a person turns his back on prajñā and becomes involved in the four marks that unite to form a self. The mark of self is the root of all marks. If one can turn the illusion of self around, then he can take living beings across to nirvāṇa. He can separate himself from the four marks, subdue his heart, and thereby become a true Bodhisattva." (Hsuan Hua: The Diamond Sutra, p 90)

"A person has to get rid of the four notions of self, a person, a living being, and a life span in order to have the wisdom of nondiscrimination.

"Self" refers to a permanent, changeless identity, but since, according to Buddhism, nothing is permanent and what we normally call a self is made entirely of nonself elements, there is really no such entity as a self. Our concept of self arises when we have concepts about things that are not self. Using the sword of conceptualization to cut reality into pieces, we call one part "I" and the rest "not I."

(Thich Nhat Hanh: The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion, p 45-46)

"Since a Bodhisattva does not see the mark of self nor the mark of others, when he/she takes across the others, he/she would not cling on to any form of existence. By real mark prajna, there is not a slightest notion of inequality: "Dharma is level and equal, with no high or no low". A true Bodhisattva has no mark of the self and thus can take across all living beings to extinction. That is how a Bodhisattva can subdue his/her heart by relinquishing the four marks. That is why the Buddha said that if a Bodhisattva has any of the marks, he/she is not a Bodhisattva."

(http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/sutra_comm/diamond/diamond_05.htm)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

How do you account for nonconceptual perception in your scheme? You can't. Since you can't, you are, *prima facie*, denying there is such a thing as a direct perception. Direct perceptions, for example, the direct perception of a blue vase, are nonconceptual by definition.

Astus wrote:

All experiences of the five physical categories are nonconceptual, as you say, as thoughts are attributed to them subsequently. The difference is that by direct perception you seem to mean an interaction between subject and object, while I say that it is an appearance. However, even in the 18 elements scheme the perception happens only once contact is made and a sensory consciousness occurred, that is, an experience. So in the end there is no difference between the two.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Virgo said:

Whether you see them or not, those physical phenomena are still there.

Astus wrote:

If it is not experienced, it is not a phenomenon, as it does not occur to us. But of course we can assume that it exists nevertheless, however, that is just an assumption. And from that assumption we can build up the system where from the encounter of object and organ a consciousness is produced.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 3:07 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

1. Meaning that a Bodhisattva does not perceive any difference between their "self" and another. That they do not consider the suffering of an other being as separate to them. That they do not consider the joy an other being feels as separate to them. That they identify completely with other beings, since they realise the true nature of their own existence.

2. If a Bodhisattva (or a Buddha) was literally no different (or not differentiated) to other

beings, then their merit store would be our merit store. Their enlightenment would be our enlightenment. But that is quite clearly not the case.

Astus wrote:

That two sections do not add up to me. First you say there is no difference for a bodhisattva, then you affirm a difference. Is it perhaps that to you no-self means a unity with everything, therefore while a bodhisattva personally knows of a unity but is not actually one with all beings?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

All experiences of the five physical categories are nonconceptual, as you say, as thoughts are attributed to them subsequently. The difference is that by direct perception you seem to mean an interaction between subject and object, while I say that it is an appearance. However, even in the 18 elements scheme the perception happens only once contact is made and a sensory consciousness occurred, that is, an experience. So in the end there is no difference between the two.

Malcolm said:

Astus, now you are contradicting yourself:

Astus wrote:

...a form exists either as a concept produced by the bifurcation of experience to subject and object, or as a subsequent concept about the object.

No contradiction:

experiences of the five physical categories -> bifurcation of experience -> subsequent concept

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So space, emptiness and the two cessations are not dharmas? Really?

Astus wrote:

As <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=326065#p326065>: "All four denominate types of absences, and as such they are not different from common concepts like the blankness of a screen."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: What is a "sentient being"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, they are dharmas, the four unconditioned dharmas.

Astus wrote:

There are other nominal dharmas as well, like speed (java), number (samkhya), and syllables (vyanjanakaya).

Also, according to the Cheng Weishi Lun (tr Wei Tat, p 81, 85, 87):

"The Unconditioned Non-Active Dharmas (asamskrtadharmas), apart from rupa-citta-caittas, are definitely not real entities as the Sarvastivadins and others say. We do not, by our reason, recognize such Asamskrtas as real entities.

...

Here are the two ways in which we should understand them.

1. The three Asamskrtas exist as fictitious constructions dependent on the evolution of consciousness.

...

2. The three Asamskrtas exist as fictitious constructions of the true nature of dharmas, dharmata, also called Bhutatathata.

...

All these five Asamskrtas, Akasa etc., are only fictitious constructions formulated on the basis of the significations of Bhutatathata. But Bhutatathata itself is also only a fictitious designation (like food, oil, worm, etc.).

...

We are not like the other schools according to which a real eternal dharma exists, apart from matter, mind, etc., which is called Bhutatathata.

Hence the Asamskrtas are not real entities."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 3rd, 2016 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Authoritarianism, Splitting, and Buddhadharma

Content:

DGA said:

I venture the hypothesis that there is an authoritarian tendency in all of Buddhadharma as it is realized in institutions such as temples and Dharma centers, made much more explicit in some areas than others. Whether this is counterproductive or unavoidable or whatever else, I leave you to draw your own conclusions based on your experience and knowledge of the teachings.

Astus wrote:

It is human nature. Although there are some child-like people who want a parent-figure above them, most people are OK with some sort of commander simply out of lack of interest in taking charge and thinking for themselves in a given matter. So, it's more a matter of ignorance than attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 3rd, 2016 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: what is happiness for you?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

and buddhism is quite clear that immeasurable happiness is found in 4 ways. and those 4 immensurables are all absolute/ non-dual. No?

Astus wrote:

The <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmavihara> are limited, relative and impermanent. Getting stuck on them leads to a heavenly birth.

tomschwarz said:

how do you characterize happiness?

Astus wrote:

This is a great answer:

seeker242 said:

Not wanting anything.

Astus wrote:

However, living itself is beset by desires and needs. The kind of "no want" (apranihita) that is possible is when the very dependency of all physical and mental events are clearly seen and one no longer believes there is something to aim for.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 3rd, 2016 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: what is happiness for you?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

the four immesurables, when taken in their absolute context are quite well-fitting as absolute truth. don't forget that absolute love is one door-way to realizing the absolute truth.

Astus wrote:

They can lead to liberation, if realised to be impermanent, i.e. 'This awareness-release through good will is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.'

(<http://www.accesstinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.052.than.html#brahma>)

However, if only the immeasurables are practised, they are insufficient for liberation, as we can see from the story in the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.097.than.html>, where the Buddha says: "Monks, Sariputta — when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjanin the brahman in the inferior Brahma world — has gotten up from his seat and left."

tomschwarz said:

when you read over the definitions in the link you sent, e.g. equanimity, does that not help you to feel better?

Astus wrote:

There are many things one can feel better from. That is their allure. And once one clings to such sensations, one is trapped and becomes dissatisfied. That's where one needs to know the escape from that.

tomschwarz said:

and that definition there above, is a good door for something like entering the path of seeing, no? do you think that getting "stuck" on the path of seeing leads to a heavenly rebirth? ...not a rhetorical question....

Astus wrote:

It does not lead to the path of seeing, it lacks the insight into the nature of experiences. It leads to a calm state that can be conducive to insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 4th, 2016 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: what is happiness for you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A comparison of the mentioned Zen story with the one in the Theravada tradition:

<https://bhikkhublog.blogspot.com/2007/04/desire-reposted-tale-of-two-similes.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 4th, 2016 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: One continuous mistake

Content:

MalaBeads said:

Dogen zen-ji described practice as one continuous mistake.

Astus wrote:

As Jundo has already pointed it out, that is a misquote. However, what he definitely stated is that practice is enlightenment (and enlightenment is practice). And that teaching of practice-enlightenment is a way to say sudden awakening. That is something that Zen teaches, although in various versions, depending on whom you ask.

Also, it should be noted that Soto is not the only type of Zen out there.

MalaBeads said:

Another thing I have noticed (concerning the differences in the two traditions) in this: in zen I was taught that there are no symbols. This is important to understand I think: no symbols in zen.

Astus wrote:

It is chock full of symbols. Have you heard of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower_Sermon, Zen's own origin myth? There are also Deshan's <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keisaku> and Linji's https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsu_%28Zen%29. And how about <http://www.sanbo-zen.org/hek019.pdf> or <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/glg/glg38.htm>?

MalaBeads said:

Another thing i have noticed over time is that many people do not understand at all either tradition. Especially, if they have not practiced it.

Astus wrote:

"Many people" do not understand anything.

MalaBeads said:

Saying that zen is, for instance, just staring at a wall, is, to put it mildly, ludicrous.

Astus wrote:

It is indeed just <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhidharma#Wall-gazing> (biguan 壁觀), that's what http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57. It means to be unattached (like a wall) and aware (gaze). The expression is quite symbolic.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 5th, 2016 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: what is happiness for you?

Content:

Jeff H said:

Refuge in the Three Jewels means that there is a way for both conditions (the illusion of happiness and suffering) to dissolve into the bliss of perfect, universal harmony, and it is possible to make that happen. I think that is Buddha's happiness, but it is nothing like ours.

Astus wrote:

I think setting up an otherworldly happiness is only extending the original pursuit of everlasting bliss and contentment. What Buddha clearly stated is that the cause of suffering is craving. And the most common reaction to that that I have heard was that giving up desire is completely negative, undesirable, and nihilistic. So, I consider it a

skilful means in Buddhism that instead of proclaiming emptiness and extinction in a straightforward way, there is a currency of expressions like happiness, bliss, peace, and other nice words. The other objection I have regularly heard is that total contentment is unwanted, because then all the action is gone from life and there is no room for development, innovation, etc. left. That we need problems so we can solve them. Basically, we want to keep ourselves busy, either in a secular-materialistic way, or in a spiritual-religious way, or perhaps both. Then it is easy to find the idea that we need to practice a lot, we need to learn more, and so on, just to keep ourselves occupied with Buddhism, and consider that as virtuous. Certainly, excuses are plenty for that.

So, some may know of zazen as "<http://www.tricycle.com/interview/good-nothing>", and still make it a goal. Others might have learnt mahamudra's "<http://www.unfetteredmind.org/a-way-of-freedom/>", and think that it needs to be realised. And there are other terms around, going back to apranihita, a synonym of nirvana. While samsara means constant occupation, chasing thoughts, feelings, and impressions, nirvana is the end of it all, no more chase. But that sounds totally boring, to simply stop doing things. Fortunately, a bodhisattva is eternally liberating beings out of immeasurable compassion. That is definitely a virtuous (therefore happy) existence. As for the part that a bodhisattva knows that there is nothing to attain, let's leave that as a theory or far away aim. What that tells me is not that we are all poor helplessly deluded beings far away from the buddhas. It tells me that we love to be busy, and it is practically unimaginable even for Buddhists to accept that life is not only empty (of both meaning and purpose) but also suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 5th, 2016 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: One continuous mistake

Content:

barndoor said:

Gregory Wonderwheel had a recent blog post about "Practice is Enlightenment" <http://wonderwheels.blogspot.co.uk/2015/12/the-misnomer-of-dogens-practice-is.html> in which he argues that "Practice is Enlightenment" is a misunderstanding of 修證, pronounced in Japanese as shusho. He argues that Dogen was really asserting the identity of practice and its proof, or verification. I just wondered what anyone here with a knowledge of Dogen's original text makes of this.

Astus wrote:

"The literal meaning of sho (証) is "proof," "evidence," or as I usually translate it, "verification." In terms of Buddhist practice, sho is usually thought of as the result of practice. The compound word shusho (修証), for example, is an abbreviation of mon shi shu sho (聞思修証). Mon (聞) is "to hear," shi (思) is "to think," shu (修) is "practice," and sho (証) is "verification." When we listen to a Dharma talk, we may think about its contents and try to understand them, for instance. If we consider the teachings meaningful, we adopt them as part of our practice, and as a result of our experience we may come to know directly that the teachings are true. So sho, the result of shu

(practice), is proof or evidence acquired from direct experience that something is true."
(Shohaku Okumura: Realizing Genjokoan p 128-29)

The term 聞思修證 occurs as early as the Dasheng yi zhang (大乘義章, T44n1851) written by Huiyuan (慧遠, 523-592). In that treatise at one point (669a18) he splits 證 ("verification") to two parts: 報生識智 (karmic consciousness knowledge) and 證智 (experiential knowledge), where of the two the latter is genuine insight. Later (0685c07) there's a definition for 修 as meditation (禪定) and for 證 it is abiding in the principle (住理). And while my interpretation of Huiyuan can be way off (as I have only searched for the exact term for this post), it seems quite clear that "verification" is equal to insight, the logical consequence of the first three.

An even more important place for 證 is the expression 證無生法忍 - realising/verifying the patience for unborn dharmas (anutpattika-dharma-ksanti). And that is a good example of enlightenment.

See also this essay by Rev. Seijun Ishii: http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms07.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 6th, 2016 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: One continuous mistake

Content:

Temicco said:

Practice-enlightenment always struck me as the opposite of subitism -- is yours a common interpretation of Dogen?

Astus wrote:

It is a version of subitism. Zazen is not a practice to attain enlightenment, but enlightenment itself.

See this essay by Francis H. Cook: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8591/2498>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 6th, 2016 at 2:55 AM

Title: Re: Meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

Most types of meditation are like any other skill, it takes time to learn. However, it should be recognised that while in the West the form of silent sitting is taken to be the practice of Buddhism, that is a biased interpretation. First of all, there are six paramitas, of those only one is related to that kind of silent sitting, and that's not even the most important of them.

Also, in East Asian Mahayana there are two widespread meditation techniques: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nianfo> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hua_Tou. While you may use them in a seated position, that is not necessary at all. Other methods, like doing prostrations and reciting sutras are also popular. Tibetan Buddhism offers a large variety of ways of meditative practices as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 6th, 2016 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: One continuous mistake

Content:

MalaBeads said:

I have never heard that before. That "one continuous mistake" is a misquote. Do you have the actual quote?

Astus wrote:

See this post by Koun Franz: <http://nyoho.com/2013/04/01/here-i-am/>.

The source (Eihei Koroku, vol 1, discourse 88, p 131-2):

Enlightenment Day Dharma Hall Discourse

The teacher Dogen said: Two thousand years later, we are the descendants [of Sakyamuni]. Two thousand years ago, he was our ancestral father. He is muddy and wet from following and chasing after the waves. It can be described like this, but also there is the principle of the way [that we must] make one mistake after another. What is this like? Whether Buddha is present or not present, I trust he is right under our feet. Face after face is Buddha's face; fulfillment after fulfillment is Buddha's fulfillment. Here making mistakes is chasing after waves, and that means buddha-function. Then he clarifies that all functions, all appearances are the buddha's function.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 7th, 2016 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: From a Buddhist point of view, how to live your life properly ?[Life choices in the light of impermanence and death]

Content:

Astus wrote:

... in the light of impermanence and death:

Karma is what defines both present and future, so

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noble_Eightfold_Path#Right_effort is crucial. Beyond that, if you aim higher, for liberation, it is achievable through contemplation on impermanence and death, and by that realising that not even the best of heavens is worth aspiring for, much less anything below that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 7th, 2016 at 9:40 PM

Title: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Astus wrote:

From Jingde Chuandeng Lu, vol 14 (T51n2076, p311, a4-17):

Zen master Danxia Tianran entered the hall and addressed the monks, saying, "All of you here must take care of the temple and monastery. Things in this place were not made or named by you, and have they not been given as offerings? Formerly I studied with Shitou, and he taught me that I must personally protect these things. This is not to be discussed further.

Each of you here has a place to put your cushion and sit. Why do you suspect you need something else? Is Zen something you can explain? Is a buddha something you can become? I don't want to hear a single word about Buddhism.

All of you, look and see! Skillful means and expedience, the unlimited mind of benevolence, compassion, joy, and detachment—these things aren't received from someplace else. Not an inch of these things is evident. Skillful means is Manjushri Bodhisattva. Expedience is Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Do you still want to go seeking after something? Don't go using the Buddhist scriptures to look for emptiness!

These days Zen students are all in a tizzy, practicing Zen and asking about Tao. I don't have any Dharma for you to practice here! And there isn't any doctrine to be confirmed. Just eat and drink. Everyone can do that. Don't harbor doubt. It's the same everywhere! Just recognize that Shakyamuni was an ordinary old fellow. You must see for yourself. Don't spend your life trying to win some competitive trophy, blindly misleading other blind people, all of you marching right into hell, floundering in duality! I've nothing more to say. Take care!"

(tr. A. Ferguson: Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 129)

Alternative translation by Beishi Guohan:

Chan Master Danxia Tianran entered the hall and said,

"All of you here have to take good care of your own spiritual treasury, which is not attainable through labeling and describing by the effortful-effort of your deluded mind, and there is even no need to talk about attainment and non-attainment. ... You neither need to rely on the sutras and teachings, nor to fall into nothingness. These days Chan practitioners are all in a tizzy, investigating Chan and inquiring into the Way. Here in my place, there is no Way to be cultivated and no Dharma to be realized. Merely drink when you're thirsty and eat when you're hungry by way of clear awareness without self-referential deluded thinking. Just always act with this Mind in all places in your daily life to realize that Shakyamuni is the ordinary person."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2016 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

Content:

Iconoclast said:

I'm still on the fence about Dogen's work. I just don't want to buy a big, expensive volume if I'm not going to understand what I'm reading. My mind is thoroughly Westernized, scholastic even. All of my deeper reading has been of Reformed Scholastic theologians so I really struggle with Eastern cosmology and philosophy.

Astus wrote:

You don't need to buy a thing, you can read the Shobogenzo online in two different translations, although personally I have found the <https://books.google.com/books?id=QTfqAwAAQBAJ> version the best for general reading. You better start with his http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/common_html/zuimonki/ anyway. Then read a few introductory works, like <https://books.google.com/books?id=tTs6AwAAQBAJ> and <https://books.google.com/books?id=dw0ldBlmyRYC>. Anyway, as I see it, Dogen is difficult to read, especially without prior knowledge of East Asian Buddhism, particularly of Song era Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2016 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Often in Zen, the "ordinary" is most extra-ordinary and miraculous if properly perceived. The fantastic and extra-ordinary is right at the heart of the most seemingly mundane, commonplace and ordinary.

Astus wrote:

The point of saying that Shakyamuni is an ordinary being is to remove dreamy ideas about the nature of reality. What's the point of calling ordinary fantastic?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 2016 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: in enlightenment we only loose?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

is it true that in enlightenment we only loose and do not gain? I think that the answer is yes. and you?

Astus wrote:

What is there to lose or gain? Trying to get rid of something is as mistaken as trying to gain something. Rather, one should see that all experiences are impermanent: things arise, there is no loss; things pass away, there is no gain.

Śāriputra, foolish ordinary beings do not see the one dharma realm in accord with true reality. Because they do not see the one dharma realm in accord with true reality, they

elicit the wrong views in their minds, saying that the realm of sentient beings increases or that the realm of sentient beings decreases.
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2016 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Jeff H said:

I think the point is that within each ordinary being there is buddha-nature to be realized and Buddha is an ordinary being who realized buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

That is like the common tathagatagarbha doctrine, where buddha-nature is taught to raise hopes.

Linji says:

There are a bunch of shavepate monks who say to students, 'The Buddha is the Ultimate; he attained buddhahood only after he came to the fruition of practices carried on through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas.' Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours.
(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 19)

It basically comes down to this:

When one is deluded as to the self-nature, one is a sentient being, but when one realizes the self-nature, one is a buddha.
(Platform Sutra, ch 3, p 39, BDK Edition)

In other words, do not wait for mystical lights and special feelings, just look at your own mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2016 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Because the ordinary is fantastic. Chopping wood, fetching water, scratching one's nose or taking a breath. Wondrous.

Astus wrote:

When you call it that, it reminds me of <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN->

8G0HCD5U. Still, what is your reason for talking that way? What does it mean to you?
Because to me it's just unnecessary embellishment and possibly a source of confusion.

jundo cohen said:
But the same Linji also said ...

Astus wrote:
What you quote simply says that the real buddha is one's own mind. Not anything to be sought outside (or attained inside), nor something 'fantastic'.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2016 at 9:59 PM
Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow
Content:

jundo cohen said:
I believe that there are so many people in this world who see the ordinary as merely "ordinary", nothing special, tedious, trying, sometimes amusing and often frustrating, sometimes beautiful and frequently very ugly, the source of Dukkha.

Astus wrote:
Such views are certainly problematic, the causes of problems actually. Exchanging it to another view, however, is not a solution, although "positive thinking" may prove helpful in some cases. Rather, it is seeing through every view as a view that brings about release from attachments.

jundo cohen said:
But it is hard for people to see what a wonder is the so-called "ordinary", how brass or gold is truly Gold, that breathing, an aching back or petting the cat is a more incredible feat than levitation.

Astus wrote:
Appreciation of everyday matters creates a good mood, and I do not doubt its beneficial effects. But it's not the same level as the teaching of the equality of beings and buddhas.

jundo cohen said:
If one merely describes "ordinary" as just "ordinary", perhaps the point is missed.

Astus wrote:
That is possible.

jundo cohen said:
Folks do not realize how special is this "nothing special", and how much can be attained by this "nothing to attain".

Astus wrote:
True, it can sound boring, therefore it is usually not recommended for those without

motivation. On the other hand, why waste time with building up a nicer view if one can just get rid of one's present concepts? That is, after all, the direct method of Zen.

jundo cohen said:

There are many people who see shitting and pissing and changing light bulbs as shitting and pissing and changing light bulbs.

There are those who see Grand Shining Buddhas Exhibiting Major and Minor Marks as "Luminous"

But how easy to realize a broken light bulb and all "ordinary" functions as a Grand Shining Buddha's Major and Minor Marks?

Astus wrote:

First of all: great question!

While we might be on the same page on this matter as far as the meaning goes, it is about the way it is expressed that I can still raise an issue. My take is that there is no need to get anything grand and luminous put in the equations, rather just start from the broken bulb and point out how it is an essenceless conceptual creation. In other words, in order to drop body and mind, why first build up a magnificent buddha-body?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 9th, 2016 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

seeker242 said:

What's the point of saying he's ordinary?

Astus wrote:

To recognise that one is not a deficient being far from the perfection of buddhas. To see that buddhahood is about this life: one's present actions, words, and thoughts.

seeker242 said:

Can "ordinary" even exist without "fantastic"? Ordinary and fantastic are opposites are they not? How can thinking in opposites itself not be "floundering in duality"?

Astus wrote:

There is already a dual idea of ordinary and fantastic in one's mind. The point of showing that buddhahood is not in the category of fantastic is to clarify that realisation is seeing how things are now, not changing into something new. It is not about besmirching the Triple Jewel, dragging the sacred into the dust, but enlightening what holiness actually is in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2016 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is pretty clear from these statements, that "Buddha is an ordinary guy" simple means that the conduct of the Buddha, an awakened person, was completely unfabricated. Jeez, you Zen guys make everything so damn complicated and wordy. Must be a Chinese cultural thing.

Astus wrote:

There is a teaching by Mazu Daoyi where he says that "ordinary mind is the way" (平常心是道), it is also referred to in case 19 in the Wumenguan. That ordinary mind could be called "unfabricated". In that sermon he quotes the Vimalakirti Sutra: "Neither the practice of ordinary people (非凡夫行), nor the practice of sages (非聖賢行), that is the Bodhisattva's practice." The term translated in Danxia's sermon for "ordinary fellow" (凡夫) is like in the quote, not in the saying of ordinary mind (平常心). That is, ordinary person (凡夫) means prthagjana. Still, Mazu and Danxia are in agreement, as Mazu explains his ordinary mind in a similar fashion (tr from M. Poceski: Sun-Face Buddha, p 65): "Just like now, whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, responding to situations and dealing with people as they come: everything is the Way. The Way is identical with the dharmadhatu."

As I have written here before, the point of stating that "Just recognize that Shakyamuni was an ordinary old fellow." is to know (識得) that he was no different from us. To quote the Vimalakirti Sutra (ch 7, BDK Edition, p 128): "On behalf of the self-conceited, the Buddha explained that emancipation is the transcendence of licentiousness, anger, and stupidity. If one is not self-conceited, the Buddha explains that licentiousness, anger, and stupidity are emancipation." In other words, there is no state of being unfabricated to be attained, it is to see that all fabrications are already the unfabricated.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2016 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

the Zen teaching situation is in part about creating a kind of context for encountering something. So all kinds of outrageous and confusing things can happen: the teacher charges in and kills a cat in front of everyone, for example. What was THAT about? I think the attempts to mobilize the literary figures of ancient Ch'an masters in the present are attempts to introduce someone to this kind of learning environment. Whether it's effective or not is knowable only after the fact--if it worked on the intended audience.

Astus wrote:

If there is a mechanism to describe the way "wordy Zen" works, it is like jokes. It is meant to prompt a turn in one's thinking from grasping at concepts to a total release. Not the type of release of falling into nothingness, but one that comes from

understanding, from wisdom. There is actually a technique for this called the huatou method, something that Dogen did not actually agree with by the way.

Literary styles aside, if you look at the practical side of Zen, it is very simple. The huatou method is a concession to serve as an entry point, just like Soto's focus on the sitting posture. As Hanshan wrote: "to even speak about practice is really like the last alternative". But the essence of Bodhidharma's message remains the same: see the nature of mind. Everything else are just temporary instructions, better not take them too seriously.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2016 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

This is not to idolize the Buddha but simply to acknowledge the import of the teaching. It is a soteriological teaching (in the technical language of scholarship) that is, concerned with deliverance from the wheel of birth and death. It isn't simply about rationalising it.

Astus wrote:

Showing that the buddha is one's mind and not something far away is to eradicate the distance created by the elevated status of the goal. Another function of this kind of teaching is to point out that there is no special knowledge or experience that one should acquire through various methods, but simply to recognise what is already there. Actually that is how liberation is gained anyway.

Wayfarer said:

Do you think it's possible you're reading a kind of 20th Century existentialist/nihilist view into the Zen texts?

Astus wrote:

I tell you what I read, then you can decide what it is.

Dissatisfaction with life comes from aspiring for peace and happiness in experiences. Experiences are completely unstable and unreliable, therefore they provide neither peace nor happiness. When it is recognised that experiences are like that, there is no more any reason to be dissatisfied. There are many ways to realise that, and what Zen teaches is the direct path to reflect on one's present experiences right now.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2016 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: in enlightenment we only loose?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

is there not a goal in Buddhism of loosing a self centered attitude?

Astus wrote:

How about gaining a selfless attitude?

tomschwarz said:

understood about a point farther along on the path, emptiness, no increase no decrease. but to begin to embody that realization we must loose quite a bit of fundemental ignorance. no?

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is lack of knowledge, so it is not actually something to lose. Rather, one needs to gain knowledge to, figuratively speaking, lose ignorance. And what knowledge is that? That there is neither increase nor decrease, no loss or gain.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 10th, 2016 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: is Cheontae/Tendai Seon/Zen and Pureland is the same?

Content:

ShineeSeoul said:

so why there is big deal between schools? and what sect you must follow?

Astus wrote:

Devotional practices of the laity and the monastic regulations are similar in East Asia, although Japan is somewhat different in its monastic set up. As for the differences between Tiantai, Chan, and Jingtu, there are a few actually. What should be clear, however, is that except for Japan, these are not really sects existing as distinct organisations, but rather areas of study. It's similar to how while all South Asian Buddhists are put under the category of Theravada, there are numerous groups that follow different methods and philosophies.

Tiantai has its own practices (e.g. samatha-vipasyana, four samadhis) and doctrines (e.g. three truths, 3000 worlds in a thought). It is a fairly comprehensive teaching of Mahayana that organises all into its own system. Those on this forum who specialise in it can certainly tell more, plus the differences between Tiantai in the various countries.

Chan in China is mostly a general term for Buddhism, and monasteries are usually called Chan temples, but this does not have any effect on what actually happens there. If we were to narrow it down to something actually related to Bodhidharma's traditions, Chan exists primarily as the practice of huatou and the occasional references to Chan stories. If you look at http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chanmed1.pdf 's and http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chandew.pdf 's manuals, you'll see that they describe Tiantai and classic Indian methods, even though both are nominally Chan. But of course there are teachers who actually specialise in the teachings of the historical Chan School, but again, it is nothing exclusive.

Seon in Korea is heavily influenced by the teachings of Wonhyo, Jinul, and Hyujeong,

who are in turn continue the type of Chan propagated by Zongmi, Yongming, and Dahui. It is a combination of Huayan/Hwa'eom theory with Chan/Seon huatou/hwadu practice. But besides that there are individual differences between what a specific teacher or group follows. For instance, Seungsan, founder of the Kwan Um Zen School, taught koan practice (Japanese style) instead of hwadu meditation, while Daehaeng, founder of the Hanmaum Seon Centre, did not teach either hwadu or koan practice.

Zen in Japan is another story. Today they differentiate three branches: Soto, Rinzai, and Obaku. Soto, at least its modern form, is focused on seated meditation as its central method, and doctrinally they concentrate on the works of their Japanese founder. Rinzai and Obaku are not really two schools. On one hand, they have a joint council as a unified representational body, on the other there are several independent monastic groups within Rinzai. They generally follow the methods propagated by Hakuin, i.e. koan practice, that is somewhat separate from the huatou/hwadu style. It is also important to note that in Japan most of the monastics (clergy) are non-celibate, unlike in other countries where they still follow that full Pratimoksha.

Pure Land in China and Korea is not a separate school but, as noted before, a type of practice. What generally unifies Pure Land followers everywhere is the intention to attain birth in Sukhavati, but since practically any Mahayana practitioner can have such a goal, it is not that simple to draw some clear lines. So we could say that those who focus on some kind of practice centred on Amitabha and wish such a birth are those who could be considered Pure Land followers. Japan again presents a unique situation where there are some schools - independent organisations - that explicitly focus on Amitabha and birth in Sukhavati in an exclusive way.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Matt J said:

Zen is a direct pointing at the nature of mind, which in my experience is much different.

Astus wrote:

And what is that direct pointing at the nature of mind? How is it any different from seeing that all are unstable, unsatisfactory, and impersonal?

From Huineng (Platform Sutra, BDK Edition):

"The wondrous natures of people of this world are empty, without a single dharma that can be perceived. The emptiness of the self-natures is also like this."

"To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

"If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e.,

superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature."

"There is in the self-nature fundamentally not a single dharma that can be perceived."

From Mazu's sermons (tr Poceski):

"Whatever arises in the mind is called form; when one knows all forms to be empty, then birth is identical with no-birth. If one realizes this mind, then one can always wear one's robes and eat one's food. Nourishing the womb of sagehood, one spontaneously passes one's time: what else is there to do?"

"It is because of not knowing how to return to the source, that they follow names and seek forms, from which confusing emotions and falsehood arise, thereby creating various kinds of karma. When within a single thought one reflects and illuminates within, then everything is the Holy Mind."

"The mind can be spoken of [in terms of its two aspects]: birth and death, and suchness. The mind as suchness is like a clear mirror which can reflect images. The mirror symbolizes the mind; the images symbolize the dharmas. If the mind grasps at dharmas, then it gets involved in external causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth and death. If the mind does not grasp at dharmas, that is suchness."

From Dazhu's treatise (tr Lok To):

"If you understand clearly that your mind does not abide anywhere at all, then you are clearly seeing your Original Mind, which is also referred to as "clearly seeing the nature of seeing." Just this Mind, that abides nowhere at all, is the Mind of Buddha and the Mind of liberation, the Mind of Bodhi and the Mind of the Uncreate. It is also referred to as realizing that the nature of form is void. Finally, it is what the sutra calls "Attaining the patient endurance of the Uncreate.""

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: is Cheontae/Tendai Seon/Zen and Pureland is the same?

Content:

ShineeSeoul said:

Zen still practice the recitation of Amitabha, they might do it for different reason but they still do it

Astus wrote:

The intention matters a lot, even more than the practice itself. If one aims at seeing the nature of mind in this life, that is Chan practice. If one aims at attaining birth in Sukhavati, that is Pure Land practice. And one can do both at the same time as well. But they are still not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I have said before, I don't think that is an adequate depiction.

Astus wrote:

It is just the four noble truths that I have rephrased.

Wayfarer said:

Buddhism generally is not simply a matter of accepting the reality of ordinary life, but cutting off the root of suffering altogether, through understanding the factors that give rise to 're-birth' (whether in this moment or in 'future lives').

Astus wrote:

The root of suffering (and rebirth) is attachment to appearances mistaken for substantial objects. Once that mistake is removed then things are seen as they are, that is, empty. That's why in zazen the instruction is to let things come and go, as there is nothing to manipulate, and that is the buddhas' realisation, as it is.

Wayfarer said:

But as I said before, Zen like any school of Buddhism is soteriological, which isn't just 'accepting things as they are'. If that was all there was too it, there wouldn't be Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

There is the problem of suffering, of dissatisfaction. It is solved by seeing emptiness. How is that not good enough?

Wayfarer said:

Hence 'paravritti', which is a 'turning about' in the deepest seat of consciousness, which is surely a description for 'religious conversion'.

Astus wrote:

Such conversion is the end of defilements through the realisation of the twofold emptiness, and from that the four wisdoms and three bodies manifest.

"The conversion of support means that, when its counteragent arises, the other-dependent pattern forever alters its basic nature as the defiled aspect and forever realizes its purified aspect. This conversion of support has six varieties: ... 6) extensive conversion—the realization by bodhisattvas of the non-self of things, wherein by understanding the merits of quietude and insight, they both abandon and do not abandon [transmigration]."

(The Summary of the Great Vehicle, ch 9, BDK Edition, p 99-100)

I don't see how that is particularly different from what I have already said.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: is Cheontae/Tendai Seon/Zen and Pureland is the same?

Content:

ShineeSeoul said:

still stressing upon differences, its not big deal, you can be in a chan school and recite Amitabha to reborn in Pureland, its all at the end depend on individual intention more

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure I follow. There is no such church as "Chan School", it is not a club one can be a member of, but a teaching and practice one either follows or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 7:50 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Matt J said:

How is anicca, anatta, and dukkha able to see, hear, sense, and know?

Astus wrote:

It is to realise that the six kinds of experiences are empty. That is the meaning of no-abiding and no-thought. What the original mind is is nothing other than the non-abiding mind, or simply no-mind. So, what one should recognise is that seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing are without anything to grasp. However, assuming an independent awareness, that is the belief in a soul.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2016 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: Why Pureland?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Aiming for Sukhavati is a great choice for any Mahayana practitioner. There is no other path that guarantees buddhahood in one lifetime for everyone. So, unless you make it to at least the first bhumi now, Pure Land is the way to go. And if you look at the many forms of practices in Chinese PL teachings, it has a great offer of all sorts of methods, in case recitation does not satiate your needs.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2016 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Au contraire, the Buddha was quite different from us. He was completely free from all afflictions, and had knowledge of all modes of awakening. Can you say the same? If not, then you must admit you and the Buddha are different.

Astus wrote:

What am I and what is the Buddha? What is that freedom and knowledge you point out as differences? Dogen writes in Genjokoan (SBGZ, BDK Edition, vol 1, p 41): "Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded about realization are ordinary beings." That is, to see appearances as self is delusion, to see them just as they are is clarity. As the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment says (ch 2, tr Muller): "when you know illusion, you will immediately be free ... Freedom from illusion is in itself enlightenment". To further clarify the point:

"If you conceive of the Buddha in terms of the characteristics of purity, brilliance, and liberation, and if you conceive of sentient beings in terms of the characteristics of impurity, darkness, and samsara—if your understanding is such as this, then you will never attain bodhi even after passing through eons [of religious practice] as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River. This is because you are attached to characteristics. There is only this One Mind and not the least bit of dharma that can be attained." (Huangbo, in Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2016 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Simon E. said:

But you see, or perhaps it is all so familiar to you that you don't..that is exactly the kind of freemasoneque jargon I was talking about. I am not denying that it is meaningful to you. But it is completely meaningless to me. It's just noises.

Astus wrote:

Huangbo is still relatively easy to read, as most of the text is original 9th century, when Chan was still pretty close to general East Asian Mahayana. Although it can take a while to familiarise yourself with it. However, if you look at works a century or two later, like the Blue Cliff Record and Dogen, it is developed Chan and it is a lot harder to penetrate. So in that quote Huangbo is just alluding to the Diamond Sutra's passages about the Buddha being without characteristics.

E.g. in ch 5:

"All things that have characteristics are false and ephemeral. If you see all characteristics to be non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata."

And the stanza in ch 26:

"Someone who tries to discern me in form
Or seek me in sound
Is practicing non-Buddhist methods
And will not discern the Tathāgata"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2016 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are a bundle of afflictions who continually blunders through samsara because your afflictions generate actions which result in your own suffering.

Astus wrote:

That's it! We look at ourselves and see only all sorts of mundane, vulgar, basic, coarse, and totally ordinary things. While at the same time we think the Buddha is completely the opposite. The path is to go from mundane to supramundane, from delusion to enlightenment. As for the paths, in Zen there are all sorts of ways to categorise teachings, but the ultimate one is always sudden enlightenment. Among other things it means realising that afflictions are bodhi, to quote a general Mahayana concept. It also means the insight into the dharmas being unborn.

The master said, "The afflictions are bodhi. They are nondual and not separate. If one [tries to] use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, this is the interpretation of the two [Hinayana] vehicles [held by] those fit for the sheep and deer [carts]. Those of superior wisdom and Mahayana capabilities are completely different." Xie Jian said, "What is the Mahayana interpretation?"

The master said, "Ordinary people see brightness and ignorance as different, but the wise comprehend that they are nondual in their nature. The nondual nature is the true nature, and the true nature is present in the ordinary and stupid [common people] without decrease, and in the sages and wise ones without increase. One abides in the afflictions without disruption; one resides in meditation without serenity. Not annihilationist and not permanent, neither coming nor going; neither located in an intermediate location nor in the internal and external; neither generated nor extinguished, permanently abiding without movement—this is called the Way." (Platform Sutra, ch 9, BDK Edition, p 80)

"If he perceives there to be generation [of the elements of reality] and moves toward [a state of] extinction, he will fall into the way of the srvakas. If he does not perceive there to be generation but only perceives extinction, he will fall into the way of the solitary enlightened ones (pratyekabuddhas).

The dharmas were originally not generated, and neither are they now extinguished. Do not activate the two views, and neither detest nor enjoy [things]. All the myriad dharmas are only the One Mind, and after [one realizes this] they become the vehicle of the Buddhas."

(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 24)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are hundreds and thousands of texts written about this, but at the end of the day, if you are churning out verbiage with no change in yourself, then, you are just a parrot.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, this is a well known teaching in Mahayana, and it is not any kind of novelty that is expressed by saying that the Buddha was an ordinary being. It is something one should realise for oneself.

"people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So the essay that this OP linked to in support, doesn't actually say 'life is meaningless'. In fact, it reaches the opposite conclusion!

Astus wrote:

What is that meaning? To attain liberation. Just as I have acknowledged there. What does liberation mean? To fully realise that there is nothing in samsara that is worth clinging to. Not only this life is without anything to rely on, but even the highest possible heavens are to be discarded. Also, on a personal level, not a single thought or feeling is one's real being, so all should be let go. That's how in life - in this series of experiences - there is nothing meaningful.

Wayfarer said:

Now I agree that Buddhism states that 'the world is without essence and substance'. That is straight-ahead teaching of emptiness. But 'without purpose and meaning' is another thing altogether.

Astus wrote:

What gives meaning to life is when there is something to hold on to and/or something to strive for. Karma makes life meaningful in the sense that no act remains without

consequence. On the other hand, acts are conditioned, and both holding on and striving are the very causes of suffering. Without a substance there can be no meaning. Hence it is repeatedly taught in Zen that one should cease seeking and realise that Shakyamuni was an everyday person.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

jundo cohen said:

This life and world is overflowing in meaning! Our way is not nihilism. For one, the meaning of life is life, just as the meaning of drinking tea is to drink tea, savoring as well that the tea cup holds within it all the universe. We can come to see every instant, every gesture, every up or down, every smile or tear as just the same ... holding and embodying all the universe, each and all just Buddha in life.

Astus wrote:

You just made a very fine empty fist.

That is: a clever way to say that there is no meaning, as meaning/purpose is necessarily beyond the act/thing itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But I think it is because there is something of greater worth than the things people are inclined to treasure.

Astus wrote:

As nirvana is the denial of samsara, it makes everything in/as samsara worthless and meaningless, exactly because it is greater than everything people normally treasure.

Wayfarer said:

Is that something you would concur with? You did cite it, after all.

Astus wrote:

That article is quite clear.

"According to Buddhism, the reality of life is dependent originated. The only way to transcend the state of relativity and experience the state of absoluteness, is to understand, grasp and experience the nature of dependent-origination. ... Conversely, if these self-attachments can be eradicated, the conditions to live will not arise. Then, we will be free from the cycle of live and death and attain the state of"

That is, life is fully dependent, and one should end the cycle of life completely, that is liberation. And that is what the article calls the ultimate significance of life, to fully and utterly end life.

Wayfarer said:

I quoted previously the passage in the Pali nikayas where the Buddha provides an account of what he is, and he explicitly says he is not a 'human being' (manussa)

Astus wrote:

It is not about what is a buddha and what is a sentient being. It is a given that there is a general difference between the two. However, that conventional concept is also an obstacle, so Danxia says that one should recognise that Shakyamuni was an ordinary fellow. This is the realisation of emptiness, or in other words, seeing buddha-nature. As for some scriptural references:

"The appearance of the realm of sentient beings is just like that of the realm of Buddhas."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>)

"Therefore, Śāriputra, not apart from the realm of sentient beings is the dharma body; not apart from the dharma body is the realm of sentient beings. The realm of sentient beings is in effect the dharma body; the dharma body is in effect the realm of sentient beings. Śāriputra, these two dharmas under different names have the same meaning."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>)

"Mañjuśrī, as the open sky is [pure, taint free, and attachment free], so too is bodhi. As bodhi is, so too are dharmas. As dharmas are, so too are all sentient beings. As all sentient beings are, so too are worlds. As worlds are, so too is nirvāṇa."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra46.html>)

And what identity is this about?

"What is meant by understanding the true reality of a sentient being? It means achieving a clear understanding of the Mahāyāna."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra48a.html>)

"All dharmas are empty like dreams.

Without self-essence, they are as pure as the open sky.

Dharmas have neither self nor no-self,

And I know that they are like illusions and lightning.

As a sentient being is born and dies,

No dharma can be captured.

The beginning, middle, and end have no self-essence,

Nor does a sentient being's life.

However, a sentient being receives requitals according to its karmas

And endlessly transmigrates through life-paths.
If one trains to attain bodhi,
One will come to know that dharmas have no self-essence."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra48a.html>)

Wayfarer said:

So again I think your interpretation is based on rationalising the human condition by not looking for any way out of it or anything beyond it. It's like you're taking the 'everyday mind' teaching and turning it upside down. It is more like reconciling yourself to the idea that life is basically meaningless.

Astus wrote:

There are the five aggregates and six sensory areas. The only difference between buddhas and beings is whether there is attachment to them or not. The aggregates and areas are no problem in themselves, grasping any of them as self is the mistake. However, there has never been any self anywhere to begin with, so selflessness is not a special state to gain.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

That is not liberation, Astus, that is a realization. But liberation and realization are not the same thing, though the two are often confused. Liberation is freedom from affliction that causes rebirth in samsara. If one does not understand this, one has understood nothing of the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

When there is nothing seen to be attached to, how can affliction arise?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, the difference between buddhas and sentient beings is the presence or absence of traces.

Astus wrote:

Traces depend on ignorance. Ignorance is removed by the knowledge of suchness, of emptiness. That's how when the aggregates are realised as insubstantial, there is no more basis for afflictions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Matt J said:

If that were the case, then we would achieve enlightenment every time we go unconscious.

Astus wrote:

What affliction is there in unconsciousness? Alas, consciousness arises again, that's why the path of asamjnikas are faulty.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 11:35 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Matt J said:

Ignorance.

Astus wrote:

How do you define ignorance?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2016 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

As long as one has not eradicated latent afflictions [anusayas], one continues to take rebirth in samsara, even after realizing emptiness

Astus wrote:

What maintains and what eradicates latent afflictions?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Ignorance sustains them and prajñā eliminates them, but it is not the case that prajñā can eliminate all the traces sustained by ignorance in a single moment. This is why there are nine grades of affliction — from course-course to subtle-subtle— that need to be removed gradually, after one has realized emptiness on the path of seeing.

Astus wrote:

That is, in the role of wisdom eliminating ignorance there is no disagreement.

"You must realize that there is fundamentally no distinction between the buddha natures of the foolish and the wise—it is only because of delusion and enlightenment that [you think they are] different and that there are foolish and wise."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 28)

So this is where we get really into the Zen part then, i.e. sudden enlightenment. Because Huineng also says (p 30):

"To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of prajñā, to cultivate this practice is the practice of prajñā. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body."

And (p 31): "To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

Also (p 33): "If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."

And a clear description of what this Dharma is (p 33-34):

"in wisdom's contemplation both interior and exterior are clearly penetrated, and one recognizes one's own fundamental mind. If you recognize your fundamental mind, this is the fundamental emancipation. And if you attain emancipation, this is the samādhi of prajñā, this is nonthought. What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. ... to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, what Huineng says is nothing special. The realization of a first stage bodhisattva is the same wisdom a Buddha fully realizes. The difference between an ārya bodhisattva and buddha is whether or not that realization is sustained 24/7/365. Bodhisattvas have equipoise and post-equipoise phases, where they may still act out afflictively. Buddhas are only in equipoise.

What accounts for this is that veil of twin obscurations a bodhisattva must burn away with diligent practice, and of course, in every lifetime, bodhisattvas on the impure stages regress completely to the level of common persons, and need to begin again, albeit, advancing more rapidly. It is only when they reach the eighth bhumi that this regression ceases and they attain power over birth.

Astus wrote:

What you say is called in Zen "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice".

"As for "gradual cultivation," although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the buddhas, the beginningless proclivities of habit (vāsanā) are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Therefore he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening so that this efficacy of gradual suffusion is perfected; he constantly nurtures the embryo of sanctity, and after a long, long time he becomes a sage. Hence it is called gradual cultivation."

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 216-217)

As for it being equal to the first bhumi, at least Sheng-yen agrees with that,

"At most, enlightenment in Chan Buddhism is something like attaining the "pure Dharma-eye" (S. dharmacaksu-visuddha; C. fayanjing) that is, seeing the path (jiandao), which corresponds to the first fruit [stream-entry] in Nikaya Buddhism."

(Sheng-yen: Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p 102)

However, the Platform Sutra takes neither of those positions.

"The self-nature becomes enlightened itself, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the dharmas. The dharmas are quiescent—how could there be a progression?"

(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK Edition, p 75)

Neither does Mazu.

"Following the principle is awakening, and following phenomena is ignorance. Ignorance is to be ignorant of one's original mind. Awakening is to awake to one's original nature. Once awakened, one is awakened forever, there being no more ignorance. Like, when the sun comes, then all darkness disappears. When the sun of p~ajMem erges, it does not coexist with the darkness of the defilements."

(Sun-Face Buddha, p 67-68)

Dazhu.

"If one see his own Nature, he is no longer a worldly person. If one is suddenly enlightened about the Supreme Vehicle, he has transcended both the worldly and the holy stages. Only a deluded man talks about worldly and holy. The enlightened man transcends both samsara and nirvana. While the deluded man talks about action and

basic principles, the enlightened man talks about the Great Function without limits. The deluded man seeks to obtain or attain something, while the enlightened man neither seeks, obtains nor attains anything whatsoever. The deluded man yearns for attainment in some distant kalpa in the future, while the enlightened man perceives the nature of all things suddenly and instantaneously."

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Huangbo.

"To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness."

(Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 20)

Dogen.

"The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment."

(https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

Or Menzan.

"Eihei Dogen went to China, practiced under Nyojo, and received the transmission of this jijuyu-zanmai. After he returned to Japan, he advocated this samadhi, calling it shinjin-datsuraku datsuraku-shinjin (dropping off body and mind, body and mind dropped off). This is another name for anuttarasamyaku-sambodhi (ultimate awareness)."

(Jijuyu-zanmai <http://terebess.hu/zen/JijuyuZanmai.rtf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

From the perspective of one in a state of equipoise, there is no progression. From the perspective of one in a state of affliction, there is progression.

Astus wrote:

Such a distinction between equipoise and post-equipoise is not used in Chan. Rather, consider the third line from the <http://terebess.hu/english/hsin.html>: "Be off by a hair, And you are as far from it as heaven from earth." (毫釐有差天地懸隔) Dogen writes exactly the same in

https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html: "And yet, if there is a hairsbreadth deviation, it is like the gap

between heaven and earth." (然而毫釐有差天地懸隔) That is, you have either realised buddha-nature or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

the fact is that buddhahood requires the elimination of the two obscurations. That does not happen in one lifetime, in general.

Astus wrote:

With seeing buddha-nature there is no place for any obscuration left.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

I am quite certain that Chan Buddhism contains the teachings about karma and knowledge obscurations. Why? Because they are discussed at length in the Lanka sūtra. Or has the Lankāvatāra Sūtra been demoted?

Astus wrote:

The Lankavatara Sutra has a special place in Chan, but not because of its contents, as it is hardly ever quoted at all, but because of the story in the Further Biographies of Eminent Monks (Xu Gaoseng Zhuan, from around 660) that Bodhidharma handed over the Lankavatara Sutra to Huike as a form of legitimising his teachings. Furthermore, as we know now from the Dunhuang texts Annals of the Transmission of the Dharma-treasure (Chuan Fabao Ji) and Record of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankavatara Sutra (Lengqie Shizi Ji), the Lankavatara Sutra had a prominent legitimising place in early Chan (that's been later called the Northern School of Shenxiu), and while in those texts Hongren (5th patriarch) is said to have taught from that scripture, we can see in the Platform Sutra - the text that eventually superseded all previous works of similar nature - that it's been switched to the Diamond Sutra. So, assuming any doctrinal or practical position of Chan from the Lankavatara Sutra is mistaken.

The sutras in currency among various factions of Zen mainly are: Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Vimalakirti Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, Amitabha Sutra, Platform Sutra, Surangama Sutra, Complete Enlightenment Sutra, Vajrasamadhi Sutra

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Anders said:

You are going to have to define what you mean by "realise buddha-nature" here.

Astus wrote:

Just the usual: no-thought. See last quote in

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=328785#p328785>.

Anders said:

Atm, you sound more like an Osho-wallah to me than a Zen practitioner, so I must be missing something here.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2016 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

My frame of reference here is Seung Sahn Sunim's Compass of Zen. But I think the first quotation you give in this post, the one by Moguja, articulates it succinctly.

Astus wrote:

Seung Sahn used a circle to describe a practitioner's progress. It goes gradually up to fully realising buddha-nature, so it's more like gradual practice, sudden enlightenment. Otherwise, he says in Compass of Zen when describing the purpose of Buddhism:

"If attain your mind—which means, if you attain your true self—then you become Buddha." (p 16)

"When you attain your true self, you become Buddha. But Buddha is not something special, and it is not something outside you. Buddha means that if you attain your true self, you attain your own mind." (p 25)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, this is exactly the distinction between an ārya's equipoise and post-equipoise. When in equipoise, one is in a state of realization, when not, then not, and one's realization remains at the level of a concept.

Astus wrote:

There is a difference between the two in that one can go in and out of equipoise, but realisation of buddha-nature is once and for ever (except for those advocating a sudden enlightenment followed by gradual practice system). So Danxia says, "Just eat and drink.

Everyone can do that. Don't harbor doubt."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

Question about the Danxia quotation you use here. It seems to me that if one is advised against harboring doubt, that the teacher knows very well that doubt can emerge, and that the student may harbor it. Is this an example of going in and out of equipoise? For the purpose of this example, how does equipoise differ from realizing (or recognizing) Buddha-nature?

Astus wrote:

It is the doubt of questioning buddha-nature, it is the fear of the void, it is the confusion about how things are, it is the lack of faith in one's own mind. As for equipoise, that is still a conditioned experience based on ignorance about the emptiness of appearances, an approximation, but not the real wisdom. Seeing the nature is the first hand confirmation that there is nothing that can be grasped, so whether the mind is moving or still are no problem. That is knowing that the Buddha was a common being.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 3:50 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

I think if you understand "equipoise" in the sense Malcolm does, which is the recognition of one's Buddha-nature, then my question about the Danxia quotation makes sense.

Astus wrote:

Seeing buddha-nature is being a buddha. Dogen often likes to quote the Lotus Sutra:

"No one but the buddhas (yuibutsu yobutsu 唯佛與佛 - this is also the title of chapter 91 of Shobogenzo) can completely know the real aspects of all dharmas".

"Although innumerable Bodhisattvas may well perfectly practise the paramitas [spiritual perfections], they might only reach the stage of the ten abodes ["bhumis"] and yet may not be able to see the Buddha-Nature."

"Such Bodhisattvas may well reach the stage of the ten soils ["bhumis" - stages of Bodhisattva development], and yet they cannot clearly see the Buddha-Nature. How could sravakas and pratyekabuddhas well see [it]?"

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 12, tr Yamamoto)

"If sravakas, pratyekabuddhas and the Bodhisattva of the ten abodes do not see the Buddha-Nature, we say "Nirvana". It is not "Great Nirvana". If they clearly see the

Buddha-Nature, there is Great Nirvana."

(ch 29)

"The Buddha-Nature of beings is what all Buddhas can see; it is not what sravakas and pratyekabuddhas can know. All beings do not see the Buddha-Nature. That is why they are all bound up by defilement and repeat birth and death. When one sees the Buddha-Nature, no bonds of defilement can tie one up. Emancipation comes and one attains Great Nirvana."

(ch 34)

"To see the Buddha-Nature is to attain unsurpassed Enlightenment. To attain unsurpassed Enlightenment is to arrive at unsurpassed Great Nirvana."

(ch 36)

"Whoever sees his nature is a buddha; whoever doesn't is a mortal. But if you can find your buddha-nature apart from your mortal nature, where is it? Our mortal nature is our buddhanature. Beyond this nature there's no buddha. The buddha is our nature. There's no buddha besides this nature. And there's no nature besides the buddha."

(Bodhidharma, Bloodstream Sermon, tr Red Pine)

"To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

"If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."

"If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."

"To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, tr McRae)

"since the mind of all sentient beings is the same as original Buddha-Nature, there is no need to practice; for if one recognizes one's own Mind and sees one's own Nature, there is nothing at all to seek outside oneself."

(Huangbo, Wan-ling Record, tr Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: What's lineage, what is it for, & how does it work?

Content:

Astus wrote:

I think it should (also) be asked why bother with claiming some kind of lineage in the first place? Sot'aesan, founder of Won Buddhism, didn't need any, nor did Sangharakshita, founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community. Same goes for Daehaeng, founder of Hanmaum Seon Centres, and Thich Thanh Tu, founder of the new Truc Lam school; and likely many others throughout Asia

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_new_religions).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

My only point is that this isn't the only perspective among Ch'an/Zen traditions, and this is legible in this very thread, and that's cool.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, there are various positions in that area, and it's perfectly fine.

"Some say that one first relies on all-at-once awakening and then can engage in step-by-step practice. Some say that relying on all-at-once practice, one step-by-step awakens. Some say that awakening and practice are both step-by-step. Some say that they are both all-at-once. Some say that the dharma has neither all-at-once nor step-by-step, that all-at-once and step-by-step are in the dispositions [of trainees]. Each of the above theories is significant."

(Zongmi on Chan, p 118)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

you have written elsewhere many times that as far as you are concerned, buddhanature and emptiness are one and the same.

Astus wrote:

Yes. It is as Huangbo says,

"If Dharma students wish to know the key to successful cultivation, they should know that it is the mind that dwells on nothing. Emptiness is the Buddha's Dharmakaya, just as the Dharmakaya is emptiness. People's usual understanding is that the Dharmakaya pervades emptiness, and that it is contained in emptiness. However, this is erroneous, for we should understand that the Dharmakaya is emptiness and that emptiness is the Dharmakaya.

If one thinks that emptiness is an entity and that this emptiness is separate from the Dharmakaya or that there is a Dharmakaya outside of emptiness, one is holding a wrong view. In the complete absence of views about emptiness, the true Dharmakaya appears. Emptiness and Dharmakaya are not different. Sentient beings and Buddhas are not different. Birth and death and Nirvana are not different. Klesa and Bodhi are not different. That alone which is beyond all form is Buddha."

(Chung-Ling Record, tr Lok To)

Malcolm said:

If however by buddhanature you mean dharmakāya, well, than yes, only buddhas can see that. But your language is so imprecise as to be deceptive.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature is the dharmakaya as well.

"The non-abiding Mind is not green, yellow, red or white. It is not long or short, nor does it come or go. It is not pure or impure, nor does it have birth or death. It is only deep and permanent stillness. This is the non-abiding Mind, which is also called the Original Body. The Original Body is the Buddha's Body, which is also called the Dharmakaya."
(Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment)

"As to the three bodies, the pure dharmakāya is your nature, the perfect and complete saṃbhogakāya is your wisdom, and the thousand billion nirmāṇakāyas are your practices (i.e., saṃskāra, "mental activities"). To speak of the three bodies apart from the fundamental nature is called 'having the bodies but being without wisdom.' If you are enlightened to [the fact that] the three bodies have no self-natures, then you will understand the bodhi of the four wisdoms."
(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK Edition, p 60)

"If you wish to differ in no way from the patriarch-buddha, just don't seek outside. The pure light in a single thought of yours—this is the dharmakāya buddha within your own house. The nondiscriminating light in a single thought of yours—this is the saṃbhogakāya buddha within your own house. The nondifferentiating light in a single thought of yours—this is the nirmāṇakāya buddha within your own house. This is the threefold body is you, listening to my discourse right now before my very eyes. It is precisely because you don't run around seeking outside that you have such meritorious activities."
(Record of Linji, p 9, tr Sasaki)

However, Linji continues with this:

"According to the masters of the sutras and śāstras, the threefold body is regarded as the ultimate norm. But in my view this is not so. The threefold body is merely a name; moreover, it is a threefold dependency. A man of old said, 'The [buddha-]bodies are posited depending upon manifested meaning; the [buddha] lands are postulated in keeping with essential substance.' Therefore we clearly know that 'dharma-natured bodies' and 'dharmanatured lands' are no more than shimmering reflections."

And later he said (p 16-17):

"According to the masters of the sutras and śāstras, the dharmakāya is regarded as basic substance and the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya as function. From my point of view the dharmakāya cannot expound the dharma. Therefore a man of old said, 'The [buddha-]bodies are posited depending upon meaning; the [buddha-]lands are postulated in keeping with substance.' So we clearly know that the dharma-nature body

and dharma-nature land are fabricated things, based on dependent understanding. Empty fists and yellow leaves used to fool a child! Spiked gorse seeds! Horned water chestnuts! What kind of juice are you looking for in such dried-up bones!"

That's because Zen's primary teaching is just the non-abiding mind (no-mind), the awareness without grasping, that is labelled the essential and ultimate teaching of the buddhas. Details beyond that are only a matter of skilful means.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Anders said:

I think it is fine to say, from the POV of internal vision, that a moment of true practise is a moment of Buddhahood. That is, as I understand it, how it is to be experienced and how it is to be actualised.

I don't think it's equally fine to extrapolate from there that Buddhahood in all given contexts, is fully accomplished in a moment of seeing the nature.

Astus wrote:

One moment of buddhahood should be followed by further moments of buddhahood.

"To always practice wisdom in all places, at all times, and in all moments of thought, without stupidity—this is the practice of prajñā. A single moment's stupidity and prajñā is eradicated, a single moment's wisdom and prajñā is generated."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 28-29)

"If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature.

Good friends, one should not reside within or without, and one's going and coming should be autonomous. One who is able to eradicate the mind of attachment will [attain] penetration unhindered. Those who are able to cultivate this practice are fundamentally no different from [what is described in] the Prajñā Sutra."

(p 32)

Anders said:

But does it follow that a moment of seeing the nature gives access to the array of means that a Buddha has for transforming sentient beings? This is after all, the reason we talk about Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

It is a matter of "correct view".

"What is 'automatic salvation of the self-nature'? It is to use correct views to save the

sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of prajñā to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them."
(p 48)

Anders said:

you need to start looking at what the masters say about things like manifesting the Nirmanakaya and how to engender the wisdom of perfection of action.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, one of the most important points of the buddha-nature teachings is that the three bodies are found within the mind. It is not something developed. That is, once false thoughts are removed, it manifests automatically.

"If they were without these enervating defilements, wisdom would always be manifest and they would not depart from the self-natures. To be enlightened to this Dharma is to be without thought. To be without recollection, without attachment, to not activate the false and deceptive—this is to allow one's self[-suchness]-nature to function. To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."
(p 30-31)

"The person who has seen the nature apprehends [the dharmas] whether he posits them or not. He is autonomous in his going and coming, without stagnation or hindrance. He acts in response to the functions [of students], and he answers in response to their words. Always manifesting his nirmāṇakāya, he never departs from the selfnature. He attains the samādhi of autonomous disportment in the supernormal powers. This is called seeing the nature."
(p 74)

Anders said:

I think you need to apply a bit of two truths to this whole thing and get better at sorting out between practical and 'ultimate' concerns.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, if the validity of the sudden path is denied, then Zen is just a strange way of rephrasing the six paramitas and the gradual path of the bodhisattva. Why bother with that at all, if not for simply aesthetic (literary) reasons? My idea/vision is to take this view seriously and see where it goes. There are some studies on what a "sudden practice" is (<http://terebess.hu/zen/Practice-in-Shen-Hui.pdf>, http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=31128&local_base=GEN01-MCG02, <http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf,%20Mindfulness%20and%20Mindlessness%20in%20Early%20Chan.pdf>), just to clarify further.

There is another problem. If "seeing nature" amounts "only" to a beginning, further instructions are required. As you say, Hakuin provided them. But what about the others?

In the first quote in this topic Danxia says that there's nothing else to do, and the same goes for most of the classical teachers as well. Sure, we can always claim that there were the secret personal instructions, but that's a very weak argument, and it makes the recorded teachings false. Plus, there is no point in not describing the whole path, as that's been already done by the sutras and numerous treatises. Also, when there was a Zen teacher who set up a gradual method, he discussed it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So, are you saying there's no possibility that you're not 'off a hair'?

Astus wrote:

I don't think this is a topic about me, even if it is a common trend to turn everything into personal matters.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, if one still has afflictions, one is on the path of cultivation, at best. Buddhas have no afflictions, so Huineng's statement is pointing to ārya practitioners, not buddhas. Buddhas have no enervating afflictions to worry about at all, because they have been eradicated [by the eighth bhumi].

Astus wrote:

The teaching was addressed to a mixed group of lay and ordained people, so the audience should be considered ordinary beings, who all attain enlightenment at the end of the speech. The quote says that with the realisation of the sudden teaching the afflictions will be eliminated.

Here's the BTTS translation: "When you become enlightened to the Sudden Teaching, you do not grasp onto the cultivation of external things. When your own mind constantly gives rise to right views, afflictions and defilement can never stain you. That is what is meant by seeing your own nature." (若開悟頓教，不能外修，但於自心常起正見，煩惱塵勞常不能染，即是見性。)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Right, this simply means that you are immune to the afflictions that you possess, not that you have eradicated them.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean "non-afflictive ignorance" / jneyavarana with immunity to afflictions? Otherwise, an affliction that does not afflict is not an affliction.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 18th, 2016 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are two kinds of afflictions: kleśas and anuśaya; the former is active; the latter, dormant or inactive. By the end of the seventh bhumi all afflictions are totally eradicated, leaving only the knowledge obscuration, which is like an increasingly sheer veil.

Astus wrote:

What is immunity to afflictions then?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Anders said:

Are you going to be able to recognise the moment and on top of that, be able to manifest transformative action?

Astus wrote:

It's up to each being what serves as a transformative moment. Hence buddhas manifest depending on beings' karma, and monks wander to find the right teacher.

Anders said:

Pouring our heart and soul into a life's work for the opportunity to make a difference like that in someone's life, if it comes. It's not about what is the superior path or inferior path, or what is the easiest all accomplishing path and so forth. It's about saving lives, man.

Astus wrote:

How are lives saved? If by that you refer to the teaching, the Dharma, then it is crucial to answer the question about the most efficient and appropriate way(s). For instance, the Pure Land path is said to be appropriate for all kinds of people, all capacities, and it has fairly simple teachings and practices. So no matter what situation, one can always recommend buddha-remembrance as the optimal solution, like Honen did. Because of that it sounds only logical what the <http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/shoshinge.html>

says: "Sakyamuni Tathagata appeared in this world Solely to teach the ocean-like Primal Vow of Amida". How does Bodhidharma compare, going all the way from India to China? How many are saved by "this mind is buddha"? Also, to effectively save, shouldn't one already be in the position to do that? These and other similar questions are why I think it is worth probing the depth of the Chan pond. But if you think this is not how it is, please tell.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

The nonconceptual equipoise on emptiness. When you are in nonconceptual equipoise on emptiness, the latent afflictions which cause rebirth in the three realms are gradually burned away.

Astus wrote:

So you mean immunity in the sense that they are not activated, therefore they do not even come up to one's consciousness. But then, because they are latent, they are not active except in the right conditions anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 7:41 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nevertheless, until they are burnt away, one can still take birth in the three realms. Buddhas do not take birth in the three realms at all.

Astus wrote:

Dogen writes in Shoji (SBGZ, vol 4, BDK Edition, p 299-300):

"If a person looks for buddha outside of life and death, that is like pointing a cart north and making for [the south country of] Etsu, or like facing south and hoping to see the North Star. It is to be amassing more and more causes of life and death, and to have utterly lost the way of liberation. When we understand that only life and death itself is nirvana, there is nothing to hate as life and death and nothing to aspire to as nirvana. Then, for the first time, the means exist to get free from life and death.

...

This life and death is just the sacred life of buddha. If we hate it and want to get rid of it, that is just wanting to lose the sacred life of buddha. If we stick in it, if we attach to life and death, this also is to lose the sacred life of buddha. We confine ourselves to the condition of buddha. When we are without dislike and without longing, then for the first time we enter the mind of buddha. But do not consider it with mind and do not say it with words! When we just let go of our own body and our own mind and throw them into

the house of buddha, they are set into action from the side of buddha; then when we continue to obey this, without exerting any force and without expending any mind, we get free from life and death and become buddha."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 7:44 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Are there any Zen sources that describe what Buddhahood is, in an externally-verifiable kind of way? If we're going to compare Zen to Indian Mahayana, this will be helpful. Otherwise, it feels like we may be comparing apples and oranges.

Astus wrote:

There are two options. One can go with the usual Mahayana descriptions. Or one can look at the teaching of the buddha being the mind. Those who choose the first one usually also talk about gradual purification and such. While those who go with the second option say that one should just realise it for oneself immediately.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is just a poetic restatement of Nāgarjuna's trope about the non differentiation of samsara and nirvana, but it does not address the core of my point.

Astus wrote:

Your point seems to be that afflictions need to be fully eliminated first, and only then one has attained full enlightenment. But Huineng says:

"If one [tries to] use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, this is the interpretation of the two [Hinayana] vehicles [held by] those fit for the sheep and deer [carts]. ... Ordinary people see brightness and ignorance as different, but the wise comprehend that they are nondual in their nature. ... One abides in the afflictions without disruption; one resides in meditation without serenity. Not annihilationist and not permanent, neither coming nor going; neither located in an intermediate location nor in the internal and external; neither generated nor extinguished, permanently abiding without movement—this is called the Way."

(Platform Sutra, ch 10, BDK Edition, p 80)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2016 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

99.999%

It is still what complete sudden enlightenment means.

(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 16)

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, CWKB, vol 2, p 213)

Malcolm said:

Buddhas are not on a way. They have reached their destination.

Astus wrote:

It says "the Way", not "a way". It is a synonym for bodhi, for enlightenment.

"Studying the Way is to always contemplate the self-nature:

This is to be identical with all the buddhas."

(Platform Sutra, ch 7, p 53)

Malcolm said:

Once upon a time, first bhumi realization was common, now it has become very rare.

Astus wrote:

Even a thousand years ago the belief in the end times

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Ages_of_Buddhism#Latter_Day_of_the_Law) was popular.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: One continuous mistake

Content:

DGA said:

Astus, for the purpose of this conversation--what is meant by "subitism"? thanks

Astus wrote:

It is a term specifically created to mean the "doctrine of sudden enlightenment". Has its own <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subitism>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

DGA said:

I'd thought that the character translated as Way in that instance (道), which is the same as Tao from Taoism, really does mean path, and is sometimes used to render the term Dharma. I'd thought bodhi was rendered in another way. Perhaps I'm missing some context here?

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is dao 道 translated as Way here. It has a wide variety of meanings in Buddhist texts.

A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous (excerpt)

A way, road; the right path; principle, Truth, Reason, Logos, Cosmic energy; to lead; to say.

佛教漢梵大辭典 (Chinese-Sanskrit Large Dictionary of Buddhism)

mārga, path, gati, pratipad; bodhi; bhikṣu; nyāya; adhvan, avacara, āśrama, gatika, gati-saṃdhi, caraṇa, cari, carī, caryā, jāti, dharma, naya, patha, pada, parāyaṇa, pratipatti, prahāṇa, bodhi-mārga, bhūmi, mārga-caraṇa, mārgaṇa, mārgatas, mārgatva, mārga-satya, yāna, rathyā, vartman, vidhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

What does "this" refer to?

Astus wrote:

The preceding line. This = studying the Way = always contemplating the self-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 6:45 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Direct interaction between minds contradicts karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Direct interaction between minds contradicts karma.

Sherab Dorje said:

Why?

Astus wrote:

Mind is a stream of momentary phenomena. If two such streams cross, they become one stream. That's one part. The other part is that if one can connect to another mind directly, that means one person's thought becomes another's, so one's will becomes another's will, hence what one intends is what the other intends. And while it is possible that two people agree on something, and that can be called shared karma, if a mind can take control of another, that violates another's ability to make decisions.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 20th, 2016 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So my remark was about the seemingly black-and-white nature of this approach: enlightenment being immediate and complete, with a 'miss being as good as a mile'.

Astus wrote:

One is either a buddha, completely free from ignorance, or not. I think that's a fairly mainstream position even in the gradual paths. Similarly, if one has attained any level of nobility, there is no way back from that, as it includes permanent eradication of some defilements. Consequently, one has either realised the nature of mind, the dharmakaya, or not. That does not mean one cannot have concepts about the nature of mind, and even correct views.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Realizing emptiness is not realizing "dharmakāya." The realization of the dharmakāya is attended by the twin omniscience concerning the nature of what exists and all that exists. Now, if you wish to redefine, or dumb down, dharmakāya to make it seem more attainable, I can't stop you. But it is an error to do so.

Astus wrote:

No need to dumb down anything. All three knowledges/wisdoms are included in seeing the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

That's it then, just see the nature of the mind and you are omniscient? If this is case, would you then claim that first stage bodhisattvas have not seen the nature of the mind? Because they are certainly not omniscient.

Astus wrote:

As far as the fully sudden approach goes, only buddhas know it. Consider <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=329214#p329214>, where Huangbo makes it clear what one is enlightened to directly and how it compares to the gradual path.

Also, Dazhu says:

Q: What is Sudden Enlightenment?

A: "Sudden" means instantly stopping false thought. "Enlightenment" means [awareness] that one attains nothing.

and

"Sudden Enlightenment means liberation during this lifetime. Just as a lion-cub, from the moment it is born, is a real lion, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method has, from the moment he begins his practice, already entered the Buddha-Stage. Just as the bamboo-shoots growing in springtime are not different from the parent bamboo-shoots, because they are also empty inside, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method to rid himself suddenly of false thought abandons, like the Buddhas, the sense of an ego and a personality forever. Being absolutely deep, still and void, he is, then, without an iota of difference, equal to the Buddhas. Thus, in this sense it can be said that the worldly is holy. If one practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method, he can transcend the three realms during this lifetime."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Question: how is the awakening put forward in Chan different than realization of an Arhat?

Astus wrote:

See for yourself the differences described:

"Whoever knows that the mind is a fiction and devoid of anything real knows that his own mind neither exists nor doesn't exist. Mortals keep creating the mind, claiming it exists. And Arhats keep negating the mind, claiming it doesn't exist. But bodhisattvas and Buddhas neither create nor negate the mind. This is what's meant by the mind that neither exists nor doesn't exist. The mind that neither exists nor doesn't exist is called the Middle Way."

(Bodhidharma: Wake-up Sermon)

"If one allows a thought to arise while seeing, one falls into heresy. When one desires to exterminate birth and death, one falls into the Sravaka realm. One who sees neither birth nor death and is aware only of cessation falls into the Pratyekabuddha realm. However, one might ask: Originally the dharmas know no arising, so how can they be subject to cessation? The answer one might receive is: With this non-dualistic outlook - that is, having neither desire nor aversion - everything is Mind. This alone is the Buddha

of Supreme Awakening!"
(Huangbo: Chung-Ling Record)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is certainly a Mahāyāna doxographical claim. And further, what is the difference then between a bodhisattva and buddha? This distinction is the one that you really fail to tease out.

Astus wrote:

"To awaken to the incomplete truth of voidness of self and then practice is inferior-vehicle dhyana. To awaken to the true principle of the dual voidness of self and dharmas and then to practice is great vehicle dhyana. (All four of the above types show such distinctions as the four [dhyanas of the realm of] form and the four [concentrations of the] formless [realm].) If one's practice is based on having all-at-once awakened to the realization that one's own mind is from the outset pure, that the depravities have never existed, that the nature of the wisdom without outflows is from the outset complete, that this mind is buddha, that they are ultimately without difference, then it is dhyana of the highest vehicle. This type is also known by such names as tathagata-purity dhyana, the one-practice concentration, and the thusness concentration."

(Zongmi on Chan, p 103)

"There are many methods in practicing Buddhism. The Lesser Vehicle practices "eradicating afflictions." The Great Vehicle (Mahayana) "transforms afflictions." In the Ultimate Vehicle, "afflictions are bodhi." Each method is centered on the mind. In the end, they all enable sentient beings to attain unsurpassed complete enlightenment.

Those who practice the Lesser Vehicle take afflictions as real; therefore, they must exterminate them. They still have the concept of subject and object; therefore, there is still attachment to the dharmas. They only realize the emptiness of self and enter into partial nirvana.

Those who practice the Great Vehicle use the method of "transformation (of the mind)" because they understand that amid our afflictions there is our inherent Buddha nature. It is like forging steel from iron. The nature of steel is within the wrought iron. If we throw away the pieces of iron, we will not be able to refine the steel. Similarly, "there is no water besides the waves." Therefore, in Mahayana, bodhisattvas cultivate the myriad good practices of the six paramitas. By benefiting self and others, they transform afflictions, and return to their pure inherent nature. Just as when we practice charity for a long time, we will naturally diminish greed. By contemplation of compassion, anger will naturally subside. When we are diligent in the cultivation of actions, speech, and mind, we can overcome sloth. When the mind is scattered and confused, we must use samadhi to overcome delusive thoughts. This is known as "transformation." The last of

the six paramitas is “prajna.” Prajna overcomes ignorance. Our mind is filled with ignorance and confusion; it easily forms attachments to the external environment. If we can reflect inward, without falling into dualism, without the concept of subject and object, and attain “triple emptiness,” we will attain prajna paramita. We can then face each encounter with clarity and mindfulness, thereby extinguish all our afflictions.

In the Ultimate Vehicle, we neither transform our afflictions nor extinguish them; our mind is originally pure and lucid. This mind is inherent in everyone; we do not need to seek it externally. This is the Chan School’s principle of “affliction is bodhi; birth and death (samsara) is nirvana.””

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=219&Itemid=59)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Are these the sayings of 'an ordinary fellow?' Are 'ordinary fellows' 'absolutely deep, still and void, and 'devoid of ego and personality forever'?"

Astus wrote:

This is just what no-thought (wunian 無念) is, as said in the previous section. What "ordinary fellow" signifies is that the six senses function as before, the difference is in whether there is attachment.

Wayfarer said:

Related point: what original term is being translated as 'mind' in these verses? It might have a much more profound meaning than what moderns understand by the term, which I suspect is much closer to what Zen would call 'discursive thought'.

Astus wrote:

It's possible to check, but it is a case by case investigation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

I am pretty certain I don't agree with the characterization of Mahāyāna ārya practice above.

Astus wrote:

That's what normally happens in every characterisations to those relegated to a lower position. One of the reasons for the disagreements between Tibetan and EA Buddhism

is that they do not share the same view of the Mahayana teachings. Naturally, when the Tibetan view of the bodhisattva path is used, there is no basis for Zen's and Tiantai's teachings of enlightenment in one life.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

Revise to "...when the Indian Mahāyāna view of the bodhisattva path is used, there is no basis for Zen's and Tiantai's teachings of enlightenment in one life," then we can agree.

Astus wrote:

I'm OK with that, if we modify it to "Late-Indian Mahayana", or something to a similar extent. After all, Chinese Buddhism has Indian origins as well, but then it's developed on a separate path, and that's why even Xuanzang's teachings have not been as widely accepted as Fazang's.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2016 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

We have no evidence, apart from perhaps Bodhidharma, of any kind of sudden awakening school in India.

Astus wrote:

I did not mean anything like that. Just in general the source of sutras and treatises that are of Indian (and Central Asian) origin.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

But do they actually? A buddha can taste with his sight, smell with his fingers and hear with his tongue, etc.

Astus wrote:

Dongshan said the following poem:

"How amazing, how amazing!

Hard to comprehend that nonsentient beings expound the Dharma.

It simply cannot be heard with the ear,

But when sound is heard with the eye, then it is understood."

(Record of Tung-shan, p 26)

Zhiyan says about Indra's net and interpenetration:

"The explanation according to the greater vehicle says that the great and small can interpenetrate by virtue of transformation by psychic power, or it says that they interpenetrate through a bodhisattva's power, or that they interpenetrate because they are nondual. This is not the same as the explanation of the unitary vehicle."

(Entry into the Inconceivable, p 136)

You might consider those abilities of the Buddha as supernatural abilities, but in Chan that is not so.

"On the nose is an eye that discerns fragrance and stench.

The Dharma sound universally spreads to all senses.

All who hear clarify the genuine truth.

An enlightened person is widely awakened to the mind that breaks through emptiness."

(Dogen: Eihei Koroku, p 611)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

They are "supernatural" compared to your abilities and mine, which is actually the point.

Astus wrote:

What I meant is that such abilities are not about magic powers (or synesthesia), but that categories of experiences are the works of conceptual discrimination, and concepts are interrelated and interpenetrate each other.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Buddha is an Ordinary Fellow

Content:

Malcolm said:

But in actual fact, the sensory experience of buddhas is not confined to their six sense gates in the way ours are.

Astus wrote:

And this is where the interpretation and view of the teachings come in. For Chan the mind is buddha and there is no other buddha to be found. What you talk about, however, are what could be termed an external buddha. For Chan all the teachings talk about are to see into the nature of mind. What you refer to, however, is an interpretation where the

teachings provide accounts of other beings.

"The difference between Zen and the teaching sects is like the difference between one who gets hit by an arrow and dies on the spot and one who sees the incident and stands on the side saying this and that about why the person died. The one who sees directly into his own nature is the Zen man; the one who talks about it is from the teaching sect."
(Bassui: Mud and Water, p 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 25th, 2016 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Compassion practice in Zen

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

I feel the compassion aspect has been sorely lacking from my practice, making me become aloof and detached from others.

Astus wrote:

That can happen when emptiness is mistaken for apathy, disinterest, and such. It is a known "sickness" in Zen.

There was an old woman who supported a hermit. For twenty years she always had a girl, sixteen or seventeen years old, take the hermit his food and wait on him. One day she told the girl to give the monk a close hug and ask, "What do you feel just now?"
The hermit responded,

An old tree on a cold cliff;
Midwinter – no warmth.

The girl went back and told this to the old woman. The woman said, "For twenty years I've supported this vulgar good-for-nothing!" So saying, she threw the monk out and burned down the hermitage.
(Entangling Vines, case 162, tr Kirchner)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 25th, 2016 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Compassion practice in Zen

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Astus, what is advice given to people who have this emptiness sickness?

Astus wrote:

There are all sorts of ways to approach it, and those one can find in the scriptures, teachings, and hear advice from wise friends.

For a generic answer, I have three.

1. Emptiness is empty. Grasping at whatever state, whatever feeling, is still attachment. One has to let go of everything. Or as for instance Baizhang put it in three stages: Do not grasp anything. Do not grasp not grasping. Let go of even that. Daehaeng says practically the same, instructing to die again and again. The same can be seen in Jizang's formulation of the four levels of two truths. The point is, when everything is truly released, boundless wisdom and compassion can function unhindered.

2. Focus on interdependence. After cessation comes clear observation, as described in the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana. It is seeing clearly how karma works, how suffering emerges, how beings are bound by their ignorance. It is letting go of the hundred-foot pole (aloofness) to "appear with his whole body in the ten parts of the world". Or as the Genjokoan says "To forget ourselves is to be experienced by millions of things and phenomena." This is where one can learn not to fear appearances, because they are all illusory. These are the 9th and 10th pictures of the ten bulls. This is contemplating the function of the mind instead of its essence, because eventually it turns out to be not two different things.

3. Trust in buddha-nature. There can be this fear that if everything is let go, it will be just a big nothingness, total obliteration. Because of that fear, we want to keep control to ourselves, want to be able to influence things. That is basically our core belief in a self, and the source of all problems. The first option mentioned is when we see there is nobody in control. The second option is to see that all things change according to causes and conditions, so there is nothing to control. This third option is to let our inherent buddha-nature manage everything. This can be mistaken in two extreme ways: either as inactivity, or as following impulses mindlessly. Instead of those two, one should face every situation openly, so that buddha-activity can manifest. How to be open? When something comes, let it come. When something goes, let it go. When something is present, let it be. Letting go is not worrying about the past and the future. Letting be is embracing without hesitation. This is possible because one has faith that all is taken care of by the buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 26th, 2016 at 8:53 AM

Title: Re: Sanbo Kyodan question

Content:

DGA said:

he prefers working with traditions that have proven histories, rather than trying a "make it up as you go along" practice and hoping for the best

Astus wrote:

If it's about Zen, the so called transmission is only about the enlightened mind. Passing on methods is a different matter, and something that theoretically Zen is not supposed to be bound by. Although we can say that transmission matters only when one wants to, other times it's disregarded.

DGA said:

I'm not convinced that SK is merely a make-it-up-as-you-go-along organization. I say this because it has endured for long enough to suggest that if it were a bit of trivial fluff, it would have floated away in the breeze by now.

Astus wrote:

That argument doesn't hold. Just because something is old and/or popular is no proof of quality. There are numerous nonsense beliefs in the world that are both popular and old.

DGA said:

is there a distinctive logic by which the curriculum or pedagogy or typical development of the student (choose your wording) is laid out in SK? Does it "hang together" as a singular, integral path, or does it feel chockablock?

Astus wrote:

They follow the "Harada-Yasutani koan-curriculum, which is derived from Hakuin's student Takuju. It is a shortened koan-curriculum, in which the so-called "capping phrases" are removed. The curriculum takes considerably less time to study than the Takuju-curriculum of Rinzai" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%8Dan#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFord200642.E2.80.9343-103).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 27th, 2016 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Now the mechanism for this procedure, how it works exactly, is not really touched upon in the Abhidharma (and seems to contradict some of the theory therein) and yet...

Astus wrote:

This itself I find problematic. There is no sensible explanation in (or outside) Buddhism for telepathy.

Sherab Dorje said:

Personally I have experienced a phenomenon that can be described as telepathy.

Astus wrote:

I assume most of us have. However, a number of deja-vus don't mean there's a glitch in the Matrix.

Sherab Dorje said:

I believe that this idea that we are somehow completely and utterly separate physically and mentally from our surroundings has been proven false by yogi and scientists alike. So this idea that thoughts exist solely within the confines of your mind (head or brain) is a little misleading. It seems that reality is a little more fluid than that.

Astus wrote:

If it's allowed for minds to mingle, to lose integrity, then it also allows for one mind to manipulate another. However, our experiences are our own, just like our actions. So, we can share thoughts and even organs, but not deeds and perceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 27th, 2016 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: Sanbo Kyodan question

Content:

DGA said:

I'm interested in learning a bit more about the curriculum

Astus wrote:

From <http://www.desertlotuszen.org/koan-curriculum.html>:

Our curriculum is as follows:

1. Initial koan to open the body of reality.

We use a range of koans for this purpose, according to need and affinity. Examples are Zhaozhou's No, Yunmen's Medicine, What is your original face before your parents were born?, Linji's The true person with no rank, Zhaozhou when times of great difficulty visit us, how shall we meet them? Zhaozhou said "Welcome."

When this koan starts to open up there is an extensive process of exploration using checking questions to make the view clear and to teach the language of koans. The What is the sound of one hand? koan is included in this process. The final koan in the checking process is What is the source?

2. Miscellaneous Koans. By tradition the first koan in the miscellaneous collection is Stop the sound of that distant temple bell. These koans include a lot of explorations of emptiness.

3. The Gateless Barrier (Wumenguan)

4. The Blue Cliff Record (Piyen lu)

5. The Book of Serenity

6. The Five Ranks of Dongshan

7. The Sixteen Bodhisattva vows

8. Entangling Vines

Following the completion of this course senior people usually work on other books.

The Record of Linji

The Kido Koans

The Record of Zhaozhou

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2016 at 7:29 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

How do you explain what happened to you?

Astus wrote:

My approach: Don't question the experience. Question the explanation. That's because of the same reason as what happens on a magic show. It looks real, but you know it's false. If you just believe your eyes, you accept that it's paranormal.

There are various plausible ways to approach telepathy and other abilities like that. The most reliable would be to test if it's even something one can actually do, to rule out coincidence and memory distortion. But I think that's never really happened. So I'd not go that way, and rather say that abilities are something else than what generally people think about them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2016 at 7:35 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Anders said:

"Our own"? That doesn't sound very dependently originated. Nothing in Samsara is wholly private.

Astus wrote:

Causal consistency. From an apple seed an apple tree grows, not a pear tree.

Dependent origination includes that every being experiences the fruits of their own actions, not another's. How is it not wholly private?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2016 at 7:43 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

pothigai said:

My understanding would be that thoughts have in part have a physical basis and are thus not entirely private. The subjective experience of the thoughts is private, but the physical basis for them arising is not, so theoretically it could be accessed by other sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

What physical basis do you mean? Seeing the same vase?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 28th, 2016 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

pothigai said:

No, brain states.

Astus wrote:

I'm unaware of such a connection between brain and thoughts in Buddhism. Maybe there are such ideas in Vajrayana, but not anywhere else. Although the Visuddhimagga talks about observing another's blood colour (12.9, p 402-403), on the one hand there is no actual change in colour of the blood, on the other it is a preliminary practice to simply knowing the mind of others' (i.e. arupaloka beings don't have hearts). So actually even there is no explanation of how it can happen.

Beyond that, as it is taught in Prajnaparamita teachings (and Zen), the way the mind of other beings are known is through realising emptiness.

"Moreover, Subhuti, thanks to this perfection of wisdom the Tathagata wisely knows immeasurable and incalculable beings as they really are. And that through the absence of own-being in beings."

(PP8000 12.3)

It is said in the T'an-mo-ho-yen p'in (Mahāyānastutiparivarta): "If the minds and mental events of all beings existed essentially and in reality (tattvatas) and were not false, the Buddha could not know the minds and mental events of all beings. But because the minds and mental events of all beings are essentially and really false, without coming (āgati) or going (gati), the Buddha knows the minds and mental events of all beings." To take an example: if the bhikṣu is greedy (adhyavasita), he does not receive offerings (pūjā), but if he has no ulterior motive, he lacks for nothing. It is the same for the mind (citta). If it imagines (vikalpayati) and grasps at characteristics (nimittāny udgrhṇāti), it does not find the truth and, not finding the truth, it cannot penetrate or know the minds and mental events of all beings. On the other hand, if it does not grasp at characteristics and does not imagine anything, it finds the truth and, finding the truth, it penetrates and knows the minds and mental events of all beings without encountering any obstacles. (MPPS, vol 4, p 1503-1504)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2016 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: What's lineage, what is it for, & how does it work?

Content:

DGA said:

whatever his qualifications may be, they correspond to those of something other than Tendai.

Astus wrote:

That's an example of what the idea of lineage is for. To claim authenticity for those who belong to it, and exclude everyone else. As far as I know, Tendai had more than one group in China, and Saicho was not appointed as anything, but he spent less than a year there over all, mostly gathering texts. Should we then debate his qualifications?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2016 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: What's lineage, what is it for, & how does it work?

Content:

DGA said:

And besides, this thread is still in the fact-finding stage.

Astus wrote:

The reason I mentioned Saicho was to point out that it's not the fact of lineage that is the most important, but the teachings provided. So, perhaps the facts that should be established are whether what they teach there matches those of Saicho or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2016 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Anders said:

You can genetically modify an apple to be something other than an apple.

Astus wrote:

Can buddhas then modify beings to be enlightened?

Anders said:

Beings are exposed to the fruits of other people's actions all the time. And profoundly influenced by them.

Astus wrote:

If experiences are not the products of previous actions, then karma does not exist. On the other hand, it is taught that both good and bad actions done by others to oneself are results of one's previous deeds.

Anders said:

Basically, you want minds to be souls. Something only you possess and whose autonomy is sheltered from other souls.

Astus wrote:

If one is not subject to one's own delusion only, then liberation is not possible.

Anders said:

This is not an a priori protected privilege in samsara.

Astus wrote:

It is a question of what karma means.

Anders said:

I get that you have trouble reconciling these concepts. But you aren't really representing any strand of Buddhism with your presentation here.

Astus wrote:

I try to follow the generally accepted teachings on karma, and consider that more significant than teachings on telepathy and such. But if you have another idea, please tell.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2016 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: What's lineage, what is it for, & how does it work?

Content:

DGA said:

The best basis of comparison would be to the conventions that are established in Tendai-shu at the present, since that's where we are and what we have available.

Astus wrote:

Then that should be used to clarify if a group fits the category of Tendai, don't you think?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 30th, 2016 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I understand it, the essence of Dogen's message is zazen, and the essence of zazen is hishiryo, also called shinjindatsuraku. What is non-thinking, dropping off body and mind? The experience that whatever appears there is nothing to grasp. And what is the essence of Nagarjuna's teaching? It is that all phenomena are without substance, hence there is nothing to grasp. So, in terms of goal, they likely agree. In terms of method, however, there is the difference between the gradual stages of the bodhisattva taught by Nagarjuna, and the direct realisation taught by Dogen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 30th, 2016 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

krodha said:

The bodhisattva path begins with the direct realization championed by Dogen.

Astus wrote:

Where is that assertion from? Dogen is fairly clear that zazen is complete enlightenment.

"The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment."

(https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 30th, 2016 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

Matt J said:

I don't think its a matter of resonance but a matter of capacity. Personally, I think Zen is actually high capacity stuff--- but high teachings require students with high capacity to receive it.

Astus wrote:

"A person who seems superficially dull but has a sincere aspiration will attain enlightenment more quickly than one who is clever in a worldly sense. Although he could not recite even a single verse, Cudapanthaka, one of the disciples of the Buddha, gained enlightenment during one summer practice period because he had earnest aspiration."

(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/common_html/zuimonki/02-20.html)

"There is a saying in the secular world, "I sell gold, but no one will buy it." The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is also like this. It is not that they begrudge the Way; even though it is always being offered, no one will accept it. To attain the Way does not depend on whether you are inherently sharp or dull witted. Each one of us can be aware of the dharma. Slowness or quickness in attaining the Way depends on whether you are diligent or indolent. The difference between being diligent or indolent is caused by whether your aspiration is resolute or not. Lack of firm aspiration is caused by being unaware of impermanence. Ultimately speaking, we die moment by moment, not residing for even a little while. While you are alive, do not spend your time in vain."

(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/common_html/zuimonki/06-09.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2016 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

jundo cohen said:

I feel your two posts reveal another one of the "paradox-non-paradoxes" of Soto Zen ... attaining by non-attaining, goalless goaling and such ... "joyful ease" and "diligence" ...

Astus wrote:

I don't see any paradox here. (Although you conclude the same eventually)

"there is not the slightest interval between establishment of the mind, training, bodhi, and nirvana"

(Gyoji, in SBGZ, vol 2, BDK Edition, p 163)

jundo cohen said:

in a moment of Shikantaza, one can experience simply and clearly what Nagarjuna and Dogen were pointing to through all their words.

Astus wrote:

That should be the case, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2016 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

jundo cohen said:

It is the seeming paradox of "original enlightenment", namely, if we are already "Buddha" why don't we know it and act like it? If there is "nothing to seek and do", does that mean that we don't have to seek it?

Astus wrote:

Everything is already empty, never has been otherwise. Ignorance itself is empty, an illusion, and not knowing that is how ignorance functions. This story of Dogen searching for an answer, wasn't that Keizan's invention, something nowhere mentioned in Dogen's works? It is a sort of basic question anyway, like asking if there is no self why do we think there is.

jundo cohen said:

We begin at the bottom of the mountain, lost in ignorance. ... However, along the way, we realize that the entire mountain has been Buddha all along, top to bottom, although the fellow at the bottom and start of the climb did not recognize so until the fog of ignorance began to clear.

Astus wrote:

That is very much what the bodhisattva path is, moving from stage to stage, accumulating merit, deepening wisdom, and at the same time it's prajnaparamita all along. Zen is shedding body-mind completely, not just one piece at a time.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2016 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Question: how do you know you're not kidding yourself?

Astus wrote:

One is always kidding oneself. "I am correct." - that's a thought. "I am wrong." - that's another thought. Creating an identity of either is the basic error.

Wayfarer said:

there's a process of assessment

Astus wrote:

There is no measuring stick. It's up to whatever the local teacher considers acceptable.

Wayfarer said:

What if you have not really grasped the point of the teaching but you think that you have?

Astus wrote:

Ultimately, all views are wrong. What amounts to correct view in Buddhism is what helps in abandoning unwholesome qualities, developing wholesome qualities, and letting go of attachments.

Wayfarer said:

If you're a solo practitioner, is there anything to tell you that your understanding is erroneous?

Astus wrote:

There are a lot of things, starting with the sutras and shastras. Correct view develops from learning. Besides that, zazen is not simply a practice, but also verification. That is, if one pays attention to one's experiences, it becomes crystal clear that there is no physical or mental phenomena that is permanent. That's Zen's direct approach. Otherwise, one can follow the instructions for insight meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2016 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

krodha said:

Awakening to instant buddhahood is essentially unheard of

Astus wrote:

from http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms04.pdf:

the Sotoshu doctrine is to realize (joto) shikantaza (just sitting) and sokushin zebutsu (the mind itself is Buddha).

In "Gakudo Yojinshu" ("Points to Watch in Practicing the Way"), joto is explained by

Dogen Zenji as follows:

Joto (realizing) is to directly realize Buddhahood with this body-mind. In other words, it is not to change the former state of body-mind into some other special state but just to follow the realization of the other (one's teacher). It is called jikige (right here) or joto.

The fundamental Sotoshu teaching is that of realizing Buddhahood through shikantaza and sokushin zebutsu in each moment. Therefore sokushin zebutsu, as well as shikantaza, is a very important term and a basic teaching for Soto Zen Buddhists.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2016 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: A Tale of Two (Not Two) Nagarjunas

Content:

krodha said:

In my opinion, that passage isn't saying that one awakens to fully omniscient buddhahood in one fell swoop. Just that the reality of what buddhahood entails is directly encountered through awakening [bodhi].

Astus wrote:

Do you know of teachings in Zen, and in its Soto branch, where they establish the distinction you talk about?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 3rd, 2016 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Is Consciousness Produced by the Brain?

Content:

Astus wrote:

An immaterial consciousness cannot really be included in scientific investigation.

"If it can't be measured, that means, by definition, it can't affect anything."

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQHBAAdShgYI>, 1:00-1:05)

Even Aryadeva rules out the assumption.

"Intangible things do not

Produce so-called motility.

Thus the life force is not

Agent of the body's movements."

(Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, 10.230, p 217)

And the root of the problem is really the belief in a self.

"Is the body the same as the soul? ... Is the body one thing, and the soul another? ... that too has not been declared by the Blessed One"

"But the Tathagata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, does not assume of the eye that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' ..."

"But the Tathagata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, does not assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. ..."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.007.than.html>,
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.008.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 3rd, 2016 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Is Consciousness Produced by the Brain?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are nama and rupa. Rupa is the category of the five physical appearances, nama is for all the mental phenomena. Both are things we know of, so they are experienced as they occur. Problems of duality, the relationship between mind and matter, come up only when we consider them separate substances. The solution lies in understanding them to be simply experiences that are only nominally divided up.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 5th, 2016 at 3:21 AM

Title: Re: The Perfectly Imperfect Beyond Perfection/Imperfection (Zen) Buddha

Content:

jundo cohen said:

I see much focus on "Wisdom" but not "knowledge" as such. Perhaps Astus can set me straight, as I may be missing the point.

Astus wrote:

I don't think there is any sensible difference made in Zen between prajna and jnana. Prajna is seeing nature, and jnana is seeing nature. Also, the word for jnana is 智, that is usually translated as wisdom, as in the following passage from Dogen (talking about Huineng first hearing the Diamond Sutra):

"This is just the truth of "Those who have wisdom, if they hear [the Dharma],/Are able to believe and understand at once." This "wisdom" is neither learned from other people nor established by oneself: wisdom is able to transmit wisdom, and wisdom directly searches out wisdom. In the case of the five hundred bats, wisdom naturally consumes their bodies: they have no body and no mind [of their own] at all. In the case of the ten thousand swimming fishes, due neither to circumstances nor to causes, but because wisdom is intimately present in their bodies, when they hear the Dharma they "understand at once." It is beyond coming and beyond entering: it is like the spirit of spring meeting springtime, for example. Wisdom is beyond intention and wisdom is beyond no intention. Wisdom is beyond consciousness and wisdom is beyond unconsciousness. How much less could it be related to the great and the small? How much less could it be discussed in terms of delusion and realization? The point is that although [the Sixth Patriarch] does not even know what the Buddha-Dharma is, never

having heard it before and so neither longing for it nor aspiring to it, when he hears the Dharma he makes light of his debt of gratitude and forgets his own body; and such things happen because the body-and-mind of “those who have wisdom” is already not their own. This is the state called “able to believe and understand at once.””
(Inmo, SBGZ, vol 2, BDK Edition, p 156)

Huineng in the Platform Sutra talks about wisdom (prajna 智 & 智慧) in chapter two, however, he talks about the four wisdoms (catvari jnanani 四智) in chapter seven, where we read (BDK Edition, p 60-61):

Zhitong said further, “How might I hear the meaning of the four wisdoms?”
The master said, “If you understand the three bodies, then you will understand the four wisdoms. How could you ask any further? If I were to speak of the four wisdoms apart from the three bodies, this would be called ‘having the bodies but being without wisdom.’ This would be to have wisdom but make it into non-wisdom.” He preached another verse, saying:

The great round mirror wisdom is pure in nature.
The wisdom of the universally same nature is without illness in mind.
The seeing of the wondrous contemplation wisdom is not [the result of] merit.
The wisdom that creates that which is accomplished is identical to the round mirror [wisdom].
The five and the eighth, sixth, and seventh [consciousnesses] transform [through] results and causes.

These are just names that are used, with no true nature.
If one’s sentiments linger not in the places of their transformations,
In profusion does one generate in the locus of permanence — the samādhi of the dragon.

Zhitong [achieved] sudden enlightenment to the nature and the wisdoms. He then offered this verse:

The three bodies are originally the essence of oneself.
The four wisdoms are fundamentally the understanding of the mind.
The bodies and wisdoms interpenetrate without hindrance,
Responding to things in accordance with forms.

All [deliberate] activation of cultivation is false activity.
To guard one’s abiding is not true serenity.
The wondrous purport has been illuminated by the master.
I will forever forget [all] defiled names.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 6:37 AM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Astus wrote:

坐禅は...安楽の法門なり - "The zazen ... is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease"
(https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

The expression for "joyful ease" is anraku 安楽 (Ch. 安樂), where raku 楽 is sukha (i.e. 大樂 - mahasukha, 極樂世界 - Sukhavati). Also, anrakukoku 安樂国 is another name for Sukhavati. So Dogen might wanted to counter Pure Land teachings.

In ch 7 of the Platform Sutra bliss is mentioned in relation to nirvana, the ultimate reality.

"Even though the eon-[ending] fire burns to the floor of the ocean
And the winds pound upon the mountains like drums,
The true bliss of permanent quiescence—
The characteristic of nirvana—is suchlike."

There is a poem "

<https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/enjoyingtheway.pdf> " (Ledaoge 樂道歌), but it doesn't speak about bliss (le 樂, i.e. enjoying) in particular.

Otherwise, it seems that bliss/sukha doesn't play any particular role, beyond it being one of the four characteristics of buddha-nature in the Nirvana Sutra. At the same time, it is one of the " http://www.sgilibrary.org/search_dict.php?id=535 " (pleasure), so it is to be avoided.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Wayfarer said:

You mean, "otherwise" from it being infinite and eternal?

Astus wrote:

Otherwise, that is, apart from what's been listed above. As for being "infinite and eternal", it is only figurative speech, like calling it the "bliss of nirvana". Sounds good, but it is meant to express a contrast between the drawbacks of samsara and the advantages of liberation, therefore it is not a pleasurable experience at all, since all such experiences are samsaric.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Experience is indeed samsaric, but realisation is of a different order. That is why 'what is good' is the opposite to 'what is bad' in the ordinary sense, but that the bliss of liberation is not simply some relative good. It is a 'good with no opposite', so it's of a different order to merely a good experience.

Astus wrote:

Zen and Mahamudra agree that what needs to be realised is buddha-nature, however, their methods and terminology somewhat differ. The realisation of buddha-nature in Zen means that one realises that there is nothing to realise. As for Mahamudra, from the same book:

"When the emptiness of physical and mental phenomena is directly experienced as a subjective reality and the mind is stable and able to maintain awareness, the luminous clarity of the mind gives rise to a sense of well-being that transcends both happiness and unhappiness. This is the experience of all-pervasive bliss, the goal of Mahamudra practice. When we no longer fixate on our thoughts and emotions but let them arise without interference and without hope and fear, our minds will become blissfully clear."

(Mind at East, p 20-21)

We might suppose that with the realisation of emptiness, regardless if it's through Zen or Mahamudra, one attains the mentioned bliss. And that bliss, as noted earlier, is one of the four characteristics of buddha-nature. Since both systems agree that this bliss is not a feeling or emotion, the word "bliss" stands for the complete lack of "suffering" (duhkha), and that is the very meaning of nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

jundo cohen said:

"peaceful ease/comfort" for anraku 安樂. ... "安樂" had the meaning in Dogen's time or earlier in China of "peaceful/joyful ease/comfort" rather than "bliss" as "ecstasy, delight, rapture"?

Astus wrote:

The word is the combination of "peace" and "happiness", where 樂 also means "harmony" and "music". Besides anraku's meaning as a name for Sukhavati, there is another explanation: "peaceful body, happy mind" (身安心樂) and "not threatened body is peaceful, not anxious mind is happy" (身無危險故安, 心無憂惱故樂). So, I would say it's virtually nothing to do with ecstasy and rapture.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Heart-to-heart Transmission

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a basic Zen idea. It is even an idiom in Japanese. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishin-denshin>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2016 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Wayfarer said:

realising it relies on a complete transformation of perception and if we say 'well there's nothing to realise' then why not simply stay as we are?

Astus wrote:

To stay as we are would mean being lost in the concepts of gain and loss. Seeing that all is empty means that there is nothing that can be grasped. When there is nothing to be grasped, there is no attachment, and without attachment there is no suffering. But nothing to grasp doesn't mean total blankness, it means that all experiences constantly change, hence nothing to rely on. That is the non-abiding mind, but not simply mindlessness.

Wayfarer said:

Realisation pertains to the nature of reality, or to the 'nature of all experience' if you like. As I understand it, that is why realisation is for keeps, it doesn't come and go

Astus wrote:

The realisation is the realisation of all being in a flux. It is giving up the mistaken idea of permanence, and once that misconception is completely removed, there is no view attached to, and that lack of grasping doesn't come and go.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2016 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Isn't the real difference here between being aware of no view, no grasping and simply dully having no view? One is clarity, the other is basically nihilism disguised as meditation of no view. The first one is exactly my perception of the "bliss" we are talking about.

Astus wrote:

Taking no view as the view is still an error. The options of falling into disinterest or unconsciousness are both the results of making no view a view. When there is just no view, it means the insight that all views are conditioned and insubstantial. At the same time, we always operate with some kind of view (thinking, clarity), the difference is in

taking it as self or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2016 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That is why it's called paravritti, is it not?

Astus wrote:

That is a very Yogacara term referring to the transformation of the repository consciousness, so it is not per se about change of perception. Although probably we can take it to simply mean leaving behind habitual perception and acting, and accomplishing the mirror-like wisdom, however, in Yogacara at least, that applies only to the event of becoming a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 7th, 2016 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That is exactly what I meant by it, and what I think it means.

Astus wrote:

Thanks for the clarification.

Wayfarer said:

Because it is related to the point that bliss is not a transient emotion that comes and goes. It is intrinsic to the nature of realisation itself as in the very quote that you posted on page 1: The true bliss of permanent quiescence—
The characteristic of nirvana—is suchlike.

Astus wrote:

So it is. At the same time, the unity of bliss-emptiness has made a more outstanding career in Vajrayana.

"Non-Self is Samsara, the Self is the Tathagata; impermanence is the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the Eternal is the Tathagata's Dharmakaya; suffering is all tirthikas, Bliss is Nirvana; the impure is all compounded [samskṛta] dharmas, the Pure is the true Dharma that the Buddha and Bodhisattvas have. This is called non-perversion/ non-inversion."

(Nirvana Sutra, ch 3, tr Yamamoto, p 29)

Kasyapa said further: "You, the Buddha, say that utmost peace is Nirvana. How can this be? Now, Nirvana means relinquishing the body and intellect. If one relinquishes the

body and intellect, who is it that can become blessed with peace?" The Buddha said: "O good man! As an example: there is a man here. He eats some food. After partaking of it, he feels sick, desires to go out and vomit. After vomiting, he comes back. A person who was with him asks: "Have you got rid of the trouble you had? You have come back here again. " Such may be the case. The same applies to the Tathagata. He fully segregates himself from the 25 existences and eternally gains Nirvana, which is peace and bliss. There can [then] be no more of the topsyturvy inversions, no ending and no extinction. All feeling is done away with. This is the bliss of non-feeling. This non-feeling is eternal Bliss. We can never say that the Tathagata feels Bliss. So, utmost Bliss is none but Nirvana. Nirvana is true emancipation. True emancipation is the Tathagata." (Nirvana Sutra, ch 7, tr Yamamoto, p 73; T12n375, vol5, p636b5-15)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2016 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Is Kensho mentioned in sutra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Besides those who equate seeing nature with buddhahood, there were the teachers Zongmi, Yongming, and Jinul, who put Chan and Huayan together, and equated the initial insight with the early stages of the 52 levels of the bodhisattva path. Here is a summary of Jinul's thoughts from Robert E. Buswell: The Collected Works of Chinul, p 64-66:

As Chinul observes time and again throughout his writings, the success of any practice depends on a sudden awakening at the beginning of one's efforts to the fact of one's fundamental Buddhahood. Without the confidence that such experience brings, the long ages of struggle the bodhisattva contemplates would be unbearable for even the most enthusiastic of adepts. To induce this awakening is the purpose of "faith and understanding according to the complete and sudden teachings"-the practice, based on Hwaom theory, intended for the majority of students. The discussion which follows recapitulates the explication of Li T'ung-hsuan's thought given in Chinul's Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood.

The unmoving wisdom of Buddhahood, otherwise known as the wisdom of universal brightness, is the source of all dualistic phenomena including Buddhas and sentient beings. Through faith and understanding that this unmoving wisdom is identical to the discriminative thoughts of sentient beings, the individual realizes that even in his present deluded state he is, and indeed has always been, a perfect Buddha. By understanding this fact at the very beginning of the spiritual quest-at the first of the ten levels of faith the student becomes fully endowed with the wisdom and compassion of Buddhahood in potential form. This accomplishment was usually assumed to occur only at the arousing of the bodhicitta stage of the ten abiding and only after the adept had supposedly passed through all ten levels of faith for ten thousand kalpas. But through the knowledge of this fundamental wisdom nonretrogressive faith is established, assuring the student's continued progress on the bodhisattva path and perfecting the other constituents of the ten stages of faith. Accordingly, the student is able to enter the initial abiding stage directly. At that stage there is immediate experience of the fact that he is a Buddha, and the former tacit faith and understanding

are confirmed. With the tremendous potential of the "great effortless functioning" inherent in Buddhahood, the subsequent stages of the bodhisattva path are instantly completed. Consequently, the wisdom of universal brightness is not simply the origin of sentient beings and Buddhas: every accomplishment along the bodhisattva path reveals the operation of that fundamental wisdom. Thus faith and understanding are enough to consummate the immediate and full attainment of Buddhahood even when the adept has progressed no further than the normal level of the ordinary sentient being. This is the essence of the complete and sudden approach.

Although Buddhas and sentient beings are originally only the phantomlike manifestations of the fundamental wisdom of universal brightness, the defilements of passion and discriminative thought have narrowed that wisdom and obscured its brightness. Even though the bodhisattva who realizes this fundamental wisdom is completely endowed with the compassion and wisdom of Buddhahood, his ability to display that wisdom through expedient means of expression and spiritual powers is still inchoate. Consequently, he must continue to cultivate the wide-ranging practices and vows which are developed on the remaining stages of the bodhisattva path. Any defiling actions which might arise from the inertial force of habit must also be corrected; his awakening has given him the ability to see through these habits, however, so he is free to employ appropriate methods during his progression along the path until they subside. Once his practice has been perfected, he will have arrived in fact, as well as potential, at the stage of Buddhahood. Nevertheless, throughout all his subsequent development, the bodhisattva has in fact never strayed from the fundamental unmoving wisdom which was realized upon the initial awakening at the first of the ten stages of faith. This fundamental wisdom of universal brightness is thus the cause for the attainment of Buddhahood as well as its fruition-hence its importance in Chinul's system of practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2016 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: What if I am the only one...

Content:

Astus wrote:

Can't remember the source now, but there was a teaching I have encountered that said one should actually think that one is the last unenlightened being, and everyone else are bodhisattvas helping to achieve awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2016 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Essence of Chan

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

enter the Chan state of mind

Astus wrote:

Chan mind is no mind. Whatever state it is, it is conditioned and impermanent. Therefore, the instruction has always been not to abide in any state.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2016 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

once it has become a "style" to adhere to, or a set of things to not do, it has lost it's original purpose entirely.

Astus wrote:

It's easy to repeat words and forget the meaning. Has always been like that. See this one from Fayen Wenyi (885-958):

"But when it came to continuation, their descendants maintained sects and factionalized their ancestries. Not basing themselves on reality, eventually they produced many sidetracks, contradicting and clashing with one another, so that the profound and the shallow became indistinguishable.

Unfortunately, they still do not realize that the Great Way takes no sides; streams of truth are all of the same flavor. These sectarians spread embellishments in empty space and stick needles in iron and stone, taking disputation for superknowledge and lip-flapping for meditation. Sword-points of approval and disapproval arise, and mountains of egotism toward others stand tall. In their anger they become monsters, their views and interpretations ultimately turning them into outsiders. Unless they meet good friends, they will hardly be able to get out of the harbor of delusion. They bring on bad results, even from good causes."

(<http://terebess.hu/zen/fayan.html#a2>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2016 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Approach in the West: Scientific vs Spiritual?

Content:

Astus wrote:

None of the above.

I believe in the direct way to point to the heart of the matter. Anyone can confirm for oneself that no matter what experience occurs, it's unreliable. Because it's unreliable, there is nothing worth grasping. Cultivating that is what regulating, relaxing, and realising are about.

All of the above.

Skilful means is the application of wisdom in all sorts of situations. One better follows wisdom than recipes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2016 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: Bliss in Zen (sukha)

Content:

jundo cohen said:

... the specialty of Zen, which is the separate transmission outside of doctrine.

Astus wrote:

It's buddha to buddha, mind to mind. Not a transmission of words and methods. The skilful means of a bodhisattva comes from wisdom. Wisdom comes from seeing appearances to be unborn. Seeing comes from understanding. Understanding comes from clear explanations. The clarity of explanations depend on the flexibility of the teachers, the efficient use of skilful means. If "Zen style" works, good. If it creates confusion and distrust, it is not good at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2016 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Essence of Chan

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

That may be, but how do you get there? One sure-fire way to do so is to start with the instructions above.

Astus wrote:

It can be a start, but it's more like the middle part if it's about gradual instructions. But it's hardly Chan, much less its essence.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

conebeckham said:

In Zen, as I understand it,(based on very little exposure,) such sorts of analysis, intellectual reasoning, conceptual elaboration, are beside the point at best, and antithetical to the Zen path at an extreme.

Astus wrote:

The largest amount of canonical works by a specific school of Buddhism in East Asia is by the Zen tradition. This itself shows a strong conceptual and literary aspect.

Many of the famous teachers of the past have produced written teachings, and a number of them have even engaged in systematic philosophising. And those who appear only in stories were also apparently familiar with the scriptures to the extent to

be able to freely quote them.

Historically speaking, those who were abbots - i.e. most of the "patriarchs/ancestors" - were members of the educated elite who interacted with the top echelons of the aristocracy and literati in order to ensure the stability of their monastic institutions.

The iconoclastic and anti-intellectual style of Zen is really just a style, as sophisticated and artificial as calligraphy, or a weird piece of modern art.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 2:02 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Useful, of course, for getting around in the world.

Astus wrote:

1. I might be missing something, but so far I have not seen that knowledge of Buddhist teachings is a lucrative business.
2. Getting around in the world is the best anyone can expect, being free from all the entrapments and allures, moving like clouds.

jundo cohen said:

An obstruction to the heart of the matter.

Astus wrote:

1. From thinking comes understanding, from understanding comes realisation.
2. Thoughts are not hindrances in Zen.

jundo cohen said:

if one then scoffs at the anti-intellectual aspect of Zen, and the thinking non thinking aspect

Astus wrote:

Non-thinking and anti-intellectual slogans are two different things.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

conebeckham said:

The caveat I'd add is that sometimes it's not "just a style"--you know?

Astus wrote:

If you refer to not getting stuck with words, that's not a unique concept of Zen. It's been

around since the Nikayas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Need to see through them.

Astus wrote:

How are they seen through?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 2:23 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

conebeckham said:

I mean that it can be a "defense mechanism" against hearing or thinking about things that make one uncomfortable, or it can be used as a defense in argumentation.

Astus wrote:

Like when they say "all is relative", but what they mean is "I don't care what you mean, I know I am right".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

jundo cohen said:

You are trying to have a discussion of Zen leaving the Zen out of the Zen.

Astus wrote:

What is Zen? (so we don't omit it)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

jundo cohen said:

Now you got it!

Astus wrote:

What makes you say that? I certainly did not get anything.

How can you expect keeping Zen in the Zen forum if you don't specify what Zen is?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 10:30 PM

Title: Re: Intellectualization

Content:

jundo cohen said:

the teachings of Soto/Caodong or Rinzai/Linji lines

Malcolm said:

Chan/Zen is ... the teachings of Bodhidharma and his followers

Astus wrote:

So, Zen is a set of teachings. Discussion of those teachings is the primary purpose of the Zen section on this forum. That is quite an intellectual activity. And since this topic, like the others, discusses Zen teachings, there is no lack of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 12th, 2016 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Approach in the West: Scientific vs Spiritual?

Content:

Ayu said:

I was referring to science as a term for the exclusive belief in everything that can be proved scientifically. That belief in its pure form doesn't accept anything that isn't evidenced.

Astus wrote:

That does not exist on the human level. Also, that kind of "pure science" is a methodology, a technique of investigation, not a claim or statement, so it is not in the same category as being spiritual, or any view. Not to mention the problem that if one can actually understand the scientific proof, it is not a matter of believing it or not. So, I think that the "scientific approach" is simply physicalism, another word for materialism, the extreme view of annihilation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2016 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Approach in the West: Scientific vs Spiritual?

Content:

Ayu said:

one side wants to have scientific approach only, leaving out all those traditional prayers and rituals. The other side finds that strange and disagrees.

Astus wrote:

Or: one side doesn't understand the benefits of prayers and rituals in cultivation, the other side is a group of romantics. So I'd say both sides think that it's a religious-traditional thing only. And that creates this false controversy of "scientific or spiritual". Better go for Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2016 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Essence of Chan

Content:

seeker242 said:

So then what is the essence of chan?

Astus wrote:

"since the past this teaching of ours has first taken nonthought (wunian 無念) as its central doctrine (zong 宗), the formless (wuxiang 無相) as its essence (ti 體), and nonabiding (wuzhu 無住) as its fundamental (ben 本)."

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK Edition, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2016 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Is Consciousness Produced by the Brain?

Content:

WeiHan said:

I have an objection to this. Isn't electromagnetic field immaterial but it is a subject of scientific study. And the list goes on

Astus wrote:

Then call it https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_body, if you like.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2016 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Is Consciousness Produced by the Brain?

Content:

WeiHan said:

Do you mean that consciousness is immaterial and thus cannot be subject to scientific investigation?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2016 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Mechanics of Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zazen is where all the analysis leads to. Neither grasping nor rejecting. See for instance <http://www.dharma-friends.org.il/libitem/the-middling-stages-of-meditation-by-acharya-kamalashila/>:

"In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis, because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it. While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. ... If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 15th, 2016 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Mechanics of Enlightenment

Content:

Justmeagain said:

I guess it doesn't actually feel like I have had a non-conceptual experience of the empty nature of phenomena when I am just sitting...

Astus wrote:

Experiences come and go. You cannot stop experiences to stay away. You cannot hold experiences to remain. That's all there is to recognise. Then there is nothing to grasp, nothing to identify with, nothing to gain, nothing to lose. At the same time, there is clear awareness of everything that occurs and disappears. What more do you want?

"When there is nothing to be gained, nothing to be realized, sitting zazen is "body-mind dropping off (shinjin datsuraku)." Body-mind dropping off is not a wonderful psychological state to be gained as a result of sitting zazen. Rather, zazen itself is nothing but "body-mind dropping off." It is to escape all kinds of clinging. When we sit zazen, our body-mind naturally drops off and the true Dharma manifests."
(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms01.pdf)

"When a thought arises during zazen and we become aware of it, it disappears by itself. And when another thought arises, we again become aware of it and it disappears. If we maintain this process, we naturally put aside everything outside and become one with ourselves. This is exactly the state of mind during zazen and the content of hishiryo. Hishiryo is not to attain a transcendental state of mind through meditation or to enter a state of no thoughts and no images. It is not to remain in a state full of defilements and delusions or to keep discriminative thinking, either. This is what Dogen Zenji meant when he used the word hishiryo. This concept was steadfastly handed down to Keizan Zenji's Zazen Yojinki. Thus, in the Soto Zen tradition we now emphasize hishiryo as a state of mind during zazen."

(http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms08.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2016 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: The Beginning of Zen/Chan in China.

Content:

Astus wrote:

What does this have to do with Zen?

First martial arts book attributed to Bodhidharma was made in 1642. Even the association of martial arts with Shaolin goes back only to the 13th century. See for reference McRae's "Seeing through Zen", p 26.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2016 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Mechanics of Enlightenment

Content:

Justmeagain said:

Ok, let me put it another way. What's the difference between sitting here in the couch and sitting on my cushion?

Astus wrote:

From Dazhu's <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>:

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

Similarly, either you accomplish non-thinking (hishiryo), or you are trapped in the extremes of thinking and not thinking. This is what should be clarified first, and that's what sitting on the cushion can help with.

Justmeagain said:

How can, just sitting, with no agenda or method bring about a permanent and transformative experience?

Astus wrote:

It is not an experience one should look for, it is the ongoing experiences one should look at. See them how they arise and fall, come and go. Delusion is wanting an experience, grasping an experience. Liberation is not being fooled by experiences, seeing them to be impermanent, empty of any substance that one can identify with or hang on to. Then, when it is obvious that experiences are ungraspable, there is no agenda or method.

Justmeagain said:

As a friend once suggested, a stone can just sit there doing nothing?

Astus wrote:

Humans cannot do that. We need to eat and sleep, we need clothes and sometimes medicine. And from those needs come all sorts of things to do. Not to mention the innumerable desires and cravings we have. So, we are already in this situation called life, where we want peace and happiness, but at the same time we are constantly bombarded by thoughts, feelings, sensory impressions, and all the social elements. The question is how to deal with all of that. And the Buddha's answer is to realise that the cause of dissatisfaction with life is craving, and craving comes from the ignorance about experiences being conditioned and impermanent. Hence zazen is the practice-realisation of what this body-mind (experiences) really is. In other words, as long as we want to manipulate life, we cannot be at peace, so when one sits, one should not manipulate anything, like a stone left at the bottom of a river.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2016 at 8:11 PM

Title: Re: The Beginning of Zen/Chan in China.

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

Especially considering that the books attributed to Damo have nothing to do with what the classics describe.

Astus wrote:

Can you give exact sources?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 18th, 2016 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Words on nihilism

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

Does anything we do in samsara (other than the endeavor of getting out of it) have value and meaning?

Astus wrote:

There are causes and effects. Whatever we do has consequences. When we want

something to have value, have meaning, what we want is to have effects, that it matters what one does. Certainly it does. At the same time, because it's all causality, there is no actual self inside or outside that, so there is nothing that one should identify with. That everything is meaningful necessitates that it's all meaningless.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 18th, 2016 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

Only buddhas can see a mind via direct perception. For ordinary beings, they either imagine the other mind, or in samadhi see a reflection of the other mind.

Astus wrote:

Buddhas do not have that subject-object distinction required to perceive another's mind. Also, assuming even resemblance or reflection of another's mind requires some sort of connection or conditions that would allow that communication, so it does not really solve the problem.

[Question:] if only consciousness exists, does knowledge of the minds of others [really I know the minds of others or not? [We reply,] if we agree, what is the error? [The opponent argues,] if you are unable to know, how can you speak of knowledge of others' minds? If you are able to know) the minds of others,) then consciousness only is not demonstrated (because you admit the real existence of others]. [We reply,] even though one knows the minds of others, still, it is not [knowing] according to reality (yatha-artha). A verse says,

How does knowledge of others' minds

Not know the object of perception according to reality?

In the same way that knowledge in knowing one's own mind

Does not know it in accordance with the object of perception of a Buddha.

The Treatise says, how can knowledge of the minds of others not know objects of perception in accordance with reality? It is like knowledge of one's own mind.

[Question:] Why does knowledge of one's own mind not know the object of perception according to reality? Because of ignorance of the object of perception. Because each of the two [kinds of knowledge] is concealed by ignorance, they do not know the ineffable object of perception in accordance with a Buddha's pure knowledge. These two do not know the object of perception in accordance with reality because of false appearances that resemble external objects of perception, and because the discrimination of the grasped and the grasper is not eliminated.

(Vasubandhu: Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only, from Three Texts on Consciousness Only, BDK Edition, p 406-407)

It might also be of some interest that Dogen has a short writing on this topic in the

Shobogenzo, it's called "The Power to Know Others' Minds" (Tashintsu, in vol 4 of the BDK Edition). There he writes (p 121-122):

Furthermore, what is called in India “the power to know others’ minds,” should be called “the power to know the images in others’ minds.” [Mind readers] may dimly detect, on the outer edges of perception, images arising in the mind. In the absence of images in the mind, however, they are dumbfounded; that must be laughable. Moreover, the mind is not always mental images, and mental images are not always the mind. When the mind becomes the image, the power to know others’ minds cannot know it; and when the image becomes the mind, the power to know others’ minds cannot know it. This being so, the five powers and the six powers of India are not equal to our mowing weeds and working the fields in this country. They are of no use at all. For this reason, all the past masters in and to the east of China have not liked to practice the five powers and the six powers, because there is no need to do so. Even a one-foot gem can be necessary, [but] the five powers and the six powers are not necessary. Even a one-foot gem is not a treasure, [but] every inch of time is vital. How could a person who attaches importance to time want to learn the five or six powers? In sum, we should decisively affirm the principle that the power to read others’ minds cannot reach the boundary of the Buddha’s wisdom.

And concludes the matter in a very Zen way (p 126):

Now, if we say that there is the power to know others’ minds in the Buddha-Dharma, there must be the power to know others’ bodies, there must be the power to know others’ fists, and there must be the power to know others’ eyes. That being so, there must be the power to know our own mind, and there must be the power to know our own body. If the state is like this already, self-command of our own mind may be nothing other than “the power to know our own mind.” When expressions like this are realized, the state may be the power to know others’ minds [that naturally emerges] from the self itself and from the mind itself. Now let us ask: Is it right to command the power to know others’ minds or is it right to command the power to know our own minds? Speak at once! Speak at once! Setting that aside, [we can conclude that] “You have got my marrow” is just the power to know others’ minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

The mind is considered a sense organ too, after all, so why would it not be able to sense the thoughts of others like the ear senses the sounds made by others? (Please feel free to add the word "apparent" before every single noun in the sentence).

Astus wrote:

There is an explanation of how sound goes from one's mouth to another's ear. What is the explanation of the movement of thoughts between beings?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Words on nihilism

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

But the path is a path out of the world -- an escape from samsara. So, in effect, actions and experiences in the world are judged by whether they will help us get out of the world. Because of this, we can't really say that dharmas have any intrinsic value, and insofar as that is true, Buddhism is similar to philosophical nihilism.

Astus wrote:

That only creates two levels of a value system: worldly (laukika) and other-worldly (lokottara). Those with worldly interest have the values of merit and sin, and those with other-worldly interest also have the values of conducive or unconducive to liberation.

Denying those values is the wrong view of the ten unwholesome actions: "There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves." (<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.041.than.html>)

The only point where both worldly and other-worldly values lose meaning is where one is liberated from karma. But the consequences of previous actions do not disappear because of enlightenment, it's just that they do not cause suffering any more, and no new karma is generated.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Words on nihilism

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

Buddhas have cleared away all obscurations, and thus have no karma.

Astus wrote:

In the case of buddhas, they have the merits accumulated and the vows made during their bodhisattva career, and only because of those merits and vows can they produce a buddha-field and manifest skilful actions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Words on nihilism

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

There is no merit outside of good karma, and there is no karma outside of the alayavijnana. Are you saying that buddhas have an alayavijnana?

Astus wrote:

You can call them inconceivable merit and great mirror wisdom, if you like. Still, the idea is that it is accumulated on the bodhisattva path in order to accomplish the buddha qualities. So, there is cause and effect.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

There is no movement "between" beings, there is only the ruling condition.

Astus wrote:

Now that I could look into that text a little more, the DDV matches Vasubandhu's verses I have quoted, that there is no mind entering another. The DDV states explicitly that minds are not included in the shared category. In Mipham's commentary what are in the shared category are confirmed to be merely the products of one's own mind, while he makes the exception for knowing others' minds. So, since there are just distinct mind-streams, there is some sort of communication between them, otherwise not even a resemblance or reflection of another stream could occur. What is the explanation of such a communication?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Words on nihilism

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

Sure, but are you using "consequence" as a synonym for "meaning"?

Astus wrote:

See in my previous <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=334039#p334039>: "When we want something to have value, have meaning, what we want is to have effects, that it matters what one does."

Causality is the basic rule of the world in Buddhism. That's what makes things good or bad, and that's what one is either deluded or enlightened about. Belief in an intrinsic value is not only against enlightenment, but against the worldly values as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

"Shared" is merely a designation

Astus wrote:

In other words, a convention. Telepathy is a conventional concept. Or rather, it was once, but in the modern times it's moved into the conventional reality of a few who believe in the paranormal and such. So, if someone argues that there is such a thing as telepathy, it requires a conventional explanation, just as there is one for how hearing works.

Mother's Lap said:

for when multiple minds see their own minds in a similar fashion to each other

Astus wrote:

How can such a similarity be established, when there is no way to compare one's mind with another's?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Mother's Lap said:

Sraddha in Buddhadharma until we can know it for ourselves at buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the arguments presented in Yogacara (and Dogen's work) is not about explaining how telepathy could work, but to point to realising how our experiences are, and from that gain the liberating view that there is nothing that can be grasped.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: am i "suffering"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Samsara is not a container of beings, but the life of delusion. Hence the Vimalakirti Sutra: when the mind is pure, the land is pure. And as Yongjia's Song of Enlightenment says: "The true nature of ignorance is the buddha-nature; this empty body, an illusory transformation, is the dharma-body."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2016 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Can women become Buddhas?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Really? Well I have yet to see this plethora of evidence. Normally it is one or two standard quotes that are trotted out. That is hardly "well documented" considering the volume of teachings attributed to the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.dhammadharini.net/dhamma/dhamma-talks-from-the-bhikkhuni-sangha/aranya-bodhi-hermitage/non-historicity-of-the-eight-garudhammas>

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/bahudhatuka.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2016 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, indeed minds do not enter each other. However, in knowing the mind of another, what is required is that the mind to be known apprehends characteristics. If it does not apprehend characteristics, there is nothing for another to apprehend about that mind—for example, when some devas became unnerved when they could not locate a favored monk, they were informed that he was a) now an arhat b) in equipoise, which is why they were unable to find him with their minds.

Astus wrote:

That is the idea that

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=334111&sid=744a1659a6aff7331c07d0a6f592d7c9#p334111> analysed in his writing, and criticised it.

As for minds with characteristics, if we say that consciousness necessarily has an object - one is always conscious of something, not just conscious - then a mind without characteristics does not exist. What is called an

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.055.than.html> is the liberated mind, where there is no attachment to the aggregates. However, that doesn't mean that the mind and other functions stop, so even those who are liberated see, hear, sense, and think. So it seems that if the difference lies in the presence of ignorance, then what can be known of another's mind is ignorance only. However, in the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.11.0.than.html#mindreading>, one can see even an undeluded and released mind, and there are also

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.060.than.html#telepathy> to read another's mind, both with and without signs involved. So, when an arhat is not found, is after parinirvana (<http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=419>), so there is also an interpretation that unestablished consciousness means <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn22.87> <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn12.25>.

Here is a

http://www.zenguide.com/zenmedia/books/content.cfm?t=the_gateless_gate&chapter=42 on this topic (note: Momyo (lit. false/no light, i.e. ignorance) is on 1st bhumi):

Once, in the old days, in the time of the World-honored One, Manjusri went to the assembly of the Buddhas and found that everyone had departed to his original dwelling place. Only a girl remained, sitting in samadhi close to the Buddha's throne.

Manjusri asked Shakyamuni Buddha, "Why can the girl get near the Buddha's throne, while I cannot?"

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Bring her out of her samadhi and ask her yourself."

Manjusri walked around the girl three times, snapped his fingers once, took her to the Brahma heaven, and exerted all his miraculous powers to bring her out of her meditation, but in vain.

The World-honored One said, "Even a hundred thousand Manjusris cannot make her wake up. But down below, past twelve hundred million lands as innumerable as the sands of Ganges, there is a Bodhisattva Momyo. He will be able to rouse her from her samadhi."

Instantly the Bodhisattva Momyo emerged from the earth and made a bow to the World-honored One, who gave him his imperial order. The Bodhisattva went over to the girl and snapped his fingers once. At this she came out of her samadhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2016 at 10:02 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But it clearly does, since it is described as such in many sūtras, etc.

Astus wrote:

A mind without characteristics exists? That would be an independent consciousness, a soul.

Malcolm said:

Also, realized people (bodhisattvas, arhats) with liberated minds may indeed cognize characteristics when in post-euipoise. All the examples you gave merely demonstrate that point. Further, sound is apprehended by characteristics, etc. All cognitions are cognitions via characteristics from which we conceptually abstract our world.

Astus wrote:

Yes, consciousness is of something, of characteristics. Saying that telepathy is seeing the characteristics is equal to seeing the mind, just as there is no roundness and ball separately, therefore experiencing the same characteristic as another is being one with the other, a merging of minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 21st, 2016 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

there is such a thing as a mind that does not apprehend characteristics, hence a mind without characteristics.

Astus wrote:

What counts as characteristic? What does a mind without characteristics depend on?

Malcolm said:

No, no more than seeing a ball is merging with a ball.

Astus wrote:

There are a number of differences between a ball and a mind. What makes a consciousness is a moment of cognition. If one has the very same moment of cognition, then it is the same mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2016 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

For example, the blueness of a vase.

Astus wrote:

OK, that's a concept, a function of perception (samjna).

Malcolm said:

Upon what should a mind depend? If you assert it must continue based on sense perceptions, then you cannot explain how a mind continues in a completely nonconceptual samadhi, for example, nirvikalpa samadhi (which in a Buddha is called Vajropama Samadhi).

Astus wrote:

When there is nothing grasped, there is no grasper either. But that means only the lack of substantialisation of object and subject, not that there are no phenomena.

Malcolm said:

Same only in the sense in the sense that two fires are both hot; different in so far as the two fires are distinct. In other words, I I apprehend the ball in your mind's eye, the image I perceive in my mind will be identical to how you perceive the ball, but different in so far as our minds are distinct continuums.

Astus wrote:

Mind is the subjective experience. To make it an object is not any more a subjective experience, therefore not the experience of another's mind, but a concept about what is in another's mind. In other words, you can think that I think about a ball. That happens even when I tell you that I think of a ball, so you know what I think about. Telepathy is knowing what I think without I telling you. But since there is no connection between the minds, what is the cause of knowing it? Without connection it is like seeing a ball that's in another room - there is no light reaching the eyes from the ball, so it cannot be seen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2016 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Minds are essentially unimpeded and nonimpeding so the question of how they connect is irrelevant. It's the wrong question.

Astus wrote:

Since we generally don't perceive others' minds, there is something impeding that perception, or there is a lack of condition for perception. What is it?

Also, if there is no separation between minds, they still remain separate continua, i.e. different causal sequences. If two continua could result in the same moment of consciousness, that would mean two sequences becoming one, and from then on they could not go on different sequences, unless we assume that from a single moment of consciousness two different moments could occur.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2016 at 8:34 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who says we don't perceive others minds. We just don't know that the appearance of the triple realm is a mentally generated appearance. The traces of other minds are of enough strength even to create appearances for ourselves.

Astus wrote:

When and how do we perceive others' minds? Since the triple realm is a production of one's own delusions, even mountains are just the false projections of concepts. How could traces (what are such traces anyway?) of minds then come from others?

Malcolm said:

You seem to fail to grasp generic sameness as opposed to sameness as identity. If I apprehend someone else's direct perception of a blue vase, my perception and theirs

are generically the same, but the sameness of identity.

Astus wrote:

What specific details would be different in a single moment of thought?

Malcolm said:

Then there is the funny case of the group of arhats who all shared one mind, in the sense that since they were completely open to one another, it appeared to them as if they had but a single mind.

Astus wrote:

Just out of curiosity, where is that story found?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2016 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The three realms are not just a production of solely our own traces

Astus wrote:

Then the triple realm is not just a mental construct. It sounds like you say the world is a virtual/mental reality of many minds.

Malcolm said:

Subject a has a thought that Subject b perceives.

Astus wrote:

OK. Still, what is the cause/condition/reason for being able to do so? You said that "It is a very simple principle that does not require much analysis." - that is practically like saying that "it just happens".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2016 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Samadhi is the cause and condition of being able to perceive the thoughts in the mind of another.

Astus wrote:

Yes, so it is with all six powers.

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to

knowledge of the awareness of other beings. He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness."
(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html>)

Again, this does not actually explain how it is possible, or how it works, it just says that it happens so. So, "samadhi" is an insufficient reason. Unless what you mean is that we can have such experiences of the powers during meditation, but it should not be taken literally.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, it explains both how it is possible and how it works. When you are less distracted by your own thoughts, you can perceive the thoughts of others more easily. A mind is both unimpeded and unimpeding by nature. It should be taken literally.

Astus wrote:

If that's so straightforward as you say, where are all the telepathic and miracle making yogis (besides all the stories)?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 2:27 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

It's not as rare as you think.

Astus wrote:

If it were only a matter of gaining the fourth level of absorption - something that's not exclusive to Buddhists - magical feats would be as common as marathon runners, or at least as world class athletes.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

What would be called an exceptional level of emotional intelligence in western psych is pretty hard to separate from 'psychic ability', IMO they might actually one and the same. Knowing one's own mind makes it possible to know the minds of others.

Astus wrote:

That's possible, and takes the whole mystical side away.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

These days? Tibet and India.

Astus wrote:

How come then that the world knows nothing about them? With all the parapsychologists, hermeticists, esoteric enthusiasts, New Age believers, media sensationalism, and the people who want to prove every one of them as frauds, it seems very unlikely that if there are people with genuine supernormal powers, they just remain unnoticed.

Malcolm said:

There are very few people who have attained even the first dhyāna, let alone the fourth, in this day and age.

Astus wrote:

There are also very few Nobel laureates and Olympic gold medalists.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Frankly, they prefer to remain unnoticed.

Astus wrote:

That sounds just like a good number of conspiracy theories do.

Malcolm said:

And, imagine how annoying it would be to be able to "hear" all the chatter in other beings' minds. What a cacophony.

Astus wrote:

If it is an ability someone has developed, then it can be controlled, and activates according to one's will.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 23rd, 2016 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

So my sneaking suspicion is that for a good chunk of people who have these abilities or qualities (personally I think quality might actually be a better description in some ways) don't really know how to do them at will, and in some cases maybe aren't even particularly aware of them..though for sure I'm open to the possibility that some very developed folks can use such things and know what they are doing.

Astus wrote:

Everyone should have those abilities. In a way, it is part of social interaction, and regularly experienced among family members and close friends. And there are people who take this to the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentalism>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Further clarification of my approach on the matter.

If powers are taken to be real magic, they actually remain only a matter of stories, good for entertainment and nothing more. But if they are understood as meditation/religious experiences, they regain their relevance and become something that people can relate to, that they can truly use for something, etc. And people do experience them, as many practitioner can testify.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your approach to the subject is no different than any other scientific materialist.

Astus wrote:

There is a history of testing claims of supernatural powers in Europe and the US. It is not the case that there is a lack of people who believe in magic, rather it's the lack of people who can perform in a controlled environment. There are monks who are scientifically tested for the benefits of meditation. But there are only old stories where monks and yogis display magical powers.

The materialist approach is to interpret the powers in a way that they should exist in a materially effective way, just like you seem to say. And that's why it is easily refuted as false by others with a similar materialistic approach.

Malcolm said:

What can you use clairvoyance for if it is not a real capacity of the human mind?

Astus wrote:

I don't recall the Buddha advising his disciples to use clairvoyance for anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Bodhisattvas are supposed to cultivate the five abijñās to be of benefit to other sentient beings. For example, being able to know the minds of other sentient beings means that one will automatically know what kind of teaching for which they are suited, etc. Buddha gave much advice of this kind.

Astus wrote:

There are a number of stories of the Buddha where apparently he had no powers to prevent what had happened or know about it (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn4.18>, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn54/sn54.009.than.html>). Also, the very first abhijna includes all sorts of magical powers, that could have definitely helped in spreading and defending the Dharma over the centuries. But clairvoyance and telepathy should have proved useful in several cases, when Buddhist masters had encounters with all sorts of rulers.

Malcolm said:

We are talking about clairvoyance, manomāyakāyas and so on. What is material about that?

Astus wrote:

Do you know anyone who has passed some tests for those abilities? Likely not. At the same time, we don't need to look as far as India to find clairvoyants and such. If, as you say, it is something humanly capable - and it's not as hard as attaining insight into emptiness - I don't see why it is not a common thing.

Malcolm said:

People who have such capacities are not supposed to demonstrate them idly, and if they are monks, they are forbidden to do so.

Sherab Dorje said:

Do you believe that "proving" to the world that telepathy can arise as a consequence of dhyana is an idle demonstration?

Malcolm said:

Yup.

Astus wrote:

Not all people with such capacities are Buddhists, and even Buddhist monks, including the Buddha, have demonstrated their powers openly numerous times according to the stories. So, that kind of argument of "hiding magicians" does not stand either within Buddhism nor outside of it. Again, if it were something attainable by people, we would have dozens of them showing off in concert halls and live on TV, just like those "remote healers", "fortune tellers", etc. actually do.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 7:36 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What makes you think they still don't? As I said, you apparently don't know any real yogis.

Astus wrote:

Because if there were even one, it would make news all over the world. Like https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braco_%28faith_healer%29.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

I am in complete agreement with Malcolm on this one. But the reason is that the demonstration of such skill will never take a potential student in the correct direction. Always this leads to those who do not have sufficient roots gaining powers that they will inevitably abuse.

Astus wrote:

That does not match all those anecdotes about Buddhist masters using all sorts of magic. For instance, monks were employed by Japanese emperors to guarantee succession through a male heir. Also, look at how in the 17th century a Chinese monk who moved to Japan was perceived:

"Among common Japanese, Yinyuan and his disciples had been viewed as magic workers with extraordinary abilities such as divination, rainmaking, and telekinesis, which has been commonly referred to as "spiritual penetration" (jintsū) in Buddhist literature." (Jiang Wu: Leaving for the Rising Sun, p 165)

An example of one of the stories from the pen of a German visitor in Japan (p 164):

"His sanctity came to the test shortly after his arrival, and the result greatly enhanced the esteem in which he was held. He was asked by the farmers of the surrounding countryside to conduct a kitō, that is, a holy ceremonial prayer or mass, to draw rain

from heaven onto their rice fields, which were being devastated by drought. He answered that he could neither make rain nor assure them that the kitō would produce the desired effect but that he would do his best. Thereupon he climbed up a mountain and conducted his kitō. The following day the rain poured down so heavily that even the smaller bridges in the city were washed away, and not only the farmers but also the city judged that he had made his kitō too strong."

It doesn't look like that Yinyuan was afraid of any misdirection of his disciples and the general people.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Vasana said:

despite the staggering ammount of anecdotal accounts which are collectively significant pieces of data in and of themselves.

Astus wrote:

Christian literature is filled with stories of miracles. Would you call that proof of God's presence?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 24th, 2016 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Either that or he was a victim of good timing...

Astus wrote:

I guess we will never know. But it is telling that while Yinyuan was a Zen teacher - and people today would think them to be not magical at all, nor do such events play any important role in his teachings and records - he was famous among the masses as a miracle worker.

This discussion itself is somewhat strange. All we can talk about are interpretations of stories. As I see it, as long as they are just stories of extraordinary people who are long dead, they bear no relevance to one's practice and life at all. But the rddhipada is part of the 37 qualities for enlightenment, so it should not be foreign to anyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2016 at 1:29 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

The 17th Century and now are worlds apart in terms of the prevailing social conditioning. Whereas back then, such feats would make a person revered, today they would make the same person derided.

Astus wrote:

How so? Just reading through this thread shows that many acknowledge the validity of such powers. This little interview tells the same:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKqmPSToWUU> Beyond that, all kinds of energy (Reiki, etc.) and faith (Christians) healers, fortune tellers, magicians and shamans have great popularity.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2016 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: can one mind enter another?

Content:

Vasana said:

I don't know about extraordinary displays of abilities in Theravada or Zen circles today, but they're actually still fairly common in the Tibetan traditions. Many students have themselves witnessed such feats so of course it bears relevance to one's life ,view and practice.

Astus wrote:

Such stories exist in traditional communities, like about Ajahn Chah and Hsuan Hua. But they all sound like the following:

In Taiwan, I have a disciple who has been practicing with me for quite sometime. He has a good command of English, so when a certain Tibetan rinpoche was scheduled to lecture, he was asked to translate. He was very nervous. He had never practiced Tantra, and was afraid that he wouldn't understand what the rinpoche said. In a quandary, he finally decided that if he didn't understand, it was the rinpoche's responsibility to make him understand. With this thought he went to sleep. The rinpoche came to him in a dream, placed his hand on the disciple's head, and said, "You don't have to be nervous. You will understand everything I say tomorrow. You don't have to worry." He had a wonderful feeling when the rinpoche touched him. The next morning it was the rinpoche who woke him up. My disciple immediately prostrated to the rinpoche and thanked him for entering his dream. Curious, the rinpoche asked, "What happened last night?" The disciple told him, and after a few more questions from the rinpoche, he concluded that it might not have been the rinpoche but a "yidam," a Dharma protector, who came to him.

Later I asked him if he had ever dreamed of me. He said, "Yes, indeed, many times." Then I asked if he thought that it was me who had entered his dreams. He said, "No, because Shih-fu doesn't have a yidam." So then I said to him, "O.K., I will go and find myself a yidam so that the next time you dream of me, you will be sure that it is my yidam that is entering your dream."

(<http://chancenter.org/cmc/1985/05/15/esoteric-and-exoteric-buddhism/>)

In other words, disciples like to believe that a teacher has special powers, so they attribute some otherwise ordinary events to those powers. That's not different from calling some events the acts of God.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2016 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment and Phenomena

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two essays by Sharf:

http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert_Sharf-e.htm

http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf%20Is%20Nirvana%20the%20Same%20as%20Insentience_.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2016 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

So how can it be realised then? It would be tantamount to running a race without knowing where the finish line is, or if there is even a finish line. Or even a track, given that suddenly dhyana is not the point of (some... any?) Buddhist meditations.

Astus wrote:

The Mind in terms of the Absolute is the one World of Reality (dharmadhatu) and the essence of all phases of existence in their totality. That which is called "the essential nature of the Mind" is unborn and is imperishable.

...

Question: If such is the meaning of the principle of Mahayana, how is it possible for men to conform themselves to and enter into it?

Answer: If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks, nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks, nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it. And when they are freed from their thoughts, they are said to have entered into it.

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

As for the attainment of dhyanas, there are various views on them, particularly among Theravada teachers where they teach it in several ways (e.g.

<http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?t=4597>). However, essentially it means peace of mind, where in the first four stages one's enjoyment of peace calms down, while the formless stages are about refining the object that sustains the attention.

Naturally, there is the tendency to elevate holy concepts to unreachable levels, at which point they disappear from practice, while the actual practices are simply renamed. And that's how we have calming meditation with new names in Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2016 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

1. From where does it arise?
2. If wholesome behaviour is afflicted too, then how can it be a means to traverse the path?

Astus wrote:

1. The three realms have only 3 lower ones with more pain than pleasure. The rest, including numerous heavens, are all nice places. Similarly, there are significantly more wholesome dharmas than unwholesome in abhidharma charts. They are all parts of this world.

2. One can do all kinds of good things, and that will result in good fruits. That is still very much within the scope of how karma works. The reason it can serve as a support for liberation is that one can use the good conditions for peaceful reflection on the drawbacks of life, the four noble truths, dependent origination, and emptiness. Then when the futility of life generates renunciation, and the insight into the conditioned nature of existence shows the insubstantiality of oneself and all appearances, then there is nothing left to attach to and one gains freedom.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2016 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Vasana said:

As far as i understand it, the wholesome virtues and karmas enable you to actually benefit beings through the Rupakayas where as the unconditioned karmas (primordial wisdom) are the cause of realizing Dharmakaya.

Astus wrote:

That is the bodhisattva path, where one is established in prajnaparamita. Before that, however, it's deluded wholesome action causing wholesome results.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 26th, 2016 at 8:27 PM

Title: Zen Language

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are two comparisons. The first one is a Hongzhi comment on a section from the Platform Sutra. It is three poems with the same intention. The second one is an old Chan story in Dogen's version and a modern Theravadin teaching, again, pointing to the same idea.

Record of Hongzhi (vol 3, T2001p27c16):

Wolun was cited:

"Wolun has a trick
That can stop the hundred thoughts,
Meeting circumstances no mind rises
And bodhi grows daily."

To that the Sixth Patriarch said,

"Huineng has no trick
There are continuously hundred thoughts,
Meeting circumstances mind arises
How could bodhi grow?"

Hongzhi added,

"Sunflowers turn to the Sun.
Willow catkins fly with the wind."

<http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Modern%20Teachers/John%20Daido%20Looi%20-%20Dharma%20Talks/Discourse%20Yunyen%27s%20Insentient%20Beings%20Preach%20the%20Dharma.htm>:

Dongshan asked Yunyen, "Who can hear the teachings of the insentient?"
Yunyen said, "It can be heard by the insentient." Dongshan asked, "Do you hear it, Master?" Yunyen said, "If I heard it, then you would not hear my teaching." Dongshan answered, "That being the case, then I do not hear your teaching." Yunyen replied, "You don't even hear my teaching, how could you hear the teachings of the insentient?"
Dongshan was enlightened on hearing this and responded in verse:

Wondrous! Marvelous!
The teachings of the insentient are inconceivable.
If you listen with the ears, you won't understand.
When you hear with the eyes, then you will know.

https://www.ajahnchah.org/book/Samm_Samdhi_Detachment.php:

When the mind sees like this, wherever we go, we see aniccam. (transience), dukkham.

(imperfection) and anatta (ownerlessness). There's nothing left to hold on to. Whether we sit at the foot of a tree, on a mountain top or in a valley, we can hear the Buddha's teaching. All trees will seem as one, all beings will be as one, there's nothing special about any of them.

They arise, exist for a while, age and then die, all of them. We thus see the world more clearly, we see this body and mind more clearly. They are clearer in the light of transience, clearer in the light of imperfection and clearer in the light of ownerlessness. If people hold fast to things, they suffer. This is how suffering arises. If we see that body and mind are simply the way they are, no suffering arises, because we don't hold fast to them. Wherever we go we will have wisdom. Even when seeing a tree we can consider it with wisdom. Seeing grass and the various insects will be food for reflection.

When it all comes down to it, they all fall into the same boat. They are all Dhamma, they are invariably transient. This is the truth, this is the true Dhamma, this is certain. How is it certain? It is certain in that the world is that way and can never be otherwise. There's nothing more to it than this. If we can see in this way, we have finished our journey.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What one gains insight of is non-conceptual awareness. However, at the beginning that is only like non-conceptual awareness, because one usually takes it to be a non-functional mind, the lack of thoughts. So, as in Mahamudra, one trains from one-pointedness, non-conceptuality, and one-taste up to non-meditation, where mind, thoughts, and appearances are all co-emergent and self-liberating; or in Madhyamika terms, non-dual emptiness and dependent origination.

The reason only buddhas see buddha-nature, is that buddha-nature means liberation and the buddha qualities at the same time, so there is the talk about both empty and not empty. Hence, sravakas know liberation, bodhisattvas know liberation and limited qualities/function, and only buddhas have both liberation and function.

The trick (or reinterpretation) for buddha-nature in so called direct teachings is to identify the buddhas' liberation and qualities/function with emptiness and awareness, whereby seeing the mind becomes seeing buddha-nature. But that still leaves space for a gradual development.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Zen Language

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

So my question is: why this different kind of presentation (which some would call oblique). Why not just put the idea out there in a straightforward way, as in the Ajahn

Chan text? What happens as a result of the change in presentation?

Astus wrote:

There are simple and straightforward Zen teachings using conventional Mahayana terminology. Some Tang era records are mostly unedited, like those of Baizhang, Huangbo and Dazhu, while those of Huineng (Platform Sutra), Mazu, and Linji have been edited more extensively, but they are still fairly legible. When it comes to the Song era, on the one hand we have the koan collections with their complicated language, and the reason behind that is that they are literary products. On the other hand, if you read the works of Dahui Zonggao and Foyan Qingyuan, they are quite clear. You can read all those mentioned in English.

As always, one should keep in mind the intended audience of a text. In many cases, Chan writings are like calligraphy, artistic products for the educated elite. And Chan teachers themselves were members of the high society, who catered to the taste of the rulers, in exchange of support and other benefits. Of course, there are other types of writings as well, however, it shows the requirements of the Western audience that people reading Zen are also from the educated class, and they enjoy the peculiarity of exotic Eastern riddles. Among so called Zen practitioners, the majority probably do not want anything to do with common, prosaic, religious philosophy, so instead it's easier to pretend that Zen is beyond all concepts when the texts themselves are mostly non-sense.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

If seeing the mind = seeing tathāgatagarbha, then this makes mind unconditioned or tathāgatagarbha conditioned, but undesirable consequences.

Astus wrote:

There is no such thing as the unconditioned. Unconditioned means unbound, empty. Seeing the mind means recognising that it's empty and conditioned, and by that one is not conditioned any more by imagined essences. So as they say, the emptiness is the dharmakaya, the awareness is the sambhogakaya, and appearances are the nirmanakaya.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Depends on what you mean by "thing." I mean "dharma"

Astus wrote:

By thing what was meant was substance, an independent object. Dharma, in the sense you mentioned, is a conceptual category, and in that way there can be a category of unconditioned things, as they say in abhidharma.

Malcolm said:

If emptiness = the dharmakāya, then is the dharmakāya is just something inert, like a rock?

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya refers to the ultimate nature of buddhas, and that is emptiness. It seems that Buddhist thinkers did not bother with creating a special word for the insubstantiality of rocks. Note: dharmakaya is just one of the three/four bodies, so it is not all there is to a buddha/mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So here you definition of dharmakāya = emptiness is inadequate, since it would leave dharmakāya as an inert void.

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is not a being to be anything, it is a term, a concept, used in various contexts. If you think it should be emptiness-awareness/wisdom/appearances/etc., so be it. We can then go on from there.

Malcolm said:

No, but they do have a word for the insentience of rocks.

Astus wrote:

What is it?

Malcolm said:

As for as there being more than three bodies of the buddha, that very much depends on whether one considers svabhāvakāya to be a synonym for dharmakāya or not. I am inclined to think it is a synonym.

Astus wrote:

As for the fourth body, I think it's just an extra emphasis on the oneness of the three bodies. Or another way to claim superiority of Tantra, similar to adding a fifth wisdom (jnana). Maybe both at the same time. Regardless if it's three or four, Linji said it all (p 19, tr Sasaki): "They are just empty names, and these names are also empty."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, just as there is no partial awareness of dharmakāya, there is partial awareness of tathāgatagarbha.

Johnny Dangerous said:

That actually makes sense, can't have partial awareness of something that is by definition beyond partiality.

Astus wrote:

Just to add another version:

Those Bodhisattvas who, having advanced from the first stage of correct faith by setting the mind upon enlightenment through practicing contemplation, have come to realize the Dharmakaya, can partially comprehend this. Yet even those who have reached the final stage of Bodhisattvahood cannot fully comprehend this; only the Enlightened Ones have thorough comprehension of it. Why? The Mind, though pure in its self-nature from the beginning, is accompanied by ignorance.

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

is a term used to describe the mind of a buddha. It is not simply an term describing a blank insentient emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Then you have to change the roles given to sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya as the functional aspects. Because where dharmakaya refers to emptiness, the three bodies together make up a complete buddha-mind, and they do not exist separately.

Malcolm said:

Kansthā. It means anything that lacks a mind.

Astus wrote:

Interesting. In the dictionaries online it translates to "rag, patched garment; wall, town". But if it means anything mindless, how is it specifically for rocks?

Malcolm said:

That is how it is parsed in some Vajrayāna contexts, but never in sūtra, where it is

generally treated as synonym of dharmakāya.

Astus wrote:

Maybe in TB, but have not encountered with it in EAB. But their unity is known:

"The dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya—
The three bodies are fundamentally a single body.
If one can see it oneself within the nature,
This is the cause of bodhi and the achievement of buddhahood."
(Platform Sutra, ch 10, BDK Edition, p 90)

Malcolm said:

it is easy to reduce everything to nihilism with flippant quotes.

Astus wrote:

"The concluding practice is the conviction that the ordinary mind that was from the beginning the unity of clarity and emptiness is itself the naturally arising three kayas - its emptiness is dharmakaya, its clarity is nirmanakaya, and the union of those is sambhogakaya."

(Jamgon Kongtrul on Mahamudra of the Shangpa Kagyu, in The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, p 246)

"The great state of dharmakaya is space-like emptiness. The expression arising out of the state of primordial purity is a spontaneous presence which includes the two form kayas - sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. ... What that means is our essence, which is a primordially pure emptiness, is dharmakaya. Indivisible from that is the natural cognizance, the spontaneously present basis for experience that is the sambhogakaya aspect."

(Tulku Urgyen: As It Is, vol 1, p 100)

"As to the three bodies, the pure dharmakāya is your nature, the perfect and complete saṃbhogakāya is your wisdom, and the thousand billion nirmāṇakāyas are your practices (i.e., saṃskāra, "mental activities")."

(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK Edition, p 60)

"Emptiness is the Buddha's Dharmakaya, just as the Dharmakaya is emptiness. People's usual understanding is that the Dharmakaya pervades emptiness, and that it is contained in emptiness. However, this is erroneous, for we should understand that the Dharmakaya is emptiness and that emptiness is the Dharmakaya. If one thinks that emptiness is an entity and that this emptiness is separate from the Dharmakaya or that there is a Dharmakaya outside of emptiness, one is holding a wrong view. In the complete absence of views about emptiness, the true Dharmakaya appears. Emptiness and Dharmakaya are not different. The most important thing is your empty, cognizant mind. Its natural emptiness is

dharmakaya, also called empty essence. Your natural ability to know and to perceive is cognizant nature, sambhogakaya."

(<http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang%20Po/Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Huang-po.htm>)

"By what reasoning can it be shown that sentient beings have Buddhature? Because all sentient beings are pervaded by the emptiness of Dharmakaya, because there are no differentiations in the nature of suchness, and because all beings have a "family " For these three reasons, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature. ...

To explain the first reason "all sentient beings are pervaded by the emptiness of Dharmakaya" means that the ultimate Buddhahood is Dharmakaya, Dharmakaya is all-pervading emptiness, and emptiness pervades all sentient beings Therefore, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature.

Saying "there are no differentiations in the nature of suchness" means that the suchness of the Buddha is identical to the suchness of sentient beings None is better or worse, none is bigger or smaller, none is higher or lower So, because of that, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature."

(Gampopa: Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 49-50)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, you don't have to change anything.

Astus wrote:

If the dharmakaya includes both emptiness and awareness, what do sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya stand for?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Zen Language

Content:

Meido said:

Who are the "so-called Zen practitioners", as opposed to Zen practitioners? From what experience do you make definitive statements about what the majority of them want?

Astus wrote:

Zen practitioners are anyone who engage in Zen practice, usually identified as zazen. I have not intended the larger group of Zenophiles (very good term!). As for the reason, it is simply my personal observation from both online and offline sources. It could be

added that it is not an exclusively modern Western phenomenon, but a common human behaviour. Of course, it's not exclusive to Zen either. It is normally easier to follow a practical method than to change one's mindset, for example as it happened with yoga.

Meido said:

But really, I think sweeping generalizations about Zen in the West are not terribly useful, and it's not clear to me on what basis you make them.

Astus wrote:

You may consider it as a side note about a possible deviation. It is about how the supply and demand works in terms of Zen community programs and literary products. For Zen groups, the main events are retreats, while in Asia the main events are holiday ceremonies. As for books, let's look at some reading lists. It seems to me that they lack a significant doctrinal part, they focus on meditation, sometimes ethics, but not really on what's behind those things - karma, defilements, dependent origination, wholesome and unwholesome mental factors, etc. And because there is no view provided, people can fill in the gaps with whatever they like.

I think this sums up the attitude quite nicely:

I don't believe in rebirth and yet, I don't negate it. There is no basis to believe or negate it. What I can say for sure is, "I don't know." The important thing for me is to practice in this lifetime as the Buddha instructed in the Dhammapadam, "To refrain from anything bad and practice everything good. Purify your mind. This is the teaching of the seven Buddhas." (Shohaku Okumura:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Dogen_Teachings/Genjokoan_Okumura.htm)

So, let's look at those recommended works.

At <https://zmm.mro.org/training/recommended-reading/>:

They recommend DT Suzuki, that's sort of a strong negative. They use questionable translations (for the Diamond Sutra, Vimalakirti Sutra, Surangama Sutra), and history books (Armstrong, Dumoulin). Basic teachings on karma, rebirth, the bodhisattva path, etc. are marginal, while the three major koan collections and most of the available recorded sayings are there. Four books by Trungpa are included, but nothing from Nagarjuna, or on Madhyamaka, Yogacara, or Pure Land, while there is only one book on Tiantai meditation, and one on general Huayan concepts.

At <http://www.oceangatezen.org/resources/a-basic-soto-zen-reading-list/>:

Basic introductory list. Includes mostly modern practice oriented Soto teachings, a Theravada intro, and TNH's intro. It's OK for a start.

At <http://zmc.org/reading-list>:

1 Dogen, 2 Trungpa, 1 Pema Chodron, 12 modern Zen teachers, 5 koan collections. This

lacks even the basics, not to mention fundamental Mahayana.

At <http://bostonzen.org/suggested-reading-list/>:

A good number of modern Zen books, one Nikaya anthology, a few Mahayana type intro books, a little Dogen, koan collections, and a mixture of Buddhist and spiritual works.

At http://www.mondozen.org/resource_library/reading_list.htm:

A big mixture of this and that. At least it mentions The Sun of Wisdom by KTG. It's hard to see how someone could gain a complete picture of Buddhism, or even just Zen from that list.

At <http://www.zen-azi.org/en/node/43>:

It gives the basic tone when the second book on the list is Buddhism without Beliefs. Lot of Soto Zen books. Has a nice list of the Nikayas and Mahayana sutras, but nothing comprehensive on schools or teachings besides a practice centred Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Zen Language

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

That said, poetic transmissions are useful, really any teaching that goes straight for the jugular and shuts down the conceptual is a real gift.

seeker242 said:

And it seems these are the people who hate koans because koans don't allow for that!

Astus wrote:

"It has been noted that Zen was essentially associated with the literati and the means of dissemination of Zen, such as Recorded Sayings, history of lamp transmission, collections of koan stories, and so on, was highly literary and textual. Zen is basically a literary tradition and a high level of literacy is necessary for understanding the meaning of Zen."

(Jiang Wu: Leaving for the Rising Sun, p 34)

This type of literary Zen (wenzi chan 文字禪) goes back to the Song era when they started composing recorded sayings, lamp transmissions, and koan collections. The Blue Cliff Record is a prime example of that. So, actually it was not about "shutting down the conceptual" at all. And there is still a currency of this sort of literacy, as shown by http://www.thezensite.com/ZenBookReviews/Zen_Sand.html, but Meido can probably say more.

I would compare this "Zen language" to other forms of Buddhist intellectual products,

like abhidharma, madhyamaka, yogacara, etc. They are all works of the educated elite for other members of that group, and they are meant to convey the Dharma in a respected and appropriate format.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

See my post above for one explanation....

Astus wrote:

What you gave seems to follow the original quote in identifying the dharmakaya with emptiness ("non-thought" free of clear fixation), while clarity goes to the sambhogakaya, and appearances to the nirmanakaya. Or did I miss something?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2016 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In which system? In which context?

Astus wrote:

Whichever you think is fine.

Malcolm said:

If you claim, as you have, that dharmakāya is only emptiness, there is the fault that dharmakāya will be a blank void.

Astus wrote:

I don't hold the dharmakaya to be anything, not even blank void. It is just a term for the emptiness side of buddha-mind, while the rupakaya accounts for the aware, functional side. If we move the aware quality from the rupakaya to the dharmakaya side, it matters little to me, except that then the rupakaya needs new roles.

Malcolm said:

The dharmakāya is realization of emptiness, the realization of dharmatā. That realization is nondual with emptiness, but it still is a realization. A blank void cannot realize anything.

Astus wrote:

One realises things with the mind. That the mind is empty, that quality can be called the dharmakaya. Otherwise, if it is the realisation of emptiness, it is a very momentary occurrence. If it is the result of the realisation, the enlightened mind, then of course it

cannot be a mere blankness.

Malcolm said:

Furthermore, the next fault is that a blank void cannot be a source of anything, and dharmakāya is the source of the two rūpakāyas.

Astus wrote:

If dharmakaya means the enlightened mind, what are the other kayas?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

We have already seen that dharmakāya is defined as the buddha's jñāna, his pristine consciousness, which is characterized by the twin omniscience.

Astus wrote:

You also mentioned before that the dharmakaya is unconditioned. Do you propose an unconditioned consciousness then?

Malcolm said:

Which mind? Certainly not the eight consciousnesses. For example, which mind among the eight consciousnesses is operative in the realization of emptiness?

Astus wrote:

Realisation of emptiness is the elimination of the wrong concept of essence. That ignorance is removed from the mind (the 8th in the 8 consciousnesses system) by correct discernment (of the 6th).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

I've not seen Rupakaya defined as the "aware" part.....It's defined as the "benefit for others" and so we can say it's the "functional" part. Dharmakaya is defined as the "benefit for oneself" so therefore it must mean more than just the empty quality. It must have some other "quality"--the quality of awareness, IMO.

Astus wrote:

There are the threefold body of the nature of mind, and the threefold body of buddhas. When applied to the mind, that's where sambhogakaya is called clarity. When to the buddhas, it is identical to the dharmadhatu.

conebeckham said:

Sambhogakaya, in this presentation, is bliss with non-thought. So, we can say it's empty as well, but it has a blissful quality.

Dharmakaya, in this presentation, is a state of "'non-thought' free of clear fixation." If we take 'non-thought' to be emptiness of mind, we still have to understand what is "free of clear fixation." "Clear Fixation" does not mean lack of clarity.

Astus wrote:

Is there anything that's not empty? Unless there is, there is no point in using it as a quality again and again. I mean, we can then say sambhogakaya is bliss. As for the dharmakaya, if it means "free of clear fixation", doesn't that simply mean without fixation? If the definitive quality of dharmakaya that it has no fixation, then it is just lack of fixation in the mind. And because it is an absence, it is not an actual quality of something, just like emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 1:28 AM

Title: Re: Zen Language

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

On a related note, what is the sort of cultural history of Zen poetry involving depictions of the natural world?

Astus wrote:

Perhaps: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanshui_poetry.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: Zen Language

Content:

seeker242 said:

Did the 6th patriarch have a high level of literacy? If not, then that essentially proves that statement to be false, does it not?

Astus wrote:

The Platform Sutra is a literary product. In fact, as we can see from the Dunhuang version, it was used as the very emblem and source of transmission. As for Huineng's biography, it is good fiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I didn't mention it. The sūtras maintain this is so. They also maintain that dharmakāya is jñāna. Draw your own conclusions.

Astus wrote:

Unconditioned knowing is not possible, unless one accepts a soul. So, the meaning is something else.

Malcolm said:

Mano-vijñāna is a nonconceptual consciousness, like the other five sense consciousnesses.

Astus wrote:

The mano-vijnana is the thinking mind, the one with all the thoughts and ideas, i.e. concepts. It is also the one that becomes discerning wisdom (pratyavekṣaṇājñāna / 妙觀察智). So, what you seem to be saying is that conceptuality is non-conceptual. Manas only adds the grasping at self, and a number of basic defilements.

The first mind as subjective transformer is the ālaya-vijñāna. The ālayavijñāna flawlessly retains all of our past experiences, and recognizes and contextualizes things as we cognize them. our experiences, according to their depth and significance upon our lives, are difficult to remove.

The second subjective transformer is the manas. in this case, objects of cognition are transformed by a deep attachment to the self, and the resulting tendencies to protect and further that self.

Then, already subject to these subconscious influences, the cognitive function of the thinking consciousness and the five sense consciousnesses—that is, the discrimination of things — arises.

(Tagawa Shun'ei: Living Yogacara, p 17)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

If something is merely empty, an emptiness, a null set, or whatever, then how could there be any fixation, how could there be anything to be fixated on, and what would be "doing the fixating?" Perhaps we can look into what could be fixated in the first place.....

Astus wrote:

Emptiness does not exist, it only means that the aggregates are without essence. But there are dependent appearances, it's not complete blankness. Fixation is just the mistake that there is an essence. Once that delusion is gone, there is no cause for fixating on appearances, but again, it's not the end of appearances.

conebeckham said:

You seem to want to equate "clarity" with awareness. I see clarity as a quality of a

certain kind of awareness.

Astus wrote:

How many kinds of awareness do you have?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 7:16 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So for you Buddhamind is conditioned, therefore it is impermanent.

Astus wrote:

On the one hand, that's what Huineng and Dogen says, that buddha-mind is impermanent. On the other, supposing a buddha outside of one's mind (buddha-nature beyond the five aggregates) makes it an unattainable theory.

Malcolm said:

The presentation you provide of yogacara i really dont agree with. Try sourcing from Asanga.

Astus wrote:

Do you have a quote perhaps, to give the interpretation of manas and manovijnana you agree with?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 7:18 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Dependent appearances occur to a mind, these appearances or occurrences are the Nirmanakaya. Fixation does not merely mean that one mistakes an essence of objects, in this case.

Astus wrote:

Mind itself is a dependent appearance. What more does fixation mean?

conebeckham said:

There are different ways to answer that question, right? We can parse sense consciousnesses, mental consciousness, or we can talk of a single awareness, like the monkey in the window of a many-windowed house. Or we can talk about Pristine Awareness.

Astus wrote:

True.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So whatever 'the unconditioned' is, it is insentient?

Astus wrote:

Necessarily it is. Sentience requires the ability of cognisance, of perception. Those are conditioned events, just like any event is dependent. Unconditioned consciousness would mean a permanent consciousness, hence an eternal moment of a single thought, and that is as good as no consciousness at all.

Wayfarer said:

Is that so?

Astus wrote:

If it were independent, it would be useless, because it would be without contact to anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

What is it that recognizes affliction? Is that faculty itself afflicted? If there is an unconditioned, an unborn, an unmade, what knows that? Is what knows that a mind that is made and born?

Astus wrote:

Afflictions are unwholesome thoughts and emotions. So, can one be angry at anger? Sure. Can one look at anger in a not angry manner? Of course. Thus one can either worsen one's situation or improve on it, or just keep it on.

Nirvana is the unborn and unconditioned. Nirvana means the end of afflictions, because all the causes of afflictions are gone. When there is no fuel, there is no fire. But a fire extinguished is not some being, self, or consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 29th, 2016 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

How could it be 'pleasant'? For whom? Why is it not just non-existence?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha says at the beginning of that sutta: "Just that is the pleasure here, my friend: where there is nothing felt."

Why?

"If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality, that is an affliction for him. Just as pain arises as an affliction in a healthy person for his affliction, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him. Now, the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant."

And the text goes through all the jhanas like that. So, because in nirvana there are no afflictions at all, it is pleasant.

Wayfarer said:

Again, is Nirvāṇa the 'end of afflictions' or complete non-existence?

Astus wrote:

It is the extinction of craving, the end of attachment. Craving is not all there is, so it is not total annihilation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: Sutras of the Chinese Canon?

Content:

seeker242 said:

So how would one go about determining what particular Mahayana sutras are canonical according to the Chinese Canon?

Astus wrote:

There are canons, not just a single authoritative collection. And even in one canon you can find more than one translation of a number of sutras. Previously it was the emperor in China who authorised (and sponsored) a collection.

You can read about it a bit on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Buddhist_canon.

seeker242 said:

Is there a list somewhere, in English?

Astus wrote:

Check this: <http://terebess.hu/zen/szoto/Map-of-the-Taisho.pdf>

seeker242 said:

For example, is the Lotus Sutra canonical? The Heart sutra? The Diamond sutra? The Surangama? I'm sure there is someone who could tell me if they are or not but how would I find out for myself?

Astus wrote:

If you look at the above "map", you find that there are whole sections, like one for the Lotus Sutra (Volume 9: 法華部類 Lotus Sutra Section: T0262 – T0277), a smaller for the Heart Sutra (T0250-T0257 般若心經 Wisdom Heart Sutras), and the Diamond Sutra (T0235-T0239 金剛般若經 Vajra Wisdom Sutras). As for the Surangama, there is the Surangamasamadhi Sutra (T0642) translated by Kumarajiva in the Sutra section, and there is the Surangama Sutra (T0945), the one popular among Chan people, in the Tantra section.

If you want to find out for yourself, check the source of the English translation. For instance, <http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html> uses the CBETA version of the Taisho Canon, and he notes that in the translation, just like other translators do.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 1:42 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Strange that they says this. It means that either you have not understood them, or that they are wrong.

Astus wrote:

As for Huineng, it wasn't given much weight anywhere - as far as I am aware -, probably because it is a short discussion between him and an advocate of the Nirvana Sutra. The exception is Dogen, who used that bit to turn it into an attack on a prevalent interpretation of buddha-mind. While it was Dogen who made that interpretation one of the main elements of his teachings, as he shows by a number of quotations, the common reification of buddha-nature has been pointed out by teachers before him as well. More on Dogen's buddha-nature interpretation: http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms13.pdf, <http://www.lionsroar.com/impermanence-is-buddha-nature-embrace-changemay-2012/>, <http://terebess.hu/zen/dogen/Kodera-Dogen.pdf>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=AmKE2xljOwcC>.

Malcolm said:

Mipham states:

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the dual qualities of emptiness-awareness can be applied perfectly well to the five aggregates, in the sense that they are without essence, and at the same time exist as experiences. But assuming that there is something beyond, an eternal knower,

is just a self-view.

Malcolm said:

The problem is, that aside from the five sense organ consciousness, all the three others can be described as conceptual consciousnesses

Astus wrote:

The reason I said it's the 6th, is because both the 7th and 8th are latent. They are proposed in order to set up a fairly coherent theoretical model, but nobody ever actually experiences them, they are practically non-functional.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 2:24 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Where are habitual tendencies? Where are karmic seeds? Where is memory?

Astus wrote:

Can there be an object of consciousness, a mental phenomenon, without consciousness/mind? If yes, then there are unthought thoughts and unfelt feelings. If no, then habits, seeds, and memory cannot exist in some hidden way.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Dependent origination was never taught to explain the nature of things. It was taught only explain the process of delusion and how to reverse it.

Astus wrote:

I did not refer to the 12 links only, but the general concept of causality. Three examples:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patthana>,
<http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Paratantra>,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indra%27s_net.

Malcolm said:

Second, there are no "things" for which dependent origination is the nature.

Astus wrote:

"No things" is exactly what dependent origination is about. But illusory doesn't mean nothing.

Malcolm said:

since the eight consciousness are strictly deluded, there can be no buddhahood in them.

Astus wrote:

That's when they "turn into" the four wisdoms. But it's just the same old body-mind without delusion.

Malcolm said:

There can be no time, conditions, causes, etc., in a real sense.

Astus wrote:

It's all in an unreal sense. That's the whole point of emptiness, to see how unreal everything is. And they are all already unreal just as they are. The only error is this deluded idea of a real self, real substance. There is no error in a bowl of soup, or a pair of socks. The error is imagining them to be anything that they are not.

Malcolm said:

Since the the all-basis consciousness is the imputing nature, it is very active.

Astus wrote:

Do you experience the innumerable seeds replicating themselves every moment, waiting to be ripened in an unknown future time?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Even so, this does not go beyond delusion.

Astus wrote:

Anything that is beyond causality is irrelevant in life.

Malcolm said:

No, it isn't.

Astus wrote:

In that case, there is neither enlightenment in this life, nor is it compatible with life.

Malcolm said:

This is a subtle reification of things. Your view here is very much the same as the Gelugpa view.

Astus wrote:

Do you think then that the problem is not (only) with attachment, but with appearances?

Malcolm said:
All delusion is the experience of seeds/traces.

Astus wrote:
Deluded experiences are manifestations of seeds, not the seeds themselves.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 6:42 PM
Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?
Content:

Malcolm said:
Causality is a delusion. Further, your assertion proposes that there cannot be a consciousness of any kind which is free of the three realms, which does not take birth in the three realms, that outside of the three realms there can be no sort of consciousness at all.

Astus wrote:
If the three realms stand for a deluded approach, one should leave all that behind; but as long as there is something one takes as the true self, an ultimate consciousness, it is still the three realms of delusion. If the three realms can be viewed with either a pure or an impure mind, then there is no other realm or consciousness to look for either, thus we are already in the pure land of Shakyamuni.

Malcolm said:
Au contraire, this is why we have rainbow body.

Astus wrote:
This body-mind is no different from a rainbow - it looks like there is something, but it's just the momentary product of causes and conditions.

Malcolm said:
The problem is with deluded appearances. The appearances of pristine consciousness are not a problem, and nor can there be any attachment to them. If there is attachment, the appearance is automatically a product of delusion and is delusion.

Astus wrote:
Then this is only a matter of terminology.

Malcolm said:
All eight consciousnesses and their attendant dharmas are delusion, products of delusion and experiences of delusion.

Astus wrote:
The question is about experiencing seeds, not delusions. Since seeds are not experienced, they are conceptual assumptions of a theoretical explanation, a philosophical attempt to connect action and fruit.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: ye shes and jalus

Content:

Malcolm said:

but perhaps you will not cast a shadow.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

When the three realms are seen as delusion from top to bottom, then it is seen correctly.

Astus wrote:

And the question is if you propose that the seer is real or illusory.

Malcolm said:

Pristine consciousness is not a product of causes and conditions since no causes and conditions can be found at all. If you insist that the only thing that exists are things produced out of causes and conditions, your view is really no better than realism, and betrays an inner attachment to a self of persons and things.

Astus wrote:

Pristine consciousness is the same consciousness as the deluded one, with the difference that it lacks identification. And then it can be said that the absence of identification is unconditioned.

Malcolm said:

What I am saying here is that what one experiences is the seeds in the sense that without the seeds/traces there are no deluded experiences to be had.

Astus wrote:

Yes, the seeds are the assumed causes of delusion. And because it is merely an assumption, it's nothing experienced, but an element of a theoretical explanation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 30th, 2016 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The seer is empty clarity.

Astus wrote:

Is clarity a form of consciousness/awareness/knowing? If yes, it is conditioned. If no, what is it?

Malcolm said:

Pristine consciousness is not the same consciousness as the deluded consciousness, but you can say that the eight consciousnesses arise from mistaking the nature of self-originated pristine consciousness for being a self.

Astus wrote:

If the eight consciousnesses are the assumption of self in consciousness, when there is no such mistake, it is impure. Is that what you say?

Malcolm said:

So what, now you are saying that the all-basis consciousness is merely a theory?

Astus wrote:

I have been saying that for a while.

Malcolm said:

I also note that you did not reply to my charge that you are suffering from an hidden grasping to the self of persons and things by your insistence on the verity of cause and condition.

Astus wrote:

Causality is the basis of the conventional, the illusory. I don't say it is anything more than conceptual.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 1st, 2016 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your assertion that all consciousnesses are conditioned is unproven. For example, Vasubandhu notes that there are unconditioned sensations and perceptions among the six unconditioned dharma he identifies.

Astus wrote:

So, the 6 unconditioned dharma are: space, 4 types of cessation, suchness. None of them are anything in particular. Calling them "consciousness" doesn't really fit, since they do not denote any thought, feeling, or perception.

Malcolm said:

Not only that, but the Bodhisattvapitika clearly states: Further, an unconditioned consciousness is a pristine consciousness (jñāna)

Astus wrote:

That refers to the absence of self-grasping. But what functions as consciousness is dependently arisen.

Malcolm said:

Consciousness in which there is no delusion is a pristine consciousness, self-originated and unconditioned.

Astus wrote:

See my previous comment. Although it can be said that since there is no attachment, it doesn't rely on anything, doesn't identify with anything, so in a way it is as you say. My problem is that when it is said there is an "unconditioned consciousness", because consciousness means knowing and thinking, and there can be no knowing and thinking without causes and conditions, it is a contradiction.

Malcolm said:

So what isn't a theory?

Astus wrote:

That's a valid question. The difference here is that while normally it is easy to identify the first six consciousnesses, and that's what one works with, the 7th and 8th are not seen nor used for anything, except for theorising about karma.

Malcolm said:

No, the basis of the "conventional" is delusion. Cause and condition cannot be established apart from delusion, they are rooted in delusion, and therefore, the basis of the conventional is also delusion.

Astus wrote:

The delusion in conventional is to take it for the absolute. When conventional is seen as conventional, there is no problem, so it is then the absolute. In other words, conventional is not negated but enlightened. But, again, we can say that there is either deluded functions and buddha functions, and the two never meet. However, I consider that model more misleading.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 1st, 2016 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Um, Astus, one is called vedana-asamkṛita, the other is called samjñā asamkṛita, respectively unconditioned sensation and unconditioned perception/ideation.

Astus wrote:

I used this one from Vasubandhu:

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/outlines/100dharma.html>. What is your source?

Malcolm said:

If you claim it is merely an essence of phenomena that have not arisen, this means you grasp to the conventional as real. This comes from not understanding homogeneity and nonduality.

Astus wrote:

Being real requires an essence. Without essence, what is there to be called real? Conventionality is nominal interdependence, appearing illusion without anything substantiating it. To say that there is nothing that arises is a conventional expression that sounds like utter nothingness. I'm not saying that the dharmas are not unborn. What I'm saying is that there are other ways to put things.

Malcolm said:

That is really not true at all. For example, what takes rebirth in the yogacara system is precisely the ālayavijñāna.

Astus wrote:

That's how they came up with an explanation for karma, positing a hidden consciousness to bridge death and birth, cause and effect, etc.

Malcolm said:

When we see the conventional as the conventional, then we can understand that things like causes and conditions are just erroneous attributions. Since this is the case, conditioned consciousnesses are impossible. Why? Because when the conventional is seen as conventional, it is seen as a delusion.

Astus wrote:

And that's all we have, the illusory world. An opposite of that would be a real world, or nothingness. Here you just deny it, so that's the nothingness option.

Malcolm said:

Further, the Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra states: ...

Sthiramati's comment on how this is understood is instructive: ...

Astus wrote:

That is equal to saying: not this, not that, but I cannot say what. That is not an argument, or even a statement.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 1st, 2016 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

'Delusion' is a mental or existential state, isn't it? Rocks and other insentient objects

can't be subject to delusion. So there must be a subject of delusion, musn't there?
What becomes of the subject when delusion is dispersed? If the subject merely ceases to exist, how is that not nihilism?

Astus wrote:

There is no subject of delusion, because in that case subject and delusion would be two things. And that's how buddha-nature often sounds like, for instance when in the <http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra50.html> they talk of it as hidden under defilements. However, assuming a duality between buddha-nature and the defilements is exactly the theory of atman. The Buddha has denied the existence of a subject, and only when a subject is assumed one falls into the extremes of eternity and annihilation. When you say that a subject ceases to exist, that is the mistake of positing a subject.

Delusion exists as an element of the mind-stream, and when delusion is removed, it's not a factor in the mind any more. It is like the clearing of water, that is not coloured by defilements (see:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn46/sn46.055.wlsh.html>).

Wayfarer said:

But there are clear precedents for the 'transcendent' nature of mind even in the Pali sources:

Astus wrote:

It's jhana radiance, not soul radiance.

"In early Buddhism, the "radiant mind" (pabhassara citta) refers neither to an absolutely pure state of mind nor to spiritual liberation, but is the dhyanic mind that is radiant on account of not being disturbed or influenced by external stimuli."

(<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/8.3-Radiant-mind.-piya.pdf>)

Wayfarer said:

"Consciousness without feature, without end, luminous all around: Here water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing. Here long & short coarse & fine fair & foul name & form are all brought to an end. With the cessation of [the activity of] consciousness each is here brought to an end."

Astus wrote:

As the sutta itself says, consciousness ceases. Adding in brackets "activity of" means little, since a non-active consciousness is just unconsciousness. See more: <https://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/vinna%E1%B9%87a-is-not-nibbana-really-it-just-isn%E2%80%99t/>. More analysis on the unestablished consciousness: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/17.8a-Khandha-5-Vinnana-piya.pdf>.

Wayfarer said:

There is also an exposition of the 'true nature of mind' in the Aspiration Prayer of

Mahamudra.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is part of the teachings of Mahamudra, Zen, etc. And what does it practically mean? Not much, really. One is promised to attain some marvellous mind, like Nanda was promised heavenly maidens, but then the practice is all about not grasping anything and seeing all phenomena as empty. There is even strong criticism of those who grasp a watcher mind, something that they identify as the true self in Vedanta. But in Mahamudra, just like as in Zen, there is nothing to be found, nothing to be seen, even buddhas don't see it.

"It is not nonexistent--it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana."

Chokyi Nyima's comment:

"But on the other hand, we have various sorts of feelings and thoughts, as well as our sense organs, which link objects and consciousness together. Different sense perceptions occur; we see forms, hear sounds and so forth. So because of perception, mind is not nonexistent. In this way the extreme of the mind as a complete nothing is also avoided."

(Song of Karmapa, p 65)

That is, we have thoughts and feelings, there are things coming and going. That's why it is not a big nothingness. Not because we have an eternal, independent knower. It is no different from Madhyamaka's middle way of empty interdependence.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 1st, 2016 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Same text, Tibetan translation from Chinese.

Astus wrote:

I don't see any feeling and perception among the unconditioned dharmas on that list. Unless you mean *saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha*, what is a cessation.

Malcolm said:

If nothing substantiates nominal interdependence, why argue so hard that consciousness must be conditioned?

Astus wrote:

There is just nominal interdependence, that is, conditioned phenomena. Saying that there is an unconditioned consciousness leans towards permanence, and saying there is no consciousness leans towards nothingness. So, I prefer the language of

dependence-impermanence.

Malcolm said:

It is not a hidden consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Who experiences it? Ordinary people don't see it, and buddhas don't even have it. Plus there is a problem that it requires innumerable moments of consciousness in a single moment, in order to maintain the flow of unripe past impressions.

Malcolm said:

No, there is no denial, even an illusory world is not established. Why deny what has never been established from the start?

Astus wrote:

Illusoriness is what not being established is. Besides that, see my comment on the leanings of terminology.

Malcolm said:

It is a very good argument, one that has left you silenced and unable to reply.

Astus wrote:

I have replied that it's not an argument. You just turned that into a personal remark now, instead of showing how it was a valid statement from your part.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'm afraid I don't agree. If what you were saying were true, the Buddha would have ceased to exist at the moment of the enlightenment. But, he did not, obviously.

Astus wrote:

Why would he have ceased? It is only craving, attachment, ignorance that's removed. In other words, the difference is whether there is or there is not any grasping at the aggregates. The aggregates are not gone.

Wayfarer said:

The radiant mind, it says in that verse we are discussing, is 'obscured by adventitious defilements'; so how could the radiant mind and its obscurations be the same?

Astus wrote:

If something is dirty, it is not radiant. But if dirt and light are separate, then it is radiant no matter what.

Wayfarer said:

That verse you have quoted says 'consciousness without end', so how could something 'without end' come to cease? 'The consciousness that ends' is the mano-vijnana.

Astus wrote:

There is infinite consciousness, the 7th jhana. But it's not permanent. As for what mind ceases, it only says vijnana. The Yogacara version of mano-vijnana is a different system.

Wayfarer said:

But the intrinsically-aware or -knowing nature of mind is not the same as Ātman.

Astus wrote:

What is the difference?

Wayfarer said:

I understand what the 'problem of reification' is, but there is an opposite problem, which is the 'problem of nullification', which is what I think you're falling into.

Astus wrote:

Annihilation is the error when something is eliminated or something ceases to exist. There has never been an essence ever, so it cannot be nullified. So, where does it apply to what I say?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, delusion exists as an adulteration of the mind, but since it is not inherent to the mind, it is extraneous to the mind from the beginning.

Astus wrote:

Delusion is the delusion of the mind, not something outside it. As for its inherency, I did not say anything like that.

Malcolm said:

This not only a dhyānic radiance.

Astus wrote:

It is not, "In the later developed concept...", as the essay says. And so it's been further developed in Theravada, just like in Mahayana. But it has not been said so in the suttas themselves.

I also recommend Sujato's <https://sujato.wordpress.com/2014/10/29/on-the-radiant-mind/> of the scripture, where he writes: "Nowhere is there any suggestion that it has anything to do with Nibbana."

Similarly,

<http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?p=315864&sid=619c200efdfac56bfbf9d86acd213aaa#p315864> as well agree that the sutta refers to jhana.

Malcolm said:

So you are an advocate of cessation. When a buddha or arhat dies, his consciousness ceases. This is definitely not the Mahāyāna view.

Astus wrote:

I simply pointed out what the sutta literally says. However, the Nikayas do not support the idea that parinibbana equals cessation, as it's been repeated in several suttas regarding that question.

Malcolm said:

In order for one thing to depend on another thing, one thing must arise upon which another must depend. But this does not solve anything. Why? Since the arising of even one thing cannot be established, there is no arising.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's fine.

Malcolm said:

Everything which appears is merely a conditioned self-apparent display nondual with an conditioned self-originated pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

That's certainly one way to say it. However, if we analysed that sentence, it would be quite problematic. For instance, just as you say that arising of even one thing is not established, self-origination is refuted in the same way.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is the error of your view. You imagine that conventional things are like hollow bubbles, they have no insides, but they still somehow exist.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.095.than.html>, and

All conditioned phenomena

Are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow

Like the dew, or like lightning

You should discern them like this

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 32)

Malcolm said:

In reality, also the hollow bubbles you cling to have never arisen, so what is the need to even speak of their essence?

Astus wrote:

Sure, all dharmas are unborn, inconceivable, and inexpressible. At the same time, there is no emptiness outside the aggregates, or to talk of anything else but the insubstantiality of one's experiences. Denying appearances, denying conventionality - what is that good for? As I have quoted before Chokyi Nyima's comment, it's not all just non-existence. Similarly, it is exactly because all things are unborn that they are interdependently apparent. As the quote goes (MMK 24.14): "All is possible when emptiness is possible. Nothing is possible when emptiness is impossible."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In the Tibetan, it is clearly translated as "unconditioned" ('dus ma byas, asaṃskṛita), not "cessation" (nirodha, dgog pa). You are using Mueller's list, not the text itself.

Astus wrote:

Muller simply translated it: http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T31n1614_001, and it lists the same 6 unconditioned dharmas, 1 empty space (虛空), 1 suchness (真如), and 4 types of cessation (滅). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuiji>
http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T44n1836_002 lists the same six. See also the <http://www.cttbusa.org/100shastra/100dharmas9.asp>.

Malcolm said:

There are no moments, so this is not a problem. The three times are not established.

Astus wrote:

If that's not a problem, then there is no need for any seeds to connect past actions with future fruits, thus the storehouse-consciousness is redundant.

Malcolm said:

It is an argument — nonconceptual pristine consciousness is immune to refutation because it is free from all extremes.

Astus wrote:

It is nonconceptual, and not conceptual. That's an extreme. It is pristine, not defiled. That's an extreme. It is an independent consciousness, not a dependent one. That's an extreme. Since it's not at all free from extremes, it is not immune to refutation either.

Malcolm said:

The point is that delusion is not part of the mind.

Astus wrote:

Is it outside the mind then? Because then the mind need not be purified.

Malcolm said:

Do you take the suttas to be the definitive statement on the Buddha's teachings?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what teachings. If the question is about the meaning in the context of the Nikayas, that's what should be looked at. If the question is, let's say, a Yogacara interpretation of the Agamas, then look at the Yogacara works.

Malcolm said:

One says "self-originated" because reality is only discerned for oneself without depending on another.

Astus wrote:

So is it another term for mind made?

Malcolm said:

Sure there is emptiness outside of the aggregates, the emptiness of emptiness, for example, or the emptiness of the unconditioned. The dharmadhātu is an emptiness "outside of the aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Seeing the emptiness of the aggregates is about clarifying whatever we experience. Otherwise, the various categories of emptiness are for refuting specific attachments to specific ideas, so theoretically we could have as many types of emptiness as concepts.

Malcolm said:

Who is denying appearances? Appearances self-display, but no cause and condition can be found for them. Who denies conventionality? The conventional is just deluded attributions for self-displayed appearances.

Astus wrote:

Is self-display like self-originated, i.e. mind made? If, as you seem to say, the correct view is when appearances only self-display without causality and interdependence, then how can one drink tea that way, or even get dressed?

Malcolm said:

But this not a confirmation of conventionality.

Astus wrote:

It seems so to me.

Magja Jagchub's commentary to MMK 24.14:

"For the one for whom emptiness is possible, all conventional principles, such as those pertaining to the four noble truths, will be possible as well. Below it is then explained how that which originates in dependence is devoid of nature and, therefore, emptiness.

...

As this is the case, conventional dependent origination is possible for those for whom natural emptiness is possible. All the [principles] mentioned above, from the noble truths to mundane conventions, will then be just as feasible since they are included within dependent origination. Yet for the one for whom emptiness is not possible, that is, the one for whom there is a nature, dependent origination is not possible either. Hence, everything that falls under the category of dependent origination, such as the noble truths and mundane convention, becomes impossible as well."

Tsongkhapa's commentary to the same verse:

"This is why it makes sense: we maintain emptiness to be the emptiness of essential existence of that which is dependently arisen. Therefore, for anyone to whom emptiness makes sense, dependent arising makes sense.

...

All mundane and transcendental phenomena, the sacred and the profane, their effects and mundane conventions make sense. The Commentary explains that the reason that all of these make sense is that they exist and that is also in accord with the madhyamika's system. Therefore, this does not mean that since they are said to exist, we fall into the extreme of reification or that all systems need to be consigned to the perspective of others."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Karma is only function of a delusion; the eight consciousness are just a name for different functions of one consciousness, that consciousness is deluded.

Astus wrote:

It cannot be a function of consciousness if there is no consciousness/awareness of it.

Malcolm said:

It is free from extremes since none of these terms are relevant to the meaning. It can't be refuted because it not a subject of analysis by ordinary persons.

Astus wrote:

What is relevant to the meaning then? It is still a statement made within the boundaries of conventional language, so it cannot be exempt from the rules of argument.

Malcolm said:

Right, the mind does not need to purified. It is an affliction to be abandoned.

Astus wrote:

Where are the afflictions, if not within the realm of consciousness?

Malcolm said:

Nope. Pratyatmyavedana, "personally known for oneself."

Astus wrote:

That's a strange Sanskrit word. If you mean that it is personal experience, then mind made also fits, in the sense that it happens only to/in the mind, in other words, it is subjective. It is something Theravadins sing in the http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/vandana.pdf, one of the <http://www.purifymind.com/Introduction.htm>: "Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi" - to be personally realised by the wise.

Malcolm said:

Drinking tea and getting dressed are activities of delusion.

Astus wrote:

Delusions are all there is.

"Conditioned generation is the place of enlightenment, because ignorance and so forth through old age and death, are all unexhausted. The afflictions are bodhi, because of understanding according to actuality. Sentient beings are the place of enlightenment, because of understanding no-self. All dharmas are the place of enlightenment, because of understanding the emptiness of the dharmas."

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 4, BDK Edition, p 100)

Malcolm said:

Madhyamakās cling to correct relative truth, not understanding homogeneity and nonduality.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by homogeneity and nonduality?

Malcolm said:

Everything is completely equivalent to an illusion, not merely "like" an illusion.

Astus wrote:

I think there are two possible reasons that rarely anyone puts up an extreme claim as you seem to do. Antinomianism is feared to be misused as <http://www.georgegatenby.id.au/kw40.htm>, or one wants a more coherent system that includes the stages of the path. Probably the two goes together.

Illusions are causes and conditions. It makes little difference to call pain and joy illusory

as long as one is bound by them. And when not bound, it doesn't matter whether one calls them illusory or not either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 2nd, 2016 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: What is the ultimate good according to Mahayana and Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is neither a positive, nor a negative axiology. But at the same time there is. In Chinese they call them those who advocate existence (you 有), and those who teach non-existence (wu 無).

Theravada sounds like annihilationism, Mahayana sounds like eternalism.

The Nikayas state clearly that statements about the Tathagata after death is nonsense, since even in life there is nowhere to pinpoint him. In other words, there has never been a self, so there is no self to disappear.

Mahayana talks of the eternal life of the buddhas, and the true self of the buddha-nature. But once you care to actually look beyond those terms and analyse what is actually meant there, it will turn out to be nothing else but emptiness.

All of Buddhism follows the idea of the four noble truths, the gist of that is how attachment is the wrong move that leads to all problems. Consequently, it is not something to be attained, but attachment to be stopped in order to gain peace. One can go on from satipatthana through zazen to mahamudra, and that's what one has to understand, practice, and accomplish. On the other side, it is taught that with the attainment of wisdom comes morality as well.

As for the ultimate good, here's one famous stanza from Zen (Record of Linji, p 32, tr Sasaki):

When hunger comes I eat my rice;
When sleep comes I close my eyes.
Fools laugh at me, but
The wise man understands.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So for you, there can only be conceptual consciousness, and no nonconceptual consciousness, which means there can be no direct perceptions, and awakening is therefore also a conceptual state.

Astus wrote:

How so? Even the highest jhanas can be experienced, they can occur in the realm of the mind. Seeds do not exist as experiences at all. It's not a question of nonconceptuality.

Malcolm said:

It is immune from the conventions of language because nonconceptual pristine cannot be accessed through conceptual analysis, that is the point of Sthiramati's presentation of the Buddha's meaning.

Astus wrote:

If it's not accessed through conceptual analysis, it is neither a statement, nor an argument, since it cannot be said what is immune.

Malcolm said:

Thus, mind is an affliction to be abandoned. Pristine consciousness is a quality to be acquired. Differentiating mind and pristine consciousness, in the end, is all the path is about.

Astus wrote:

Unfortunately, pristine consciousness is something that cannot be known. It can't be known because it is beyond ordinary mind, and it cannot be known because it is not even in the scope of consciousness. So, how do you differentiate?

Malcolm said:

That is a pretty pessimistic view, and is at the heart of what Wayfarer was trying to get at with "if there is a an born, etc., there is an unborn, etc."

Astus wrote:

Why pessimistic? That's the inseparable two truths. It's just that while you like to say rainbow bodies and unconditioned minds, I like a cup of coffee and a slice of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kal%C3%A1cs>.

Malcolm said:

Sure, no sentient beings, no buddhas. Stands to reason. But there is still something before buddhas attained realization and sentient beings fell into delusion. In Kagyu, it is called the mahāmudra of the basis.

Astus wrote:

As I have <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=336108#p336108>, that basis of samsara and nirvana is the clarity-appearances, in other words, knowing and feeling of all sorts of phenomena.

Malcolm said:

Homogeneity means the two truths are inseparable. Since Madhyamakas assert a true relative truth, they do not understand this point. Nondual means that having understood the two truths as inseparable, one abandons views since all phenomena

are in fact nondual.

Astus wrote:

Since they are one, why reject causality and views?

[Mañjuśrī] asked further, "Where should emptiness be sought?"

[Vimalakīrti] answered, "It should be sought within the sixty-two [heterodox] views."
(Vimalakīrti Sutra, ch 5, BDK Edition, p 109)

Malcolm said:

there is no ability to develop formations— not accepting, not rejecting, not moving, and not seeking. As such, this culmination of the comprehension of being like an illusion is also proven to be the culmination of comprehending the two truths as inseparable.

Astus wrote:

So, if such a person is offered a choice between strawberry and raspberry, can he not decide? If he can, how is that not accepting and rejecting?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are not only arguing that seeds are not experienced, you argue that the ālayavijñāna does not exist because according to you it is not aware.

Astus wrote:

The store-consciousness' function is to maintain the seeds, where the seeds and the store-consciousness depend on each other, forming a stream. So, the store-consciousness is aware of the seeds (plus the "material" (not the 5 sense-consciousnesses) world). It includes and maintains all that one is not actually aware of, but it is explained as if there were a consciousness that knows of innumerable things, just like the ordinary ideas about the subconscious and memory where so many things are hidden. However - and this is where the problem is - none of us are actually conscious of anything that the store-consciousness supposedly knows. And, as you have noted before, the eight are simply functions of one consciousness, and it is unreasonable to say that one cannot know what one actually knows, there cannot be such a store-consciousness.

Malcolm said:

We did say what was immune [to argument], and that is nonconceptual pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

The reason you say it is immune, is because it cannot be conceived. What cannot be conceived cannot have a meaning, because meaning comes from conceiving what

something is. Therefore, it is immune, because it is meaningless. On the other hand, if it is meaningful, then there is something to be conceived, and it is within the boundaries of conceptual analysis, hence not immune.

Malcolm said:

It is differentiated because pristine consciousness is the dharmatā of the mind, the essence of the mind.

Astus wrote:

How can you separate something from its essence? Also, what is not the essence, the attributes? Is it the mind that discerns its own essence?

(It seems that this differentiation between essence and mind brings us to the problems of Aristotelian essence and accidents.)

Malcolm said:

Therefore, the original mind is dharmatā emptiness which is the luminous mind that does not become solely empty by nature or an inert emptiness and is called self-originated wisdom. Since there isn't an iota of a characteristic of conditioned or unconditioned apart from being intrinsically clear emptiness, it is beyond the inert composed of particles, clarity which possesses subject and object, and a knowing consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is always emptiness of something, just as awareness is awareness of something. Saying that appearances are always experienced (awareness, consciousness, mind) and also without essence (empty, not self, ungraspable), is perfectly fine with me. And an empty knowing as an abstract concept is also good, as long as it's not turned into some transcendental soul.

Malcolm said:

Who rejected causality? No me. I said it was not something which could be established, that does not mean I negate it.

Astus wrote:

What would be an establishment, a substrate, for causality? Actually, an ultimate consciousness would be exactly that. However, that's not something I proposed. What I say is that causality is how appearances operate. I can also add to that, just to emphasise the lack of any substrate here, that causality is a conceptual interpretation of appearances, and appearances themselves are very much unattainable. In other words, I take it to be illusory, phenomenal, apparent.

Malcolm said:

For a completely realized person, there is no difference between a strawberry or a raspberry, so he or she does not need to make a choice.

Astus wrote:

Does such a person then simply starves to death (or dies from dehydration, or perhaps

stops breathing...) because of his inability to function in the world?

Malcolm said:

When one is in nirvikalpa samadhi, is this an experience or not? Are there nonconceptual experience? If so, how?

Astus wrote:

Going with Vasubandhu's and Xuanzang's definition here (CWSL, tr Wei Tat, p 687):

"If, in perceiving the sphere of objects,
Wisdom (jnana) no longer conceives any idea of the object,
Then that wisdom is in the state of Vijnaptimatratā,
Because both the object to be apprehended and the act of apprehending by
consciousness are absent."

"Nirvikalpajñāna, which does not cling to the objective world, and accepts no kind of sophistry about its seeming appearance (prapañcānimitta). He is now said really to abide in the genuine and transcendent nature of Vijnaptimatratā, that is to say, he experiences the Bhutatathata (Absolute Reality)."

This is of course an experience, it is the realisation that there is no real substance. It could be said that it is the same experience as before, except here there is none of the usual personalisation and objectification.

Malcolm said:

Seeds occurs in the realm of the mind, so why they not experiences?

Astus wrote:

I think the above response should answer this question.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016 at 6:37 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Luminous Clarity, Buddha Nature, in Connection with Bliss-Emptiness Mahamudra
A Vajra Song by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso

Astus wrote:

Thank you for sharing this here. Let me step out a bit of the ongoing debate, so perhaps we can do some other kind of discussion.

conebeckham said:

Namo Guru Asanga Ye

To the unequalled teacher, mighty Shakyamuni,

And the lord of the tenth ground, supreme Maitreya,
With my three gates filled with great respect, I prostrate.
I shall explain Buddha Nature, luminous clarity.

Astus wrote:

I have no special qualities to show for myself, so whatever explanations I seem to give here, is all an attempt at rephrasing words.

conebeckham said:

The subject of the final turning's Sutras on the Essence
Is mind's abiding reality, Buddha Nature itself,
Spontaneously present, not produced by causes,
Self-arisen and self-free, clarity-emptiness, fixation-free.

Astus wrote:

The tathagatagarbha scriptures are skilful means to point to the sublime experiential realm of the realised ones. This true nature of our minds is already there, and requires no learning or practice. Right now, everything comes and goes incessantly, and there is no force required to manipulate them in any way. Sights, sounds, feelings, and thoughts are here, yet they cannot be relied on.

conebeckham said:

Mind's essence is empty of duality's fleeting stains,
Beyond duality, ordinary mind is not empty.

Astus wrote:

When the mind is ordinary, it doesn't add or subtract anything. It is always without anything that can be held onto, even though it is filled with never ending bright images.

conebeckham said:

Beyond permanence and extinction is luminous clarity,
Permanence and extinction don't exist in this basic nature,
Affirmation and negation's stains don't cover it,
So it is explained to be self-arisen and self-free.

Astus wrote:

Unhindered awareness is clearly visible, when ideas of keeping and leaving are silent. In fact, the true mind cannot ever be pulled or pushed. Not because there is some unmoved mover, or a motionless watcher. Nor it is because one has conquered all the nasty defilements and obscurations. This world sensed now is simply such, changing and transforming according to its own ways right in front of our eyes.

conebeckham said:

This bliss-emptiness, self-awareness, inexpressible,
When described is luminous clarity, great bliss,
And when left undescribed, it is the same bliss-emptiness—
How amazing! Join this with the great secret path.

Astus wrote:

Contentment is neither gained nor lost. There is nothing we miss, so why not rest and rejoice? Talking and not talking are equally fine, the painting of a circle is black, but also white. The path is vividly clear, with every step you are there.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Your comments about experiences--sights, sounds, feelings, etc.-are beside the point, the contents of discursive consciousness, the 6th consciousness, or "mental consciousness," and are excluded from the object under discussion--the "mind's abiding reality." Why? Because those things you've added--experiences, percepts, etc., are all "produced from causes," etc.

Astus wrote:

Is the nature of mind experienced in a vacuum where nothing whatsoever occurs and one is in the pure perception of awareness without content? I guess that is not the case, but rather one recognises how the nature of mind is free from fixating on whatever is displayed. Is that not so?

conebeckham said:

Just a clarification the "Luminous clarity" is something other than merely the "world sensed now as simply such." It is not the normal, transitory appearances of consciousness alone.

Astus wrote:

What more do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

We are not conscious of direct perceptions either, since they are nonconceptual. Therefore, according to you, nonconceptual pristine consciousness (nirvikalpajñāna) is an impossibility.

Astus wrote:

Why wouldn't we be conscious of basic sensory impressions? I think we have a terminology problem here... We see many colours, hear many voices, etc. But of course we do not give special attention to all of that, don't label them all, don't start thinking about them, and so on. However, the store-consciousness is a whole different matter,

and I don't see how your response even relates to that.

Malcolm said:

Again, you here make a wholesale rejection of nonconceptual jñāna, as well as direct perceptions. Thus, for you buddhahood is a conceptual, conditioned, impermanent mind, in contradiction with all the sūtras and tantras.

Astus wrote:

We can very well understand nonconceptual experiences, actually that's what we normally do all the time, conjecturing about sights and sounds, all sorts meditative experiences, and practically anything. And since sutras and tantras talk about nonconceptuality, they do give explanations and do conceptualise it.

Malcolm said:

Emptiness is not always the emptiness of something, for example, the emptiness of emptiness or the emptiness of the unconditioned. Awareness is not always an awareness of something, for example, yogic direct perception of emptiness on the path of seeing.

Astus wrote:

The emptiness of emptiness is dropping the conceptual grasping of the idea of emptiness, so it does have something there. Same goes for the unconditioned. Perception of emptiness is not perceiving anything (i.e. it's only nominally a type of perception), it is just normal perception without the imputation of substance.

Malcolm said:

No, you are imputing causality onto appearances, there is no causality which can be found in appearances themselves. If you assert that appearances operate according to causality, you are falling into realism.

Astus wrote:

What is the kind of causality then that you do not reject?

Malcolm said:

They act spontaneously.

Astus wrote:

What does that mean? They act out of habit? Or what is the cause, the intention for their actions?

Malcolm said:

And thus, it is an unconditioned experience, a nonconceptual pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

If that is what you call unconditioned pristine consciousness, we are not in disagreement on the level of meaning, only on the level of terminology/aesthetics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Direct perceptions are nonconceptual by nature. It means we are not conscious of them. We are not conscious of the blueness of the vase when it is perceived by vijñāna, it is only after it has been discriminated and become a second order perception that we become conscious of a blue vase that we have seen.

Astus wrote:

It sounds like you say that people have no experience of their senses, they only think of sense impressions. To me it seems common to just gaze without any thoughts or labels, but still being aware of the view.

Malcolm said:

No, the emptiness of emptiness is not a conceptual emptiness, neither is the emptiness of the unconditioned. These things are empty whether we conceptualize that emptiness or not.

Astus wrote:

Why make them categories of emptiness then?

Malcolm said:

The direct perception of emptiness is not a "normal" perception. If it were, all people would have it all the time.

Astus wrote:

Perceiving emptiness is not perceiving a particular object, but the lack of fabrication. Might call that uncommon, but I was referring to the usual sensory functions, that they do not cease to operate.

Malcolm said:

The causality that I do not reject is the same as the self that I do not reject.

Astus wrote:

Fair enough.

Malcolm said:

A buddha simply responds to the needs of sentient beings spontaneously without any thought at all, in just the same way a wishfulfilling gem grants all wishes without any thought at all about the one who possesses it.

Astus wrote:

That means that a buddha is either a robot or natural force, or that there are effects

without causes.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

conebeckham said:

For sentient beings such as ourselves, "Experience" occurs in the mental consciousness. Even "experiences" of nonconceptual bare awareness are reified into conceptual proliferation.

Astus wrote:

There is the tendency to objectify and personalise experiences, that is the deluded habit that generates dissatisfaction. At the same time, most of the experiences are not grasped or labelled as anything, and that's why they then often fall into the area of disinterest, unawareness, and ignorance, that is, the inclination to disregard them. This selective perception could be called the normal, but it is not that uncommon that one occasionally becomes aware of the larger amount of ongoing experiences, although it is most likely during the practice of meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

I'm curious ... is anyone here serious about pursuing jhanic attainments? It seems that much of this discussion is about fitting the jhanas onto a Procrustean bed, said bed being preconceptions and teachings and arguments from authority. Anything that doesn't fit the preconceptions is simply lopped off.

Astus wrote:

If one has no experience, then there are only the theories. If one has experiences, then again there are only the theories to compare it with. The problem is that once one calls it "jhana/dhyana", there are so many associated ideas with that word, that it inevitably becomes a debate about definitions. Just consider the situation where two people's version of what constitutes absorption do not match. If they think there can be only one correct interpretation, they will start to argue about whose reading of whatever source material is correct. There are topics on Dhammawheel where it goes on endlessly, and the same applies to the larger community of Theravadins.

And to answer your question, I did experiment with states of absorption, and I have found them beneficial. As Ajahn Chah said (Collected Teachings, p 309), "We don't have to call it first jhana, second jhana, third jhana and so on, let's just call it `a peaceful mind'". If we take the practical approach, the first four describe a gradual calming, that makes sense once the first jhana is seen as a naturally pleasant, peaceful resting, that

comes from abiding unmoved by thoughts and feelings. These same qualities experienced during meditation are recognised in the various Mahayana traditions as well, but they don't call it absorption, simply because that term has been elevated and alienated by earlier generations of abhidharma scholars and the tradition in general.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

I would not attach the label "bliss" to it because it seems to confuse things. It's just my way of sorting the labels.

Astus wrote:

The Nirvana and the Srimaladevi Sutra popularised the notion that nirvana is nitya, sukha, atma, subha. That is in opposition to the four classic elements of contemplation, but they also emphasise that they should not be confused with the mundane versions. As I take it, this is merely a wordplay to set up positive sounding qualities, instead of the original negative sounding ones. But practically there is no difference in the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Because they are empty.

Astus wrote:

What isn't?

Malcolm said:

This is definitely a point of contention. In general, in sūtra, it is considered that on the path of seeing all ordinary appearances vanish, one does not perceive them anymore. It is only in post-equipoise that appearances, albeit, now truly dream-like and illusory, return.

Astus wrote:

If by "ordinary appearances" it is meant as perceiving with delusion, then it is OK. If what is meant is total cessation of perception, then it is more like nirodha-samapatti.

Malcolm said:

Mañjuśrimitra states:

Astus wrote:

That sounds just like the prajnaparamita teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 1:01 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

When perceiving emptiness on the path of seeing, it is described as perceiving "space like emptiness." One does not perceive characteristics of things at all, therefore, there is no perception of things. It is not nirodha, because there isn't a total cessation of perception. There is a perception of emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Is there such a thing as emptiness to perceive?

"This is a perfection of what is not, because space is not something that is."
(PP8000 9.4, tr Conze; T8n227v4p553a25)

Malcolm said:

Dzogchen is the state of prajñāpāramita.

Astus wrote:

It looks like that prajnaparamita is a big common factor among all Mahayana schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

When no characteristics are perceived, that is called "perceiving emptiness."

Astus wrote:

That's a good example of figurative speech.

"All things that have characteristics are false and ephemeral. If you see all characteristics to be non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata."
(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 5)

Malcolm said:

Yes, and this is why we can say that pristine consciousness is unconditioned

Astus wrote:

Again, figuratively speaking.

Q: Where does the mind dwell in its real abode?

A: Dwelling nowhere is its real abode.

Q: What is dwelling nowhere?

A: It is the mind not dwelling anywhere or on anything.

Q: What does "not dwelling anywhere or on anything" mean?

A: Not to dwell anywhere or on anything means not to dwell on good or evil, existence or non-existence, within or without or on the middle, nor on concentration nor dispersion, and neither to dwell on the void nor on the non-void. This is the meaning of "not dwelling anywhere or on anything". Just this alone is real abiding. This stage of achievement is also the non-abiding Mind, and the non-abiding Mind is the Buddha Mind.

(<http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is no correspondence between what the Tibetan text says and this translation into Chinese.

Astus wrote:

It is clear from the context that "characteristics" refers to bodily characteristics of the Tathagata, because that's the original question in the chapter. Nevertheless, it is not unusual to use the text in a flexible way.

Here are two commentaries of the chapter.

"Tathagata is the true nature of life, wisdom, love, and happiness. Only when we can see the signless nature of signs do we have a chance of seeing the Tathagata. When we look at a rose without being caught by its signs, we see the nature of non-rose and therefore we begin to see the Tathagata in the rose. If we look into a pebble, a tree, or a child in this way, we also see the Tathagata in them. Tathagata means coming from nowhere and going nowhere, showing no sign of coming and no sign of going, no sign of being and no sign of non-being, no sign of birth and no sign of death."

(Thich Nhat Hanh: Diamond that Cuts Through, ch 5)

"Why can the Tathagata not be seen by his bodily characteristics? Because the existence of marks is false. All marks decay and become extinct. In the midst of marks one must be separate from marks. When there are marks, know them as empty. Then you see the Tathagata's Dharma body, which is without form or appearance."

(Hsuan Hua: The Diamond Sutra, p 96)

Malcolm said:

The Tibetan renders it as follows:

Astus wrote:

Xuanzang doesn't translate it as "bodily characteristics" but as "perfect characteristics", and seems that it matches the Tibetan rendering. I don't know if anyone has used his to make an English translation. As you may know, Kumarajiva's works generally beat everyone else's in popularity.

Malcolm said:

It is not figurative. It can be taken literally.

Astus wrote:

Pristine consciousness is the one the perceives emptiness, isn't it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

Geez that's pretty absolutist don't you think?

Any mind with a modicum of clarity can follow a few simple logical arguments and arrive at a rough perception of emptiness. A more practised mind will perceive emptiness more clearly. A Buddha, completely separated from affliction, would have in a sense a pristine mind and a perfect apprehension of emptiness. It's a gray scale.

Astus wrote:

My point is that the difference between deluded and enlightened is not the attainment of a different type of mind, but the presence or absence of afflictions. That is actually expressed by the concept of buddha-nature that only requires unearthing from under the dirt. And then there is the sort of teaching where "this mind is buddha", that is, not something beyond everyday actions, feelings, and thoughts. The dirt is not what appears, not the experiences, but whether one grasps them or not, and attachment depends on seeing them empty or not. That's why I say that talking of an unconditioned pristine consciousness is figurative, otherwise it is a duality between conditioned and unconditioned, and people have two minds. That assumption of a pure mind can easily make people look for a second head, as

http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama4/shurangama4_8.asp goes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 7:39 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

If the unconditioned mind arises from the conditioned mind.... then maybe it isn't unconditioned? At any rate there is no need for "both minds" to exist simultaneously. Pristine mind is a pretty concept but man there are some tricky problems attending it. Are we on the same page now? Getting closer?

Astus wrote:

It doesn't arise from anything, since it's not something to arise or disappear, so in that sense it is unconditioned. But as long as it's presented as if there were an "it" or "something", it keeps generating this misinterpretation of an ultimate object or subject, while the whole point is to realise the lack of substances.

To me, unfabricated sounds better than unconditioned, because fabrication implies active doing, while conditioning is being subject to something. So, an unfabricated mind is more like not making up ideas, while an unconditioned mind is like untouched by things. Although both can mean the same, unfabricated - or unfabricating - seems more accurate.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

In which case, essentially we just have to let go of this deluded mind, but then the logical flaw arises that if enlightened mind is unconditioned, then why/how would it be effected by the conditioned?

Astus wrote:

That is the questions raised in the

http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama4/shurangama4_9.asp after Yajnadatta's story. The answer is not necessarily satisfactory, but shows that because of the type of language used, it results in a convoluted explanation, that could have actually been avoided if they did not start with talking as if there were some ultimate mind.

Sherab Dorje said:

Which is why I prefer the description of Tathagatagarbha as the potential for enlightenment that exists in all sentient beings. This description then avoids 16 pages of acrobatics.

Astus wrote:

As a potential it means that the tathagatagarbha teaching is only about raising spirits and trying to convince people who are afraid of prajnaparamita.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 5th, 2016 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

I disagree about the "fear" part because I believe the "ideas" of Tathagatagarbha and emptiness are just describing two aspects of the same thing being viewed from different angles...

Astus wrote:

If by buddha-nature what is meant is the mind without ignorance, then yes. But if tathagatagarbha is only a potential, then how?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 6:49 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

"How" what?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is about seeing that appearances are without anything concrete, anything personal. If tathagatagarbha means that all beings may attain that insight, that is not the other side of wisdom, it is only a chance to gain wisdom. Like, anyone with legs may be able to run, but that's not the other side of being a marathon runner.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

First Problem

Astus wrote:

Yes, there is a problem, if unconditioned mind means that there exists a special kind of awareness separate from the normal kind. It is not a problem, if it means that the normal mind is cleansed of ignorance.

catmoon said:

Second Problem

Astus wrote:

Again, the problem of something arising happens if unconditioned mind means an object/subject, a unique awareness, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

But when the movie ends, you have not been physically affected by the events of the story.

Astus wrote:

Samsara does not end, plus you're very much affected physically. Both body and mind are fully involved in life.

AlexMcLeod said:

you know it is just a story.

Astus wrote:

If one knows that only once it's over, it cannot apply to life, unless you think it will be OK once dead, in which case you are not considering rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Time is not something real, therefore, this qualm does not apply [conditioned entities can only exist in time].

Astus wrote:

Time is not real, therefore conditioned entities are not real. That is clearly a liberating insight, since even body and mind are unreal. We can rest then.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

Does this mean that jñāna is not some sort of 'thing' that is somewhere within the mind, but rather that jñāna is itself the very nature of mind itself?

Astus wrote:

The very nature of mind: "the dharmatā of the mind or the cittatā of citta".

The problematic element is that of the unconditioned awareness part. As I take it, experiences have the qualities of emptiness, awareness, and appearance. Neither of the three exists on its own. However, "unconditioned awareness" suggests a separate knower of emptiness and appearances, and that is practically a reified/objectified self/soul.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Emptiness is how things are, the Tathagatagarbha is our inherent capacity or capability to see how things are. It is all part of the same equation.

Astus wrote:

That is, buddha-nature means that we are capable of getting rid of ignorance. I think that is a basic requirement for Buddhism to make any sense, otherwise there is no path to liberation. However, this does not account for all the ink spilt on the tathagatagarbha doctrine.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

This is just the kind of reductio ad absurdum I've been thinking about and fearing.

Astus wrote:

How so? It is a perfectly traditional and accepted teaching all over Mahayana. Even a meditation method. But, if what you mean is that this is too much of a jumping ahead, that might be so. Although, from a Zen point of view, dhyana goes together with wisdom.

catmoon said:

Rather than diving into THAT logical rat's nest, I think I'd far rather put it aside and return to the OP question.

Astus wrote:

Maybe you can say something on

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=336481#p336481>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

your samsaric body and mind might be fully involved, but your true nature is unaffected.

Astus wrote:

Such a separate "true nature" does not exist. Even if it existed, it wouldn't matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

It is not separate, it just isn't affected, because the things you posit should have effect on it are not real. They can effect things in the story, but not the real. This doesn't make them separate, because stories exist in our minds, but we have power over them, not the other way around. And that is not to say that the real cannot affect the imagined. You see examples of this all the time, with story elements based on actual experiences.

Astus wrote:

If one is real and the other is unreal, that is an important difference separating them. One possible definition of reality is whether it makes some effect. That is, one can dream and imagine all sorts of things, they will not change one's everyday conditions. If there were a true nature separate from the aggregates, it would mean that such a true nature does not have the qualities of the aggregates, nor can it interact with the aggregates. If said true nature were not separate from the aggregates, then it is the aggregates, so it is affected by everything that affects the aggregates. If it were neither the same nor different, then as far as it's not the same, it is unconscious (consciousness is an aggregate), and as far as it's not different, it is affected.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 8:35 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

I got sent to a post in which you were talking about lack of experience leading to argumentation about definitions. If that's what you were referring to...

Astus wrote:

The point I wanted to refer to is that discussion of jhana/dhyana is a discussion of the definition of absorption, so it is theoretical regardless if somebody has or doesn't have experiences. But if you think there is a way around that, let's do it.

The second point there is my version of avoiding the problem of definitions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 6th, 2016 at 9:48 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

Ajahn Chah of all people should know better than this.

Astus wrote:

From the introduction of his collected teachings (p xi): "Ajahn Chah avoided talking about levels of attainment and levels of meditative absorption in order to counter spiritual materialism (the gaining mind, competitiveness and jealousy) and to keep people focused on the Path."

catmoon said:

The gradual calming he refers to is clearly nothing more than access concentration settling in, and is well described in the suttas and if anyone should know this, it would be Ajahn Chah.

Astus wrote:

He mentions development of jhanas to some extent, like in Detachment Within Activity on p 298-299.

In The Path in Harmony on p 316 he talks about the dangers of deep samadhi and that one should just go with access concentration. Then on the next page:

"So, there can be right samadhi and wrong samadhi. Wrong samadhi is where the mind enters calm and there's no awareness at all. One could sit for two hours or even all day but the mind doesn't know where it's been or what's happened. It doesn't know anything. There is calm, but that's all. It's like a well-sharpened knife which we don't bother to put to any use. This is a deluded type of calm, because there is not much self-awareness. The meditator may think he has reached the ultimate already, so he doesn't bother to look for anything else. Samadhi can be an enemy at this level. Wisdom can not arise because there is no awareness of right and wrong.

With right samadhi, no matter what level of calm is reached, there is awareness. There is full mindfulness and clear comprehension. This is the samadhi which can give rise to wisdom, one can not get lost in it. Practitioners should understand this well. You can't do without this awareness, it must be present from beginning to end. This kind of samadhi has no danger."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 12:16 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Right, this kind of one pointedness never abandon vitarka and vicara. It is essentially the first dhyāna or perfect śamatha.

Astus wrote:

Not necessarily. As I read the suttas, change from one jhana to another happens by recognition that the present mental factors are troubling. Then either one realises the true nature of appearances and abandons it all (i.e. nirvana) completely, or goes to the next level. It seems logical to me that unless there is a level of awareness, such a shift

from one jhana to another could not happen. So, there is indeed correct samadhi and incorrect samadhi.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Shifts between dhyānas cannot deliberately happen after the second dhyāna. There can only be a deliberate shift through the remaining dhyānas by exiting one and then entering another. Because of the absence of vitarka in the second dhyāna on up, we then have the notion of so called "access concentrations."

Astus wrote:

That depends on the interpretation of vitarka and vicara. Normally they are understood in this context as grabbing the object and maintaining the object of meditation. It is not about thinking about the object, but using one's attention.

For a practical description:

http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books/Ajahn_Chah_Samma_Samadhi.htm

For a linguistic analysis: <https://sujato.wordpress.com/2012/12/06/why-vitakka-doesnt-mean-thinking-in-jhana/>

Also, if you look at the description in the

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.111.than.html>, Sariputra goes through the 8 jhanas, and only following nirodha-samapatti does he emerges from it and reflects. And that's quite logical, since in nirodha both feeling and perception stops, but not before that. And if you look into the other texts describing the sequence, it goes deeper and deeper, it's not that they always have to stop and go back.

Of course, what you say is a known explanation, where absorption becomes something so otherworldly and absorbed, that it is practically useless for wisdom and overly difficult (if possible at all) to attain at the same time.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 1:16 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You apparently did not read this sutta carefully. Sariputra enters and exits each dhyāna before proceeding to the next one.

Astus wrote:

Please point me to the line you think means that.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

But you have to come down a step or two to redirect the mind, then back up you go.

Astus wrote:

Why would that be so? Accessing the first jhana already requires a level of peacefulness, and then further levels are even calmer states. How would it be helpful if one had to create disturbance in order to attain a deeper tranquillity? To me that is a contradiction. But perhaps we have different things in mind here.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

we can't conclude that it is saying that Sariputra immediately went from one jhana to the next.

Astus wrote:

That might be so. I think there are enough references to the same sequence of the jhanas in numerous suttas to allow a general description of how it goes. And it goes by letting go first of external and emotional disturbances in order to establish the first absorption, and then gradually letting go of subtler factors to arrive at a mindful peace.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I think it is fair to say that it applies to all, because otherwise you have give a complicated explanation for why this is not said of the first six, etc.

Astus wrote:

That's like saying that to walk slower one has to walk faster first. It might be that this sutta is more of an exception in stating that he emerged from those states.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Bakmoon said:

Emptiness is the nature of all phenomena as well, and emptiness is of course unconditioned, but no one would complain that all things having an unconditioned nature in that sense is impossible.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means an absence, so calling a lack of something unconditioned is not a problem. It is when we come to unconditioned consciousness that needs more specifications as to what sense it is unconditioned. It is unconditioned in the form of not grasping at appearances, but the functioning of consciousness cannot be unconditioned, because being aware of things is a conditioned occurrence.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

I think they are confusing lack of "thoughts" with lack of ability to have an intention. An intention is all it takes to switch between mental states, and can be used in any mental state.

Astus wrote:

That is a good point. In a calm state one does not start verbalising in the usual form of internal monologue and daydreaming. At the same time, during the stages of absorption there are still the fundamental functions of mind, that is: attention (manasikara), feeling (vedana), volition (cetana), perception (sanna), and contact (phassa); or simply the four mental aggregates.

Here is a fine description of the four jhanas:

<http://measurelessmind.ca/anapanassatisamadhi.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Astus wrote:

...but the functioning of consciousness cannot be unconditioned, because being aware of things is a conditioned occurrence.

Malcolm said:

So in terms of conditioned occurrences, their arising, abiding and perishing must be established. So how are you going to establish this? As conventions? That is fine, but a "convention" refers to an imputation and a reification.

Astus wrote:

That seems to imply a strong difference between appearances and emptiness. Conventions (interdependence) and emptiness (insubstantiality) has to form/be a single reality (called the Middle in Tiantai teachings). But I think you as well like to emphasise the non-duality of the two truths. And that singularity, where there are appearances without establishment, where consciousness and emptiness are inseparable, is all there is. Here is an example of how that is realised for dhyana:

In the case of one who has realized the true character of dharmas, on contemplating the five hindrances, he finds that they have no inherent existence at all. He then realizes that the true character of the five hindrances is identical with the true character of dhyāna and that the true character of dhyāna is identical with that of the five hindrances. In this way the bodhisattva is able to realize that the five desires as well as the five hindrances, the dhyāna concentrations as well as their component factors—they are all of a single character. Thus, without depending on anything whatsoever, he is able to enter dhyāna absorption. It is this which qualifies as dhyāna “pāramitā.”

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-13.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 7th, 2016 at 9:02 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Then it does not any sense to say that things arise from cause and condition, because as Mañjuśrimitra points out, they are nondual in the mind.

Astus wrote:

It is the apparent production and the ultimate non-production that are non-dual, so it is conditionality that means the absence of substance, and emptiness that exists only as illusoriness of phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So, production is not real and nonproduction is real, correct?

Astus wrote:

They form a single reality together.

Malcolm said:

in order for there to be an eye consciousness, there has to be an external object, a form, of which that consciousness is aware

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. What I say is that when there is consciousness, it is consciousness of something. Even more precisely, there are only experiences, and they can be theoretically separated into subject and object, but that's an added distinction, and not something experienced. To put that into the dhatu version, there are instances of consciousness, and it can be then imagined to be objects and senses.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you subscribe to the third extreme then — that there can be something both existent and nonexistent. Because in reality, production and nonproduction are mutually exclusive.

Astus wrote:

No. Production is a concept to navigate within experiences. Non-production is a concept to eliminate attachment. The point is to be active and free at the same time. Do you consider that a contradiction?

Malcolm said:

So if I poke my finger in your eye, you will not experience my finger as an object, distinct from your eye?

Astus wrote:

Both finger and eye exist as experiences. To that basis comes all the qualifications.

Malcolm said:

If there are no objects, how can there consciousness of "something?"

Astus wrote:

Consciousness means there an instance of experience, a phenomenon. That is, an instance of seeing a vase is first a "vase-phenomenon" that is divided into a vase as object and a viewer as subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 6:25 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

When it is understood that the illusion of an elephant is not an elephant, there is no concept of elephant to eliminate. One knows an elephant never existed where one seemed previously to appear. That elephant is self-liberated.

Astus wrote:

There is still an illusion, isn't there? Or do you mean by self-liberation a total nothingness?

Malcolm said:

But your contention is that we do not experience objects.

Astus wrote:

That doesn't sound like what I said.

Malcolm said:

But according to you, there must be a cause of that consciousness.

Astus wrote:

I think this got mixed up because of terminology. I only used the word consciousness to compare it to the 18 dhatu scheme, to show that experiences precedes subject and object. On the other hand, I debate an independent consciousness, because that is an absolutist version of subject, while even the subject itself is an abstraction from experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: What is the ultimate good according to Mahayana and Vajrayana?

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

What I'm particularly interested in, I think, is the question of whether (according to Mahayana doctrine) there is some property of awareness that can be ascribed to Buddhas who have entered parinirvana.

For example, a follower recites the nembutsu. Is Amitabha aware or cognizant of the nembutsu, or is it rather that the nembutsu activates the conditions of the vow taken long ago, and as a result the Pure Land manifests -- even though there is no actual "Amitabha" there in the sense of a being who has cognition and awareness?

Astus wrote:

The three bodies doctrine is a summary of three perspectives of buddhas. The nirmanakaya explains the story of Siddhartha. The sambhogakaya explains all the celestial buddhas. The dharmakaya explains the ultimate meaning of buddhahood as suchness. So, Amitabha is considered nirmanakaya in TB and sambhogakaya in EAB, for various reasons. In either case, it means that Amitabha is an active, living being, and that's how everyone imagines him anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

As far as the illusion itself goes, we can say that it depends on causes and conditions, but these also cannot withstand analysis and will be found to be unproduced as well. So in the end, everything winds up being illusion, and therefore, unproduced.

Astus wrote:

The elephant is illusory, just as causality. Illusory means apparent, functional, and at the same time insubstantial, empty.

Malcolm said:

The eighteen dhātu scheme demonstrates nothing of the sort. It shows, or intends to show, that consciousnesses are a product of the meeting of a sense organ and a sense object. It is elaborated to show that experience is derived from subject and object, not that it precedes it.

Astus wrote:

I used the 18 dhatus format in a reversed way, where from consciousness comes subject and object.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 8th, 2016 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

It's because you need viccāna and vitakka to change the object of meditation. And you leave those behind in the third and fourth jhanas. Some sources vary on this sequence btw.

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure about what you mean by change of object. If one starts with one object, with that one it's possible to go through the stages of calming the mind.

catmoon said:

The fourth jhana is exquisitely delicate. It is a state so fine that the merest intention to do anything, and very lightest grasp on an object of meditation, both completely disappear.

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the rūpa jhanas have a specific object on what one rests the mind on, and only with the arūpa jhanas one changes from specific object to a "non-object", like infinite space.

As for the progression of jhanas, it moves from holding a specific object of focus, through the enjoyment of the peace coming from one pointedness, until one arrives at an unmoving mind. So the first jhana is about returning again and again to the object, the second and third about the pleasure of the stable mind, and the fourth is just the

stable mind. The formless absorptions are about abandoning the experiences as identities. So, here is my model.

catmoon said:

Access Concentration

Astus wrote:

I don't use this category. Here could be mentioned the usual requirements to begin meditation.

catmoon said:

First Jhana

Astus wrote:

Vitakka and vicara are present to establish the mind repeatedly on the object, and this is the primary element to work with, while the others are supporting factors. Piti is the joy of resting, like when one can lie down after a tiring walk. Sukha is the contentment of peace, like when one is finished with a task and there's nothing more to do. Ekaggata is the one pointedness of attention, the quality of being focused internally on the body and mind.

catmoon said:

Second Jhana

Astus wrote:

With the mind further withdrawn and stabilised, there is no need to remind oneself of the object of attention, and one is absorbed in the joy of rest, with contentment and one pointedness in the background.

catmoon said:

Third Jhana

Astus wrote:

When the more intensive joy is let go as well, one rests content within the seclusion of internally focused mind.

catmoon said:

Fourth Jhana

Astus wrote:

The feeling of contentment with peaceful abiding abandoned, there is just the one pointed mind that is unmoved by appearances.

catmoon said:

Infinite space

Astus wrote:

With the mind that is stable in peace there is no need to hold any sensory objects, thus the senses go unfocused and they rest open and unmoved.

catmoon said:

Infinite Consciousness

Astus wrote:

The attention moves from the lack of objects to the lack of senses, hence consciousness itself is unbound and uniform.

catmoon said:

Infinite Nothingness

Astus wrote:

Without object to focus on, or a specific state of mind to maintain, one comes to the experience that there is nothing at all.

catmoon said:

Neither Perception nor Non-Perception

Astus wrote:

But holding that there is nothing is still something perceived, one realises that experiencing itself is unreliable, and abandons that as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2016 at 2:09 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

Yes, one can calm the mind with a single object, but there will be no jhana without the shift to the countersign. It's quite possible to calm the mind to within an inch of absolute silence without entering jhana. This is access concentration. Jhana is qualitatively different, not just a refinement of what went before.

Astus wrote:

That is the approach of the Visuddhimagga, which is fine, but it's not the only version.

catmoon said:

This is the whole point of jhana - to take a carefully honed consciousness, this laserlike focus, and use it in the pursuit of understanding and enlightenment. One pointed concentration is worthless if it is not put to use. It would just be mental gymnastics.

Astus wrote:

As you say. Although I would use "laser like focus", more like the metaphor of calm and transparent water.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2016 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You mean the illusory elephant can haul wood? Bear a rider?

Astus wrote:

Unless you mean that while elephants are illusory wood and riders are real, then of course an illusory elephant is functional, otherwise it is a very bad illusion. There are also Vasubandhu's answers in Vimsatika.

I think a relevant question here is whether there is a place for teachings that account for ordinary experiences, that go gradually from one level to the next.

Gangottara inquired, "If all things are empty space, why does the World-Honored One speak of form, feeling, conception, impulse and consciousness; the [eighteen] elements; the [twelve] entrances; the twelve links of dependent origination; the defiled and the undefiled; the pure and the impure; samsara and nirvana?"

The Buddha told Gangottara, "When I speak of a 'self', for example, although I express the concept by a word, actually, the nature of 'self' is inapprehensible. I speak of form, but in reality the nature of form is also inapprehensible, and so it is with the other [dharmas], up to nirvana. Just as we cannot find water in mirages, so we cannot find a nature in form, and so it is with the others, up to nirvana.

(<http://www.tuvienquangduc.com.au/English/Maha/20sutra.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2016 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: What is the ultimate good according to Mahayana and Vajrayana?

Content:

Vasana said:

there's a difference between a Buddha being eternal/permanent or unceasing. What is unborn can neither cease, there's no eternalism in Mahayana. So long as there are puddles and lakes, moons will be reflected.

Astus wrote:

A permanent entity is independent, therefore it is non-functional, hence it does not actually exist. Unceasing are causes and conditions, endless change, but there is nothing in particular that remains from one moment to the next. As for what is not born, that is not existent either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2016 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: What is the ultimate good according to Mahayana and Vajrayana?

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

But since the skandhas dissolve at the time of parinirvana, how can this be?

Astus wrote:

You mean remainderless (sopadishsha) nirvana, but Mahayana adds a third version: non-abiding extinction (apratishtita nirvana), and that is what the buddhas attain. Also, the eight consciousnesses transform into the four wisdoms at the attainment of buddhahood. So, there is an explanation how buddhas remain functioning.

Lazy_eye said:

Also, the Diamond Sutra tells us that "self, person, living being and lifespan" do not apply to Buddhas

Astus wrote:

They do not apply to anyone, it's just that deluded beings grasp at such mistaken concepts.

Lazy_eye said:

the recognition of a distinct Buddha can only take place in the mind of a spiritual practitioner who has not yet reached "the other shore."

Astus wrote:

That is a possible interpretation, often emphasised in Zen, that people should see that there is no buddha but their buddha-mind.

Lazy_eye said:

The spiritual practice is the cause for Amitabha to manifest, and our not being at the other shore is the reason he must manifest as a distinct being.

Astus wrote:

Amitabha is either the imagination of the practitioner, or a real being ten thousand buddha-lands away. However, everything is the creation of mind, from hells to the buddha-lands. Even the idea that "I exist" is only a concept. See http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf, question 4, p 65.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 9th, 2016 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

catmoon said:

Yup. I frankly know diddly squat about the Mahayana approach to jhana (if it's Mahayana do I call it dhyana?) but it differs significantly, right? (I know, a Gelug should know this

but I don't).

Astus wrote:

The eight stages dhyana is more a Hinayana thing, and the Mahayana approach is somewhat different, more clearly connected with wisdom. However, what I was referring to here is the difference between the jhana teachings in the suttas and in the Visuddhimagga. Those who follow the Vsm consider kasina meditation to be the primary form, while it plays a marginal role in the suttas and it is practically non-existent in Mahayana.

Here is a description of

http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-13.pdf from the Mahaprajnaparamita-upadesha, an important treatise in East Asia.

catmoon said:

Do I need to go back and reread your model? Is it a Mahayana model? What about the Zen people?

Astus wrote:

The model I have provided is mostly my take on the sutta teachings. As noted above, there is no Mahayana version of the eight stages model. As for Zen, dhyana goes together with wisdom, and they together refer to the essence (emptiness) and function (discernment) of the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2016 at 12:53 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your model is some strange version that does not account for this fact.

Astus wrote:

How doesn't it account for it? I simply defined the basic focus of each stage. And of course one can get stuck at any stage. Moving to the next level depends on relinquishing the previous one. At the same time, it is also possible to let go of everything and attain liberation at any given stage.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2016 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point, Astus, is that each of these dhyānas is in fact a concept on which we focus, where as you treat them as if they are grades of consciousness, which they are not.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that dhyanas are not stages of mental tranquillity, but a number of conceptual focuses people may be absorbed in according to their inclination?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2016 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Is meditational absorption (jhana, dhyana) possible or not?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes. For example, one of Buddha's teacher taught him that meditating on 'infinite emptiness' was the highest stage of liberation, the other, that "neither perception nor nonperception' is the highest state. But these are just mental concepts upon which he focused, and he discovered that by focusing them they created paths for rebirth.

Astus wrote:

That is as you say, in a sense. However, I think it is important to note that these are experiences people can have, and that's what makes them really enticing.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 10th, 2016 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Can women become Buddhas?

Content:

Nicholas Weeks said:

Arya Asanga, a Third Ground bodhisattva, says in his Bodhisattvabhumi that women cannot reach annutarasamyaksambodhi. Because they have too many mental afflictions and inferior wisdom.

During the first of the three big kalpas bodhisattvas use female bodies if they wish, but after that time period (a mere 10 to the 59th power years) the use only male bodies. So women can become great bodhisattvas, but not full Buddhas.

See Engle's new translation The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment, pp 169-70.

Astus wrote:

The Astasahasrika says otherwise, attributing the freedom from female birth to much higher level bodhisattvas.

"Endowed with these attributes, tokens and signs a Bodhisattva should be borne in mind as irreversible from full enlightenment. Furthermore, an irreversible Bodhisattva does not pander to Shramanas and Brahmins of other schools, telling them that they know what is worth knowing, that they see what is worth seeing. He pays no homage to strange Gods, offers them no flowers, incenses, etc., does not put his trusts in them. He is no more reborn in the places of woe, nor does he ever again become a woman."
(PP 8000 17.1, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2016 at 10:07 PM

Title: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see a general tendency to search for the truth, to argue about the truth, to consider the truth as the final goal and measure in Buddhism. But what if we change that yardstick to pain, suffering, dissatisfaction and the lack of it? One can consult scriptures and teachers to decide what is orthodox and canonical in terms of doctrine and method. However, if the standard is one's own pain or peace, what is there to compare?

No need to search for truth,

Just put to rest all views.

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=57)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

smcj said:

Let me ask everybody reading this some questions: Why is my position so unpopular? What is the source of resistance to it? Isn't it possible that this deep-seated emotional and conceptual antipathy towards all things "religious" is an attachment that is an obstruction?

Astus wrote:

As far as saying that Buddhism is polytheistic, I think it is true from the beginning. And with Mahayana it has even produced its own types of deities in the form of buddhas and bodhisattvas, then with Vajrayana we also have the magical elements fully internalised.

Arguing that Buddhism is actually about inner contemplation on emptiness is taking an idealised elite form as the mainstream. And while a small number of educated monks do contemplate on emptiness, they also pray to and bow before a wide arrange of deities, perform rituals, etc., just like the majority, who, on the other hand, don't know or care about contemplating the true nature of mind and such. Same thing you can see in Catholicism, with a small number of educated monks and a big mass of devotees.

There are a number of studies out there that discuss how the worship of

<https://books.google.com/books?id=TtLEr3tod18C>,

https://books.google.com/books?id=tFcy_5Ultq0C,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=WpyiqKZISw0C>,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=dgo7JV9vNCQC>,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Pz6okTs7wdAC>, etc. defined Buddhism in East

Asia. And for those who do not recognise the names:
http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/ancientsgrfx.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 1:59 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

the problem is, it is easy to lose a sense of basic honesty in the search to rid oneself of pain, to gain peace or whatever. The naturally tendency is to cling, including to 'peace' or 'lack of pain', which is of an within itself, a kind of pain.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, we can make an identity of anything. With the identity comes the ideology.

Johnny Dangerous said:

IMO that's a big part of the reason that a teacher. lineage etc. is so important.

Astus wrote:

That is: an authority of the right ideology should correct one's mistakes, and that is fine. My direction in this topic, however, is about seeing the veracity of the Dharma in one's personal first hand experience. One possible argument against that is how people can so easily delude themselves in many ways, therefore it is necessary to have an external supervisor. To that my answer is that people believe whatever they want anyway, and a teacher can only advise but not force. This is not (another) debate about the role of receiving instructions. It is about trusting our mindfulness and facing what we actually experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

tiagolps said:

Worshipping them alone won't take you to the summit, buddhahood. If it doesn't take you to buddhahood, how can it be mahayana? How can it be Vajrayana?

Astus wrote:

I don't think buddhahood is the first concern of most of the devotees, but rather more mundane matters, like health, wealth, success, safe travel, children, good afterlife, etc. And there are particular buddhas and bodhisattvas assigned to various wishes and domains, just like in polytheist religions. But for those who aim for buddhahood, worship can do the job. That is, by attaining birth in a buddha-land.

tiagolps said:

Dharma requires more study and practice than Catholicism.

Astus wrote:

How did you measure that? Have you, for instance, compared the time it takes to master the http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM and the <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/F/151> (<http://www.cbeta.org/result/T22/T22n1428.htm>)?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 6:33 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

tiagolps said:

That is what I would call Folk Buddhism, which can be called polytheistic deity worship, not buddhadharma.

Astus wrote:

That is a serious reduction of followers from hundreds of millions to tens of thousands, worse than saying that only monastics are true practitioners. It also disregards a fair number of sutras that actively teach worship.

tiagolps said:

Sure, but aspiring to be born in a pure abode is different then polytheistic deity worship.

Astus wrote:

In Theravada the pure abodes (suddhavasa) are the five highest heavens of rupaloka. Other polytheist religions also teach about one or several heavens.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

wuyouxianren said:

Doe the title of your post, "No Truth, Only Pain", express a view?

Astus wrote:

Of course, anything can be a view. It is the content that differs.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Yes, for sure ultimately we are fully responsible for our own practice. Funnily enough though, taking full responsibility for it often means opening up and recognizing we are

NOT the authority we often think we are.

Astus wrote:

There are elements we should recognise that we do not know. There are also elements we should recognise that we know. The first great step on the path is losing our doubts about the Dharma. That's not the same as knowing everything there is to know, but knowing enough to be confident in our practice. Or, as Yangshan said of this stage (Book of Serenity, case 32): "You can take the seat and wear the robe. After this, see on your own."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Bristollad said:

I don't understand the dichotomy you are suggesting between the truth and pain, suffering, dissatisfaction

The Buddha taught four truths about suffering.

Astus wrote:

They are connected, yes. The point here is that whatever truths are discussed in Buddhism, they are to eliminate suffering. The goal as seeing reality is only the reality where no suffering can arise, it is not the sort of reality that can stand on its own.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

tiagolps said:

Not saying that they are not buddhist, just saying many lack understanding to differentiate between their local folk religion and buddhism. I mean look at japan, how many people who say they are buddhists actually know the basics?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you call the basics. If you look at what the Buddha called the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/index.html>, there generosity, discipline, and heavenly birth come before discussing the drawbacks and renunciation of samsara, then finally comes the four noble truths. The gradual teachings of Mahayana work in a similar fashion, and the basis for everyone are generosity, virtuous action, and accumulating merit for good results in this life and the next. Cultivating meditation and wisdom are not the basics at all. Giving alms, good behaviour, and the belief in karma and rebirth are.

And there are some differences between Buddhism and "folk religion". For instance, Buddhists do not sacrifice animals. There is actually an opposite practice, they

<http://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=504>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

tiagolps said:

I agree with that, but I still hold that that is not polytheism. Polytheism as no gradual training.

Astus wrote:

Polytheism simply means belief in many gods. Buddhism fits that. As for gradual training, all the priests, shamans, witches, etc. were trained gradually in their respective traditions and practices. For instance, one might even

<http://www.kokugakuin.ac.jp/english/shintostudies.html> to become a Shinto priest.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Bristollad said:

can you put it another way?

Astus wrote:

Let's take impermanence as an example. As a truth on its own, it is about affirming that all things are impermanent. Then we can debate if there are still some permanent things or not. As a truth conducive to liberation, it is about seeing for oneself that things are impermanent, and from that recognition become free from suffering. In this case, it is not a question of ultimate truth, of affirming the impermanence of everything, to convince others about it, but to gain liberation by understanding personally the meaning of the teaching of impermanence.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: A Fine Blend of Mahāmudrā and Madhyamaka: Maitrīpa's Collection of Texts on Non-conceptual Realization (Amanasikāra)

Content:

Astus wrote:

An older, but relevant study: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/255461191/Enlightenment-by-a-Single-Means-Tibetan-Controversies-on-the-Self-sufficient-White-Remedy>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Is the nature of mind a fiction?

Content:

Temicco said:

The Atthakavagga of the Sutta Nipata talks about how if you relax and don't cling, you'll reach a state where nobody can define you and nothing you experience bothers you by being there.

Astus wrote:

Which sutta?

Temicco said:

This also appears in Chan texts. The only difference between the two, really, is that Chan texts discuss the nature of mind.

Astus wrote:

No attachment is certainly the essential teaching of the Buddha, and that is also the ultimate nature of mind.

Temicco said:

So, what then of the nature of mind?

Astus wrote:

No nature is the true nature.

Temicco said:

It seems like this state can be entered

Astus wrote:

That's already a wrong approach. If there is a state to enter, it is just another delusion.

Temicco said:

Are Chan and Mahamudra really adding anything substantial to the teaching of the Sutta Nipata by discussing the nature of mind?

Astus wrote:

Probably not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2016 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

wuyouxianren said:

Thanks. So then this statement of yours, "No need to search for truth", also expresses a view. Am I right?

Astus wrote:

Yes. The decisive question is whether one simply grasps at that view, or follows the instruction and lets it all go.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2016 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Vasana said:

Doesn't that suppose a false dichotomy between whatever an ultimate truth is and the personal realization of how that truth applies to one's own practice and liberation or am I also missing the intention behind this thread ?

Astus wrote:

It is, as you say, a difference in focal point. If we get stuck on the question of how things really are, that is missing the point of why the teachings were given. They are not meant as statements about reality, but as instructions for liberation. Therefore, the goal is not clear insight but freedom from dissatisfaction.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2016 at 2:15 AM

Title: Re: Is the nature of mind a fiction?

Content:

Temicco said:

Why then discuss it using positive formulations? It seems potentially misleading, no?

Astus wrote:

The concept of "nature" (xing 性) has a history in China pre-dating Buddhism. See a short section on nature <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-metaphysics/#ImpDif>, or for instance the opposing views of <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mencius/#3> and <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/xunzi/#humans>. Besides that, the concept also comes from India in the form of the tathagatagarbha teachings. So, it is fairly complicated why and how certain terms are used.

Temicco said:

It just throws me for a loop when the nature of mind is so frequently discussed as if it's a thing that can be cognized, even if such a view is explicitly shot down. If it's not adding anything on, then why add it on?

Astus wrote:

One has to communicate somehow. Just consider how nirvana can be easily taken to be some kind of realm or state (e.g. nirvana as dhatu, or as dharma), when it literally means extinction.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2016 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: Is the nature of mind a fiction?

Content:

Temicco said:

Chan is all about the nature of mind. In what way do you propose it differs from the latter two?

Astus wrote:

Zen's " <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/D/92> " is about seeing the nature of mind yourself, gaining a first hand experience without going through stages. In Mahamudra and Dzogchen " https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pointing-out_instruction " means certain methods teachers use to induce an experience of the nature of mind. Although it could be said that Zen has stories where a teacher's words or actions trigger realisation in the student - and such stories exist even in sutras - it is not a formal technique.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2016 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Vasana said:

There is no freedom from dissatisfaction without clear-insight. The goal posts are not the goal but you need them to know where to aim.

Astus wrote:

Wisdom is part of the path. So are concentration and discipline.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2016 at 3:19 AM

Title: Re: Is the nature of mind a fiction?

Content:

Temicco said:

I think it would be a bit silly to think that what's going on in Tibetan ngo sprod is any different from what's going on in some of the gong-ans.

Astus wrote:

In TB they give such introduction regularly, in a set format. That does not happen in Zen, you cannot go to such a programme. And even you can only compare it to some koans, that is, stories. In TB it's not just in stories, it's what they do.

Temicco said:

Does it really matter that Chan didn't reify this into a method?

Astus wrote:

Chan is a direct path. No methods, just see nature and become buddha. What nature? That there is nothing to see. How do you see that? Just sit and observe how everything comes and goes, and there is nothing to do about it. This is not complicated at all. At the same time, not even the buddhas can make you see it. You have to do it yourself. The approach in Vajrayana is somewhat different.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2016 at 1:16 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

wuyouxianren said:

So, when you told others "Just put to rest all views", you were actually advocating views of your own, and even stronger ones; in other words, you are teaching others what you yourself have not been able, or are simply not willing, to do. Am I correct?

Astus wrote:

All teachings are views. However, there is a difference between views that only create further views, and views that eliminate views.

wuyouxianren said:

Next, would you elaborate where these statements, "No truth, only pain" and "No need to search for truth", come from? In particular, are they the Buddha's original teaching? Or are they the faithful representation or interpretation of such a teaching? If yes, what are your original sources? If not, would you briefly justify these statements based on Buddha's original teaching? And in particular, would it be more wrong or harmful to claim "No pain, only truth" than "No truth, only pain"?

Astus wrote:

"No truth, only pain" - that's simply a title. As for what it refers to has been explained already.

"No need to search for truth" - that is from a Chan text, but it goes back to teachings found in the sutras, like in chapter 6 of the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html: "If even my correct teachings are to be abandoned, how much more incorrect teachings?"

wuyouxianren said:

Lastly, when you made such a claim as "No truth, only pain" or "No need to search for truth", were you aware of what kind of audience you were addressing? Or were you aware of the fact that traditionally there is a difference of emphasis between the Mahayana and Theravada teachings?

Astus wrote:

This is a public forum.

wuyouxianren said:

Can the Buddha's teaching be always explained, or re-taught, in a fully consistent, and

therefore more convincing, way? If yes, why do we need to choose a less consistent or even self-contradictory way?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha's teachings have always been repeated and reformed ever since his disciples began to teach. As for the success of a teaching, it is measured by the realisation attained by the student.

wuyouxianren said:

If the Buddha is the ultimate authority of his teaching, would not it be a safer and better approach to have the so-called Chan Masters, together with their practices, to be critically examined rather than simply accepted or even blindly followed?

Astus wrote:

Chan is in agreement with the Buddha's teachings. If you want to debate that, just open a topic for it.

wuyouxianren said:

Would not it make more sense to first remove one's various wrong views and replace them with the Buddhist right views, and then talk of getting rid of these right views when one has moved into the proper stage of his Buddhist practice?

Astus wrote:

That's what normally happens.

wuyouxianren said:

And how can a person talk of giving up his swimming skills, or even refusing to have learned them at all, before he has swam across the river? Or how can one talk of destroying the boat or bridge even before he builds them?

Astus wrote:

As the Zen saying (from Record of Linji, p 38, tr Sasaki) goes: "Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts." Why keep building sand castles, when one could as well just stop?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2016 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Matt J said:

I think this is a false dichotomy. Once you see the truth with clear insight, then you gain freedom from dissatisfaction.

Astus wrote:

What truth is that?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2016 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Wayfarer said:

There is definitely truth which can be distinguished from delusion.

Astus wrote:

And that truth, just as you say, is that all things are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impersonal. However, they are truths in the sense as something to learn and contemplate, so that the imagined attributes of appearances as stable, satisfying, and personal are removed. They are not truths that one has to uphold just because the Buddha said so. This is expressed in Mahayana with the teaching that even emptiness is empty, and not a substance. In other words, the truths are all skilful means with practical value.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 15th, 2016 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

conebeckham said:

a positive expression of an Ultimate, which is certainly religious, and which is at least partly an object of faith, immune to the analysis of Madhyamaka.

Astus wrote:

Is it immune because it is an object of faith?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 2:21 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

If it is truly the Ultimate, it is immune because the Ultimate beyond description or analysis.

Astus wrote:

What makes something the ultimate?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 2:23 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Wayfarer said:
As always, I disagree.

Astus wrote:
What do you say about the purpose of the Buddha's teachings as being for liberation from suffering?

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 2:40 AM
Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain
Content:

Malcolm said:
I would say that is the essence of the Hinayāna path. But the Mahāyāna path also includes the attainment of omniscience.

Astus wrote:
What is the reason for attaining omniscience? Isn't it to liberate all beings from suffering?

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 2:42 AM
Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain
Content:

Bakmoon said:
If you mean that our emphasis should be on the soteriological effectiveness of the teachings rather than taking them as a way of fashioning more and more views for ourselves

Astus wrote:
That is exactly the point. That all the truths in Buddhism serve a purpose, they are not good because they are true, but because they deliver beings.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 3:07 AM
Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain
Content:

Malcolm said:
However, the point is that the Buddha's path is not only about freedom from negative qualities. It is also about the attainment of positive qualities, such as the four fearlessness, the eighteen unshared qualities of a Buddha and so on.

Astus wrote:
I don't deny those.

Malcolm said:

So while it is true that the motive for the attainment of these positive qualities is in order to liberate other sentient beings, they are also positive in their own right, apart from that motivation.

Astus wrote:

They are positive, because they help in accomplishing one's own and others' liberation. What could be called positive on its own right is freedom/enlightenment itself.

Malcolm said:

The negative view of awakening that you consistently portray also shortens one's lifespan.

Astus wrote:

The buddha-nature is already perfect with all the qualities of buddhahood. The reason buddha-nature is not seen is grasping appearances. Once that mistaken identification is gone, the buddha-mind can manifest.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Malcolm said:

That is just a lot of conceptuality.

Astus wrote:

What isn't?

Malcolm said:

Anyone can see buddhanature, they just have to have the method.

Astus wrote:

E.g. "zazen is entering directly into the ocean of buddha-nature and manifesting the body of the Buddha" (<http://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

Ultimate is merely a shorthand term some people use for Ultimate Reality. Or True Nature, or I've heard a bunch of other colorful phrases people use to describe it.

Astus wrote:

In that way, even God and Atman can be exempt from analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The term "ultimate" simply means an object of an undeceived cognition, for example, the direct perception of emptiness.

Astus wrote:

That is non-conceptual wisdom, where there is no view to analyse.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

Malcolm said:

That's not what I am talking about.

Astus wrote:

Then please clarify it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Is that non-conceptual wisdom immune from analysis?

Astus wrote:

As a concept, no. As an experience, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

I suppose that depends on how you are using those terms. In the common usage, no, they would not be considered either Ultimate or exempt from analysis.

Astus wrote:

In what way would they be inarguable?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 4:31 AM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

If you used those terms in a non-traditional way, they sometimes refer to the idea of True Nature, rather than a creator god or an individual soul. Like I said, people use a lot of terms to refer to the perception of reality.

Astus wrote:

There are examples for that.

AlexMcLeod said:

Mostly just to not be thrown out of their society for blasphemy.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean Indonesia?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 7:07 AM

Title: Re: No Truth, Only Pain

Content:

wuyouxianren said:

I would love to have a debate on this topic, at the same time, however, I believe that there needs to be consequences for whoever loses the debate, for example, if I lose, I would commit myself to giving up all my wrong and/or unjustified views, at least those directly related to this debate, and would never, during my life time and anywhere and in any form, advocate them again.

Are you willing to make the same commitment? If yes, then we can move into the next steps of, for example, setting up and/or discussing the debate rules.

Astus wrote:

I'm open for a debate with the possibility of being proven wrong, however, I don't see how the conditions of conviction can be satisfyingly delineated. As for debating the rules of debating, that's a whole different topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2016 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: is Buddhism a religious faith?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

People from any religion can have a realization, I just believe Buddhism to be most

conducive to awakening.

Astus wrote:

No religion agrees with that idea, unless you consider things like Theosophy a religion.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2016 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: How to study Mahayana?

Content:

Temicco said:

Regarding Indo-Tibetan Mahayana, it seems I would just read everything I can get my hands on from the four tenet schools, especially primers written by people already familiar with the material. Is that enough? What order would I do it in and what texts in particular?

Astus wrote:

Go with the lamrim works. They give good summaries. Jamgon Kongtrul's

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Treasury_of_Knowledge is really a treasury of knowledge.

Temicco said:

I don't really know what to do for East Asian Mahayana besides reading some of the main sutras -- there seems to be less of a shared basis between the schools. Is this true? I've read the Awakening of Faith, but that seems to be mainly a Dhyaana school thing.

Astus wrote:

The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana is one of the most fundamental and influential texts in EAB. Here are some online resources covering numerous subjects.

Ven Xingyun: <http://hsingyun.org/books/core-teachings/>, <http://www.fgsitc.org/see-publications/>

Ven Shengyan: http://www.108wisdom.org/html/OTH_03.pdf,
<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 17th, 2016 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: is Cheontae/Tendai Seon/Zen and Pureland is the same?

Content:

Iconodule said:

My understanding is that the sharp sectarian divisions of Japanese Buddhism have a lot to do with the way the Japanese government, early on, required the Buddhist sects to be separate and each receive a certain number of ordinands each year.

Astus wrote:

The strong separation of schools was established in the Tokugawa era through the enforcement of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danka_system, as part of the general classification of Japanese society, and a defensive measure against the spread of Christianity. For instance check this essay:
<http://www.columbia.edu/~wtd1/w4030/sjt/Ch33.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 18th, 2016 at 6:40 AM

Title: Re: Reception of Japanese Buddhism in China

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are recent historical reasons that I doubt Japanese Buddhism can expect any welcome in the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War or the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan_under_Japanese_rule.

Ven Shengyan studied in Japan, and was a disciple of a Sanbo Kyodan teacher as well. But as for his teachings on Buddhism, I don't see any Japanese influence.

I remember someone mentioning that Shingon has some active groups in Taiwan.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2016 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Zen events and small children?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Depends on what counts as a Zen event. As I have seen at a Chinese temple, children are no problem. However, since the people were almost exclusively Chinese and Vietnamese, it is a different style than Western convert communities, where the Buddhist activity consists almost exclusively of sitting silently after a minimal chanting.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2016 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: How to move from selfishness to happiness

Content:

Astus wrote:

If one approaches selflessness in the mundane way, it can give good results, but also lot of frustrations. It is as faulty as anything in life. The bodhisattva's great compassion is fundamentally different, because it is based on liberating wisdom (prajnaparamita), that is, the realisation of the conditioned, impersonal, and insubstantial nature of the entire world and all the beings in it. So, to move from selfishness one should see that there is no self to be obsessed about, also there are no others to worry about. Then one can be naturally and fully permeated by the immeasurable states.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2016 at 7:50 AM

Title: Re: Single Stream of Consciousness and Rebirth

Content:

Iconodule said:

I've read and heard a fair amount of Buddhist teaching, but one question I don't recall hearing an answer to is this: Between rebirths there is a single stream of consciousness, so one death leads to one rebirth in one of the six realms depending on the karmic orientation. Why does this mindstream not split up and constitute in several different births? What keeps it from merging with other mindstreams?

Astus wrote:

The mind stream is an attempt to explain rebirth without self. However, rebirth and karma applies only to those who are attached to the concept of self. Since a self is always unitary, there is no splitting into two selves.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2016 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: Single Stream of Consciousness and Rebirth

Content:

Iconodule said:

But that would mean the mind-stream can be identified as a self which would undermine the basic Buddhist critique of self.

Astus wrote:

Yogacara teaches exactly that. The manas (also called klista-manas-vijnana, i.e. defiled-mind-consciousness) continually and incessantly grasps the alayavijnana as the self, and together they form the mind stream that stops only with enlightenment. That is also their explanation for how the mistaken concept of self persists even during states of unconsciousness and such.

On the other hand, it is not necessary to posit a mind stream - although we find it in both Mahayana and Theravada schools as a generally accepted theory. But if you take a look at how the idea of a mind stream developed, it is secondary to the teaching of rebirth and karma. That is, individual karma is a given and is a primary teaching, while the explanations are diverse and secondary. Therefore the question of splitting streams is based on a wrong approach to the matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2016 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Single Stream of Consciousness and Rebirth

Content:

Anders said:

How is are emanations not a splitting of consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Only we can think that a bodhisattva has a body and mind. The bodhisattva does not have such ideas.

Anders said:

How do 100 emanations avoid the issue about karma of a single being ripening in multiple ones?

Astus wrote:

The short answer: it's magic.

The long answer: there are two kinds of rebirth (二種生死). For deluded beings it is fragmented rebirth (分段生死), that is, birth from body to body, but for bodhisattvas it is inconceivable transformation rebirth (不思議變易生死), because it is generated purely by compassion and vows. The second type is also called mind made body (意成身, manomayakaya), and transformation body (變化身, nirmanakaya). See: Cheng Weishi Lun, Wei Tat p 609-611 / Cook BDK p 276 / http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T31n1585_008#0045a11.

Anders said:

Also, how can a partless dharma be dependently arisen?

Astus wrote:

Dharmas are basic categories, so they are technically partless. Even the physical elements of earth, etc. are singular. On the other hand, they are all fabricated (samskara) and conditioned (samskrta), except space, the cessations, and suchness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2016 at 1:27 AM

Title: Re: Result of Karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two major speeches by the Buddha on karma in the Majjhima Nikaya. In <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.than.html> he gives the general effects of specific actions. In <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.136.than.html> he shows how causes and effects are a complicated matter, and one should not fall into simple generalisations. There is another important teaching, the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.101.than.html>, where the Buddha refutes the Jain idea of the fatalist interpretation of karma, and the idea that asceticism can purify past karma.

In the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.002.than.html> the Buddha lists a number of topics that are not only worthless, but even harmful to ponder about:

'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past?

Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'

The reason such questions are wrong is that they all involve one or another sort of self view. And the reason for the teaching of karma is that by seeing the consequences of bodily, verbal, and mental actions, one avoids harmful and cultivates beneficial actions. Then, through wholesome acts one can attain a level of peace and joy, and there it becomes possible to cultivate a tranquil mind, then with a tranquil mind one can attain insight, thus with insight one gains liberation. On the other hand, to take the teaching of karma as a theoretical truth to analyse, one can only fall into confusion and wrong views.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2016 at 6:28 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

I wonder if the decline in religious affiliation and growth in atheism is a sort of rejection of milk?

Astus wrote:

It makes little difference whether one believes there is or there is no God. What matters is the everyday thinking and actions. Switching Christian folklore to materialist-consumerist folklore are equally mundane, superficial, and naive ideas about life that one rarely even thinks about.

Queequeg said:

In both Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism there is an idea that in a time marked by overall decline in standards of ethics, morality, religion, etc. the real, most profound teachings of Buddhism will spread.

Astus wrote:

I don't know about the spread of profound teachings (I guess it's a Tibetan idea), but the concept of the decline of Dharma is just the usual https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Age_myth.

Queequeg said:

I wonder if it's the breakdown in the perpetuation of (false) views that permits people open to the most profound teaching to arise, free of the fetters that hold people of previous generations back?

Astus wrote:

Don't think so. There are always a few people open to new ideas, and the rest either don't care or like to hear things in the way that sounds assuring of their existing beliefs.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2016 at 7:08 AM

Title: Re: Lists of buddha names in sutras?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a sutra "The Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas Sutra" (<http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0440>), that was supposed to have been translated to English (see: <http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/publish/523/vbs523p026.pdf>, <http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/publish/521/vbs521p028.pdf>), but I couldn't find it. That sutra is 12 fascicles, but the one following it in the Taisho canon with an identical title is 30 fascicles. And there are other, shorter sutras giving lists of buddha names.

Besides that, if you search for names from the Amitabha Sutra like Sumeru Lamp Buddha (須彌燈佛), or Most Victorious Sound Buddha (最勝音佛), they appear only in other texts giving lists of names, like the above sutras, or the Thousand and Five Hundred Buddha Names in the Ten Directions Sutra (<http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0442>).

For instance Sun Birth Buddha (日生佛) appears in T440 (12 fascicles Buddha Names Sutra) in fascicle 11, simply as "Namo Sun Birth Buddha". And in that fascicle only, there are 1119 other "Namo ... Buddha", and that's all there is. I assume the reason behind reciting the names of buddhas (they usually do the <https://kongmu.wordpress.com/2011/10/09/88-buddhas/>), is a form of meritorious activity, and extended version of buddhanusmrti. But there might be more.

If you look at a commentary (<http://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/explanation-text/text-transmission> or <http://www.cttbusa.org/amitabhacommentary/amitabha15.htm>), they don't bother giving explanations and stories for each names. In the sutra itself they serve as buddhas who testify for Amitabha's and Sukhavati's greatness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2016 at 4:53 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

So, is it easier for an Atheist to relate to Buddha Dharma than a Deist?

Astus wrote:

Is it easier for an annihilationist than an eternalist? Buddhism has elements for both that are harder and that are easier. Perhaps it is easier for those who believe in some sort of eternalism, because that's the type of view Buddhists had to contend with usually, and there are only a few cases where they argued against the carvakas.

Queequeg said:

I'm not sure the idea of the degeneration of Dharma is just a Golden Age delusion. Its based on the arising and perishing of phenomena. There is more to it - some remarkable observations about the passing of teachings and traditions over generations - the proverbial Telephone Game through the ages.

Astus wrote:

It rather seems to be the common human experience that things were better in the old times. There's also the general phenomenon of elevating the people of the past to saintly levels, while our present situation always seems like the worst ever. Just consider how a thousand years ago Buddhist teachers considered their times totally degenerate, and then those 500 years later thought about those before them as great times but theirs as crap.

Here are two quotes from the Tang era, that is generally considered by the Zen tradition to be the "golden age".

Pei Xiu (791–864):

Therefore, while among the followers of all the [Chan] lineages there have been awakened people, nevertheless, each [lineage] rests in its own practices, [and so] the flexible are few and the limited numerous. For several decades the teachings of the [Chan] masters has increasingly declined. They have taken their transmissions as doors-and-windows [separate sects], each opening outward in its own way.
(Preface to the Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 193, tr J. L. Broughton)

Fayan Wenyi (855-958):

People of recent times take a lot lightly. They may enter communes, but they are lazy about pursuing intense inquiry. Even if they develop concentration, they do not select a true master; through the mistakes of false teachers, like them they lose direction to the ultimate.

...

In recent generations, Zen teachers have lost the basis; students have no guidance. They match wits egotistically and take what is ephemeral for an attainment. Where is the heart to guide others? No longer do we hear of knowledge to destroy falsehood. Caning and shouting at random, they say they have studied Te-shan and Lin-chi; presenting circular symbols to each other, they claim they have deeply understood Kuei-shan and Yang-shan.

(Ten Guidelines for Zen Schools, in Five Houses of Zen, tr T. Cleary)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2016 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

"It is not only the people who live during the Buddha's lifetime who obtain great benefits. In the last five-hundred-year period, the sublime way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."

-Zhiyi

In these passages, Lotus Sutra = Ekayana = true teaching = sublime way.

Astus wrote:

I guess you are aware that a good number of sutras talk about the "later ages", and elevate themselves in making statements about themselves, just like in the Lotus Sutra.

"But if there is someone five hundred years hence who is able to hear this scripture, and believe, understand, and commit it to memory, then this person will be most rare."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 14)

There are even texts discussing the end times: <http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra10.html>.

But although all the sutras will disappear, the <http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra25.html> will remain for another hundred years:

"In times to come, the Dharma will be annihilated. Out of lovingkindness and compassion, I will specially save this sūtra and make it stay for a hundred years more. Sentient beings that encounter this sūtra will all be delivered as they wish."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 24th, 2016 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

I'd caution, though, that in the Lotus Schools the Lotus Sutra is not just a book but the awakening of Buddhas itself; the Buddha's own wisdom and action.

Astus wrote:

The same applies to some other sutras as well. Also, I think the Lotus Sutra itself is somewhat explicit on how "Lotus Sutra" means enlightenment.

"Subhūti, all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 8)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

But, those quote only confirm the general tendency of decline through the Former and Middle Days...

Astus wrote:

Then see how even Mahakashyapa complained about monks at the time of the Buddha:

"What is the cause, lord, what is the reason, why before there were fewer training rules and yet more monks established in final gnosis, whereas now there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis?"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn16/sn16.013.than.html>)

A study on the early scriptures' words on the decline of Dharma:

<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/1.10-Dharma-ending-age-piya-into.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

What is the teaching that is efficacious in the Degenerate Age...?

Astus wrote:

That is a question used only as a preamble before introducing one's own ideas of the "only true path".

Queequeg said:

By definition, all provisional teachings are not efficacious.

Astus wrote:

All teachings show the same and single idea of how the ending of attachment is liberation from suffering and delusion. As I see it, that's what the one vehicle really means.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

No, that's actually a question. Personally, I'm not even sure there is a viable question there.

Astus wrote:

Then isn't the question simply what a viable path is?

Queequeg said:

Your stab at "one true path"?

Astus wrote:
Exactly.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at 6:56 AM
Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age
Content:
Queequeg said:
That is indeed the only viable question...

Astus wrote:
And how can it be answered? People stick to any path that fits their conditioning, and it has nothing to do with the usual claims of efficacy, velocity, and superiority.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at 5:24 PM
Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age
Content:
Queequeg said:
That is indeed the only viable question...

Astus wrote:
If popularity is an acceptable measure, then faith based methods are the best, primarily faith in Amitabha and Sukhavati. Related to that are the ritual practices and chanting, where many people can participate. Studying the scriptures is probably the second most popular option, considering the many Buddhist education institutions. Third on the list might be the reclusive lifestyle with an emphasis on meditation.

As for a path that actually works, I think it's always been the same: discipline, concentration, insight.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2016 at 12:14 AM
Title: Re: Illusion
Content:
pothigai said:
If all phenomena are illusions, then what would real phenomena be?

Astus wrote:
There are a few steps to take before one can see the useful meaning of illusion in the Buddhist context.

1. One has an emotional bond with an object when it is viewed in a personal sense. That

is, the difference between "a table" and "my table". It doesn't upset one if "a table" is repainted, carried away, or destroyed. It does upset one if that's "my table". Therefore, the first meaning of emptiness is the lack of self, lack of personal essence.

2. One can have a personal connection with an object only if there is actually an object to relate to. What is called an object, however, is simply a name, a concept, and not any actual physical or mental experience. So, there is a difference between seeing colours and forms, and the name "table".

3. Because there is no personal relation and nothing to relate to, the common view that there is such a thing as "my table" is an illusion.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2016 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Iconodule said:

Right, but how do their Zen, Tendai, etc. neighbors look at them? As eccentric cousins? As deluded weirdos? And for those Mahayana who incorporate some tantric practices, like Tendai, but aren't full-blown Vajrayana, do they see these practices as superior to sutra and, if not, what purpose do they see them as serving?

Astus wrote:

Tendai takes the secret doctrines (mikkyo) on the same level as the Lotus Sutra teachings. They are equal. But we have some members of the Tendai school who know a lot more than me to elaborate on this.

As for the others, as far as I am aware, they see Vajrayana as a less efficient teaching, just like Vajrayana sees all the others. It is only because people are often not familiar with the other teachings that they assume the doxography presented by Vajrayana is the sole truth there is. Perhaps it is not that big a surprise to say that the only people who agree with what Vajrayana presents as valid are the Vajrayana followers themselves.

Dogen has the question about Shingon raised and answered in the Bendowa. The first sentence of his reply is:

"Remember, among Buddhists we do not argue about superiority and inferiority of philosophies, or choose between shallowness and profundity in the Dharma; we need only know whether the practice is genuine or artificial."
(SBGZ, vol 1, BDK Edition, p 9)

And his closing sentences (p 10-11) in the answer:

"From these intellectual ideas emerge all sorts of flowers in space: we think about the twelvefold cycle and the twenty-five spheres of existence; and ideas of the three vehicles and the five vehicles or of having buddha[-nature] and not having buddha[-

nature] are endless. We should not think that the learning of these intellectual ideas is the right path of Buddhist practice. When we solely sit in zazen, on the other hand, relying now on exactly the same posture as the Buddha, and letting go of the myriad things, then we go beyond the areas of delusion, realization, emotion, and consideration, and we are not concerned with the ways of the common and the sacred. At once we are roaming outside the [intellectual] frame, receiving and using the great state of bodhi. How could those caught in the trap of words compare [with this]?"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2016 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

What do you find shocking about that remark?

Astus wrote:

He has already said the same thing

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=339855#p339855>:

Malcolm said:

They reject them. What else can they do? If they accept them, they have to sign on.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2016 at 10:25 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Queequeg said:

Is there an uncommon Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

That's another term for Vajrayana in TB.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2016 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: What is Sutra Mahamudra?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

Is Sutra Mahamudra something that would be viable in this situation? Even if it's not completely compatible, is it possible to engage in at all, even if it cannot be taken to the complete end result of Mahamudra? And if so, do you have any recommendations on which particular teachers would be best suited for such a presentation of Sutra Mahamudra?

Astus wrote:

The late John Crook taught not only Chan but also Mahamudra at Western Chan Fellowship. Anzan Hoshin of the White Wind Zen community has also been involved in Mahamudra teachings, and made some translations as well. On the other hand, Ken McLeod has included Zen in his Mahamudra teachings. So, I would say there is a possible connection, if one wants to make it.

If your friend just wants to learn the methods for samatha and vipasyana, he can do that from numerous sources, like <http://mahamudracenter.org/>. There are also live teachings around, if he wants that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2016 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

maybay said:

Yes I do. Not as a requirement for attainment though, but as a criteria for engagement. If you fail in your practice of Dzogchen, nothing is lost. If you fail as a renunciate, you will either die or end up living a truly wretched existence. Bravery is a question of what risks you are willing to take.

Astus wrote:

Good point. That is another reason for recommending the Pure Land path over the path of sages (i.e. aryas). All who have faith in Amitabha and vows to be born there, will be born there. And once in Sukhavati, no more problems, and buddhahood is guaranteed.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2016 at 9:28 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, there are problems in the pure land, such as being born inside a lotus and stuck there for 18,000,000 human years.

Astus wrote:

That can happen only if one has some doubts about the Pure Land path. Besides that lotus is not itself a painful place, if somebody realises one's faults there, one can come out immediately.

That is, even if one has some doubts, one can attain birth. Not to mention those who commit all sorts of evil deeds and are totally lost in delusions.

Malcolm said:

Well, what about those who have committed the five actions which result in immediate rebirth in lower realms? They are excluded.

Astus wrote:

Actually, they are not. It states in the Contemplation Sutra that even those who commit the five worst actions can attain birth by remembering Amitabha. May read more on it from Shinran <http://shinranworks.com/the-major-expositions/chapter-on-shinjin/>.

Malcolm said:

Yes, after incalculable eons, the same as any other sūtra based path.

Astus wrote:

If you think there is a shorter path, then it is available in Sukhavati, simply because all beings there are free to visit any number of buddhas, not to mention Amitabha himself, and the present bodhisattvas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 27th, 2016 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is not certain. Why? There are four causes required for birth in Sukhavati: the aspiration to do so, recollection of Amitabha, accumulation of virtue and dedication of merit. All four are required, as dictated by the 19th aspiration.

Astus wrote:

The minimal requirements are faith and vow. Beyond that everything else are commendable but not necessary. On this both the Chinese and Japanese masters agree.

Malcolm said:

All of these things depend on faith in something that may or may not happen after one dies.

Astus wrote:

Same goes for rebirth in general. Not to mention all the invisible forces at play in Vajrayana, like the whole role of a guru and empowerments.

Malcolm said:

Merely crying out to Amitabha like a lost child searching for its mother is not sufficient.

Astus wrote:

Mahasthamaprapta used this comparison (Surangama Sutra, tr new BTTS, p 230, 232-233):

"Consider someone who is always thinking of another person. This second person, though, has completely forgotten about the first person. Even if these two people were to meet, they might as well not have met, and even if they were to catch sight of one another, they might as well not have seen each other. But consider two other people

who always have each other in mind so much so that they will be, in lifetime after lifetime, as inseparable as a man and his shadow. Similarly, the Thus- Come Ones in all ten directions think of all beings with compassion, just as a mother always thinks of her child. If the child were to run away from home, the mother's thinking of him will be of no use. But if the child is mindful of the mother, just as she is of him, the two will be inseparable in lifetime after lifetime. In the same way, beings who are always mindful of the Buddha, always thinking of the Buddha, are certain to see the Buddha now or in the future. They will never be far from Buddhas, and their minds will awaken by themselves without any special effort. Such people may be said to be adorned with fragrance and light, just as people who have been in the presence of incense will naturally smell sweet. The basis of my practice was mindfulness of the Buddha. I became patient with the state of mind in which no mental objects arise. Now when people of this world are mindful of the Buddha, I act as their guide to lead them to the Pure Land. The Buddha has asked us how we broke through to enlightenment. In order to enter samādhi, I chose no other method than to gather in the six faculties while continuously maintaining a pure mindfulness of the Buddha. This is the best method."

Malcolm said:

This is not certain.

Astus wrote:

As much as the sutras are certain, so it is this certain.

Malcolm said:

This is also not certain.

Astus wrote:

Why wouldn't it be? That's what the Buddha says in the sutra, it's a feature of Sukhavati. There are even vows for those (7, 9, 23).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 12:32 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are no invisible forces at play in Vajrayāna — if you think so, you have not understood anything.

Astus wrote:

That's good. Then empowerments work from a record as well as through live broadcast.

Malcolm said:

Crying out to Amitabha like a lost child can hardly be described as pratyahara and Buddhānusmṛti.

Astus wrote:

A child, when crying out, knows that there is the mother who can help. Similarly, one has faith in Amitabha to come and help.

Malcolm said:

It is not really certain at all.

Astus wrote:

Then there are no certain teachings, Pure Land or not.

Malcolm said:

These are not guarantees that these buddhas teach the short and quick path. These are listed as opportunities for gathering merit and hearing the teachings. Nothing about what teachings may be heard are mentioned.

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't a buddha teach the most beneficial and efficient method? And even if someone's karma requires the long road, that is the same situation in this life.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

They have to given in person, otherwise, there is no transmission.

Astus wrote:

What is transmitted from teacher to disciple?

Malcolm said:

They hope there is a mother, but their desperation is driven by the fact that they are not sure. It is the same with Pure Land Buddhism. They may have convinced themselves, but in reality, they will never be sure until they find themselves in Sukhavati.

Astus wrote:

If what you mean by uncertainty is that one can never know for sure whether there is a slice of cheese left in the fridge as long as one doesn't go there and opens the door, then I think it's a level of unconfirmed hope we all have to live with every day.

Malcolm said:

Direct perception is always certain. This is the difference between lower and higher vehicles in general.

Astus wrote:

How is direct perception certain? We all see that the sun goes up and down. Does the sun actually go up and down? Or do you mean that first hand experience of the validity of the teachings is better than only believing in it based on a level of theoretical

confirmation? If so, then I see no difference between the vehicles, they all point to seeing the truth for oneself. At the same time, isn't it the case that in the nine vehicles scheme all that the lower vehicles assume to be direct realisations are actually false? That is, it just shows how direct perception is uncertain.

Malcolm said:

There is no suffering in Sukhavati, so rapid means are not needed there. It is similar with our situation, the more pain-free the eon in which we live, the lower the teachings are available to us. Since there is no pain at all in Sukhavati, the path taught there is the longest one.

Astus wrote:

What do you base that idea on? Bodhisattvas are not in a hurry because they feel uncomfortable, but to liberate all the others.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

the path is transmitted to the student if they fail to achieve buddhahood during the empowerment

Astus wrote:

What sort of thing is the path to be given to another? Or, asking in another way, what is the medium between teacher and student?

Malcolm said:

That depends on what teachings you practice, and whether they are based on mind or pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Wisdom first needs to be attained - hence the movement from ignorance to knowledge. Then, with that knowledge, that wisdom or pristine consciousness, one can progress on. That's what happens in all paths, where one goes from ordinary being to a noble one, and from noble practitioner to a non-practitioner. Unless it is the sudden enlightenment version, where with one step one goes from ordinary to buddha.

Malcolm said:

They all use the same rhetoric, "ehi, paśya," come and see. But in reality, the eight lower vehicles are based on intellectual theories, not pristine consciousness.

Astus wrote:

We could say even of the 9th vehicle that it is very much loaded with theories. Does that make it then intellectual? It certainly doesn't look as simple and free from theoretical matters as Pure Land and Zen.

As Honen wrote in his <http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>:

"Even if those who believe in the nembutsu study the teaching which Shakyamuni taught his whole life, they should not put on any airs and should sincerely practice the nembutsu, just as an illiterate fool, a nun or one who is ignorant of Buddhism."

Malcolm said:

The Vajrayāna is available to us in this epoch because it is the worst possible epoch in which liberation through Dharma is possible. Even Mahāyāna teachings are not always available. For example, Maitreya will not teach Vajrayāna.

Astus wrote:

Don't buddhas know all the teachings of all the vehicles? If they do, one can learn them just by asking for them.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Obstacles and their elimination - The Degenerate Age

Content:

Malcolm said:

And then there is the third option. Pristine consciousness is innate. The stage of liberation is first. Vajrasattva lost his jewel, and needed to find it again.

Astus wrote:

It makes no difference if it's innate or not. As long as Vajrasattva does not know the actual place of his jewels, he's an ordinary being. Once he knows it, he's a noble one. Same story.

Malcolm said:

Buddhas don't proffer teachings like merchants displaying wares in the market. They teach according to circumstances. Since Sukhavati is so nice, easy and blissful, there is no reason at all to teach a swift path at all.

Astus wrote:

Circumstances? They teach according to the inclinations of the disciples. And again, beings in Sukhavati are not bound to that single buddha-land.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 7:23 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism

Content:

Iconodule said:

Here's something I wondered- how pronounced is Tiantai as a specific school in

Chinese Buddhism today? Are there actually teachers/ monasteries explicitly advocating the Tiantai approach?

Astus wrote:

It seems to me that the answer lies in Chinese...

There are two outstanding Tiantai teachers (teacher and disciple) mentioned in English:

Dixian Guxu 諦閑古虛 (1858-1932)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tan_Xu 倣虛 (1875-1963), there's also a book on his life

https://books.google.hu/books?id=z_wTDAAAQBAJ

It should also be noted that anyone can study and practice any school of Buddhism within a monastery, so there is no need for organisations like Fo Guan Shan or Dharma Drum Mountain to call themselves Tiantai, or anything in particular for that matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 7:24 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism

Content:

Iconodule said:

Now that I think about, I remember Ven Hsing Yun's book Only a Great Rain had some Tiantai methods in it. Not so much teaching Tiantai as a school but taking it for granted as part of Chinese Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. If you look into Shengyan's Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, you will find Tiantai teachings there as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 28th, 2016 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism

Content:

Iconodule said:

Tiantai methods

Astus wrote:

Tiantai teachings

Queequeg said:

I'm curious what these terms refer to...

Astus wrote:

As an example, Shengyan uses the five identities to explain the stages of enlightenment in relation to buddha-nature and sudden awakening. Thich Thanh Tu in Keys to

Buddhism gives the six stages of breath meditation as the gradual method. Ting Chen in *The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice* describes the six gates with breath meditation and outlines the basics of Mohezhiguan. Does that make them Tiantai teachers?

Dongyang Dehui's collection of Pure Rules (BDK edition: Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations) contains a manual for zazen (p 255-257), and there it is recommended, besides the Surangama Sutra and Zongmi's 18 volume Manual of Procedures for the Cultivation and Realization of Ritual Practice according to the Scripture of Perfect Enlightenment (<http://www.cbeta.org/result/X74/X74n1475.htm>), it is Zhiyi's zhiguan manual. So, from this we can see as well that there are no strict boundaries and no strong sectarian identities in Chinese Buddhism usually.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 29th, 2016 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Result of Karma

Content:

Norden said:

This is what I don't understand. Killing will result in short life, stealing will result in poverty. So how is that impossible to know the precise result of karma? Is it possible for a murderer experience poverty as the result of his killing? Again, if it's not possible, then why it's said the result of karma is imponderable?

Astus wrote:

Killing happens out of anger and fear, the act strengthens those feelings and harming as a solution to get rid of those feelings. Because aggression becomes the basic approach to problems in life, life itself turns to look like a fighting pit for the person. Similarly with other actions, that through influencing the thinking influence the view and experience of life. However, there are numerous other factors in the mind that modify the perception of acts and experiences. Just like one event means many things for many people, and they all react in their own ways. That's how on the one hand there are clear consequences, and on the other it is too complicated to calculate. And there is one more very important factor, the possibility to make decisions in the present, to change one's mind, and that opens the possibility for liberation, like in the story of Angulimala.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2016 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

8

Queequeg said:

The Tiantai schools definitely had a self conscious identity, and I think the same can be said of Huayan. IIRC, in the Tang and Sung, sectarian identities were common - this is the Buddhism that was transmitted to Japan and is the reason Japanese Buddhism is characterized by sectarianism (though modern ideas of sectarianism are very different

that what they had through the medieval period.)

Astus wrote:

I think it's difficult to do justice to how Buddhism functioned in China, because in Buddhist studies the Japanese model of distinct schools has a strong influence. For instance, neither a Huayan, nor a Pure Land school existed in China. Even talking about a Chan school before the Song is complicated. As for Tiantai, I have not really looked into its history.

Queequeg said:

My point stands - if there is a Tiantai school in China now, it's a revival, not a continuous lineage. To my knowledge there is no line of abbots at Mt. Tiantai claiming a continuous lineage back to Zhiyi.

Astus wrote:

I could find you two monks connected with a living Tiantai lineage. There could be more of course, but there's practically nothing in English.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sik_Kok_Kwong (1919–2014)

Mingzhe <http://www.nanshanchansi.com/?q=mingzhe> (1925-2012), 45th patriarch, a disciple and heir of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tan_Xu (source http://www.guanhaisi.com/index.php/Fmcc/cc_tt, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b9fb39c0101ef88.html).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2016 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: The real meaning of Madhyamaka and Yogacara

Content:

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka is the study of the objective state of reality.

Yogacara is the study of the subjective process of awakening.

When understood in this way, they are non-contradictory and harmonious.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like the reverse form of how they are used together, where mind only refutes external realities, and emptiness refutes the reality of mind.

At the same time, it is a fairly reductionist approach, as if the two systems were lacking in teachings for the whole path. I assume you propose this harmonisation of them with "study" standing for purely intellectual effort.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2016 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism

Content:

Queequeg said:

Though you realize that by pointing out a continuous lineage, you're kind of bearing out that at least Tiantai school has a self conscious identity... which is at least one exception to the rule you seem to be overstating.

Astus wrote:

Tiantai came up with the lineage idea even before Chan, so I would not say that it lacks a sense of identity. However, the extent and meaning of that identity is another matter. For instance, my source 1 for Mingzhe is a lineage of the current abbot of Guanhaisi (a temple in Dalian). However, abbot Yihui is not only the 46th ancestor of Tiantai, but also the 46th of Linji and the 49th of Caodong. And as for what sort of instructions he gives to people is another matter. Just consider how Ven. Xingyun is a member of the Linji lineage, but Foguangshan is primarily a school of Humanistic Buddhism, and as such they include all 8 schools of Chinese Buddhism.

Queequeg said:

But to suggest that Chinese Buddhism is and always has been an ecumenical melange within a common monastic system is also not true.

Astus wrote:

That's not exactly what I meant. Certainly, individual monks and certain groups formed a type of affiliation with specific teachings and practices, and from that emerged an identity. However, the monastic system is bigger than a few literati monastics arguing about abstract ideas. Before the establishment of the public monastery system in the Song dynasty, inheritance was a matter of tonsure lineage, not association with any school. And when the public monasteries were fixed to lineages (Chan, Jiao (teaching), Lu (Vinaya)), it also meant stronger state control, and the fight for sponsorship, hence the sectarian outlook. (source: How Zen Became Zen, p 37-40) However, I don't see how that would account for what appeared in Japan, since the Tendai and Shingon schools were set up before that, and then there was the appearance of independent Pure Land schools, something unique to Japan, and not an influence from China. Rather, it seems to me that the Japanese state exerted a stronger control over Buddhism than the Chinese central administration; but it could be something else as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2016 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: "The Flat Truth" by Chogyam Trungpa

Content:

tomschwarz said:

"If you personally want to understand and realize the teachings, you will have no understanding at all if you don't sit and practice meditation.

Astus wrote:

What meditation? One can sit for a hundred years and not understand a thing. Even dying while seated is pointless. To see the truth of the Dharma takes only a single moment of insight of the nature of one's present experience.

Here are some illustrations:

O Śāriputra, you need not take this sitting [in meditation] to be sitting in repose. Sitting in repose is to not manifest body and mind in the triple world—this is sitting in repose. To generate the concentration of extinction while manifesting the departments—this is sitting in repose. Not to relinquish the Dharma of enlightenment and yet manifest the affairs of [ordinary] sentient beings—this is sitting in repose. To have the mind neither abide internally nor locate itself externally—this is sitting in repose. To be unmoved by the [sixty-two mistaken] views yet cultivate the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment—this is sitting in repose. Not to eradicate the afflictions yet enter into nirvana—this is sitting in repose.

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 3, BDK Edition, p 85)

When that buddha was seated on the terrace of enlightenment after having defeated Māra's army, he tried to obtain highest, complete enlightenment, yet the Dharma of the buddhas did not appear to him. In this way, even after having sat cross-legged for one to ten intermediate kalpas, undisturbed in body and mind, the Dharma of the buddhas still did not appear to him.

(Lotus Sutra, ch 7, BDK Edition, p 114-115)

A monk asked Koyo Seijo, "Daitsu Chisho Buddha sat in zazen for ten kalpas and could not attain Buddhahood. He did not become a Buddha. How could this be?"

Seijo said, "Your question is quite self-explanatory."

The monk asked, "He meditated so long; why could he not attain Buddhahood?"

Seijo said, "Because he did not become a Buddha."

(http://www.zenguide.com/zenmedia/books/content.cfm?t=the_gateless_gate&chapter=09)

During the Kai Yuan era of the Tang dynasty [713–41] there was a novice monk called Mazu Daoyi who constantly practiced Zen meditation upon Mt. Heng. Nanyue knew that Daoyi was a great vessel for the Dharma, and once walked up to him and said, "What does Your Worthiness intend to do by sitting in meditation?"

Mazu said, "I intend to become a buddha."

Nanyue then picked up a piece of tile from the ground and began grinding it on a rock.

Daoyi then asked, "What are you trying to make by grinding that?"

Nanyue said, "I'm grinding it to make a mirror."

Daoyi said, "How can you make a mirror by grinding a tile on a rock?"

Nanyue said, "If you can't make a mirror by grinding a tile on a rock, how can you become a buddha by sitting in meditation?"

Daoyi said, "What is the correct way?"

Nanyue said, "It can be compared to an ox pulling a cart. If the cart doesn't move, do you strike the cart or strike the ox?"

Daoyi didn't answer.

Nanyue then said, "Are you sitting in order to practice Zen, or are you sitting to be a buddha? If you're sitting to practice Zen, then know that Zen is not found in sitting or lying down. If you're sitting to become a buddha, then know that Buddha has no fixed

form. With respect to the constantly changing world, you should neither grasp it nor reject it. If you sit to become a buddha, you kill Buddha. If you grasp sitting form then you have not yet reached the meaning.”

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 54)

Jiufeng served as Shishuang's attendant. When Shishuang passed away, the congregation invited the head monk to become abbot.

Jiufeng said to the congregation, “First, he must show that he understood our late master's great meaning, then he can become abbot.”

The head monk said, “What teaching do you mean?”

Jiufeng said, “Our late teacher said, ‘Desist! Become barren autumn ground! Have one thought for ten thousand years. Be a cold dead tree. Be an ancient incense dish. Be a blank strip of white silk.’ Not asking about the rest, what is a ‘strip of white silk’?”

The head monk said, “This teaching illuminates a matter of form.”

Jiufeng said, “Fundamentally, you don't comprehend our late teacher's meaning.”

The monk said, “You don't approve of my answer? Then light a stick of incense, and if I don't go before it is burned up, then you can say I don't understand our late master's meaning.”

A stick of incense was then lit, but before it burned down, the head monk died.

Shishuang patted the head monk's body on the back and said, “Dying while sitting or passing away while standing isn't it. You didn't see our late master's meaning even in your dreams.”

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 258-259)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 8th, 2016 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: how do I know if I am progressing in Buddhism?

Content:

ShineeSeoul said:

I am trying to practice Buddhsim, but I have feeling like what I am doing is useless?

Astus wrote:

Progress can be measured in several ways. One direct method is to see if you have more peace, compassion, and mindfulness in your daily life. There are also the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhipakkhiy%C4%81dhamm%C4%81>

that you should look out for in cultivating. On the bodhisattva path there are also the six paramitas as both practices and qualities to cultivate, and there are the

<http://sgforums.com/forums/1728/topics/158325> as a description of the path (on that you can find more in English in the introduction of Buswell's Tracing Back the Radiance), but using the <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/stages-and-path> is also fine and there are more translations available in English.

ShineeSeoul said:

I am trying to Chant Buddhas name everyday, and bow 3 time.....what else I am supposed to do? is this enough?

Astus wrote:

What is your goal? There are various extensive meditation manuals out there that you can use even on your own, like http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/anapanasati.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 9th, 2016 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: Essence of Chan

Content:

Alex123 said:

What is the exact difference between abiding in a certain state, vs not abiding in that state?

Astus wrote:

Whether one adds the idea that makes a state one's identity, considering it an actual state, existence, being; or not.

Good friends, one's enlightenment (one's Way, dao) must flow freely. How could it be stagnated? When the mind does not reside in the dharmas, one's enlightenment flows freely. For the mind to reside in the dharmas is called 'fettering oneself.' If you say that always sitting without moving is it, then you're just like Śāriputra meditating in the forest, for which he was scolded by Vimalakīrti!

...

Nonabiding is to consider in one's fundamental nature that all worldly [things] are empty, with no consideration of retaliation—whether good or evil, pleasant or ugly, and enemy or friend, etc., during times of words, fights, and disputation.

Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK Edition, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2016 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Mahayana view is that afflictions are enlightenment, simply as they are: empty, ungraspable, and inconceivable.

Affliction, action, the body,
The agent, and the result
Are all like a city of scent-eaters,
Like an illusion, and like a dream.
(MMK 17.33)

Chapter 23 of MMK deals with afflictions in depth. Translation is from "Ornament of Reason" (v 1-4, 21-25).

It is taught that desire, anger, and stupor
Originate in dependence on thought.
Their arising depends
On the attractive, unattractive, and mistaken.
That which originates in dependence
On the attractive, unattractive, and mistaken
Cannot be due to its own nature.
Hence, the afflictions are not real.
The existence or nonexistence of the self
Is not established in any way.
How can the existence or nonexistence
Of the afflictions be established without it?
The one to which the afflictions belong
Is not in any way established.
When they do not pertain to anything at all,
The afflictions cannot exist in any way either.

...

If there is a self, something clean,
Something permanent, and something delightful,
The apprehending of self, clean, permanent, and delightful
Are not mistakes.
If there is no self, nothing clean,
Nothing permanent, and nothing delightful,
There cannot be any absence of self, anything unclean,
impermanent, and painful.
As error in this way ceases,
Ignorance comes to an end.
As ignorance ceases,
Formations and so forth end.
If someone's afflictions
Are existent by nature,
How can they be eliminated?
Who can eliminate the existent?
If someone's afflictions
Are nonexistent by nature,
How can they be eliminated?
Who can eliminate the nonexistent?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2016 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your citations from the MMK don't say that. They merely state that afflictions are not ultimately real.

Astus wrote:

I cited the MMK only to give something from Nagarjuna related to the topic. But practically the quote backs up with reasoning what the sutras say on the matter, since once the afflictions are seen to be without substance, there is nothing to do about them and they are equal to enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 10th, 2016 at 11:43 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Lame, Astus. Everything is without substance, that does not mean that everything is awakened.

Astus wrote:

Seeing them to be insubstantial is awakening, and recognising all phenomena to be equal (samsara=nirvana).

Malcolm said:

You need a quote.

Astus wrote:

I'm sure you know a few yourself.

"For what is isolated cannot be defiled and purified, what is empty cannot be defiled or purified, and what is isolated and empty cannot know full enlightenment. Nor can one get at any dharma outside emptiness which has known full enlightenment, which will know it, or which does know it."

(PP8000 22.2)

"Conditioned generation is the place of enlightenment, because ignorance and so forth through old age and death, are all unexhausted. The afflictions are bodhi, because of understanding according to actuality.

Sentient beings are the place of enlightenment, because of understanding no-self.

All dharmas are the place of enlightenment, because of understanding the emptiness of the dharmas."

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 4, BDK p 100)

"Good sons, all hindrances are none other than ultimate enlightenment. Whether you attain mindfulness or lose mindfulness, there is no non-liberation. Establishing the

Dharma and refuting the Dharma are both called nirvana; wisdom and folly are equally prajna; the method that is perfected by bodhisattvas and false teachers is the same bodhi; ignorance and suchness are not different realms; morality, concentration and wisdom, as well as desire, hatred and ignorance are all divine practices; sentient beings and lands share the same dharma nature; hell and heaven are both the Pure Land; those having Buddha-nature and those not having it equally accomplish the Buddha's enlightenment. All defilements are ultimately liberation. The reality-realms's ocean-like wisdom completely illumines all marks to be just like empty space. This is called 'the Tathāgata's accordance with the nature of enlightenment.'

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html, ch 6)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 12:34 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I see phenomena as insubstantial. Am I awakened? (Answer: no) I recognize all phenomena as equal. Am I awakened? (Answer: no) So there must be something else you are leaving out.

Astus wrote:

What would that be?

"The mark of self is no mark. The mark of others, the mark of living beings, and the mark of a life are no marks. And why? Those who have relinquished all marks are called Buddhas."

(http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/sutra_comm/diamond/diamond_02.htm#d14)

Malcolm said:

All these say that from the point of ultimate truth. But not from the point of view of relative truth. You must distinguish the two truths.

Astus wrote:

They talk about what should be clear, that the conventional reality is just conventional, and that is all the ultimate there is.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I also know there are no characteristics. So you are still leaving something out.

Astus wrote:

If it's not the difference between thinking and doing, then please tell what you mean.

Malcolm said:

That's why people think Chan is nihilistic.

Astus wrote:

It is quite the opposite, very much life affirming and down to earth. The only true Chan practices are eat, shit, sleep.

Wasn't it just recently that in some thread you were emphasising how everything is illusion? I mean, that must sound nihilistic as well then.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

How does one relinquish marks that do not exist? And if it is the case that one must relinquish marks, is it not also the case that one must relinquish the afflictions that cause clinging to marks?

Astus wrote:

The part I quoted from PP8000 (22.2) asks the same question and answers in the following way:

"To the extent that beings take hold of things and settle down in them, to that extent is there defilement. But no one is thereby defiled. And to the extent that one does not take hold of things and does not settle down in them, to that extent can one conceive of the absence of I-making and mine-making. In that sense can one form the concept of the purification of being, i.e. to the extent that they do not take hold of things and do not settle down in them, to that extent there is purification. But no one is therein purified. When a Bodhisattva courses thus, he courses in perfect wisdom. It is in this sense that one can form the concept of the defilement and purification of beings in spite of the fact that all dharmas are isolated and empty."

Also from the <http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>
(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T08n0232_001#0727c11):

The Buddha asked, "What is called true reality?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "The view that one has a self is true reality."

The Buddha asked, "Why is the view that one has a self true reality?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "Taking this view as an appearance of true suchness, which is neither real nor unreal, neither coming nor going, with neither a self nor no self, is called true reality."

Malcolm said:
Then everyone is a great master of Chan.

Astus wrote:
All beings have the buddha-nature. But, as <http://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>:

"While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

Malcolm said:
The ultimate is just a pure absence. How can that be all the conventional is?

Astus wrote:
The conventional is just the conventional. Its substance is absent.

In Linji's words (tr Sasaki, p 19):

"All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong!"

And in <http://sutasmantras.info/sutra13.html>:

"Just as self is only a name, so too Buddha is only a name. Realizing the emptiness of a name is bodhi. One should seek bodhi without using names. The appearance of bodhi is free from words. Why? Because words and bodhi are both empty."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

How do you even attain first bhumi, and the ability to emanate 100 emanations, in Chan?

Astus wrote:
As long as one grasps at words and ideas like bhumis and emanations, one is far from being an ordinary person with nothing to do.

You say, 'The six pāramitās and the ten thousand [virtuous] actions are all to be practiced.' As I see it, all this is just making karma. Seeking buddha and seeking dharma are only making hell-karma. Seeking bodhisattvahood is also making karma; reading the sutras and studying the teachings are also making karma. Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do. Therefore, [for them] activity and the defiling passions and

also nonactivity and passionlessness are 'pure' karma.
(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 17)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 7:22 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

I am not grasping at emanations. 100 emanations is a hallmark of the first bhumi.

Astus wrote:

The Ten Stages chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra says about those who attained the first stage:

"Having gone forth, enlightening beings instantly attain a hundred concentrations and see a hundred buddhas and acknowledge their power; they stir a hundred worlds, go to a hundred lands, illumine a hundred worlds, mature a hundred beings, live for a hundred eons, penetrate a hundred eons past and future, contemplate a hundred teachings, and manifest a hundred bodies, each body manifesting a company of a hundred enlightening beings."

(tr Cleary, p 710-711 / http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T10n0279_034#0183b29)

Then on the next stage it's a thousand, then hundred thousand, then a billion, then a trillion, etc. There are a number of ways to interpret those lines. What is your version?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 7:11 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

Each bhumi has certain hallmarks. On 8th Bhumi you can directly see sambhogakaya Buddhas and have power over birth and death.

Astus wrote:

What is the practical role or value of that information?

- Someone practices buddha contemplation, like as it's taught in the Pratyutpanna-samadhi Sutra, one qualifies as being on the 8th stage. But what is that idea even good for to think that "I am 8th stage"? Fairly meaningless and shows lack of confidence. So, it cannot be it.
- It allows scholars to assign numbers to various bodhisattvas in scriptures. That's a cynical view.
- It serves as an excuse for people to consider the bodhisattvayana too difficult and impractical. But that cannot be the original purpose.
- The stages are a convenient schematic way to use in describing the path, and that is

how they were actually applied, similar to the noble eightfold path.

As for the "magical powers" of the bodhisattvas on the stages, where they are said to be able to manifest hundred bodies, etc., those are to indicate meditative power and experiences, thus the sutra says that they are attained in a single thought by those who have gone forth, i.e. left home as monastics. As Vasubandhu explains in the Shastra on Dasabhumika Sutra (http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T26n1522_003#0144c19): "Then the bodhisattva leaves home and meditates with surpassing karma. Surpassing karma is two sorts. One is surpassing samadhi: so called because attains samadhi easily, so in a single thought attains a hundred samadhis. The second sort is surpassing act in samadhi: (seeing hundred buddhas and their lands, etc.)"

To that it should be also kept in mind that seeing a single buddha is equal to seeing all the buddhas, and all visions of buddhas are mind made.

"If they can continue, thought after thought, thinking of one Buddha, they will be able to see, in their thinking, past, future, and present Buddhas. Why? Because the merit acquired from thinking of one Buddha is immeasurable and boundless, no different from the merit acquired from thinking of innumerable Buddhas or thinking of the inconceivable Buddha Dharma."

(<http://sutrasmanttras.info/sutra13.html>)

"If one wishes to see the Buddha then one sees him. If one sees him then one asks questions. If one asks then one is answered, one hears the sutras and rejoices greatly. One reflects thus: 'Where did the Buddha come from? Where did I go to?' and one thinks to oneself: 'The Buddha came from nowhere, and I also went nowhere.' One thinks to oneself: The Three Realms—the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Realm of the Formless—these Three Realms are simply made by thought. Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathagata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha."

(Pratyutpanna-samadhi Sutra, ch 2, BDK p 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is prescriptive and not descriptive.

Astus wrote:

Marks/characteristics are concepts. As long as one believes those concepts to be substantial, there is clinging. Once they are seen as merely conceptual, there is nothing left to grasp.

Malcolm said:

This is is not an answer.

Astus wrote:

It answers it by showing how while we all have the qualities of a buddha, it doesn't mean we realise and manifest them.

Malcolm said:

But why?

Astus wrote:

As Huangbo puts it (Zen Texts, p 13):

"It is only this One Mind that is Buddha; there is no distinction between Buddhas and sentient beings. However, sentient beings are attached to characteristics and seek outside themselves. Seeking it, they lose it even more. Seeking the Buddha in search of the Buddha, grasping the mind with the mind, they may exhaust themselves in striving for an entire eon but will never get it. They do not understand that if they cease their thoughts and end their thinking, the Buddha will automatically be present."

Malcolm said:

So there is something other than the ultimate?

Astus wrote:

The ultimate is seeing the conventional as conventional.

Malcolm said:

So there are names? Or not.

Astus wrote:

We use words (i.e. names) here all the time, don't we?

Malcolm said:

So your basic conclusion is that there is no awakening, and therefore, the whole thing is a farce.

Astus wrote:

There is ignorance about and awakening to phenomena as inessential.

"when the sky-flowers disappear from the sky, you cannot say that there is a definite point of their disappearance. Why? Because there is no point from which they arose. All sentient beings falsely perceive arising and ceasing within the unarisen."

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html#div-1

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 11th, 2016 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Many people continue to grasp even though they know characteristics are concepts. So, there is still something missing. Your presentation is completely intellectual.

Astus wrote:

Grasping is always at characteristics. If one does not conceive characteristics, how can there be grasping? What many people may know and still continue to grasp at objects are words, that is, grasping at characteristics, imagining that emptiness is another thing.

Enlightenment is naturally true and is fundamentally without names. It is only that people of the world do not recognize it and remain deluded within their ratiocination. The Buddhas then appear [in the world] to destroy their misconceptions. I am afraid that you people do not comprehend but provisionally establish the name "enlightenment." You must not generate interpretations so as to maintain this name. Therefore it is said, "attain the fish and forget the trap."
(Huangbo, in Zen Texts, p 32)

Malcolm said:

So how do you do that (realize and manifest them)?

So what is the different between a buddha and the unconscious devas. Both have stopped thinking.

Astus wrote:

It is not thoughtlessness, but not grasping at thoughts.

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations.

...to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK p 33, 34)

Malcolm said:

I see, so there is no ultimate.

Astus wrote:

Is there such a thing as "pure absence"?

Malcolm said:

So there are names.

Astus wrote:

Even names are without characteristics.

Malcolm said:

But this is still just intellectualism. Many people here understand that phenomena are inessential, and yet, they are not awake. There is still something missing from your presentation.

Astus wrote:

Thinking that there is no essence is grasping at an essence. To recognise in one's present experience that there is nothing that can be grasped is what is meant by seeing characteristics to be fictional.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 2:36 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So the only difference between buddhas and sentient beings is attachment to thoughts?

Astus wrote:

What more needed?

"To see form but not be corrupted by form or to hear sound but not to be corrupted by sound is liberation. Eyes that aren't attached to form are the gates of Zen. In short, those who perceive the existence and nature of phenomena and remain unattached are liberated. Those who perceive the external appearance of phenomena are at their mercy. Not to be subject to afflictions is what's meant by liberation. There's no other liberation. When you know how to look at form, form doesn't give rise to mind and mind doesn't give rise to form. Form and mind are both pure."

(<http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/The%20Zen%20Teachings%20of%20Bodhidharma/THE%20ZEN%20TEACHINGS%20OF%20BODHIDHARMA.htm>)

"The Buddhas of the ten directions realized the true nature of things and spontaneously perceive the source of mind; errant imagining does not arise, accurate awareness is not lost. The egoistic, possessive attitude disappears, so they are not subject to birth and death, they are ultimately tranquil; so obviously all happiness naturally comes to them. Ordinary people lose sight of the nature of reality and do not know the basis of mind. Arbitrarily fixating on all sorts of objects, they do not cultivate awareness; therefore love and hatred arise. Because of love and hatred, the vessel of mind cracks and leaks. Because the vessel of mind cracks and leaks, there is birth and death. Because there is birth and death, all miseries naturally appear.

The Mind King Scripture says that true thusness, the Buddha-nature, is submerged in the ocean of cognition, perception, and sense, bobbing up and down in birth and death, unable to escape. Effort should be made to preserve the basic true mind, so that arbitrary thoughts do not arise, egoistic and possessive attitudes vanish, and you spontaneously realize equality and unity with the Buddhas."

(<http://terebess.hu/zen/daman.html>)

Malcolm said:

This gets back to the question you have not answered, how does the mind become free from afflictions, since this is necessary precondition for what you are describing as nonconceptuality (nirvikalpa)?

Astus wrote:

Afflictions come from attachment to thoughts. Once there is no attachment, there are no afflictions either. The quoted line from the Platform Sutra continues as follows:

"[The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK p 33)

Nagarjuna writes as well:

"Liberation follows from the exhaustion of action and affliction.

Action and affliction are due to thought,

And thoughts proliferate due to mental construction.

They are brought to an end by emptiness."

(MMK 18.5, tr from Ornament of Reason)

Malcolm said:

How could there be?

Astus wrote:

Since you <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=342396#p342396> that "The ultimate is just a pure absence.", you've answered the question.

Malcolm said:

That does not settle anything, since as you admit above affliction and clinging is the problem, not characteristics.

Astus wrote:

Affliction and clinging comes from not seeing emptiness. Since names are empty, there is no problem, when it is realised.

Malcolm said:

I see, so there is apprehension of characteristics, but you don't "grasp" them. Well, many people also understand this and practice this way, and yet, they still are not awakened. I still think you have failed to escape intellectualism here.

Astus wrote:

What awakening is it you miss?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 6:43 AM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Then, please explain the difference between mere indifference (to thoughts) and liberation (from attachment to thoughts).

Astus wrote:

Indifference is a concept where one deems something uninteresting or irrelevant. Liberation means not abiding in any concept, neither grasping nor rejecting.

Malcolm said:

Yes, so, what does it look like to become free of attachment to thoughts? How does one actually do that?

Astus wrote:

If you think that none of the passages already quoted answer that, then here is the instruction for zazen:

"When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf_Mindfulness%20and%20Mindlessness.pdf. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone." (Zongmi on Chan, p 88; same in <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html> and <http://zen.rinnou.net/zazen/sitting.html>)

Malcolm said:

Again, this is a prescription, not a description. How does one purify the fundamental mind? (I assume he means here the ālayavijñāna).

Astus wrote:

The fundamental mind (本心) is one's original buddha nature. To purify it means to see it, to recognise that it is originally pure.

Malcolm said:

What does "realizing emptiness" actually mean and how does one do it. Descriptions please, no more prescriptions, we have had enough of these already.

Astus wrote:

If Zen and prajnaparamita do not match your criteria for descriptions, there are all sorts of other manuals.

Malcolm said:

What awakening are you trying to describe? How do you do it?

Astus wrote:

I have described awakening as seeing the insubstantiality of afflictions. Regarding methods, there are numerous.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is all very nice, Astus, but what you are describing is just an intellectual view that won't help one deal with afflictions at all.

Astus wrote:

What view is not intellectual? The teachings are all made of words. How one uses them decides if they are of any help. Even Bodhidharma

<http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enBodhiDharmaSutraWithAnnotation.htm> the direct entrance as "to awaken to the Truth through the doctrine". And direct entrance is where the teaching of afflictions are bodhi belongs to:

"In the Ultimate Vehicle, we neither transform our afflictions nor extinguish them; our mind is originally pure and lucid. This mind is inherent in everyone; we do not need to seek it externally. This is the Chan School's principle of "affliction is bodhi; birth and death (samsara) is nirvana.""

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=219&Itemid=59)

As for teaching it, here's a short story.

For a long time Yaoshan did not enter the hall to speak.

The temple director said to him, "The monks have been waiting for a long time for the master to give them some instruction."

Yaoshan said, "Ring the bell!"

The monks assembled in the hall.

Yaoshan then got down from the Dharma seat and went back to the abbot's quarters.

The temple director followed him and said, "Master, since you consented to speak to the monks, why didn't you say anything?"

Yaoshan said, "Sutras have sutra teachers. Shastras have shastra teachers. Why are you unhappy with me?"

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 124-125)

So, what is there to do with views and words?

"The more words and thoughts the more you will go astray.

Stop speaking, stop thinking and there is nothing you cannot understand."

(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/fm/fm.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that what you are describing is an intellectual view that is meaningless outside of the context of a teacher student relationship, where such a view is integrated meaningfully with practice. There is no liberation through words, my friend, as your final citation points out.

Astus wrote:

Whatever that can be described or taught by anyone is an intellectual view. To see that all views are nothing more than mind made concepts is to be free from them. To look for more than that is indeed falling in to the thicket of views.

Also, you could have added that the teachings were for monastics, so there is no point for us laity to dabble in such matters. However, to both objections here is a quote from the Platform Sutra:

Lord Wei asked further, "How can householders cultivate this practice? I hope you will teach us this."

The master said, "I will recite a formless verse for this great assembly. Just cultivate according to this, doing exactly as if you were always with me. If you do not cultivate according to this, what benefit would it be to take the tonsure and leave home [to become a monk]?"

(ch 4, BDK p 40)

And in the sutra's final chapter:

"I will tell you again, in order to make you see your natures. After my nirvana, practice in accordance with this just as if I were alive. If you go against my teaching, it would be no use even if I were alive. I will say another verse"

(p 91)

"This Platform Sutra has been transmitted in order to make manifest the central doctrine, to disseminate the triple treasure, and to benefit all living beings."

(p 93)

Malcolm said:

It is funny to watch ordinary people like us confidentially opine on awakening, it is like watching children playing at being royalty.

Astus wrote:

Who else would opine on awakening? On the other hand, since buddhas have infinite manifestations, there should be several of them present here.

"If the deluded people of some later time recognize sentient beings, [they will recognize them] as the buddha-nature. If they do not recognize sentient beings, they could seek the Buddha for ten thousand eons without ever meeting him. I teach you now: to recognize the sentient being in one's own mind is to see the buddha-nature in one's own mind. If you wish to see the Buddha, just recognize the sentient being [in your mind]. It is only sentient beings who are deluded as to the Buddha; the buddhas are not deluded about sentient beings. If you are enlightened to your self-nature, then the sentient being is the Buddha; if you are deluded as to the self-nature, then [what might be] a 'buddha' is [only] a sentient being."

(p 89-90)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Saoshun said:

View based on clarity isn't intellectual.

Astus wrote:

What view is that?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

Astus, the topic has been (this entire time) what to do to deal with the fetters or kilesas. Your quotes are stories of Awakened masters pointing the truth to very highly realized students. This is not appropriate response for the low level of development that is present day practitioners on the internet.

Astus wrote:

Zen is the easiest approach there is, but it's also easy to misinterpret the words. If you say that people have dull faculties and need simple methods, tell me, what is so complicated about recognising that all the six types of sensory phenomena are unattainable? Even reciting a buddha's name takes more effort than that.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Difference views on fetters and kilesas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Similarly to the <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=342619#p342619> instructions for Zen, here are the instructions to "<http://www.purifymind.com/ObstaclesPath.htm>":

"once you have recognized the arising of whatever klesha it is, then you simply look directly at its nature without altering anything, without attempting to alter your mind or the klesha. As you look at its nature you will experience and recognize its nature."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2016 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Pointing Out through Appearances

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

Well, I can think of occasions where my actions were deliberately hurtful and gave rise to feelings of hurt in the object of my behaviour. So this idea that the "meaning" of all actions is just what we interpret them to be, seems to not stand true.

Astus wrote:

The situation you describe follows conventional causal relations, and there is no denial of that. However, there is also the possibility to hear angry words and not be offended.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2016 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Astus wrote:

If they vote to stay, the EU is justified, so further requests for special treatment of the UK can be dismissed.

If they vote to leave, they will still be subject to the same EU laws and regulations without any power to change them.

All in all, this whole referendum idea will likely cause the fall of the current British government, no matter the results.

And from the perspective of the ordinary citizen, better vote stay. The EU makes travel and such a lot easier.

As for the global concerns of industrialisation and protection of the environment, only larger groups can make efficient changes. So, it is ethically defensible to vote in.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2016 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in three incalculable eons an improbable venture.

Content:

Astus wrote:

It all depends on how one counts those aeons.

For instance, these are not uncommon statements in the sutras

(<http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>):

"If good men and good women, having heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā, can come to resoluteness in their minds, not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, know that they stand on the Ground of No Regress. If those who have heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā are not shocked, not terrified, not baffled, and not regretful, but believe, accept, appreciate, and listen tirelessly, they have in effect achieved dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, dhyāna-pāramitā, and prajñā-pāramitā. Moreover, they can reveal and explicate [the teachings] to others and can have them train accordingly."

"If, among good men and good women, there are those who can believe and delight in this profound prajñā-pāramitā without doubts, they must have long trained and learned under past Buddhas, and planted their roots of goodness."

"If in future times, among good men and good women, there are those who, having heard this profound prajñā-pāramitā, listen and accept it with faith and delight, we should know by this indication that they too have heard it from past Buddhas, and have studied and practiced it."

So, if you can actually hear, accept, and even understand the sutra, you are already a great bodhisattva. Now, compare that to those who may only have a passing thought about the Buddha and how long they have left till buddhahood. And there are other reasons why the uncountable aeons are not that simple a matter. Although, it could be said that those who are shocked and afraid are not yet that advanced.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2016 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in three incalculable eons an improbable venture.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Cooking the Dharma books....

Astus wrote:

It's called exegesis.

"the three-asankhya kalpas refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call asankhya in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts, And every thought lasts a kalpa. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three asankhya kalpas, Once the three poisons obscure your real self, how can you be called liberated until you overcome their countless evil thoughts? People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three

releases are said to pass through the three-sankhya kalpas. But people of this final age are the densest of fools. They don't understand what the Tathagata really meant by the three-asankhya kalpas. They say enlightenment is only achieved after endless kalpas and thereby mislead disciples to retreat on the path to Buddhahood."

(Bodhidharma: <http://www.fodian.net/world/dmpsl-e.html>)

"There are a bunch of shavepate monks who say to students, 'The Buddha is the Ultimate; he attained buddhahood only after he came to the fruition of practices carried on through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas.' Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours."

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

"In fact, time and space are concepts of ordinary people with discriminating minds. Noble bodhisattvas have no such conceptions, because time and space are merely conventional designations of the physical world. In the world of pure mind, concepts such as the length of time or the size of space cannot even be established. Even the dreams of ordinary people are unfettered by the limitations of ordinary time and space—how could noble ones who have transcended the world be bound by such limitations? A sūtra states that a long kalpa "enters" a short kalpa and a short kalpa enters a long kalpa, that one kalpa enters all kalpas and that all kalpas enter one kalpa, that a moment of thought enters the three times and the three times enter a moment of thought, that a billion-world universe enters a particle and a particle is the same as a billion-world universe, and even that one skin pore contains countless worlds (see the Avatamsaka Sūtra). While these statements may at first seem to be mind-boggling myths, after deeper and objective analysis we discover they are not without truth."

(Sheng-yen: Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p 99-100)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 14th, 2016 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in three incalculable eons an improbable venture.

Content:

Anders said:

If the road looks heavy, aim for a holiday in the pure lands to solidify your roots and recharge your batteries.

Astus wrote:

That is indeed the universal advice, and the Pure Land path is the one that embraces people of all capacities. It should not be considered a lower method, since even great bodhisattvas go to Sukhavati. It is also not just a holiday, but the assured way to buddhahood.

"suppose there is a man who learns this teaching for the first time and wishes to seek the correct faith but lacks courage and strength. Because he lives in this world of suffering, he fears that he will not always be able to meet the Buddhas and honor them

personally, and that, faith being difficult to perfect, he will be inclined to fall back. He should know that the Tathagatas have an excellent expedient means by which they can protect his faith: that is, through the strength of wholehearted meditation on the Buddha, he will in fulfillment of his wishes be able to be born in the Buddha-land beyond, to see the Buddha always, and to be forever separated from the evil states of existence. It is as the sutra says: "If a man meditates wholly on Amitabha Buddha in the world of the Western Paradise and wishes to be born in that world, directing all the goodness he has cultivated toward that goal, then he will be born there." Because he will see the Buddha at all times, he will never fall back."
(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2016 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Keith Dowman's argument for his "interpretive free" translation style

Content:

Astus wrote:

Personally, I find most translations of Duff I have yet encountered not particularly readable, filled with made up terminology. Dowman's works are at least fluent. And in the long run, fluency beats accuracy. But I wouldn't go for either of them as my preferred sources.

As for the idea of a compulsory dictionary, unless you have a dictatorial system to force it, and of course sponsor the translations, it will never happen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2016 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

For a clearer picture of Tang era Chan there are a number of fine studies out there, and likely more to come. What should never be forgotten is the monastic context and the Chinese Mahayana tradition, because they are always there, just like today. I'm not saying that the immediate method of Chan is not real, but it is not as pronounced as it may seem. Another thing is that in the end meditation is very much a personal matter, and there is no mind police to tell what practice you do.

Teachers today like Xingyun and Thich Nhat Hanh may not look even close to the stereotypical figures of Mazu and Linji, but my guess is that they are very close to how things actually looked like over a thousand years ago. And if you look into the works of Xingyun and TNH, they do teach Chan in its direct form.

There was an era in China when they revived the so called Patriarchal Chan in the 17th century, and that spread over to Japan as well. See Jiang Wu's two studies on this (Enlightenment in Dispute; Leaving for the Rising Sun). That reform came and went by, and while it had some lasting effects, the dramatisation of Chan stories - pretending to

be like in the books - was not one of them. However, if you are looking for something like that, the Kwan Um School has it. Again, not because Korean Buddhism somehow preserved it (since there wasn't actually anything to preserve), but because Korean Buddhism had its 20th century revival and because Seung Sahn made that school what it is.

As I see it, there is currently only one community that openly follows a rather radical approach to Chan, and that is <http://www.hanmaum.org/eng/> - no koan, no zazen, just go directly to buddha-nature. However, because it is a community, there are numerous things people occupy themselves with, so in the end it is not that different from the others in practical matters.

Another thing with the genuine direct teaching is that it does not build a group. Dogen tried to sort this out, but then what you get as a result is a community obsessed with rules and rituals (this is not a critique of Soto in general, but an observation on a number of zazen-centred groups of today, and somewhat on Dogen's stance on rules).

In the end, the direct method is to drop all concepts and live freely in contentment. What's the point of looking for groups and teachers for that?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2016 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: Keith Dowman's argument for his "interpretive free" translation style

Content:

dzoki said:

Well if we keep the process of translation of Dharma a thing of democracy and personal preferences, then we will continue to have shitty translations.

Astus wrote:

Even now not all translations are crap. And just as now one can tell the better and the worse sources, eventually there will be those that survive and those that will be forgotten.

dzoki said:

For example, Ole Nydahl wrote several books which introduce many misconceptions.

Astus wrote:

That's how freedom of religion works.

dzoki said:

Then his students take these up and go ahead and translate Karma Kagyu texts according to Ole's personal preferences.

Astus wrote:

Same thing happens in other religions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 15th, 2016 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is filled with universals, they are known as dharmas. The dharmas are not considered derivatives of particulars, it's the other way around. People conceive conventional terms, but behind those terms there are only dharmas. For instance the relationship between various physical objects and the four primary elements. However, dharmas don't all have equal ontological status.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Temicco said:

The fact remains that Xu Yun taught something very different. Others, like Hsuan Hua, taught something very mixed.

Astus wrote:

What is so different in <http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/>? All that's said in http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html is very much the norm since the 12th century. Compare it with <http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/>, and you'll see that they're not much different. As for Hsuan Hua, I find his teachings somewhat odd.

Other groups of the Chan brand:

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=4&id=15&Itemid=59, <http://www.thienvientuquang.org/node/203> (check <http://www.thienvientuquang.org/kinhsach/english/KeysToBuddhism.pdf>).

Temicco said:

Is there any evidence of that actually being the case? I didn't think the Chan Sangha just petered out of existence due to its lack of formalism. It's also weird of Dogen to emphasize the community over the Zen, IMO.

Astus wrote:

First of all, there hasn't been any "Chan Sangha", but simply monastic communities, and as monasteries they have various functions. Community and Zen have the same relation as Dharma and Sangha. The teachings remain relevant as long as there are people who follow them. As for Dogen's emphasis on monastic organisation, it was his goal to build an authentic community following the model he had seen in China. Also, what is the Zen part in Dogen's teachings? Could say it's zazen, but seated meditation is

as common an element in Buddhism as sutra recitation. The idea is that all elements of monastic life is Zen, henceforth even the minutest details become important (note: this approach is nothing new in Soto). Then there's Keizan, called the second founder of Soto, whose greatest achievement was in the area of community building, while at the same time his teachings were more according to the contemporary trends in Zen.

Temicco said:

Everyone advises it, at any rate. But I know. At the very least a teacher could help me work through any reservations I may have, point me in the right directions, and urge me to anuttara samyak sambodhi (and not a partial buddhahood), as Dosha did for Bankei. It just seems like most teachers (or groups, at least) are more interested in teaching a bunch of doctrines than in spurring students towards buddhahood. And that's what puts me off.

Astus wrote:

You know your situation best. If you have not yet practised with a community, it is certainly a good idea to pay a visit. As for reservations and doubts, they are all conceptual phantasms. There is

<http://antaiji.org/en/services/%E3%81%84%E3%81%BE%E8%87%AA%E6%AE%BA%E3%81%97%E3%82%88%E3%81%86%E3%81%A8%E6%80%9D%E3%81%84%E3%81%A4%E3%82%81%E3%81%A6%E3%81%84%E3%82%8B%E4%BA%BA%E3%81%B8%E5%86%85%E5%B1%B1%E8%88%88%E6%AD%A3%E8%91%97/> attributed to Dogen: "I have not visited many Zen monasteries. I simply, with my master Tendo, quietly verified that the eyes are horizontal and the nose is vertical. I cannot be misled by anyone anymore. I have returned home empty-handed." And as for how that is all to learn in (Soto) Zen, see <http://thatssozen.blogspot.hu/2014/09/zazen-or-no-one-can-help-you.html>. However, I think it's already too much.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Queequeg said:

Particulars are derivative of dharmas?

Particulars are themselves dharmas...

Astus wrote:

By particulars I meant ordinary things like chairs, shoes, coats, and sandwiches. There is no dharma for one particular chair, nor for chairs in general, but only the dharmas of name and form, and from those basic dharmas come the illusion of individual objects and beings.

Queequeg said:

you're talking about sravakayana conceptions of irreducible dharmas?

Astus wrote:

Dharmas are the basic elements in Mahayana as well. The difference is whether they are considered with or without self-being (svabhava).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But Platonic universals are not at all like the dharmas. Dharmas are the 'constituents of experience', they are grounded in 12 links of dependent origination and the conditioned nature of perception. They're the momentary constituents of experience as revealed in meditative insight.

Astus wrote:

Dharmas are universal in the sense that they are the same for everyone. As for their momentary and empty nature, those are universal qualities of the dharmas. So, while the definitions are not the same in one aspect, they have a similar role as the basis of appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

seeker242 said:

This, from the Platform Sutra, always comes to mind whenever I hear about Chan being sudden or gradual.

"The Dharma is originally of one school. It is people who think of North and South. The Dharma is of one kind, but people understand it slowly or quickly. Dharma is not sudden or gradual. Rather it is people who are sharp or dull. Hence the terms sudden and gradual."

Astus wrote:

It basically means that only stupid people think there is a gradual path. The whole point of that 8th chapter where North and South are distinguished is to vindicate Huineng's teaching of immediate enlightenment, just like it's done all over the text.

As Huineng tells Zhicheng: "The morality, meditation, and wisdom of your teacher is directed at people of the Great Vehicle. My morality, meditation, and wisdom are directed at people of the Supreme Vehicle."

Might also consider the following passages as well, to give a clearer picture:

"Good friends, those of small capacities who hear this sudden teaching are like plants whose capacities are small. Beset by a great rain, they all collapse and are unable to grow. People of small capacities are also like this. They possess the wisdom of prajñā

fundamentally, no differently from those of great wisdom. So why do they hear the Dharma without being able to become enlightened? Because of the profundity of their false views and layered afflictions! Just as if great clouds are blocking the sun, unless a wind blows [them away], the light of the sun will not be visible.

There is also no great and small in the wisdom of prajñā; it is only that the delusion and enlightenment of the minds of all sentient beings differ. Those with deluded minds appear to be cultivating and seeking buddhahood, but they are unenlightened to their self-natures. Hence are they of small capacities. If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature."

(ch 2, BDK p 31-32)

"There are no sudden and gradual in the Dharma,
It is delusion and enlightenment that are slow or fast.
It is only this teaching of seeing the nature
Which stupid people cannot comprehend.

...

This verse is the sudden teaching.
It is also called the ship of the great Dharma.
In delusion one can listen to the sutras for eons, but
Enlightenment occurs in a moment."

(ch 2, BDK p 34, 36)

"Good friends, the correct teaching is fundamentally without either sudden or gradual—it is human nature that is either clever or dull. Deluded people cultivate gradually, while enlightened people suddenly conform [to the truth]. If you recognize your own fundamental mind and see your own fundamental nature, there will be no such distinctions! Thus it is that sudden and gradual are posited as provisional names."

(ch 4, BDK p 43)

"Our patriarchs have transmitted only this sudden teaching,
And you should all vow to see the nature and be identical to them."

(ch 7, BDK p 53)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Vima Repa said:

That's not what "universal" means in the context of the problem of universals.

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_%28metaphysics%29:

In metaphysics, a universal is what particular things have in common, namely characteristics or qualities. In other words, universals are repeatable or recurrent

entities that can be instantiated or exemplified by many particular things.

Astus wrote:

Particular things have the dharmas in common, and those are their true characteristics and qualities. Dharmas are repeatable and recurrent as well, they exist in all the different experiences.

Vima Repa said:

Universals are hypothetical real entities that imbue particulars with their qualities.

Astus wrote:

Can be applied to the dharmas as well.

Vima Repa said:

A particular chair is a chair by virtue of its participating in the universal "chairness."

Astus wrote:

Buddhism approaches from a different angle, where both "chairness" and "a chair" are superficial, and the underlying universal qualities of dharmas are the true reality. However, just because it's the other way around, it does not mean they are not alike.

Vima Repa said:

In Buddhism, it's most certainly not the case that a dharma is impermanent by virtue of participating an abstract, eternal universal of "impermanence." This is exactly the sort of purely speculative philosophical entity that Buddhist thinkers have questioned for millennia.

Astus wrote:

The dharmas are the true realities whence illusory, conventional appearances are abstracted.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2016 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Queequeg said:

Where can I find a textual source that explains this?

Astus wrote:

It's how the conventional (sammuti) and ultimate truth (paramattha sacca) are differentiated in abhidhamma.

"Different characteristics of rupa can be experienced through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body-sense and mind. These characteristics are real since they can be experienced. We use conventional terms such as 'body' and 'table'; both have the characteristic of hardness which can be experienced through touch. In this way we can prove that the

characteristic of hardness is the same, no matter whether it is in the body or in the table. Hardness is a paramattha dhamma; 'body' and 'table' are not paramattha dhammas but only concepts. We take it for granted that the body stays and we take it for self, but what we call 'body' are only different rupas arising and falling away. The conventional term 'body' may delude us about reality. We will know the truth if we learn to experience different characteristics of rupa when they appear."

(<http://www.budsas.org/ebud/nina-abhidhamma/nina-abhi-01.htm>)

Also I can recommend Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation (and a great introduction in it) of https://store.pariyatti.org/Comprehensive-Manual-of-Abhidhamma-A--PDF-eBook_p_4362.html.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Temicco said:

I question the idea that people's contemporary needs really differ all that much. It seems like there are teachers concerned with getting people to realize the truth, and teachers concerned with throwing people a raft. Ritualization isn't liberative in any meaningful way.

Astus wrote:

Ossification is a necessary element of any tradition. While there is the living myth of the enlightened teacher, actually the transmission from one generation to another is about maintaining the tradition, so it is fairly mechanical, therefore the primary requirement for transmission is upholding a minimal standard as best as possible. This may sound like a bad or cheap thing, but practically this is how it works. If one accepts that liberation depends on the teachings and rituals transmitted, this keeps the door open for every participant to make use of it. In other words, only the blueprint of a raft can be handed over, and everyone has to build their own vehicle. Others may assist in reading the blueprint and advice on the building process, but they cannot give their own raft.

Temicco said:

Still looking around for communities, but this was where the issue I mentioned in the last paragraph of my last comment comes up. So many groups (even well-regarded ones) content themselves with charging you excessive amounts of money for the chance to come meditate and listen to people talk about their feelings and how spiritual incense is. It's not a conceptual phantasm to notice a difference between teachings that focus on liberation and money-grubbing church circles, and unfortunately the second is all I've found so far.

Astus wrote:

If there is no acceptable community in your vicinity, you might have to travel. That is, if you want to connect with some group. I don't think you'd be alone in that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Mechanics of Enlightenment

Content:

Anders said:

I don't think this analysis has ever been 'required'. I think one of the down-sides of Tibetan Madhyamika is that in its present presentation, it is treated as a preliminary dialectic to something else, moreso than as a fullfledged school in its own right, with distinctive Madhyamika practices.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamika analysis in meditation is very much there in TB, for instance in Mahamudra, even if they pretend it's something different. But if one looks at the sutras where they teach that the unborn nature of the dharmas is what needs to be realised, then looks at MMK, it is easy to see how Nagarjuna gives a straightforward instruction in realisation. However, it is the natural progress of things that what was once a practical teaching becomes mere theory. That's why in the beginning we read that many attained enlightenment just by hearing the teachings, but later generations fail to achieve that. So, the teaching must adapt to the new conditions and must sound live and appropriate.

By the way, even Madhyamaka was once a novel form to correct the formalised teachings, and those formalised teachings themselves were at one point new and practical.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I understand that, but that doesn't make the meaning of 'dhammas' the same as what is meant by 'universals'. You're stretching the meaning of the term.

...

Just because dhammas are the supposed explanatory sub-stratum of experience, doesn't mean that they correspond to what was designated 'universals' in Western philosophy. They're nearer to atomism.

Astus wrote:

Then it turns out that universals are not found in Buddhism.

Wayfarer said:

I think this is as near as Buddhism gets to acknowledging universals.

Astus wrote:

The apoha idea seems to actually negate any possibility of universals. If a chair is

defined by every non-chair, and all those non-chairs are again defined by everything other than those non-chairs, then we find how all definitions are non-definitions, and there is nothing defined by anything. This is basically another way to say that all phenomena are conditioned, and therefore empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Queequeg said:

my understanding is that the real dharmas you refer to arise in the contact between sense object and sense apparatus. Red, for instance, arises on the eye seeing something 'red'. Red, however, is nothing more than the sensation of red. The object itself is not red, nor is it not not red... it is inconveivable.

Astus wrote:

Of the four ultimate dharmas only nirvana is unconditioned. Red is a rupa-dharma (see: Comprehensive Manual, p 237), of the category of objective material phenomena (gocararupa), and within that it is a visible form (rupa). So, red is not a dharma, but only a derivative of a dharma.

Queequeg said:

So then what you're describing as a Buddhist universal is the consciousness that arises on contact.

Astus wrote:

Universals are the dharmas, and not all dharmas are mind (citta) or mental (cetasika).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

I believe, as do all my lamas, that you can attain the highest realisations through sadhana practice.

Astus wrote:

And what is it in a sadhana that is the cause of realisation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

The deity.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the deity as an outer force makes you realised, or is it the visualisation of the deity that causes realisation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Malcolm said:

In a sadhana you start with the realization of emptiness at the beginning.

Astus wrote:

So anyone who even begins one is a realised being?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Mechanics of Enlightenment

Content:

Malcolm said:

While it is true that there is some preliminary analysis derived from Madhyamaka reasonings which may be found in Lamdre, Kagyu Mahāmudra and so on, the key distinction is that Madhyamaka offers no method of directly experiencing one's own dharmatā.

Astus wrote:

It's not merely some preliminary analysis, but the method used to examine the mind and all phenomena, and through that examination can one arrive at genuine realisation. It is just like that in the Bhavanakrama. So, I don't see how Madhyamaka would be lacking in anything, when it can lead to - and it is used as such - to non-conceptual wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 17th, 2016 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

So your question is like asking if the pitcher of beer an "outer force" that is making me drunk, or is it my action of drinking the beer?

Astus wrote:

So, what is the cause of realisation?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcohol_intoxication:

"Alcohol intoxication is the result of alcohol entering the bloodstream faster than it can be metabolized by the liver, which breaks down the ethanol into non-intoxicating byproducts. "

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 12:42 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

The deity, and my internalising it through meditation. "Meditating on the deity"="drinking the beer". Get it?

Astus wrote:

As far as I'm aware, meditation on a deity has several steps and elements, for instance the realisation of the deity as clarity-emptiness, or the whole process of completion stage with and without marks. What part do you mean by internalisation?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 2:13 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

Merging the deity with my mind.

Astus wrote:

"The visualization of oneself and all sentient beings in the form of Chenrezig is the development stage, and this is method. Recognizing that both the visualization and the form visualized are empty is the fulfillment stage, and this is wisdom. One should always combine these two aspects of practice, method and wisdom."

(<http://www.kagyu.org/kagyulineage/buddhism/dev/dev03.php>)

Based on the above quote, visualisation of being the deity is not the part where realisation happens, but when that vision is seen as mind-made and insubstantial. Or do you mean something else?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 2:44 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is termed "taking the result as the path."

Astus wrote:

Does that mean one has actually realised emptiness? Or is it just pretending?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 7:31 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Malcolm said:

It means that one has received direct introduction through the word empowerment and is experientially familiar with the example wisdom. So no, one has not realized emptiness, but neither is one pretending.

Dzogchen, of course, is quite different.

Astus wrote:

Example wisdom occurs at the wisdom empowerment, but according to Tsele Natsok (Empowerment, p 41) if it's not genuine insight "there is no way to recognize all forms of conceptual thinking to be the innate nature (dharmata), and thus one misses the point of the third empowerment. Without experiencing the nature of the third empowerment, one does not obtain the true fourth empowerment."

Also, according to Thrangu rinpoche (Creation and Completion, p 142-143), the sudden pointing out of the nature of the mind "as authentic as it is, is in some ways adulterated by conceptualization and therefore remains an experience rather than a realization. The problem with this is that, while the recognition is authentic as far as it goes, because it is incomplete and imperfect, it will at some point vanish. When it vanishes, the student does not know how to bring it back, because their initial recognition was experienced under the dramatic circumstances of receiving the pointing out from their guru." That is practically a criticism of the example wisdom. Therefore, he says, the solution to that in the Kagyu tradition is "to enable students, through their own exploration, to come to a decisive recognition of the mind's nature."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 7:34 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

Since the Sambogakaya is a manifestation of enlightenment, it is undeceived about the true nature of emptiness. And since your mind has mixed with the deity, when the deity is dissolved into unmistaken emptiness, your mind is unerringly brought to the same state. There is absolutely no need for philosophical positions or discrimination. This is unlike Sutra where you must find your way to emptiness.

Astus wrote:

That is, if one perfectly identifies oneself with the deity, one becomes a living buddha. Is that what you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 7:37 AM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

Temicco said:

That's an interesting way to look at it, I just don't really get why a "tradition" is any more necessary than some kind of undefined sramana group. Is there evidence that there's more staying power and accessibility in the former?

Astus wrote:

Undefined sramana groups have a short lifespan. An early term for Buddhism is Dharma-Vinaya, that is, Doctrine and Discipline. Both are equally important. I think there is ample evidence of several communities that used rules and regulations to survive the centuries, while occasional groups that happened to come together dispersed.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Disillusioned by gradual teachings

Content:

smcj said:

That is the goal, yes.

Astus wrote:

With sadhana practice one gradually develops a clear image, an understanding of the meaning of the image, and the pride in being the deity. That sounds more than ritualised practice to me, it is qualitatively different from merely reciting the sadhana. It is not a good example of how ritualised practice is liberating.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2016 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Winning gives birth to hostility.

Losing, one lies down in pain.

The calmed lie down with ease,

having set winning & losing aside.

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.15.than.html.201>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2016 at 6:06 AM

Title: Re: Victims of Communism

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are victims of every social order, those who do not fit in are cast out or crushed, and there are those at the bottom of society, the poor. This was not different in the socialist era. The ex-Warsaw Pact country I live in (Hungary) had its own version of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goulash_Communist that made it the happiest barrack following the reforms in the 1960s. Those are the decades that people thought/think of with nostalgia after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc that, with the introduction of capitalism, resulted in several difficulties. No wonder that the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Socialist_Party - official successor of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Socialist_Workers%27_Party - formed the elected government three times since then, and currently the strongest opposition party, although rapidly losing voters to the far-right.

But, before the "happy times", there were two darker episodes of communism in Hungary. Hungary was the second country in the world to become officially socialist, and it lasted from 21 March until 1 August 1919. It was the time of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Terror_%28Hungary%29 with its infamous https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lenin_Boys, only to be followed by the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Terror_%28Hungary%29 of the following government to eliminate communists, including a good number of Jews (this is not the Holocaust yet). Then the kingdom was restored (without a king), a million people killed (at least half of them in the Holocaust), another war lost, and with the Soviet army came "our nation's wise leader", "Stalin's best pupil", comrade https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A1ty%C3%A1s_R%C3%A1kosi, who happened to be the sixth child of Jewish parents. That was the era of proper dictatorship with purges, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Protection_Authority, show trials, personality cult, and the usual methods required to establish a fine socialist state. There is a fantastic satire film about that era, made in 1969 - sponsored by the state, immediately banned by the state, and released to the public in 1979 by the state - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Witness_%281969_Hungarian_film%29. If you have the opportunity to obtain it with English subtitles, you should see it.

Regarding Buddhism, the <http://europeanbuddhism.org/members/buddhist-mission-hungary-church-of-arya-maitreya-mandala/> was officially recognised in 1956 by the state, and it is still an active group. As I have heard it, it was recognised as an official church in order to serve as a countermeasure against the Catholic Church, and it was of course under surveillance by the state. Here is a short introduction from the 1973 edition of Bulletin of Tibetology by the founder: http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot_10_01_03.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2016 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Kaccāni said:

So the practice, in and competition, is to stay calm.

Astus wrote:

If you compete, you're not calm.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2016 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Kaccāni said:

Yet you may be calm in competition.

Astus wrote:

How do you do that?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 23rd, 2016 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Kaccāni said:

When there is awareness of the competition, you may argue that you're still "in" it, it's still within your awareness, it appears in consciousness, the situation lies before you, yet the competition will not defile you and you can be all calm you want.

Astus wrote:

To compete is the desire to defeat others and win. Competition that doesn't defile means one is without the desire to win and defeat others, hence one does not compete. To participate in a competition with some other purpose is possible, if that's what you mean, but then winning cannot be the goal. One should also be aware not to fall into the error of thinking that the end justifies the means.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2016 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Kaccāni said:

Compete can also only mean to engage in a contest.

Astus wrote:

Life might be described as a competition for survival and procreation, but that is a theoretical concept that one either subscribes to or not. Those who accept it as a valid truth are those who compete. And those who compete are in the mindset that desires winning, and that is engaging in a competition. Saying that others may label one's

activity as competition is irrelevant, because there are also those who imagine life to be governed by fate or a god.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2016 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

the greater thing was challenging yourself through competition, rather than beating others.

Astus wrote:

How is that really better? Challenging yourself is trying to reach an ideal goal, that is often set by others. That concept of self-improvement is most apparent in the fitness and diet culture that makes many depressed when they fail to look like athletes or even just lose a few kilos. It creates an inner war, that leads many to feel disappointed with oneself, while others become obsessed with reaching and maintaining an ideal.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2016 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

There are times where you can only "self-improve" so far, in a traditional art at least, part of this means simply accepting your limitations, finding what you are good at, and doing your best with that, without fear of failure, and moving away from a goal-centered approach. For most people who are "lifers" it becomes a kind of joy for it's own sake, and indeed most of the people I've known (myself included) with long years in the arts long ago gave up on the goal-oriented approach and simply love doing it.

Astus wrote:

What you say sounds not like challenging yourself, but cultivating something. That is not competition in any sense, but simply finding joy in an activity.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2016 at 9:32 PM

Title: Re: Does competition increase greed, malice, and covetousness?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

IME there is a difference between healthy "pushing against" oneself - even if we consider it spiritually lesser pursuit-, and the kind of self-hatred and grasping that you are talking about, which is rife all over the world of fitness, diet etc. While it's true that many competitive pursuits end up there, IMO, and IME they do not have to.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, there are various degrees, and it is good to be able to have motivation but not fall into various traps of overdoing it. On the other hand, it is not an uncommon belief that any cultivation is pointless, because in this age the capacity of the people are meagre, their karma is heavy, and only through an external help can they be liberated.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2016 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

Boomerang said:

I've believed in rebirth longer than I've believed in Buddhism. Still, I feel that I could believe in rebirth more. Then I would have more samvega and bodhicitta.

Astus wrote:

If you accept rebirth and you want to improve your motivation, contemplate the six realms and the drawbacks of samsara.

As for beginning to believe in rebirth, Malcolm has already recommended the best way of investigating it on the experiential rather than the conceptual level. If we look at our present experiences, it easily becomes clear that the mind can operate independent of the body. Then we can see how the mind functions influenced by its own habitual patterns. Those two show that with the death of the body there is still a mind bound by its own inclinations.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2016 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

Boomerang said:

I've been trying to do that, visualizing myself burning, freezing, being eaten alive, and so on.

Astus wrote:

Perhaps a different approach to it might work better. To believe fully in something, is to regard it as natural and self-evident. When one accepts something as true, one acts according to that reality. What importance does rebirth have in one's daily life? It means avoiding unwholesome acts and cultivating meritorious deeds. And when one sees the total futility of endless rebirth, that generates renunciation and the wish to attain liberation. Furthermore, understanding that not only oneself is subject to a meaningless and painful cycle, but all other beings as well, compassion for all can rise. Continuing that line of thought, one may also realise that rebirth is not anything that one controls, but only the interplay of causes and conditions, without an personal element in it, and that provides an insight into emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems so strange to me that those who would support Bernie in the US can at the same time rejoice over and approve Brexit. Is it not apparent enough that with Brexit the right wing, especially far-right politics won?

"The EU already has two member states – Poland and Hungary – that have moved towards authoritarian nationalism and away from liberal democracy. The success of the English nationalist revolution (and that is what Brexit is) will further energise those forces throughout the union."

(<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/fintan-o-toole-brexit-fantasy-is-about-to-come-crashing-down-1.2698974>)

See also: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/brexit-campaign-shows-perils-of-a-populist-paeon-to-ignorance-1.2700314>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 12:28 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Lobsang Chojor said:

I agree that the far right see this as a victory for them, however the left (Corbyn etc.) supported brexit

Astus wrote:

Where did you get that from?

From 2 June:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36430606>

From 26 June (today):

"Analysis of the polling shows that Labour persuaded two-thirds of its supporters to vote remain. I think that is an achievement. And in part it is an achievement for Jeremy Corbyn and the shadow chancellor John McDonnell. Without the "remain and reform" demand they put forward, I think even more of our own people would have voted out."

(<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/26/corbyn-leader-brexit-labour-rebels-sabotage>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Malcolm said:

The American Left in general supported Brexit, because it represents the failure of neoliberalism.

Astus wrote:

Then it seems their assessment what the EU stands for is missing a number of key elements.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 12:38 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

I keep hearing people say that Brexit is pretty much exclusively a victory for the far right, does this mean that staying in would have been a victory for the left? Would staying have been a victory for anyone? If so, who?

Astus wrote:

The Tories would have still failed, and Labour could have gained more support. It would have also allowed a reasonable position to address the grievances of Leave voters in a more peaceful way. Not the mention that the UK already had a special position in the EU. Although, all in all, the whole referendum was a bad idea.

Johnny Dangerous said:

How?

Astus wrote:

The EU is first of all is the organisation meant to keep Europe at peace and in mutual agreement. It is also a strong force against our Eastern neighbour Russia, plus a sizeable economy to keep things running in an orderly fashion (i.e. the EU regulations to protect its citizens and the environment). The other option, the voice of the nationalists, where there are independent states, is not a nice one. It may look like that Europe is a cultured and peaceful land, at least that's the impression I get from how American's see it. And while that is half true, there is another half. As

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgxglVm_2OY said about Hungary: "The fantasy home of every little girl who's young enough to love castles, but not quite old enough to be aware of neo-fascist political parties."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 1:18 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

It's my impression that the EU leadership generally gives a squat about public opinion regardless of what goes on, that certainly seems to have been the case with the possibility of Grexit. I can see why people are scared about the far right thing though. The answer to that is a real movement to oppose far-right politics though, I don't quite understand how a neoliberal supra-national bureaucracy is some bulwark against far-right politics.

Astus wrote:

Have you followed the 2016 elections in Austria? First round was won by the far-right party by 35.1%, greens got second place by 21.3%, then the second round was won by the greens with 50.3% against 49.7%. Note, it was the far-right's gain (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Party_of_Austria and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B6rg_Haider) in the 1999 elections that prompted the first ever http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/fileadmin/media/pdf/falkner_sanctions.pdf. Currently it is the new Polish right wing government that the <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-threatens-sanctions-if-poland-doesnt-reverse-high-court-overhaul/a-19298401>. The Hungarian right wing government has had its own clashes as well, and had to throw out a number of laws, e.g. about <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/european-union-hungary-european-parliament-resolution-on-hungarys-media-law/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 1:23 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Myoho-Nameless said:

Someone I know in Europe says that these "far right" groups tend to be in favor of "leftists" policies like safety nets, socialized medicine etc. They just don't want immigrants to have access to them and other than that, they aren't really rightist.

Astus wrote:

Correct. It's called

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialism_%28disambiguation%29. In case there is someone who does not recognise the term and does not check the link: the most famous national socialist party ever was lead by Adolf Hitler.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Astus wrote:

Far-right on the streets:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-eu-referendum-racial-racism-abuse-hate-crime-reported-latest-leave-immigration-a7104191.html>

And online:

https://www.facebook.com/sarah.leblanc.718/media_set?set=a.10101369198638985&type=3&pnref=story

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

I guess I don't really understand how the EU structure provides that, can someone explain that a bit better?

Astus wrote:

Every member state has to comply with a good number of EU laws including in their constitution. Any member state diverging from or violating those laws are taken to court. That actually provides a protection for all EU citizens who suffer injustice by any state institution. That is actually a great benefit for the people in general.

On the other hand, it should be clear that the EU is a union and not a federation or a state, so practically all member states are sovereign entities and there are many ways they can circumvent their own laws. For instance, the Hungarian government took away church status from all churches in 2012, set up a very short list of churches they accept, and then in 2014 the European Court ruled that the new church law is in violation of freedom of religion. Nevertheless, nothing has actually changed, and the churches haven't got back their previous legal status ever since.

Johnny Dangerous said:

how exactly does the EU prevent the rise of the far right, is it just that you fear national governments are more likely to lend the far right legitimacy, and have right parties ascend to power..

Astus wrote:

It cannot prevent it ultimately. There are actually far right parties in the EU parliament itself, who are against the EU. At the same time, it serves as a structure to bind countries and parties together, and through that prevent conflicts escalating between them. It should also be noted that a good number of far right parties are supported by and extensions of Russia, and there is an ongoing misinformation campaign to bring people to their nationalist causes. So far nothing really has been done by the EU, as far as I'm aware, but that is where again a united stand against that form of attack is important.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

dreambow said:

Norway, Iceland and the Swiss are not part of the EU but in the free trade area EFTA and they are doing OK.

Why do people prefer this deal to the EU? Not because it's perfect – nothing is perfect – but because it allows participation in the European market while retaining self-government.

Astus wrote:

Wrong examples. They all have to adopt EU laws, pay in to the EU, and allow free worker movement. What they don't get is a vote in any of the laws and regulations they have to follow.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 27th, 2016 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Malcolm said:

The EU's approach has not been, "UK we'll miss you," but rather, "You fools, you will regret this." Not a very appealing message.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-germany-rethink-idUSKCN0ZC0IB>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36630326>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2016 at 1:08 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, I was referring to the all the sturm and drung leading up to the vote.

But also from the second article you posted:

But politicians are talking tough. Concessions, they say, might encourage other member states to leave. For this reason one senior MP told me: "There must be consequences for Britain".

Astus wrote:

Well, it seems Merkel couldn't hold out against everyone else:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/article-50-brexit-eu-referendum-result-german-eu-latest-news-leave-european-union-a7105946.html>

BTW, it's like when someone says that he wants a divorce but then procrastinates in

leaving the house and doing the official paperwork.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2016 at 1:27 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, that would be a fair comparison is the leave vote was a clear mandate, but it wasn't. And, it is not a binding vote (which every one seems to forget). As long as the UK does not trigger article 50, they are in the EU still.

Astus wrote:

And how do you imagine they could disregard the referendum in the parliament? It might have worse consequences then leaving.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2016 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

A very good piece from Paul Mason:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/27/global-order-britain-survive-eu-alternative-economic-model>

Astus wrote:

If they went with EEA then free movement remains, and most of the other things. That's how they can make this Brexit mostly harmless and pointless.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 28th, 2016 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Ayu said:

I suspect it is a conspiracy

Astus wrote:

Comedian turned politician: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpgavJ17uTk>, whose party gave Rome's new mayor, <http://www.euronews.com/2016/06/22/virginia-raggi-rome-s-first-female-mayor-talks-to-euronews/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 29th, 2016 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

dreambow said:

Farage's quip that many in the EU have never had a real job is very close to the truth. These Bureaucrats and their long talk fests and long lunches....an indulgent group who are completely removed from the man in the street and the consequences of their decision making.

Astus wrote:

Have you actually checked the facts?

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36654901>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 29th, 2016 at 4:02 PM

Title: Re: Cancel the Order

Content:

Admin_PC said:

On the other hand, the approaches in Pure Land and Zen seem contradictory on the surface, but have the same ultimate aims.

Astus wrote:

If by ultimate aims you mean buddhahood, definitely true. However, it should not be forgotten that there are a number of differences between the Pure Land path and the path of sages.

<http://amida-ji-retreat-temple-romania.blogspot.hu/2016/06/an-answer-to-comment-comparing-zen-with.html>

Jeff H said:

Refuge means we have confident faith that liberation and enlightenment are possible due to the example of arhats and buddhas who've gone before us. It means that those beings have provided us with a road map to follow them -- by our own efforts -- in the Dharma. And it means that we can expect to find support among others who are similarly trying to change their lives. But it does not mean that we turn the job over to any other being to "handle it" for us.

Astus wrote:

No buddha can save beings on their own, otherwise samsara has already been over and we wouldn't need any path. The Pure Land way is a teaching, a method, that one can use for attaining complete enlightenment. The reason it is the path that is swift and easy is that the immediate goal is to attain birth in Sukhavati, and such a birth is possible because the conditions are simple: to have faith, intention/vow, and mindfulness/practice. That is how karma works anyway (see: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.057.nymo.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 29th, 2016 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Dan74 said:

Why is automation an issue? Isn't the problem that so much manufacture has been abandoned in Europe? That given the recent instability, investors are wary which naturally impacts growth. EU is hardly a hub of commodity exports. And zero interest rates are not the cause of stagnation but an attempt to spur growth. So I am a bit lost here.

Astus wrote:

There is lot of manufacturing going on in the EU. With automation it requires less and less low-skilled workers.

"'Machinery and vehicles' is the most important individual product group in the international trade of the EU, accounting for 41 % of the total EU exports and 26 % of imports in 2013. The group records also the largest surplus in EU trade: EUR 275 billion in 2013.

The main exported products within the group are road vehicles, industrial machinery and electrical machinery, while the imports are dominated by electrical machinery, telecommunications equipment and IT products."

(http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Extra-EU_trade_in_manufactured_goods)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2016 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Astus wrote:

"By the same token, it seems unlikely that those in these regions (or Cornwall or other economically peripheral spaces) would feel 'grateful' to the EU for subsidies. Knowing that your business, farm, family or region is dependent on the beneficence of wealthy liberals is unlikely to be a recipe for satisfaction (see James Meek's recent essay in the London Review of Books on Europhobic farmers who receive vast subsidies from the EU). More bizarrely, it has since emerged that regions with the closest economic ties to the EU in general (and not just of the subsidised variety) were most likely to vote Leave. While it may be one thing for an investment banker to understand that they 'benefit from the EU' in regulatory terms, it is quite another to encourage poor and culturally marginalised people to feel grateful towards the elites that sustain them through handouts, month by month. Resentment develops not in spite of this generosity, but arguably because of it. This isn't to discredit what the EU does in terms of redistribution, but pointing to handouts is a psychologically and politically naïve basis on which to justify remaining in the EU."

(http://www.perc.org.uk/project_posts/thoughts-on-the-sociology-of-brexit/)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 1st, 2016 at 6:02 AM

Title: Re: Padmasambhava in Translation

Content:

Malcolm said:

from this perspective, he is saying his teachings are superior to translations.

Astus wrote:

But I assume hardly anyone today would think that a Westerner's similar statement would amount to anything serious. And if there were a group of students who followed such a living buddha, they'd be considered unorthodox and cult-like.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 2nd, 2016 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

davidbrainerd said:

The 'self-view' he doesn't want us to have is a dogma of the self's origin (is it eternal, is it created). He never says we don't exist. He also never says we are only the aggregates, but the exact opposite: the aggregates are not the self.

Astus wrote:

The <http://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=Sakkaya-ditthi> means any of the views that posit a self that identical with the aggregates, that is contained in the aggregates, that is independent of the aggregates, or that owns the aggregates. In other words, there is not any kind of self possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 3rd, 2016 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Rebirth is as illusory and unfounded as this present body and mind. If we try to find what is there to be born again and again, we can only realise that there is no such entity. Similarly, there is no entity passing on from one moment to the next. That's how the true nature of birth is no birth, and of death is no death. When it becomes clear that there is neither birth nor death, it is also obvious how the illusion of existence occurs: by identification with concepts and feelings. Then it is only natural that there is running up and down all over the six realms.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 4th, 2016 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

davidbrainerd said:

Its not as simple as that. There are clearly two minds. In Pali you have nama and citta and it seems to me nama is physical and citta is non-physical. Bodhidharma says (Red Pine's translation, page 21) "But this mind is subtle and hard to see. It's not the same as the sensual mind."

If there is a material/sensual mind and an immaterial/subtle mind, which of the two is reborn? Its obvious. And which is part of the aggregates? The other one. So one mind is not part of the aggregates of which it is said "these are non-self."

Astus wrote:

There are the aggregates with grasping - that is the sensual mind. And there are the aggregates without grasping - that is the subtle mind. It's not about two minds existing at the same time, it'd be neither sensible nor practical to posit a second head. Rather, one has to see the nature of this present mind, and recognise that it is originally pure.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2016 at 4:06 AM

Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth

Content:

undefineable said:

It seems that Buddhist teachers deny something over and above the rebirth of an 'underlying entity' called consciousness (and defined as the mental impression of an external or internal object in relation to a subject), yet stop short of denying rebirth altogether.

Astus wrote:

Beings have both bodies and minds. With rebirth the mind takes a new body. It is this simple. When the body and the mind are analysed, one can find that there is nothing substantial anywhere, and when that is realised, there is no more identification, then there is no more rebirth. But as long as there is identification, there is rebirth, and there is a mind to attain a body again and again.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 7th, 2016 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Britian's upcoming E.U referendum

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the real answer lies in the push factor in the east. People do not decide on emigration simply based on higher relative wages elsewhere. Mostly it is a lack of prospects in the domestic economy that drives them away. "

<https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/07/solution-brexite-lies-eastern-europe/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 9th, 2016 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Does all Zen teach the One-Mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huanbo teaches No Mind as much as One Mind. They mean the same. It should also be clear that 'one' means non-dual, and non-dual means without like and dislike, without existence and non-existence, it is simply the wisdom of emptiness, what has always been the Buddha's and patriarchs' essential message.

"The important thing is to learn the Truth; for without learning that there is really no holy, no pure, no dirty, no big, no small, etc., but only emptiness and non-action and that this alone is ONE MIND and that, always, any adornment is only an expedient to learn the truth, one only clings to illusion."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 10th, 2016 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: Mahanayan canon?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Currently the most popular edition of the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Buddhist_canon is the http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html. Here is the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripit%E1%B9%AD to give you a basic outline, and here is a <http://terebess.hu/zen/szoto/Map-of-the-Taisho.pdf>.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160328122520/http://fodian.net/world/> provides translations following the Taisho categories, while

<http://mbingenheimer.net/tools/bibls/transbibl.html> is a bibliography of translations.

The major edition of the previous Qing era is the

http://www.suttaworld.org/Collection_of_Buddhist/Chiarnlurng_Tripitaka/menu/index.htm, completed in 1738. Its structure is different from the Taisho, has the three main sections of Sutra, Vinaya, and Shastra, where the Sutra section sets up the order as Prajna section, Ratnakuta section, Mahasamnipata section, Avatamsaka section, Nirvana section, Five great foreign translations section, Mahayana single translations section, Agama section, Hinayana single translations section, All sorts of Song, Yuan, Tibetan scriptures section.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Of the thousand or ten thousand people in this school, only three or five [have really understood Buddhism]."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 42)

"With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi."

(Huineng: Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 30)

"The view that practice and realization are not one is skewed outside of the Way. In the Buddha Dharma practice and realization are one and the same. This is the practise of realization, and so from the beginning practice is the whole body of original Awakening. And so the instructions are to not to seek Awakening outside of the practice because the practice itself points directly to original Awakening."

(Dogen: <http://wwwzcn.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>)

"If a person retaining the concept of there being anything to be gained generates the bodhi resolve and then proceeds to cultivate kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, dhyāna absorption, and wisdom, doing so for an incalculable number of asaṃkhyeyas of kalpas, one should realize that, on account of retaining the concept of something to be gained, such a person will not succeed in leaving behind birth and death and will not succeed in progressing towards bodhi."

(Vasubandhu: http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/V-Bcitta_excerpts/VBcitta_X-21_X-10.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I once read there is a quotation from the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra translated as 'even though I have realised the supreme ultimate truth I have gained nothing thereby'. But whenever I searched for it I was unable to locate the source. Would you be able to cast any light?

Astus wrote:

Subhūti said to the Buddha: "World-honored One. When the buddhas attain peerless perfect enlightenment, is it the case that actually nothing is attained?"

"Exactly right. Subhūti, as far as peerless perfect enlightenment is concerned, I have not attained the slightest thing. This is why it is called peerless perfect enlightenment."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 22)

"And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so?"

Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(ch 3)

See the whole of ch 9.

"World-honored One, when the Tathāgata studied under Dīpaṃkara Buddha, there was, in reality, nothing that he attained in the dharma."

(ch 10)

This teaching of "nothing to be attained" is in many sutras, even in the <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/heartv12.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

No problem. There are 21 capacities of Dzogchen practitioners divided into best, medium and average. The best achieve buddhahood in this life. The next 19 achieve buddhahood in the bardo. The last, the average of the average, achieve buddhahood in a nirmanakāya buddhafiield without ever returning to samsara.

Anders said:

On that note, I guess we can also say:

Pure Land: 100%

Astus wrote:

Here is a classic on the question on the success rate from the

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html>:

59. Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda approached the Blessed One and saluted him courteously. And having exchanged with him pleasant and civil greetings, the wandering ascetic Subhadda seated himself at one side and addressed the Blessed One, saying: "There are, Venerable Gotama, ascetics and brahmans who are heads of great companies of disciples, who have large retinues, who are leaders of schools, well known and renowned, and held in high esteem by the multitude, such teachers as Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccayana, Sañjaya Belatthaputta, Nigantha Nataputta. Have all of these attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or has none of them, or is it that some have attained realization and others not?"

60. "Enough, Subhadda! Let it be as it may, whether all of them have attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or whether none of them has, or whether some have attained realization and others not. I will teach you the Dhamma, Subhadda; listen and heed it well, and I will speak."

"So be it, Lord."

61. And the Blessed One spoke, saying: "In whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, there is not found the Noble Eightfold Path, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness. But in whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline there is found the Noble Eightfold Path, there is found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness. Now in this Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, is found the Noble Eightfold Path; and in it alone are also found true ascetics of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness. Devoid of true ascetics are the systems of other teachers. But if, Subhadda, the bhikkhus live righteously, the world will not be destitute of arahats.

And in the <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.095.than.html>:

Master Gotama, when having directly known it, you teach the Dhamma to your disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding, will all the cosmos be led [to release], or a half of it, or a third?

...

Uttiya, suppose that there were a royal frontier fortress with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent, & knowledgeable gatekeeper to keep out those he didn't know and to let in those he did. Patrolling the path around the city, he wouldn't see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. Although he wouldn't know that 'So-and-so many creatures enter or leave the city,' he would know this: 'Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.'

In the same way, the Tathagata isn't concerned with whether all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it will be led to release by means of that [Dhamma]. But he does know this: 'All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led [to release] from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances — those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment — having well-established their minds in the four frames of reference, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for Awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

If you believe that, then practice Pure Land. If you don't, practice something else.

Astus wrote:

I don't see much difference between the Dzogchen and the Pure Land version. And that difference is the very small percentage of superior practitioners who achieve buddhahood in this life, while the rest are beyond normal human perception, just like the Pure Land itself. Apparently both have a faith based 100% success rate.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, of course you don't see any difference between Dzogchen and Pure Land because you do not know Dzogchen and thus do not understand its path. That can be remedied.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say their paths are the same, but their promises of success are very close.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, but your error is claiming that both are faith-based. One is, the other is not.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that with Dzogchen you necessarily gain the divine eye and can perceive other practitioners attaining buddhahood in the intermediate state and in buddha-lands?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

In any case, the only way one can confirm whether what I am saying is true or not (it is true, according the texts), is to actually discover what Dzogchen is. That discovery will never happen on an internet forum.

Astus wrote:

Same could be said about the Pure Land path. Looks like there are more similarities than one would expect.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: Does all Zen teach the One-Mind?

Content:

davidbrainerd said:

So then "One Mind" doesn't mean that we all share one mind? I didn't think so. I was thinking it meant like that we all share the same type of mind, or same essential nature, i.e. that it meant simply we all have/are Buddha Nature. But I encountered a guy in some amazon review of a book who seemed to be arguing that "One Mind" means something like we all share the same mind or self, and it sounded to me like he was arguing for the type of concept in the Upanishads with the concept of everyone being Brahman, except replacing Brahman with Buddha. And that's why I was wandering how wide-spread the concept is.

Astus wrote:

That kind of self/soul/substance based interpretation is clearly off the mark. One mind is the dharmadhatu, the single realm of experience. Being deluded about the one mind means positing subject and object, imagining that there are isolated, substantial elements independent of each other; in other words, grasping at phenomena. Awakening to the one mind is to realise that the concepts of stand alone entities, of self, are merely ideations. That's why misunderstanding the one mind as some universal and eternal entity is a wrong view.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Does all Zen teach the One-Mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The three worlds of samsara arise and return [as] the one mind. Buddhas of past and future transmit the mind by mind not relying on words and letters."

(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/zh-cn/X63n1218_001#0002a24)

"All of you should believe that your mind is Buddha, that this mind is identical with Buddha. The Great Master Bodhidharma came from India to China, and transmitted the One Mind teaching of Mahayana so that it can lead you all to awakening. Fearing that you will be too confused and will not believe that this One Mind is inherent in all of you, he used the Lankavatara Sutra to seal the sentient beings' mind-ground. Therefore, in the Lankavatara Sutra, mind is the essence of all the Buddha's teachings, no gate is the Dharma-gate."

(Mazu Daoyi, in Sun-Face Buddha, p 62)

The teaching of one mind has become a central doctrine in East Asian Buddhism because of the treatise

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html.

Following that work Wonhyo explained it extensively, so did Guifeng Zongmi and Yongming Yanshou in their treatises, who were studied and regularly quoted by Bojo Jinul.

"This one mind is not born with the physical body, nor does it die with the demise of the

body. Though it can't be seen, it operates through the whole body, seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears, smelling with the nose, speaking with the mouth and propelling the hands and legs. There isn't any place where it doesn't function. Seeking the Buddha and Dharma outside of this mind is called the delusion of ordinary people. A buddha is one who understands that this very body is Buddha. That's why nobody will attain Buddhahood who doesn't realize her own mind."

(Bassui: To the Abbess of Jinryoji Temple, in Mud and Water, p 190)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The practical response:

Zazen is the practise of awakening to the reality that all experiences of the six sensory areas are without anything that can be grasped. It is not about scriptures, teachings, methods, or traditions; and at the same time it includes all of that and accomplishes the Buddha's enlightenment.

The historical response:

It is only natural that a Theravadin sees Mahayana as unorthodox and inauthentic. It comes from not comprehending its meaning nor its historical evolution.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 15th, 2016 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Tao said:

Maybe it is not of interest, but I found this in the Wanderling website, can anyone confirm the data?

Astus wrote:

Yes. there are several collections of Zen ancestors from the Song and Ming eras. Similarly, there are compilations of stories of birth in the Pure Land.

In English translation:

https://books.google.hu/books?id=QPn_8kKS3SAC

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=TrYKAAAAYAAJ>

And there are quite a few separate works dedicated to individual teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 15th, 2016 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: Does all Zen teach the One-Mind?

Content:

White Lotus said:

a buddhist approach may be... throw away the key in order to unlock the door of enlightenment. if we rely on words, concepts and names we cannot experience emptiness (or as a christian may put it: God). if we call emptiness Mind then we have already reified something, the same applies to the word Self. even use of the word emptiness is not a direct experience of emptiness and can be misleading.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means simply that all the experiences of the six areas - whatever is seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, thought - are without an abiding, independent nature, that phenomena are not something that one can identify with, call a self. It is not some sort of transcendent experience or realm, and such an interpretation is a mistake. Therefore ideas about God are just ideas, and there is no place for it in Buddhism. Enlightenment is awakening to the lack of any substance in appearances and of any substratum beyond them. When there is no essence imagined, then there is no basis for grasping at or abiding in anything, and without grasping or abiding there is no dissatisfaction and delusion. To conceive emptiness, the absence of substance, as a distinct reality, is just another form of self-identity.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 16th, 2016 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: Japanese monk's vestments

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Between 148 and 170 CE, the Parthian monk An Shigao came to China and translated a work which described the color of monastic robes (Skt. *kāṣāya*) utilized in five major Indian Buddhist sects, called Da Biqu Sanqian Weiyi (Chinese: 大比丘三千威儀).[6] Another text translated at a later date, the *Śāriputrapariṣcchā*, contains a very similar passage with nearly the same information. However, the colors for Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda are reversed. In the earlier source, the Sarvāstivāda are described as wearing deep red robes, while the Dharmaguptaka are described as wearing black robes. The corresponding passage found in the later *Śāriputrapariṣcchā*, in contrast, portrays the Sarvāstivāda as wearing black robes and the Dharmaguptaka as wearing deep red robes.

During the Tang dynasty, Chinese Buddhist monastics typically wore grayish-black robes and were even colloquially referred to as *Ziyi* (Chinese: 緇衣), "those of the black robes." However, the Song dynasty monk Zanning (919–1001 CE) writes that during the earlier Han-Wei period, the Chinese monks typically wore red robes.

According to the Dharmaguptaka vinaya, the robes of monastics should be sewn out of no more than 18 pieces of cloth, and the cloth should be fairly heavy and coarse."

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmaguptaka#Robes>

"Perhaps the most visible sign of this monastic distinction was the monk's clothing. Indeed, a common term for monks in medieval texts is the "black-robed ones" (ziyi). And when referring to monks and laymen, Buddhist texts commonly use the expression, "the black and the white" (zibai). Following this line of inquiry it would be possible to write a detailed study of the relationship between Indian styles of monastic clothing and indigenous Chinese fashion. But more than in the cases of sex or food, clothing provides us a glimpse into the ways in which monks distinguished among themselves, quickly dispelling the picture of a uniform clergy that is painted in secular sources. This is the aspect of the monastic uniform that I focus on below.

As the term "black-robed ones" indicates, Chinese monks often wore black robes, but other colors were also worn. In his *Brief History of the Clergy*, Zanning includes a section on monastic garb in which he relates that during the Han-Wei period, most monks in China wore red robes. An expert in the Vinaya, Zanning further notes that the color of a monk's robes depended in India on the school to which he belonged. Pitch black (zao) for members of the Sarvastivadins, deep red (jiang) for the Dharmaguptakas, blue (qing) for the Mahasamghikas, and so forth. After citing examples from the *Biographies of Chinese monks* who wore robes of various colors, Zanning goes on to describe the variety found in his day, that is, the late tenth century. At that time, a given color of robe was associated with a particular region: deep-black (hei) or red in the Jiangnan region, brown (he) in the area around the capital at Kaifeng, and so forth. Though some difference between the Chinese monk's robe and its Indian counterpart was tolerated, there were limits to the degree of innovation allowed. Zanning is critical of the practice of wearing deep-black robes, and even more so of monks who had in his day taken to wearing white robes. The wearing of either color, he insists, is forbidden in the Vinaya."

(John Kieschnick: *The Eminent Monk*, p 29)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 17th, 2016 at 1:35 AM

Title: Re: Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

I can see his point, can't you?

Astus wrote:

And what is that point?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 17th, 2016 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Matylda said:

almost to the XX century there were no mutual contacts between theravada, zen,

tibetan vajrayana etc. Therefore after long ages of very autonomous development of each tradition, often in one country, the new meeting was sort of surprise for each party involved.

Astus wrote:

That's not exactly true. Chinese and Tibetans lived in the same empire for a very long time, just like they do now, and during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) Tibetan Buddhism was actually the state religion. In South-East Asia, similarly to India, Mahayana and Vajrayana were dominant forms of Buddhism until the 13th century. It should also not be forgotten that the whole area was a neighbour of the Chinese Empire, and Vietnam has both a Mahayana and a Theravada tradition in the same country.

Matylda said:

Anyway it is best to keep to one's own tradition without attempt to make judgments of what is and what is not 'true' Buddhism. It will only involve mundane thinking and operating of worldly dharmas in minds of practitioners. Finally it may end up in sectarianism. This is in my opinion truly non-dharmic activity.

Astus wrote:

Mahayana defines itself by rendering a set of teachings into a lower position. The Abhidhamma Pitaka of the Pali Canon has the book Kathavatthu discussing numerous controversial points to define what is orthodox and what is not. Critical assessments and debates cannot and should not be avoided. The problem occurs when it turns into a personal and emotional matter, and that makes it a fine test for one's Dharma practice.

Matylda said:

common language which they use to communicate is mostly.. English.. so basically non-dharmic language

Astus wrote:

The only language that might be called Dharmic is the Pali, as it is used only in Buddhist literature, while all the other languages exist as natural ways of communication.

Matylda said:

there are many mutual misinterpretations between traditions based simply on non-dharmic, dualistic language, lacking any proper dharma terms

Astus wrote:

All languages are dualistic. Terminology is simply a matter of an agreed upon glossary.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 17th, 2016 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: No Difference in Results?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Accordingly, although these two vehicles are the same in that they both result in the

attainment of buddhahood, they are different in the understanding or lack of understanding present in the methods for attaining it."

(Jigme Lingpa: Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 88)

"Concerning [the seventh distinction of the mantras], through their levels: In the dialectics [the levels] are held to number eleven by differentiating the successive renunciations and antidotes. The mantras, however are superior because [they progress] to the twelfth level of the Unattached Lotus Endowed (ma-chags padma-can), the thirteenth level of the Holder of Indestructible Reality (rdo-rje 'dzin-pa) and so on."
(Dudjom Rinpoche: The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, p 254)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 18th, 2016 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: Zen Buddhism?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

To clarify (again) I think he was suggesting that all that was needed was already within the Pali Canon and to move that far away from it, the point of petitioning deities etc was tantamount to justifying the question "was still 'Buddhism'!"?

Astus wrote:

Here's a traditional response:

The Pali Canon explains how to become an arhat, but does not tell you how to become a buddha. Therefore it does not contain everything one needs if one wants to attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

From another perspective:

Mahayana is how Buddhism developed in Northern India and in other countries. It provides an extensive record of answering personal and cultural needs of people over two thousand years and various cultures, implementing and transmitting the Buddha's message again and again. Compared to that, relying only on the Pali canon means limited resources of only a few hundred years. So, even if one says that only the suttas can be the authentic teachings for historical reasons, the Mahayana is on the same level in reliability as the Abhidhamma and the commentaries of Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2016 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: karma in india before buddhism vs in buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Johannes Bronkhorst: <https://books.google.com/books?id=fjU6AwAAQBAJ>,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4GNG5KuH73QC>

Richard Francis Gombrich: <https://books.google.com/books?id=YMILAQAAMAAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2016 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: karma in india before buddhism vs in buddhism

Content:

dreambow said:

All the scriptures in the world, before Buddhism, after Buddhism will not penetrate the great mystery. Karma is deeply multi layered, intent verses action, subtle, inscrutable, imponderable. All the concepts we ramble on about will not penetrate the workings of karma. Its like a knot within a tangle within a knot and we must simply say we know not.

Astus wrote:

That's unnecessary mystification, not scholarship or study.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 26th, 2016 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

makewhisper said:

Hi there, I have three questions concerning the practice of shikantaza.

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza has a couple of versions. There are those who teach it as a body-centred practice, where the posture is the most important. There are those who teach it as a concentration practice where one focuses on the breath and the abdomen. There are those who teach it as practice-enlightenment where there is neither grasping nor releasing of appearances. And there are likely a dozen other forms as well.

So, when you say "the practice of shikantaza", what do you mean?

makewhisper said:

1) When thoughts enter the mind, is the best practice to become aware/mindful of "thinking" at the next possible moment?

Astus wrote:

If you focus on the body/breath, keep your attention there. If your practice is enlightenment, you have nothing to do with thoughts, they leave on their own anyway.

There is actually a simple logic at work here. If you concentrate on breath/body, you don't meddle with thoughts and other sensory inputs, but let them come and go. If you are stable in your recognition that there is nothing to grasp, you have left behind the intention to fixate on anything, in other words, dropped body and mind.

makewhisper said:

2) What should I make of impulses to, for example, move my hands or shift my body

during zazen? What's the best method for overcoming the dichotomy between resisting an impulse and indulging in an impulse? Is it a problem if I move my hands? Or is it merely a problem if I do so without awareness?

Astus wrote:

Those are things you should experiment with. Then you will see the changes in your body and mind as they happen. As long as you uphold an idea of what and how shikantaza should happen, everything else is a disturbance. That is, to consider any specific state of body and mind as the proper method is grasping at body and mind.

makewhisper said:

3) Does "just sitting" encompass other actions such as moving one's hands with awareness?

Astus wrote:

If you just sit you just sit. What does that have to do with awareness? Of course, if you think it is a sort of mindfulness you cultivate, then moving one's hands are OK in mindfulness, and not moving one's hands without mindfulness is not OK. But is that just sitting?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 27th, 2016 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

Originally there was only one 'version' - dropping of body and mind... all other are made up things... specially in the XIX and XX century..

Astus wrote:

Dogen seems to have accepted following the breath as a method (http://shoresofzen.com/index_htm_files/KeizanAndDogenonBreathMeditation.pdf), while Keizan gave various instructions for different obstacles in the Zazen Yojinki. Although it is debatable whether they can be called shikantaza.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 27th, 2016 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

makewhisper said:

What I find is that thoughts come without my control, they run their course without my control, so I avoid trying to control them. When thoughts come, they crowd out awareness of thoughts.

Astus wrote:

If thoughts move without your control, how could you ever do anything about them? If

you think there is awareness separate from thoughts, isn't that just another thought? Sometimes there are thoughts, sometimes there are no thoughts. To favour one or the other is falling into the extremes of existence and annihilation. That's why the practice is neither-thinking / no-thought - if a thought comes, OK; if no thought comes, OK.

makewhisper said:

However, I find that when I become aware that they're there, the thoughts usually stop. I think before I was engaging in thought-stopping where I'd see a thought and then actively seek to diminish it.

Astus wrote:

Do you know the Tenpuku version of the Fukanzazengi? It says instead of the "think of not thinking" part: "When thought arises, be aware of it. When you are aware of it, it will disappear. Put aside everything outside continuously, and make yourself into one piece." That is from the instructions of Changlu Zongze, but this phrasing and calling it the essential art of zazen goes back even further to Guifeng Zongmi. It is the simple observation of you have discovered for yourself as well, that once one becomes conscious of one's thoughts, one does not continue to think about it. It is similar to the fourth method given in the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.020.than.html>, if one interprets it as the method to calm thoughts.

makewhisper said:

But I've found that reminding myself that I'm not in control is useful.

Astus wrote:

That is somewhat like meditating on the theme of no-self. But again, that's not exactly practice-awakening.

makewhisper said:

And when I'm aware of the thoughts, there is awareness. But I believe I'm attached to that awareness. When I'm aware of awareness, there's usually a shift in my visual perception that lasts for a few seconds before my eyes move on their own and bring distraction. Perhaps it's a mistake to strive after awareness, to cling to awareness, if dropped-off body and mind is the realization of shikantaza as practice-enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

There are the ideas to do something and not to do something. It is of course quite normal, but then one should be clear about how to do that properly, and that means learning the Dharma. If you want to go with the ideal form of zazen, there is nothing to do at all, no state to accomplish, and no experience to get rid of. As you sit you have to immediately recognise that all the six types of appearances are such, there is nothing to improve or decrease, and there is no one to do or know anything either.

makewhisper said:

As for the movement of hands and such, I've gotten better at remaining still. I guess if just sitting is just sitting then moving one's hands is ill-advised.

Astus wrote:

Just sitting does not mean sitting still. It means not conceptualising sitting. You cannot sit still anyway, unless you're a corpse.

makewhisper said:

I guess in the instant that you move your hands there's an awareness of movement that is just another empty phenomenon appearing and then passing away, something the deluded mind grasps after.

Astus wrote:

That is lot of worrying.

makewhisper said:

While just sitting, the practice-enlightenment of dropped-off mind, is sudden---the result of nothing---and ungraspable?

Astus wrote:

Such Zen terminology can be misleading. Try to translate it to ordinary English.

makewhisper said:

But how does this inform practice?

Astus wrote:

The practice is the experience confirming that all things (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily feelings, thoughts) are such, that is, they appear and disappear on their own. There is no one controlling or perceiving them, as they are all dependently originated ephemeral, illusory instances of experience. That is why there is nothing at all that can be grasped, as attachment itself is a conceptual fabrication of a subject grasping an object, while if you actually look at the experience itself there are no subjects nor objects.

makewhisper said:

Is it just a matter of sitting down and taking the posture with faith in the Buddha mind, and in doing so, hopefully relinquishing the delusion that we can control both the realization of the Buddha mind (through practice) and the conditions of samsaric existence?

Astus wrote:

That is practising with the aim of awakening, not practice-enlightenment. Plus it is the wrong attitude to practice itself, where one merely hopes for some realisation without actually realising anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 29th, 2016 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: Kensho and "stages of enlightenment"

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

I'm wondering if the Zen understanding of enlightenment

Astus wrote:

There are quite a few versions out there. Which one do you mean, whose interpretation?

Lazy_eye said:

can be mapped loosely onto the "four stages of enlightenment"

Astus wrote:

If we are OK to disregard the whole distinction between sravakayana and bodhisattvayana.

Lazy_eye said:

I know Zen has an initial enlightenment (kensho) and then ultimately full enlightenment (satori).

Astus wrote:

That is an idea coming from Japanese Rinzai. Soto Zen does not subscribe to it. As for Korean and Chinese teachings, it's possible to find similarities with such a gradualist view.

Lazy_eye said:

Do these two paradigms match up, sort of?

Astus wrote:

Kensho - stream entry. Satori - arhat.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 29th, 2016 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

makewhisper said:

One thing I don't understand is the role of "conscious endeavor" in all of this. Should I strive to be aware of my thoughts and sensations and perceptions? That is, should I focus my awareness on my these dharmas when the thought to do so occurs?

Astus wrote:

On the gradual path endeavour is important, it is the fourth paramita. On the sudden path there is no effort involved. Thoughts, and all experiences, are events that one is necessarily aware of. Then why add awareness on top of awareness? Whatever appears is a conscious appearance, otherwise it does not exist as an appearance.

makewhisper said:

I recently read Dogen's "Zazengi: Rules for Zazen" in The Art of Just Sitting, and he says:

"Zazen . . . is not conscious endeavor."

Astus wrote:

One important thing to learn when dealing with Buddhism is that one is reading a translation. So, while Kazuaki's version (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye) of Zazengi says:

"Zazen is not thinking of good, not thinking of bad. It is not conscious endeavor. It is not introspection. Do not desire to become a buddha. Let sitting or lying down drop away."

Look at the others:

<http://antaiji.org/en/classics/zazengi/>:

"Do not think of good, do not think of evil. Zazen has nothing to do with the function of intellect, volition, or consciousness, nor with memory, imagination, or contemplation. Do not seek to become a buddha. Be free from the discrimination of sitting and lying down."

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazengi/zazengi.translation.html>:

"Good is not thought of; evil is not thought of. It is not mind, intellect or consciousness; it is not thoughts, ideas or perceptions. Do not figure to make a buddha; slough off sitting or reclining."

<http://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/shobo/056zazng.pdf>:

"Do not think about what is good or what is bad. Do not exercise your discriminatory mind or weigh and judge your mind's remembrances, concepts, and reflections! Do not aim at becoming a Buddha, and drop off any concern with whether you are sitting or lying down."

<http://www.zen.org/dharma-text/zazengi-how-sit>:

"Don't think of good. Don't think of bad. It is not a matter of mind, intention, or consciousness; it is not a matter of thoughts, ideas, or perceptions. Zazen is not self-consciousness or self-contemplation. Don't sit to become a Buddha. Release ideas of sitting and lying down."

So, what becomes clear here, and what reflects on the way Kazuaki's translations are done, is that where it says "It is not conscious endeavor. It is not introspection." is a simplification and reinterpretation of "It is not mind, intellect or consciousness; it is not thoughts, ideas or perceptions." that is actually in the original: 心意識にあらず、念想観にあらず。

makewhisper said:

I'm having trouble reconciling the idea of bringing awareness to thoughts---"When thought arises, be aware of it" (do this when that happens)---with the idea of foregoing "conscious endeavor." I've probably misunderstood what Dogen meant by "conscious endeavor." Maybe he's making the claim that zazen is not conscious endeavor---there is no striving---because it's "confirming that all things . . . are such" as you put it.

Astus wrote:

This is a matter of what and how you practice. Don't forget the first part of https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html, where he points to the original perfection and the necessity of practice being equally important. Although it is popular to interpret it in the extreme way of "must sit", the point is rather that it is not enough to understand original enlightenment, one has to embody it, and zazen is embodying buddhahood. It should also be added here that zazen is simply the easy and simple method to realise buddhahood, but enlightenment is not limited to sitting.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2016 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Kensho and "stages of enlightenment"

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

I've heard some people say that the bodhiattvayana encompasses the sravakayana (including progression through the stages of enlightenment as taught in the nikayas), but because of the different aspiration does not become an arahant. Is this a misunderstanding? Or perhaps reflective of some schools and not others?

Astus wrote:

It encompasses it in the sense that a bodhisattva becomes free of emotional afflictions by the 8th bhumi, at attains the level equal to an arhat. But that's a comparison relevant only from a certain perspective.

Lazy_eye said:

Soto would be the sudden enlightenment view, correct? And Rinzai the gradualist?

Astus wrote:

Every Zen school claims to teach sudden enlightenment, as they all nominally descend from Huineng. Calling Hakuin's version of Rinzai gradualist is somewhat of a criticism.

Lazy_eye said:

If so, that would explain why Thich Nhat Hanh, for instance, is able to accommodate the Pali Canon to the degree that he does.

Astus wrote:

TNH is not a Japanese Rinzai teacher, so there is no connection either.

Lazy_eye said:

That was my impression -- sort of what I was trying to get at in the OP.

Astus wrote:

If we allow a little flexibility, it can be clear that all forms of Buddhism aims for freedom from grasping at appearances. That's what one learns in Theravada, in Mahayana, in Zen, and even in Vajrayana. There are differences in certain methods and doctrines of course.

Lazy_eye said:

I'm not aware of this being the case regarding the bhumis, at least in East Asian traditions such as Zen or Pure Land -- but again this may simply reflect my ignorance. Do practitioners here think about the bhumis and see them as concrete goals in practice?

Astus wrote:

The whole bhumis system is irrelevant and unused, and has been like that for a long time. Zen is not a gradual path, so setting up grades is contrary to it. Pure Land aims for reaching enlightenment only in the next life, so there is no point thinking about matters that are only confusing for ordinary deluded beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2016 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: How to drop effort

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

How do you drop effort, without producing more effort?

Astus wrote:

Effort is wanting to reach a goal. Effortlessness - that is ultimately one of the doors of liberation: apranihita - is attained by recognising that there is nothing to attain. That recognition is the realisation of emptiness, so, in order to be free from effort one has to gain insight. It can be done with practises like contemplating how the past thought is no more, the future thought is not yet, and the present thought does not abide. Therefore it is actually impossible to grasp a thought or aspire for anything, and that is seeing the natural perfection.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 1st, 2016 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Kensho and "stages of enlightenment"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So, people either totally get it, or they totally don't. No shades of grey?

Astus wrote:

On the gradual path of the bodhisattva, before the first bhumi there is only a conceptual view of emptiness, but it can and should be a correct view. From the first stage on it is a

working, experiential insight into emptiness, i.e. prajnaparamita, but with varying degrees of application. Buddhahood is the completion not only of wisdom but also the qualities necessary for the all around use of skillful means. That is one generic description of the steps, however, one can find various interpretations. Using the stages model is one way to describe the path and set up the common sequence of things to learn. The drawback is to interpret it as a fixed order of things. Eventually, as we can see, it turned into a merely theoretical doctrine with no real use, I guess because it was a fitting teaching in India at one point, but not for later generations.

As for Zen, it is possible to find some descriptions of stages of insight, especially in the sudden enlightenment gradual cultivation model, but even there it is not about a clear set of stages to go through. We could also say that people go through the three stages of approaching, recognising, and cultivating, but all three are about the same thing. It might also be noted here that the bodhisattva path is like that as well, but because that had become a venerated teaching, people moved away from it to remain in touch with the practical application and to avoid complications.

As for totally getting it or not, it is a fairly simple matter.

"To practice in every moment of thought is called the true nature. To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of prajñā, to cultivate this practice is the practice of prajñā. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body. Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 30)

In other words, to be attached to the five aggregates is painful and unsatisfying. To not be attached is calm and peaceful. That is what has been stated from the very beginning in the four noble truths. As for the path, the emphatic point in Zen is to go directly to recognising suchness, and it's not about studying and cultivating other things to prepare one for such an insight. That's how stages are irrelevant, and that's what makes it a sudden method.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 5th, 2016 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

makewhisper said:

"When you hear a sound, instead of remaining outside of it, and thereby fighting it, just become that sound yourself. Really being that sound yourself, that sound won't disturb you anymore. The "me" that perceives the sound becomes one with the sound, leaving only the sound itself. This is emptying yourself

Astus wrote:

What does it mean to be one with the sound? That there is no observing it, no judging it, no letting go of it, no perpetuating it, there is just the sound without any relation created with it. This is achieved through concentration, through wilful focus on a single object, until only that one thing is left and everything else is forgotten.

makewhisper said:

But there still remains the dharma, the object. So next, empty that too! Again, by really being thus, you become unaware of even being thus.

Astus wrote:

This is the shift from maintaining the object of concentration to simply maintaining the concentration, the state of mind. It could be said that here one moves from rupa-dhyana to arupa-dhyana.

makewhisper said:

This is a state of samadhi: both person and dharma are empty; subject and object are empty. This is called the great death. In describing the great death, Dogen Zenjui says, 'body and mind drop away.' When body and mind spontaneously drop away, you transcend the bondage of limited consciousness.

Astus wrote:

I think those are too big words. What was described was a temporary experience of calmness.

makewhisper said:

This passage stuck out to me because I often have a song stuck in my head when I'm practicing, and it persists even when I become aware of it in a way that random thoughts do not. The song just repeats itself interminably, and I've been ill-advisedly trying to fight that.

Astus wrote:

Do you want to get rid of breathing? Your hands? Your belly? Your back? There are so many things we could say they persist.

makewhisper said:

Hakuyu's writing suggests to me that I could "empty myself" by simply becoming the song or the thought or whatever dharma I'm objectifying in the moment.

Astus wrote:

Why not give it a try and see what happens?

makewhisper said:

I think I worried that such an approach would not be shikantaza, practice-realization, because it seems akin to taking an object of meditation.

Astus wrote:

There is nothing wrong with practising concentration. It is a sound method that helps one to relax and put aside ideation, although at the same time one can go wrong with becoming too tense from trying to maintain a specific state. As for just sitting, it is a very simple thing, and all it needs is the understanding that no matter what thought or other phenomenon occur, they necessarily and inevitably pass away, hence there is no need to do anything about it.

makewhisper said:

But what I get from Hakuyu's work is that mind and body dropping off is "spontaneous" or "automatic" and intrinsically not the result of effort.

Astus wrote:

When one is focused on one thing, everything else is left on its own, so they just come and go. They can come and go because they are left on their own. For instance, when one concentrates on the breath, it is only breathing that matters. Then one should eventually recognise that there is no effort in breathing, it happens anyway. And if one cares to look into what breathing is, it turns out that it is nothing in particular that one can grasp as breath, it is merely a concept.

makewhisper said:

So it makes no sense to make an effort at practice-realization of emptiness/buddha-nature. He seems to suggest that the emptying of the object is a spontaneous experience equivalent to the "great death" whereas the emptying of the subject can be accomplished with some practical application.

Astus wrote:

There is the wrong attitude to just wait for some realisation to happen. It won't. Furthermore, shikantaza is the realisation, because it is seeing clearly, as first hand experience, that there is nothing to grasp, nothing to identify with, nothing to attain, and no one to attain it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 5th, 2016 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

I think you go simply too far.. why do not send questioner to qualified zen master? what is the point of giving answer with very limited insight, and altogether it is just petty judgement of contemporary zen master teachings...

Is there no any restriction on the zen forum concerning how far we may go, without taking undeservedly position of zen teacher in this public space after all?

Astus wrote:

This is a forum, intended for discussions. The usual "go visit a teacher" advice has already been posted twice

(<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=347592#p347592>,
<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=348076#p348076>), and makewhisper has
already written of the plans to
<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=348121#p348121>.

If you think what I wrote is incorrect, please go on and correct it.

As for my comments on the quoted instructions, they are not criticisms of Maezumi at all. Or do you think it is inappropriate and unseemly to talk about teachings?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 6th, 2016 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

it is about possible misinterpretation, not about criticism...

Astus wrote:

Misinterpretation is possible even between close friends. But if you can read a different meaning in the quoted text, I'd be happy to read it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2016 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

Well it does not have anything to do with concentration.

Astus wrote:

So you think that Maezumi is teaching something that's wrong and should not call it shikantaza?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2016 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

No he did not teach in this sense wrong.. I related the passage to your comment, nothing else. You wanted me to write about misinterpretation, so it is what I did.

Astus wrote:

I see. And how does that differ from what is found in Maezumi's instructions? He seems to talk about concentration. What do you think it is actually about?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2016 at 12:38 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

Yes.. please give me exact quote from Roshi's writting which you are referring to.

Astus wrote:

It was posted <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=349399#p349399> by makewhisper that I have commented to.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2016 at 1:23 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

Concentration is not zazen.

Astus wrote:

We agree on that.

Matylda said:

Anyway in English translation of Maezumi there is nothing about wilful concentration etc.

Astus wrote:

So how do you interpret this line?

"When you hear a sound, instead of remaining outside of it, and thereby fighting it, just become that sound yourself."

And then the second stage?

"But there still remains the dharma, the object. So next, empty that too! Again, by really being thus, you become unaware of even being thus."

What I read there is an instruction for concentration practice, not shikantaza.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2016 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

Definitely not...

Astus wrote:

Why not? What does it mean then?

Matylda said:

Anyway Roshi talks here about the realm of realisation, not about calmness of mind. ... He is using Hakuin's great death and Dogen's dropping body and mind as synonyms of enlightenment to explain the final result of unfolding enlightenment. ... And again he clearly says that it 'transcends' limited consciousness. Right?

Astus wrote:

He talks of two stages. First by "becoming the sound" one loses the self. Then, in some unspecified manner, one has to lose the object as well.

Does shikantaza have two stages? I have not heard of such a thing yet. And if there are no two stages in shikantaza, how could it be what is talked about here?

What is it to "become the sound"? Did Dogen teach such a thing? Or anyone else?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2016 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

this is realisation of selflessness, or optiness of person or subject
one gives up all conditioning of the grasping self.. then you are the sound itself

Astus wrote:

He advises to be the sound, says nothing about realising that there is no self, rather it is the result of becoming the sound that one abandons the subjective viewer. As the quote says: "The "me" that perceives the sound becomes one with the sound, leaving only the sound itself. This is emptying yourself"

So, there is still nothing said about how one "becomes the sound", if that is not simply concentration.

Matylda said:

This is realisation of emptiness of object.. in deep realisation of selflessness you realise finally nature of all phenomena.

Astus wrote:

If with the realisation of no-self comes the realisation of the emptiness of object, then there is no point in differentiating the two.

Matylda said:

Then one attains complete enlightenment, not only selflessness of person..

Astus wrote:

Since with selflessness comes objectlessness, there can be no such thing as realising only no-self.

Matylda said:

Teachings of Shikan taza as it is popular in the West concerning sitting came in the XX century.. it was work of Sawaki Kodo..

Astus wrote:

There are other Soto teachers in the West besides the followers of Sawaki. Like the students of <http://www.sfzc.org/>, <http://www.shastaabbey.org/index.html>, <http://www.wzcc.org/>, <http://www.nebraskazencenter.org/>.

Matylda said:

unspecified manner - no, it is in samadhi of selflessness it is not unspecified

Astus wrote:

See above. If the samadhi of selflessness means realising the emptiness of objects, then there is no difference at all. Also, it has not been clarified what else is "becoming the sound" if not concentration. Realising selflessness is not a method but a result.

Matylda said:

shikan taza contains this 'double' realisation of selflessness of subject and object

Astus wrote:

Emptiness of self and phenomena is a general Mahayana doctrine, not a technique.

Matylda said:

Two stages are in position of madhyamaka of Nagarjuna

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the two truths or the twofold emptiness? In any case, they are not methods.

Matylda said:

Dogen speaks about this kind of realisation

Astus wrote:

Maezumi says "become that sound yourself". It's not a realisation, it is an instruction to do it. Or do you think one can just do realisation? If yes, how?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 9th, 2016 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

I must admit I don't understand Nichiren. I think I understand Shinran

Astus wrote:

On one hand, it's the same for me. However, if I look at Queequeg's post:

Queequeg said:

NMRK is a sudden practice. The Sudden Teaching is the complete and immediate revelation of the Buddha's Mind. All those things said about the Buddha apply here - beyond words, beyond conception, indescribable, etc. etc. No one understands it when it's revealed, even when they see it directly, except Buddhas. However, once you see it, even if you don't understand what you saw, you can't unsee it. NMRK is aspirational for those who want to see. It's affirmational for those who have caught a glimpse, as well as those fluently coursing in it.

Astus wrote:

it tells me that Nichiren taught a faith based method of recitation, just like Honen and Shinran, except that he claimed to teach something more than that, even though apparently he did not. That is, it is all "beyond words, beyond conception, indescribable", what is in other words: faith. There is neither calming nor insight in Nichiren's teaching, and even though ichinen sanzen seems to have a doctrinal relevance, it hasn't, because it explains nothing why repeating a text's title would make one a buddha in this life. All I have found so far are merely claims that in some mysterious way one's buddha-nature is recovered through repetition.

But, if there is something more to it, I hope that it will be clarified here.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2016 at 1:05 AM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

Shinran's is sudden as well ... because his birth is already settled now, in the present.)

Astus wrote:

That is "sudden" only in the sense of an assured birth, not in any actual attainment or realisation, unlike in Zen and Tiantai where immediacy means actual enlightenment. As for having shinjin is equal to being a buddha, that is only figurative speech, in the same way that we could say all beings are buddhas because they have buddha-nature. And while talking like that may sound nice, it has no practical relevance besides boosting some people's morale.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2016 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since those are eight consciousnesses, isn't it quite logical that they belong to the aggregate that is actually called consciousness? Vasubandhu and Sthiramati says it is.

The complete explanation is given by Vasubandhu:

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Analysis_of_the_Five_Skandhas, in English translation with Sthiramati's commentary published as <https://books.google.com/books?id=xa0VBgAAQBAJ>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2016 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Queequeg said:

First, the object of faith is different. In Pure Land the object of faith is Amida, and particularly his vow to draw everyone who calls on him to be reborn in Sukhavati. In Nichiren, it's the Primordial Shakyamuni Buddha.

Astus wrote:

That's fairly evident.

Queequeg said:

The word "faith" is also a little different. For Nichiren, when he refers to faith 信 shin its from 信解 shinge or adhimukti, rather than derived from 信 shin as related to sraddha or prasada.

Astus wrote:

That means little unless there is a definition of those terms by Nichiren. First of all, regarding the term, it is how

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=124473#p124473>, one should consider the Chinese first and the Sanskrit second, especially when a teacher like Nichiren probably has never encountered the Sanskrit version and could not understand any Sanskrit. As for how dedication (adhimukti) became faith-understanding, my guess is that - just as the term is explained in Chinese - one is dedicated when one aspires towards understanding with faith. So, in <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/ott/PART-1/4> (although it seems to be a disputed text), we can find an explanation in line with the above explanation:

Volume six of On "The Words and Phrases," commenting on this, says, "Looking at the matter from the viewpoint of the Great Vehicle, we may say that the two words 'belief' and 'understanding' refer to the two paths [of insight and practice]. First one rids oneself of doubt, and therefore this is called belief. Then one proceeds to embark on [the path of practice], and this is called understanding. The term 'belief' applies to both paths, but the term 'understanding' applies only to the path of practice. Therefore the path of practice is termed 'understanding.'"

Queequeg said:

My understanding is that its that point when the dharma first appears in the mind, but before there is any judgment about it - just appearance.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me you refer to some sort of unreflected experience. However, the problem there is is that while theoretically all appearances could be like that in their first instance, following that one integrates it into one's conceptual framework in order to be able to interact with it. In other words, such mindlessness is impractical and pointless. Furthermore, one always needs wisdom to see through appearances and comprehend both conceptually and experientially their emptiness.

Queequeg said:

In the sense that subject and object arise together, there is the implication that the subject IS the object, and so when we "approve" of an object, we are that object.

Astus wrote:

The subject cannot be the object, otherwise there is no distinction, consequently they do not arise at all.

Queequeg said:

The 16th Chapter goes on to the famous exposition of Shakyamuni's life span - dust motes of dust motes of aeons of aeons. In grokking the Buddha's life span, we are thereby instantly integrated with the Buddha's life span, ie. The Buddha. And that, as far as I can tell, is the Sudden Teaching of the Lotus Sutra. That is what is referenced in the formula Namu (I devote/venerate/worship/affirm/aspire to/accept/etc.) the Sublime Dharma of the Lotus Blossom Scripture.

Astus wrote:

What is a sudden teaching in saying that Shakyamuni has an eternal lifespan? How does that bring one to realise the suchness of one's own life?

Queequeg said:

The benefit of Adhimukti the Buddha's life span is then explained in the next chapter where the Buddha explains that if a person can adhimukti the Buddha's life span for a single instant, their benefit is greater than that of all the pre-Lotus bodhisattvas.

Astus wrote:

That's like saying that if one believes the Buddha, there will be great benefits. It's not the same as attaining enlightenment.

So, maybe I'm missing something in your explanation here, but I still don't see any difference in faith besides the object of faith.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2016 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

1. only if realisation contains both at once.. however as I said before it does not come all at once

1.2 in Japan there is clear distinction between selflessness of person and selflessness of object. Realising only no-self of the self itself is not complete yet. To realise both emptiness/selflessness of both one may call complete

2. What is difference in soto? Practice and enlightenment are one, not two.. it is specific for this teaching and also meaning of shikan taza..

2.1 So we may safely say that there is no method in zen...

2.2 Here instruction or method and realisation are not two... to understand it one has to follow realised master...

Astus wrote:

That is, you say:

Realisation doesn't contain both, and there are two stages. At the same time, practice is enlightenment and there is no method. To understand what all it is, one needs to follow a realised master.

Those are three contradictory statements. If there is no method, one cannot move even from unrealised to realised, much less from a lower realisation to a higher one.

Following a realised master is meaningless, because there is nothing at all such a person can say or do, because there is no path at all, no method, nothing to teach or transmit. Even some magical version of handing over enlightenment is impossible, because that would still need a method to do it.

Matylda said:

Generally I just refuted claim that it is about concentration of which Roshi did not talk about

Astus wrote:

So, instead of taking the statement "becoming the sound" as a concentration method, what you propose is an impossibility.

- We both agree that shikantaza does not involve concentration.
- We both agree that shikantaza is practice-enlightenment.
- What we do not agree on is that the quote from Maezumi is an instruction for shikantaza.

As I see it, it cannot be, and one of the reasons is that in shikantaza there are no two stages of realising separately the emptiness of self and the emptiness of phenomena, one has full realisation right from the beginning. It is also not the case that there is no method, since zazen can be described clearly and precisely, just as it's done on

<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>, and even on the <http://zen.rinnou.net/zazen/sitting.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 10th, 2016 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

That is shinjin as I understand it, it's not "enlightenment" ("getting the money") but it's also not "having buddha-nature" ("having a ticket") instead, it is simultaneously both and neither: it is having the winning ticket but not yet the money, which already has effects on you even though technically, you're still poor. This is figurative.

Astus wrote:

Good point. But I'd add that the buddha-nature teaching is not a mere potentiality, but when one has faith in it, it means that one has the conviction that one can actually attain unsurpassed enlightenment, and such a faith is taught to be a prerequisite in Zen for instance.

Yuren said:

We say that unsurpassed awakening [bodhi] has faith as its cause.

The causes of awakening are innumerable, but if stated as faith, this covers everything
Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra

Astus wrote:

I'd guess that the Nirvana Sutra doesn't mean faith in Amitabha, but rather faith in the sutra and/or buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 11th, 2016 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Thoughts and impulses

Content:

Matylda said:

What you may find on general websites of rinzai and soto are very basic instructions how to sit in zazen, how to regulate body breathing and mind.... those are not instructions you may receive from the master.. it is just very outer knowledge of zen for not informed or rather public outer presentation for interested.

Astus wrote:

In that case, even though there is no method in Zen, it sounds quite complicated and layered.

Matylda said:

However when we look at Maezumi's statement it has nothing to do with the method of concentration, simple instructions etc. It is about practice-realisation which are

inseparable. Mixing these two presentations makes even more confusion.

Astus wrote:

So, here is a more complete quote, to put the original one in context:

"Sitting and just thinking about all sorts of things, one after another, is not zazen; in fact, it's daydreaming! So when sitting, cast aside all these involvements and affairs; just try to sit well.

Occasionally I say "just sit," but you may find that a little hard to do. So you can do it gradually: First try to make yourself empty. If you are working on koans or on breathing, totally put yourself into your koan or into your breathing. Let it occupy you completely. If you are practicing shikantaza, it's especially hard to do this. In all probability, you are not "just sitting," but "just thinking," "just imagining," or just something else. So in order to get past all that and truly just sit, you must try to cut off clinging to the senses. When you hear a sound, instead of remaining outside of it, and thereby fighting it, just become that sound yourself. ..."

(The Art of Just Sitting, p 83)

That is, he gives the "becoming the sound" section as a preliminary method, not as equivalent to just sitting.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 11th, 2016 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Queequeg said:

When Nichiren refers to faith 信, its not faith in the sense of grasping an object and then willfully putting trust or belief in it. If anything, its a removal of resistance to very simply "hearing the teaching". That is why its a teaching appropriate for even a person with no capacity. What Nichiren is getting at in terms of "faith" is something actually pretty close to... adhimukti.

Astus wrote:

I don't really see the difference you make here. As your quotes and comments said, faith is the initial stage where one accepts the teachings as valid, even though there is no understanding yet, and that trust is what allows one to begin practice and learning. This sounds to me no different from how faith is part of the Buddhist teachings in both Sravakayana and Mahayana.

Queequeg said:

I'm not quite sure where you are going with this.

Astus wrote:

That faith is simply faith in the teachings, the initial stage on the path, and nothing more.

Queequeg said:

Lastly, though, you seem to assume that "emptiness" is the end goal of Lotus Buddhism

Astus wrote:

I meant it in the madhyamika sense and did not consider Tiantai interpretation. That is, in madhyamaka emptiness is dependent origination, and the two together is the middle way itself. But I think this is besides the topic here.

Queequeg said:

Again, not believe, but actually see the Buddha, grok the Buddha, in his full breadth and depth for even a single moment. Isn't that by definition, enlightenment? If you can see the Buddha in full, what do you not see?

Astus wrote:

What I cannot see is how reciting the title of a sutra creates such an insight. I can understand the logic behind the Pure Land doctrine of reciting the name and thus attaining birth in a buddha-land. But how can recitation generate wisdom?

Queequeg said:

Just to criticize your whole approach here

Astus wrote:

I simply try to be as clear as possible with how I understand the topic, in the hope that you can respond with some clarifying statements and arguments.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 11th, 2016 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

Well. What is Amitabha?

According to Shinran, the Supreme Buddha has no form, but because formlessness is not comprehensible to us, forms are expediently taught, such as "Amida": Infinite Light. The name Amida stresses the aspect of infinite life and infinite light of the Buddha. But what even is a Buddha?

...

He's saying Tathagata equals Buddha-Nature equals Nirvana. This is quite a profound, revolutionary statement.

Astus wrote:

The trikaya theory has been around well before Shinran, and even before the trikaya theory the doctrine of the dharmakaya was formed, so saying that a buddha is nirvana/dharmadhatu doesn't sound revolutionary to me. On the other hand, it seems irrelevant from the perspective of attaining birth in the Pure Land. I'm sure Shinran had his reasons to explain things the way he did, but I don't know who his intended audience was.

Yuren said:

My relationship to my Buddha-Nature is the relationship to my own future Buddhahood. To myself as a (future) Buddha.

Astus wrote:

How could one have a relationship with one's buddha-nature? One may have some ideas about what it is, but that's all. What is the practical value of that on the Pure Land path?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2016 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Queequeg said:

So returning to Verbal Identity, what we find is that it refers to that moment where we have consciousness of words without any understanding of their meaning. There is not anything in that which we might understand as the English word "faith".

Astus wrote:

That is, one simply hears syllables and repeats those syllables without any consideration of meaning, like an audio record, or a parrot. Is that what you mean by Nichiren's interpretation of faith?

Queequeg said:

One of Nichiren's main points throughout his writings is the necessity of persisting in Verbal Identity in the face of obstacles and distractions. Again, though, this is not faith in the sense of holding to something that we don't already know, but rather holding to the Verbal Identity which we know even when doing so is disadvantageous or even dangerous.

Astus wrote:

That is, just keep repeating the words, right?

Queequeg said:

I don't know where you get this idea that chanting the Daimoku "creates" insight. Insight comes as we integrate the Daimoku in our lives. Despite the insistence of some Nichiren Buddhists on the power of mere recitation to lead to enlightenment, they're wrong, at least to the extent that chanting all your waking hours will not lead to enlightenment, not anytime soon, anyway. And contrary to what you seem to think, Nichiren taught much more than reciting the Daimoku. The practices that really lead to enlightenment are the same as in any school of Buddhism – putting the teachings into practice in our moment to moment life.

Astus wrote:

This is somewhat new to me. I thought the recitation of the sutra title is considered enough for buddhahood. If you say there are other practices, I have not yet encountered

with them. So, do they teach the Makashikan and such?

Queequeg said:

One thing to keep in mind, we are talking about a Sudden and Perfect teaching, so ordinary ideas about gradual development are not applicable here.

Astus wrote:

As your quote says: "involves taking the true aspects [of reality] as the object from the very beginning". At what point one arrives at the realisation of suchness in Nichiren's teachings?

Queequeg said:

even as we don't understand the symbols. Notwithstanding, the symbols are the reality itself.

Astus wrote:

All beings experience the same way, but they are not free, exactly because they do not understand suchness.

Queequeg said:

At later stages, the True Aspect is contemplated and gradually understanding arises.

Astus wrote:

What is that contemplation practice in Nichiren's school?

Queequeg said:

the difference is that understanding arises subjectively

Astus wrote:

That's what really matters, isn't it?

Queequeg said:

chanting the Daimoku and fully realizing it are not different in fundamental reality

Astus wrote:

That's merely theoretical, and not an actual attainment. How does one go from delusion to enlightenment then?

Queequeg said:

For that matter, there isn't anything that is not a path that leads to enlightenment in the Sudden and Perfect Teaching

Astus wrote:

I don't see how that can be possible. If anything is a path, then all beings are already on the path. Furthermore, talking of a path, it is not sudden anymore. Not to mention what you wrote a paragraph before: "the True Aspect is contemplated and gradually understanding arises".

So, as you might see, this is somewhat confusing to me. Chanting does not lead to enlightenment, but anything can be the path, and while it is sudden there is a gradual development.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2016 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Very clear statements about the Dzogchen path- Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

As far as a meditation instruction? All over the place iirc. I've seen the same instruction in Mahamudra writings I'm certain, heck..I think I even read some Thai Forest people and Zen people with the instruction to observe the observer, know the knower etc. Not saying it's the same thing exactly in those contexts of course...

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra vipasyana instruction starts with first observing the mind, then thoughts, then external phenomena. As for Zen, it is one of the first questions (huatou) given: Who is it?; or in China especially: Who is reciting the name? (i.e. asking this while chanting Namó Amituo Fó). By the way, Neo-Advaita has this method as well, particularly in Ramana's community, since they actually believe in an ultimate observer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2016 at 9:24 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

Not even advanced Bodhisattvas see their own Buddha-Nature clearly. That is something reserved to Buddhas.

So we can only "know" it through hearing (about it), verbally. Through deep listening and in faith.

Astus wrote:

Then I still don't see the practical value here.

Yuren said:

The text called The Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra by Nichiren seems to suggest the mere repetition without understanding is efficacious: <http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Content/14>

Astus wrote:

It seems to claim two things related to efficacy (not considering all the paragraphs about the superiority of the Lotus Sutra):

Thus faith is the basic requirement for entering the way of the Buddha. In the fifty-two

stages of bodhisattva practice, the first ten stages, dealing with faith, are basic, and the first of these ten stages is that of arousing pure faith. Though lacking in knowledge of Buddhism, a person of faith, even if dull-witted, is to be reckoned as a person of correct views. But even though one has some knowledge of Buddhism, if one is without faith, then one is to be considered a slanderer and an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief.

(p 141)

Thus, as we have seen, even those who lack understanding, so long as they chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, can avoid the evil paths.

(p 142)

That is, faith is the entrance to the path - but not the whole path -, and one can be saved from the evil paths by it. Now, comparing that to the Pure Land teaching of reciting the name, thereby one gains birth in Sukhavati and consequently attains enlightenment, and additionally it purifies karma (although this has little importance, since one can never be born in any samsaric realms anyway).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 13th, 2016 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Queequeg said:

In the Sudden teaching, you are introduced to the Buddha in full. In that instant, you see the Primordial Buddha's timeless, eternal Trikaya. Even without understanding, your mind has been made aware of it in full. Understanding, as you agree, is subjective knowledge, meaning, how "I" relates to Buddha. In relating the subject to the Buddha, alternatively, the True Aspect, the subject is, in that instant, completely integrated with Buddha, and therefore, enlightened, even if that integration is not understood at the grosser levels of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

What I fail to see here is how that is more than rhetoric and theory. Since it has no bearing on the individual, no actual liberation on the personal level, calling it a sudden and perfect teaching amounts to nothing more than nice words. In Zen, that similarly claims to be a sudden teaching, there is necessarily actual realisation of buddha-nature, any if one can merely repeat some words about how zazen is enlightenment, one is promptly sent back to the zafu.

Queequeg said:

Progress in the path is more or less drawing out the full implications and conforming our thoughts, words and deeds with Buddha.

Astus wrote:

And that is where it turns out to be very much a gradual path. Yes, all beings have buddha-nature, and then we can say that the practice is about uncovering that. This is

actually a common view all over the Mahayana schools.

Queequeg said:

In the Sudden Teaching, where the gate of entry is the very instant of encounter with reality, there is no subject-object rumination, but rather, immediate immersion into the reality of Buddha which is timeless, without top or bottom, or beginning or end, start or finish.

Astus wrote:

As you say, there has to be an encounter with reality. To say that such an encounter happens on an unconscious level, like the teaching where even if one hears the word buddha one will eventually attain enlightenment, that is not encounter with reality but karma. Suppose we walk towards each other on a street but we do not recognise each other and just pass by, while it might be acceptable to call this meeting on an unconscious level, practically speaking we would not have actually met.

Queequeg said:

It was perfect to begin with - our problem before was that we did not realize it was all Buddhahood to begin with.

Astus wrote:

It makes no difference. All Buddhist schools agree that there is no self, never has been and never will be. To hear the doctrine of anatma is one thing, to understand it is another, and to actually attain the realisation is a third. Still, we can say that no-self is eternal and universal, it makes no practical difference to merely accept those ideas. And no matter how long one believes in it, without practice, there is no realisation.

Queequeg said:

In the Perfect and Sudden Teaching, that repetition of NMRK is the expression of that mind of instant Buddhahood. If you have any question about its efficacy despite it not making sense to your logical mind, I would suggest trying it.

Astus wrote:

There are clear descriptions of the path from delusion to enlightenment in Buddhism, for instance in Tiantai. What I don't see yet is how Nichiren's teachings fit into it. How can one recognise the emptiness of self and dharmas through recitation (or other methods available in it)?

Queequeg said:

In the instant you hear the Sublime Dharma, insight does arise - at the stage of Verbal Identity

Astus wrote:

Why call it insight when one merely hears the teachings? No insight happens, no experience occurs beyond hearing words. That is simply called the first stage of learning that must be followed by understanding and insight in order to gain wisdom, that is, personal encounter with reality.

Queequeg said:

The recitation of the Daimoku is the essential teaching. It is the Sublime Gate that all Buddhas emerge from. But, the Daimoku, the particular string of syllables, is actually arbitrary. In other times and places it is expressed differently. In some places its expression is in 24 characters, or millions of characters, or through fragrances... its expression is unlimited. But here, in these particular circumstances, Nichiren taught it as NMRK.

Astus wrote:

Then what recitation is the essential? Reciting the Lotus Sutra in general? But if expression is unlimited, then what is it actually?

Queequeg said:

to live out the Lotus Sutra itself. To make our own body the expression of the Lotus Sutra. This is done by introducing people to the Sublime Dharma, exposing them to the Buddha in full.

Astus wrote:

The Lotus Sutra is a text, like any other sutra. One can apply the meaning of a text in one's life, but not the text itself. So, how is the Lotus Sutra expressed in other than words?

Queequeg said:

Actually, this is the real practice Nichiren taught.

Astus wrote:

The practice of the Lotus Sutra is to tell/recite/preach the Lotus Sutra to others?

Queequeg said:

When you ask if Nichiren taught Makashikan, what do you mean? Ichinen Sanzen is the contemplation at the heart of the Daimoku. Ichinen Sanzen is the Sudden and Perfect teaching, taking any object for contemplation. If you think Ichinen Sanzen is more than what is described...

Astus wrote:

I mean that hearing and reciting words are not the same as understanding them, and understanding is not the same as realising them, therefore chanting sutras cannot be enough for liberation. Do people contemplate ichinen sanzen? Is there a meditation on it, a specific method, like one can contemplate dependent origination and mind-only?

Queequeg said:

That's Kuanting's famous synopsis of Ichinen Sanzen. There's no double speak or hidden meaning. That is it.

Astus wrote:

As it says: "the true aspects [of reality] as the object from the very beginning". Where

does the experience of dharmadhatu, of the middle, of suchness, of quiescent and luminous dharmas occur in recitation? As I have noted before, even though all appearances are without self, one first have to overcome the false view of self to realise it, and it is not enough to just believe that there is no self. So, there is calming and contemplation that leads one to insight, because insight does not happen on its own, nor only by faith.

Queequeg said:

When we completely integrate, that's it. Nothing more to do.

Astus wrote:

What is integrated and how is it done? Do you mean making recitation a 24/7 occupation for the mind/mouth?

Queequeg said:

the teachings that fully explicate this teaching.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean there is more than NMRK? What is fully explicated?

Queequeg said:

NAMU MYOHO RENGE KYO. You're free. Single Mindedly hold that teaching and you'll find the truth of my words, "You're free."

Astus wrote:

Now it sounds like that it's believed to be a magic spell, a mantra. But no matter how long one recites "Gate gate paragata parasamgate svaha", no perfect wisdom will ever come from it.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 14th, 2016 at 2:37 AM

Title: Re: Differences between nichiren and pureland

Content:

Yuren said:

It is my understanding that the Chán Buddhists interpretation of such practices

Astus wrote:

"Good friends, people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all." (Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 28)

Yuren said:

at least since the time of Hanshan Deqing, but definitely even before that, is that single-minded repetition of any mantra (in truth, they don't really care about the content, one

could be repeating "Pizza-hut pizza-hut kentucky fried chicken and a pizza-hut mcdonalds mcdonalds" and get perfect enlightenment from that, in theory - if one becomes one with the repetition so that the split between subject and object is shown to be null in a single thought-moment). Chu-Hung Hanshan, Yin-Yuan Lung-Chi, Xuyun, ... this has been the standard in Chinese Chán for a long time? Correct me if I err?

Astus wrote:

One can certainly use the name or a mantra as an object of concentration, and with that fend off appearances. This is a method accepted in Chan, and in common Buddhist terms it is a fine way to train in calm abiding. But, and this is my general objection, concentration and calm abiding is not enough for enlightenment. The moment one loses one's focus, one is back in the afflicted mind.

Yuren said:

Ippen is completely in line with the Chinese style of Pure Land Zen practice, similar to Xuyun, Hanshan, etc.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it seems so.

Yuren said:

I don't see why you don't allow that single-minded recitation of a phrase would bring one to wisdom? ANYTHING can bring you to wisdom. A Japanese Zen disciple was apparently enlightened by hearing the sound of his piss when he was in the toilet. That's the point of the Lotus Sutra, that each phenomenon is the Middle; each - if viewed properly - is the Buddha-Dharma. And that is the logic behind why the Nembutsu and the NRMK can "work". At least that's how I understand it.

Astus wrote:

Let me highlight it: "each phenomenon is the Middle; each - if viewed properly - is the Buddha-Dharma". The proper view does not come from concentration, from recitation, or from random events. That's why there is a definite need for the teachings, that's why a buddha had to start the wheel of Dharma rolling, and that's why one has to learn the teachings. Recitation and concentration were methods well known even before Shakyamuni, they were (and still are) common practices of Hindu yogis, and found even outside India. That's why one can achieve such supernormal levels of absorptions as the formless dhyanas, and still be bound by birth and death.

Yuren said:

I guess that you only disagree about the DEGREE of wisdom that such single-minded recitation can bestow? You agree it can be efficacious to a certain degree, but not that it can deliver the final result?

Astus wrote:

Yes, like that. Consider the four types of buddha-remembrance (四種念佛). Of them the first one, "<http://eubuddhist.blogspot.hu/2015/10/real-mark-buddha-remembrance.html>" (實相念佛), is what I call proper Chan practice of immediate

enlightenment. Recitation helps to calm (samatha) the mind, huatou helps to see (vipasyana) the mind, but both precede realisation of buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 14th, 2016 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Eastern-Western Dharma and the "Great Dharma Drum"

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

"The Great Dharma Drum", they seem to be put out from a Chinese Pure Land group

Astus wrote:

<http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=110> is not a PL group but rather general Chinese Buddhism that puts emphasis on Humanistic Buddhism, Chan, and studies.

Coëmgenu said:

addresses very different concerns and questions than I often see addressed in Western presentations of Buddhadharma

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure what you mean there. First of all, those videos have English subtitles, intended for a global audience. Furthermore, DDM has several centres worldwide, and translations from Ven. Shengyan are also available. There are other Buddhist groups from Taiwan as well, including <http://www.amtbweb.org/index.html> that is actually focused on Pure Land teachings, that have spread in Western countries, and you can find similar presentations like in that video.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 17th, 2016 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: The continuation between births

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

do you think that any attempt to speculate as to the nature of the continuation between apparent "beings" undergoing rebirth, leads innately wrong-views regarding excessive self-conceptualization, challenging anātman -teachings?

Astus wrote:

There is a continuation because of karma, and the process is described as the 12 links of dependent origination. So, by all means go on and contemplate on it.

Coëmgenu said:

The Buddha often avoided a lot of discourse about "selves that transcend the immediate self", which leads to the famous eternalism/annihilism discourse.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean a true and eternal soul beyond the five aggregates? That has been definitively rejected and refuted.

Coëmgenu said:

Is trying to conceptualize and understand the precise nature of the continuity from one birth to another just an example of most likely falling into a bit of an eternalist manner of thinking, foreign to proper Buddhadharma?

Astus wrote:

Contemplating rebirth is a fine Buddhist practice. Dependent origination is a wonderful and fruitful topic. But you might want to read about those things first, just to clarify what the Buddha's teachings actually are.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2016 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

Tirisilex said:

It doesn't make sense that the 8 Consciousnesses would be the aggregate of consciousness because the aggregates of senses and or perceptions could be argued to be the exact same of the first 5 consciousnesses of the 8. So how could the 8 consciousnesses fit in the aggregate of consciousness alone?

Astus wrote:

The usual six consciousnesses fall under the aggregate of consciousness. Yogacara simply added two more to the list, so that they can explain in another way how karma works. The other three aggregates of the mental part are not consciousnesses (citta-dharma) but mental elements (caitasika-dharma).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2016 at 4:00 PM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

undefineable said:

Can they take place outside consciousness, semi-/sub-consciousness and awareness altogether, or do they simply amount to a subjective process of dealing with the objects of consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Feelings, perceptions, and formations are mental factors, objects of consciousness. That is, feeling when something is pleasurable or painful, recognising what a perceived thing is, and relating with some form of intention. Consciousness is what is aware of those factors.

undefineable said:

If so, wouldn't consciousness be the first or second of the five skandhas rather than the fifth?

Astus wrote:

I think the reason of the order is how one may identify with those aggregates, where considering the body as the self or relating to the self is the primary, then comes the rest. Consciousness is the last one because usually only philosophers and meditators imagine that their true self is pure awareness.

undefineable said:

If, on the other hand, the former is true, and the untrained are unable to become aware of their perception/feeling/categorisation(insert preferred translation here)

Astus wrote:

What one is not conscious of, that one does not experience at all, it does not occur as a phenomenon, and consequently one cannot identify with it or relate to it. But I believe we all have bodies, feelings, perception, intention, and consciousness; and we interact with them practically every moment, or rather we are them. The main error is of course the mistaken identification that we are the body and the mind, or that we are their owner.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2016 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Loch Kelly

Content:

krodha said:

That said, obviously discussing the taste of sugar implies "ideas" regarding that taste, but the taste itself is not an idea.

Astus wrote:

"If a word and its referent are not different,
[The word] fire would burn one's mouth;
If they're different there'll be no comprehension.
This you, the speaker of truth, have stated."

(Nagarjuna: <http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/WorldTranscendentHym.pdf>, v 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2016 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

undefineable said:

How can these factors be said to have an existence separate from consciousness?
Before awareness and (often) an aware response, surely it's all just computation

Astus wrote:

Why would they be separate? These categories are tools for practice, to create a general map so that one can distinguish appearances in a skilful way. But if you want further details, I recommend you dig into some abhidharma works.

undefineable said:

Has science shown that consciousness apprehends/arises with objects after the earlier skandhas have run their course? If so, then is this something one can nonetheless become aware of through meditation?

Astus wrote:

I can't follow your question. The skandhas are a Buddhist idea, not scientific. Furthermore, skandhas designate general groups (i.e. aggregates) of experiences/phenomena that we all have. They are not objects of themselves, nobody sees "a skandha".

undefineable said:

If one was born with the habitual tendency to see things this way, then what are the dangers?

Astus wrote:

People normally grasp a form of self. The danger is all the sufferings of samsara.

undefineable said:

If the nature of mind is open and so on, then how can it also be so tightly restricted to the limited contents of very specific computational processes - in a way that so much implies an inability to rise above itself?

Astus wrote:

Open versus tight? Such expressions in Buddhism are figurative, there is no such thing as an actually open or tight consciousness. When it's said that the nature of mind is spacious and open, that is meant to help one let go of all the worries and attachments, but not to be taken literally.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2016 at 5:18 PM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

undefineable said:

Right, so one observes mental processes that the Buddha labelled skandhas. The question you couldn't follow was intended to ask whether the other skandhas are consciously experienced or not, but you seem to have answered that _ _

Astus wrote:

Answered <http://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=351458#p351458>: "What one is not conscious of, that one does not experience at all, it does not occur as a phenomenon, and consequently one cannot identify with it or relate to it. But I believe

we all have bodies, feelings, perception, intention, and consciousness; and we interact with them practically every moment, or rather we are them."

That is, yes, aggregates are what we experience, in fact, that's the whole of our experience. As the 8000 Prajnaparamita Sutra says (XII.2, tr Conze): "The five skandhas have by the Tathagata have declared as 'world' [loka]. Which five? Form, feeling, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness."

undefineable said:

The form of self being grasped defining the suffering risked in so doing, with philosophers presumably liable to experience 'true-self-as-pure-awareness'-type suffering (given your earlier thoughts)

Astus wrote:

Suffering is said to have three types: suffering of pain, suffering of change, suffering of conditioning. It does not matter what appearance one is attached to, those three can occur. Those who strongly identify with a pure awareness may be born in the formless realms at best, but it's still not an escape, even if they believe it to be.

undefineable said:

If you are merely yourself (in the sense of your own habitual patterns) eternally (a couple of samsaric cycles or whatever in temporal terms perhaps), then how is it possible to see things from someone else's point of view? To consider alternative courses of action? To be 'open' rather than "tight" and fully pre-determined?

Astus wrote:

Everyone is merely who they are. Habits are influential, but not the only factors in one's actions. People have intelligence, so they can reconsider things and reflect on their ideas. Such intelligence is practically a basic requirement for life, so that one can effectively react to changing events. Of course, the level of intelligence varies among beings in general and among humans in particular.

undefineable said:

As a teenager I entered a powerful and terrifying 'mystic' state in which I didn't so much feel that I didn't exist (c.f. Depersonalisation Disorder), as that I was lost in a vast cloud of 'potentially anyone and everyone' while at the same time (perhaps because rather than in spite of that) trapped in "no-one". I'm not bothered that this isn't Buddhadharma, just curious as to how it fits with everything else (beyond being). If the Buddha's message is simply "you'd be truer and better to yourself if you just cool it", then teachings like sunyata sound irrelevant.

Astus wrote:

Experiences and their interpretations are two different things. People can have all sorts of experiences, and can come up with a large variety of explanations for those (as shown in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf7YSURReVM>). All experiences can be categorised into the five aggregates, and all ordinary (non-Buddhist) interpretations fall into one of the 62 wrong views or just generally the extremes of eternalism and

annihilationism. The Buddhist approach is to recognise that all experiences are impermanent, unsatisfactory, empty, and not self. That's how sunyata is very relevant, at least if one aims for enlightenment. Or, to go with the Yogacara approach, all experiences are mind-made, all conceptualisations are false.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2016 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

jmlee369 said:

The notion that the Pali scriptures somehow capture the original words of the Buddha is a long discredited one in academia.

Astus wrote:

From a historical perspective, the Nikayas are still the closest to the original and the most accurate resource of the earliest teachings, as it has been confirmed through the comparative studies with the Chinese Agamas and fragments in other languages.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2016 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Eastern-Western Dharma and the "Great Dharma Drum"

Content:

jmlee369 said:

even though he was a Chan master

Astus wrote:

This is more a Western bias to think of Chan as something like what one can read in old texts. Shengyen was famous for his scholarly works, books that have not yet been translated to English, and he did not call himself a Chan master - i.e. chanshi, that is, meditation teacher/instructor - partially because his focus was not on sitting for years in some remote hermitage. Even when he has spent six years in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaY3gmyMkrM>, while he did practice meditation, he also did lots of repentance practices, studied the scriptures, and composed texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

heart said:

So you think the academical and the historical perspective are different?

Astus wrote:

No, by historical I meant the academical study of history.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 12:57 AM

Title: Re: The Skandhas and the 8 Consciousness's

Content:

undefineable said:

What about the enlightened?

Astus wrote:

The difference between deluded and enlightened is whether there is identification with the aggregates or not. The five families stand for the pure vision of the five aggregates, that is, when there is no more attachment. But the aggregates don't cease to function when there is no clinging to them.

If any conceptualisations are false, while descriptions of true insights might point to truth, then the question is how to distinguish the valid insights from false conceptualisations, particularly when a teacher has made a (non-literal) statement that must then be interpreted non-conceptually [/ have the insight that inspired it identified] by an unrealised student. Given the vast range of material written in Buddhism's name, going even by the meaning implied by a statement is probably not a good place to start _ The insight is the confirmation of the Dharma, the first hand experience of the teachings received. So it's not that one first has an experience and then an explanation, but first one has a view and then its proof in experience. That's why correct view matters. Another aspect is the decrease of unwholesome factors and the increase of the wholesome, the development of the 37 factors of enlightenment and the bodhisattva qualities.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

heart said:

So you and jmlee369 are not agreeing, perhaps you have some academical support for your point of view?

Astus wrote:

Bhikkhu Sujato & Bhikkhu Brahmalī: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=fK9zBwAAQBAJ>

Comparative studies:

Mun-keat Choong: https://books.google.hu/books?id=yLU-oZio9_oC

Bhikṣu Thich Minh Chau: <https://www.amazon.com/Chinese-Madhyama-agama-Majjhima-nikaya/dp/8120807944>

Bhikkhu Analayo: <http://www.indologica.de/drupal/?q=node/1700>

Also a great site: <https://suttacentral.net/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 7:20 AM

Title: Re: Eastern-Western Dharma and the "Great Dharma Drum"

Content:

davidbrainerd said:

Yet there is a book on Chan he wrote that is available in English. It has a long title: Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master. I've actually been thinking of buying it because of watching his youtube videos.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say he had not taught meditation. That's exactly what I wanted to highlight that he was seen in the West as a Chan master, and not as an educated Dharma teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 7:23 AM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

Malcolm said:

Dzogchen teachings are the earliest Buddhist teachings, predating all others by eons and eons.

Astus wrote:

Dzogchen may teach that there was a first buddha. But I think everyone else says that there is no beginning of buddhas. So I guess infinite beats first.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

jmlee369 said:

My point was made against claims that the nikayas are what the Buddha taught verbatim.

Astus wrote:

That's right. As I <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=351585#p351585>: "the Nikayas are still the closest to the original and the most accurate resource of the earliest teachings".

But as for being a verbatim record, I don't know anyone who actually studied the texts to say that. One can find in the footnotes of Bhikkhu Bodhi's translations how he considers

a number of sources and overrules the Theravada commentarial tradition, or occasionally even the text itself. And that is the case with likely all the other studies of Theravada texts in English.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Question about agamas

Content:

Astus wrote:

A study of the Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Pali versions by Norman Joseph Smith:
<https://archive.org/details/The17VersionsOfTheBuddhasFirstDiscourse>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Eastern-Western Dharma and the "Great Dharma Drum"

Content:

jmlee369 said:

I used the term Chan master more to emphasise that there are no hard distinctions in Chinese Buddhist practice. ... but more because it is part of their teaching and training methods.

Astus wrote:

It is part of the whole of Chinese Buddhism, so in that sense everyone is a Chan teacher. They are also Pure Land teachers, Sutra teachers, Shastra teachers, and Vinaya teachers. And being all of that is what actually being a Dharma teacher is about. So probably there should be different categories to clarify the differences among those groups, if there are any at all beyond personal styles. For instance, Shengyan follows Yinshun in taking emptiness as the ultimate, instead of buddha-nature or mind-only, and he does not agree to sudden enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: Dependent Origination and the Cosmological Argument

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So in the Western form, the cosmological argument is that every contingent being is dependent on the uncaused cause or first cause, which is God, without which neither they nor anything else would exist.

Astus wrote:

The same argument was made by Hindus and Taoists as well, and it directly opposes the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination. It even contradicts their own idea that everything must have a cause to then assume something without a cause.

Wayfarer said:

Now obviously Buddhism does not argue for the existence of God

Astus wrote:

They actually refute all attempts of establishing an ultimate substratum or originator, because it denies the whole teaching of karma and rebirth.

Wayfarer said:

so the argument from dependent origination points to a different conclusion, which is that 'Everything except Nirvāṇa are the consequence of Pratītyasamutpāda'.

Astus wrote:

In Madhyamaka dependent origination is nirvana. To posit a nirvana outside of samsara is the mistaken view of sravakas.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 21st, 2016 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

Malcolm said:

Oh, what Dzogchen teachings says concerning this is that in every eon from beginningless time, Dzogchen teachings appear first and disappear last.

Astus wrote:

I think that's the biggest claim I have heard yet in Buddhism. But just to turn it on its head, it could be said, again from a modern historical point of view, that such a claim makes it likely the latest on the list of sets of teachings to appear.

Malcolm said:

So, we have our cake and can eat it too...

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2016 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts

Content:

Malcolm said:

Which is relevant to whom, exactly?

Astus wrote:

Good question. I think it matters in case of interschool debates when historicity is brought into the argument. But not when measuring the value of certain views and methods.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2016 at 3:43 AM
Title: Re: Quality of Sanskrit Texts
Content:
Malcolm said:
Only to westerners.

Astus wrote:
Why would that be? History is not a purely Western field of study. The Japanese are at the top level in Buddhist studies, and most Asian Buddhist countries are catching up. The historical perspective gained currency among Asian Buddhists in the 19th century, and has been found a valid method in researching past events. The Taisho Tripitaka compiled in 1924 is an obvious example. So it might be that only Tibetans have not yet caught up with the rest of the world.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, August 27th, 2016 at 7:09 AM
Title: Re: How to believe in rebirth
Content:
Wayfarer said:
So where this karma is acquired, is an open question.

Astus wrote:
Question to whom? There are practically infinite worlds and realms in Buddhism.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2016 at 12:21 AM
Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that
Content:
Kim said:
Pointing out instruction by Alan Wallace
But as you cut through to that which is aware, you may cut through to a dimension of awareness that is unborn and unceasing, that never moves, because it is not in time. It is unchanging and you can never wrap your conceptual mind around it. Because this baseline, this ground of awareness, from which all conditioned states of consciousness emerge. Transcends the very parameters of existence and non-existence. It transcends all conceptual categories. It can be known. It is not an ultimate mystery. It can be known directly without mediation, but only by itself. It can know itself. But your conceptual mind cannot grasp it. It is beyond its pay grade, it is beyond its scope.

Astus wrote:
Or we could as well call that the soul, the true self, atman, the witness, etc. How can that even be considered Buddhism? On the other hand, with such a view it is no surprise one can easily fall into extreme simplifications that we see in Neo-Advaita and mindfulness teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2016 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

monktastic said:

What in particular do you take issue with?

Astus wrote:

Positing an independent consciousness is a problematic view, to say the least. Of course, figuratively it's possible to say that the mind is unbound from all appearances when there is no more attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2016 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

As Jigme Lingpa famously quipped:

"Even the Buddha couldn't explain the ground."

I'm paraphrasing here.

Astus wrote:

That's not because there is any fault in the teachings or because of some inability. It simply means there is nothing to explain, as it is the end of grasping at concepts.

"there is no concrete dharma which the Tathagata has spoken. And why? The dharmas spoken by the Tathagata cannot be grasped and cannot be spoken. It is neither dharma nor no dharma. And why? Unconditioned dharma distinguishes worthy sages."

(<http://www.cttbusa.org/vajra/vajrasutra.asp>, ch 7)

"The pacification of all objectification

And the pacification of all fabrication is peace.

No Dharma was taught by the Buddha

At any time, in any place, to any person."

(MMK 25.24, tr Ocean of Reasoning, p 532)

"It is not existent since even the victorious ones do not see it.

...

When looking again and again into the unseen mind,

The fact that there is nothing to see is vividly seen as it is."

(Rangjung Dorje: Aspirational Prayer for Mahamudra, tr Song of Karmapa, RY Pubs, p 13-14)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 30th, 2016 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

dzogchungpa said:

OK, it seems that people don't get that I was attempting to humorously get back "on topic" by referring to something "even the Buddha couldn't do".

Astus wrote:

And what I intended to point out, and I guess it is on topic, is that this concept of inexplicability is not unique to Dzogchen, and it doesn't mean that the Buddha had some sort of linguistic difficulties, nor is it about a mystical realm beyond language.

“Friend, when you are asked: ‘With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there something else?’ you say: ‘Do not say so, friend.’ And when you are asked: ‘With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there nothing else? . . . Is there both something else and nothing else? . . . Is there neither something else nor nothing else?’ [in each case] you say: ‘Do not say so, friend.’ In what way should the meaning of this statement be understood?”

(1) “Friend, if one says: ‘With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is something else,’ one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated. (2) If one says: ‘Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is nothing else,’ one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated. (3) If one says: ‘Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is both something else and nothing else,’ one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated. (4) If one says: ‘Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is neither something else nor nothing else,’ one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated. Friend, as far as the range of the six bases for contact extends, just so far extends the range of proliferation. As far as the range of proliferation extends, just so far extends the range of the six bases for contact. With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact there is the cessation of proliferation, the subsiding of proliferation.”

(Kotthita Sutta, AN 4.173 / II.161, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2016 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

Interest in Dharma doesn't exist from it's own side; even our interest develops from receiving Buddha's blessings. I'm not saying that Buddhas liberate us with no effort on our part, that's your misunderstanding of what I'm saying. it's a co-operative effort - the Buddhas provide teachings, blessings and emanations and we practise the path.

Astus wrote:

If buddhas can somehow influence people, why not everyone is already enlightened? If you say that it's because beings' minds are deluded and cannot see the blessings and such from the buddhas, then there is no relevance at all whether there are such influences coming from them or not, since in both cases it's up to the beings to develop themselves. So, there seems to be no logical way to claim such influence in any way.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2016 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

I agree. The texts are the only way to separate the teaching from the innovations that creep in to these little semi formal private interviews and intimate instructions.

maybay said:

"The texts" abound with controversy. The error is not in not fact checking teachings, its in drawing your own conclusions about their applicability based on your experience of them alone, a naïveté the Zen school is renowned for.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it the Dalai Lama who urges return to Nalanda style Buddhism when teachers were proficient in engaging with non-Buddhist thinkers? I think the error that seems to be in Garchen Rinpoche's teaching comes from being surrounded only by Buddhists. I see similar teachings in East Asian Buddhism as well that can be easily interpreted as a sort of substance/substratum doctrine. But again, I attribute the development of such terminology to the lack of an opposite party that teaches any type of eternal spirit theory, because without them there is no reason to be careful and strict in how one teaches the Dharma. Apparently in India they had to keep the sword of wisdom sharp to cut off all sorts of wrong views, and there was no place for anything that even resembles an atman.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 31st, 2016 at 11:31 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

See also an older thread: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=100&t=6459>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 1st, 2016 at 12:57 AM

Title: Re: Even the Buddha couldn't do that

Content:

maybay said:

That would be institutionalized Buddhism, where students can specialize and develop into authorities on a given subject. What do you think Garchen's speciality is? Surely its

not in showing people how groundless their lives are. If they are looking for that aspect of truth they would do better to look in a book.

Astus wrote:

I don't see how institutionalisation applies here. In fact, apologetics is normally part of the doctrine of any religion. For instance, the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.01.0.bodh.html> is a great example of that, and all the later developments in Buddhist thought contain similar arguments and refutations of incorrect views. However, although there is a growing amount of literature on the finer levels of the Dharma in English, it still seems to be an alien subject to those who identify themselves as practitioners. And that is one of the possible answers to the OP where it raises the question about the possible lack of success in pursuing the Buddhist path. That is, from incorrect view there is only incorrect meditation.

Another error is to take a teaching out of context, and reinterpret a practical instruction into a general doctrinal statement. That is the age old neyārtha-nīṭārtha problem actually.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 1st, 2016 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Creation through perception in Buddhism?

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

Just now tonite found another source for this. Daigan Matsunaga's book Foundation Japanese Buddhism Volume 1.1974. Page 38,39, 260

Astus wrote:

So it is the Sarvastivadin definition of a moment. But if one moment is 0.013 seconds, then a second is little less than 77 moments.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 2nd, 2016 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: First words of Buddha after enliggthenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a Zen saying. I've done a little search on the topic.

The morning star is mentioned in relation to the time of the Buddha's birth:

T185 太子瑞應本起經 (A.D. 222-228) - 到四月八日夜明星出時，化從右脇生墮地，即行七步，舉右手住而言：『天上天下，唯我為尊。三界皆苦，何可樂者？』 (They arrived on the night of the eighth day of the fourth month when the star comes out, and he was born from the right side and fell to the ground, immediately walked seven steps, raised his right hand and said, "Above and under heaven, only I am honourable. The three worlds are suffering, who can be happy?"

In relation to enlightenment:

T457 彌勒來時經 Maitreyavyākaraṇa(sūtra) (A.D. 317-420) - 彌勒到樹下坐，用四月八日明星出時得佛道。(Maitreya arrives at a tree and sits under it, then on the eighth day of the fourth month when the (morning) star comes out attains the Buddha way.)

Then in the Jingde Chuandeng Lu, the first major collection of Zen stories, simply quotes a text I could not identify, but the star is still only an indicator of time:

T2076 景德傳燈錄 (AD 1004) 故普集經云。菩薩於二月八日明星出時。成佛號天人師。(As the Universal Vinaya Sutra says, "The bodhisattva on the eighth day of the second month when the star comes out became buddha and the teacher of men and gods.)

It is here in Dahui's (1089–1163) writing that a connection is given between seeing the star and enlightenment:

T1998A 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (12th c.) 因見明星忽然悟道。便見自己本來面目。(Because he had seen the star he suddenly awoke to the way. That is, he has seen his own original face.)

There are numerous results for the expression 見明星悟道 (see the star and attain the way), including Dogen's Shobogenzo, but mostly in late texts and those not included in the Taisho Tripitaka, i.e. mainly works of Chinese origin.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 5th, 2016 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

Tirisilex said:

I've read that awareness is the only thing that is permanent so awareness

Astus wrote:

Permanent awareness is not consciousness. It is called permanent in the sense that it is without attachment, without anything to identify with. It is eternal in the sense that there has never been any self, and never will be. At the same time, every instance of consciousness is conditioned and impermanent. Might also say that impermanence is permanent. It is a figure of speech, a play with words. As for the awareness aspect, it means that all appearances are what one is aware of, so just as everything is impermanent, they are also aware. It is merely a conceptual category to say that things are objects of awareness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 7th, 2016 at 11:35 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

kalden yungdrung said:

Those who can draw into everything is that also possible maybe?

Astus wrote:

Why not? On the other hand, Gampopa wrote (JOL, p 251, 252):

"If the meaning of emptiness does not dwell within the mind, we cannot attain liberation by means of the other virtues.

When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path."

And Lama Zhang (Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 126):

"In the instant that you realize your own mind,
all good qualities, without exception,
are simultaneously completed without having to accomplish them."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 7th, 2016 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

BuddhaFollower said:

Mahamudra as a separate system from HYT is a Tibetan invention.

Astus wrote:

It is the unique teaching of Gampopa, founder of all Dakpo Kagyu lineages. Besides that, as Malcolm mentioned, there are studies out there about the origins of the Maitripa lineage.

BuddhaFollower said:

Thread should be "HYT same as Dzogchen?"

Astus wrote:

Dzogchen as a separate method is a Tibetan invention as well, maybe even later than Mahamudra. So the question could be "HYT same as HYT?"

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, it is clearly an earlier, skeptical movement that can be directly traced back to Śrī Siṃha in India, and we have evidence for this in the work of Mañjuśrīkīrti, who mentions Śrī Siṃha by name, as well as other associates of Padmasambhava such as Bhikṣuṇi

Nandi.

Astus wrote:

I've read some works of Mathes but don't remember any mention of Dzogchen there. Do you know which one it was? Or do you mean that Dzogchen has the same origin as Mahamudra in India?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 1:02 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You can find the reference in Yarnall's translation of the creation stage section of sngags rim chen mo of Tsongkhapa.

Astus wrote:

Alas, I don't have that one (<https://books.google.com/books?id=4cZyNwAACAAJ>).

Malcolm said:

I am quite certain that the reference refers to Śrī Simha.

Astus wrote:

So, was Sri Simha a member of the sahayayogin's group together with Saraha and Maitripa, therefore dzogchen and mahamudra come from the same movement? Was there anyone else who looked into this perhaps, like Sam van Schaik? If not, you might consider coming out with an article yourself.

Malcolm said:

there was push back by the anonymous author of the Hevajra Tantra

Astus wrote:

Ulrich Timme Kragh (Tibetan Yoga and Mysticism, p 70) suggests that Sapan's "view was derived from a stage of Indian Tantrism that was earlier than Bsod nams rinchen's more liberal view", and then writes about Maitripa as a "pertinent watershed in the history of Tantric Buddhism".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

What differentiates practitioners of Mahamudra or HYT from Dzogchenpa, view, practice, both?

Astus wrote:

That sounds to me too broad a question. Practitioners are individuals, and people can use for practice all sorts of things, and approach the same method in many ways. As for the ideal part, there is creation stage, and there are various forms of completion stage: six yogas, dzogchen, and mahamudra. All four could be combined, all four can be used separately, and in any other setting. Besides that, I guess you are already familiar with the general descriptions of those methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Where are the bodhisattvas?

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

It is said that buddhas and bodhisattvas have both compassion and the wisdom to employ this compassion to benefit beings.

Yet one needn't look far to see cruelty heaped on misery heaped on natural disasters and decay in this world.

Some even insist on pursuing the very cause of their misery, while others struggle with all their might to overcome adversity yet fail.

Where is this perfect help from enlightened beings? What forms does it take?

Astus wrote:

The fundamental doctrine of Buddhism is karma, and that means everyone experiences what they are conditioned to experience. Through faith and devotion one can have buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest, but not otherwise. That is also the reason behind Amitabha being unable to simply deliver beings to the Pure Land - people have to intentionally aspire for such a birth, hence the necessity of faith, vow, and practice. What you propose, the problem of evil, does not apply to Buddhism, because not even buddhas can magically make any being's karma change. But we can change our own conditioning through mindfulness of gods, bodhisattvas, and buddhas.

At that time Śāriputra was influenced by the Buddha's numinous charisma to have this thought: "If the bodhisattva's buddha land is pure according to the purity of the bodhisattva's mind, then when our World-honored One was a bodhisattva his mind must have been pure. Nevertheless, this buddha land is so impure!"

The Buddha knew what he was thinking and asked him, "What do you think? Although the blind do not see them, can the sun and moon be anything but pure?"

[Śāriputra] answered, "No, World-honored One! This is the fault of the blind, not that of the sun and moon."

[The Buddha said], "Śāriputra, it is through the transgressions of sentient beings that they do not see the purity of the Tathāgata's (i.e., my) buddha land. This is not the Tathāgata's fault! Śāriputra, this land of mine is pure, but you do not see it."

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 1, BDK Ed, p 78)

"Those endowed with unpolluted faith and so forth,
having cultivated the qualities of faith and so on,
will see in their own minds the Buddha's appearance,

which is perfect and has special signs and marks.
They will see the Buddha while he is walking,
while he is standing, sitting, or resting in sleep.
They will see him in manifold forms of conduct:
when explaining the teaching leading to peace,
when silently resting in meditative equipoise,
or when displaying various forms of miracles.
Possessed of great splendor and magnificence,
[the Buddha] will be seen by all sentient beings.
Once having seen this, they too will wish
to fully join what is named "buddhahood,"
and adopting its causes in a genuine way
they will attain the state they longed for.
These appearances are totally free from ideation
and do not involve the slightest movement at all.
There is nothing of this kind, and yet nevertheless
they are accompanied by great benefit in the world.
"This is the appearance of my own mind."
Worldly beings do not have such insight.
Yet, their seeing of this visible kaya
will become meaningful for these beings.
Relying on gradually beholding this form,
all those who follow the [Great] Vehicle
will see their genuine inner dharmakaya
by means of the eye of primordial wisdom."
(Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra, p 61-62, tr Fuchs)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: Where are the bodhisattvas?

Content:

Footsteps said:

This portion is intriguing...

Do you not have awareness of your own mind, even if that awareness only appears in
fleeting glimmers?

Astus wrote:

It means ordinary beings do not realise that all experiences are mental fabrications.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Where are the bodhisattvas?

Content:

Footsteps said:

If they are afforded with the awareness of their own minds, they will be afforded with the

seed of awareness of which you speak. Thus, it will dawn on them that there is more to mere mental perception as they come to understand the limitations of mental perception...a natural state of development of the human soul.

Astus wrote:

It seems you have not familiarised yourself yet with the meaning of mind only in Buddhism. Might as well start
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vasubandhu/#DefAppOnl>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

conebeckham said:

I suppose the question is whether Vajrayana MUST reflect the power structures and dynamics of the environment, with respect to gender, and perhaps other factors

Astus wrote:

Religious communities adapt in order to survive. They preach what people like to hear, otherwise there will be no income. In Mahayana they call this skilful means.

Malcolm said:

The question is really, are Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in the West, who are otherwise in general pro-feminist, liberal, etc., unconsciously preserving antiquated patriarchal power relations in their attempts to be "good" disciples.

Astus wrote:

Those who like to hear liberal things will receive it. Those who are inclined towards hierarchy will receive that. Now let's think a bit about the common mindset of those who willingly submit themselves to church authority. But as long as Buddhism is not the mainstream, conservatives will normally stick with the culturally established ideologies.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Malcolm said:

But the situation of patriarchal oppression is pervasive in this world among human beings. It is not skillful to teach patriarchal oppression in the name of "skillful means."

Astus wrote:

Patriarchal oppression does not happen to people, it is what people believe in. There is a difference between cultural bias and a small group of people using various methods to force others to follow their orders. When a guru is believed by the whole group to be superior and thus they allow him to have power over them, it is not that the guru had to

force them to submit themselves. It actually takes a very aware teacher to recognise the power invested in him and to handle it appropriately.

Malcolm said:

For example, when it says that there are no women in the buddhafiield of Amitabha or Bhaisajyaguru, how do you think women feel about this? How would you feel if you were devalued based solely on your genitalia?

Astus wrote:

You might know women who say they accept the traditional values of patriarchy. Now consider women in the actual traditional culture. Most of them can only think that that's how the world works and there is nothing to be done about it. Same goes for men of course. I'm not saying it is good. What I'm saying is that if something seems like a universal value then opposing it is nonsense and practically unthinkable. Another example is torture and capital punishment that one can read about in the Nikayas where they are treated as simple karmic consequences. Women's lower status is just another form of karmic consequence, although not in the Nikayas but in the Mahayana scriptures.

To avoid the usual trappings, it is not grand social and political ideas one should come up with, but focus on the personal cultivation of compassion and wisdom. And then based on that it is possible to explain and realise them on a communal level.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Malcolm said:

Hence the problem of people being unconscious of patriarchal power relations in which they are embedded.

Astus wrote:

That unconscious part is what I referred to above by saying that men and women equally live in it and keep it alive.

Malcolm said:

Yes, and this points to a deficiency in some Mahāyāna teachings which should be openly explored and not defended as Buddhavacana.

Astus wrote:

There are teachings addressing those deficiencies, even if not many.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: According to Mahayana, is everything our karma?

Content:

Boomerang said:

For a long time I've had the understanding that in Mahayana Buddhism, absolutely everything we experience in life is the result of our karma, while in Theravada Buddhism there are exceptions. However, I don't really remember where I learned this from. What do you think?

Astus wrote:

All Buddhist schools point to karma as the fundamental force shaping everyone's experiences, Theravada included. Some may misinterpret the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.021.than.html> as if certain natural factors independently influenced beings, but as it's noted in Thanissaro Bhikkhu's preface, even those factors are results of karma. As one can see in cosmological descriptions, the whole world is generated and sustained by karma. What should be remembered, however, is that not only past but also present actions of body, speech, and mind count.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: According to Mahayana, is everything our karma?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

If one acts from compassion, is that the result of karma also? If it is, it is hard to see how liberation is possible at all.

Astus wrote:

There is the description of the 12 links of dependent origination that neatly tells how from ignorance and action comes about. There is also the reverse of the 12 links describing how liberation comes about. Compassion is based on ignorance for ordinary beings, therefore it creates good karma. Only when it is based on wisdom it is not a karmic act. That's why prajnaparamita is the most important for bodhisattvas, and every other paramita depends on that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 6:53 PM

Title: Re: According to Mahayana, is everything our karma?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

When you say 'compassion is based on ignorance for ordinary beings', is what you mean that what ordinary beings take to be compassion is not actually compassion, but only attachment?

Astus wrote:

It is compassion, why wouldn't it be? But it goes with attachment, therefore maintains the ideas of subject, action, and object. Based on ignorance it is called compassion

(karuna), and based on wisdom it is great compassion (mahakaruna).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Dan74 said:

It is hard not to form prejudices when consistently subjected to negative experiences with a certain group.

Astus wrote:

The moment we think of a group we work with prejudices. A small group of male friends don't think of each other as "he is a man, therefore he acts in a certain way", because they can take each other to be individuals, and have preconceptions based on their unique history of interactions.

Buddhist wisdom is very much applicable here. One has to recognise that conceptual categories are nothing more than conditioned ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Anders said:

Hilarious though. What are they going to use them for?

Astus wrote:

It's part of having a perfect body. If one doesn't have it, he cannot become a monk. It also has to be functional. More fun stuff about masculinity and Buddhism:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=0lZRt8i7Xq8C>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Kunga Lhadzom said:

maybe having a rational mind that can think logically is what they mean by having a penis?

Astus wrote:

The female body has several drawbacks in Buddhism. First of all, there are the "five obstacles, three subordinations" (

五障三從), that is, no woman can become brahma, indra, mara, cakravartin, or buddha; and they are subject to their father as a child, their husband as an adult, and their son

as an old person. Furthermore, particularly in East Asian Buddhism, they are impure from menstruation (see: <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/menstruation-sutra-michael-kelsey.pdf> and <http://www.reed.edu/hellscrolls/scrolls/Aseries/A06/A06e.html>), and suffer from giving birth (see: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/filial-sutra.htm>). It is also a regular theme that women are overly passionate.

Here is a famous section from the Nirvana Sutra (tr Yamamoto, ch 16):

"All good men and women desire to be born as a man. Why so? Because females are the nests of evil. Also, it is as in the case of the water of mosquitoes and sawflies, which cannot moisten this great earth. In addition, the sensual appetite of females cannot ever be satisfied."

But eventually the scripture states:

"Any person who does not realise that he has the Buddha-Nature is a woman. If he does so realise, he is a man. If any woman knows that she has the Buddha-Nature, she is a man."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

can practice whatever they like or need from the eight lower yānas.

Astus wrote:

Why would they do that if it's complete as it is?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Because people have relative circumstances.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by that? Is Dzogchen not sufficient, or is it functional only for some people?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

let us say you are a Dzogchen practitioner, but you have a problem with alcohol. ... Let us say that you have a clear sign your life force is dwindling, then you might want to resort to various methods of cheating death and prolonging life.

Astus wrote:

Those issues are not related to the bodhisattva path. I wouldn't consider health, financial, or computer problems appropriately solvable with Buddhist methods, nor should they be seen as such.

Malcolm said:

the actual path of Dzogchen is never based on concepts and mind

Astus wrote:

That's great. No ideation, no self, no suffering. And that's why I raised the question about the need for doing anything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2016 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

Kunga Lhadzom said:

but maybe what this is really talking about is the mind. It takes a certain amount of intelligence to figure out what exactly Buddha-Nature is.....maybe you have to be a genius

Astus wrote:

I doubt that. Intelligence/rationality is associated with masculinity by modern Westerners, not ancient Asians. The reason I quoted those drawbacks of female birth was to show what can be considered connected with femininity. Rationality has not been seen as a difference between the sexes.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But they are, and are one of the reasons we have many methods of dealing with health, financial and other kinds of obstacles in the Vajrayāna tradition that Dzogchen practitioners can use as they see fit. If you get a Mac, you won't have computer problems, apart from hardware failures.

Astus wrote:

Really? Do you know a mantra perhaps for the problems caused by the current IOS

upgrade on Apple devices? Could help a lot of people.

Malcolm said:

Well, when we talk about the path of Dzogchen, it goes beyond this inert kind of emptiness of which you are so fond.

Astus wrote:

That still doesn't answer the question. If it is a method that is sufficient for liberation, why use anything else? If one knows self-liberation, how could that not be enough?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

IOS and OS X are not the same thing.

Astus wrote:

That's OK. I'm simply asking about those other special methods that work in all walks of life, like fixing IT problems. Practising patience is of course beneficial, but the machine cares not about your state of mind.

Malcolm said:

That's up to the individual person to decide for themselves.

Astus wrote:

Fair enough, I guess. If I remember correctly, Gampopa was happy to teach Mahamudra to everyone as the swift and efficient path, but reserved deity yoga and tummo to his circle of close disciples.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 12:45 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You will note I excluded IT problems. I also do not know of any mantras that can fix other inert things such as pots, wheels and so on, because they are inert.

Astus wrote:

I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe we have to wait a few more years for computers to become sentient.

Malcolm said:

Practices for healing, prosperity, increasing harvests and so on are abundant and useful since they relate to things that are alive, and not inert.

Astus wrote:

Is it possible to exchange one's 8 hours job for a 30 mins prosperity ritual but maintain the same income level? Might need a new topic for that perhaps.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, but that depends on the power of your siddhi. So I would not give up that day job just yet, Astus.

Astus wrote:

So it's the fault of the user if it doesn't work. How convenient.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

tiagolps said:

What is the difference between arahantship and buddhahood?

Astus wrote:

Arhats attained liberation from samsara. Buddhas attained everything that can be attained.

tiagolps said:

I know that buddhas attain omniscience, and thus are able to help beings in ways the arahants can not, but what else?

Astus wrote:

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Buddha#Kayas_.26_Wisdoms,

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eight_qualities_of_a_buddha,

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eighteen_unshared_qualities_of_a_buddha.

See also: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=DTWZLMGFFgkC>.

tiagolps said:

And what is the connection between arahantship and buddhahood?

Astus wrote:

Both mean freedom from rebirth.

tiagolps said:

How do arahants progress to the mahayana path after attaining Nirvana?

Astus wrote:

They start on the 6th/7th bhumi.

It should also be remembered that arhats in Mahayana mainly represent those practitioners who think that annihilation is the solution, and they mistake meditative peace for enlightenment. That's why they need to be waken up from their false nirvana to continue the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus does.

Astus wrote:

What is an inert emptiness? What other emptinesses do you know?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 4:10 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What in fact that Dzogchen tradition rejects is that the two stages are needed at all. They can be used if desired, but they are not necessary.

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra works without them as well.

"Still others just meditate on mandala circles,
Some are fixed in explaining the purport of the fourth,
For some [reality] is conceptually visualized as space,
Still others would have [reality] possess emptiness.
In general they are fixed in contradiction."
(Ornamental Flower for the Dohas, v 45–49, Dreaming the Great Brahmin, p 136)

"No tantra, no mantra, nothing to meditate on,
no meditative concentration.
These all are causes which delude your ego.
Do not corrupt your mind, whose nature is pure,
with meditative concentrations.
Station the true self in bliss, and cause it no torment.
Basking in eating, drink, and sex
Fills the nodes again and again,

Through such a teaching, the ends of the earth are reached";
Stamp down such deluded defenders of the world
and move on.
Those in whom the breath and mind do not move,
And the sun and moon are uninvolved,
Ignorant ones, you must rest your breath.
Saraha has taught all instructions and gone away."
(v 95–106, p 141-142)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

tiagolps said:

So from the mahayana viewpoint, arahants aren't really free from samsara?

Astus wrote:

They are. That is what makes them arhats. But besides that, there are all sorts of interpretations and opinions about them. For instance, arhats have their own cult in East Asia in the form of 16/18 <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/rakan-arhat-lohan.shtml>.

There is no generally applicable definition either, as views are contradictory and diverse, starting with the difference between saying that arhats end their career at parinirvana and those who say they don't, although I've also found an explanation that simply says that some arhats are finished while some continue on the bodhisattva path.

Interestingly, if we compare the early teachings where one has to be free from identification with the aggregates, and teachings on the obscurations in Mahayana that block one from attaining buddhahood, it turns out that there should be no difference at all between arhats and buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: According to Mahayana, is everything our karma?

Content:

muni said:

I think we cannot just say conventional bodhichitta is ignorance.

Astus wrote:

That's not it. The point is that good deeds merely result in good effects, nothing more. In case one aspires for enlightenment, such good circumstances are used to study the Dharma. But in order to engage in the practice of the paramitas, the most important is to establish oneself in prajnaparamita, because that is what makes the other five into paramitas and not simply good deeds.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 10th, 2016 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Patriarchy in Vajrayāna

Content:

daelm said:

patriarchal oppression definitely happens to people.

Astus wrote:

Who are the oppressors?

daelm said:

when a systemic institutional

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is in the whole system, it is not that a few individuals make others obey, but everyone serves a role by believing in the system itself.

daelm said:

if there are institutional misogynies in a system, they will still have effects unless they are addressed.

Astus wrote:

I agree with that. But it's not just a few oppressors one has to inform of being oppressors, but everyone in the whole system must recognise the entire construction. The oppressed has to recognise their own situation and address their own preconceptions that help the system to stay.

daelm said:

if the tenets being taught still embed such biases, the biases will still have the expected outcomes

Astus wrote:

It extends beyond mere tenets. It goes back to the common belief that physical attributes define mental function. Consequently, even talking about male and female deities as if they symbolised certain qualities is sexist.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 2:33 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

tiagolps said:

That's what makes this question so complicated haven't been able to find a concrete answer, the most confusing explanation is when arahants are called selfish by mahayanists, how can they be free from samsara if they are selfish?

Astus wrote:

In Mahayana arhats are mostly fictional dummies playing the role of dumb practitioners. Plus neither in China nor in Tibet were any strong Hinayana school, so there is nobody behind the term arhat, just as there have been no pratyekabuddhas even in India. Unless one wants to repeat arguments that have lost their meanings more than a thousand years ago, one has to engage in some sort of discussion with the current Theravadins.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course there is a difference; arhats possess non-afflictive ignorance. Buddha's don't. But if arhats want to realize Mahāyāna buddhahood, they must begin at the beginning, since they lack both accumulations.

Astus wrote:

Arhats cannot have cognitive obscuration, because that would mean attachment to mental aggregates. Saying that they are stuck in the samadhi of cessation of course means that they have been reduced to the level of asamjnisattvas. Then it is quite easy to refute them - or rather the arhats one has made up - as mistaken.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

maybay said:

I beg your pardon, there were most certainly pratyekabuddhas.

Astus wrote:

Pratyekabuddhas exist when there is no Buddhadharma in the world. That is, no Buddhist has ever met one in the last 2500 years.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 2:51 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

This does not follow at all.

Astus wrote:

How so? If one grasps at concepts, that is identifying with at least some mental

aggregates. If no mental phenomena is attached to, where can be any cognitive obscuration?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Kagyü Mahāmudra, Trekchö, the view of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana, etc., all have the same point: resting in a moment of unfabricated consciousness. Dzogchen goes beyond this point, that's all.

Astus wrote:

In what way does it go beyond? For instance, the seven distinguishing features of thögal (Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 269) can be valid for Mahamudra as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Dzogchen?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, they cannot be. There is no practice of thögal in any gsar ma system.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say there is thögal. I said that the listed features can be true for Mahamudra as well. Let me quote it then:

First, practitioners on this path are not distinguished by the sharpness or dullness of their faculties, but rather by the intensity of their endeavor, greater or lesser as this may be.

Second, practitioners do not rely on mental analysis because they can see ultimate reality directly.

Third, because they have a direct realization of awareness as it truly is, they do not rely on mere words.

Fourth, since the natural luminosity (of primordial wisdom) is actually present, the ground, path, and result are not chronologically related to each other.

Fifth, since it does not depend on karmic sequences, good or bad, this path is free from the strenuous and discriminative practices of adopting and rejecting.

Sixth, since the self-arisen luminosity manifests from within, there is no difference between young and old practitioners.

Seventh, practitioners enjoy a perfect experience of the three kayas even while they are still on the path. They capture the everlasting kingdom of spontaneously present awareness in the expanse of primordial purity.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Absence of attachment does indicate absence of cognitive obscuration.

Astus wrote:

What do you call cognitive obscuration then?

Malcolm said:

For example, one may have no attachment to chocolate, and nevertheless be ignorant of the flavor of coffee.

Astus wrote:

That is not obscuration, that is lack of information. By the way, Shakyamuni tasted neither.

Malcolm said:

Likewise, arhats may be free of gross attachment to the three realms, but they are ignorance of all modes of awakening, among other things.

Astus wrote:

Arhats are free from attachment to the five aggregates. There is nothing more to be attached to. So, either they have knowledge of all modes, or knowledge of all modes does not come from lack of clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Astus wrote:

...knowledge of all modes does not come from lack of clinging.

Malcolm said:

Yes.

Astus wrote:

Yes it does come from lack of clinging? Or yes, there is a different cause? If the latter, what is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

maybay said:
Knowledge comes from developing your faculties.

Astus wrote:
What faculties? Like sight and taste?

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 5:12 AM
Title: Re: Difference in attainments
Content:
anjali said:
Here is how it is explained by Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche in As It Is, V2:

Astus wrote:
That is the same definition as in the Uttarat Tantra Shastra, and it can go back further to Yogacara's grasper/subject and grasped/object. An arhat that does not grasp at the aggregates cannot have those subtle concepts either. Primarily, because there is no attachment to concepts. Secondly, because an arhat has realised the lack of self, and without an owner/grasper there can be no owned/grasped either.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 5:39 AM
Title: Re: Difference in attainments
Content:
Malcolm said:
Yes, it does not come from a lack of clinging.

Astus wrote:
Mipham seems to disagree:

One may wonder: "Although this does eliminate the cognitive obscuration that obscures the nature as it is, how can it eliminate the cognitive obscuration that obscures all that exists?" All that exists and the nature as it is are no different in the real condition and, when the distorted frame of mind that blindly apprehends contrary to the nature of things is eliminated, the wisdom that correctly realizes this real condition will effortlessly perceive all possible existing things.
(Gateway to Knowledge, vol 3, p 222)

And that agrees with the view that once the two obscurations are gone all knowledge is attained.

Malcolm said:
Arhats realize selfness of the aggregates only, they do not realize the selflessness of all phenomena because the aggregates do not include all phenomena, but only afflicted conditioned phenomena.

Astus wrote:

An arhat has also realised the lack of self in all six areas of perception. Since all appearances that occur are one of the five aggregates and six areas, there cannot be anything an arhat grasps as self or belonging to a self. Furthermore, belief in any kind of substance can occur only in the aggregates, and since no aggregate is grasped, no view can be grasped either.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2016 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Not so. When we say that "Arhats realize the selfless of the aggregates," in fact they do not realize the selflessness of the aggregates themselves, rather, only the selflessness of the person imputed on the aggregates.

Astus wrote:

That is the usual definition of their attainment, that they take the aggregates real but not any self. Or in other words, they differentiate aggregates with attachment and aggregates without attachment, where the latter is considered the final attainment. Now, if they are not attached to the aggregates, then they cannot be attached to any view, because views are concepts, and concepts are within the aggregates.

If the emptiness of person for arhats means not grasping a self but grasping the aggregates, that is a contradiction, because grasping the aggregates is itself grasping at a self. Eliminating grasping at aggregates is the method taught even in Mahayana as the way to relinquish the attachment to a real self.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2016 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are referring to upādāna-skandhas? Anupādāna, non-addictive, simple means that these aggregates are not a cause for future rebirth. There is no implication that they are not regarded as being existent and so on. All that is being implied is that śrāvakas recognize that there is no person (pudgala) in the aggregates and therefore the aggregates are no longer addictive (upādāna).

Astus wrote:

Upādāna is the support, the fuel, and without it there is nothing to rely on, no burning. Since the aggregates are still there without clinging, at least until complete extinction, it can be said that they exist. On the other hand, because there is no identification nor appropriation (me, mine), there is no reliance on physical or mental appearances,

hence no view clung to (diṭṭhupādāna), no attachment to the extreme of existence or non-existence. What is the basis then for any cognitive obscuration?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 13th, 2016 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just because there is no view regarding the person, does not mean that there does not still remain views regarding dharmas. Also, as pointed out, Arhats do not realize emptiness free from all four extremes of proliferation. Why? They realize only the emptiness of the person.

Astus wrote:

You seem to say that arhats merely learn this idea that there is no self but fail to learn that there is no substance of any kind, as if no-self were merely a conceptual view for them. What I say is that realising no-self in case of an arhat means not grasping the aggregates. If no aggregates are grasped, then no concepts are grasped. If no concepts are grasped, there are no views attached to either.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 15th, 2016 at 5:35 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

That's why I said no bodhisattvas. If there are no sentient beings, what are the bodhisattvas holding back for?

Astus wrote:

Samsara never ends, there are infinite sentient beings, and buddha-nature is permanent. In other words, while Hinayana can be misunderstood as annihilationist, Mahayana can equally be called eternalist. Of course, both can also deny such extremes, and explain how emptiness is neither.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 15th, 2016 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Rakz said:

But if it did end then Buddhas would too enter into the samadhi of cessation like they already do temporarily after the universe gets destroyed.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is not nirodhasamapatti (samadhi of cessation). Otherwise yes, that is one of

the interpretations, and that's why bodhisattvas are said to delay the attainment of nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 16th, 2016 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sure it is, the only difference between vajropama-samadhi and nirodhasamapatti is whether one is an ārya or not.

Astus wrote:

http://www.palikanon.com/english/wtb/n_r/nirodha_samaapatti.htm is the 9th dhyana, not nirvana, and it is also called the cessation of perception and feeling. It is not the same as the http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/ay/asannasatta.htm, because of the difference in the cravings eliminated (Samuccaya p 19). They both differ from http://www.palikanon.com/english/wtb/n_r/nibbaana.htm, because that means the complete extinction of defilements, but the faculties remain functional until death, while with death there is no more becoming of any bodily or mental existence (Samuccaya p 137). As for vajropamasamadhi, that is the attainment eliminating all defilements that leads to nirvana (Kosha, vol 3, p 981-3, 1020-1021; Samuccaya p 174), so it is different from nirodhasamapatti that does not necessarily lead to the elimination of all defilements.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 16th, 2016 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Rakz said:

Just curious, where is it stated in the sutras that samsara never ends and the number of beings are infinite?

Astus wrote:

Check the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhisattva_vow#East_Asia themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 16th, 2016 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

The only difference between the two, as I already said, is whether it belongs to an ārya or not. In the case of an ārya, it leads to the elimination of afflictions, in the case of a commoner, it does not.

Astus wrote:

Both are available only to aryas. However, neither of them are nirvana. And the point is that nirodhasamapatti is not the destination of arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 16th, 2016 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, technically, nirodhasamapatti and nirvikalpa samadhi are the same, differentiated by whether one is a commoner or a buddha, and the latter is the vajropamasamadhi of a buddha.

Astus wrote:

Nirodhasamapatti means the suspension of perception and feeling. Nirvikalpa means the absence of false discrimination as a lack of substantialist conceptualisation, but both perceptions and feelings are functional. One is a high level absorption, the other is a high level wisdom.

"Non-discrimination in the absence of idle speculation should not be understood as nonthought (amanasikara), or as going beyond thought (manasikarasamatikrama) or as appeasement (vyupasama), or as [*own-]*nature (svabhava), or as a mental construction concerning an object (alambane abhisamskara), but as a mental non-construction concerning an object (alambane anabbisamskara)."
(Samuccaya p 240)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 16th, 2016 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Cessation of perception is what nirvana is.

Astus wrote:

Then asamjnisattvas are arhats. And how do you rectify that with the meaning of sopadisesanirvana?

Crazywisdom said:

The arya enters and exits this meditation and sees the 12 links in forward and reverse order thereby seeing how there is nothing to be perceived (no self) in any link. So it's all one vision in essence.

Astus wrote:

Seeing no-self is one thing, abiding in the cessation of perception is another, and nirvana is a third.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

It's the seeing w discernment that avoids becoming a mindless being and and connects with signlessness, emptiness, etc... Discerning the three doors and 12 links in every stage.

Astus wrote:

It says nowhere that nirodhasamapatti is nirvana. What it says is that following nirodhasamapatti there is only nirvana that is more pleasant.

Not only arhats can attain nirodhasamapatti, but also non-returners. Therefore, it doesn't equal nirvana.

“Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu accomplished in virtuous behavior, concentration, and wisdom might enter and emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling. If he does not reach final knowledge in this very life, then, having been reborn among a certain group of mind-made [deities] that transcend the company of devas that subsist on edible food, he might [again] enter and emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling. There is this possibility.”

(AN 6.166 / III.194, tr B. Bodhi)

Nirvana can be attained without accomplishing the formless absorptions, therefore one may never experience nirodhasamapatti but still be an arhat (SN 12.70). In one sutta (SN 8.7) it is even said that 64% of arhats are like that, that is, liberated by wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Equating it with nibbana.

Astus wrote:

If it were the same as nirvana, there would be no need to see it with discernment/wisdom. Furthermore, it could not be that one doesn't attain arhatship.

Crazywisdom said:

This is not an either or situation.. Buddha was open to different outcomes. But cessation is a path to nibbana.

Astus wrote:

Following nirodhasamapatti one gains either the state of an arhat, or the state of a non-returner. There is no third option.

"How does the emergence from it come about? The emergence comes about in two ways thus: by means of the fruition of non-return in the case of the nonreturner, or by means of the fruition of Arahantship in the case of the Arahant."

(Vism. XXIII.49, p 741)

Crazywisdom said:

So here entirely different terms are used, but it should be clear "Even this much..." means Nibbana

Astus wrote:

As before, it requires seeing with discernment, and discernment cannot occur while there is no perception.

Crazywisdom said:

You make the mistake of thinking there are logically distinct categories.

Astus wrote:

Why is that a mistake?

Crazywisdom said:

In the Nibbana Sutta it's clearly stated that cessation is Nibbana.

Astus wrote:

It's not stated anywhere. Please provide a quote that explicitly says that.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

I did. Twice. Plus, Buddha is saying there is possibility of discernment in cessation.

Astus wrote:

Both quotes describe a sequential order, that following absorption in cessation there is a reflection on that state. If, as you claim, cessation were equal to nirvana, there would be no need to be followed up by reflection. Furthermore, when there is no perception, how can discernment be performed?

Crazywisdom said:

Discernment is what is causing Nibbana in any case.

Astus wrote:

Since cessation is not discernment, and cessation precedes discernment, cessation

cannot be the same as nirvana.

Crazywisdom said:

Or Nibbana is a kind of discernment, with a wide variety of ways to get to it.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana means the complete cessation of defilements. That is neither an absorption, nor a discernment.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

But I contend, the wisdom aspect of mind is never stopped.

Astus wrote:

What is that wisdom aspect? If you assume there is something beyond the five aggregates, that contradicts both Hinayana and Mahayana teachings.

Crazywisdom said:

Cessation of perception and feeling is not the same as a coma.

Astus wrote:

"What is the difference between one who is dead, who has completed his time, and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling?"

"In the case of the one who is dead, who has completed his time, his bodily fabrications have ceased & subsided, his verbal fabrications ... his mental fabrications have ceased & subsided, his vitality is exhausted, his heat subsided, & his faculties are scattered. But in the case of a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, his bodily fabrications have ceased & subsided, his verbal fabrications ... his mental fabrications have ceased & subsided, his vitality is not exhausted, his heat has not subsided, & his faculties are exceptionally clear. This is the difference between one who is dead, who has completed his time, and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.043.than.html>)

Crazywisdom said:

The discerning mind is not included in either of perception or feeling.

Astus wrote:

Perception means the function of identifying things. How do you discern without the ability to identify anything?

Crazywisdom said:

The self-knowing awareness

Astus wrote:

There are only six types of consciousness, they all are dependent on objects, and all of them come under the consciousness aggregate.

"Consciousness, monks, is classified simply by the requisite condition in dependence on which it arises. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the eye & forms is classified simply as eye-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the ear & sounds is classified simply as ear-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the nose & aromas is classified simply as nose-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the tongue & flavors is classified simply as tongue-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the body & tactile sensations is classified simply as body-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the intellect & ideas is classified simply as intellect-consciousness."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.038.than.html>)

"It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of it, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. In the same way, what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Five wisdoms, Buddha-nature, hello?

Astus wrote:

Those are Yogacara and Vajrayana ideas, not Hinayana.

Crazywisdom said:

Faculties are exceptionally clear, hello?

Astus wrote:

"mental fabrications have ceased & subsided" - hence no discernment. Faculties (indriya) means only the senses, in other words, one who is in nirodhasamapatti has not lost the ability to sense, but there is nothing that occurs to be sensed.

Crazywisdom said:

Nirodha is identified. He knows, it is stopped, etc.

Astus wrote:

Since there is no perception, there is no possibility of conceiving that "it is stopped".

"The thought does not occur to a monk as he is attaining the cessation of perception & feeling that 'I am about to attain the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I am attaining the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I have attained the cessation of perception & feeling.' Instead, the way his mind has previously been developed leads him to that state."

...

"The thought does not occur to a monk as he is emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling that 'I am about to emerge from the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I am emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I have emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling.' Instead, the way his mind has previously been developed leads him to that state."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn41/sn41.006.than.html>)

Crazywisdom said:

So Nibbana can discern peace, happiness, freedom, etc. many qualities are discerned that do not fall within the above lists. Nibbana is also called a consciousness, pure, clear, luminous all around. So the capacity to know and understand is always available.

Astus wrote:

What do you base those assumptions on? Nirvana is the final cessation of defilements. It is not a consciousness, especially because all six consciousnesses are conditioned. Discernment is a mental function that occurs within the four mental aggregates and it is necessarily the object of the sixth consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

I addressed your points, but you won't address mine, eg, re cessation and clear faculties

Astus wrote:

I did respond to that, saying that faculties are the basic sensory ability, namely eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, mind. However, nothing occurs as physical object, since one is well beyond the rupadhyanas. Nor is there anything to appear for the mind, as both feelings and thoughts have ceased. That's why one of the quoted suttas explicitly say that the bodily, the verbal, and the mental functions have stopped.

Crazywisdom said:
and nirvana as pure consciousness.

Astus wrote:
There are six consciousnesses. They are neither pure nor impure. Positing a seventh consciousness as nirvana is not based on any Buddhist teaching that I'm aware of. Please quote your sources.

Crazywisdom said:
Your use of the indriya and sense bases is non responsive.

Astus wrote:
How so? I have clearly stated what faculties mean. But see what the Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism says:

"In the sutra literature, indriya typically refers to the five or six sense bases: e.g., the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile faculties associated with the physical sense organs and the mental base associated with the mind; in the case of the physical senses, the indriya are forms of subtle matter located within the organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body that enable the functioning of the senses. The mind (manas) is typically listed as a sixth, internal sensory faculty."

Crazywisdom said:
It's also contradicted by the passages previously cited.

Astus wrote:
What exactly contradicts what?

Crazywisdom said:
By the way you cited the passages about having clear faculties in cessation.

Astus wrote:
Yes. That's a difference between one who is in absorption and one who is dead, that the one in absorption has functioning senses. It doesn't mean, as you seem to interpret, that there are objects occurring to those faculties.

Crazywisdom said:
Nibbana is a consciousness

Astus wrote:
Which one of the six is it?

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 3:31 AM
Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Nibbana is it.

<http://community.dhammaloka.org.au/showthread.php/244-Meaning-of-Vi%C3%B1%C3%B1%C4%81%E1%B9%87a%E1%B9%83-anidassana%E1%B9%83>

Astus wrote:

As Ajahn Brahmali points out there:

"Remember that there is no mind apart from the five khandhas, the aggregates. The mind is nothing apart from the the mental aggregates working together. When consciousness ceases, the mind also ceases. Nibbāna is simply the cessation of suffering, since all these things are suffering."

See also Sujato's (friend of Brahmali) posts:

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/vinna%E1%B9%87a-is-not-nibbana-really-it-just-isn%E2%80%99t/>

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/21/nibbana-remains-not-vinnana/>

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/18/nibbana-is-still-not-vinna%E1%B9%87a/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

No. I'm saying Nibbana is a discernment and it happens in the cessation, because Nibbana is a consciousness without surface or feature and also because it does not come or go, and because it is luminous whether there are defilements or not

Astus wrote:

In other words, you're positing an unconditioned consciousness. That is a clear case of belief in a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 4:46 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

So there's no denying this refers to Nibbana vinnanam annidassanam, anantam sabbatopham.

Astus wrote:

It refers to consciousness without attachment. That is what being liberated means. Nirvana is the end of all attachments. But it doesn't mean there is an unconditioned

consciousness. It is simply an unestablished (appatiṭṭha) consciousness.

"But when one doesn't intend, arrange, or obsess [about anything], there is no support for the stationing of consciousness. There being no support, there is no landing of consciousness. When that consciousness doesn't land & grow, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.038.than.html>)

"Where there is no passion for the nutriment of consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or increase. Where consciousness does not land or increase, there is no alighting of name-&-form. Where there is no alighting of name-&-form, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.064.than.html>)

"If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.053.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.054.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.055.than.html>)

"Whatever you're alert to,
above, below,
across, in between:
dispelling any delight,
any laying claim
to those things,
consciousness should not take a stance
in becoming.

The monk who dwells thus
— mindful, heedful —
letting go of his sense of mine,
knowing right here would abandon
birth & aging,
lamentation & sorrow,
stress & suffering."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.5.04.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 5:55 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Now you're speaking out of both sides of your mouth and conceding my point. And you're wrong it is unconditioned and unestablished consciousness. Besides. This is a distinction without a difference, unless one is imputing a difference for pedagogy. But in this case doing so obscures the point that these are the same thing.

Astus wrote:

Unconditioned means that it is without cause, it is permanent. Such a consciousness is impossible. Unestablished is simply another word for lack of attachment, lack of the mistaken concept of a self. In other words, unestablished consciousness (no self) means the exact opposite of unconditioned consciousness (self).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 6:02 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Perhaps off topic, but where is the difference between nirvana and annihilation at death if the extent of Dharma ends at the five skandhas?

Astus wrote:

The aggregates cease to occur after parinirvana, that is the Hinayana view. However, it is not annihilation, because there is no self that is destroyed. This is clarified in teachings like the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.072.than.html>, the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>, and the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.086.than.html>.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Does not contact cease with dissolution of the body, therefore the types of consciousnesses no longer have a basis? I have a hard time sussing out the difference between nirvana and ordinary death in the case of a consciousness predicated on bodily senses.

Astus wrote:

There are six consciousnesses, so there is also a mind-consciousness that occurs based on mental objects. That's why there is rebirth. But when there is no more craving, no more attachment, no more self view, then there is no cause for rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

There is a something not conditioned, if there weren't the path would be impossible.

Astus wrote:

I didn't say there is nothing unconditioned. I said that consciousness cannot be unconditioned. It is nirvana that is unconditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Abhidharmasammuvaya, pg. 135

Astus wrote:

That talks about nirodha, the third noble truth. I meant there nirodhasamapatti, the 9th dhyana. They are not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 18th, 2016 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Astus, out of curiosity: what do you mean by "consciousness"? Are you using it in the specific context of the skandhas, dhatus and ayatanas, or in the broadest possible sense, to designate all and any possible types of cognition?

Astus wrote:

As Malcolm said, the fifth aggregate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 1:03 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

The latter leads to the former.

Astus wrote:

Not necessarily, because one can attain not only arhatship but also the state of the non-returner.

Malcolm said:

The Mahāyāna point is that arhats, when they pass away, enter that equipoise and remain there, since we do not accept that there can be an absolute cessation of the mind.

Astus wrote:

There is no arising, hence no cessation either. It is because all appearances are unborn that they are no different from nirvana. That's why the emptiness of phenomena is emphasised as the unique wisdom of bodhisattvas. However, it is a misinterpretation even in Hinayana to say that an arhat ceases to exist, for the same reason it is a mistake in Mahayana: there is nothing to cease. At the same time, there is nothing to persist either. So, saying that the mind-stream continues on forever is at best a provisional teaching for those afraid of becoming nothing.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, since Sautrantikas assert that Nirvana is a nonexistence, it is definite that the highest Hinayāna view maintains that nirvana is a nonexistence. Other Hinayāna schools maintain that nirvana is some unconditioned phenomena, belonging to cessation due to insight.

Astus wrote:

I assume you're referring to this:

"What is called pratisankhyanirodha or Nirvana is—when both the defilements already produced and the existence already produced are destroyed—the absence of any other defilements or any other existence, and that by reason of the force of the consciousness (pratisamkhyā-prajñā)."

(Kosha II.55d; v 1, p 280-281)

It is not simply non-existence, but the end of defilements and the existence (suffering) that comes from those. This is nothing more than the statement repeated so often with the twelve links of dependent origination, how because of the "remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes ... the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.002.than.html>)

But would you say that the Sautrantikas or others claimed a definitive negative answer to the question whether the Tathagata exists after death? At the same time, are you of the opinion that the Mahayana answer is a definitive yes?

Malcolm said:

If the purified continuums of buddhas and bodhisattvas do not continue forever, it follows that they must somehow cease.

Astus wrote:

That is simply exchanging "self" for "continuum", and positing the extremes of existence and non-existence.

Malcolm said:

If they must somehow cease, this is an annihilationist position.

Astus wrote:

And if they must persist, it is the eternalist position.

Malcolm said:

If you are argue it is merely a self within that continuum that does not cease because it does not exist, this still leaves us with the purified continuum of buddhas and bodhisattvas persisting forever since there is no condition by which such a continuum should cease given that there is no condition by which the continuums of sentient beings, the object of their compassion, will cease.

Astus wrote:

What is the maintaining force of that continuum? It cannot be ignorance, or defilements, nor can it be wisdom, or compassion. Then what?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is not that they must, it is simply that they do.

Astus wrote:

That still makes it an eternalist interpretation. Beings are literally immortal.

Malcolm said:

Aspirations.

Astus wrote:

That is? Ordinary beings have selfish aspirations, while noble beings have selfless aspirations? That sounds like saying that the third noble truth is false and there is only craving.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

tomamundsen said:

which phenomena are not included in the skhandas?

Astus wrote:

The unconditioned dharmas are categorised under the dhatus but not the skandhas in the Kosha.

"All conditioned dharmas are included within the totality of the skandhas (i.7); all of the impure dharmas are included within the totality of the upadanaskandhas (i.8); and all the dharmas are included within the totality of the ayatanas and the dhatus (i.14)."
(Kosha, I.18; vol 1, p 76)

"Unconditioned things are not named with respect to the skandhas, because they do not correspond to the concept."
(Kosha, I.22a-b; vol 1, p 81)

Same in Theravada where nibbana is a mental object, hence include in the 12 ayatanas and 18 dhatus, but it is different from the 8 supramundane minds - they take nibbana as the object - that are within the 5 aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

their continuums are sustained on infinite causes.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is taught to be the root cause of birth. Saying that birth can never end means that ignorance cannot be the root cause. What is it then that sustains it?

Malcolm said:

Prañidhāna-pāramitā.

Astus wrote:

For bodhisattvas and buddhas compassion is said to be the driving force so that they don't abandon beings. Such a condition is needed if birth can end. But since birth cannot end, there is no need for such an aspiration, and there is always either a deluded or an enlightened inclination that sustains birth, in which case both types of beings are subjects to birth and death. Thus nirvana is samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Then you and CW are just talking past each other, are you not?

Astus wrote:

I do not see how. Consciousness, any kind, is necessarily conditioned. Nirvana is not a consciousness, but the final extinction of defilements. CW is of the opinion that somehow there can be an unconditioned consciousness. That I call illogical and impossible, because consciousness is always the awareness of something, and that means change, but change cannot happen to what is unconditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

the cause of the continuity of buddhas is the force of previously made aspirations. This is not controversial. Buddhas are beyond birth and death, as are bodhisattvas on the pure stages.

Astus wrote:

How can they be beyond rebirth when there is no end of birth? Non-abiding nirvana means being present in samsara without being affected by it. That is practically no different from nirvana with remnants, where the arhat has only functional minds (kiriya-citta) that are beyond karma. The only difference lies in the compassion part. If bodhisattvas and buddhas are sustained by their aspirations, since an arhat is without such vows, there should be no reason for the continuity of birth. Saying that they still have to be reborn because of cognitive obscurations leads us <http://dharma-wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=355583#p355583> in this topic. Not to mention the non-afflictive nature of cognitive obscurations that make them irrelevant regarding rebirth. In other words, what if there were no vows made, and why wouldn't that mean the end of the mind-stream?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

there are no buddhas who made no aspirations

Astus wrote:

Ignorance cannot be what sustains rebirth, because then arhats would be finished, as they are without aspirations. It also cannot be established that arhats grasp at non-existence and that's why they succumb temporarily to an inactive state, since they are

without any form of identification with anything. Furthermore, if aspirations are necessary for the buddhas to remain functional, that in itself means that dependent origination is driven by mental effort.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 11:41 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Not quite. CW is of the opinion that all consciousness (vijñāna) is afflicted, unestablished and conditioned -- but there is also unafflicted cognition (aka as wisdom, jñāna) which is unestablished and unconditioned. Controversial?

Astus wrote:

Any form of consciousness/awareness/cognition is conditioned, because it is dependent on the object that is perceived. A consciousness without anything to be conscious of is unconsciousness. Affliction is the attachment to appearances, believing them to be independent, unconditioned, and thus regarding them as self or the possession of a self. Recognising the empty nature of phenomena means abandoning the false concept of substantiality, of self, and it is brought about by contemplation performed with a conditioned mind. If an unconditioned consciousness were necessary to realise emptiness, then such a realisation could never happen, or it had already been realised, because what is unconditioned does not change.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, dependent origination is a mind-driven process. Isn't that plainly obvious?

Astus wrote:

Of course. What is it that drives the mind? The Hinayana position is that it is ignorance, and with the ignorance removed there is no reason for another birth. Mahayana follows that view, that's why it needs to exchange ignorance with aspirations, since that type of understanding comes from the Hinayana version of the bodhisattva path, in other words, all the Mahayana explanations are built to back up an already accepted model. And the problem I see here is that it lacks the explanation for why arhats could not simply end the process, thus questioning the assumption that the mind-stream is unceasing.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Would you say that your position is representative of what Chan Buddhism has to say on the matter?

Astus wrote:

No. There is hardly anything that all of Chan followers would universally agree on anyway. What I said regarding the impossibility of an unconditioned mind is more in line with what you find in the Nikayas and Madhyamaka. But to give a Zen example, Dogen was quite serious in attacking the idea that buddha-nature means an independent mind.

treehuggingoctopus said:

Do you consider suchness to be conditioned?

Astus wrote:

As the Samdhinirmocana Sutra explains in its second chapter (BDK ed. p 11): "Good son, in sum, all things are of two kinds, conditioned and unconditioned. Herein conditioned things are neither conditioned nor unconditioned, and unconditioned things are neither unconditioned nor conditioned."

In other words, suchness is a word, a concept, and as such it is conditioned. At the same time, seeing it to be conditioned means it is without any meaning on its own, and that meaninglessness is the unconditioned. Hence suchness is conditioned because it is unconditioned because it is conditioned, and that's how it is simply such.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

If I am reading you correctly, you are equating suchness with emptiness, right?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness emphasises that there is no substance. Suchness emphasises the illusory appearance.

treehuggingoctopus said:

The logic of the head-spinning second sentence seems to me somewhat dubious.

Astus wrote:

What is the doubt about?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 7:28 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Would your reasoning be valid with respect to that nonconceptual merely apparent "something" the word "suchness" points to?

Astus wrote:

What is there to say about silence? It means there is nothing said. Similarly, non-conceptual means nothing conceived. What is there to elaborate, to conceptualise, about the lack of concepts? Then to come up with the view that somehow we can nevertheless perceive something makes it more complicated than necessary. Rather, what makes one's view non-conceptual (nirvikalpa) is not being mindless but not having the wrong view of self/substance, because that is what results in grasping and suffering, not thoughts in general. And that's what it means to see the conditioned as conditioned.

treehuggingoctopus said:

More importantly, does your suchness include the subject side, i.e., the mere knowing of appearances?

Astus wrote:

Mere knowing is an imaginary idea based on the mistaken view that for some reason concepts are bad. And that concept of "mere view" only leads to the wrong sort of meditation where people try to remain thoughtless.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

what I meant by "mere knowing"

Astus wrote:

I see, so it was the lack of grasper and grasped, in other words: vijñaptimātra.

treehuggingoctopus said:

You did not answer my question, though.

Astus wrote:

Which one?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

treehuggingoctopus said:

Does what you mean by suchness include the "subject side," the (appearance of) mere knowing?

Astus wrote:

As I see it, everything in Buddhism is about the subjective point of view (skandhas, dhatus). So, as suchness is about the illusory appearances, it fits what is also called mere knowing or mind only.

"The recognition of the one vehicle is obtained when there is no rising of discrimination by doing away with the notion of grasped and grasping and by abiding in the reality of suchness (yathabhuta)."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.56, tr Suzuki)

"When the external world is not grasped [as real] there is neither causation nor reality; there is the essence of suchness (tathata), which is the [spiritual] realm of the wise."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.62, tr Suzuki)

"Suchness (tathata), emptiness, realm of truth (dharmadhatu), the various forms of the will-body— these I call Mind-only."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.64, tr Suzuki)

"When erroneous views based on the dualistic notion of assertion and negation are gotten rid of, and when the Vijñanas cease to rise as regards the objective world of names and appearances, this I call "suchness.""

(Lankavatara Sutra, 6.83, tr Suzuki)

"Whenever, regarding the objective realm,
Knowledge is completely devoid of something obtained,
Then it dwells in consciousness only,
Because it is divorced from characteristics of the twofold grasping."

(Trimsika, v 28, tr Cook, BDK ed. p 383)

"For it has been said by the Tathagata that "the five skandhas are reckoned as the 'world.'" Therefore then, Subhuti, that which is the Suchness of the skandhas, that is the Suchness of the world; that which is the Suchness of the world, that is the Suchness of all dharmas; that which is the Suchness of all dharmas that is the Suchness of the fruit of a Streamwinner, and so on, up to: that is the Suchness of Pratyekabuddhahood, that is the Suchness of the Tathagata. In consequence all this Suchness, -the Suchness of the Tathagata, of the skandhas, of all dharmas, of all holy Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas- is just one single Suchness, is without any trace of the variety of positivity and negativity, as being one, non-different, inextinguishable, unaffected, non-dual, without cause for duality."

(PP8000, XII.3, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 9:46 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

If ignorance were the ultimate or first cause of the mind (it isn't) than everything you say would make sense. But ignorance is not the ultimate or first cause of the mind, and in fact, ignorance is not inherent to the mind, as your query suggests. In fact, it is affliction in general that drives samsara, but afflictions do not drive the mind.

Astus wrote:

What Mahayana teaching is it that goes beyond the twelve links of dependent origination? The twelve is what establishes ignorance as the root cause, and it is also what is given as the force driving both the mind and the whole of the world.

Malcolm said:

Third, just because one no longer takes rebirth in the three realms does not mean that one's mind has ceased to exist. The mind does not exist in the three realms; the three realms exist in the mind.

Astus wrote:

What is it that drives the mind if not ignorance and the subsequent afflictions?

(If possible please give something else as well, besides Dzogchen sources.)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2016 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

In Chapter 3 of the *Kośabhaṣyam*, Vasubandhu, representing the Sautrantika point of view, rejects the idea, quite decisively, that ignorance is the first cause of the 12 nidanas.

Astus wrote:

Is this what you're referring to?

"From defilement there arises defilement and action; from whence foundation; from whence a new foundation and defilement: such is the manner of existence of the parts of existence or bhavangas."

(Kosha, III.27; vol 2, p 407)

That simply means that ignorance is not without a cause, and of course there is no "first cause" either. What I said was that ignorance is the root of the defilements.

Malcolm said:

And the Buddha never says anywhere that afflictions are the cause of the mind.

Astus wrote:

A small reminder of the twelve nidanas then: ignorance -> formations -> consciousness -> name and form (name = consciousness) -> six ayatanas (sixth ayatana =

consciousness).

"Only the skandhas, conditioned by defilement and action, go reincarnating themselves by means of the series of intermediate existences. As an example: the lamp."
(III.18a-d; vol 2, p 399)

Do you propose a consciousness beyond the five aggregates?

Malcolm said:

We can know from many sources, including the Pabhassara Sutta, that afflictions are not inherent to the mind.

Astus wrote:

Afflictions are not inherent to the mind, and that's not been stated here. What is stated is that ignorance gives rise to birth, and birth includes the birth of consciousness.

Malcolm said:

If the mind arose from affliction, it could never be free of affliction

Astus wrote:

Wheat grows from the soil, but bread should not have soil in it. And there is the well known metaphor of the lotus. The whole world is said to arise from ignorance.

Malcolm said:

If we follow your idea, it would seem that all there is samsara, and ultimately, when the mind ceases, samsara ceases.

Astus wrote:

When there is no more birth there is no more samsara. I have not realised this is my idea.

Malcolm said:

Why?

Astus wrote:

I'm not asking to leave Dzogchen out, but simply to provide others who support it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

This does not show that the mind arises because of afflictions. It merely shows that mind is conditioned by afflictions.

Astus wrote:

When there is one, there is the other, when the one is not, then the other is not - that is

the basic structure of dependent origination. If it were to say that there are all these 12 elements lying around influencing, but not generating, each other, then it could not even be called origination.

Maybe this is explicit enough then:

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

And what is consciousness, what is the origin of consciousness, what is the cessation of consciousness, what is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. With the arising of formations there is the arising of consciousness. With the cessation of formations there is the cessation of consciousness. The way leading to the cessation of consciousness is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

When a noble disciple has thus understood consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

...

"With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of formations. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of formations."

...

"With the arising of the taints there is the arising of ignorance. With the cessation of the taints there is the cessation of ignorance."

...

"With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of the taints. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of the taints."

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.009.ntbb.html#vinnana>; see also: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.035.than.html>, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.017.than.html>)

"Through the cessation of this and that,
This and that will not be manifest.
That which is only a mass of suffering
Will thus completely cease."
(MMK 26.12, tr Samten-Garfield)

Malcolm said:

Are you also proposing Buddhas are like pieces of wood? Without any consciousness at all?

Astus wrote:

"Buddha-activity is unceasing because it is devoid of conceptualising"

(Uttaratantra 7.284, tr Holmes)

Beings experience buddhas and lands dependent on their perception. Buddhas are beyond thought and intention. What kind of consciousness is there to be for them?

"Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathagata would describe him: That the Tathagata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, Vaccha, the Tathagata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Both does & does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.072.than.html>)

"One who holds firmly
That the Tathagata exists
Will have to fabricate his nonexistence
After having achieved nirvana.
Since he is essentially empty,
Neither the thought that the Buddha exists
Nor that he does not exist
After having achieved nirvana is tenable."
(MMK 22.13-14)

Malcolm said:

Are you further proposing that afflictions are inherent to the skandhas?

Astus wrote:

No.

Malcolm said:

Likewise, if the cause of the mind is ignorance (wheat seed) it is impossible that a mind could ever be awakened (lotus), since its nature and its continuum is inherently ignorant (wheat), since its cause is ignorance (wheat seed).

Astus wrote:

Is a buddha a consciousness?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Therefore, you are asserting that afflictions are a necessary precondition for the arising of the mind, period.

Astus wrote:

And apparently so does everyone else who accept the twelve nidanas as Buddhadharma.

Even the Uttaratantra states:

"It is true happiness, since [even] the aggregates of mental nature and their causes are reversed."
(v 38)

And DJKR comments:

"The dharmakaya has no aggregates, not even the subtlest aggregates, nor the cause of such aggregates, which is ignorance. When there is no ignorance and no result of ignorance, namely the aggregates, there is no suffering. That is transcendental bliss."
(p 46-47)

Malcolm said:

So you think buddhas are pieces of wood, inert, like rocks.

Astus wrote:

As the Uttaratantra states, they make no effort, and all activities are illusory.

"Here the meaning of the chapter is as follows:

The nine aspects of physical display and so on [show] that the Teacher has no birth and death, and yet perfectly manifests without any effort. Something that, similar to Indra, the drum, clouds, Brahma, the sun, the precious king of wish-granting gems, an echo, space, and the earth, effortlessly and as long as existence may last fulfils others' benefit is only conceived of by [supreme] yogis."
(v 363-364)

Malcolm said:

Jñāna. The only difference between dualistic consciousness (vijñāna) and pristine consciousness (jñāna) is the presence and absence of the vi- prefix. They are both a kind of consciousness, however, and they exist on a continuum. With the removal of obscurations of both afflictions and knowledge, vijñāna gradually becomes jñāna.

Astus wrote:

When vijnana loses the two obscurations and only jnana remains, what is it that maintains the continuity? If you say it's the aspirations, then those vows were added to vijnana and the continuity is not the result of the absence of defilements.

Malcolm said:

Buddhahood is a supramundane jñāna.

Astus wrote:

And what does that actually mean? A buddha is without thoughts, lacks the functions of the five aggregates, all activities are automatic, and the effect on beings is solely dependent on the deluded perception defined by their karma. From the perspective of beings, it's always their own conceptualisations they perceive. From the perspective of the buddha, well, a buddha has no perspective at all, and does nothing whatsoever.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

No one accepts that afflictions are a precondition for the arising of the mind, if one does, it renders the Pabhassara Sutta meaningless.

Astus wrote:

If that were the case, then no school could posit the disperse of the aggregates following parinirvana of the arhat. And that contradicts the accusation of the Hinayana schools' annihilationist view.

Malcolm said:

He just means upadana skandhas. For example, it well known that the mental aggregate transforms into the four pristine consciousness according to the Mahayānasamgraha

Astus wrote:

If aggregates without attachment may continue, then there is no point in their transformation, nor in changing vijñāna into jñāna.

Malcolm said:

And nevertheless the Buddha has five aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Aren't they supposed to change into the four/five wisdoms?

Malcolm said:

In the case of an arhat, what sustains their consciousness until they are aroused from the slumber of the samadhi of cessation is their intention to enter that samadhi.

Astus wrote:

Arhats are supposed to be without all kinds of craving. And craving for existence (bhavatanha) or non-existence (vibhavatanha) are two basic types of desire.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Sentient Light said:

According to Vasubandhu, jñāna is pure unmediated cognition, empty of conceptions, perceptions, etc. It is stainless, the surface of water after all debris has been cleared away.

Astus wrote:

Where does he write that?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Anupadāna-skandhas are the transformed aggregates.

Astus wrote:

That's what arhats have. How is there any difference then between arhats and buddhas in terms of the aggregates?

Malcolm said:

Arhats may be without craving, but they still have cetana.

Astus wrote:

Since even buddhas can be described by aggregates without attachment, they have cetana too. Furthermore, cetana is a universal mental factor, necessary for any mental function.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Flavors of Nationalism... and the wind tossed seas of Open Dharma

Content:

Astus wrote:

I don't really see how patriotism/nationalism can sound anything acceptable to those who are not on the right wing side of the political spectrum. It sounds to me a harmful idea used for harmful purposes, both in the past and the present.

Here's a fine example of patriotism/nationalism:

Since the mid 19th century Jews in Austria-Hungary rapidly assimilated into the mainstream culture and accepted the national identity as their own. This reached the point where in the late 1930's Jews actively supported the Hungarian government, despite the anti-Jewish laws already in effect. The last time there was a thanksgiving service for a Hungarian head of state by Jews was for the 76th birthday of the governor and regent https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikl%C3%B3s_Horthy in the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doh%C3%A1ny_Street_Synagogue of Budapest, on 18 June 1944. They had already heard about what happened to Jews in other countries and in other parts of Hungary, but they believed that it could never happen to them, since they are Hungarians. Deportations from Budapest began on 30 June.

And as for collective responsibility:

3.5 million Germans were expelled from Poland by 1950, and the death toll was around 400,000. 2.4 million Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia between 1945-48, with a death toll around 15,000. 239,000 Germans were expelled from Hungary, the death toll was about 11,000.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsdam_Agreement#Expulsions,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bene%C5%A1_decrees#Loss_of_citizenship_and_confiscation_of_property.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

The aggregates of an arhat are not transformed because they have not realized dharmakāya.

The buddhas do not have cetana, because of the transformation of the samskara skandha.

Astus wrote:

So there are the upadana-skandhas, the anupadana-skandhas, and what is the third version?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Arhats have an inferior conversion, according to Asanga, because arhats are afraid of transmigration and reject it since their realization of emptiness is confined to the selflessness of the person.

Astus wrote:

The Samgraha says nothing new on the matter, just that arhats know only personal emptiness while bodhisattvas the dual emptiness. It does not really discuss the aggregates in relation to the arhats. So, I don't think that work is of much help here.

"This conversion of support has six varieties: ... 5) inferior conversion— the realization

by word-hearers of the non-self of persons, which completely turns away from transmigration and constitutes an eternal rejection of transmigration; 6) extensive conversion—the realization by bodhisattvas of the non-self of things, wherein by understanding the merits of quietude and insight, they both abandon and do not abandon [transmigration]."

(Samgraha 9.2, BDK ed. p 100)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2016 at 12:33 AM

Title: Re: Flavors of Nationalism... and the wind tossed seas of Open Dharma

Content:

Queequeg said:

Astus, see the first post in this thread.

I specifically addressed race or culture as basis for national identity and offered the American version as alternative.

Astus wrote:

Jews are not a race, nor are Germans, even if pre-1945 imagined biological traits of every nation were considered real and scientific. National identity of any kind is nationalism - it only takes a nicely tailored historical narrative to make up a nation.

Queequeg said:

This points to American Nationalism being something fundamentally different than say, nationalism in the UK, or Germany, or Ukraine, or Russia, or whatever. Race or culture or religion does not matter to most of us as much as fundamental commitment to certain ideals, to a certain social contract.

The moment American nationalism becomes racial, I think it loses its meaning.

Astus wrote:

That's actually a very good start. One first has to establish why one's nation is unique, special. From that come the concepts of being outstanding and superior. Leader of the free world. Germans, French, Italians, and English each consider their nation better than the other three, and there is no need to add racism here, since all four are traditionally white societies. To give an example how even racism is not that straightforward, look at this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorary_Aryan. It's always "certain ideals" that matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2016 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Malcolm said:

This says volumes, then of course there is Sthiramati's commentary on this work.

Astus wrote:

Does it? Sounds like the same argument used before.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2016 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Flavors of Nationalism... and the wind tossed seas of Open Dharma

Content:

maybay said:

If someone says sit Japanese style u know what they mean. But if u talking to Japanese people its inappropriate. You should say seiza or whatever.

Astus wrote:

Seiza 正座 literally means correct 正 sitting 座. When a buddha or bodhisattva sits like that, it's called Yamato-suware 大和座, i.e. Japanese sitting.

<http://lapizlazuri.net/yamatosuware.html> are some examples. So, you could actually tell a Japanese to sit in the Japanese style.

The opposite of correct/Japanese sitting is agura 胡座 that means barbarian (foreign) 胡 sitting 座, and it refers to sitting cross-legged, i.e. Indian style.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 22nd, 2016 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: Difference in attainments

Content:

Astus wrote:

"In brief, the chief thing that sravakas must realize is the selflessness of the person. To understand that, they must eliminate grasping at the aggregates as true [things]. This is because "grasping at truth qua grasping at the truth of the aggregates" is the ever-present power that is the direct cause of the apprehension of the self of the person." (Gorampa: Distinguishing the Views of Emptiness, in Freedom from Extremes, p 225)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 23rd, 2016 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: Flavors of Nationalism... and the wind tossed seas of Open Dharma

Content:

Virgo said:

People think about nationalism as long as their country is prospering, is lawful, and is a nice place to be in

Astus wrote:

I'd say it's the opposite. When things seem to be in a bad condition it is easy to turn to nationalist ideas and blame "the others" for all the problems. Same goes for religion.

People care little about abstract ideas as long as there is ample source of material comfort and entertainment. Of course, the philosopher (wisdom lover) is a different kind, and like the Buddha, leaves behind vulgar pleasures even when they are available.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 24th, 2016 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: Why is Amitabha absent in American Zen and TB?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why should Amitabha appear in Soto Zen at all? He is nowhere included in the <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/scriptures.html>. Officially Shakyamuni is the "main image of worship" (honzon 本尊) of the school. Kannon has a special place, as the example of the perfect bodhisattva. As for aiming for birth in Sukhavati, that is meaningless for one who understands that zazen is practice-enlightenment.

"Even if up to now, you have thought that a buddha has excellent characteristics like Shakyamuni or Amitabha, radiates a halo, has the virtue of preaching the dharma and benefiting living beings, you should believe your teacher if he says that buddha is nothing but a toad or an earthworm, and throw your former ideas away. However, if you look for some excellent characteristics, a halo, or other virtues of a buddha on the toad or the earthworm, you still have not reformed your discriminating mind. Just understand what you see right now is buddha. If you continually reform your discriminating mind and fundamental attachment in this way according to your teacher's instruction, you will naturally become one with the Way.

Students today, however, cling to their own discriminating minds. Their thinking is based on their own personal views that buddha must be such and such; if it goes against their ideas, they say that buddha cannot be that way.

Having such an attitude and wandering here and there in delusion, searching after what conforms to their preconceptions, few of them ever make any progress in the Buddha-Way."

(Dogen: http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/common_html/zuimonki/01-13.html)

If you are looking for PL related elements, Chinese and Vietnamese Buddhist communities usually have them.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 24th, 2016 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: are you someone special?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What is pride (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81na>)? It is exaltation of the mind (cittasyonnatih) which rests on the idea of self. Its function consists of giving a basis to the appearance of contempt (agaurava) and suffering."

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 12)

"Soṇa, when any ascetics and brahmins, on the basis of form—which is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—regard themselves thus: 'I am superior,' or 'I am equal,'

or 'I am inferior,' what is that due to apart from not seeing things as they really are?
When any ascetics and brahmins, on the basis of feeling ... on the basis of perception ...
on the basis of volitional formations ... on the basis of consciousness—which is
impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—regard themselves thus: 'I am superior,'
or 'I am equal,' or 'I am inferior,' what is that due to apart from not seeing things as they
really are?

Soṇa, when any ascetics and brahmins do not, on the basis of form—which is
impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—regard themselves thus: 'I am superior,'
or 'I am equal,' or 'I am inferior,' what is that due to apart from seeing things as they
really are?

When any ascetics and brahmins do not, on the basis of feeling ... on the basis of
perception ... on the basis of volitional formations ... on the basis of consciousness—
which is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—regard themselves thus: 'I am
superior,' or 'I am equal,' or 'I am inferior,' what is that due to apart from seeing things as
they really are?"

(<https://suttacentral.net/en/sn22.49>)

THE NINE CONCEITS

One produces the conceit: "I am superior to others who are superior"; or one produces
the conceit: "I am equal to the superior ones"; or one produces the conceit: "I am
inferior to the superior ones;" or one produces the conceit: "I am superior to others who
are like me;" or one produces the conceit: "I am inferior to others who are like me;" or
one produces the conceit: "I am superior to those who are inferior;" or one produces the
conceit: "I am equal to those who are inferior;" or one produces the conceit: "I am
inferior to others who are inferior". These nine conceits are destroyed through the Path
of Saintship.

(Vimuttimaggā, p 317)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 26th, 2016 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: Why is Amitabha absent in American Zen and TB?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The first major teacher of Pure Land and Chan together was

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongming_Yanshou, who was likely the most outstanding
Buddhist teacher in early Song China. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhongfeng_Mingben,
an heir of Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1238-1296) - the one who invented the method of the
three essentials of kanhua chan, i.e. faith, determination, doubt - taught Pure Land
practices, just as his disciple Tianru Weize (1286-1355) whose work "Doubts and
Questions about Pure Land" (淨土或問) has been translated to English and published in
"Pure Land Buddhism - Dialogs with Ancient Masters"

(http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf).

It is a rather mistaken view to call it a combination or syncretism, since they have not
really existed separately, and this view of a Zen corrupted by Pure Land is a late
Japanese interpretation used against the Obaku school and Chinese teachers in the

18th century, then later taken up by early Western scholars and projected on Chinese Buddhism following Japanese scholarship.

Meido said:

What I have not found, however, is the opposite: Zen teachings interpreted in light of Pure Land teachings e.g. that Zen's "seeing nature/becoming Buddha" really means that one will attain rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

Birth is attained through faith, vow, and practice. One may practice Zen and aim for birth in the Pure Land. In fact, it is recommended to aim for birth there, because seeing one's nature is no easy thing, and even after that one can still fall back and encounter numerous hindrances. At the same time, all bodhisattvas are said to aspire towards the Pure Land.

This is often quoted from Yongming:

有禪無淨土 十人九錯路
陰境若現前 瞥爾隨他去
無禪有淨土 萬修萬人去
但得見彌陀 何愁不開悟
有禪有淨土 猶如帶角虎
現世為人師 當來作佛祖
無禪無淨土 鐵床并銅柱
萬劫與千生 沒箇人依怙

"With Ch'an without the Pure Land
Nine people out of ten take the wrong road.
If the skandhic states appear,
Instantly they follow.
Without ch'an but with pure land
Ten thousand cultivate and ten thousand go.
You only need see Amitabha
And what worry is there of no enlightenment?
With Ch'an and with Pure Land
One is like a tiger wearing horns.
In the present acting as people's teacher,
In the future one will be a patriarch.
Without Ch'an and without Pure Land,
It's the iron bed and the brass pillar.
In ten thousand kalpas and a thousand lives,
There is no one you can turn to."

(http://www.drbachinese.org/vbs/1_100/vbs72/72_1.html, see also: Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, p 236)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 26th, 2016 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

Awareness never drops away. It just gets clouded over with obscurations. The consciousnesses that we cling to are a confusion.

Astus wrote:

Awareness is never clouded. Awareness is not separate from the skandhas, just as emptiness is not separate from them. Awareness means that skandhas are experienced, and it is a quality that is always true, just as they are always empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 26th, 2016 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

At some point you're going to have to account for the deluded condition.

Astus wrote:

Delusion is the mistaken view that there is anything stable in the aggregates and thus forming an identification with it.

maybay said:

If pristine awareness is the sky, then it is meaningful to say clouds of confused appearances obscure that awareness.

Astus wrote:

The sky and clouds are merely a metaphor. Ignorance is not separate from the aggregates, just as ignorance is not separate from awareness. Recognising ignorance to be empty awareness is freedom from ignorance.

What is ignorance? Good sons, all sentient beings fall into various inverted views without beginning. Just like a disoriented person who confuses the four directions, they mistakenly take the Four Elements as the attributes of their bodies and the conditioned shadows of the Six Objects as the attributes of their mind. It is just like when our eyes are diseased and we see flowers in the sky, or a second moon. Good sons, the sky actually has no flowers—they are the false attachment of the diseased person. And because of this false attachment, not only are we confused about the self-nature of the sky; we are also mixed up about the place where real flowers come from. From this there is the falsely existent transmigration through life and death. Therefore it is called "ignorance."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html)

maybay said:

The sky is always there. It just becomes unrecognizable.

Astus wrote:

As I have said before, awareness and emptiness are qualities of the aggregates. There is no separate awareness. Is impermanence ever unrecognisable? It is always recognisable. But as long as one keeps to the idea of permanence, it is not recognised.

maybay said:

You seem to be suggesting that the skandhas are always A. Experienced and B. Empty. But it is wrong to say that they are always experienced as empty.

Astus wrote:

I have not said they are always experienced as empty. Whatever experience there is, it is always empty: without essence, without self, without anything to grasp. The question is whether one recognises it or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

Just the way you write this makes me think you believe the aggregates have some reality.

Astus wrote:

As you say, they are categories of experience.

maybay said:

they bear different characteristics, e.g. form has the characteristic of impermanence.

Astus wrote:

All five are impermanent. All five are empty. All five are awareness, i.e. experiences. Those are actually universal characteristics that are true for all five of them.

maybay said:

It's just the way you worded it. Sounds like you're trying to mix together too many systems of thought. In a thread on skandhas we shouldn't really be talking about awareness. We shouldn't need to.

Astus wrote:

That's what this topic is about. As it asks in the OP: "How does consciousness divide from awareness?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

Malcolm said:

This the basic problem with translated the term "rigpa" as "awareness."
It simply does not work.

Astus wrote:

Doesn't have to be "rigpa". Buddha-nature has been identified as awareness (zhi 知) by some Chan teachers as well. Interestingly, zhi 知 means both "to know" and "to be aware".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

Malcolm said:

"Awareness" is a term which is next to useless in a Buddhist context.

Astus wrote:

What do you suggest? <https://books.google.com/books?id=bUgg9aWaAH8C> translated zhi 知 as "knowing".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

Sorry I meant change, not impermanence.

Astus wrote:

What's the difference? What is impermanent changes, what changes is impermanent.
All five aggregates change.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

Malcolm said:

What does zhi mean in Sanskrit?

Astus wrote:

It can be a translation of various words. According to the Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Great Dictionary (佛教漢梵大辭典):

√jñā, -jñā, jñāna, vi-√jñā, pra-√jñā, √vid, -vid, ava-√budh; ajyate, adhigata, adhi-√gam,

adhigamana, anugata, anugama, anujñāpita, anu-pra-√viś, anupraviṣṭa, anu-√budh, anubodha, anumāna, anusāritva, anusmaraṇatā, antara-jñā, abhi-√gam, -abhijñā, abhi-√jñā, abhisambodhanatā, abhisambodhi, ava-√gam, avagama, ava-√gāh, avatāra, avatīrṇa, ava-√tṛ, avadhāraka, avabudhyanatā, avabodha, avabodhana, avê(√i), avêkṣ(√īkṣ), avetya, ā-√jñā, ājñā, ājñākhyā, ājñāta, ājñātāva, ājñāna, ājñēndriya, ājñeya, āsada, ucyate, udaya, upalakṣaṇa, upalakṣyate, upalabdhi, eṣṭavya, kovida, √kṣam, gatiṃ-gata, √gam, gamyate, gāmin, √gāh, √grah, grahaṇa, cetana, jānaka, jñāta, jñāpita, jñeya, dṛśyate, dṛṣṭvā, draṣṭavya, nidhyapti, nidhyāpta, niścaya, parāyaṇa, parikuśala, pari-cchid(√chid), pari-√ñā, parijñā, parijñāta, parijñāna, parijñānatā, parijñāyate, prajāna, prajānat*, prajñā, prajñāna, pratijñāyate, prati-√budh, pratibhāvayati, prativijñapti, prati-vi-√jñā, prativijñāna, pratividdha, prativibhāvayati, prativedha, prati-√vyadh, pratisaṃvidita, pratisaṃvedana, prati(√i), praty-anu-√bhū, pratyabhijñā, pratyabhijñāna, pra-vi-√ci, buddhi, budhyanatā, budhyanā, bodha, bhajana, mata, √man, manas, lakṣyate, labdha, va-√gāh, vicārayati, vi-√ci, vijñapti, vijñā, vijñāta, vijñāpana, vijñāyate, vidita, vidhi-jñā, vibuddhana, vibhāvayati, vibhāvita, vibhāvya, vetṭṛ, veda, veditavya, vedin, saṃ-lakṣaya (den.), saṃ-√jñā, saṃ-anu-√dṛś, saṃ-anu-√paś, saṃ-anv-ā-√hṛ, saṃ-√āp, samudāgama, saṃ-√jñā, saṃ-pra-√dṛś, suniścita, smṛti.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

No only form changes. If change was a characteristic of the other aggregates then there would be no (mistaken) sense of permanence. What was a good feeling doesn't turn into a bad feeling. The recognition of blue doesn't change to a recognition of purple. The formation of disgust doesn't morph into the formation of scepticism. The cognition of one thing will not change into another thing. It is only form that changes, and consequently one experiences different feelings, perceptions etc. As form changes so the continuity of experiencing it, the perception of its blueness etc is disrupted.

Astus wrote:

I think you should change your mind about that.

Appearances are momentary, both mental and material.

"It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of it, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. In the same way, what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 4:50 AM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

This just proves my point Astus.

Astus wrote:

What part? You said that mind does not change. That sutra emphasises specifically that the mind changes rapidly, and we can easily recognise that.

maybay said:

Impermanence is another word for death. But change is another word for alteration.

Astus wrote:

The difference you make between change and impermanence is that with change you imply a persisting substance, and such a view is inadmissible in the Buddhist analysis of the skandhas. I don't even see the point in making up such a distinction.

"there is no form... no feeling... no perception... there are no fabrications... there is no consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change
(<http://dsalrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:1:2314.pali>), that will stay just as it is as long as eternity."

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.097.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

Malcolm said:

What is the most common Sanskrit term it represents?

Astus wrote:

No idea.

Here's the DDB's <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/indexes/term-sa.html> glossary, and for zhi 知 there are 423 results. And as for the possible English translations of zhi 知 it gives:

To know, to realize, to understand, to be aware of.

To appreciate, distinguish, be acquainted with.

To recall, to see.

To inform, to let know.

Knowledge, awareness, consciousness, ability to know. Wisdom.

To find out the "most common" would take some in depth search or a good source.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: The 5th Skandha

Content:

maybay said:

The sutra speaks only about the arising and ceasing. And certainly it could not mean that one mind will arise and then another different mind will cease, which would be chaos.

Astus wrote:

All four mental aggregates are momentary, just like the body. Even Yogacara accepts the momentariness of mind.

maybay said:

The body on the other hand can arise, change, and cease (as the same body).

Astus wrote:

All composite things are impermanent, both body and mind.

What are the characteristics of Impermanence? In brief, they are of twelve kinds: [1] characteristic of unreality, [2] characteristic of destruction, [3] characteristic of transformation, [4] characteristic of separation, [5] characteristic of presence, [6] characteristic of essential nature (dharma-laksana), [7] characteristic of momentariness, [8] characteristic of continuity, [9] characteristic of disease, etc., [10] characteristic of the varied continuity of the mind, [11] characteristic of good or bad fortune, [12] characteristic of the devolution and evolution of the receptacle-world. (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 85-86)

maybay said:

So a body obstructs the arising of another body, and instead undergoes deformation. This does not happen with mind and mental states.

Astus wrote:

Is there a body that exists beyond a single moment in your view?

maybay said:

There is no persisting substance, change is merely the characteristic of form.

Astus wrote:

Change is a characteristic of all impermanent phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2016 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: are you someone special?

Content:

tomschwarz said:

how do you regard yourself as not superior, not inferior, and not equal? we also must not have identity, or? for example, if you have identity x, and another being has identity y, surely they would be regarded as not equal (as well as potentially similar, etc...).

Astus wrote:

As the quoted Sona Sutta says, when the aggregates are seen in terms of "this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self", then one sees correctly, and there is no basis any more for such comparisons. Conceit is one of the ten
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fetter_%28Buddhism%29 that eventually one has to be free from.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 28th, 2016 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

NoToo said:

Would you please let me know where the following is from.

Astus wrote:

It is there in my signature:

1 Huangbo, T2012Ap381c1

2 Nirvana Sutra, T374p521b3; tr. Yamamoto

3 Mazu, X1321p3b23; tr. J. Jia

4 Yongjia, T2014p395c14; tr. from "The Sword of Wisdom"

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 28th, 2016 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Apparently there is still a misunderstanding of what "transmission" means. There is nothing transmitted, it is merely an expression in the sense that when one attains genuine insight, one carries on the torch of the Buddha's realisation.

"People of the world hear it said that the Buddhas all transmit the Dharma of mind, and they take it that there is a Dharma apart from the mind that can be realized and grasped. They search for the Dharma with the mind, not understanding that the mind is the Dharma and the Dharma is the mind. You cannot search for the mind with the mind—you will pass through a thousand and ten thousand eons [trying] and never get it. [Such useless efforts] are not equal to right now achieving no-mind—this is the fundamental Dharma."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 18)

"You cannot seek the mind with the mind, you cannot seek the Buddha with the Buddha, and you cannot seek the Dharma with the Dharma. Therefore, trainees should achieve no-mind right now. Simply conform with [the mind] in silence—if you try to use the mind you will miss it.

To transmit the mind with the mind—this is the correct view. I warn you, do not look outward and chase after realms but recognize that the realms are the mind. [To commit this error would be] to accept the thief as one's own child."
(Huangbo, p 22)

[The questioner] said: If one is without dependency, how can [the mind of the patriarchs] be transmitted?

The master said: The mind is transmitted with the mind.

[The questioner] said: If the mind is transmitted, how can you say that the mind is also nonexistent?

The master said: To not attain a single dharma is called the transmission of the mind. If you comprehend this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma.

[The questioner] said: If there is no mind and no dharma, why do you call it a transmission?

The master said: You have heard me say "transmission of the mind" and have taken it that there is something that can be attained. It is for this reason that the patriarch said, "When one recognizes the mind-nature, it should be called inconceivable. Clearly and distinctly without anything that is attained, when one attains it one does not speak of it as understanding." If I taught this to you how would you be able to understand it?
(Huangbo, p 36)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 28th, 2016 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Jeff said:

Yes, you are correct. Books are basically useless. Like the proverbial looking at the finger instead of the moon, let alone "becoming the moon".

Astus wrote:

As Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan instructed (Platform Sutra, ch 10, tr BTTS):

"Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written.

When they hear others speaking, they slander them by saying that they are attached to written words. You should know that to be confused as they are may be permissible, but to slander the Buddha's Sutras is not. Do not slander the Sutras for if you do, your offense will create countless obstacles for you."

Jeff said:

Mind to mind transmission (or connecting mind streams) makes a vast difference. Think of it like you are trapped in your own bubble of sense of self. The transmission of a true master is better described as the master can connect mind streams and get "inside of your bubble". That connection creates sort of a crack in the wall of your bubble of self. The "luminosity" shines through the crack helping you to break down the walls. Authors make money from writing books, but "clarity" can be shared by a master.

Astus wrote:

Where do you get those baseless assertions from? I guess not from any sutras or authentic Buddhist teachings, since you consider them useless.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2016 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Soma999 said:

on a relative level, there as been a transmission.

Astus wrote:

On the relative level there is no such mind meld you seem to describe.

Soma999 said:

But you received, relatively, something, that created the experience.

Astus wrote:

What exactly was received?

Soma999 said:

Speaking about those subject is trying to grasp the wind. It has to be lived. Otherwise, it creates confusion.

Astus wrote:

If you say there is a mystical transmission, that is speaking. To say that it cannot be explained is merely excusing oneself from explaining one's own statement.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2016 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Jeff said:

Hopefully, we can agree that the Lankavatara sutra is pretty universally accepted in Zen. From the second chapter on the point...

Astus wrote:

The quoted section confirms one of the
http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_reliances, namely "rely on the meaning, not just on the words". That is standard Mahayana. It does not negate the importance of scriptures at all.

Jeff said:

On transmissions themselves, there is some good stuff in the Lotus sutra about them and the turning of the wheel by Buddha that allowed them.

Astus wrote:

What exactly are you referring to?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

I found this quote in a book I'm reading, and it seemed germane to the discussion.

Astus wrote:

The paragraphs following what you quoted should also be considered:

"The ancients taught us to approach enlightened teachers, and seek spiritual friends, [that is], men and women of knowledge. But enlightened teachers do not have any means to transmit mind or impart secret methods: all they do for people is release sticking points and remove bonds. This is the esoteric secret. Today we just recite the buddha-name with unified mindfulness without confusion. This formulation is the esoteric method for releasing sticking points and removing bonds. This is the grand highway out of birth and death. Recite the buddha-name morning and night. Recite it when you are walking and when you are sitting. When your mindfulness [of Buddha] is continuous, then it spontaneously becomes a samadhi, that is, a stable state of concentration. Then you will not seek further elsewhere."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_Hong here points out that a teacher cannot do more than what one can achieve with the practice of buddha-remembrance.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

the advice applies equally to other modes of Zen practice? My impression is yes, which is why I thought of this thread when I read the passage

Astus wrote:

Since Zen practice is no-thought, and no-thought means being free from all entanglements, it is truer for that than for buddha-remembrance.

As Huineng taught (Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed p 40):

“Good friends, if you wish to cultivate this practice, you may do so either as a householder or in a monastery. Householders who are able to practice this are like those persons of the East whose minds [harbor] good. Those in the monastery who do not cultivate it are like those people of the West whose minds [harbor] evil. It is only that the mind should be pure—then it is the Western [Paradise] of the self-nature!”

And Linji (tr Sasaki, p 15, 16),

"You who today study the Way must have faith in yourselves. Don't seek outside or you'll just go on clambering after the realm of worthless dusts, never distinguishing true from false. [Notions] like 'There are buddhas, there are patriarchs' are no more than matters in the teachings."

...

"Whatever comes along, don't accept it. One thought of doubt, and instantly the demon [māra] enters your mind. Even a bodhisattva, when in doubt, is taken advantage of by the demon of birth-and-death. Just desist from thinking, and never seek outside. If something should come, illumine it. Have faith in your activity revealed now—there isn't a thing to do.

One thought of your mind produces the three realms and, in accordance with causal conditions and influenced by circumstances, the division into the six dusts takes place. What is lacking in your present responsive activity! In an instant you enter the pure, enter the dirty, enter the Tower of Maitreya, enter the Land of the Three Eyes, and everywhere you travel all you see are empty names."

And Dogen

(https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html):

"Although they say that there are ten thousand distinctions and a thousand variations, they just wholeheartedly engage the way in zazen. Why leave behind the seat in your own home to wander in vain through the dusty realms of other lands? If you make one misstep, you stumble past what is directly in front of you."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Jeff said:

Did you miss this part of the quoted text regarding books...

Mahamati, you and all the Bodhisattvas must seek for this inner self-realisation of

Noble Wisdom, and not be captivated by word-teachings.

Astus wrote:

That is the whole point of any teaching, to be used for insight. However, without the teaching there is no direction for insight, hence the need for the teachings, i.e. the scriptures.

Jeff said:

I mean chapter seven where they talk about flying celestial vehicles (transmission to get to people)...

Astus wrote:

You should use some newer translations for the Lotus Sutra. "Brahma-angels" and "aerial cars" make little sense. The chapter talks of brahmas, a type of gods, and their palaces, i.e. their heavenly abodes. Your interpretation as "cars for transmitting the Dharma" does not fit.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

muni said:

Regarding directly pointing/direct transmission outside of scriptures, these problems aren't. It is always fresh from the timeless "source". It would sound funny to say give me a newer version.

Astus wrote:

Sutras point to the same emptiness as teachers do. There is not and can not be any difference. And like half-educated teachers who mislead students, wrong translations mislead readers.

It should also be understood that the mind-to-mind transmission is beyond all words. That applies not only to written, but also to spoken words as well. Such transmission is not some secret code or mystical energy, but seeing the truth of the Dharma in one's personal experience. And that truth means that all phenomena are empty, without anything to be grasped.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Suppose you go to court.

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Will you agree to swear an oath to tell the truth?

Will you dress up nice and change your speech, using honorifics such as "your honor"?

Astus wrote:

If one is not a monastic, there are 5 precepts and 10 deeds to be mindful of. Neither of those contradict following the mentioned customs.

Dogen, Instructions for the Tenzo said:

I propose that doing either is problematic, and an example of what is spoken against in this quote: A person who is influenced by the quality of a thing, or who changes his speech or manner according to the appearance or position of the people he meets, is not a man working in the Way.

Astus wrote:

Read Vinaya and Rules of Purity works, then you'll see how strict a Buddhist legal environment can be. What seems to be referred to in your quote is duplicitous behaviour.

Dogen, Instructions for the Tenzo said:

Following the customs of intimidation and flattery in courtrooms therefore disrupts cultivation, unless we have highly stabilized our practice.

Astus wrote:

A single fly can disrupt cultivation.

Dogen, Instructions for the Tenzo said:

For those who would stress the ultimate emptiness of things such as legal vows and courtrooms, I enjoin us to keep the conversation in the realm of the run-of-the-mill practitioner whose realization is shallow and easily disturbed by intimidation and seeing/hearing of violence.

Astus wrote:

Since it's a run-of-the-mill practitioner with minimal abilities, such a person should focus on ethical discipline, generosity, and simple forms of rituals, like chanting and bowing. Consequently the problem of mundane activities disrupting one's cultivation is not an issue, unless one is about to break one's fundamental precepts.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Still, "court" is the dream we find ourselves in, and we are expected to follow the rules of the dream to hopefully help one charged with a crime.

So how do we bring our dharma practice fully to bear in such a situation?

That's what I'm wrestling with.

Some in this thread have said it means going with the flow and avoiding causing offense. But what sentient beings call respect is often blameworthy. Gaining title, honor, esteem is delusion.

What sentient beings call disrespect is often praiseworthy, loosening their grip on the same.

Astus wrote:

Such concerns do not actually address Buddhist cultivation. Titles and customs are

how societies are built. Even Buddhist monastic communities have them. If one thinks that they are a problem, one should first of all leave home (become a monk/nun), and then reside in some remote monastery. But for lay people their whole life is filled with obstacles, unless they can attain wisdom despite such circumstances, but then we are no longer talking about run-of-the-mill people.

Monlam Tharchin said:

So to the topic, (1) if one knows an oath is being given peremptorily with no regard even to its meaning, does it reflect conduct "as fine as flour" to grunt "yep" while the court officer moves automatically down the line?

Astus wrote:

It is irrelevant as long as it does not fall into the category of wrong speech.

Monlam Tharchin said:

(2) If one feels "there is only the one taste of the great ocean of life," that these lawyers and judge are our mothers, and that we aspire to lift them out of the boiling cauldron of samsara, does it show integrity to avoid any expression of vows which might upset someone?

Astus wrote:

What would upset who?

Knowing universal emptiness means one is not moved by appearances. It doesn't mean one falls into endless worry, quite the opposite actually.

Monlam Tharchin said:

With vows as lofty as those of a bodhisattva, I'm not sure one would remain indistinguishable in speech, behavior, and lifestyle from those utterly lost in confusion.

Astus wrote:

Acting patiently and compassionately does not mean one becomes a social/language reformer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 30th, 2016 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Jeff said:

Such a mind to mind transmission is effectively the bypassing (or removal) of a perceived obstruction by the person receiving the transmission. Effectively since the emptiness is truly "known" by the transmitter, that knowledge can be temporarily extended (or shared).

Astus wrote:

If there were such a thing, buddhas would already have liberated all beings. However, no transmission like that exists, and everyone has to make effort individually.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 3:08 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Jeff said:

Sure they do.

Astus wrote:

What canonical sources confirm your assumption about that transmission? And I'm not asking for some symbolic story, but explicit statements in sutras and treatises.

Jeff said:

The problem is that for most it is temporary unless the obstructions are actually let go by the receiver.

Astus wrote:

Buddhas could perform the transmission every moment incessantly.

Jeff said:

Havnt you ever felt the shift just being in the presence of a master? Like the mind shuts down and the fog is lifted just being in his/her presence?

Astus wrote:

That is a common experience of people who are devoted to another person, a place, or some other object of perception. That doesn't mean there are magical forces at work.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 6:20 AM

Title: Re: Suppose you go to court.

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Yes, exactly. My feeling is the customs I mentioned are duplicitous behavior.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism uses an intention based ethical system. A vow would be considered lying if one actually meant to mislead others. If it's merely following a custom, where one has no intention to cheat others, then there is no precept broken.

Monlam Tharchin said:

One expresses honor towards beings who, while objects of our compassionate vows, do not occupy the status of Honored Ones, which appropriately belongs to the Buddha, Dharma teachers, monastics, and so on.

Astus wrote:

Those are religious values. There are other values in the world as well. Expressing one's respect towards social order is not contrary to Buddhism, particularly in case of lay people.

Monlam Tharchin said:

I propose also that a truth-telling vow supposes there are two standards of truth: daily life, where one is expected to tell small lies to benefit oneself, exaggerate, lie through omission and so on; and the "real" truth where one is expected not to do these things.

Astus wrote:

Such are the drawbacks of the world.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Every thought, word, and act concern Buddhist cultivation, don't they?

Astus wrote:

Yes and no. There are precepts to draw the line. Lay people follow 5 training rules, fairly simple ones actually. There are no huge legal tomes in Buddhism governing every aspect of daily life, unlike in many other religions. Even the 10 unwholesome deeds are not too restricting.

Monlam Tharchin said:

One needn't shave one's head and leave home to attempt to bring every single situation to the path.

Astus wrote:

What path is it? The lay precepts are not in contradiction with most Western customs.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Unmindful speech to me is wrong speech, similar to how alcohol is itself not "wrong" but too easily leads to lapses where unskillful action can creep in.

Astus wrote:

That is a rule that you made up for yourself. What makes something unmindful anyway? One can commit all sorts of evil mindfully.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Many social norms, being rooted in the Three Poisons, have suffering as their fruit.

Astus wrote:

All acts of life are rooted in the three poisons. Of course, there is a difference between good and evil, nevertheless, they are both samsara.

Monlam Tharchin said:

Much of Buddhadharma constitutes going against the grain, which constitutes a wide range of behavior without necessarily getting into capital "A" Activism.

Astus wrote:

Does one go against a custom because it would cause pain to others, or is it merely to enforce some ideological principle on others?

Monlam Tharchin said:

The moment one takes the Bodhisattva Vows above the vows of society, one has become a social and language reformer, in my opinion, on a small or big scale.

Astus wrote:

The primary vow is compassion. One should never mistake that for upholding religious values.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

As I've said previously, I'm fairly confident that the transmission the masters were referring to is a very advanced form of modeling, which is why they always drove the student to the edge first, and then they were ready to "receive" the teaching. Damo and Huike are the best example of this.

Astus wrote:

Such a model does not fit. What transmission is a model of is the imperial lineage that it was copied from, and it was meant to establish a higher authority of those belonging to the family than those who did not. That is the

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=98542#p98542> of transmission. The religious meaning of mind-to-mind transmission is what I've

<http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=357558#p357558> from Huangbo, that is, the realisation of no-mind.

Note: the term "special transmission outside teachings" first appeared in the Zutang Ji (952), and was set in the four line stanza first in 1108. It was a slogan used by the emerging Linji faction of the 11th century to boast its claims of orthodoxy and supremacy.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

DGA said:

I'm puzzled that Meido sensei's earlier post has been largely ignored, as it sets the table for a reasonable conversation suitable to the Zen forum.

Astus wrote:

He presented his interpretation of the phrases, what I assume fits the current theory about it in the lineage that he belongs to. But it does not seem to match the theories beyond that community nor teachings from past masters. So I don't see those definitions as generally applicable.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

Actually, I completely agree with his definition, and come from a different lineage.

Astus wrote:

What sources do you base that on?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 1st, 2016 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

At this point, it would be apropos to ask from whom you learned Zen/Chan yourself.

What is your lineage? Are you just going based on things that you have read, or have you actually practiced Zen/Chan under the direction and guidance of a qualified master.

Astus wrote:

It does not seem to be a relevant question to me. What difference does it make in discussing interpretations? But if you want to know.

I have learnt

- Chan from Shi Mingzheng, Shi Minglai, John Crook, Simon Child
- Seon from Antal Dobosy, Wu Bong SSN, Chong An Sunim JDPSN
- Zen from Sozui Zenni, Shodo Harada, Yvon Myoken Bec

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 2nd, 2016 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

I forgot to ask if these teachings included intensive practice under their guidance, or were in the form of academic encounters.

Astus wrote:

None were particularly academic, I have spent various length of time with various teachers. But if you are interested in details, just send me a PM here or on FB.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 2nd, 2016 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

Because his description of transmission perfectly describes the way my teacher teaches. And the way his certified instructors teach. And although I am only allowed to teach at a much lower level to friends and family, that is how I teach. It's how his teacher taught, and so on and so forth.

Astus wrote:

There is such a thing as training under supervision, however, that is not what the slogan "special transmission outside teachings" means. Receiving instructions from an elder practitioner is a basic requirement for any novice monastic, so there is nothing special about it, nor is it outside the teachings, since it is the teachings that one is instructed in, including methods of meditation. As I have noted before the expression gained currency in the Song era. Here is a short explanation for it:

"In the world of Sung Buddhism, there was no real debate over the substantive issues of sutra study by monks or the chanting of sutras as merit-making devices in Buddhist rites. Nor was there any great controversy over the practice of seated meditation (tso-ch'an), the importance of finding a good teacher, or the idea that every monk should seek the same realization of awakening as that attained by the founder of the order, Sakyamuni. All of those practices and values were taken for granted by all monks and were built into the structure of the Buddhist monastic institution as a whole, with scarcely any differences between the monasteries that were designated as Ch'an establishments and those that were not. The controversies that simmered in the Sung over the status of the Ch'an lineage as a "separate transmission," in short, were more about securing prestige, patronage, and special privileges within the Buddhist order than about practical matters of monkish training or spiritual cultivation. The "separate transmission" slogan was used successfully by proponents of Ch'an to argue that members of their lineage, having inherited the enlightenment of the Buddha in a direct line of "mind-to-mind transmission," were the monks most qualified for positions of leadership within the existing Buddhist monastic institution. The slogan was not used to promote any particular reforms of that institution from within, nor was it associated with any schismatic attempt to establish independent Ch'an monasteries that were "sectarian" in the technical sense of splitting off from an ecclesiastical mainstream." (T. Griffith Foulis: Sung Controversies Concerning the "Separate Transmission" of Ch'an, in Buddhism in the Sung, p 220-221)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2016 at 6:23 AM

Title: Re: Question about Tilopa's Six Advices

Content:

rachmiel said:

What about attention, focus, awareness?

Astus wrote:

Tilopa is talking about Mahamudra, the ultimate state. What you are looking for is gradual training, methods to apply, and that is the problem. You can of course find step by step instructions, Mahamudra teachings are good at that. But Tilopa's six advices are for those who have already covered those stages.

Here is something for you to contemplate:

The past is already gone. The future does not exist yet. The present does not abide. Or as the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html says in chapter 18: "the past thought is unobtainable, the present thought is unobtainable, and the future thought is unobtainable". When there is no thought to abide in, there is no more effort. But first you need to see for yourself the nature of thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2016 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Question about Tilopa's Six Advices

Content:

rachmiel said:

The reason I have stayed with Tilopa is because it resonates strongly with me and helps me move in what I intuitively know is the right direction.

Astus wrote:

It's good that you have trust in Tilopa's words. Since they are merely six words, it's like the title of a book. Trying to intuit the content of a book from its title seems inconsiderate to me. So, if you want to know the content, you have to start reading. Similarly, if you want to understand those six words, you need to study the teachings and follow the instructions in those teachings. That's why many here recommend you to get in contact with a teacher.

rachmiel said:

I could follow each advice (as I understand them) to the letter and end up in a crystal-clear thusness state ... or a hypnagogic daze ... or trance ... or even asleep! And I'm looking to find out if all of these states are included in what Tilopa is pointing to, or just the first one.

Astus wrote:

You made up your interpretation, and then you try to match that with your experiences. The problem here is that this whole process is only your creation and Tilopa's words are used only as an excuse. What those words say is that grasp no state at all, and do not try to create any state either. What you describe goes in the opposite direction.

For a start, listen to what Lama Shenpen Rinpoche has to say about the first two advices:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwxGL_QCuVk

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2016 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Question about Tilopa's Six Advices

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lama Tashi Namgyal: On Tilopa's Six Essential Points of Meditation
(excerpt)

The mahasiddha Tilopa's six essential points of meditation contain the basic principles of placement meditation. The first point is not to be distracted by, dwell upon, get involved in, get lost in, nourish, encourage, or follow thoughts about the past. Anything that arises concerning anything that occurred or one thought prior to the current moment, one should simply let go of, and the sooner the better. Ultimately, one should develop the discipline or the automatic habit of letting go of such thoughts instantly, on the spot, and one should learn to remain in such a state of "permanent let-go."

The second point is not to be distracted by, dwell upon, get involved in, get lost in, nourish, encourage, get fixated on, or follow thoughts about the present. In particular, one should not fixate on either outer or inner phenomena.

The third point is not to be distracted by, dwell upon, get involved in, get lost in, nourish, encourage, or speculate about the future or thoughts of the future, but to let go of them instantly as well.

The fourth point is not to meditate. One should resist, or let go of the temptation, which at some point always arises in the experience of beginning meditators, to improve or make better one's meditation by meditating on tranquility, or on the experience of emptiness, or on clarity, or on bliss, or by fabricating or contriving any other strategy to improve one's meditation. All such attempts to improve one's meditation by "meditating" are cul-de-sacs, and, as such, obstacles to meditation.

The fifth point is not to analyze. Although there are other forms of meditation that teach one to analyze one's experience, the ultimate goal of such analysis is to transcend analytical and conceptual impositions on one's experience altogether so that one will finally experience directly the true nature of mind, the true nature of experience, the true nature of reality. So in this approach, according to the fifth point, one should not analyze; one should not engage in the asking of such questions as, "What color is it? Where is it? How is it? Why is it? Does it have any shape or color or location or any other characteristics?" One should let go of all tendencies to analyze one's experience.

So, then, if one is not to be distracted by thoughts of past, present, or future; and if one is not to meditate and not to analyze, then what should one be doing? What is one's mind to hang on to? The answer is "nothing." Tilopa's sixth point is just to "leave it to itself." Whatever arises in the mind, one should neither welcome nor reject, neither encourage nor suppress - nor should one get lost in thoughts. In the words of Bokar Rinpoche there is "nothing to do;" nothing to do beyond resting in the awareness of the freshness of whatever arises.

(Shenpen Ösel, vol 1, no 2, p 36)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2016 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Question about Tilopa's Six Advices

Content:

rachmiel said:

Why not just rest in what arises, rather than in *the awareness* of what arises? Isn't the latter placing a kind of extra layer of non-directness into the experience? Isn't simply tasting a mango more directly "real" than being aware of tasting a mango?

Astus wrote:

That is still proposing one should do something, that one should abide in a specific state. The point is to not grasp and not reject. Assuming an identity that is the same as what appears is grasping, and an identity that is separate from what appears is rejecting. The error lies in the concept that there is an identity.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 4th, 2016 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Question about Tilopa's Six Advices

Content:

rachmiel said:

Okay. But doesn't this apply equally to resting in the awareness of what arises? How is "resting in what arises" a specific state whereas "resting in the awareness of what arises" not?

Astus wrote:

Better not take it too literally. It simply expresses where there is no identification present. It does not mean taking the position of a watcher who is above appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 4th, 2016 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

This lines up very nicely with the direct pointing that Meido described. This is what a heart-to-heart transmission is in my teacher's school. The, for lack of a better term, initiation of the student into the path, not the fruition of that path.

Astus wrote:

That does not seem to be about Zen Buddhism. As it is quoted <http://shaolin.org/general-2/way-of-master/way49.html>, it's about his own form of martial arts. Furthermore, Zen teachings have practically nothing to do with physical and energy training.

On the other hand, he explains the line about transmission that is the topic in this thread in the following way:

"Transmission beyond the tradition' refers to the methods of Zen cultivation that are different from the traditional ways practised in other schools of Buddhism. Hence, traditional methods like the cultivation of moral purity (as in Theravada), devotional worship of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas (as in many Mahayana schools), and the use of mantras (as in the Vajrayana tradition) are seldom found in Zen Buddhism. Even in the all-important practice of meditation, essential in all schools, is quite different in Zen meditation. Here the meditator focuses on the void, whereas other schools use the traditional method from Indian Buddhism where the meditator trains his mind to be one-pointed."

(Wong Kiew Kit: The Complete Book of Zen, p 185)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 4th, 2016 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

It is a teaching methodology.

Astus wrote:

What method is that? See the following definitions.

Bodhidharma (Bloodstream Sermon):

"Buddhas of the past and future only transmit this mind."

"In India the twenty-seven patriarchs only transmitted the imprint of the mind. And the only reason I've come to China is to transmit the instantaneous teaching of the Mahayana This mind is the Buddha."

"Yours is the mind of all Buddhas. Buddhas of the past and future only talk about transmitting the mind."

Huineng (Platform Sutra):

"I transmit only the Dharma of seeing the nature;" (ch 2, p 34)

"Our patriarchs have transmitted only this sudden teaching," (ch 7, p 53)

"I transmit the mind-seal of the Buddha; how could [what I say] differ from the Buddha's sutra?" (ch 8, p 76)

They say nothing at all about methods. If anything, it's the single method of realising the nature of mind directly, and such a realisation is a personal experience.

AlexMcLeod said:

And notice he still is speaking of method in the text you quoted. In our school, heart-to-heart transmission is the prerequisite for correct practice. This means that such methods necessarily involve teacher to student initiation. Hence making it a transmission, as defined above, that is not from the scriptures/tradition.

Astus wrote:

That's all fine. I don't know any martial arts school that does not involve learning it directly from a teacher. So, to call such a common phenomenon a "heart-to-heart transmission" is OK, but actually means very little. In a similar way one could call the method of tying one's shoes received in a "heart-to-heart transmission". But again, this is a topic on a Zen saying, not martial arts or landscape painting.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 2:36 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Meido said:

Zen practice, on the other hand, has everything to do with the body.

Astus wrote:

That depends on what practice you mean.

Why should they? The four lines defining Zen do not discuss methods either. Those quotes point out Zen's approach to the path, they are not practice instructions.

What do you consider practice instructions? Can you give some examples from traditional works?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 2:38 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

AlexMcLeod said:

As for the saying we are discussing means teachings that aren't written down in sutra.

Why would someone writing about such things write them down if they know they can't be written down?

Astus wrote:

What teachings are not found in the sutras? If they are not in the sutras, they could not have been taught by the Buddha, consequently they are not even Buddhist teachings, much less Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

Funny thought that, thinking that Buddha's teachings are confined to extant sūtras, since only a tiny fraction of sūtras in toto exist in this world system. Then of course there is the issue of tantras...

Astus wrote:

Tantras are not different from sutras, they are both scriptures (jing 經) of the canon. And what the teachings (jiao 教) refer to are the words of the Buddha.

As Zongmi wrote:

"The sutras are buddha word, while Chan is the intention of the buddhas."
(Zongmi on Chan, p 109)

And as the later tradition, maintained, in the words of Hyujeong:

"The branches of Seon and Doctrine were Kāśyapa and Ānanda. To use no words to reach the wordless is Seon; to use words to reach the wordless is Doctrine. So then the mind is the Seon dharma (method) and language is the Doctrine dharma."
(Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 59)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 3:23 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

Then you should understand that there is only a tiny fraction in this world system, and not one of them reaches the meaning of "direct perception."

Astus wrote:

As Linji said,

"Even if, through your seeking, you did find something, that something would be nothing more than fancy descriptions in written words; never would you gain the mind of the living patriarch. Make no mistake, worthy Chan men! If you don't find it here and now, you'll go on transmigrating through the three realms for myriads of kalpas and thousands of lives, and, held in the clutch of captivating circumstances, be born in the wombs of asses or cows."

(Record of Linji, p 8, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

Contradicts what you write here:

Astus wrote:

Even if we consider buddhas in other worlds, it makes no difference, that was what I

intended to point out. Nevertheless, what Shakyamuni taught is what we have in the scriptures.

Malcolm said:

And it implies that knowledge of reality is something pointed out by a master in a student's direct perception.

Astus wrote:

Where does it imply that? Linji talks about the importance of seeing the truth of the Dharma in one's experience. Such instructions are given in the sutras as well.

More from Linji:

"Virtuous monks, time is precious. And yet, hurrying hither and thither, you try to learn meditation, to study the Way, to accept names, to accept phrases, to seek buddha, to seek a patriarch, to seek a good teacher, to think and speculate.

Make no mistake, followers of the Way! After all, you have a father and a mother—what more do you seek? Turn your own light inward upon yourselves!"

(p 10)

"In my view there is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no past, no present. Anything attained was already attained—no time is needed. There is nothing to practice, nothing to realize, nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Throughout all time there is no other dharma than this. 'If one claims there's a dharma surpassing this, I say that it's like a dream, like a phantasm.' This is all I have to teach."

(p 12-13)

"For the Chan school, understanding is not thus—it is instantaneous, now, not a matter of time! All that I teach is just provisional medicine, treatment for a disease. In fact, no real dharma exists. Those who understand this are true renouncers of home, and may spend a million gold coins a day.

Followers of the Way, don't have your face stamped with the seal of sanction by any old master anywhere, then go around saying, 'I understand Chan, I understand the Way.'

Though your eloquence is like a rushing torrent, it is nothing but hell-creating karma."

(p 13)

"As for myself, I haven't a single dharma to give to people. All I can do is to cure illnesses and untie bonds."

(p 22)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, what the Buddha taught can never be captured in words, no more than one can

capture the taste of sweet in words.

Astus wrote:

To teach is to communicate information. It happens mostly through verbal means. The carrier of the information (words) are not identical to the information (meaning) itself. Furthermore, once the meaning communicated is understood, it is up to the receiver to apply it. But if the method of communication is taken away, there is no meaning delivered, no understanding of that meaning occurs, and there is no possibility of applying it. If you say that words are incapable of communicating the meaning, then no teaching is possible, and a samyaksambuddha is actually a pratyekabuddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Meido said:

Just about all of them.

Astus wrote:

Which of those instructions discuss physical training? Even the https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html says "How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?" And the <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml>: "Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down." And although "for the study of the path, sitting is the superior posture" (Zhiyi: Essentials of Buddhist Meditation, ch 6) and "of the four forms of conduct, [sitting is the most] peaceful and joyful" (Dogen: Bendowa, BDK ed SBGZ vol 1, p 12), the "essence of cultivating enlightenment" is "the inherently complete and pure mind" (Hongren: Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle), and as Huineng said "the samādhi of the single practice is to always practice the single direct mind in all one's actions, whether walking, standing still, sitting, or lying down" (Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed p 42). My point is no different from what Vimalakirti told Sariputra, and Nanyue told Mazu: the posture is not the essential point. That is not to deny the importance and benefits of corporeal practice, however, when it comes to the direct path, that is not it.

Meido said:

One could start exploring it by considering why Hyakujo's students were tested for suitability to serve as abbot of a new monastery by being ordered, each in turn, to take a few steps forward and clear their throats.

Astus wrote:

I am not familiar with that incident. There is the story in the BCR, cases 70-72, and in the WMG, case 40, and even Baizhang's recorded sayings have nothing more either. I might also add that those events are most likely Song era inventions and not accounts of how abbots were actually selected, a process that was regulated by the Vinaya and often controlled by the local or imperial aristocracy.

on the ground people use myriad methods transmitted in various lines, according to

their unique conditions.

And that is the expected way of a good teacher (even outside Buddhism), the application of skilful means. As Fayan wrote in his Ten Guidelines for Zen Schools: "The Zen founder did not come from India to China because there is something to be transmitted. He just pointed directly to the human mind for the perception of its essence and realization of awakening. ... Nevertheless, the provisional teachings devised by the guides to the source had differences and accordingly came to differ from one another."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

ask Roshi about relation of body, breathing, energy and samadhi in zazen practice.

Astus wrote:

Such a relationship was known in India as well (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pranayama>), but as far as I'm aware, only in the late Anuttarayogatantra teachings were such methods incorporated, while the classical practice of Anapanasmrti is not about control but mindfulness of breath. As for how it appeared in modern Rinzai Zen, I think that's something Hakuin introduced. In other words, manipulation of breathing is not a traditional element of East Asian Mahayana, nor of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

You cannot explain "sweet" to anyone.

Astus wrote:

Words are not the meaning, and the meaning is not the experience. Experience is not communicated, it is what one arrives at after understanding what is meant.

Malcolm said:

But when they taste it, they know exactly what you mean by sweet. Buddhahood is something to be shown in one's direct perception.

Astus wrote:

Just as you say, one has to arrive at the experience oneself, it cannot be handed over. What can be received are the words.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2016 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Meido said:

They do not in the traditional view negate methods at all, however.

Astus wrote:

I agree, there is no negation of methods. Neither I am saying that there is anything wrong with them.

Meido said:

But your concept of a "direct path" seems completely devoid of methods, and therefore is not actually a path.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. That's what makes it direct.

Meido said:

for someone who reads the words of, say, Rinzai in the Rinzaïroku and is not immediately liberated, or is unable to manifest the seamless continuity of recognition which everyone is recommending, what is to be done?

Astus wrote:

Mahayana offers a detailed progressive path.

"[The teaching that one can] cultivate the six perfections and the myriad practices in order to achieve Buddhahood—this is the progressive [approach to Buddhahood]." (Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed p 14)

"If a trainee does not instantly [attain] no-mind but spends successive eons in cultivation, he will never achieve enlightenment. He will be fettered by the meritorious practices of the three vehicles and will not attain liberation. However, there is fast and slow in realizing this mind: there are those who attain no-mind in a single moment of thought after hearing the Dharma; those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten faiths, the ten abodes, the ten practices, and the ten conversions; and those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten stages [of the bodhisattva]. In spite of the length of time it takes them to [attain it, once they] reside in no-mind there is nothing else to be cultivated or realized. Truly without anything to be attained, true and not false [is no-mind]. Whether it is attained in a single moment of thought or at the tenth stage [of the bodhisattva], its efficacy is identical." (p 16)

Meido said:

check Transmission of the Lamp for Guishan (though I don't know if that is the earliest reference, but that puts it in early Song).

Astus wrote:

Thanks, I've found it.

頭陀令警欬一聲行數步。 (T51n2076_009)

"The Dhuta ordered him to cough deeply once and pace several steps" (Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism, p 201)

However, Ferguson translates it (i.e. 警欬一聲) differently:

司馬請警欬一聲行數步。 (T47n1989_001)

"Sima asked Hua to speak a few words and walk back and forth." (Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 145)

Meido said:

This anecdote from that time tells us something about Chan as it existed then, and there is a transmitted understanding of what that something is as well as its utility in practice.

Astus wrote:

This Sima, a dhutanga ascetic, called a geomancer by Heine (Opening a Mountain, p 49), is the true judge in the story of who becomes the abbot, so it's not really a question of Chan abilities. It's like the practice of fortune telling used in selecting the abbot.

Meido said:

My personal experience practicing with a modern Chan teacher also included instruction in related things.

Astus wrote:

That seems fairly common, just as certain tantric rituals, and of course a fair amount of Amituofo.

Meido said:

Zen being what it is, it could and should be able to integrate many methods.

Astus wrote:

And that is actually the question: what is Zen? I mean, in Chinese Buddhism almost any meditation practice and anecdote can be called Chan and most, if not all, monasteries are Chan, just as monks and abbots are members of a Chan lineage, so it is actually a synonym for Buddhism.

Meido said:

Yet you seem to be at pains to discount the myriad skillful means which have developed (and not doubt will continue to develop) over the centuries, in favor of what really seems to me to be a rather sterile, literalist approach discounting oral instruction and resting solely upon words in a certain class of Zen texts which - we both must admit - reveal very little about what practitioners were actually doing day to day in terms of practice.

Astus wrote:

And the reason for that is to specify what sort of teaching Zen is. That's why I call it the direct path, as that is what was specified in the primary works of the Zen tradition as the essential element. On the other hand, if it can be a progressive teaching, then it is no different from the common bodhisattvayana, and there is not much left to call Zen but mere literary devices.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2016 at 6:40 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

actually many methods were transmitted verbally and directly in private instruction form... when zen was in decline more teachers spoke more openly about these things to encourage disciples and general consciousness of practitioners... they did not want the tradition to die out

Astus wrote:

That line of argument is used so many times when someone wants to introduce new ideas, like in the story of the nagas preserving the prajnaparamita scriptures. In any case, why would one need such methods for shikantaza?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2016 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

shikan taza is unfathomable state, though it has become popular method among modern practitioners, but in fact it is very different from current shallow interpretations.

Astus wrote:

Are you of the opinion that what goes under Soto Zen in the West is a poor imitation of the real thing? That <http://wwzc.org/dharma-text/posture-zazen> is not <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/> but something qualitatively different? Can you tell the reason behind all those teachers either hiding or being ignorant about the true teaching?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2016 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just as a parent can show a child something sweet, a proper teacher can show you your own state directly, without any words.

Astus wrote:

What good is a mute teacher? The insentient constantly teach the Dharma.

"At this time, everything in the universe in ten directions—soil, earth, grass, and trees; fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles—performs the Buddha's work."

(Dogen: Bendowa, BDK ed SBGZ vol 1, p 6)

"realizing the truth on seeing the peach blossoms, realizing the truth on hearing the sound of a bamboo, and realizing the truth on seeing a bright star, are all examples of the sutras producing good counselors."

(Dogen: Bukkyo, BDK ed SBGZ vol 3, p 140)

"The causes and conditions of eighty-thousand such Dharma aggregates are, in every case, the establishment of the mind. Some [people] have established the mind in a dream and attained the truth; some have established the mind in drunkenness and attained the truth; some establish the mind and attain the truth amid flying flowers and falling leaves; some establish the mind and attain the truth amid peach blossoms and green bamboo; some establish the mind and attain the truth in the heavens above; and some establish the mind and attain the truth in the sea."

(Dogen: Hotsu-mujoshin, BDK ed SBGZ vol 3, p 337)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 7th, 2016 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

there were fine masters of shikan taza in Japan.. now there are no more then 5...

Astus wrote:

That sounds very bad indeed. Do you consider Menzan Zuiho's description of Jijuyu-zanmai is proper shikantaza?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 7th, 2016 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Malcolm said:

A rock cannot point out to your own state. That is the difference between a rock and guru.

Astus wrote:

Is that so? There are several stories in Zen that show how someone was awakened by natural events.

A monk said, "I've just arrived here and I beg the master to point out a gate whereby I may enter."

Xuansha said, "Do you hear the sound of the water in Yan Creek?"

The monk said, "I hear it."

Xuansha said, "That's the place of your entry."

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 300)

Furthermore, can a guru point out one's state unmistakably in any situation? Or does it depend on the disciple? If it takes a good teacher and a good student, such a pointing out is a difficult matter. When a good teacher can educate a dumb student, isn't that what makes one a good teacher? Similarly, if a good student can learn from a dumb teacher, isn't that what makes one a good student?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 7th, 2016 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

yes of course... but do not take it for granted.. to understand this text and its content you need master of jijuyu zanmai, actually thoroughly realised master... nowadays there are many random and shallow interpretations of it...

Astus wrote:

It is a fairly straightforward text: "We just illuminate our thoughts which moment by moment come up and go away, refrain from fabricating adoption or rejection, and hatred or love." That is the standard description not only of Dogen's

http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms08.pdf, or the fundamental <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=145499#p145499>, but the essence of <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn47/sn47.040.than.html>.

So, while it might be so that one needs extensive and proper instructions to be able to practice correctly, it is not because of the lack of clarity in the teachings themselves that people go astray.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 8th, 2016 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Matylda said:

moreover even Dogen before he started shikan taza practice trained seriously for many years. between beginner zazen and true state of shikan taza is very long way... it is what is widely disregarded nowadays, including all instructions which may bring one to shikan taza... and today almost everyone is repeating 'just sitting' or shikan taza however missing the true meaning.. it is sad and childish.

Astus wrote:

"After the initial meeting with a [good] counselor we never again need to burn incense, to do prostrations, to recite Buddha's name, to practice confession, or to read sutras. Just sit and get the state that is free of body and mind."

(Dogen: Bendowa, BDK ed SBGZ vol 1, p 5)

There is no description of preparatory practices, nor any other elements. If we were to add preparatory and auxiliary methods, Zen would be no different from the other schools teaching gradual progression. As Hanshan

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/2011/10/13/essentials-of-practice-and-enlightenment-for-beginners/> "to even speak about practice is really like the last alternative", and then of course he goes on about how to practise the phrase-investigation. As I see it, even talking about assuming a seated posture is a concession on the part of Dogen.

Matylda said:

what is final teaching is shikan taza, and where is the rest???

Astus wrote:

As Keizan <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml>: "Zazen is not based upon teaching, practice or realization; instead these three aspects are all contained within it." and "Zazen is also not based upon discipline, practice, or wisdom. These three are all contained within it."

Matylda said:

missing part of instructions is filled by private philosophies and pov. what is the worst situation..

Astus wrote:

That is certainly a sad situation. However, it's not because oral instructions are lost, but because the extensive teachings of Mahayana are neglected.

Matylda said:

if it would be so easy as one may suggest, then reading texts on shikan taza like that of Menzan would be perfectly sufficient.. what for any further instructions?

Astus wrote:

This raises a problem: if the essential teaching of Zen is insufficient, then there is no basis of regarding it as a "separate transmission outside the teachings", because the transmission must be with the teachings. And Dogen seems to agree with this:

"Both the Buddhist sutras and the Patriarch's truth have been authentically transmitted and have spread from Śākyamuni Buddha. The Patriarch's transmission has been received only by rightful successors from rightful successors, but how could [rightful successors] not know, how could they not clarify, and how could they not read and recite the Buddhist sutras?"

(Dogen: Bukkyo, BDK ed SBGZ vol 3, p 148)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 11th, 2016 at 1:06 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Anders said:

What defines Zen most primarily is the transmission of awakening - That both teacher and student are able to use the methods at their disposal skilfully in accordance with their particular circumstances in order to engender and mature awakening. What particular methods are used is tertiary to the fact that awakening happens and the 'lineage' thus continues in a living and authentic manner.

Astus wrote:

Up to Zongmi all schools claimed exclusive rights to the transmission, starting with Zongmi it was a matter of higher and lower quality lineages. If, as you say, there is such a thing as "the transmission of awakening" as the hallmark of Zen, then not only all other schools are branded as dysfunctional communities, but even among those who identify as belonging to the lineage of Bodhidharma there are disagreements about authenticity. Such disagreements, however, would be impossible if there were such a genuine awakening transmitted from generation to generation.

Anders said:

What is called "Zen" is the work being done on the ground - The living actualisation of awakening from moment to moment and from one generation to another.

Astus wrote:

Isn't that what every Buddhist community is doing? Isn't that one of the crucial functions of the Sangha?

Anders said:

There is an immeasurable breadth and depth to this body of work that can not be boiled down to adherence to a specific set of scriptures or tenets, particular method(s) or "mere literary devices."

Astus wrote:

What is "this body of work"? Is it the particular activities of an individual teacher, or is it the literary products of the Zen school?

Anders said:

I am not sure what point you are trying to make here?

Astus wrote:

It is like what you wrote: "There is no objective clarity in teachings themselves. Clarity is a function of the person reading it." Similarly, a buddha may appear right in front of one and one can still miss it, while one with the right eyes can see the buddhas everywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 11th, 2016 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Flow, mindfulness, nondual awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

I've come to recognize three key states of "heightened" consciousness: flow, mindfulness, and nondual awareness.

Astus wrote:

What's the use of such states? How do they relate to liberation?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 11th, 2016 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Flow, mindfulness, nondual awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

Flow can help us work through a complex teaching, or a tough day at a retreat, etc.

Astus wrote:

"immersion in the current activity ... similar to autopilot in terms of the feeling that things happen "on their own."" - a complex teaching needs complex thinking to understand, so I don't see how that helps. This flow is basically just getting lost in experiences without a shred of reflection.

rachmiel said:

Mindfulness can keep us grounded in the present moment.

Astus wrote:

And that is good for what?

rachmiel said:

And non-dual awareness IS liberation ... or at least a doorway to it.

Astus wrote:

Since it is a conditioned state, it is hardly liberation. And as long as one imagines it to be anything special, it is a doorway only to more attachments.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 11th, 2016 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Flow, mindfulness, nondual awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

When you are so immersed in reading/contemplating a teaching that you forget about

time, food, self ... you are in flow.

Astus wrote:

In other words, it is an enjoyable activity. Such activities are what can serve as a good basis for craving.

rachmiel said:

Direct experience of what-is.

Astus wrote:

How is that different from recognising that it is raining?

rachmiel said:

Would all Buddhist and Tibetan Buddhist schools agree that non-dual awareness is a conditioned state? Advaitins would say no, non-dual awareness (brahman) is unconditioned and state-less.

Astus wrote:

Non-duality in Buddhism means the freedom from grasping at the concepts of existence and non-existence. It is not a state to be in.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 12th, 2016 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Flow, mindfulness, nondual awareness

Content:

rachmiel said:

It's less concept-heavy, more vivid.

Astus wrote:

Are concepts not part of what is?

rachmiel said:

So Buddhism does not have "non-dual awareness" in its vocabulary?

Astus wrote:

Buddhist vocabulary exists in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. What is the term you are looking for? For instance, "non-dual mind" (不二心) or "non-dual awareness" (不二知) are not found in the Chinese Buddhist dictionary, nor "non-dual intellect" (不二意) or "non-dual consciousness" (不二識).

Garfield (Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings, p 44) uses it in his translation of Trisvabhavanirdeśa:

"In the same way, through the non-perception of duality
There is the vanishing of duality.
When it vanishes completely,

Non-dual awareness arises."

However, the same stanza by Anacker (Seven Works of Vasubandhu, p 295):

"With the non-apprehension of duality, the appearance of duality vanishes,
and with this disappearance, the fulfilled, the non-being of duality, is understood."

And Kochumutton (A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience, p 252):

"By the non-perception of duality
The form of duality disappears;
The non-duality resulting from its disappearance
Is then attained."

And indeed, I don't see any sign of "non-dual awareness" in the
<http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/338/1391>:

dvayasyānupalambhena dvayākāro vigacchati|
vigamāt tasya niṣpanno dvayābhāvo'dhigamyate||

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 12th, 2016 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: "transmission outside the scriptures"

Content:

Anders said:

Historically, I suppose you could say it was distinctive, in the sense that when Zen came to China, it really shifted the onus from exegesis and choice of scripture as the hallmarks of profundity of the various school to embodied awakening and transmitting this awakening in the most practical and expedient way according to circumstances.

Astus wrote:

Except that when it came to China, it was the Lankavatara school, very much scripture based, if we can consider Bodhidharma the source of Zen. Then there was Shenhui and the Diamond Sutra, followed by the first major Zen scripture, the Platform Sutra, that itself became the hallmark of true transmission according to its own claim. And when we arrive at mature Zen of the Song era, when the "outside the teachings" concept was invented, it was all about the production of lamp records. As for teaching according to circumstances, that's the whole point of skilful means, a classical Mahayana element.

Anders said:

Yes indeed. The point of being a 'transmission' school, as opposed to a 'scriptural' school (though I think 'scriptural' schools that carry authentic living lineages of awakening share this trait with Zen)

Astus wrote:

We can know for a fact that Zen does not have an unbroken lineage. How can there be a

transmission then?

Anders said:

the profundity of the Zen school is not a matter of a special teaching or method, but a matter of the present profundity of realisation of those within its lineage and their ability to impart this onto students.

Astus wrote:

Can you specify what the realisation is about? What is it that is realised?

Anders said:

Basically, the profundity of Zen varies over time.

Astus wrote:

How could it vary if the same realisation is transmitted?

Anders said:

Hence why Dogen refused to even acknowledge a Zen school as anything other than false classification and stressed that "You must understand that in Buddhism the stress falls on the truth or falsity of the training-not on the excellence or mediocrity of the teaching or the depth or shallowness of the principle."

Astus wrote:

And in the same answer Dogen (Bendowa, BDK ed SBGZ vol 1, p 10-11) specifies his message as: "When we solely sit in zazen ... relying now on exactly the same posture as the Buddha, and letting go of the myriad things, then we go beyond the areas of delusion, realization, emotion, and consideration, and we are not concerned with the ways of the common and the sacred. At once we are roaming outside the [intellectual] frame, receiving and using the great state of bodhi." At the same time, he summarily dismisses every other teaching: "This is something that has never been heard in other lineages." In other words, he does have a specific method, and considers it the only real path.

Anders said:

This is aversive to classification and eludes questions like "what is Zen really"

Astus wrote:

Not at all. Dogen (in Bendowa) is quite straightforward in stating that "Great Master Śākyamuni exactly transmitted, as the authentic tradition, this subtle method of grasping the state of truth, and the tathāgatas of the three times all attained the truth through zazen. Thus the fact that [zazen] is the authentic gate has been transmitted and received. Furthermore, the patriarchs of the Western Heavens and the Eastern Lands all attained the truth through zazen. Therefore I am now preaching [zazen] to human beings and gods as the authentic gate."

Anders said:

It is essentially Samantabhadra - ie, all enlightened and enlightening activities within the stream of Zen practitioners and adepts. Pretty simple and unadorned really, but

impossible to overlook, imo.

Astus wrote:

In other words, Zen is what Zen practitioners and adepts do, so "Zen is what Zen does". But why some people are and others are not Zen, that's still a mystery.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 13th, 2016 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Taisho translations

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is a more complete list of existing translations:

<http://mbingenheimer.net/tools/bibls/transbibl.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 14th, 2016 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: Taisho translations

Content:

pael said:

How many characters you need to know for reading Taisho?

Astus wrote:

It's not just knowing classical Chinese, but add to that a Buddhist vocabulary as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 14th, 2016 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Is this wrong?

Content:

Norden said:

since it's a Sutra, Maha Karuna Dharani Sutra to be precise. Did I make a bad kamma since I turned it off with such thought?

...

But that is Sutra's noise not music's sound.

And the "dislike" arose prior turning it off was caused by the Sutra's noise hence the doer with such thought turning it off.

Astus wrote:

You cannot turn off a sutra, nor does a sutra have noise. The only bad thing would be if you rejected the teaching of the sutra, thus abandoning the path. But that is not the case here.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 24th, 2016 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Sadhana or Visualization come under what category in Tendai or other Buddhist sects?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Visualisation of a buddha is commonly known as buddha-remembrance (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nianfo>), one of the basic remembrance practices (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anussati>).

Some sutras on visualisation:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra22.html>

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra24.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0277b.html>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/0450.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: How do buddhas contact people?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is some explanation from Kumarajiva on meeting buddhas:

"There are three types of samādhi for seeing the Buddhas (jianfo sanmei 見佛三昧): (1) A Bodhisattva might attain the divine eye or the divine ear, or perhaps fly throughout the ten directions to where the Buddhas reside, see them, ask questions about their difficulties, and have their snare of doubts cut off. (2) Even without supernatural powers, they contemplate (nian 念) Amitābha and all the Buddhas of the present, and with their mind residing in one place, they can attain a vision of the Buddhas and ask about their doubts. (3) They can study and practice nianfo with or without having abandoned their desires. Alternatively, they may gaze at a Buddha image, or contemplate his earthly Buddha-body, or see all of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. All three of these are called "nianfo samādhi.""

(Charles B. Jones: http://chinesebuddhiststudies.org/previous_issues/chbj2109-New_Jones_CHBJ_V21.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Sadhana or Visualization come under what category in Tendai or other Buddhist sects?

Content:

ShineeSeoul said:

are they under vipassana? the visualization, or they are under different category

Astus wrote:

If one thinks about the qualities of buddhas, that is a good preliminary practice. If one

focuses on an image, that can be samatha. If one contemplates that the image is mind made and empty, that is vipasyana. Combining focus and contemplation is the combination of samatha and vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-blp_r2rKOk

```
if (typeof bbmedia == 'undefined') { bbmedia = true; var e =  
document.createElement('script'); e.async = true; e.src = 'bbmedia.js'; var s =  
document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(e, s); }  
https://phpbbex.com/ [video]
```

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Samatha vs Vipassana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by such terms? There are numerous ways to practise calming and insight, and there are methods to prepare oneself to calming. As long as the emotions are too strong to allow sitting peacefully, you might approach from cultivating <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nianfo> (see: <http://ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice>), the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmavihara> (see: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html>), one of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ng%C3%B6ndro> s, sutra recitation, or prostration.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

He talks about having a timeline in order to respect the plurality of Buddhist traditions, warning against "Early Buddhist" fundamentalism.

Astus wrote:

It is the historical approach that can logically explain the varieties while at the same time does not devalue the developments.

Admin_PC said:

In real life, his works are absolutely used to establish an "Early Buddhist" fundamentalism

Astus wrote:

His main area is the study of Early Buddhism. If there are some who happen to misuse it for fundamentalist claims, how is that his fault?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 6:06 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

tomamundsen said:

But even labeling some teachings (i.e. Mahayana sutras) as "developments" and rejecting them as authentic original teachings of the Buddha is de-valuing them straight out of the gate.

Astus wrote:

Everyone claims that they are the original and the rest are not. Thus the conflicting statements. That is what taking a historical perspective can resolve.

tomamundsen said:

What about the case of Buddhist teachers from traditional Buddhist cultures who teach these things to Westerners?

Astus wrote:

A good number of Asian teachers have been aware of modern historical studies for a while now. Besides that, every tradition has its own version of structuring the teachings according to its own ideas. There is nothing wrong with such structures. However, they are not historical accounts, but theoretical systems meant to establish certain interpretations.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

I'm saying he inherently devalues by forcing his narrative without evidence, establishing his own version as historically primary. He did it in that video for sure.

Astus wrote:

Historical studies in Buddhism, that has been going on for 100+ years, are quite clear about the sequence of the appearance of various texts. Are you aware of some research that contradict the generally accepted view?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

Let me put it this way, that faction puts a lot of stock in TW Rhys Davids. I happen to put more stock in people like Prof. Charles Willemen.

Astus wrote:

Does Willemen debate the timeline of Buddhist scriptures and schools? Does he claim that Mahayana is traceable to the earliest strata of Buddhism? If not, what is it in particular that makes you say that you prefer that "faction"?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Resolve what? What exactly is resolved by these studies? Is it something relevant to the goals of Dharma practice, or is it merely relevant to validating one approach to texts over another?

Astus wrote:

Authenticity based on historical claims is what is investigated and analysed. In other words, if one's claim of authenticity relies on a set of assumptions about past events, then analysing those statements is the logical step. Just as it is so often done about today's teachers that the first thing people want to affirm is whether they are members of an accepted tradition. So, is history relevant to Dharma practice? Many think so, otherwise they would not base their credibility on historical assumptions, and there would not be controversies over lineages, transmissions, etc. But if we remove the historical element, then what we are left with are the doctrinal and practical teachings, so we can actually deal with what is directly relevant to practice, instead of the usual bickering over stories of the past.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

tomamundsen said:

I don't really see much being resolved with this method, to be honest. It seems to just create a new statement that conflicts with all of the other ones. I am happy to take traditions on their own terms and accept the cognitive dissonance that follows.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that you accept history as a matter of sectarian affiliation? If so, then all versions stand on equal grounds, consequently neither of them can actually call itself the true account compared to any other story. In this way the whole topic of historical

origin becomes irrelevant in ascertaining authenticity.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: Sadhana or Visualization come under what category in Tendai or other Buddhist sects?

Content:

LetGo said:

I'm not sure 念佛 is the proper term for visualizing the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Nianfo simply means buddha-remembrance, from the term buddhanusmrti. The way one recalls a buddha is not specified by the expression.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 7:03 PM

Title: Re: How do buddhas contact people?

Content:

Luke said:

How does one distinguish between actually contacting a buddha mentally and one's own wishful thinking/fantasies/delusions?

Astus wrote:

Everything, the entire realm of experience, is the product of "one's own wishful thinking/fantasies/delusions". If one encounters a buddha or several buddhas in one's meditation, that is actually seeing a buddha. To think that there is a buddha besides one's actual experience, that is assuming an independent self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

You're reframing my argument to say something I'm not saying. You say I'm debating Mahayana timeline, I am not. I never have in this thread.

Astus wrote:

In that case I see nothing to be debated, at least from my side.

Admin_PC said:

he does say it's organic growth of ideas that have seeds starting with very early material. Analayo is quick to throw out any early material that contains the seeds for these later ideas, claiming it's all later material

Astus wrote:

I am not as invested in the topic as you seem to be. Do you have some examples of scriptures he rejects?

Admin_PC said:

That he attempts in that video to claim he is ecumenical is laughable and ironic.

Astus wrote:

I think that is focusing on the person instead of the content. Whether Ven. Analayo lives up to the ideals presented there or not is irrelevant as far as I can tell.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 8:40 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

The most egregious is probably his rebuttal of Guang Xing's mention of Buddhas of the Ten Directions appearing in a sutra in the Agamas based entirely off of a CBETA search of a single character.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/mahayana.pdf>? There, on p19n48 what he writes is that the expression "buddhas of past, present, future" does not mean contemporaneity. Furthermore, Guang Xing writes (p 65) that the idea of contemporaneous buddhas is most likely a Mahasamghika concept that is not accepted by the Sarvastivadins. In other words, if that concept of many buddhas at the same time had been present in the early strata, it would not have been a problematical view, and the MPPS (quoted by Guang Xing as the earliest discussion on the matter) would not have said that contemporaneous buddhas were not a sravaka but a mahayana idea.

So, there is actually no disagreement on the matter between Guang Xing and Analayo that the idea of contemporaneous buddhas is a later concept. Even if the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80gama_%28Buddhism%29#Buddhology tries to make this a thing, it isn't really a thing.

Admin_PC said:

when the man has an entire library of sectarian articles

Astus wrote:

Do you call the study of Early Buddhism a sectarian endeavour? I wouldn't.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

One quote from that footnote seems to dispute what you just said:

"EĀ 37.2 is the only one out of these passages that does reflect the notion that Buddhas can exist simultaneously."

Astus wrote:

The whole point of that paper is to show how EA includes several Mahayana elements, so that passage is one more example for it.

Admin_PC said:

Among other things, these guys support Gombrich's idea that no teachings could possibly have been passed down within certain lineages that were not preserved in the Agamas

Astus wrote:

Are you referring to the usual trope of "secret transmission", used so often by those who wanted to establish a new teaching's authenticity?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

How Guang Xing supports Analayo's claim that it's all back-imported into the Agamas from Mahayana, I have no idea.

Astus wrote:

What Analayo shows is the presence of Mahayana notions in the EA, particularly the first part of it, and attributes that to the conditions in 5th century China.

Admin_PC said:

I'm talking about the in-house doctrines of the various 18 early schools, which Guang Xing covers pretty extensively. These in-house doctrines led to fairly early works like the Mahavastu and would've been ideas passed down within particular schools prior to being made formal works.

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure if Analayo debates that Mahayana is the organic development from the northern schools. In fact, his work <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/genesis-bodhisattva.pdf> concludes (p 130): "A central factor behind these various strands of development that appear to have contributed to the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal seems to be the gradual apotheosis of the Buddha, evident already in the early discourses." and (p 131): "Taking the early discourses as the starting point would also explain quite naturally why the bodhisattva ideal became a pan-Buddhist phenomenon that drew followers from most, if not all, of

the Buddhist schools, including the Theravāda tradition."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 12:26 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

I'm just positing that attributing the simultaneous Buddhas of the 10 directions to the Mahayana is a bit of a stretch. Certainly Guang Xing is not making this case in his writings, attributing the idea to pre-Mahayana Mahasanghika thought.

Astus wrote:

Analayo attributes it to the Mahasanghikas as well, as you have seen yourself in the footnote.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Admin_PC said:

Maybe I'm missing something, but where are the Mahasanghikas mentioned

Astus wrote:

You're right, it's Guang Xing who writes that the doctrine of contemporaneous buddhas was held by the Mahasanghikas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: How do buddhas contact people?

Content:

Luke said:

Even Shakyamuni Buddha who was a historical figure is/was "just a product of my own wishful thinking"??

Astus wrote:

You have not seen nor touched Shakyamuni, you merely think of him. So it is a good example of purely mental existence, that you nevertheless propose as something absolutely real.

Luke said:

And secondly, lumping all ideas proposed by humans as "delusions" completely skips over the fact that some ideas are very useful, beneficial, and accurately predict phenomena; whereas others are not useful, not beneficial, and don't accurately predict phenomena. For example, scientific laws and theories are some of the most useful

"delusions" that there are!

Astus wrote:

Visions of buddhas are relevant to the practice of Buddhism, in particular a type of meditation. It is neither a scientific nor an economic doctrine or method. As far as I'm aware, no one has suggested that one should visualise buddhas in order to explain earthquakes or improve internet connection.

Luke said:

It's not clear to me how sophisticated Mahayana Buddhists have recalibrated their "B.S. filters" to let in the minimum amount of essential Mahayana concepts while safely keeping out total nonsense. Saying "all is mind" seems to me to be embracing a world of undifferentiated nonsense, which doesn't seem to me like a very useful view to have...

Astus wrote:

One of the basic tenets of Buddhism is that everything exists in context. So, if one says that there is anything that exists and/or has a meaning regardless of context, that is B.S. All teachings of Buddhism are within the context of perpetuating liberation. Once one forgets that context and tries to interpret the Dharma as something else, it ceases to be in accordance with the teaching of the buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

MiphamFan said:

The differences in paths are due to the differences in karmic proclivities of beings, this is basic Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

This is actually saying that not only someone follows an inferior path, but that the person following it is inferior as well. On the other hand, it is a fine way to strengthen pride and arrogance for those who imagine that because they subscribe to some superior path they are per definition superior people.

MiphamFan said:

Objectively, there are paths that lead more quickly or more slowly to Buddhahood

Astus wrote:

According to what objective criteria?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:
MiphamFan said:
How is it pride and arrogance?

Astus wrote:
What else would you call the assumption that oneself is superior (exaltation) and others are inferior (contempt)?

"What is pride (mana)? It is exaltation of the mind (cittasyonnatih) which rests on the idea of self. Its function consists of giving a basis to the appearance of contempt (agaurava) and suffering."
(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 12)

MiphamFan said:
In the same way, through good circumstances, I somehow met with Dzogchen teachers and have been given teachings. Through no fault of theirs, other beings never managed to do so.

Astus wrote:
All beings are heir to their own deeds. Karma and luck are opposing concepts.

MiphamFan said:
Criteria: rainbow body, all the signs along the path of Vajrayana etc

Astus wrote:
How are those criteria objective when they are accepted only by some Vajrayana followers?

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, October 27th, 2016 at 10:32 PM
Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path
Content:

MiphamFan said:
it's not necessarily MY own deeds that led me to this path as that metaphor suggests

Astus wrote:
If accidental circumstances can affect a being's life, that negates the very meaning of karma.

MiphamFan said:
in any case, I am not proud

Astus wrote:
That is certainly laudable. However, it does not address the problem of the view that some paths and their followers are inferior and some are superior.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

MiphamFan said:

How does the example of the insect negate karma?

Astus wrote:

Karma is intentional action, it is what one does. If a big rock crashes someone, that is not an action but a consequence of a past action.

MiphamFan said:

It's a karmic link created from e.g. Trisong Detsen's link.

Astus wrote:

What is a karmic link? Is there a definition for it? What links what?

MiphamFan said:

The vehicles in themselves are not intrinsically better or worse, whether they are superior or inferior depends on the practitioner.

Astus wrote:

So do you now say that all vehicles are capable to accomplish the same, it only depends on the practitioner?

MiphamFan said:

It is far more foolish to say they are all the same.

Astus wrote:

If not, then it's not a question of the practitioner, but rather that some are better and some are worse.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Malcolm said:

Someone who is not expert in paths will not necessarily be able to distinguish a correct path from an incorrect path, or a superior path from an inferior path. Only some people have the necessary knowledge to make such an evaluation.

Astus wrote:

When the so called expert decides what those paths are, it is quite straightforward to claim to be the upholder of the best of the best and paint everyone else as inferior. It is

like the aesthetician who says that Pre-Raphaelites are inferior to Cubists, but Pointillists are truly the best of all.

Malcolm said:

the purpose of evaluating paths is due to the fact that everyone wishes to achieve liberation as rapidly as possible

Astus wrote:

Shravakas may worry about quick liberation, bodhisattvas realise that there is nothing to attain.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is why, rather than relying on the evaluations of paths made by scholars, we rely on the evaluations of paths made by buddhas.

Astus wrote:

And how do you tell who those buddhas are?

Malcolm said:

Bodhisattvas may realize there is nothing to attain, but they sure spend a long time going about that nonattainment.

Astus wrote:

Long is too mild a word. Not only the number of beings infinite, but their amount never even decrease.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

maybay said:

Even the scholars agree who the Buddhas are.

Astus wrote:

The only buddha everyone agrees on is Shakyamuni, and even then it is a matter of affiliation that decides what teachings are attributed to him. At the same time, Garab Dorje is believed to be a buddha mostly by dzogchen followers and not others.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Ayu said:

Mathematicians say, if the world was infinite, then there have to be exact copies of everything in some duplicate worlds. They claim, the variety of forms has to be finite. If you think it through, you'll reach a point where all combinations and possibilities are finished.

Astus wrote:

The infinity and the non-decrease of beings stand for something else. It means that the realm of sentient beings and the realm of buddhas are not two.

"Śāriputra, foolish ordinary beings do not know the one dharma realm in accord with true reality. Because they do not see the one dharma realm in accord with true reality, they elicit wrong views in their minds, saying that the realm of sentient beings increases or decreases."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>)

"as the dharma realm and the domain of space have no beginning and no end, so too does the realm of sentient beings. Therefore, King of Laṅkā, because the realm of sentient beings is indescribable, we know that it neither increases nor decreases. Thus, in the ocean of the Three Realms of Existence, although some sentient beings have crossed it and some will cross it, the realm of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases. King of Laṅkā, as an analogy, the domain of space neither increases nor decreases, and has no beginning, middle, or end. Therefore, it cannot be known. Yet it pervades everywhere, with no hindrance, no shape, no action, and no appearance. Indeed, indeed. King of Laṅkā, one can never find the beginning, middle, or end of the realm of sentient beings. King of Laṅkā, only achieving a clear understanding of the holy teachings can be called ending the realm of sentient beings, though the path of saṃskṛta dharmas never ends. King of Laṅkā, the path of liberation is not apart from the path of saṃskṛta dharmas. Why? Because this is the natural way of the realm of sentient beings. Therefore, it has no beginning, middle, or end."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra48a.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

maybay said:

It is enough to agree on one omniscient Buddha. So long as a teaching is not in contradiction of his Dharma that teaching is OK.

Astus wrote:

From both the historical and religious perspective, the primary/fundamental basis of the Dharma that everyone agrees on is the collection of teachings in the Nikayas and Agamas.

And as <http://www.geocities.ws/sutrasbudistas/shastras/gran-vehiculo.html> writes:
"one who investigates well this issue realizes that the Great Vehicle is completely in accord with the threefold seal of the dharma. Of course, if one does not well investigate it, then neither the Great Vehicle nor any of the three vehicles is accepted."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 28th, 2016 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Dharma taught by the Buddha in the First Turning is palliative, not fundamental; provisional and not definitive.

Astus wrote:

It is still the only common ground among all Buddhists, regardless of how individual schools interpret it. And that makes it fundamental, the basis for everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 29th, 2016 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Malcolm said:

But it is not a common ground at all. Or, rather, because of the history of Buddhist Studies in the West, there has come to be a mirage of commonality which every one chases, but somehow, no one can quite reach.

Astus wrote:

Even if the Agamas were not particularly popular in East Asia, and they were not transmitted to Tibet, the core doctrines, like the three characteristics, four noble truths, five aggregates, eighteen realms, twelve links and the thirty-seven factors have always been known.

Although if there is no common ground for the various groups, it also means that the paths they distinguish are different, and they actually do not say anything about the others, but rather simply make up their own structure of teachings. For example, the nine vehicles of the Nyingmapas say nothing about the teachings of the Kagyupas or the Theravadins, because those nine are merely their own interpretation of the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 29th, 2016 at 2:52 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Malcolm said:

These things are not core doctrines at all. They are just taxonomies.

Astus wrote:

Teachings are what provide the description of the path to liberation. Those taxonomies are shorthand for various sets of teachings.

Malcolm said:

The nine yānas are also a taxonomy, a way of presenting distinct kinds of methodologies.

Astus wrote:

And the methodologies distinguished that way are what those who set up the taxonomy assign to it, and not identical to what others might mean by them.

Malcolm said:

So what might be a core teaching of the Buddha, as opposed to a taxonomy?

This ambrosial Dharma I have obtained

is deep, peaceful, immaculate, luminous, and unconditioned.

Astus wrote:

A teaching cannot be unconditioned. The result of applying the teaching can be.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 30th, 2016 at 1:02 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

If it is a result of applying the teaching then it arises conditionally based on the teaching.
ie The result is conditioned.

Astus wrote:

As long as there is fuel (clinging), the fire (passion) burns. With the fuel removed the fire is extinguished (see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.028.than.html>). That is how even though there is a conditioned path, the result is unconditioned. Or, to fit this to the tathagatagarbha teaching, appearances have always been empty, it is only by the mistaken view of substantiality that there is suffering. Therefore, when it is pointed out and personally seen that there is nothing to grasp, delusion is gone.

"Their mental stream, beginningless,

Is governed by their false belief that things are real.

All living beings therefore fail

To see the nature of phenomena.

Those who sound the nature of phenomena with reasoning

That cuts through misconception and brings understanding

Know this nature. It is known by powerful yogis also,

Through their clear, direct experience."

(Shantarakshita: The Adornment of the Middle Way, v 74-75, tr Padmakara)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 30th, 2016 at 1:19 AM

Title: Re: comparing paths, uniting paths, and practicing a path

Content:

Sherab Dorje said:

The fire going out is conditional on the fuel being removed (or burning out and no extra fuel being added).

Astus wrote:

When the cause is gone, there is no reason for the result to occur. When the root is cut, the tree falls and never grows again. With ignorance eliminated, there is no basis for ignorance to recur, thus no more dissatisfaction. That is how the fire cannot burst into flames again.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Relative as ultimate is the relative. Relative as relative is the ultimate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Vasana said:

not knowing the source of the relative is what keeps the wheel of suffering spinning.

Astus wrote:

If you assume there is a source, it is necessarily relative. What keeps the wheel spinning is the assumption that there is something ultimate to attain.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Malcolm said:

Revise that to, "What keeps the wheel spinning is the assumption that there is something ultimate," then it is perfect.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Vasana said:

It depends how you define "source". I'm using source in the sense of both Samsara or Nirvana arising 'from' no where else but one's mind. Not in the sense of an isolatable source.

Astus wrote:

I think saying that there is a source can mislead one into the idea of a substratum. Samsara and nirvana are mental constructs, concepts. To say that there is mind, and then there are samsara and nirvana only complicates things.

Vasana said:

Not being something to attain doesn't negate the ultimate as being something to realize for one's self, not as an 'object' of realization but as a mode of perception.

Astus wrote:

What there is to realise it that there is nothing to attain. Not even a mode of perception.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

rachmiel said:

Advaita* definitely wins in terms of simplicity:
Ultimately there is brahman, period.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is simpler: there is not even a brahman.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 6:31 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Wayfarer said:

In the early Buddhist texts, there are many exhortations to 'hasten and strive'. There is a sense that time is limited, 'the enemy' is powerful, and the chance for liberation is slight. That seems hard to reconcile with the idea that there is 'nothing to attain'. What do you make of that?

Astus wrote:

Realising that there is nothing to attain means no more attachment. Beings are very much used to grasping at things, so it is normally not that easy to give up one's

emotional and conceptual clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Vasana said:

To realize there is nothing to attain is it's self a mode of perception

Astus wrote:

It is the cessation of the mistaken view of self. It is not another view, state of mind, or mode of perception.

Vasana said:

it wouldn't be possible to conventionally distinguish the position of 'nothing to attain' with any other position.

Astus wrote:

To have any position is still attachment.

Vasana said:

It would then also follow that since ordinary beings have nothing to attain, their perceptions and knowledge are on par with a Buddha's. This would then invalidate the need for Buddhas to teach in the first place.

Astus wrote:

Ordinary beings believe there is something to attain. Buddhas do not. As Dogen (Genjokoan, BDK ed SBGZ vol 1, p 41) put it: "Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded about realization are ordinary beings." Also: "when you know illusion, you will immediately be free" (Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 2, tr Muller).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 7:22 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So 'nothing to attain' doesn't mean just going along as we have always done, right?

Astus wrote:

We have always imagined that there are states of being to maintain and states of being to attain. That's what samsara is all about. Recognising that all states of being are empty is how there is no more struggle.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 5:16 PM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

Where is this from? Not that I am implying that it is a fake quote, I just like to read.

Malcolm said:

It is from the heart of dependent origination by Nāgārjuna.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/indian-masters/nagarjuna/heart-dependent-origination>

Also see Santina: http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 31st, 2016 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Vasana said:

since mind is not blank and inert like a pebble but clear and lucid I don't think using the word perception is problematic

Astus wrote:

Appearances are apparent, and what is not apparent is not an appearance. It might be called clarity as well, if we add that there is nothing that is not clarity. Perception is not problematic, if no instance of perception is assumed to be anything other than dependently originated.

Vasana said:

when referring to that perception as being free of grasping subject and object, self and other etc. Its not another ordinary perception but bare "yogic perception" or nonconceptual valid cognition.

Astus wrote:

It's fine as long as it's clear that nonconceptual (nirvikalpa) is not the absence of concepts as appearances but the cessation of conceptualisation (nisprapanca).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 1st, 2016 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Tsongkhapa said:

The wallet is empty of money and this is not an intellectual idea, it's our actual experience.

Astus wrote:

There is a visual impression that is interpreted as absence of money. In other words, it is as conceptual as the idea that it is filled with money.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 4th, 2016 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Are there any Zen schools that teach only soup?

Content:

Dgj said:

if one totally forgot duality and nonduality then one would be practicing Zen.

Astus wrote:

That is an assumption based on what?

Dgj said:

Where there is only the soup and no further teaching or implications?

Astus wrote:

It seems you already know all you want to know. Why look for more?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 5th, 2016 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

conebeckham said:

It is ignorance of the appearance's true nature, and not the appearances themselves, which is the problem.

Astus wrote:

"What is this delusion like? It is ignorance, which in this context is an awareness that mistakenly superimposes intrinsic nature; it apprehends internal and external phenomena as existing by way of their own intrinsic character."

(Tsongkhapa: The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path, vol 3, p 206-207)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 5th, 2016 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

conebeckham said:

He does not negate appearances. Nor does he claim appearances, as such, "change."

Astus wrote:

"Hence, the ultimate wrong conceptual consciousness that conceives the object of negation is the innate ignorance which is the first of the twelve factors of dependent-

arising. Acquired objects of negation are merely superimpositions based on this. Thus, it is not at all the case that reason negates all of the cognitive processes through which non-conceptual consciousnesses - e.g., sensory consciousnesses - apprehend things. Therefore, only conceptual mental consciousnesses have cognitive processes that are negated by reason; more specifically, reason refutes the cognitive processes of the two conceptions of self and the cognitive processes of those conceptual consciousnesses that superimpose further attributes on objects that have been imputed by those two conceptions of self. It is not that reason refutes the cognitive processes of all conceptual consciousnesses of any kind."

(Tsongkhapa: The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path, vol 3, p 212)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 5th, 2016 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Malcolm said:

But there is nothing in regular sūtra to suggest that a buddha perceives only pure appearances.

Astus wrote:

What makes something pure and something impure?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 5th, 2016 at 7:43 AM

Title: Re: Ultimate Truth

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

When it comes to Buddhism, purity or impurity is defined as the presence or absence of delusion and their imprints perhaps? If minds are deluded, they are impure. If actions are motivated by delusions, they are impure. Only Buddha has a completely pure mind which is free from the two obstructions. The presence of delusions and their imprints distort our perceptions and create mistaken appearances.

Astus wrote:

Delusion is the mistake of substantiality. With the removal of that error, all are seen to be empty, hence there is no more grasping. As for appearances, it changes nothing but one's attitude towards them, where before one viewed them as self or possessions of self, after they are seen without such superimposition.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 7th, 2016 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Other examples of stories to be taken as literal or non literal.

Content:

Astus wrote:

No story should be taken literally.

Haut flung the crust of the bread he had been gnawing on into the hearth, but as there was no fire the crust simply fell among the wet sticks and soaked logs. The Jaghut frowned. 'With your vicious and incessant assault upon my natural equanimity, you force upon me the necessity of a tale, and I so dislike telling a tale. Now, hostage, why should that be so?'

'I thought I was the one asking questions.'

Haut waved a hand in dismissal. 'If that conceit comforts you, so be it. I am not altered in my resolve. Now tell me, why do I dislike tales?'

'Because they imply a unity that does not exist. Only rarely does a life have a theme, and even then such themes exist in confusion and uncertainty, and are only described by others once that life has come to an end. A tale is the binding of themes to a past, because no tale can be told as it is happening.'

(Steven Erikson: Forge of Darkness, p 513)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 9th, 2016 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism is medicine, not metaphysics

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is medicine according to its self-interpretation, and that view is based on a number of metaphysical assumptions, like any view.

Might as well say that it is through accepting the metaphysical view of Buddhism that one cures oneself from all the other views that do not agree with the Buddha's.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 11th, 2016 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Is it possible that Bodhidharma and Buddhahadra's histories are mixed together?

Content:

Dgj said:

Bodhidharma came from India, taught Dhyana (Zen), became the abbot of Shaolin Temple and taught the Shaolin monks some form of calisthenics that lead to the creation of Shaolin Kung Fu.

Astus wrote:

The legends of Bodhidharma are centuries later than his alleged arrival to China. First martial arts book attributed to Bodhidharma was made in 1642. Even the association of martial arts with Shaolin goes back only to the 13th century. See for reference McRae's "Seeing through Zen", p 26.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 11th, 2016 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Does the "Northern School" still exist today?

Content:

Dgj said:

If not, are there any schools that are very similar to it? A school or schools that teach similar to what was taught by Yuquan Shenxiu?

Astus wrote:

Disciples of Shenxiu disappeared by the end of the Tang era - i.e. people who claimed to be descendants of a lineage from him. But as for the doctrinal and practical part, the so called Northern School represent the earliest phase of Chan, consequently it is the ancestor of all later schools. For instance, works like the Breakthrough Sermon of Bodhidharma, and the Essentials of Cultivating the Mind by Hongren are actually teachings of the Northern School.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 11th, 2016 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Does the "Northern School" still exist today?

Content:

Dgj said:

What about Shikantaza? It seems a bit similar to the sitting practiced by the "Northern School".

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is Dogen's reinterpretation of Changlu Zongze's seated meditation, that goes back to Guifeng Zongmi's description of Zen practice, and that goes back to Heze Shenhui's teachings on no-thought. So it is not Northern school.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 12th, 2016 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Is it possible that Bodhidharma and Buddhahadra's histories are mixed together?

Content:

Dgj said:

Do you think I should reword it?

Astus wrote:

No need.

Dgj said:

Buddhabhadra came from India, taught Dhyana (Zen), became the first abbot of Shaolin Temple and some of his first students were martial arts masters.

Astus wrote:

What records are there of that Buddhahadra? Fotuo meditation teacher (<http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A000441>) appears in the Continued Record of Eminent Monks (vol http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T50n2060_016 & http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/en/T50n2060_021), but there seems to be no mention of martial arts.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 12th, 2016 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Is it possible that Bodhidharma and Buddhahadra's histories are mixed together?

Content:

Dgj said:

"The Shaolin Monastery" pages 35-36 tell the story found in a Tang source, about Buddhahadra's disciple Sengchou being a martial artist.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. Shaolin monks may have engaged in military activities, but that is far from what is today called martial art. Furthermore, the story there only talks of extraordinary strength gained through an encounter with Vajrapani.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2016 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Does the "Northern School" still exist today?

Content:

Temicco said:

That's surprising to hear about the Breakthrough Sermon; do you know how it was determined that it's actually a Northern School text?

And what book would talk about it? McRae's The Northern School?

Astus wrote:

Yes, it's in McRae's work, p 207-209.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2016 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Astus wrote:

"The transmission of the mind by the World Honored One at three sites is the gist of Seon; what was spoken by him over his lifetime⁸⁰ is the gate of Doctrine. Therefore it is said, "Seon is the Buddha mind; Doctrine is the Buddha word.""

(Hyujeong: Seonga gwigam, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 58)

Koans are literary products of Chinese Buddhist teachers, meant for the educated elite of monastics and literati. In practice, the method of kanna zen is using a phrase to

cease conceptualisation and recognise the nature of mind. The literary and the practical sides are related but not identical, hence the differentiation between literary/monji zen (wenzi chan 文字禪) and kanna zen (kanhua chan 看話禪). However, both are meant to deliver the meaning of the Buddha's teaching and nothing else.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2016 at 9:10 PM

Title: Re: How do buddhas contact people?

Content:

Luke said:

I don't know if I consider Shakyamuni Buddha as "absolutely real" (I am not sure about what the definition of that would be) but I do consider him "as real as Charlemagne was" because there is historical evidence for the existence of both.

Astus wrote:

And those are concepts as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2016 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

Okay thank you. What am I thinking of then? What religion or philosophy is said to be beyond literally everything and one-hundred percent impossible to pin down? That absolutely no words or descriptions can hold and that have no grounding or explanation anywhere? Completely and utterly transcendent? I thought it was Zen, being that Buddha is said to be mind in the scriptures and we have Zen masters saying it is not Buddha and not mind, it seemed like this meant they were pointing to something beyond both distinctions. Any ideas?

Astus wrote:

If it is a view (teaching, doctrine, philosophy, religion, etc.), it is a set of concepts. Zen, and Buddhism in general, teaches that concepts are interdependent and insubstantial. Realising that concepts are empty is how one eliminates attachment to views, and, in a manner of speaking, attains no-view, and that is what could be called beyond views.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2016 at 2:27 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

Okay so it is not beyond ALL views, just all non-Buddhist views?

Astus wrote:

There are incorrect views, and there is the correct view. The correct view is the one that leads to freedom from attachments, the first element of the noble eightfold path.

Dgj said:

How is all the insistence on a special transmission outside scriptures and not Buddha not mind stuff explained?

Astus wrote:

Special transmission outside teachings means not to be attached to views. Not Buddha and not mind means not to be attached to views. It is because attachment leads to suffering, and suffering is the problem that needs to be ended.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2016 at 7:33 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

So "not Buddha not mind" means "is Buddha and is mind" but not to be attached to the view of this and "outside scripture" means "inside scripture" but not to be attached to views?

Astus wrote:

Yes, you could say so.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2016 at 8:30 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

How do you think the people who said these things would respond to these explanations that are said to be in spirit in agreement with their statements but literally are exactly the opposite of what they said?

Astus wrote:

Please clarify your question. What explanations agree and/or oppose what?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2016 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

Sorry, without the quoted posts it is too complicated to explain. It is listed in the post between you and I above where everything is quoted. The statements like the one where it was said "not Buddha not mind" and you agreed this actually means "is Buddha and is

mind" but not to be attached to the view of this". How would the person who said "not Buddha not mind" respond to this which is said to be, in spirit, in agreement but is literally the exact opposite of what was said?

Astus wrote:

The Diamond Sutra teaches in the mode of "X is not X therefore it is X". So, a buddha is not a buddha, therefore it is called a buddha. The point is to recognise the absence of self in appearances. One should not create a view out of either "not Buddha not mind" nor "is Buddha is mind". As it is often said, the view of existence is one extreme, and the view of annihilation is another extreme - exactly because both supposes a substance, a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 28th, 2016 at 1:59 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

Is this correct?

Astus wrote:

It sounds like to try to find a state or essence as the ultimate meaning, and that approach is the wrong one. The final word is simply that all words are contextual, there is no meaning outside context. Since not one word carries meaning, how could many meaningless concepts create meaning? That's how all meanings, all concepts are illusory and insubstantial. To grasp at affirmation, negation, both, or neither, all four are mistakes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 28th, 2016 at 6:42 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

now you are saying all meanings and concepts are illusory. ... Scripture is made up of meanings and concepts. Zen is beyond meanings and concepts.

Astus wrote:

There is nothing beyond meanings and concepts. There are only concepts. The difference is whether one takes concepts to be substantial or sees them to be contextual.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 28th, 2016 at 7:43 AM

Title: Re: Zen teachings

Content:

Dgj said:

So Zen is not beyond meaning and concepts, Zen is meaning and concepts? Otherwise that would mean that Zen is nothing. If there is nothing beyond meaning and concepts and Zen is beyond meaning and concepts then Zen is nothing. But I don't believe that is what you are saying, unless I'm mistaken? Is this the "suchness" or "thusness" spoken of sometimes in Zen?

Astus wrote:

Zen is a word, so it has various meanings. A meaning beyond meaning sounds like a pointless complication. Zen implies a set of teachings, and teachings are necessarily conceptual. And if what you're looking for is a simple and ultimate definition of Zen, that is again necessarily conceptual, even if you assume it to be something beyond concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 29th, 2016 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Combining Shingon and Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen schools have their own set of daily rituals. If you exchange that to those used in a Shingon school, from the Zen point of view at least, there is no problem. However, if you want to follow Shingon on a deeper level, you should probably get in touch with an actual community and study with them. Also you may have noticed this before that the Chinese rituals usually include some tantric elements.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 29th, 2016 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Astus wrote:

Bondage is attachment to and identification with the five aggregates. Liberation is the cessation of attachment and identification. It is in that context that the Tathagata cannot be pinned down. See:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.002.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Dgj said:

Are you implying that there is some way to pin down a Buddha outside of the aggregates?

Astus wrote:

No, I do not imply that. Even assuming that there is something beyond body and mind is

unfounded.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Dgj said:

Could you elaborate on this idea from a Buddhist perspective? There is only body and mind? As in just the immediate body and mind one is experiencing, singular? Or that there are only bodies and minds in general, ie no things or other realities, just many minds and bodies interacting and trees, rocks, houses, etc. are not real?

Astus wrote:

All experiences fall within the six sensory areas: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, thoughts. The first five are the physical and the sixth is the mental. There is no experience beyond these six.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 8:05 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

And in fact there is no experience beyond mind, given that the other five sense consciousness are totally nonconceptual, and thus not experiences per se.

Astus wrote:

One still experiences sights, sounds, etc. even without a conceptual layer, so I rather differentiate the two.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 8:06 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Dgj said:

But doesn't dependent origination apply here?

Astus wrote:

It is exactly here that it applies. Note that the six sensory areas are simply an easy categorisation of phenomena experiences, it is not that there are actually areas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, actually we don't experience the content of the five sense consciousness without conceptual layer. Experience is always conceptual.

Astus wrote:

What do you call then all the sensory phenomena that occur even while one is focused on a single object, or while one is thinking about something? Are they not experiences? Or do you think that one thinks about them at the same time?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I would be interested in interpretations of this Sutta.

Astus wrote:

"the remainderless stopping & fading of the six contact-media" - it refers to parinibbana (as noted by Bhikkhu Bodhi), hence the explanation given there agrees with the answer provided regarding the Tathagata's fate after death. It is different from the remainderless end of ignorance, craving and suffering, whereby the sensory functions are still there.

"How is it, friend Sariputta, is the eye the fetter of forms or are forms the fetter of the eye? Is the ear the fetter of sounds or are sounds the fetter of the ear? ... Is the mind the fetter of mental phenomena or are mental phenomena the fetter of the mind?"

"Friend Kotthita, the eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both: that is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both: that is the fetter there ... The mind is not the fetter of mental phenomena nor are mental phenomena the fetter of the mind, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both: that is the fetter there.

...

In this way too, friend, it may be understood how that is so: There exists in the Blessed One the eye, the Blessed One sees a form with the eye, yet there is no desire and lust in the Blessed One; the Blessed One is well liberated in mind. There exists in the Blessed One the ear, the Blessed One hears a sound with the ear ... There exists in the Blessed One the nose, the Blessed One smells an odour with the nose . . . There exists in the Blessed One the tongue, the Blessed One savours a taste with the tongue ... There exists in the Blessed One the body, the Blessed One feels a tactile object with the body ... There exists in the Blessed One the mind, the Blessed One cognizes a mental phenomenon with the mind, yet there is no desire and lust in the Blessed One; the Blessed One is well liberated in mind."

(SN 35.232, tr BB)

But we might interpret the sutta as no different from another teaching on the cessation of suffering as well, since there are instances where only the six bases are used:

"Venerable sir, who craves?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One replied. "I do not say, 'One craves.' If I should say, 'One craves,' in that case this would be a valid question: 'Venerable sir, who craves?' But I do not speak thus. Since I do not speak thus, if one should ask me, 'Venerable sir, with what as condition does craving [come to be]?' this would be a valid question. To this the valid answer is: 'With feeling as condition, craving [comes to be]; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence ... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. '

"But, Phaggunā, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact comes cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering."

(SN 12.12, tr BB)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

In order for something to be experienced, it has to be noticed by the mind.

Astus wrote:

Then you're saying that the sensory consciousnesses do not exist, so there is only one sensory area, in which case it makes no sense to list six. But then, you should not have written that the sensory consciousnesses are non-conceptual. Furthermore, then what is the difference between visual perception and thoughts? Even Yogacara accepts the five sensory phenomena as distinct from thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2016 at 6:04 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So in a way, the question 'is there nothing else?', is an unseemly question. I think Ven. Sariputta's answer amounts to: go find out!

Astus wrote:

Not at all. Since the Buddha has no identification with the aggregates, there is nothing left to identify him with. There are four discussions on the matter between Sariputta and

Kotthita: SN 44.3-6. Furthermore, the Buddha himself clarified this in the preceding teaching as well (SN 44.2). To assume that there is anything beyond the aggregates, that is one of the four versions of self-view. In other words, there is nothing more to find out.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2016 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

That consciousness is nonconceptual is not even slightly debatable. Conceptuality, and hence, experience, is the function of the caittas. Cittas are nonconceptual.

Astus wrote:

The physical senses and their objects are neither mind nor mental phenomena. In other words, 10 of the 18 realms are not even mental, and the 5 sensory consciousnesses are not mental phenomena, consequently the 15 dhatus related to the form aggregate cannot be conceptual. If you say that the five matter related functions of mind do not occur on their own, then you assume there are two instances of consciousness at the same time.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2016 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you have become a substance dualist? Amazing.

Astus wrote:

I am merely curious how you synchronise your idea of all experiences being conceptual with the teachings, where for instance the teachings on the dhatus do not seem to agree with that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 1st, 2016 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I actually agree that experience is conceptual. That is one of the reasons that 'experience' and 'realisation' are different (as explained by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche in Mind at Ease). I think that is why the realised beings are fathomless - because experience never 'sticks' or gets recorded, they live solely in the 'domain of realisation', which is beyond the experiential domain.

Astus wrote:

If realisation is not experienced, it is separate from it, hence the two has no connection and run parallel to each other, and that view cancels the possibility of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2016 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The point is, if liberation comprises the ending of identification with the sense-gates, then what is there to experience? Thinking that there is an experience to be had is one of the hindrances, isn't it?

Astus wrote:

Right, liberation is not in phenomena, nor is it anywhere else; it's not an experience, but just not grasping any experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2016 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

Secondly, direct perceptions are by definition nonconceptual, and are only experienced when they are coordinated through second order conceptual identification such as "this is blue," "this is red," and so on. We have many direct perceptions everyday which we never experience because we never notice them.

Astus wrote:

Do you say that one cannot be aware of one's environment without taking note of each element? That would make life quite difficult.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2016 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

Awareness of our environment is a conceptual picture built up through familiarization.

Astus wrote:

There are several unknown elements even in a familiar environment, and much more in an unfamiliar one. Walking on the street or in a forest does not require one to notice everything that one sees, hears, and smells, still they are present as experiences. Or when one visits a new neighbour's home and sits in their living room there can be unknown objects all around, and even those that are familiar are not paid attention to during a conversation, but at the same time one does see them there, and if one wants

to it's possible to recall the room later. Or when for instance one is unexpectedly talked to, and when the words were spoken they were not comprehended, but when they're recalled right after that they become understandable.

Malcolm said:

No one lives in the moment, apart from babies, who have not yet developed the conceptual framework to start organizing their direct perceptions into conceptual patterns and frames of reference.

Astus wrote:

The point is not about living in the moment, but that the sensory consciousness are present in one's experience. One can see the colour and name the colour, and those are two different things, hence the basic set of nama-rupa. In your presentation there is only nama and no rupa.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 4th, 2016 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

This illustrates my point nicely.

Astus wrote:

It does illustrate the role of concepts in experience, but it also shows the presence of experience without conceptualisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 4th, 2016 at 3:21 AM

Title: Re: Enlightened individuals as impossible to pin down linguistically

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, experience is always conceptual. One has to be conceptually aware of something for to to be one's experience.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is separated into six types based on its object. Concepts exist only for mental consciousness, not the other five. What is it you call when the five sensory consciousnesses occur if not experience? As for what conceiving is, the Kosha (vol 1, p 72-73) writes:

"Ideas consist of the grasping of characteristics.

The grasping of the diverse natures—perceiving that this is blue, yellow, long, short, male, female, friend, enemy, agreeable, disagreeable, etc. — is samjnaskandha. One can distinguish six types of samjna, according to organ, as for sensation."

Do you have to conceive everything that occurs to your senses, or is it only just a select few that you actually think of when you pay attention to it? If it is the latter, then do those other sensory phenomena occur or not? If they do, then there are instances of sensory consciousnesses present without any concepts. Furthermore, when you actually look at an object, and you even name it, can you still tell the difference between what appears as visual object and what as a name for that object? If yes, then visual consciousness and mental consciousness can work together without being mixed up or collapsed into a single thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2016 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Astus wrote:

"According to Madhyamika philosophy, objects only exist in dependence upon causes and conditions, and in dependence upon the mind that apprehends it."

Because of dependent origination there is no origination of anything, only in a nominal, conventional sense. Furthermore, Madhyamaka is not the one to posit a perceiver.

"The reason that quantum mechanics reinforces the Madhyamaka view is simply the fact that alternative views, like a mind-matter duality, or either the extremes of materialism or solipsism, actually lead to serious interpretation problems."

European philosophy produced some developments beyond Descartes. I recommend you check on Kant's transcendental philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology.

"both mind and matter are empty of inherent existence, both mind and matter have the same ontological status"

Things are defined by their function, not whether they have an inherent existence or not, therefore emptiness does not serve as a sufficient basis to eliminate the difference between mind and matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2016 at 11:35 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

The only point that I am making, here, is that since both mind and matter have the same ontological status, there is no need to reify one while negating the other. That's all.

Astus wrote:

And my point is that Madhyamaka is not the solution here.

Kenneth Chan said:
into the prevailing view, in Western philosophy, of a mind-matter duality.

Astus wrote:
And my second point, that it is not the prevailing Western philosophical view. This issue has already been addressed by Kant over 200 years ago.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, December 5th, 2016 at 11:36 PM
Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics
Content:
Tsongkhapa said:
The essential point is that ultimately there is no difference between mind and matter. Matter is mere appearance to mind.

Astus wrote:
If there were no difference, then mind is a mere appearance to matter, or it's all just matter, or just mind.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 12:37 AM
Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics
Content:
Kenneth Chan said:
You need to explain why you say that Madhyamaka is not the solution here.

Astus wrote:
Because it does not deal with the mechanics of consciousness or perception. Its primary purpose lies in the field of eliminating views, and not in establishing conventional interpretations.

Kenneth Chan said:
in terms of the Prasangika Madhyamaka view

Astus wrote:
Prasanga is a technique of refutation, not affirmation.

Kenneth Chan said:
Nonetheless they are still very different from Madhyamika philosophy.

Astus wrote:
I take them to be better fitted for the whole purpose, first of all because those are philosophies, while Madhyamaka isn't.

Kenneth Chan said:
their thinking is still grounded on the basic mind-matter dualism.

Astus wrote:
One could see the same dualism in Madhyamaka as well, as far as the teaching of nama-rupa is very much accepted in its conventional application. On the other hand, even in the Nikayas the dualism (jiva-sarira) is denied.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 7:32 AM
Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics
Content:
Kenneth Chan said:
based on the Prasangika Madhyamaka view of reality

Astus wrote:
That is the point I am questioning, if it is actually Madhyamaka, or rather a personal reinterpretation that is inspired by elements of Madhyamaka.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 7:34 AM
Title: Re: Koan study
Content:
Dgj said:
are there any teachings out there in which one can study koan in a more neutral or even pleasant way?

Astus wrote:
The Blue Cliff Record, the Book of Serenity, and numerous writings of Dogen are like that.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 5:48 PM
Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics
Content:
Kenneth Chan said:
Well, I suggest you actually read my paper, and let me know whether you think it is actually Madhyamaka or just my personal interpretation, and why you think that. I am certainly open to discussing this.

Astus wrote:
I had read your paper before my first post here and responded on it based on that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

It is actually this insistence on materialism that has led to the vast array of different interpretations of quantum mechanics, all aimed at negating the role of the conscious observer.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka does not posit the necessity of a conscious observer. In fact, you could say that assuming an observer is already falling into false views, as discussed in chapter 3 of the MMK.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

Dgj said:

Could you elaborate please?

Astus wrote:

The teaching of kanhua chan, where one uses a phrase to elicit doubt and through doubt a breakthrough, is a technique introduced by Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163) and further elaborated by Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1238-1295). The Blue Cliff Record (Biyanlu) and the Book of Serenity (Congronglu) present the previous state of Chan that was named wenzi (literary) chan. Dogen disagreed with and criticised Dahui's innovation and followed the practice of the older tradition of composing expositions on stories, and such works make up a good part of the Shobogenzo. Therefore those are the sources you may turn to that do not follow the kanhua method.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

So can you kindly let us know now whether you think it is actually Madhyamaka or just my personal interpretation, and why you think that?

Astus wrote:

I think I have answered both already. It does look like your interpretation, and the reason is that it does not follow the Madhyamika teachings, nor does it attempt to follow through with Madhyamika reasoning.

Kenneth Chan said:

Please understand that I am here conveying my meaning along the lines of the conventional truth.

Astus wrote:

Because it is the conventional truth, Madhyamaka, especially its Prasangika form, does not posit anything related to that, because it is not its purpose. Dependent origination and emptiness are not unique teachings of Madhyamaka at all, but practically universal in every Buddhist school.

Kenneth Chan said:

They are certainly not merely trying to say that the role of the conscious observer is empty of inherent existence. They are actually trying to say that the role of the conscious observer does not exist at all.

Astus wrote:

It is irrelevant for a Madhyamika whether they believe in an observer or not. The usual Madhyamika approach is to dissolve whatever view the opponent holds, and not to introduce other views. Or if it introduces other views, those are in line with established Buddhist doctrines and worldly conventions. I see no basis to defend the idea of a conscious observer on merely positing dependent origination and emptiness, since those principles are applicable even in a purely materialist view.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 at 11:39 PM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

Dgj said:

Is there a book that covers the history of this and are there any that cover how to practice using the older method in addition to the Shobogenzo?

Astus wrote:

Morten Schlutter: How Zen Became Zen - this is a good introduction on early Song era Chan developments.

As for practice, you simply need to study the stories and commentaries. If you want meditation, you do zazen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2016 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

DGA said:

if you want to practice Zen generally (inclusive of koan practice), the way to do it is with a competent teacher.

Astus wrote:

I said nothing regarding koan practice, besides that it was initiated by Dahui.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2016 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

While this uses the Madhyamaka view of reality, my purpose is not primarily to provide an exposition on Madhyamaka. ... I am arguing that the conscious observer does have a role to play in quantum physics. That's all.

Astus wrote:

You say that Madhyamaka establishes the valid use of the conscious observer. I see no reason for that. In fact, the paper does not provide a reason for it either, only that because both matter and mind are empty they should be considered ontologically identical in the ultimate sense. And that actually contradicts your assumed application of Madhyamaka on a conventional level, since conventionally matter and mind are very much different even in Madhyamaka.

And if we consider this a bit, you want to establish a conscious observer separate from matter, with the argument that they are ontologically identical and dependently related. That is somewhat of a contradiction. If mind and matter are ontologically no different, there is no need to say either of the two are separate, hence both materialism and solipsism should be acceptable. And if they are dependently related, it could be said that mind originates from matter, or vice versa, hence accepted a materialist/idealist perspective. This again shows that merely stating dependent origination and emptiness is insufficient to qualify for a Madhyamika view.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2016 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

DGA said:

Dgj was asking for leads on how to practice koan

Astus wrote:

There he asked not on the Dahui method but the other one. And for the practice of kanhua chan, I'd first recommend this:

http://koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2016 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

What I actually said was that I have to talk about the conscious observer along the lines of the conventional truth because my purpose here is to provide a solution to the mystery of quantum physics. And what I actually said about mind and matter is that they have the same ontological status (not that they are ontologically identical) and because of that, there is no need to reify one while having to negate the other. In other words, there is no need to go to either extremes of materialism or solipsism.

Astus wrote:

"conscious observer along the lines of the conventional truth" - what conventional truth is that? Whose conventional truth? I don't see the connection here to Madhyamaka.

"mind and matter is that they have the same ontological status (not that they are ontologically identical)" - the same ontological status can be "existent" or "non-existent", but "empty" is the absence of both, the absence of ontological status. And since you want both mind and matter to be equally present, it seems to me the same ontological status here is "existent".

Kenneth Chan said:

The Prasangika Madhyamaka view on dependent origination and emptiness is slightly different from the views of the other schools. So all I am doing is to make use of the meaning of dependent origination and emptiness according to the Prasangika Madhyamaka view. Please try to understand me correctly.

Astus wrote:

Could you specify what unique Prasangika doctrine you refer to?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2016 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

Teachings on the two truths—the conventional truth and the ultimate truth—are actually very important in Madhyamika philosophy.

Astus wrote:

And what conventional truth do you find in Madhyamaka that supports your thesis?

Kenneth Chan said:

No. They have the same ontological status because they are both empty of inherent existence.

Astus wrote:

The mere lack of something is not an ontological status. They are also empty of horns and wheels.

Kenneth Chan said:

It is the Prasangika Madhyamaka according to Chandrakirti, Shantideva, and Lama Tsongkhapa.

Astus wrote:

What is specifically in their teachings that you find uniquely relevant in this case?
Anything in particular about conventional truth?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2016 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

For example, if we measure the position of, say, an electron, we will find it as a particle in one particular position. If, however, we do not make an actual measurement, the electron actually does not even “decide” where it is!

Astus wrote:

If there is a cat in a room, unless I look into the room, how could I know where the cat is?

Kenneth Chan said:

That’s where Madhyamika philosophy comes in. If we replace this philosophical framework of a mind-matter duality with the Madhyamaka view of reality, the problem can actually be solved. And it can be solved without having to insert all sorts of additional hypothetical ad hoc conditions (including bizarre ones like infinite parallel universes, and so on) into the basic formulation of quantum mechanics.

Astus wrote:

And this is the questionable part, that what you call "the Madhyamaka view of reality" is not Madhyamaka. Madhyamaka has no problem with the conventional mind-matter duality, while ultimately it shows that neither can be established as real.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 8th, 2016 at 9:06 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

Well, that's exactly it, Astus. Both mind and matter are empty of inherent existence, so there is no need to reify one and negate the other. In other words, there is no need to go to the extremes of either materialism or solipsism.

Astus wrote:

It is not only not falling into the extremes of only matter or only mind, but also not establishing both at the same time.

"If an object exists because of the power of cognition, how does one arrive at the true existence of cognition? If cognition exists because of the power of the object of cognition, how does one arrive at the true existence of the object of cognition? If their existence is due to their mutual power, neither can exist."

(Bodhicaryavatara 9.111-112, tr Wallace)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2016 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Matt J said:

So here's a question: how do we go from stating that I cannot find x, which is an epistemological statement, to there is no x, which is an ontological one? Why isn't it possible for to exist in a way we don't know? It is one thing you say I cannot find x and quite another to say there is no x. It is similar to subjective idealists who say there is only mind because we cannot experience anything apart from mind.

Astus wrote:

The field of analysis/investigation for Buddhism is the five aggregates and six sensory areas, because that is where suffering arises, not to mention that that's all there is in terms of human experience. So, if something is not found in one's perception, it is not there, as an unperceived perception is quite impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2016 at 1:16 AM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Kenneth Chan said:

I believe the argument you may be encountering in Madhyamika philosophy is actually this: "all of our possible models that we use to try to explain how things work are at some level broken and flawed" if we consider the things to be fully existent on their own right.

Astus wrote:

It should be noted that things not only do not exist on their own (svabhava) but they also do not exist on another (parabhava). Even saying that things exist at all is wrong.

"Given the nonexistence of intrinsic nature, how will there be extrinsic nature (parabhāva)?

For extrinsic nature is said to be the intrinsic nature of another existent (parabhāva).

Further, without intrinsic nature and extrinsic nature how can there be an existent (bhāva)?

For an existent is established given the existence of either intrinsic nature or extrinsic nature."

(Nagarjuna: Mulamadhyamakakarika 15.3-4, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2016 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

Meido said:

In any case, Dogen's motivation was fueled by a question very similar to what you asked...a koan of sorts. You might be interested to look into it.

Astus wrote:

That alleged question is not mentioned even in Keizan's Denkoroku, and the story of sudden realisation in Keizan's work is likely his own invention that is nowhere corroborated in Dogen's teachings. Quite the opposite actually, Dogen did not agree with the whole idea of kensho, as it contradicts his version of zazen as practice-enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2016 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That would seem to rule out scientific discovery, though. Many things that were not at all apparent through the six sense gates have been discovered by a process of conjecture, analysis, observation and experiment.

Astus wrote:

It does not rule it out, as the atomic theory is accepted to some extent, even though neither atoms nor the four great elements are visible. On the other hand, Buddhism does not aim at scientific discovery nor is it considered a liberating path.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2016 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Koan study

Content:

Meido said:

I mentioned it only to show that it is a valid question which others have had, and worth examining within the context of one's own practice.

Astus wrote:

Certainly a good point.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 10th, 2016 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sudden enlightenment is to recognise that there is nothing to grasp, nothing to attain. Such recognition is missed because of chasing all sorts of illusory thoughts instead of taking a look at thoughts and seeing them to be completely unreliable. Thus all the teachings and methods to entertain oneself with in the hope of one day gaining something special. And as long as there is hope there is also delusion.

"Then again, if the bodhisattva refrains from taking up the practice of any particular dharma, because he does not apprehend any dharma whatsoever, he may thereby succeed in realizing *prajñāpāramitā*."

(Nagarjuna on the Six Perfections, ch 30)

"To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness."

(Huangbo, Zen Texts, BDK Edition, p 20)

Q: What is Sudden Enlightenment?

A: "Sudden" means instantly stopping false thought. "Enlightenment" means that one attains nothing.

(Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment, tr Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 10th, 2016 at 3:24 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

but then, what is practice?

Astus wrote:

There is the gradual and there is the sudden path. The gradual practice leading to insight is discipline, meditation, and wisdom, also the six paramitas. The sudden practice is insight itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 10th, 2016 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

How does one do the sudden practice?

Astus wrote:

It is the practice of non-abiding and non-thought. In sitting peacefully, whatever bodily or mental experience occurs, there is neither rejection nor attachment, neither suppression nor obsession, neither important nor unimportant. It is immediately recognised that all phenomena of the six senses do not stay even for a moment, thus there is nothing to do, nothing to attain. This is the essential method of all the buddhas and teachers.

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.

If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view.

Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 33-34)

"Good friends, since the past this teaching of ours has first taken nonthought as its central doctrine, the formless as its essence, and nonabiding as its fundamental. The formless is to transcend characteristics within the context of characteristics.

Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts. Nonabiding is to consider in one's fundamental nature that all worldly [things] are empty, with no consideration of retaliation—whether good or evil, pleasant or ugly, and enemy or friend, etc., during times of words, fights, and disputation.

Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.

Good friends, to transcend all the characteristics externally is called the formless. To be able to transcend characteristics is for the essences of the dharmas to be pure. Thus it is that the formless is taken as the essence.

Good friends, for one's mind to remain undefiled within the sensory realms is called nonthought. Within one's own thoughts one should always transcend the realms, one should not generate the mind relative to the realms. If one does not think of the hundred things, then thoughts will be completely eliminated."

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK Edition, p 43-44)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 11th, 2016 at 2:58 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

Sounds paradoxical but clearly that is because I do not understand. How can one practice non thought while there are thoughts present? I am assuming "cause thought to be eradicated" is referencing traditional samadhi where thoughts are suppressed and so without doing this how does one have non thought while thoughts are not suppressed?

Astus wrote:

The point is not to proliferate thoughts (i.e. to grasp on an idea and start thinking about it), not to suppress thoughts (i.e. to enforce a blank mind), but to let whatever thought occurs come and then let it pass away by not following up on it or pushing it away. But trying to remain in a state one imagines to be non-thought, that is already an attachment. Rather, it should be clear that no thought can be manipulated, as they always come and go, just like every other appearance. That is how meditation and insight are not different.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 11th, 2016 at 7:12 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

Does one create a stance of deliberately watching things come and go?

Astus wrote:

Where would that stance be? And why watch them?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 13th, 2016 at 8:43 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Anders said:

Is Buddhism really deterministic though? Is it a Buddhist tenet that all future events are already pre ordained?

Astus wrote:

Causal conditionality is completely mechanical, hence deterministic. But since newer factors influence older ones, there is the possibility of enhancing or diminishing the effects of previous causes.

Anders said:

Or perhaps put another way - is there no future event whatsoever that is not knowable to the Buddha's omniscience, on account of not having been fully determined yet?

Astus wrote:

There is no limit to a buddha's knowledge of past and future karma, unlike in the case of bodhisattvas, sravakas, and others.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 13th, 2016 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Anders said:

I would expect karma to be presented in a less open-ended fashion, if it were the case that all that we do is pre-ordained. Buddhism seems to operate on the assumption that choices are open-ended to a certain extent.

Astus wrote:

There are two levels to consider. The conventional level (parikalpita) of individuals and the level of dharmas (paratantra). On the personal-conventional level, humans are free to decide. On the level of dharmas, the aggregates, it is all causally conditioned. Choices are based on already existing views and habits. The aggregates operate in a completely conditioned system, so there is no place for any free will, accidents, or uncertainty.

Anders said:

That is not strictly true though, as I recall. The Buddha's all knowledge pertains to all knowable phenomena. It explicitly does not pertain to unknowables. Which begs the question - Are all future events anywhen and anywhere theoretically knowable from this point in time? Or to rephrase - is the future wholly pre-ordained or not.

Astus wrote:

"Question. – What are all these dharmas cognized by omniscience?

Answer. –

...

‘All dharmas’ is also dharmas past (atīta), future (anāgata), present (pratyutpanna), neither past, future nor present ; dharmas belonging to the world of desire (kāmadhātvavacara), belonging to the world of form (rūpadhātvavacara), belonging to the formless world (ārūpyadhātvavacara), not having any membership (anavacara); dharmas coming from a good cause (kuśalahetusamutthāna), coming from a bad (akuśala) cause, coming from an indeterminate (avyākṛta) cause, and coming from a cause that is neither good, bad nor indeterminate; dharmas that are object condition (ālambanapratyaya), that are non-object condition, that are both object and non-object condition, that are neither object nor non-object condition. Innumerable similar groups of four dharmas comprise all the dharmas."

(MPPS, vol 4, p 1438, Gampo Abbey Edition)

PERFECT ACHIEVEMENT WISDOM (Kṛtyanuṣṭhanajñāna)

"This mind has a bearing on all the dharmas of the three periods. In fact, the

Buddhabhumi Sutra says that the Perfect Achievement Wisdom (Kṛtyanusthanajñāna) manifests itself as innumerable and varied transformation bodies (Tathāgatanirmanakāyas) and their three varieties of deeds; that it assures itself of the 84,000 states of mind of sentient beings; and that it perceives the past, the future, and the present."

(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 777-779, tr Tat)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 16th, 2016 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

Mustn't there be some kind of control deliberately exerted over one's meditative awareness? Otherwise meditation could be sitting and going over lists of things to do, planning, day dreaming, or any such thing. Or am I misunderstanding something?

Astus wrote:

You're moving into the gradual method, in which case there are step by step instructions to follow. The only thing to practice on the sudden path is enlightenment itself.

A monk asked, "What is the cultivation of the Way?"

The Patriarch replied, "The Way does not belong to cultivation. If one speaks of any attainment through cultivation, whatever is accomplished in that way is still subject to regress. That is the same as the Sravakas. If one says that there is no need for cultivation, that is the same as the ordinary people."

(Sun Face Buddha, p 63)

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

(<http://ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 17th, 2016 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

I am confused. It seems that any method whatsoever is gradual. The only way to not use a method would be to not practice at all. This is how my OP was formed; it seems the Zen of koans is where masters enlighten students directly with words and deeds, no practice on the student's part. Then today we practice sitting meditation. What am I missing?

Astus wrote:

A method is a means to an end, therefore it is gradual. Zen's teaching of sudden enlightenment stands for the means and the end are not two, hence the Platform Sutra talks about the oneness of samadhi and prajna, and Dogen talks about practice-enlightenment. But the key thing is to attain enlightenment, and with that true practice is attained as well. How can one attain enlightenment? Just by seeing that there is nothing to attain, as all the six sensory phenomena are already without anything to hold on to.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 18th, 2016 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: How Madhyamika Philosophy Solves the Mystery of Quantum Physics

Content:

Astus wrote:

The defence of conventional existence seems to come from the idea that there are actual objects to define and explain. However, anything that can be discussed are nothing else but concepts, ideas, mere words and letters.

"It has been loudly declared by you that the whole world is only name (nāmamātra); separated from the word (that expresses it), that which is expressed does not exist. Therefore all dharmas have been shown (by you) to be only mental creation (kalpanāmātra); the mental creation itself, by which voidness is conceived, has been proclaimed (by you) to be non-existent."

(Nagarjuna: Acintyastava, v 35-36, tr Tola & Dragonetti)

Similarly, beings are bound by concepts.

"Ordinary beings are bound by conceptions (kalpana);
Since non-conceptualizing yogis will be liberated,
That which will reverse conceptions
Was taught by the wise as the effect of complete analysis."
(Candrakirti: Madhyamakavatara 6.117, tr Tsultrim & Jampa)

And what they need to be liberated from are this grasping at concepts.

"Liberation is attained through the destruction of actions and defilements; actions and defilements arise because of falsifying conceptualizations (vikalpa); those arise from hypostatization (prapañca); but hypostatization is extinguished in emptiness."
(MMK 18.5, tr Siderits)

That is why Madhyamaka is simply about eliminating that grasping.

"Analysis was not made in the treatise because of liking Disputation. Thusness was indicated for complete liberation."
(Madhyamakavatara 6.118ab)

Establishing a valid conventional reality is not in line with this goal, as one can see this from the Vaidalyaprakarana as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 18th, 2016 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Dgj said:

Thank you. I still see paradox but clearly this is due to my lack of understanding. It always ends up sounding like practicing is getting further away and the only way to really understand would be to not understand and be as far as possible from anything even remotely like practice.

Astus wrote:

The root problem is grasping. To grasp at any idea or explanation as the truth is still attachment. Hence the sudden way is to drop everything by recognising that all phenomena are inessential.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 19th, 2016 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

how do you understand "no thought"? Do you take it to mean that there is nothing to understand or realise? Or do you take it in Bodhidharma's sense of becoming "unconscious"? In the unconscious there is still some grasping/attachment.

Astus wrote:

No-thought (wunian 無念) means, in the words of the Platform Sutra, "in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached", "to be without thought in the context of thoughts", and "to remain undefiled within the sensory realms". It is the absence of grasping in the presence of thoughts coming from the recognition that thoughts are baseless.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 19th, 2016 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

so having thoughts without becoming emotional? i have no experience of mind other than thought and feeling.

Astus wrote:

The point is not to suppress anything, but not to be fettered by whatever occurs. Thoughts and feelings alike come and go. Sticking to an idea or an emotion is where we get carried off and identify with various views and states, forgetting that nothing remains even for a moment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 19th, 2016 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Books on yogācāra

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=1C4qAwAAQBAJ>

<http://www.bdkamerica.org/book/scripture-explication-underlying-meaning>

<http://www.bdkamerica.org/book/summary-great-vehicle-revised-second-edition>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=CkChrAwwsvGkC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=wHHAmVPmrEC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ck4BrBqBdYIC>

https://books.google.com/books?id=UC_YAAAAMAAJ

<https://books.google.com/books?id=fQRUAAAAYAAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=z8EKAAAAYAAJ>

<http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-8624-9780824835736.aspx>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=8yfYAAAAMAAJ>

<http://www.bdkamerica.org/book/three-texts-consciousness-only>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=j0TKAgAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=aPazBgAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=9ygVT2FA0h4C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ah2XR9be5uwC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Myq3AgAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2016 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus, you quote from the BDK Platform Sutra p33-34. Here Hui Neng seems to indicate

that the 6 vijñanas must be removed from the 6 sensory gates. Destruction of these six vijñanas occurs when the 6th "discriminating" mano-vijñana consciousness ceases. What is your view on that? Tom.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't exactly say that. Quite the opposite. Let's look at that section.

McRae translation:

"Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation."

BTTS translation:

"Merely purify your original mind and cause the six consciousnesses to go out the six gates, to be undefiled and unmixed among the six objects, to come and go freely and to penetrate without obstruction."

但淨本心 - only purify the original mind

使六識出六門 - to cause the six consciousnesses to go out the six gates

於六塵中無染無雜 - by the six dusts not defiled, not mixed with

來去自由 - come and go freely

通用無滯 - penetrate without obstruction

In other words, it says that while one is aware of appearances, one grasps nothing. It actually says to raise the six consciousnesses, not to remove or eradicate them. Also consider these preceding passages from the same chapter:

McRae:

"the ratiocination of the mind is vast and great, permeating the dharmadhātu (i.e., the cosmos). Functioning, it comprehensively and distinctly responds [to things]. Functioning, it knows everything. Everything is the one [mind], the one [mind] is everything. [With mind and dharmas] going and coming of themselves, the essence of the mind is without stagnation. This is 'prajñā.'"

BTTS:

"the capacity of the mind is vast and great, encompassing the Dharma realm. Its function is to understand clearly and distinctly. Its correct function is to know all. All is one; one is all. Coming and going freely, the mind's substance is unobstructed. That is Prajna."

心量廣大 - the ratiocination of the mind is vast and great / the capacity of the mind is vast and great

遍周法界 - permeating the dharmadhātu (i.e., the cosmos) / encompassing the Dharma realm

用即了了分明 - Functioning, it comprehensively and distinctly responds [to things] / Its

function is to understand clearly and distinctly

應用便知一切 - Functioning, it knows everything / Its correct function is to know all

一切即一 - Everything is the one [mind] / All is one

一即一切 - the one [mind] is everything. / one is all

去來自由 - [With mind and dharmas] going and coming of themselves / Coming and going freely

心體無滯 - the essence of the mind is without stagnation / the mind's substance is unobstructed

即是般若 - This is prajñā. / That is Prajna

McRae:

"one should not reside within or without, and one's going and coming should be autonomous. One who is able to eradicate the mind of attachment will [attain] penetration unhindered. Those who are able to cultivate this practice are fundamentally no different from [what is described in] the Prajñā Sutra."

BTTs:

"the ability to cultivate the conduct of not dwelling inwardly or outwardly, of coming and going freely, of casting away the grasping mind, and of unobstructed penetration, is basically no different from The Prajna Sutra."

內外不住 - one should not reside within or without / the ability to cultivate the conduct (sentence from fifth line) of not dwelling inwardly or outwardly

去來自由 - and one's going and coming should be autonomous / of coming and going freely

能除執心 - One who is able to eradicate the mind of attachment / of casting away the grasping mind

通達無礙 - will [attain] penetration unhindered / and of unobstructed penetration

能修此行 - Those who are able to cultivate this practice / (sentence in first line)

與般若經本無差別 - are fundamentally no different from [what is described in] the Prajñā Sutra / is basically no different from The Prajna Sutra

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2016 at 4:52 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus, thank you so much for your thorough reply. Enlightenment as you know is instantaneous. Why is cessation of the Vijñanas not needed to deepen experience? Is it even a distraction?

Astus wrote:

Vijñanas do not only cease every moment, they are actually unborn and unceasing. How could then they cause any problems?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2016 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Would you say that the Buddha's cessation is also instantaneous because there has never been anything that could cease?

Astus wrote:

If there is nothing that ceases, how can its cessation be instantaneous?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2016 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Two understandings of emptiness: in emptiness there is neither attainment nor no attainment; it is thus. Or simply: there is no attainment in emptiness. "Thus" against "No". What would you choose. No thought on this matter? Tom.

Astus wrote:

In emptiness? Emptiness is not a place or a state, it means the absence of substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2016 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

KarmaOcean said:

is a photon empty ?

Astus wrote:

All phenomena are empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2016 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Tao said:

that kind of zen was totally lost

Astus wrote:

Why would it be lost? First of all, stories in books are mostly fiction, so there is no point

in expecting things like that in real life. Secondly, teachers still give teachings, and occasionally it may click something and bring about an insight.

Tao said:

Zen Soto, theoretically comes from sudden school, but it's everything but sudden. We can discuss if it's gradual or none of the two, but it's not sudden for sure.

Astus wrote:

Dogen taught practice-enlightenment, and as such it is very much in line with the sudden teaching. See this essay: <http://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8591/2498>. And there was a nice thread about the matter as well: <http://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=107&t=6498>.

Tao said:

Zen Rinzai, uses koans that are just a pale and frozen reflection of the gold age teachings of Huineng, HuangBo or Linji where every word was fresh, spontaneous and directed only to one target (only to one person in one situation), nothing similar to a koan (even if the words are exactly the same).

Astus wrote:

The teachings of Huineng and Linji are literary works, not actual records. Huangbo's record has been tampered with a bit but it's mostly as was remembered by his direct disciples. As for the stories with witty remarks, that's pure fiction. So, not that fresh after all. As for the practice of investigating the phrase (kanhua/kanna), that is as viable today as it was about 800 years ago. It is a matter of individual dedication to the method, just like in the past centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2016 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Tao said:

You got it in one second or you didn't... was that simple... nothing to do with koans even sharing every word... In fact is the complete opposite: spontaneity and intuition vs "studying/investigating"...

Astus wrote:

And why wouldn't one get it now then? By the way, get what?

Tao said:

Practice-realization as is Dzogchen are direct vehicles, not sudden. Because of that they implicitly deny "awakening" (sudden approach) as they state that you can be "that" instantaneously, not even awakening is needed. And of course they "lose it" at the same speed, but that's another kind of discussion. But for sure Zen Soto is anything but sudden.

Astus wrote:

"To always practice wisdom in all places, at all times, and in all moments of thought, without stupidity—this is the practice of prajñā. A single moment's stupidity and prajñā is eradicated, a single moment's wisdom and prajñā is generated.

...

To practice in every moment of thought is called the true nature. To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of prajñā, to cultivate this practice is the practice of prajñā. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body. Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 29-30)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus i agree that emptiness is the absence of form/substance; however one can also say that emptiness is form/substance. Two ways of seeing. Do you see emptiness as thus?

Astus wrote:

Substance means an independent essence, svabhava, while form (rupa) is something else. As for saying that emptiness is thus, what do you mean by that?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Thats my own experience; prajna, not logic.

Astus wrote:

Without logic it is merely senseless wordplay.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 7:44 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus, if i said we cant say "self" because all is dependently originated would you object if i add: nor can we say no self because emptiness is pregnant? I dont understand this. Its just what i feel. Tung Shan said. "this now is not me; i now am this." he balances the equation and takes the middle path. We avoid extremes. Just so.

Astus wrote:

Please see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_to_moderation.

The middle taught in Buddhism means that both existence and annihilation are false. It doesn't mean there is an optimal combination or balance between those two false views. That is why all four elements of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catu%E1%B9%A3ko%E1%B9%ADi> are rejected.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

dreambow said:

Even when the mind is empty....you are still aware. Is awareness beyond or prior to fullness or emptiness? Awareness is the reference point.

Astus wrote:

The mind, just like everything else, is empty as it is. It is not made empty by any method or practice. As for awareness, it is a basic function of the conditioned mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

If i say that it is 'neither' eternal 'nor' annihilated. It is empty/thus. I am still using the fourth element of the tetralemma. Which expresses emptiness. How can we let go of the fourth element and be faithful to the middle path?

Astus wrote:

The reason emptiness is taught is to abandon attachment to appearances. To hang on to any ideological formulation is still taking concepts as essential and real.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 22nd, 2016 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna and tathagatagarbha

Content:

Astus wrote:

MMK ch 22 discusses the nature of the Tathagata, and it is very much in line with the

approach presented in the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.002.than.html> and other early scriptures.

"The Tathāgata is neither identical with the skandhas nor distinct from the skandhas; the skandhas are not in him nor is he in them; he does not exist possessing the skandhas. What Tathāgata, then, is there?

...

Those who hypostatize the Buddha, who is beyond hypostatization and unwavering, they all, deceived by hypostatization, fail to see the Tathāgata. What is the intrinsic nature of the Tathāgata, that is the intrinsic nature of this world. The Tathāgata is devoid of intrinsic nature; this world is devoid of intrinsic nature."

(MMK 22.1, 15-16, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 23rd, 2016 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

prajna reveals appearances that rise and fall. The appearance of emptiness for example falls away.

Astus wrote:

I think there are some terminological problems here. Emptiness is not an appearance but merely a technical term in Buddhism.

White Lotus said:

Prajna is a gradual unveiling. Where i am now is: seeing "neither emptiness nor form". To identify with this would be an attachment. I dont identify with it. Is the tool of prajna unnecessary, in that it is part of the gradual path? Appearances cease.

Astus wrote:

Wisdom (prajna) has three levels: learning, understanding, confirming. Learning means learning about the words and letters of the Dharma. Understanding means understanding what is learnt. Confirming means confirming the teachings in one's personal experience. Therefore one should begin by the words of the sutras, shastras, and teachers. Without that basis in the authentic teaching there is no further progress.

White Lotus said:

Will i save myself unnecessary trouble if i just stop seeing and just live?

Astus wrote:

Relying on correct sources - sutras and teachers - is how you can save yourself from many unnecessary troubles.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 23rd, 2016 at 3:42 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

What do you think of Proffessor Suzuki's work? Ive never encountered a clearer exposition of Prajna than in his "Zen Doctrine of No Mind".

Astus wrote:

I haven't had the chance to read that book.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 2nd, 2017 at 2:40 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus, taking the sudden approach: there is nothing to be seen or realised. Therefore sudden prajna is seeing things just as they are? The gradual unfolding of prajna is unnecessary unless one wants to be in a position to transcend sudden enlightenment - to go beyond emptiness. Thats only possible with the seeing eye of gradually unfolding Prajna. It seems to me that gradual and sudden are mixed nowadays. Rgds, Tom.

Astus wrote:

Ultimate wisdom is seeing things as they are. Getting there suddenly or gradually does not change the result.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 2nd, 2017 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

Tao said:

I'm not claiming that all tradicional zen masters applied the same means. You can find gradual, sudden and directa approaches in different times.

Astus wrote:

Zen is not bound to any particular method, and in that it accords with the basic concept of skilful means.

Tao said:

You're missing nothing, you'r right and that kind of zen was totally lost, probably because of the lack of teachers able to do that...

Astus wrote:

If there were a simple, easy, and quick fix to suffering, wouldn't everyone be using that? The assumption of losing something presupposes there was something in the first place

that could have been lost.

Tao said:

Gradual enlightenment: teaching that states that enlightenment is reached by polishing certain qualities on the individual getting closer and closer to buddhahood and finally gets there

Astus wrote:

Every path is gradual, otherwise it's not a path. On the other hand, since buddhahood is not a conditioned state, it cannot be a product of the path.

Tao said:

Sudden enlightenment: teaching that states that enlightenment is reached not by polishing anything, but suddenly recognizing its inherent buddhahood forever (and forever is relevant here).

Astus wrote:

That kind of sudden enlightenment has always been the norm. Even on the sravaka path one does not build or improve the four noble truths but recognises it.

Tao said:

Direct enlightenment: teaching that states that buddhahood is available here and now for anyone. There's no awakening needed. One moment you are an ordinary being and the next you're a Buddha

Astus wrote:

The availability is assured by the doctrine of buddha-nature. That no awakening is needed, that sounds like a naturalist fallacy.

Tao said:

some of their means are totally lost, like HuangBo LinJi and Co. sudden means

Astus wrote:

What means is it that is lost? Such texts are very much part of today's mainstream Chan.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 2nd, 2017 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

dreambow said:

If I'm quiet and can hear the birds, my mind does not need to focus on the sounds. I can hear what is going on around me without labelling, labouring or needing to modify the awareness. It's just so. Nothing needs to be added or taken away from what is. If one appears to be momentarily unaware its because the thoughts/emotions are veiling the awareness but awareness is still there.

Astus wrote:

A piece of rock do not and cannot make any effort. One does not have to nor can one make oneself hungry or thirsty, they occur nevertheless. That doesn't make any of that unconditioned.

Sensing what is going around is not any less illusory without labelling and paying attention. Happening is itself a process, all processes occur in time, and time is found only as a conventional concept. To put special importance on peaceful observation is grasping at an artificially elevated idea of calmness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 2nd, 2017 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

How do you see the mountain Astus?

Astus wrote:

Proverbial.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

In the gradual; unfolding of prajna is "experiential". At different levels the mountain is seen differently. What does the sudden mean by saying the mountain is "proverbial"? Is nothing experienced other than things just as they are? What does the proverb mean?

Astus wrote:

Here is the proverb:

Chan teacher Qingyuan Weixin of Jizhou ascended the hall. "Thirty years ago, before this old monk practised Chan, I saw that mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. When later I entered this abode and experienced personal knowledge, I saw that mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers. Today, as I attained rest in this abode, as before, I saw that mountains are merely mountains and rivers are merely rivers. People take these three views to be the same or to be different. If anyone can attain this, then he can personally see this old monk."
(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T51n2077_022#0614b29)

Before aiming for liberation one grasps at phenomena, while aiming for liberation one rejects phenomena, and finally one is without grasping or rejection of phenomena. This is very much like the three truths in Tiantai and somewhat like the three natures in Yogacara.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://books.google.com/books?id=_hALAAAAYAAJ,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=58AKAAAAYAAJ>,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ASfYAAAAMAAJ> are all representatives of mainstream Chinese Buddhism where it makes little sense to talk about PL and Zen as if they were separate traditions. It is more a question of emphasis in one's own practice.

More on that read

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf2003.%20TP%20Chan%20and%20Pure%20Land.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Dr. Nida Chenagtsang

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is rare anyone achieves Buddhahood in this lifetime. It is very common however for Vajrayāna practitioners to attain buddhahood at the point of death, or even in the bardo. It is even more common for Dzogchen practitioners to achieve buddhahood at the time of the death or in the bardo, and in the case of Dzogchen practitioners, provided they understand the teachings and practice in a precise way, it is certain they will never return to samsara again.

...

I was talking about the instructions for extremely lazy people.

Astus wrote:

If it is that complicated with Dzogchen, why not take the path to Sukhavati instead?

"The optimal case is to become a Buddha in one lifetime and with one body, or else to become a Buddha as a Dharmakaya at death, when the outer breath ceases. The middling case is to recall the meaning of the unified stages of generation and completion of one's present meditation at the time when one's body and mind separate, resulting in becoming a Buddha in the intermediate state as a Sambhogakaya, indivisible from one's chosen deity. There are said to be twenty-one ways to achieve the result of Buddhahood, corresponding to the specific faculties of individuals. The very least of them is called resting in a Nirmanakaya pure realm. It is said that by making prayers to take birth in a Buddha realm, you will be reborn there."

(Spacious Path to Freedom, p 198-199)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Enlightenment

Content:

White Lotus said:

I wish to know the truth of the great matter.

Astus wrote:

About the great matter (大事):

"The Buddha Bhagavat appear in this world to cause sentient beings to aspire toward purity and the wisdom and insight of the buddhas. They appear in this world to manifest the wisdom and insight of the buddhas to sentient beings. They appear in this world to cause sentient beings to attain the wisdom and insight of a buddha's enlightenment. They appear in this world in order to cause sentient beings to enter the path of the wisdom and insight of a buddha."

(Lotus Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition, p 30)

So Huineng explains:

"The one great affair is the perceptual understanding of the buddhas. The people of this world are delusively attached to characteristics externally and delusively attached to emptiness internally. If one is able to transcend characteristics within characteristics and to transcend emptiness within emptiness, this is to be undeluded both externally and internally. If you are enlightened to this teaching, your mind will open up [in enlightenment] in a single moment of thought."

(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK Edition, p 56)

White Lotus said:

Prove to me that the sudden way is superior.

Astus wrote:

The sudden way is pointing out that appearances are already empty, and there is no emptiness outside appearances. If one can confirm this immediately in one's personal experience, that is sudden. If one first needs to pursue studies, cultivate meditation, and abide by the precepts, that is gradual. The result is the same liberation from attachment through the realisation of no self, thus there is no point in talking about inferior and superior.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017 at 11:55 PM

Title: Re: Dr. Nida Chenagtsang

Content:

Malcolm said:

Not according to Dzogchen teachings. Making prayers to be reborn in this or that pure realm is not a guarantee that you will in fact take rebirth in this or that pure land in your

next life. The twenty-one capacities that are discussed in your passage refer to the twenty-one types of people who have directly perceived dharmatā. The worst sort of person has this experience but is lazy about developing it.

Astus wrote:

That requirement sounds like a unique one in dzogchen, since according to the sutras buddha-remembrance is enough. But, as you have mentioned, "it is all really a question of whether you trust what the Buddha has said".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 4th, 2017 at 1:39 AM

Title: Re: Dr. Nida Chenagtsang

Content:

Malcolm said:

one remains in the natural nirmanakāya buddhafiels for only five hundred human years before attaining buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

What is a natural nirmanakaya buddha field? And how is that relevant, when from Sukhavati one can visit innumerable buddhas and fields?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2017 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

crazy-man said:

Honen Shonin (Jodo-Shu), Shinran Shonin (Jodo-Shin-Shu), Myōan Eisai (Rinzai-Shu), Dogen Zenji (Soto-Shu) and Nichiren Daishonin (Nichiren-Shu) were former monks of the Tendai-Shu and i think that they took some elements from the teaching of the Tendai-Shu into their own teachings.

Astus wrote:

Honen established and Shinran followed the teaching of exclusive nenbutsu, so they have practically nothing to do with Tendai or Zen. Eisai had no heirs and he led a sort of ecumenical temple. Dogen rejected the Pure Land path, while Nichiren rejected both Pure Land and Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 5th, 2017 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Thank you for these recommendations. Are there Zen Buddhists in the West who read and put into practice these Pure Land-related materials explained from a Zen

perspective? It seems that Zen in the West might not always be in tune with the devotional practices found in Zen as practiced in Asia, even including Japan.

Astus wrote:

Mostly those who follow traditional Chinese and Vietnamese schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2017 at 12:29 AM

Title: Re: Did Mahayana influence Theravada Buddhism?

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

both are true descendants of pre-sectarian Buddhism

Astus wrote:

Sectarians are the true descendants of the pre-sectarians. That is, both are sectarians.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 6th, 2017 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: The essence of the teachings is not different...

Content:

Astus wrote:

What essence? Who of the various schools stated that there is such a shared essence? On the contrary, Buddhists rejected the Vedantins, and Vedantins rejected the Buddhists.

"The conceptions of the Sankhyas, the Kanadas and the Buddhists about them are not tenable according to reason. They should never be accepted. For they are not supported by reason and the scriptures. Hundreds and thousands of errors on their part may be mentioned. As the scriptures other than the Vedas have been condemned (in the ancient sacred tradition) "scriptures other than these," (they should not be accepted). A wise man should give up the teachings of such scriptures and all crookedness, and, with faith and devotion, should have a firm understanding of the true import of the Vedantas accepted by Vyasa."

(Shankara: Upadeshasahasri 16.64-67, tr Jagadananda, p 187-188)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 7th, 2017 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Shurangama Sutra existed in China by around 730, if not earlier. Trisong Detsen, who invited Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra to Tibet, began his rule in 755. According to Sam van Schaik Dzogchen did not exist on its own until the 10th century, and Menngagde works date back only to the 11th century. In other words, not only sky gazing

and leap over practices were nowhere around when the sutra appeared, but even Dzogchen has not yet formed.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 7th, 2017 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sky gazing can be found in the PP sutras.

Astus wrote:

To take the passage as a reference to any group's practice, we'd need to find such a group.

By the way, are you referring to this often quoted passage, or is it something else?

ākāśa dṛṣṭu iti sattva pravayāharanti nabhadarśanaṃ kutu vimṛśyatha etamartham /
tatha dharmadarśanu nidiṣṭa tathāgatena na hi darśanaṃ bhaṇitu śakya nidarśanena //
(http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/4_rellit/buddh/bsu028pu.htm)

起虛空見眾生相， 虛空無相不可得，
佛說法法非相應， 不說非有非無相。
(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T08n0229_002)

A vision in space is a being, so they declare.

A vision like that of space, so should you consider that object!

Thus has the vision of Dharma been expounded by the Tathagata.

But it is not possible to report on that vision by definite statements [that differ from it].
(Ratnaguna ch 12, tr Conze)

Some sentient beings say that they have seen the sky,
Yet how is the sky to be "seen?" Examine the meaning of this.
Likewise, the Tathagata has shown this way to see all phenomena.
(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 250)

Malcolm said:

Your statements assumes that yogic practices come from texts, rather than the other way around. Bad assumption.

Astus wrote:

What is the earliest example of sky gazing in a Dzogchen text?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Astus wrote:

So called sutra mahamudra includes calming meditation with and without object, and insight meditation with and without analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Zen being Japanese, Mahamudra being Tibetan

Astus wrote:

That might be relevant in some aspects, like robes, instruments, etc., but not in the basic concept of the path. To find a common denominator between Zen and Mahamudra, it is mainly the prajnaparamita teachings. But then, the prajnaparamita is shared among all Mahayana traditions anyway.

Shikantaza is the immediate recognition of the buddhas' wisdom, there are no steps or stages provided. The Dagpo Kagyu tradition provides a step by step instruction on the stages from the preliminaries to the four yogas. That amounts to more than just a "philosophical attitude".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Justmeagain said:

Whilst I appreciate they're different traditions I can't help but feel they're so far apart so as to be almost contradictory.

...

The two practices couldn't be further apart in my opinion.

Astus wrote:

Zen practice begins and ends at non-abiding. Mahamudra provides a gradual path to non-abiding. There is no contradiction in that, they are simply different approaches.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mahāmudra is non-gradual, actually.

Astus wrote:

Although one can say that " <http://www.unfetteredmind.org/pith-instructions-on-mahamudra/> " and " <http://keithdowman.net/guestpage/maitripas-essential-mahamudra-verses.html> ", there is still a gradual path employed to train in it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Justmeagain said:

But I think the process of practice is a given.

One is utterly without form, the other its antithesis.

Do both practices lead to the same end?

Astus wrote:

All Mahayana traditions have buddhahood as their goal. As for any of them being better, quicker, higher, etc., while that can be an entertaining topic to discuss, when it comes to walking the path, the inclinations and opportunities of the individual decide what is fitting.

Justmeagain said:

I guess my concern is that I don't want to waste my time on a practice that is not as effective as another.

Astus wrote:

Effective is always what works for you. As you may have already heard, zazen is good for nothing and in mahamudra there is nothing to do.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mahāmudra and Dzogchen are both paths of self-liberation. There is no gradual training for either.

Astus wrote:

Do you then call the rest what? Preliminaries? Still, they are preliminaries somewhat specific in each tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:
Some have buddhahood as their basis.

Astus wrote:
It is still the goal/fruit as well, isn't it?

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 12:26 AM
Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza
Content:

Malcolm said:
The principle of both mahāmudra and the great perfection is to distinguish the mind from the nature of the mind. That is accomplished on the basis of the intimate instructions of a qualified guru. But in both cases there is no gradual path.

Astus wrote:
"See nature, become buddha" could be called a shared idea of Zen and Mahamudra. But while you don't find much on the topic of gradual instructions in Zen, it seems to me that people like Dagpo Tashi Namgyal and Wangchuk Dorje worked hard on spelling out the details of the preliminary practices, the main practices of calming and insight, and the stages of the four yogas, just as modern teachers of the tradition, like Thrangu Rinpoche, follow in their footsteps. I'm not debating what you say about Mahamudra, but it seems to me that is a somewhat selective presentation. Furthermore, I consider those detailed instructions in the Mahamudra tradition of Gampopa an asset, and I'm not saying that it makes it anything inferior.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 12:35 AM
Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza
Content:

Malcolm said:
The four yogas in reality are not a means to achieve anything. They are a means to familiarize oneself with the nature of the mind one has already recognized.

Astus wrote:
I think I did not describe the yogas as methods either.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 2:02 AM
Title: Re: What is the Zen and/or Chan assertion of how conventional phenomena exists?
Content:

Tenzincharpa said:
A) Exist as Illusion, existing only as a projection of the mind, (literally unreal).
B) Exist as Illusion 'like'; real but existing in an ethereal manner, lacking any inherent

true essence; nominally existent.

C) Do Zen and/or Chan deny the existence of conventional phenomena and/or matter?

Astus wrote:

In a dream Kyōzan Oshō went to Maitreya's place and was led in to sit in the third seat. A senior monk struck with a gavel and said, "Today the one in the third seat will speak."

Kyōzan rose and, striking with the gavel, said, "The truth of Mahayana is beyond the four propositions and transcends the hundred negations. Taichō! Taichō!" [Hear the truth!]

(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm>)

A monk asked Grand Master Ma, "Please, Teacher, going beyond the permutations of assertion and denial, directly point out to me the meaning of the coming from the West." Master Ma said, "I'm tired today and can't explain for you. Go ask Chih Tsang." When the monk asked Chih Tsang, J Tsang said, "Why didn't you ask the Teacher?" The monk said, "The Teacher had me come here to ask you." Tsang said, "I have a headache today and can't explain for you. Go ask Elder Brother Hai." When the monk asked Elder Brother Hai (Pai Chang), Hai said, "At this point, after all, I don't understand."

When the monk related this to Grand Master Ma, Master Ma said, "Tsang's head is white, Hai's head is black."

(Blue Cliff Record, case 73, tr Cleary & Cleary)

The four propositions (四句) are either existence, non-existence, one, many (有無一異) or the catuskoti (being, non-being, both, neither). The hundred negations (百非) are the permutations of the four as that each contains the four possibilities ($4 \times 4 = 16$), then multiplied by the three times ($16 \times 3 = 48$), then doubled by the options of arisen or about to arise ($48 \times 2 = 96$), and the original four added and thus the hundred negations. These are Chinese Madhyamaka teachings regarding the two truths. See more in Shi Changqing's book: "The Two Truths in Chinese Buddhism".

But, as you can see from the above two stories, Zen is not really a follower of Madhyamaka. Furthermore, Zen was influenced more by Tiantai and especially by Huayan teachings. So, on the subject of two truths, the teaching of the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Dharmadh%C4%81tu seems more appropriate.

Although that's still just background information, the two terms of

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essence-Function> are often used in the fashion of two truths. You might check on it this essay:

<http://www.acmuller.net/articles/indigenousshermeneutics.htm>.

Finally, there is no such thing as "according to Zen", simply because Zen is not a single church or a unified tradition, but a very generic term for loosely connected groups of people, texts, and traditions. But, to give a straightforward answer finally, I'd say the most common interpretation of conventional phenomena is that they are not different from buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 2:05 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

With respect to Mahāmudra, it is simply wrong.

Astus wrote:

If that is wrong, then what do you consider all the methods transmitted under the label of Mahamudra, particularly the techniques of calming and insight?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

Common śamatha and vipaśayāna are engaged in by those who have no experience of the nature of the mind. But in mahāmudra, śamatha and vipaśayāna unified from the beginning since it is simply a means of stabilizing one's knowledge of the nature of the mind pointed out by the guru, as in Dzogchen sems sde or trekchö, or the Lamdre's "inseparability of samsara and nirvana" and so on.

Astus wrote:

The reason calming and insight is practised is to experience the nature of mind. The difference between sudden and gradual according to Tashi Namgyal is that those with supreme intellect do not need to practise calming but can directly gain insight following their familiarity with the teachings. Then, according to Thrangu rinpoche, the difference between common and special practice of calming and insight is that in Mahamudra one begins with insight into the nature of mind instead of insight into the nature of appearances. Finally, systematic instruction in calming and insight is more reliable and efficient according to him than pointing out instructions. So, at least in the Dagpo Kagyu tradition, the gradual practice of calming and insight is cultivated in order to realise the nature of mind. And that is quite logical, since once one is clear about self-liberation, there is no point in engaging in focusing on objects and analysing them.

From Mahamudra the Moonlight:

A Differentiation of Mahamudra Meditation:

"There are, in general, two paths. There is the rapid path, which is designed for a person with a superb intellect, and who is well-disposed to an instantaneous illumination. He has to master, at the outset, the doctrinal views of reality [through analytical insight and] through the clearing away of doubts and distortions. He then concentrates wholly on the vision of reality [established through wisdom]. Then there is the gradual path, which is for a person of an average or inferior intellect who is disposed toward a gradual illumination. He has to master first the meditation on inner tranquility, and then seek to gain analytical insight.

...

The meditational system of the Dakpo Kagyüpa order consists of two systems. The first system, which meets the needs of seekers inclined toward an instantaneous illumination, directs them, at the outset, to master the vision of reality by clearing doubts and distortions concerning the natural foundation of existence, and then settle the mind [in a nondual] state. The second system, which meets the demands of seekers of gradual illumination, directs them first to achieve tranquility of mind and then gradually strive toward insight. The former method would be more suitable for highly intelligent and sensitive persons. Nevertheless, I shall elucidate the latter at this stage because it is widely known in Tibet [the Land of Snow Mountains]."
(p 144, 145-146)

The Reason Why Meditation on Insight Is Necessary:

"the determination of nonselfhood [in one's psychophysical aggregates] through discerning intellect, followed by meditation, will result in attaining permanent peace. No other means can completely eliminate misery and defilement."
(p 178)

From Thrangu rinpoche's An Introduction to Mahamudra Meditation on the difference between sutrayana and mantrayana practice of calming and insight:

"What are these extraordinary instructions of the Vajrayana? Essentially the concept of emptiness in the Vajrayana is the same as that taught by the Buddha in the sutras. The only difference is the method which is used in the Vajrayana. In the Vajrayana method of Mahamudra we do not to worry about external appearances because external appearances, such as mountains and buildings are not our problem, nor do they particularly help us. In fact, they are empty as is logically proven in the sutras, but we don't meditate on them. Nor do we particularly meditate upon the emptiness or insubstantiality of the body.

In the Vajrayana we meditate upon that which is most important, which is the nature of our mind because it is the mind creates pleasure and pain, it is the mind that gives rise to experience, it is the mind that experiences everything. It is the mind that generates disturbing emotions, it is the mind that generates faith and devotion. So the mind is most important. Therefore in Vajrayana, in the practice of Mahamudra, we look at the nature of mind rather than attempting to look at the nature of appearances."

(p 31-32)

And from Thrangu rinpoche's commentary on The Ninth Karmapa's Ocean of Devinitive Meaning:

It is said that you can tell whether or not you have genuinely heard the teachings and understood their point by whether or not you are tame and peaceful in your conduct. And you can tell whether or not your meditation is effective by whether or not your kleshas are diminishing. Ideally, someone should finally have no kleshas whatsoever. But even on the way to that klesha-free state, your kleshas and thoughts should diminish. Therefore, I think that it is of far greater importance than the experience of dramatic instantaneous pointing out that people be taught mahamudra as a full system

of instruction that they can implement on their own gradually through diligent application using either one of the three texts by the Ninth Gyalwang Karmapa—The Ocean of Definitive Meaning, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, or Pointing Out the Dharmakaya— or one of the texts by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal—either Moonbeams of Mahamudra or The Clarification of the Natural State.

In short, I think it is of far more importance that people receive this kind of complete and systematic instruction so that they can gradually develop experience on their own, than that some kind of dramatic pointing-out procedure be done. Of course, it is possible to give dramatic pointing-out instruction, and when you do so, some people do recognize their mind's nature. But, if I may say so, I question the stability and, therefore, ultimately the value of that. It certainly is a dramatic experience for those people who achieve it, but I see no evidence of their kleshas diminishing as a result. And furthermore, they then carry away with them the arrogance of the thought, "I have seen my mind's nature." I think it is of far greater importance actually to practice meditation slowly and surely and make all possible use of the resources which this book in particular gives you.

(p 127-128)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Justmeagain said:

So my OP was designed to establish whether there is (in your opinions) a discernable difference between Mahamudra and Shikantaza? Apart from the obvious cultural accoutrements of course.

Just to reiterate, I can't see any parallel at all. But keep hearing that there is?!?

Astus wrote:

When taking Mahamudra to be the practice of non-meditation where appearances liberate themselves, that can be read as identical with the practice of Shikantaza where there is neither grasping nor rejection. However, as you can see, there is more to both traditions than that, even if eventually they both reach the same point.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

So you apparently agree with my statement, "...in mahāmudra, śamatha and vipaśayāna unified from the beginning since it is simply a means of stabilizing one's knowledge of the nature of the mind pointed out by the guru."

Astus wrote:

No. There are two interpretations of the four yogas I know of, and the more popular one

among Kagyupas seems to be the view that one-pointedness is interpreted as the common practice of calming and concentration, while it is during simplicity / non-elaboration that one gains insight into the nature of mind. Accordingly, calming and insight are practised in order to gain knowledge, and only following that can one cultivate their unified form (the third yoga of one taste) based on the realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Matt J said:

You could take it in a number of ways, that is exactly the problem.

Astus wrote:

That seems to be the case with everything.

Matt J said:

We can have a group of people who all claim to practice Shikantaza, and say they are just sitting without grasping or rejection, but really, one person may be sinking into a dull, indeterminate state; one person may be cultivating mindfulness; another may be daydreaming and engaging in mental chatter.

Astus wrote:

So it is with any other inner cultivation. But that has no relevance to what the ideal is.

Matt J said:

It is hard to say without practical and detailed guidance, which is largely missing in Soto Zen (at least as transmitted in the West).

Astus wrote:

Zazen can be described simply and clearly, like <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>. What more should be said?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that uncommon śamatha and vipāśyāna is based on knowledge you have. Common śamatha and vipāśyāna is no different than sutrayāna practice. The former is based on direct introduction, and it is basically the same as the four samadhis of Dzogchen Sems sde: calmness (gnas pa), immovability (mi g.yo ba), nonduality (gnyis med) and natural perfection (lhun grub).

Astus wrote:

And what I described was that one practises the common calming and insight followed by the uncommon, and this order can be set into the four yogas where the first two are common calming and insight, and the last two are the uncommon.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 10th, 2017 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Tsongkhapa said:

In other words, Buddha did not teach Dzogchen. How then can it be a Buddhist practice? Buddha Shakyamuni predicted the appearance of Nagarjuna and Je Tsongkhapa but not Garab Dorje.

Astus wrote:

The question is rather what kind of history or legendary accounts one accepts. If one takes literally every traditions account of itself, then they are all the best and most authentic. If one takes a modern scholarly perspective, then sectarian legends are irrelevant.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2017 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

But it really doesn't work that way. No matter what books you might have read. Mahāmudra is nongradual.

Astus wrote:

It is non-gradual if you limit Mahamudra to the realisation of and familiarisation with the nature of mind. But if you consider the methods used to reach the realisation, then it can be gradual.

"When Gampopa taught sudden realizers he first taught the view and then, from within the view, proceeded into meditation. When he taught gradual realizers he first had them develop experience with meditation and then led them into the view. Among gradual realizers there are two subtypes: those whose mind is extremely wild and those whose mind is extremely unclear. To those with wild mind he taught vipashyana first. To those with extremely unclear mind he first taught shamata. The procedure in Moonlight of Mahamudra begins with shamata and proceeds to vipashyana."
(Thrangu: Essentials of Mahamudra, p 101-102)

"The Mahamudra system contains three approaches: sutra Mahamudra, tantra Mahamudra, and essence Mahamudra. According to sutra Mahamudra, one proceeds gradually through the five paths and ten bodhisattva stages, each practice followed by another. When one has reached a certain point, one continues step by step on to the

next practice. One presents one's understanding and the master will check it. The whole procedure is very gradual and quite safe."

(Chokyi Nyima: Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, p 57)

"The Sutra Mahamudra approach is seen as a specialty of the Kagyu tradition and was the central emphasis of Gampopa's teachings. Therefore, although it originated in India and was also taught by Marpa and Milarepa, Gampopa is regarded as the main figure responsible for bringing this teaching to its full development and manifestation.

...

Essence Mahamudra is transmitted through a path more profound and more wondrous than the previous two because it leads to the sudden realization of the true nature of mind, which is called *thamal8Ji shepa* (*tha mal8Ji shes pa*), or ordinary mind. ... On this path, there is no need for either the elaborate methods of Mantra Mahamudra or the gradual training of Sutra Mahamudra. In Sutra Mahamudra, there are still some forms; for example, the practices of shamatha and vipashyana meditation, as well as the practices of bodhichitta, are retained."

(Dzogchen Ponlop: Wild Awakening p 33, 34-35)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2017 at 1:22 AM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Queequeg said:

That's too far, isn't it?

From a modern scholarly perspective, ie. the Social Sciences, the legends are more raw material for study.

For the modern scholar, all of it is just more stuff to catalog and analyze.

Astus wrote:

If one wants to establish a historical sequence, then it does not matter how old a tradition believes itself to be. What one should look for are datable and verifiable evidences. At the same time, it also means that one cannot say anything more than what the evidence can corroborate. So, for instance the Shurangama Sutra can be believed to be 2500 years old, but historically it is datable only to 8th century China. Similarly, Dzogchen may proclaim itself to go back to India, but the earliest texts are 9th century Tibet. To put it another way, who would believe today a person who claims to be the sole representative of an ancient Buddhist lineage nobody has yet heard of and nothing can back up its existence?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2017 at 1:23 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Malcolm said:

That's all Mahāmudra is.

Astus wrote:

Fine. Then let me ask again: what do you call all the other things taught under the label of Mahamudra?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2017 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

The Heart Sutra is perfectly aligned with the longer Perfection of Wisdom Sutra but when people claim they can attain enlightenment by meditating on the clarity of the mind which is only a conventional truth or that generation stage of HYT is not necessary, these heresies which are clearly contrary to Buddha's teachings in the Perfection of Wisdom and the Tantras are clearly not the word of Buddha.

Astus wrote:

That necessity of HYT, generation stage, etc. might be the opinion of one or two traditions (Gelug, and Sakya?), but nobody else. So it is a bit strong to call most of Mahayana lineages heresies.

Tsongkhapafan said:

Buddha taught a path to enlightenment, either to the small enlightenment of a Hearer, the middling enlightenment of a Solitary Realizer or the great enlightenment of a Buddha - he did not teach sudden enlightenment, a 'non-path' or the abandonment of conceptual minds as a path to enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

According to the whole of East Asian Mahayana and some groups of Tibetan Mahayana the Buddha did teach sudden enlightenment, etc. So it seems that view you represent is rather in the minority.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2017 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Surangama Sutra as an anti-Dzogchen intervention

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

there's no enlightenment without HYT. It's not an opinion, it's the teaching of Buddha Vajradhara ... No HYT, no enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

Then let's just say it is not a teaching others accept as definitive, just as you do not accept their teachings as definitive.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 12th, 2017 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Justmeagain said:

How about I put my OP this way....are Mahamudra and Shikantaza synonymous?

Astus wrote:

One can find common elements between the Great Seal and Just Sitting. Both are meant as the realisation of the ultimate truth, for instance. Both view the ultimate wisdom as the absence of attachment and detachment. Both see beings as originally enlightened and appearances as originally pure.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 15th, 2017 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness turns back upon itself; it does not extend beyond name-and-form

Content:

Astus wrote:

The recommended sources for study listed here:

<http://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?t=12133>

My short response on the question:

Consciousness and name and form practically include each other, as 'name' means the four mental aggregates, also listed as "feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention" (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.002.than.html>), i.e. the universal mental factors.

Consciousness could as well be called a state of mind and the factors are the functions or activities of the mind. When one identifies with a thought, a state of mind emerges, and when there is a state of mind, one is identifying with a thought. It's like thinking 'happy' and 'being happy'. When there is no identification, no grasping, then there is no state of mind, nor any factor to cling to.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 16th, 2017 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: Differences about Zen Soto, Son and Thien. Searching right for me.

Content:

OneTwoThree said:

Does Zen Soto, Son and Thien different a lot?

Astus wrote:

Mostly, yes, unless it's "Westernised", in which case they reduce things to meditation and not much else.

OneTwoThree said:

I would like to choose that one, which is the closer one with Thich Nhat Hanh's Thien school.

Astus wrote:

What TNH teaches and what Thien looks like in general are two different things. This is applicable to everyone else as well, that specific groups and teachers can have more or less unique elements.

OneTwoThree said:

I feel Son is good idea.

Astus wrote:

If by that you mean the KUSZ - again, not representative of Korean Buddhism in general - it is probably a good idea, since they are accessible in Poland.

OneTwoThree said:

Second question, is it ok to use services of different zen schools at one time? As I am forced to do probably.

Astus wrote:

What you do at home is your business. But when in a group, you do what everyone else.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 17th, 2017 at 7:34 AM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Theravada practices

Content:

Justmeagain said:

Does this mean that Theravadins achieve Mahamudra too by practicing Vipassana and Samatha?

Astus wrote:

First you might want to specify what calming and insight stand for in Theravada and in Mahamudra.

Also, if you want to study a structural interpretation of doctrines, Ringu Tulku's <https://books.google.hu/books?id=ETAtDQAAQBAJ> is a fine work for that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 17th, 2017 at 8:42 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment vs. Liberation vs. Awakening

Content:

Astus wrote:

The common word for bodhi in Chinese is pútí 菩提, i.e. a transliteration. But, another

term that may be used for bodhi is dào 道, i.e. way. Now that is a loaded word. So, I think one can stay with whatever English term seems fitting in the context, as long as the usage remains consistent and clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 17th, 2017 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Schools of Buddhism mind map

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is a fairly misleading map, displaying various schools as if they had emerged independently of each other. Furthermore, some are philosophical systems, some are organisations, some are long dead, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 18th, 2017 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Schools of Buddhism mind map

Content:

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka was the first major doctrinal exposition on the concept of emptiness, and serves as the basis for everyone else who came later. Yogacara, as the second major school of Mahayana thought, and arguably the real first Mahayana system, is the second set of doctrines that influenced everyone else. Of course, preceding both one should mention the various abhidharma systems, primarily the Sarvastivadin and the Vaibhasika. So, following the abhidharmikas, madhyamikas, and yogacarins we can skip to Chinese Buddhism, where the newer schools of Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan emerged. Then from Chinese Buddhism developed the Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese forms. But the question really is the purpose of such a map, and what it is that it wants to describe. If it's the relationship between the various schools - and what schools exactly - then it should consider the historical and geographical changes. Furthermore, Buddhism is more than so called schools, and the sutras and the vinayas are likely even more important.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 18th, 2017 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: The Mind-Only Tradition

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Mahayana system it has been established that those belonging to the three worlds are mere representations of consciousness. This is clear from the aphorism, 'Oh ! Jinaputra, those belonging to the three worlds are mere mind' . The terms mind [citta] , thought-consciousness, [mano-vijnana] and representation of consciousness [vijñapti] are synonyms. Here mind should be understood along with its associates [samprayoga]. The term 'mere' indicates the exclusion of the [external] objects.

It is all mere representation of consciousness,
Because there is the appearance of non-existent objects.
Just as a man with a cataract
Sees hairs, moons etc.,
Which do not exist in reality.
(Vasubandhu: Vimsatika, tr Kochumuttom)

So the answer to the question: "The term 'mere' indicates the exclusion of the [external] objects." However, it doesn't fit exactly to say that "only mind exists", because, as he writes in the Trimsika:

"When one does not perceive also a supporting consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that"

In other words, without an object there is no subject either.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2017 at 12:43 AM
Title: Re: What is Ignorance (avidya)?
Content:
Astus wrote:
As far as Zen goes on defining the meaning:

"When one is deluded as to the self-nature, one is a sentient being, but when one realizes the self-nature, one is a buddha."
(Platform Sutra, ch 3, BDK Edition, p 39)

"If you depend merely on oral explanations of seeing the nature, [like a] deluded person you will have thoughts relative to the realms and you will even activate false views regarding those thoughts. And from this will be generated all the enervating defilements and false thoughts! There is in the self nature fundamentally not a single dharma that can be perceived. To think that there were any would be a false explanation, a disaster, a false view of enervating defilements."
(ch 4, p 44)

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2017 at 6:32 PM
Title: Re: The Mind-Only Tradition
Content:
Coëmgenu said:
Which one of these statements about the mind-only tradition is true (or are both right? Are both wrong in their way)?

1) The mind-only tradition, specifically on account of its being a "mind-only" discourse,

offers a valid metaphysical and (perhaps) cosmological description of the true nature of the reality we "appear" to inhabit.

or 2) The mind-only perspective establishes no metaphysics or other basis for existence and is properly a methodology, not a worldview, to realize no-self and emptiness. It is a means to an end rather than any sort of establishment or presentation of any reality.

Astus wrote:

First of all, from Vasubandhu's Trimsatika (tr Kochumuttom):

"One does not abide in the realization
Of mere representations of consciousness
Just on account of the [theoretical] perception
That all this is mere representation of consciousness,
If one places [= sees] something before oneself."

That doesn't mean there is no view presented. There is, and it is a view one needs to learn, understand, and take to one's heart. It is based on that correct view that one can then attain realisation beyond mere concepts. But not to take up the view, saying it is just a skilful means, is not understanding the importance of establishing the correct view.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2017 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: What is Ignorance (avidya)?

Content:

Queequeg said:

This is more or less a madhyamika "revelation through utter negation"

Astus wrote:

Yes.

"That there are no names that can be named is to name the self-natures."
(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK p 79)

But it has some extras as well.

The self-natures are endowed with the three bodies.
Generating illumination, the four wisdoms are created.
Without transcending the conditions of seeing and hearing,
One transcendentally ascends to the stage of buddhahood.
(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK p 60)

Queequeg said:

So ignorance = deluded as to self-nature?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

The suchlike self-nature is the true Buddha;
False views and the three poisons are King Māra.
During false delusion Māra is in one's home;
During correct views the Buddha is in one's hall.

When false views and the three poisons are generated in the nature,
This is for King Māra to come reside in one's home.
When with correct views one eradicates the three poisonous [states of] mind,
Māra is transformed into the Buddha, true and not provisional.

The dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya—
The three bodies are fundamentally a single body.
If one can see it oneself within the nature,
This is the cause of bodhi and the achievement of buddhahood.

...

If you have encountered the sudden teaching in this lifetime,
Become enlightened immediately to the self-nature and see the World-honored One.
If you cultivate by trying to become a buddha,
You'll never know where to seek for the true.

If you are able to see the true in your own mind,
Having the true will be the cause of your achieving buddhahood.
If you do not see the self-nature but seek the Buddha externally,
Every activation of your mind will be that of a big fool.

(Platform Sutra, ch 10, BDK p 90, 91)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2017 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: The Mind-Only Tradition

Content:

srivijaya said:

How do we define "mind" in Mind-Only?

Astus wrote:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight_Consciousnesses

Xuanzang: <http://www.cttbusa.org/8consciousnesses/contents.asp>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2017 at 12:30 AM

Title: Re: The Mind-Only Tradition

Content:

srivijaya said:

So it makes me wonder why the school is called mind-only when they have no ontological position. As the designation seems to imply existent (if impermanent and changing) mind and non-existent objects of awareness, which is again ontological.

Astus wrote:

If you look at Vasubandhu's verses, he uses the term vijñaptimātra, translated as "mere representation of consciousness" (Kochumuttom), or perception-only (Anacker), or weishi (唯識 - consciousness only / mere consciousness). Then one can think about the matter of what <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8673/2580> actually means. However, Yogacara is bigger than Asanga and Vasubandhu, and there are of course the misrepresentations by the opponents, so why and who thinks what is quite complicated. The mistake one should not fall into, and this generally applies to the whole of Buddhism as well, is to assume a homogeneous doctrine for a school or tradition.

srivijaya said:

Is "mind" a collective noun here?

Astus wrote:

Mind in Buddhism is always a collective noun, since assuming a unitary consciousness is equal to assuming a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2017 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: What is Ignorance (avidya)?

Content:

Queequeg said:

I think I can intuit what this means. Can you explain briefly?

Astus wrote:

"Samantabhadra says that connate ignorance is unconscious, unmindful. It is unawareness. The dominating ignorance brings the connate ignorance, which arises simultaneously with our mind. The connate ignorance is together with every moment of our consciousness, with every moment of our awareness. We know it's there, but, each moment, we fail to recognize it. Right now we are saying to ourselves that we must recognize it, but the next moment we miss it again. And the next moment we say that to ourselves again. And then, the next moment, we miss it again. This repetitive failure to recognize the dominating ignorance is the connate ignorance.

The connate ignorance is actually the nature of not recognizing. At the very moment of not being aware, as one's consciousness is totally ignorant, pristine awareness is very much present. At the very moment I have a tremendous sense of emotion, it exists within the basic state of rigpa, the pristine awareness. This is what we call connate. In that very moment of experiencing ignorance, it is already in the nature of alpha-pure

wisdom. It's not really arising at the same time; the alphas pure wisdom is its basic nature. The nature of ignorance is the same as the nature of wisdom. It's always there. This nature of ignorance is the unawareness."
(Dzogchen Ponlop: Penetrating Wisdom, p 104-105)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 20th, 2017 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: What is Ignorance (avidya)?

Content:

Queequeg said:

one of the books on my shelf that will likely not get the attention I want to give it until this dusty household life becomes a little less dusty. If all goes well, another 16.5 years, at the earliest. I need a long life this time around.

Astus wrote:

No need to wait, just see your nature. Then you find the 84,000 sutras in a single atom.

"The unsurpassable bodhi is to be able, at these very words, to recognize your own fundamental mind and to see that your own fundamental nature is neither born nor extinguished. It is to see this naturally in every moment of thought and at all times: the myriad dharmas are without obstruction; the one is true and all are true. The myriad realms are naturally thuslike, and the thuslike mind is the true. If what you see is like this, then it is the self-nature of the unsurpassable bodhisattva."

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK p 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2017 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: Mahāyāna Parinirvāṇa

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

What is it that's never born ?

Astus wrote:

"That which originates dependently
Does not cease and does not arise,
Does not come and does not go,
Is not annihilated and is not permanent,
Is not different and not the same."
(Nagarjuna, MMK, tr from Ornament of Reason)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2017 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Mahāyāna Parinirvāṇa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

You might think that 'that which originates dependently' would normally be said to 'arise and cease'. That is because everything that is subject to dependent origination is 'anicca', impermanent.

Yet Nāgārjuna says here that what originates dependently does not arise and cease.

Astus wrote:

If something is dependently originated, it cannot sustain itself, so it does not have a substance, it is not a thing in itself. Because it is not in itself, it is not anything in particular, it is not something identifiable as this or that. This absence of substance is also called emptiness. Because it is nothing in itself, it cannot be said to become, as there is nothing to become, nor can it be said to perish, as there is nothing to perish. That is how in dependent origination there is nothing that originates, that birth is no birth.

Wayfarer said:

would it be correct to say, that this verse is one of the grounds which differentiates Nāgārjuna from the early schools?

Astus wrote:

Yes, in the sravaka teachings one has to observe how something appears, remains, and disappears. In Mahayana one has to realise that all appearances are unborn and undying. Another important thing here is that in the sravaka teachings the uncompounded is what is called unborn, particularly nirvana, so saying that all dharmas are unborn also means that all dharmas are nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2017 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Attaining Full Enlightenment During an Empowerment

Content:

DGA said:

is there not at least one major empowerment that includes, in a recognizable if not necessarily named way, direct introduction?

Astus wrote:

That is the 4th, the

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Precious_word_empowerment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2017 at 6:17 AM

Title: Re: Mahāyāna Parinirvāṇa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

There's an interpretation

[https://books.google.com.au/books?id=npRVBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT73&ots=-](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=npRVBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT73&ots=-WuNqdq3ln&dq=%22That%20which%20originates%20dependently%22&pg=PT74#v=o)

[WuNqdq3ln&dq=%22That%20which%20originates%20dependently%22&pg=PT74#v=o](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=npRVBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT73&ots=-WuNqdq3ln&dq=%22That%20which%20originates%20dependently%22&pg=PT74#v=o)

nepage&q=%22That%20which%20originates%20dependently%22&f=false from Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche which explains the verse in more detail. The way I think of it is in terms of the interdependence of the transcendent and the immanent.

Astus wrote:

What do you call the transcendent and what the immanent? If you refer to emptiness and appearances, they are not interdependent, as they are not two separate things. The unborn is not interdependent with the born, but the nature of the born is that it is unborn, exactly because it is born. Just as TKR explains in the section you referred to: "In Madhyamaka philosophy, ultimate reality is not seen as something that exists outside of or above the empirical reality with which we are confronted every day. Rather, emptiness is the nature of the very world that we live in, so the nature of the empirical world is ultimate reality." and "In fact, the ultimate is understood only through an understanding of the relative, because ultimate truth is, in fact, the nature of the relative truth."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2017 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Mahāyāna Parinirvāṇa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Is that how ordinary people understand it? And if it is, why is there need for a path?

Astus wrote:

If by ordinary you mean those who have not gained personal insight into emptiness, then yes, that is how they should understand it as the correct view. If by ordinary you mean those who do not know the Dharma, then no, because such people have not yet heard such concepts.

As for the need of a path, why wouldn't there be one? First of all, one needs to learn about the Dharma, then understand it, then personally verify it. Following experiential verification comes further practice to completely establish oneself in wisdom and perfect the other paramitas as well, not to mention the liberation of all beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 26th, 2017 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism and the zombie theory

Content:

Astus wrote:

The body is like a heap of grass, a mechanical contraption, while consciousness cannot be found or established as anything. We are all zombies, shadows of magically conjured illusions, conceptual mistakes.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2017 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and the zombie theory

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Not much room for compassion in or about a mechanical heap of mistakes is there?

Astus wrote:

Only with the realisation of emptiness can there be unbound compassion.

"The bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas should subdue their thoughts like this: All the different types of sentient beings, whether they be born from eggs, born from a womb, born from moisture or born spontaneously; whether or not they have form; whether they abide in perceptions or no perceptions; or without either perceptions or non-perceptions, I save them by causing them to enter nirvana without remainder. And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so? Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 3)

"There is no emptiness meditation not permeated by compassion;
For the practice of compassion is solely [the practice of] emptiness.
As for emptiness, even those seeking tranquil abiding must practice it.
For this vehicle, however, emptiness is compassion;
And the self-nature of this compassion is emptiness.
So understand that compassion is the essential nature."
(Atisha: Advice to Namdak Tsuknor, v 24, in Mind Training, p 267)

"You will reach a point when you see that emptiness and compassion, emptiness and phenomena, and absolute and relative truth, are intrinsically one, rather than being in each case two separate entities like the horns of a goat. The vaster your view of emptiness, the clearer your understanding will be of the infinite ways phenomena can manifest in accordance with the law of cause and effect. And it is from emptiness inseparable from compassion that a bodhisattva manifests.
This is the ultimate fruit of all the different teachings of the Mahayana and Mantrayana, of Madhyamika, Mahamudra and Dzogchen."
(Dilgo Khyentse: The Heart of Compassion, p 156-157)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2017 at 7:46 AM

Title: Re: Buddhism and the zombie theory

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

My question is more what about those who haven't realized this emptiness and, encountering the idea of a mechanical body with no "real" consciousness, equate it to

some kind of nihilistic materialism?

Astus wrote:

The idea of a mechanical body fits the modern scientific concept, so I doubt that this would be anyone's first encounter with it. Furthermore, contemplation on the body in terms of its parts, its repulsive nature, its eventual decomposition, and its elements are basic meditation topics, although not particularly popular among the laity. As for falling into the misconception of annihilation, that is a matter to be addressed before one begins meditation and analysis.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 27th, 2017 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: How does one learn to practice a Sutra?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Reciting, especially in an unknown language, is recitation practice. If one wants to practice what is taught in the sutra, one needs to understand it. Understanding a sutra can be assisted by commentaries, teachings, and other sutras. Then once it's understood, one can apply it.

And as Huineng said,

"Good friends, people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn't satisfy one's hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won't be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all." (Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK Edition p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 29th, 2017 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Which (if either) of these is Madhyamaka'lly correct:

Conventionally, processes exist.

Ultimately, processes do not exist.

Astus wrote:

Conventionally it makes sense to talk about arising and ceasing, birth and death, coming and going, etc. Ultimately there is nothing to arise and cease, etc. However, to mistake this for the extreme views of existence and non-existence is an error. It is also a mistake to imagine that there are really two kinds of truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 29th, 2017 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Does the earth circle the sun?

Astus wrote:

Conventional truths are not debated, nor is it the purpose of the Buddhadharma to investigate such matters. But if it's any relevance, one can analyse such concepts as earth, sun, and circling to recognise that they are merely empty labels.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 29th, 2017 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Would you say the same thing in response to the question "Are processes real?" That process and real are empty labels?

Is the existence or non-existence of *anything* asserted in the middle way?

Astus wrote:

This idea that one can assert the existence of processes, of dependent origination, is the concession to conventionality. But when a process is analysed, it cannot be affirmed as anything, or as nothing. The point of the teaching of emptiness is to realise that all concepts are unestablished, because taking concepts to be real is the delusion that results in suffering. This is not a purely theoretical issue, but the very essence of liberating wisdom.

Nagarjuna writes (MMK 21.9-16, tr Siderits):

"Arising and dissolution do not hold with respect to that which is empty.

Arising and dissolution do not hold with respect to that which is non-empty.

It does not hold that arising and dissolution are one.

It does not hold that arising and dissolution are distinct.

If you maintained that arising and dissolution of existents are indeed seen, arising and dissolution are only seen because of delusion.

An existent is not produced from an existent, nor is a nonexistent produced from an existent.

An existent is not produced from a nonexistent, nor is a nonexistent produced from a nonexistent.

Not from itself nor from what is other is an existent produced, and neither is it produced from both itself and what is other; from what, then, is it produced?

For one who acknowledges the existent, there would follow either eternalism or annihilationism, for an existent would be either permanent or impermanent.

[Objection:] For one who acknowledges existents there would be neither annihilation nor eternity,
for a state of being is a series consisting of the arising and passing away of effect and cause.

[Reply:] If a state of being is a series consisting of the arising and passing away of effect and cause,
then annihilation of the cause follows, for there is no re-arising of what passes away."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 30th, 2017 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

Khenpo Brothers said:

On the absolute level, phenomena have no substantial existence whatsoever; they are dependently arisen mere appearances, like reflections in a mirror.

Astus wrote:

As you can see in the example of the water moon, the absence of the real moon is the absolute, the presence of the appearance moon is the relative level, while the two levels are a single reality as the water moon. See the unity of the two truths in these passages from <http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-059-014/translation>:

"Whoever understands emptiness well, understands nirvāṇa well. Whoever understands nirvāṇa well has no attachment to any entity, and despite designating conventional things with all sorts of terms—'this is mine,' or 'that is me,' or 'sentient being,' or 'life force,' or 'living being,' or 'man,' or 'person,' or 'born of Manu,' or 'son of Manu,' or 'agent,' or 'inciter of action,' or 'appropriator,' or 'discarder'—he teaches Dharma without attachment to these. He teaches Dharma well. He teaches the final reality. He teaches the final reality well."

And briefly: "Even so phenomena are designated. The learned are not attached to them."

Khenpo Brothers said:

On the conventional level, ... On the absolute level...

Astus wrote:

The conventional level consists of words, concepts, ideas. The absolute level is recognising that concepts are just concepts, they do not have any real referents, they are without any real meaning.

Khenpo Brothers said:

What *can* be asserted about processes on the ultimate level?

Astus wrote:

Processes are illusions. They are no different from virtual characters in a fictional story. Would you even begin to question the motivations and feelings of such characters as if

they had their own mind and senses?

Khenpo Brothers said:

Am I attempting to use concepts/metaphors to grok "that" to which no concepts/metaphors apply?

Astus wrote:

One better not fall for the comfort of assuming some unknowable mystery.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 30th, 2017 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Differences between Tibetan and Zen Buddhism other than Vajrayana practices?

Content:

hyperpuppy said:

1. What "liberation from samsara" means

Astus wrote:

As Mahayana schools they both maintain that unestablished (apratisthita) nirvana is the final attainment, including the accomplishment of buddhahood with the three bodies and buddha-qualities.

hyperpuppy said:

2. What "emptiness" means

Astus wrote:

They both maintain that emptiness is the absence of self-nature (svabhava) and that it is not separate from appearances (dharma). One complication in the use of the term can come from the Tiantai doctrine of Three Truths where emptiness signifies only the absence and the term 'middle' refers to the unity of emptiness and appearances.

hyperpuppy said:

What would you say are the major differences between Zen Buddhism and pre-Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

Most of the differences come from the separate histories of East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism arrived to China by around the 1st century CE, and unique interpretations started to develop, especially after the 5th century, and Chinese Buddhism became independent from India. Buddhism to Tibet arrived first in the 8th century, and another major transmission happened in the 11th century. In both cases it was a later period of Indian Buddhism that got introduced there that, doctrines that had little to no influence in China. For instance, the interpretation of the Prajnaparamita corpus in China has been based on the Mahaprajnaparamitaupadesha and in Tibet on the Abhisamayalamkara, but those two works have not even been translated to the other language. Also, the teachings of Pramana (Dignaga, Dharmakirti, etc.) and later

trends of Madhyamaka and Yogacara (Chandrakirti, Shantarakshita, etc.) have not reached China or had not received much attention. Consequently, what Tibetans call the sutrayana is in fact only their version of Mahayana that is significantly different from the East Asian teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

So you can affirm something about conventional truth: It **is** this and that. But you can only disaffirm with ultimate truth: It is **not** this or that. Quite like emptiness, which is not the presence, rather the absence of (emptiness of) ... yes?

Astus wrote:

Both affirmation and negation are conventional terms. Emptiness is the ultimate truth. But to put it another way: conventional seen as the ultimate is the conventional, the conventional seen as the conventional is the ultimate. Again, in other words: when one grasps at appearances, that is delusion, while not grasping is liberation. However, to turn emptiness and non-attachment into another thing is still being stuck in grasping conventions.

rachmiel said:

So the process of hearing -- air molecules trigger inner ear actions that in turn trigger an electrical signal to travel along auditory nerves to a region of the brain that then transmogrifies the signal to a quale of "heard sound" -- is no different from The Wizard of Oz?

Astus wrote:

If you mean that both are concepts, then yes, no different. Of course, once one compares the meaning of various concepts, within the frame of concepts, there are all sorts of differences. Note again that the point here is not to give a scientific or a literary assessment, but to bring one to the realisation of how attachment occurs.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 1:17 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

Without primordial buddha, enlightenment is impossible. In this sense, primordial buddha is the single gate, to everything else that is provisional.

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure what primordial buddha that is, but normally in Chan/Zen they talk about buddha-nature most of the time (and its identity with the dharmakaya or all three bodies)

and not the primordial buddha usually identified as Vairocana following the Avatamsaka sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 2:36 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

I think another way to talk about it is buddha-nature.

Astus wrote:

That sounds better to me. Apparently the term "original buddha" (本佛) is not particularly common, although the Fo Guang e-dictionary (佛光電子大辭典) defines it by a quote on the lifespan in the Lotus Sutra with a reference to a Tiantai commentary, and following that it defines its other meaning to be the buddha-nature.

Queequeg said:

Vairocana (Avatamsaka Sutra - though I believe in E. Asia this Vairocana is often described as Sambhogakaya?)

Astus wrote:

It seems that according to Huayanzong he's a sambhogakaya, according to Tiantaizong he's a dharmakaya, and according to Mizong he's the single ultimate dharmakaya.

Queequeg said:

We have these various handles for this Buddha, but its implicit that these words fall short?

Astus wrote:

It's not that they fall short, rather it all becomes symbolic eventually.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 2:51 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

So Buddhism does not speak of a "level" of reality beyond the conventional? I.e. the only levels spoken of are both firmly in/of the conventional: believing the conventional is reality, and believing the conventional is the conventional.
Or is another level mentioned outside the two truths paradigm?

Astus wrote:

Levels and realities are all what samsara is made of, so there are practically innumerable versions, and each one of them is a fine object of attachment. If there were another reality posited as the final liberation, how would it not be actually just another

form of self-identity, another form of existence? At the same time, it is not that one should aim for non-existence either. The source of all problems is in fact one's craving to be somebody (bhavatsna), or not to be somebody (vibhavatsna). The teaching of the middle way eliminates the extreme views of existence and non-existence. What needs to be realised is that appearances are without essence, without self-nature, they are neither one's self or one's possessions. It's not that appearances are good or bad, they are not the one's making us cling to them, so appearances are fine. It is imagining them to be something other, something more than what they are, that is the error.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 2:59 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

White Lotus said:

Astus, are you saying that identification with any state or knowledge is grasping/attachment and so we should have no refuge in anything whatsoever. Non abiding, no association. All attachments are futile because all is empty?

Astus wrote:

See what the Buddha says:

"childish ordinary beings construct unreal phenomena, construct erroneous qualities, and have constructed all phenomena, which are in fact insignificant and worthless. And thus they will go to hell, animal states of birth, and to the realm of the Lord of Death. Monk, furthermore, all phenomena are untrue; they have the characteristic that once created they do not remain. Monk, all phenomena are compounded; childish ordinary beings have given rise to attachment, hatred, and delusion. Monk, all phenomena arise from distorted perceptions. Monk, all phenomena lack existence, their very essence is like a mirage. Monk, all phenomena lack a core, they are like space. Monk, as all phenomena are devoid of reality, they are not real entities. Monk, as all phenomena are deep like space, they are deep. Monk, as all phenomena are unperceived, they are wide open. Monk, as all phenomena are utterly void, they are non-abiding. Monk, as all phenomena have no worth for anything at all, they are unreliable. Monk, as all phenomena are without worth whatsoever, they are baseless. ... Monk, as the arising of all phenomena is unperceived, as their arising is insignificant, as their arising is worthless, as their arising is empty, and as their arising is peaceful, they are final nirvāṇa."

(<http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-062-018/translation>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Righteous hatred

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hatred with an excuse is what is called righteous hatred. It has no place on the

bodhisattva path.

"Upali, when involved in defilements, Bodhisattvas should tolerate the small transgressions which are hard to avoid, but should not tolerate the grave transgressions which are easy to avoid, not even in a dream. For this reason, if a follower of the Mahayana breaks precepts out of desire, I say he is not a transgressor; but if he breaks precepts out of hatred, it is a grave offense, a gross fault, a serious, degenerate act, which causes tremendous hindrances to the Buddha-Dharma."
(The Definitive Vinaya, in Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p 270)

"The Tathagata, the Enlightened One,
Full of compassion for all beings:
For him there are no transgressions,
For him there is no going astray;
He has not fallen into confusion,
And he is the wise one, ever mindful."
(SN 1.35)

"Do not let anger overpower you;
Do not become angry at those who are angry.
Nonanger and harmlessness always dwell
Within [the hearts of] the noble ones.
Like a mountain avalanche
Anger crushes evil people."
(SN 11.25)

Considerations for the practice of the
http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-08.pdf:

Then again, the bodhisattva reflects, "Even if people torment me in this present life, bringing ruinous defamation on me, forcefully seizing wealth, slighting me, scolding me, and putting me in bondage, I should nonetheless still maintain patience. If I fail to be patient, I am bound to fall into the hells and undergo countless forms of suffering on their iron-walled hot grounds, enduring roasting and broiling and punishments such as one cannot completely describe."

Additionally, the bodhisattva considers, "When I first brought forth the resolve [to gain bodhi], I vowed to cure the mental diseases of beings. This being has now fallen ill with the fetter of hatred. I should be engaged in curing him. How then could I instead voluntarily make myself sick on this account? I should persevere in the practice of patience."

Additionally, the bodhisattva reflects, "I am a bodhisattva. I desire to be of benefit to beings. If I become unable to maintain patience, then I can't be called a "bodhisattva" at all, but rather should be known as one who is evil."

Moreover, the bodhisattva knows that from long ago on up to the present, it has always

been the case that causes and conditions come together and are falsely referred to as a “person” even though in actual fact there is no genuine dharma of a “person” involved at all. Who then is it that could be hated in such circumstances? There exist herein only bones and blood and skin and flesh. This is comparable to something laid up with bricks or to a wooden puppet displaying mechanical movements and manifesting comings and goings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 31st, 2017 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's take another angle here: if Shakyamuni is an eternal buddha, what then? How is that important or relevant?

Furthermore, in a good number of sutras we find that the true buddha is actually the dharmadhatu/dharmakaya/tathata/etc. that is eternal, unborn, etc., so this points to the true nature of the world and beings, hence it has an important message that is generally accepted in Mahayana. Perhaps the Lotus Sutra is merely saying the same thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 2:35 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

See comment above about Buddha as function.

Astus wrote:

If it stands for the ever present possibility of awakening, it is not much different from buddha-nature, but it sounds like an externalised form of it, in which case it is only good for inspiring people.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

I think it is Buddha Nature. Come to think of it, IIRC, Zhiyi referred to it as Middle Way/Buddhanature, and used these terms interchangeably.

Astus wrote:

Good, then I think this is then settled.

Queequeg said:

Another aspect of Zhiyi's thought is that for each delusion, there is a perfect antidote.

Astus wrote:

Antidotes for delusions is a fairly common idea in Buddhism.

Queequeg said:

The antidote is a function of the delusion. At a subtler level, the antidote to our delusions is their impermanence.

Astus wrote:

That makes little sense to me. Do you mean that delusions remove themselves or just disappear on their own? However, if not, but you mean that:

Goes along with his idea that we can take any object for contemplation and its thorough contemplation will lead to Buddhahood.

That again is a basic doctrine, contemplation of the true nature of any appearance. In fact, Mahayana scriptures often try to improve on this by saying that afflictions and ignorance are themselves awakening, so there is no need for antidotes, although we could call this another linguistic twist and not really an innovation.

Queequeg said:

It also goes along with the idea that enlightenment is a terminal state for everyone.

Astus wrote:

How about enlightenment being the original state?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Minobu said:

how do you get so screwed up from that point in time

Astus wrote:

Original enlightenment does not refer to a point in time but the nature of phenomena being originally pure, i.e. empty, not-self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 4:33 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

both samsara and nirvana are uncaused and beginningless.

Astus wrote:

As mentioned to Minobu, "original enlightenment" is practically another word for

emptiness. It is not about a golden age idea that first there was nirvana, then there was samsara, and finally one needs to return to samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

That is so much more convenient than cut/paste.

Queequeg said:

I have a few more Lotus Sutra resources that might help you if you want to get into the Chinese text. Some compendiums of Chinese terms matched up with the sanskrit in the version Kern translated. Its an imperfect resource but can be useful.

Astus wrote:

If I may recommend:

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=483>

https://www.academia.edu/14864159/A_Glossary_of_Dharmarak%E1%B9%A3a_s_Translation_of_the_Lotus_Sutra_%E6%AD%A3%E6%B3%95%E8%8F%AF%E7%B6%93%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8

https://www.academia.edu/14864180/A_Glossary_of_Kum%C4%81raj%C4%ABva_s_Translation_of_the_Lotus_Sutra_%E5%A6%99%E6%B3%95%E8%93%AE%E8%8F%AF%E7%B6%93%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2017 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

That thought-moment encompasses the dharmadhatu (as expressed as the 3,000 realms).

Astus wrote:

How is that different from the Huayan idea of interdependence (aside from it narrowing things down to 3000)?

Queequeg said:

The notion of self is the mistake of taking a limited part of the dharmadhatu as the entirety of self. Close examination of that mistaken limitation reveals the error.

Understanding that error completely is liberation from it.

The fact that the 3000 = the thought moment, in reality, means that if examined, everything short of 3000 = the thought moment will ultimately fail. This analysis encompasses both sunyata as well as dependent origination.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that identifying with the 3000/dharmadhatu as the true "big" self is the solution? How is that not just an exaggerated self-delusion?

Queequeg said:

Zhiyi seems to suggest that the real nature exerts a force against delusion; colloquially, reality has a way of asserting itself whether we like it, or usually, not, and that force is, cast in another light, the Buddha's compassion.

Astus wrote:

The problem with that is its assumption of a natural and necessary liberation. That is contrary to the whole path.

Queequeg said:

The novel approach Zhiyi proposes is the reversing of perspective which is possible because there is no self - no center of the dharmadhatu. That said, anything can thus be taken as the center of the dharmadhatu. Brook Ziporyn calls this "omnicentric holism". Buddhism 101 - frames the issue as its our thirst that keeps the wheel spinning. Cutting the thirst stops the wheel. Zhiyi is suggesting, the dharmadhatu itself is exerting a force against the perpetuation of delusion. Suffering arises from that point of impact, but if we fully embrace that opposition, seek to understand the impact completely, we find that it is also the compassionate force of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

What is that force exerted by the dharmadhatu against delusion? And if it opposes delusion, then it is not delusion that liberates itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2017 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

Uh, what do you make of the universal prediction of Buddhahood, then? And the Buddha's assertion that he is always leading beings to awakening?

Astus wrote:

It is no different from saying that all beings have buddha-nature. However, having it and realising it are not the same. Since realisation does not happen automatically, there is a need for individual effort. So practically the presence or the absence of a prediction, of a buddha, or of buddha-nature makes no difference.

Queequeg said:

Back to step A. the dharmadhatu=thought-moment. The thing that is acting against the delusion, is actually just part of the thought-moment that has been designated as alien, that part of the dharmadhatu that has been distinguished as other/not self.

Astus wrote:

Delusion is assuming a self. How does the assumption that there are other things besides one's self eliminate the assumption of a self? Also, since distinguishing one thing as self and another thing as not self are mutually dependent, if one half eliminated the other, the whole delusion could never even occur.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 2nd, 2017 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

1. The prediction does matter... because its actually one of the steps to becoming a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is something that happens for bodhisattvas on the 8th bhumi, not before.

"If one attains deep acceptance of the nonorigination of things,
One will receive the Buddhas' prediction of enlightenment."
(Avatamsaka Sutra, ch 12, p 335, tr Cleary)

Once one gains this patience,
One immediately receives the prediction:
"You will definitely become a buddha."
It is then that one achieves "irreversibility."
(Nagarjuna: http://www.kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Bsam-Vas_excerpts/Bsam-vas_X-102_X-06.pdf, v 31)

Queequeg said:

This is a declaration that arhats have Buddhanature - a view that is not universally affirmed in Mahayana

Astus wrote:

The last group to challenge universal buddha-nature were those of the <http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/schools/faxiang.html> school, and that position was not particularly popular even in their best days.

Queequeg said:

If your Buddhanature is not pointed out to you, how do you know you have it and that it is something to develop?

Astus wrote:

Actually, there are sutras that explicitly teach tathagatagarbha, and compared to them, the Lotus Sutra is a rather provisional teaching that may (or may not) imply universal buddha-nature. As it has been mentioned here before, there is a Yogacara commentary on it that explains how the Lotus Sutra is not in favour of tathagatagarbha.

Queequeg said:

2. You're insinuating that I'm talking about Buddhahood without effort. I never made such a statement. That said, Buddhahood is natural and inevitable for all of us. The question is now or later? Or much much later?

Astus wrote:

If it is inevitable, it does not matter what anyone does, and that qualifies for happening without effort, unless the indication is that eventually everybody will want to become a buddha, i.e. gains bodhicitta automatically, again, without effort. Since samsara is without beginning, there had already been a literally infinite time to develop the will for ultimate enlightenment, but apparently it did not happen.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 3rd, 2017 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Queequeg said:

Have you read the Lotus Sutra? The first prediction is Sariputra. Then the rest of the Arhat assembly. Monks, nuns, then Devadatta, the Dragon King's Daughter...

Astus wrote:

And that's how that prediction is in conflict with how prediction of buddhahood is taught elsewhere. If the message is that no matter what, everyone will definitely become a buddha, then that is a view contradicting the meaning of the teaching itself. If it is simply the affirmation that there is the possibility of becoming a buddha, then it is not really a prediction. So, it is more likely just another confirmation of the one vehicle model where sravakas will switch to the bodhisattva path. But that does not mean that everyone possesses a buddha-nature, nor that all beings will necessarily attain buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 3rd, 2017 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Does *any* process exist independently of mind? Or are all processes -- entities that exist over a period of time rather than in the present moment -- products of human memory/thought connecting dots that aren't connected independently of mind?

I guess this gets into the notion of continuity: Is anything continuous? Does anything flow? Or is continuity/flow an attribute mind *adds* to actuality? Is reality like a movie: discontinuous frames that appear to run together: this this this this this this? If it is always nothing other than one endless this (now) ... then how can anything actually change, evolve, grow, decay independently of a mind that is imputing these qualities to

it?

Astus wrote:

It is good to know a bit of <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abhidharma/> first of all, as that defines a number of basic elements of Buddhist teachings. The two relevant concepts here are dharma and moment (kshana). Dharmas are what everything is made of, that is, the seeming reality are all the things and events, while the true reality is only dharmas. One of the elements of the seeming reality is permanence, where something appears to endure for consecutive moments. Therefore, the existence of continuity, of processes, is acceptable only as a worldly view, a mistaken perception of deluded beings. And when we get to Madhyamaka, even the momentary coming and going of dharmas is considered illusory.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 4th, 2017 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Primordial Buddha: A Reprise

Content:

Malcolm said:

Even the afflictions of the mind are naturally pure.

Astus wrote:

"The mind, Mañjuśrī, is empty of a self and what belongs to a self; such is its nature. This is called peace. Thoroughly understanding that the mind is empty, one does not run toward dharmas. Thus it is called utter peace.

Awakening, Mañjuśrī, is by nature luminous, because the mind is by nature luminous; that is why it is said to be luminous by nature. The nature is not afflicted; it is the same as space, it has the nature of space, it goes together with space, it is comparable to space. The nature is utterly luminous."

(<http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-047-002/translation>)

"Where one takes notice, there is defilement, so it has been revealed;

The non-apprehension of I and Mine has been called purification.

But there is herein no one who is defiled or who is cleansed.

Then the Bodhisattva has understood the perfection of wisdom."

(RGSG 22.7, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 4th, 2017 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

Wayfarer said:

However, dharmas are the elements or constituents of experience, are they not? That is the sense in which they are different from atoms as conceived by materialists, because atoms are constituents of objects.

Astus wrote:

Yes, dharmas are the elements (or rather categories) of experience, but there are other things (the formations disjunct from mind, i.e. *citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra* 心不相應行) called dharmas as well, for instance the "sentence/phrase" (*padakāya* 句身) is a dharma in the Sautrantika and the Yogacara systems, just as "speed/swiftness" (*jāva* 勢速) and "acquirement/obtainment" (*prāpti* 得).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 5th, 2017 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Differences between Tibetan and Zen Buddhism other than Vajrayana practices?

Content:

hyperpuppy said:

So with these different doctrines making it to different cultures, what would you say are the biggest differences that came out of that that make Tibetan sutrayana significantly different from East Asian teachings?

Astus wrote:

Tibetans focus more on treatises, where the basis are Indian works further explained by Tibetan commentators. E.g. the Chariot of the Dakpo Kagyu Siddhas is the VIII Karmapa commentary on the *Madhyamakavatara* (part of it translated as <http://www.shambhala.com/the-moon-of-wisdom-2693.html>, and a summary by the IX Karmapa as <http://www.shambhala.com/the-karmapa-s-middle-way.html>). Because of taking Vajrayana as the direct and practical way, it is a common view that sutrayana studies are only a theoretical matter.

East Asian Buddhism focuses more on the sutras and use treatises of East Asian origin. For instance, one of the primary sources of *Prajnaparamita* study in Korean Buddhism is the <http://www.acmuller.net/articles/ogahae-oxford.html> that contains five commentaries on the Diamond Sutra (by Zongmi, Huineng, Fu Dashi, Yefu Daochuan, and Yuzhang Zongjing) collected and commented on by Gihwa. Reading, reciting, copying, memorising, and contemplating sutras are important and common practices that not only generate merit but also wisdom.

So, the differences between the two are not only exegetical but also substantial. That is, different scriptures studied in different ways.

hyperpuppy said:

When it comes to meditation, I seem to do better focusing on a leaf or doing loving-kindness meditation (Tibetan center) than watching my breath (Korean temple).

Astus wrote:

You can use other objects of meditation in Korean Buddhism as well.

hyperpuppy said:

I do find some of the more mystical-sounding aspects of the Tibetan beliefs difficult. I'm

willing to admit that I don't know everything, and willing to be convinced, but at this point I do find some of it pretty difficult to believe.

Astus wrote:

May not have encountered them yet, but East Asian Buddhism has practically as many "mystical-sounding aspects" as Tibetan Buddhism.

hyperpuppy said:

I like the more structured nature of the Tibetan training.

Astus wrote:

That can be an important element, since structured education is usually restricted to Buddhist universities in East Asia (see e.g.

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=0010&wr_id=154&page=35, although for instance <http://www.kwanumzen.org/wp-content/uploads/DT-Training-Guide1.pdf> are supposed to be familiar with a number of basic teachings, I don't know if there is actually any form of training there for them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 8th, 2017 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza and Mahamudra

Content:

passel said:

I have a strong hunch Kobun Chino practiced some mahamudra, and in China, Garma Chang, CM Chen, Nan-Huai Chin and Yin Shi Zi all did at least a bit. Sheng yen also seems to have had some exposure to it and refers to it a little in his books.

Astus wrote:

John Crook, a disciple of Sheng-yen, did practise and teach Mahamudra. Anzan Hoshin of the WWZC has also published a Mahamudra manual. On the other side, Ken McLeod implemented some Zen teachings into his courses.

passel said:

One real tangible benefit of mahamudra is that it preserves a whole body of very practical, explicit instruction that is hard to come by in western zen contexts. It absolutely exists in non western zen, but it gets lost in translation.

Astus wrote:

Do you have examples? It seems to me Zen - not just Soto - is intentionally without gradual instructions, although this is apparently not understood by many nowadays. One can actually find a good amount of them in the works of Zhiyi and others. It is no accident that one of the first zazen manuals (that was eventually used by Dogen to compose his own) refers one to other works: "as it is explained in the Śūramgama-sūtra, in the Tiantai Practice of Śamatha and Vipāśyanā (Tiantai zhiguanfamen) by Zhiyi (538–597), and in the Manual of Practice and Realization (Xiuzhengyi) by Guifeng (Zongmi, 780–841)." (Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 257)

passel said:

The mahamudra instructions can really give you something to work with on a sesshin, though, that zen instructions may not.

Astus wrote:

It sounds somewhat misguided to go to a Soto sesshin and try to use Mahamudra teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 8th, 2017 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Retroactivity of Awakening

Content:

Astus wrote:

Two basic terms would need to be clarified first: what is awakening and what one is awakened to. And the simplest answer seems to be that awakening is the removal of defilements and one is awakened to emptiness. Then the solution to the original question is that there is a point in time when defilements are removed, while the truth of emptiness is valid at any time.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

the extent to which the process of me that I feel is so real is or is not actually real.

Astus wrote:

Whatever one feels is a feeling, a thought. Both feelings and thoughts are impermanent. One moment it's there, in the next moment one is thinking about breakfast. But what can keep one circling about an idea is this assumption that it is meaningful, it is real, it is important. And this superimposition of existence is the ignorance that results in dissatisfaction. Like in this case of searching for certainty.

rachmiel said:

Do I exist in relation to what has come before and is likely to come after? Am I a slice of a continuous process, evolution? Or am I just this, then this, then this, this, this, this ... and the continuous process I feel just the product of a perfervid imagination connecting dots that are, in actuality, not connected?

Astus wrote:

Even the dot of the present moment is a product of imagination, how much more a whole line connecting millions of illusory dots.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 7:38 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

If I drop a glass, and it falls ... am I merely imagining a faux-process of a glass falling? Or am I experiencing a real process as "filtered" through my visual system?

Astus wrote:

Let's analyse this a bit. "If I drop a glass"

if - that is already hypothetical, so it's clearly imagined

I - there is no substantial self to be found, so it is imagined

drop - without a self there can be no agent, and without an agent there can be no action, so it is imagined

a - no singular entity can be identified, so it is imagined

glass - what is called a glass is an assembly of components, but when the components are analysed as well, there is nothing substantial found, so it is imagined

If your question is whether there are real things beyond one's experience or not, that is a question based on an unfounded idea, since it is impossible to relate to anything that is not experienced.

If your question is whether time/process is made of distinct moments or not, then since neither past nor future exists, and the present cannot be identified as anything whatsoever, neither processes nor moments can really exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Afaiu this is pretty much what Kant said about phenomena (experience) and noumena (real things). Any talk of noumena is purely speculative. For all we know noumena (if they exist) are in themselves so utterly alien to our sensorium and brains that our wildest imaginations don't come anywhere near close to being able to "envision" them. And, as Magister Ludi said: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." I guess I'm prone to not taking his advice!

Astus wrote:

However, there is a very important difference here between the philosophies of Kant (and Husserl), and Buddhism. The reason Buddhism focuses on personal experience in the form of the five aggregates and six sensory areas, or simply consciousness, is because that's where attachments occur, that's where the views of I and my occur, and that's where suffering occurs. It is not a question about "what is real?", it is the question about "how to attain liberation from suffering?". In Buddhist doctrine there is nothing

else beyond experience, there are no noumena, only phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I generally agree with you, and was going to make a similar point, but I'm a bit hesitant about 'nothing else beyond experience'. I would like to think Buddhist terms such as dharmadhatu and dharmakaya denote a higher reality and not simply the 'absence of experience'; not something phenomenal, but also not nothing.

Astus wrote:

A valid issue, since normally nirvana is considered a different category, an uncompounded dharma. The reason I say that there is only experience is twofold. On the one hand, awakening is a temporary experience. On the other, there is no emptiness, no dharmadhatu, no nirvana separate from experiences, since it is the nature of experiences. Positing any reality outside of the realm of experiences means that it cannot be experienced, nor can ever be known or used, consequently it is nothing more than an irrelevant and baseless assumption.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Because the doctrine serves the singleminded goal of ending suffering, and going into that which might or might not lie beyond phenomena was thought by the Buddha to work against this goal.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. Although it is true that one should not lose sight of the goal, it doesn't mean that there is some general aversion towards philosophical questions. In fact, one could say that Buddhism represents the highest philosophy, according to Buddhists of course.

rachmiel said:

if what you're after is "the truth" ... consequences be damned! ... Buddhist doctrine will only take you so far.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is the truth, the Dharma.

rachmiel said:

Are there Buddhist philosophers who have explored the realm of that which might lie beyond phenomena/experience? If so, are they seen as rebellious upstart delusional

hippie kooks by traditional Buddhists?

Astus wrote:

Buddhists debated with almost everyone else all over Asia, so they did argue against such ideas like the creator, the ultimate self, the ultimate matter, fate, etc. In other words, those who assume to know something beyond phenomena are simply wrong, mistaken, and deluded.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Hasn't it been argued that by refusing to answer the famed 10/14 metaphysical questions, Buddha was either hiding part of the truth or shutting the door to open inquiry into it ... presumably for soteriological reasons?

Astus wrote:

You might want to read some teachings from the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#sn44> where it becomes clear that they are undeclared basically because they are question based on false premises, and such premises are refuted through the teachings of no-self and dependent origination.

In the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html> the Buddha says that he did not teach everything he knows, because he taught only what is conducive to liberation. However, it should not be misinterpreted, as if metaphysics had somehow been excluded, but one should consider all sorts of knowledge here, like agriculture, military, arts, literature, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Shikantaza and Mahamudra

Content:

Matylda said:

In the past it was done for political reasons as we see the history of Buddhist religious institutions in different countries.. there was much to gain.. power and property. But today it is rather an expression of emotional confusion, it does not reflect understanding dharma...

All, zen, mahamudra, dzogchen, tantra, theravada serve people seeking liberation.. we should respect them highly, and give no ear to any criticism...

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2017 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

this "No-one no-thing is ultimately behind the curtain" view might just turn my cozy little world completely upside down.

Astus wrote:

"Illusion-like are all dharmas,

Yet the illusion itself cannot be found."

(<http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-047-002/translation>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 10th, 2017 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Is there no solace in Buddhism ... no "happily ever after" ... not even any ground on which to firmly plant your feet?

Astus wrote:

Abiding in any appearance is samsara.

"Not to dwell anywhere or on anything means not to dwell on good or evil, existence or non-existence, within or without or on the middle, nor on concentration nor dispersion, and neither to dwell on the void nor on the non-void. This is the meaning of "not dwelling anywhere or on anything". Just this alone is real abiding. This stage of achievement is also the non-abiding Mind, and the non-abiding Mind is the Buddha Mind."

(<http://ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 10th, 2017 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

Astus, what does this mean: "Just this alone is real abiding." ?

Astus wrote:

Preceding the previously quoted section:

Q: Where does the mind dwell in its real abode?

A: Dwelling nowhere is its real abode.

Q: What is dwelling nowhere?

A: It is the mind not dwelling anywhere or on anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 10th, 2017 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

Wayfarer said:

the notion that 'awakening is a temporary experience' doesn't actually square with the teachings in some important respects

Astus wrote:

In what respects? Awakening happens as a result of the path, and it happens only once.

Wayfarer said:

'Come to the end of craving' is nowhere described in terms of 'a temporary experience'.

Astus wrote:

It can only end once, not any more. That is quite temporary.

Wayfarer said:

How is that different from naturalism or positivism? And where does 'the unborn, the uncreated, the unfabricated' stand in relation to phenomenal domain?

Astus wrote:

Appearances themselves are unborn, uncreated, unfabricated.

"Observing all things

To be without inherent existence,

Whatever their appearances of origin and disappearance,

Being just provisional descriptions ,

All things are unborn,

All things are imperishable:

To one who can understand this

The Buddha will always be manifest.

The nature of things is fundamentally empty and null,

With no grasping and no vision.

The emptiness of inherent nature is Buddha;

It cannot be assessed in thought.

If one knows the inherent nature

Of all things is like this,

This person will not be affected

By any afflictions .

Ordinary people seeing things

Just pursue the forms

And don't realize things are formless:

Because of this they don't see Buddha."

(Flower Ornament Scripture, ch 14, p 373)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 11th, 2017 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: The doctrine of no-self - teaching device or metaphysical truth?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The teaching of no-self is that of the explicit (nitārtha) and ultimate truth (paramarthasatya). So, in terms of teachings, it could not really be clearer that it is a truth of the highest category. At the same time, the reason some might be reluctant to be too affirmative, is because even the correct view, when grasped at, is a hindrance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 12th, 2017 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: What are the Difference between Arhats, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas?

Content:

kirtu said:

Southern School practitioners do however see Arhatship and Praetyakabuddhahood as full buddhhood.

Astus wrote:

Theravada maintains the difference between arhatship and buddhahood in terms of abilities. While Mahayana also agrees that arhats are free from samsara, just like buddhas.

It is more interesting to consider that with the teaching of buddhahood in this life, the difference between arhats and buddhas practically disappears.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 14th, 2017 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: What are the Difference between Arhats, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas?

Content:

thecowisflying said:

How so?

Astus wrote:

In brief, the buddha-bodies and abilities are identified with the nature of mind, thus no need for all the magical displays normally attributed to buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 14th, 2017 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: zen is hard or easy, for a lot or few ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

One day, while the Layman was meditating in his sitting hut, he suddenly cried out, "It's hard, hard, hard! And I've put ten coats of linseed oil on this platform, too!"

His wife said, "It's easy, easy, easy! Just turn your eyes to the floor, lower your feet to it, and be on your way!"

Ling-chao said, "It's neither hard nor easy! The mind of the Patriarchs is in every blade of grass!"

(The Sayings of Layman P'ang, p 113, tr James Green)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: zen is hard or easy, for a lot or few ?

Content:

mansurhirbi87 said:

i guess i should be more precise : do you think is it the best way for everybody. it looks like to me that it's hard and for few people

Astus wrote:

Few people care hard enough to bother to comprehend the very simple teaching of Zen. So the rest remain confused.

The closing paragraph of Huangbo's Essentials of the Transmission of Mind (from Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 42):

Make effort! Make effort! Of the thousand or ten thousand people in this school, only three or five [have really understood Buddhism]. If you do not take this seriously then you will suffer for it eventually (lit., "there will be a day when you experience a calamity"). Therefore it is said, "Be diligent in taking care of this life, and how could you suffer misfortune in eons to come?"

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 4:23 AM

Title: Re: if we are Buddhas are we the 3 Kayas

Content:

Minobu said:

but is it possible if we are Buddhas our Sambhogakaya body could be guiding us. guiding us....using the Dharma kaya body to aid in Samsara to put things in our path ...thoughts, and such...maybe a new teacher...maybe finding a site online from which to learn from...We are not Nirmana kaya obviously but if Buddhas see only Buddhas what are they seeing in this Samsaric realm.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is what guides beings, that's how they're stuck in samsara. This is what the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Nid%C4%81nas of dependent origination show us.

There is no outer force or entity that can manipulate a being's karma. Accepting such an external influence nullifies the meaning of karma and the path of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 4:26 AM

Title: Re: zen is hard or easy, for a lot or few ?

Content:

mansurhirbi87 said:

1 - What means : "The mind of the Patriarchs is in every blade of grass!" in you first quotation ?

Astus wrote:

The truth is ubiquitous, all appearances are already such.

mansurhirbi87 said:

2- be diligent would be a condition to not suffer in the eons to come ? Did i get correctly your second quotation ?

Astus wrote:

Yes. If one is diligent now and gains insight, then the cause of future suffering is removed.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: if we are Buddhas are we the 3 Kayas

Content:

DGA said:

I'm reminded of the parable of the herbs in the Lotus Sutra, where Buddha Shakyamuni explains that he is always guiding beings to Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Supposing that there is such a guidance makes no difference, as it's still up to each person to cultivate the way. In other words, a defiled mind sees only a defiled world.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 7:46 AM

Title: Re: if we are Buddhas are we the 3 Kayas

Content:

Minobu said:

if we are all Buddhas...can i communicate with my Sambhogakaya Body ?

Astus wrote:

I think the meaning of sambhogakaya is somewhat unclear in that question. Sambhoga means enjoyment, it is the resultant pleasure of the infinite merits accumulated over

the bodhisattva path, and it is the form of a buddha that appears for bodhisattvas only, that is, how buddhas are encountered in meditation. As for the other meaning, as the awareness quality of the nature of mind, it is present in every being, so if you want to communicate with it, you can do that the moment you stop pursuing concepts.

Minobu said:

but if we are the Buddha ,Buddha sees us to be...

Astus wrote:

An ordinary object can be seen in many ways by different people, or even by one person. And just because one sees an orange as tasty, it doesn't mean that another sees the same way. A buddha sees beings as buddhas, but beings see a buddha as a being.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 16th, 2017 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

So far on this forum, I've quoted Shinran and commentators of his work in saying that Amida is the primordial Buddha in the work of Shinran. At this point, would it help if I quoted the Monshu himself?

Astus wrote:

If Amida is the primordial buddha in the works of Shinran, please prove that by a few quotes from the works of Shinran himself.

Dharma Flower said:

Even if Shinran himself doesn't use the term "primordial Buddha," the article from Alfred Bloom that I've quoted above proves everything I've been saying regarding Amida being the Eternal Buddha in Shinran's writings.

Astus wrote:

It does not prove that Shinran taught that, it only shows that there is at least one person who interprets it that way. That is a big difference.

But to give an orthodox answer on the matter, here is what the

<http://www.nembutsu.info/standard/amida.htm> has to say on the matter:

"Amida Buddha is a Sambhogakaya; he established forty-eight vows and by his practice, brought them to consummation, and attained Buddhahood."

"Dharmakaya absolutely transcends space and time. It cannot be grasped through man's senses; it exists beyond human conception, words, and intellection. Religion, however, requires something closer to humanity; something more concrete. And that concrete manifestation is the Sambhogakaya known as Amida Buddha in Shinshu."

Dharma Flower said:

I don't expect non-Shinshu Buddhists to agree with the teachings of Shinran or to convert away from their school or sect.

Astus wrote:

Shinran's teaching is very simple and straightforward, not complicated at all: if one has faith, one attains birth. The only arguable matter in that for other Mahayana followers is whether faith is sufficient for that or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2017 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: "I am God" sentiments and Sambhogakāya

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

Is it possible that certain ascetics and spiritualists ... are able to perceive a portion of their Buddha-nature

Astus wrote:

No. This is a misinterpretation of what buddha-nature is, thinking of it as if it were some sort of state, entity, or soul.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2017 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: "I am God" sentiments and Sambhogakāya

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

I am assuming an incomplete and imperfect revelation of Buddha-nature, as per DN 1

Astus wrote:

That is not a revelation of buddha-nature, but the delusion of Brahma. Not only outsiders and ordinary beings do not see anything of buddha-nature, but even sravakas and beginner bodhisattvas have nothing to do with it. See what the Nirvana Sutra (tr Yamamoto) says on the matter:

"O good man! Such Bodhisattvas may well reach the stage of the ten soils, and yet they cannot clearly see the Buddha-Nature. How could sravakas and pratyekabuddhas well see [it]?"

(ch 12, p 110)

"O good man! If a Bodhisattva abides in the ninth soil, he sees that a thing has a nature. Because of this view of the world, he does not see the Buddha-Nature. If the Buddha-Nature is seen, there will be no seeing of a nature in any thing. When he practises this samadhi of the All-Void, he does not see any nature in all things. As he does not see this, he sees the Buddha-Nature."

(ch 32, p 361)

"All beings journey along with the 12 links of interdependence, which they do not see or know. Not seeing or knowing, there is no ending and no beginning. The Bodhisattvas of the stage of the ten abodes see only the end, but they do not see the beginning. The All-Buddha-World-Honoured One sees the beginning and the end. Thus do all Buddhas clearly see the Buddha-Nature.

O good man! All beings are unable to see the 12 links of interdependence. Therefore, they ride on the wheel of transmigration. O good man! Just as the silkworm makes a cocoon, gains birth, and dies by itself, so do things proceed with all beings. As they do not see the Buddha-Nature, they generate karma out of defilement and repeat births and deaths, just as a person bounces a ball. O good man! That is why I say in the sutra: "One who sees the 12 links of interdependence sees Dharma; one who sees Dharma sees the Buddha. "The Buddha is none other than the Buddha-Nature." "Why so? Because all Buddhas make this their own nature."

(ch 33, p 369)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2017 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: "I am God" sentiments and Sambhogakāya

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

And I am wondering if such an incomplete/lacking realization, as per DN1, or at least my understanding thereof, can be conducive to "Brahma-delusions".

Astus wrote:

Are you asking if believing oneself to be some sort of deity can result in a birth as that deity? Then the answer is likely that belief in itself is insufficient, one needs more than faith to establish the relevant causes (e.g. the four immeasurables, aka. brahma-viharas).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2017 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: "I am God" sentiments and Sambhogakāya

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

No, I am asking if there is precedent in Buddhavacana or oral teachings that an ascetic of high attainment can mistake his own Buddha-nature, or more particularly his latent sambhogakāya, for divinity, and proclaim that his is "God/Brahma", out of delusion.

Astus wrote:

In a sense everyone mistakes buddha-nature for one's self, because the nature of mind is buddha-nature. But as long as one's view of the mind is mistaken, it is not seeing the buddha-nature, but seeing a self. So the sixth song of the <http://keithdowman.net/books/flight-of-the-garuda.html> says:

"Mind", this universal concept, this most significant of words, being no single entity, manifests as the gamut of pleasure and pain in samsara and nirvana. There are as many beliefs about it as there are approaches to Buddhahood. It has innumerable synonyms. In the vernacular it is "I"; some Hindus call it "the Self"; the Disciples say "self-less individual"; the followers of Mind-only call it simply "mind"; some call it "perfect insight"; some call it "Buddha-nature"; some call it "the Magnificent Stance" (Mahamudra); some call it "the Middle Way"; some call it "the cosmic seed"; some call it "the reality-continuum"; some call it "the universal ground"; some call it "ordinary consciousness". Since the synonyms of "mind", the labels we apply to it, are countless, know it for what it really is.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 20th, 2017 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

The difference is that I, via memory and thought, connect these discontinuous ephemeral objects into a continuous persistent story — I, the world, the flow of time, the process — that I take to be the true nature of reality, whereas the enlightened person doesn't.

Astus wrote:

The difference is in identification, in attachment. If an enlightened person could not comprehend processes that would mean he'd be unable to function as a living being. The contemplation of rise and fall and of momentariness are meant to eliminate the false assumptions of permanence.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 1:28 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

It pretty much always comes down to attachment (grasping/aversion) doesn't it?

Astus wrote:

"The Supreme Way is difficult

Only for those who pick and choose.

Simply let go of love and hate;

The Way will fully reveal itself."

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=57)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 2:15 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

rachmiel said:

Awareness of an experience (i.e. knowing subjectively the "experience" of the experience) rises and falls co-dependently with the experience itself?

Astus wrote:

This answers the question:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.093.than.html>

Consciousness and its object are mutually dependent, hence the six types of consciousnesses in Buddhism. Also, when there is nothing that one is conscious of, that is the absence of consciousness, and if that were called consciousness, then unconsciousness is consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

rachmiel said:

Kills it! Exactly what I was looking for.

Astus wrote:

There are quite a few teachings like that from the Buddha, as it's a standard description of the 18 dhatus.

Look at this one too:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.193.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Question about processes

Content:

rachmiel said:

It takes 10 seconds to understand the logic behind not getting caught in preferring this vs. that. It takes years, decades, lives to live this understanding.

Astus wrote:

Fortunately there is a path to do that.

As for how attachment is the problem:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.191.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.115.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 6:18 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

To extend the analogy - it's not that there is no heartwood, but that it's not to be found in the six sense spheres, any more than heartwood is to be found in a banana tree.

Astus wrote:

That is an incorrect extension on the analogy. It assumes that there is a seventh sense, but there is no such thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 8:01 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

What do you think the import of 'heartwood' is? Why is it part of the analogy?

Astus wrote:

It represents the assumption of a real, solid, inner self that is behind all experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I don't read it that way, I read it as: 'don't search for what is of value where it's not to be found'. Don't search for the heartwood of a banana tree, as there isn't any. But doesn't mean there isn't heartwood.

Astus wrote:

And where is that heartwood, where is that self, if not in the five aggregates and six sensory realms?

Wayfarer said:

There are negative and positive approaches to Nirvāṇa, and the negative approach is preponderant in many scriptures. But there also are positive descriptions of Nirvāṇa as blissful, at peace, released. But that is not to assert a 'solid inner self behind all experiences', which was the idea of 'eternalism', but what is beyond existence and non-existence.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana means the extinction of craving, the extinction of attachment. One can rightly call it the ultimate peace and happiness. But as long as one conceives that there is a

self somewhere, or that there is a special realm of nirvana, craving and attachment remains.

Wayfarer said:

As the Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra states: It is not existent--even the Victorious Ones do not see it.

It is not nonexistent--it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.

This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.

Astus wrote:

That is nothing other than "form is emptiness, emptiness is form", that is, the aggregates appear (existent) without self (non-existent). To give a comparison, in Buddhism there are the five aggregates and there is no core, no self to find anywhere, while in Vedanta there are the five sheaths and beyond them there is a self to be found.

As for the Mahamudra view, it does not teach anything different from what is taught in Madhyamaka. And especially it does not teach anything like Vedanta that assumes a core, a self.

Here is Chokyi Nyima's commentary to clarify:

All phenomena are the illusory display of mind.

Mind is devoid of 'mind' - empty of any entity.

Empty and yet unceasing, it manifests as anything whatsoever.

The view is that the essence of mind is empty. What we usually call 'mind' is that which thinks, feels and conceives all different kinds of ideas about everything. In the second line, devoid of mind means that mind is without concreteness; no shape, color or material substance can be found. Saying that the essence of mind is empty means that it cannot be established as existent. However, it is not blank nothingness like space. While empty in essence, it still manifests unceasingly and unobstructedly in multifarious ways.

(Song of Karmapa, p 58)

It is not existent since even the victorious ones do not see it.

It is not nonexistent since it is the basis of samsara and nirvana.

When we try to examine our mind, what do we find? We do not find a 'thing' which we can think of or perceive. Beyond being an object of investigation it is not existent, and therefore lies beyond the extreme of existence, of eternalism. But on the other hand, we have various sorts of feelings and thoughts, as well as our sense organs, which link objects and consciousness together. Different sense perceptions occur; we see forms, hear sounds and so forth. So because of perception, mind is not nonexistent. In this way the extreme of the mind as a complete nothing is also avoided.

Usually we perceive our world as very real and concrete, full of mountains and houses and roads. Our habit of holding on in this way makes the world seem very solid. But if we closely examine our perceptions, we find that experience occurs, yet it is devoid of any selfentity. In other words, the mind is beyond the extremes of both existence and

nonexistence.

...

Mind is not existent since even the perfectly enlightened ones, the buddhas who see everything in the three times distinctly and precisely, have not seen it as being a concrete thing of a certain size, color or shape. Therefore we cannot say that the mind exists. But as the basis of samsara and nirvana, in the sense that its nature is to manifest perception, thoughts and feelings, we cannot say it is nonexistent.
(p 65-66)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I don't think the heartwood is 'a self', but it is 'that which is not subject to arising and ceasing'.

Astus wrote:

Is there such a thing that does not arise and cease?

Wayfarer said:

Phenomena are dependently-arisen, but dependently arisen is not the same as non-existent. That I take to be the 'middle way'.

Astus wrote:

Nobody said that dependent origination is non-existent. Dependent origination is exactly what phenomena arising and ceasing means. In other words, there is no unchanging element anywhere.

Wayfarer said:

What does 'it' refer to?

Astus wrote:

It refers to mind. And mind is dependently originated.

Wayfarer said:

It is not self, but it is also not nothing. No thing \neq nothing.

Astus wrote:

Again, there are the aggregates, there are the six sensory realms, and they are dependently originated. It is not nothing, and nobody said that it is. And just like a banana tree, the aggregates are without a core, without anything independent.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2017 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But there is 'the unconditioned, the unbornd, the unmade', which doesn't arise and cease. ... the extinction of desire (rāgakkhayo) the extinction of hatred (dosakkhayo), the extinction of illusion (mohakkhayo)

Astus wrote:

It is the extinction of the three poisons that is called the unconditioned. It is not a new state or being, but simply the end of attachment. However, this ending, this absence is no different from other kinds of absences in being unconditioned, hence cessation without analysis (apratisaṃkhyā-nirodha) is counted among unconditioned dharmas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2017 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Wayfarer is wary of nihilist readings of Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

What readings are those exactly? As I see it, saying that "appearances are empty" is the most positive message ever. That is because it eliminates the duality of conventional and ultimate reality. As long as an ultimate is proposed separately from appearances, one maintains an alienated approach that tries to get rid of everything except one, and that is indeed nihilistic.

Wayfarer said:

I read here on this forum, the saying that 'Samsara has no beginning, but it has an end. Nirvāṇa has no end, but it has a beginning'.
Is that an authentic saying?

Astus wrote:

Yes, in the sense that a being is bound to samsara (no beginning) until liberation is attained (end), and once one is free (beginning) one stays free indefinitely (no end). That is similar to someone who has no children, so the person's ancestors go back in time indefinitely, but once the person is dead there is no more continuation of the lineage any more.

No, in the sense that "The realm of sentient beings is the dharma body; the dharma body is the realm of sentient beings." (<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra14.html>), that is, nirvana and samsara are not two different things, all appearances are originally unborn.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2017 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

your other statements might be interpreted to mean that 'ultimately there is no Nirvāṇa'

Astus wrote:

There is no nirvana, nor samsara. But, as Dushun begins his discussion of the Flower Ornament Meditation:

"So first it is necessary to strike down conceptual attachments; only then can you enter complete illumination. If anyone sees immediately that all things, like material form, come from conditions, this is at once the conditional origination of the universe-it is no longer necessary to use the preceding techniques. But those who are not able to enter this stage directly should start from the beginning and proceed to the end, questioning everything one by one, to bring about the cessation of confusion and the end of delusion, to eliminate things, cut off words, see the essential nature, and bring about understanding-only then can this be considered getting the meaning."

(Entry Into the Inconceivable, p 62)

It is the goal of every Buddhist school to provide a path to liberation, and that path has various stages. And it can be difficult for a while to see how the teachings on emptiness and no-self can be anything but nihilistic. So the Astasahasrika (tr Conze) says:

"A Bodhisattva who does not become afraid when this deep and perfect wisdom is being taught should be recognized as not lacking in perfect wisdom, as standing at the irreversible stage of Bodhisattva, standing firmly, in consequence of not taking his stand anywhere."

(1.2)

and

"The Bodhisattvas who have newly set out in the vehicle should beware of being afraid when they have heard this exposition."

(6.3)

And the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html:

"You should know that if someone hears the teaching of this scripture and is neither shocked, afraid, or alarmed, this person is extremely rare."

(ch 14)

Wayfarer said:

But, in the absence of that non-dual perspective, declaring that Nirvāṇa and samsara are the same, results in a flattening or collapse of the perspective. It amounts to saying that the ordinary state is the only state there is. That is why I had been told it amounts to 'discarding the ladder before it's been climbed'.

Astus wrote:

One learns the non-dual perspective through contemplating the inseparability of samsara and nirvana. After all, even "non-duality" is still a conventional concept. And you are right in saying that grasping at the idea of aimlessness incorrectly is detrimental to one's progress. But that shouldn't stop one to grasp it correctly.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2017 at 7:56 AM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

to say there is 'no Nirvāṇa or samsara' seems to reject the whole basis of the path.

Surely the path is no longer needed by those who have crossed it, but just as surely that doesn't apply to most of us.

Astus wrote:

Do you also object to saying that there is no self? Because it is really the same. It could be reasoned that since there is no self, there is nobody to attain anything, so there is no path. However, the teaching of no self is meant to be learnt, understood, and realised, and that is how one can actually walk the path.

"'Buddha,' Bodhisattva,' 'perfect wisdom,' all these are mere words. And what they denote is something uncreated. It is as with the self. Although we speak of a 'self,' yet absolutely the self is something uncreated. Since therefore all dharmas are without ownbeing, what is that form, etc., which cannot be seized, and which is something uncreated? Thus the fact that all dharmas are without own-being is the same as the fact that they are uncreated."

(Astasahasrika 1.6, tr Conze)

Wayfarer said:

I think 'the uncompounded' or 'unfabricated' signifies a reality. When it is said 'there is an unborn, an unconditioned, were there no unborn, there would be no escape from the born, the conditioned' - I take this to be a true statement. Do you think it's not a true statement?

Astus wrote:

Uncompounded means emptiness, the absence of essence, the absence of self. Realising no self is how nirvana is attained, because that is when all attachments are eliminated. And as it is taught everywhere, all dharmas are without self, there has never been a self ever. This absence of self is not something beyond appearances, but appearances themselves are without a self. To propose that there are compounded appearances on one side and uncompounded emptiness on the other side, as if they were two separate realities, is tantamount to saying that compounded objects are self.

Wayfarer said:

What progress is required, if we are already arrived?

Astus wrote:

Has anything ever been permanent? No, things are already impermanent as they are. That doesn't mean one does not need to learn, understand, and realise impermanence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2017 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Quickie on the nature of "I"

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Well, that's what I'm wrestling with! This is why I am having the problem with nihilist interpretations.

Astus wrote:

It's still unclear what you call a nihilist interpretation. Neither conventional reality, nor dependent origination is denied. In fact, the only thing denied is an independent, self-sustaining permanent existence.

Wayfarer said:

I don't believe that 'anatta' means 'there is no self'. It means 'nothing is self'.

Astus wrote:

What is the difference? If nothing is a unicorn, there is no unicorn.

Wayfarer said:

'Emptiness' doesn't mean 'nothing exists'. It means everything exists contingently, or dependently.

Astus wrote:

There is no disagreement on that.

Wayfarer said:

But emptiness is not non-existence. Emptiness means, things (and self) neither exist, nor don't exist.

Astus wrote:

That sounds problematic. Emptiness, as a realisation, is none of the four propositions, because it is non-conceptual, and non-conceptual means not grasping, not identifying with any view as ultimate.

Wayfarer said:

If we deny the reality of self, samsara, Nirvāṇa, and appearances, then nothing is real, which is what 'nihilism' means - 'nihil' means 'nothing'. It is the opposite problem to 'eternalism'.

Astus wrote:

The two extreme views are eternalism (śāśvatavāda) and annihilationism (ucchedavāda). Eternalism stands for the view that something persists from one moment to another. Annihilationism stands for the view that something ceases to exist from one moment to another. The middle way is the teaching of dependent origination, where apparent phenomena lack substance. So, as above, nobody says that there is nothing, hence it is unclear what you call nihilism.

Wayfarer said:

As for 'all attachments being eliminated', that is not just a verbal formulation but an existential reality.

Astus wrote:

So it is.

Wayfarer said:

I have a mortgage, a dog, a wife, house, bills to pay, attachments aplenty. I would imagine that eliminating such attachments would constitute renunciation of those attachments.

Astus wrote:

Attachments are not in the object. And this is where the teaching of the unity of samsara and nirvana becomes a very practical matter.

Wayfarer said:

Now as for myself, I know that I don't perceive from that perspective.

Astus wrote:

You display right there an essential quality of the good practitioner: the honest, straightforward mind.

Wayfarer said:

My stage on the path is 'student' or 'hearer'. Maybe the Mahāyāna path is not for me! But I have to believe that there is a path.

Astus wrote:

There is always a path, it is what all the teachings are. Having doubts, difficulties, etc. is very much part of the path. Mahayana is not about being compassionate and wise, but about aspiring for those qualities.

Wayfarer said:

(Also, I wonder if there is a tendency to assume such a perspective, without necessarily having realised it in practice. Not for one minute that Ven Thubten Chodron would ever do such a thing.)

That's why the straightforward mind, introspection (meditation, mindfulness, reflection), and Dharma education are important, so that we don't mislead ourselves.
a defence of the reality of Nibbana

Astus wrote:

It is the third noble truth, the very goal of the path, the ultimate truth. How could it not be accepted as real? The question is not whether there is or is not nirvana, but the definition of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 27th, 2017 at 12:26 AM

Title: Re: Turning the light around (asraya-paravṛtti)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Turning the light to shine back (回光反照) does not really match the conversion of the basis (轉依 āsraya-paravṛtti).

First of all, conversion of the basis is explained in the Mahayanasamgraha as:

"The destruction of defilement by bodhisattvas is their nonabiding cessation. What are its characteristics? It is characterized by a twofold conversion of support whereby they definitively abandon defilement but not transmigration. Herein transmigration refers to the defiled aspect of the other-dependent pattern. Cessation refers to the purified aspect of the other-dependent pattern. The basic support refers to both these aspects of the purified and defiled other-dependent pattern. The conversion of support means that, when its counteragent arises, the other-dependent pattern forever alters its basic nature as the defiled aspect and forever realizes its purified aspect."

(The Summary of the Great Vehicle, BDK Edition, p 99)

As for turning the light around, in the Linjilu we find:

"The master said, "It is because you cannot stop your mind which runs on seeking everywhere that a patriarch said, 'Bah, superior men! Searching for your heads with your heads!' When at these words you turn your own light in upon yourselves and never seek elsewhere, then you'll know that your body and mind are not different from those of the patriarch-buddhas and on the instant have nothing to do—this is called 'obtaining the dharma.'"

(Record of Linji, p 28, tr Sasaki)

And as for the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana, it uses a another word (歸) and is between the two previous views:

為離念歸於真如，以念一切法令心生滅不入實智故。

(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T32n1666_001#0580b08)

"be free from their deluded thoughts and can return to Suchness; for if anyone thinks of anything [as real and absolute in its own right], he causes his mind to be [trapped] in samsara and consequently he cannot enter [the state filled with] true insight [i.e., enlightenment]."

(AFM, p 78, tr Hakeda)

若人修行一切善法，自然歸順真如法故。

(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T32n1666_001#0580c12)

"If a man practices all kinds of good deeds, he will naturally return to the principle of Suchness."

(AFM, p 81, tr Hakeda)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Konchog1 said:

The first clue is that in the Mahayana, Buddhas are described in positive term. They have this body, this mind, this wisdom, this realm, etc.

Astus wrote:

Most of the qualities describing the buddhas are from Hinayana.

Konchog1 said:

In the Hinayana, Arhats are described in negative terms. They are the burned out fire, they are spent etc.

Astus wrote:

There are also positive terms for them.

Konchog1 said:

When fire burns out it doesn't disappear. It returns to the passive state waiting for activation.

Astus wrote:

Are you proposing some sort of eternal fire hiding in a special realm? That is not the meaning of the metaphor, since once the fuel is burnt you cannot light it again.

Konchog1 said:

In the same way, Arhats free of karma are not reborn. They don't disappear, but abide in a passive state waiting for a cause of rebirth. Namely, Bodhicitta. Whereupon they gain all the positive qualities described in the Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

What state is it exactly where they abide? Arhats are free from all the realms of samsara, so they certainly do not wait for any rebirth, as there is no more cause of rebirth for them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapa said:

I understand that they take rebirth in Hinayana Pure Lands.

Astus wrote:

What is that? The pure abodes (suddhavasa) are where non-returners go, but arhats do not and cannot be born anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapa said:

Yes, they are born in the Suddhavasa

Astus wrote:

Those are the non-returners, not the arhats, who take birth there. Arhats have no afflictions to bind them to any birth, otherwise the whole existence of arhats is simply denied.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 10:09 PM

Title: Re: Can all religions be absorbed into the Buddhism?

Content:

Boomerang said:

Can we do the same thing with Jesus, Mohammad, Mahavira, maybe even any great philosopher or musician? Could we give them the benefit of the doubt and view them as if they were bodhisattvas teaching a non-Buddhist path for the benefit of beings with little faith? Can we believe that Abrahamic god is a bodhisattva, and Moses was one of his emanations?

Astus wrote:

It is called the path of humans and gods. Those religions and views that teach a somewhat ethical behaviour are recognised to be beneficial to some extent. For instance see Zongmi's discussion of accepting on that basis Taoism and Confucianism in his <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/zongmi.html#a>. Note, however, that it does not make those views Buddhist, nor anything conducive to liberation.

Boomerang said:

And viewing world teachers in this manner, could we take refuge in them the same way we take refuge in the traditional sangha of enlightened beings?

Astus wrote:

If one takes refuge in anything else but the Three Gems one is not a Buddhist. That is because taking refuge means upholding something as the ultimate authority and source

on the matter of liberation. No god or other being can provide that.

Boomerang said:

Those of us who lack omniscience may never know for sure if these beings were bodhisattvas. But if we choose to be optimistic and view them in this way, is our refuge pure?

Astus wrote:

It does not take omniscience to see if a doctrine accords with the Buddhadharma. As for being optimistic, that sounds rather like confused.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

As I said, Arhats CHOOSE to be reborn there.

Astus wrote:

Why would they choose any birth when the whole point of attaining arhatship is to be free from every forms of birth? If they were still attached to having some form of birth, they would be non-returners, who still could not let go of their clinging to the form and formless realms.

Tsongkhapafan said:

For them it is not the form realm of samsara but nirvana because they have abandoned delusion obstructions and so their subjective experience is completely different to Never-Returners.

Astus wrote:

And you base that on what scripture?

Tsongkhapafan said:

This is like a Buddha choosing to emanate in the human realm to teach Dharma; they are not human and do not have human experiences. Even though they appear to abide in the realms of samsara, it is not samsara for them.

Astus wrote:

Buddhas have non-abiding nirvana, furthermore, both buddhas and bodhisattvas have great compassion. Neither of those apply to arhats. So, why would an arhat do that?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Can all religions be absorbed into the Buddhism?

Content:

Boomerang said:

The Hindu doctrine is against Buddhadharma, but if we have faith in the sutras, that's only because Hindus aren't aware of what these gods actually believe.

Astus wrote:

The question is whether one believes that a deity is the creator of the world, lives eternally, and faith in said deity can bring oneself perpetual bliss and freedom. If one believes none of those things, then it fits the Buddhist doctrine.

Boomerang said:

But if someone else believes that Jesus understood emptiness, who am I to disagree?

Astus wrote:

It is very much irrelevant whether Jesus understood it or not. The question is whether oneself understands it or not.

Boomerang said:

The thing is, these people are already at my dharma center, so it's not like I can go in there thinking I'm so much smarter than everyone else. That's the type of attitude that sends people to the lower realms, isn't it? What should a dharma teacher do when they meet someone who is inspired by Jesus, and Shakyamuni, and maybe Ramana Maharshi too?

Astus wrote:

Being arrogant is one thing, reinterpreting another person's view is another. One can be aware that there are wrong views and still not make of it a superiority view. But calling a wrong view a correct one is only misleading oneself and others.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, 2017 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

They are not attached to rebirth or any form of rebirth which is why they are able to choose. The only object of abandonment of living beings is contaminated rebirth, not rebirth per se.

Astus wrote:

Rebirth is contaminated, because the root cause is ignorance/three poisons. As long as there is ignorance, there is birth. No ignorance, no birth. This is the basic teaching of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Nid%C4%81nas, also known as dependent origination.

Tsongkhapafan said:

Where do you say they exist?

Astus wrote:

That is the wrong question, as it assumes a self. Please check what the Buddha taught <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.002.than.html> about it.

Tsongkhapafan said:

The Hinayana Arhat's intention is to abide in a place where they can experience uninterrupted solitary peace.

Astus wrote:

The goal of the shravaka path is nirvana, the end of any kind of birth. That is because they recognise that every form of existence, no matter how heavenly, is impermanent, and what is impermanent is suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 2nd, 2017 at 2:26 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

Rebirth is not contaminated from its own side.

Astus wrote:

What is the cause of rebirth itself then, if not ignorance?

Tsongkhapafan said:

The root cause, according to the 12 dependent-related links, is dependent-related ignorance.

Astus wrote:

OK, so it is ignorance.

Tsongkhapafan said:

No ignorance, no contaminated rebirth but that doesn't mean that one can't have a pure rebirth.

Astus wrote:

What is the cause of rebirth if not ignorance?

Tsongkhapafan said:

Bodhisattva Arhats take rebirth in samsara with complete freedom and control (Tulkus) and beings take rebirth in a Buddha's Pure Land.

Astus wrote:

Tulku - nirmanakaya - illusory body, also called emanation body. That is not rebirth.

Tsongkhapafan said:

There is a self, even after nirvana - a merely imputed self.

Astus wrote:

Has it not been merely imputed before nirvana?

Tsongkhapafan said:

Nirvana is not the extinction of self, it's the abandonment of the deluded view of self. Arhats exist after nirvana is attained, otherwise do they simply cease to exist? If there is no self, there is no existence at all. Buddha's teaching on selflessness is not that there is no self at all.

Astus wrote:

If seeing the self as a mere imputation is the correct view, and not the deluded one, then since being an imputation means that it is imaginary - like when seeing a trunk as a human the human is merely imputed - then there has never actually been a self in any form but as a misconception. However, you seem to say that not only there is really a self - not as a mere imputation - but that it is eternal, since arhats exist forever. But of course arhats do not cease to exist, since there has never been a self to begin with, so there is nothing to cease.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 2nd, 2017 at 7:35 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

The cause of the Hinayana Foe Destroyer's rebirth in the Hinayana Pure Lands is the wish to enjoy solitary peace.

Astus wrote:

Why would an arhat have such a wish? While the arhat is alive he is already unaffected by anything and enjoys complete peace, i.e. nirvana, regardless of the circumstances. If there were still the delusion that any environment can provide peace, such a person would not be an arhat.

Tsongkhapafan said:

The idea that there is no self at all is very curious. Even Buddhas have an I - this is the defining characteristic of a person. The problem is imputing an inherently existent I where there is not one; we simply see the I as existing in a way in which it does not, so no-self does not mean no self at all.

Astus wrote:

Of the five aggregates which one is the merely imputed self that necessarily exists in your opinion?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 2nd, 2017 at 7:58 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That is because bodhisattvas are able to be voluntarily re-born - as the statement says - out of 'compassion and prayer' rather than being compelled by karma and klesa. But, nowhere does this statement say that Arhats are re-born anywhere, I had understood that the whole condition of the Arhat was 'no further re-birth'.

Astus wrote:

Arya-bodhisattvas have realised the emptiness of all appearances, so they are not bound by them any more. Arhats are also free from clinging to phenomena, so they are not bound by samsara either. The difference in the case of bodhisattvas, as you say, is that they are driven by bodhicitta. Since arhats do not have bodhicitta, there is no cause of birth at all. And that is why it is repeated in Mahayana scriptures that the most important thing is to have compassion for all beings, otherwise a bodhisattva strays to the path of sravakas and ends birth in nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 2nd, 2017 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

kirtu said:

the text quotes from Buton Rinchen Drup who explicitly states that Arhats are reborn in a pure realm and then later aroused by a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra mentions the apparitional/phantom city as a temporary rest for those with insufficient faith as a reference to sravakas.

"Knowing that they have reached nirvana
And attained arhatship, the Buddha immediately
Gathers the great assembly together
And teaches the True Dharma.
All the buddhas explain and teach
The three vehicles through skillful means.
Although there is only the single buddha vehicle,
They teach two in order to provide a place of rest."
(Lotus Sutra, BDK ed, p 138)

Vasubandhu explains the parable as:

"The arrogance [of those who] refer to what is actually nothing as something. Having [attained] mundane meditative trances and meditational attainments, they form the notion [that what they have attained is] nirvana, [though] [what they have] actually [attained] is not nirvana. It should be known that "The Parable of the Phantom City" is given as the antidote to this misconception.

...

[The parable] for the fourth type of person cause him, through expedient means, to enter the city of nirvana. The "city of nirvana" refers to the city of contemplations and meditative trances. Having gone past this city, he is then later made to enter the city of great nirvana."

(The Commentary on the Lotus Sutra, in Tiantai Lotus Texts, BDK ed, p 138-139)

So, what Buton seems to say and what Vasubandhu says is that arhats are not actually arhats, just people stuck within an absorption (dhyana).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 4th, 2017 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

They are revived by a Buddha from a samadhi of cessation.

Astus wrote:

Do you know where this interpretation began? Nirodhasamapatti is accessible to both non-returners and arhats equally, and arhats are necessarily free from such formless absorptions in every system. Assuming that arhats are stuck in a samadhi of cessation contradicts what being an arhat means.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 5th, 2017 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Lanka.

Astus wrote:

Where in the http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-nondiacritical.htm is that taught? That sutra teaches the five gotras (2.20), and only those of the indeterminate lineage "who are instructed in these three lineages but who enter according to one teaching and succeed according to another." (tr Red Pine). This doctrine is also upheld by Yogacara where those who belong to the sravaka family attain the nirvana without residue and nothing more. Vasubandhu in his Commentary on the Lotus Sutra makes a clear distinction as well:

"This means that those who have produced the thought of enlightenment and who are carrying out bodhisattva practice will plant good roots of merit and be able to realize enlightenment. It is not the case that those who have not originally produced the thought of enlightenment, such as ordinary people and the disciples who are fixed [in the Small Vehicle], are able to attain it."

(Tiantai Lotus Texts, BDK ed, p 135)

and

"Regarding the disciples' attainment of a prediction, [it should be known that] there are four types of disciples: 1) disciples who are fixed [in the path of the Small Vehicle], 2) arrogant disciples, 3) disciples who have retreated from the thought of enlightenment, and 4) transformation disciples.

The two types of disciples who receive a prediction from the tathāgatas are the transformation disciples and the disciples who have retreated from the thought of enlightenment. Since disciples who are fixed [in the path of the Small Vehicle] and arrogant disciples have faculties that are not yet mature, they are not given predictions of enlightenment."

(p 142)

Similarly, the Lankavatara Sutra states regarding the question of prediction given to arhats:

"Mahamati, there are Bodhisattvas practising the work of the Bodhisattva here and in other Buddha-lands, who, however, are desirous of attaining the Nirvana of the Sravakayana. In order to turn their inclination away from the Sravakayana and to make them exert themselves in the course of the Mahayana, the Sravakas in transformation are given assurance [as to their future Buddhahood] by the Body of Transformation" (7.89, tr Suzuki)

And to clarify the meaning of arhat:

"Mahamati said: Now, the Blessed One declares that there are three kinds of Arhats: to which one of the three is this term "Arhat" to be applied? To one who makes straightway for the path of cessation? Or to one who neglects all his accumulated stock of merit for the sake of his vow to enlighten others? Or to one who is a form of the Transformation [Buddha]?"

Replied the Blessed One: Mahamati, [the term "Arhat"] applies to the Sravaka who makes straightway for the path of cessation, and to no others. Mahamati, as for the others, they are those who have finished practising the deeds of a Bodhisattva; they are forms of the Transformation Buddha."

(2.49, tr Suzuki)

While the "sustaining power" of the Buddhas applies only to bodhisattvas and helps them get beyond various forms of absorption:

"What is this twofold power that sustains the Bodhisattvas? The one is the power by which they are sustained to go through the Samadhis and Samapattis; while the other is the power whereby the Buddhas manifest themselves in person before the Bodhisattvas and baptise them with their own hands."

(2.40, tr Suzuki)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 5th, 2017 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

kirtu said:

LVI (56), verses 207-210 : http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-chapter-2.htm#chap2

Astus wrote:

Thanks. The sravakas described there have not attained arhatship, but mistaken cessation for nirvana. So that applies to those of indeterminate family, not those fixed to the attainment of arhatship.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 5th, 2017 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, they are arhats. Jñānavajra's commentary

Astus wrote:

What does he say about the difference between the gotras then? I'm asking because since the Lankavatara was an important text for the Yogacarins, and they (Asanga, Vasubandhu, Xuanzang, etc.) did not accept the idea of a single vehicle, then that interpretation you referred to is not that obvious.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2017 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Both commentaries state that while in reality the Buddha taught one vehicle, he did not teach the ekayāna to everyone. He taught the three vehicle system to śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.

Astus wrote:

That is what the sutra explicitly says. But the question is whether arhatship can be a final attainment as nirvana without residue or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2017 at 1:16 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

According to the Lanka, no. Why? because even though arhats have no active or latent

afflictions, they still have traces. This also applies to pratyekabuddhas.

Astus wrote:

The Lankavatara Sutra may be interpreted that way, although it does state:

"Having had an insight into their own vehicle, they abide at the fifth or the sixth stage where they do away with the rising of the passions, but not with the habit-energy; they have not yet passed beyond the inconceivable transformation-death, and their lion-roar is, "My life is destroyed, my morality is established, etc."; they will then discipline themselves in the egolessness of persons and finally gain the knowledge of Nirvana."
(2.20)

And the Cheng Weishi Lun explains:

"First question. - If Jneyavarana, assisting the pure deeds, produces existence (i.e., birth and death), the saints of the two Vehicles of the 'fixed' class (who cannot become Bodhisattvas) will never enter Nirupadhisenanirvana (Nirvana-without-residue). The same is true of the Prthagjanas who are fettered by their vexing passions (Klesavarana).

...

Reply to the first question. - The Jneyavarana does not constitute an obstacle to deliverance, because it is not in its power to provoke deeds and 'moisten' reincarnation."

(p 611, 613, tr Wei Tat)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2017 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

tiagolps said:

Ups, I meant śrāvakas have the realization... "So śrāvakas have the realization of the emptiness of self, but only have a partial realization of the emptiness of phenomena, is that how it should be understood?"

Astus wrote:

Shravakas believe that the skandhas, ayatanas, and dhatus have real existence - i.e. this is the common abhidharma doctrine - and this is why they are said not understand emptiness of dharmas. For more, here is a nice one from the http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-nondiacritical.htm (2.18):

"Further, Mahamati, those who, afraid of sufferings arising from the discrimination of birth-and-death, seek for Nirvana, do not know that birth-and-death and Nirvana are not to be separated the one from the other; and, seeing that all things subject to discrimination have no reality, imagine that Nirvana consists in the future annihilation of the senses and their fields. They are not aware, Mahamati, of the fact that Nirvana is the Alayavijnana where a revulsion takes place by self-realisation. Therefore, Mahamati, those who are stupid talk of the trinity of vehicles and not of the state of Mind-only

where there are no images. Therefore, Mahamati, those who do not understand the teachings of the Tathagatas of the past, present, and future, concerning the external world, which is of Mind itself, cling to the notion that there is a world outside what is seen of the Mind and, Mahamati, go on rolling themselves along the wheel of birth-and-death."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2017 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

tiagolps said:

But to realize the emptiness of self you have to have some understanding of the emptiness of aggregates that make up the self, no?

Astus wrote:

The argument is that since in Hinayana the focus is on the method of recognising that there are only the aggregates but no self, they take the aggregates to be substantial. However, if we think about this a bit, this reasoning doesn't hold up, because shravakas need to realise that the aggregates are neither self nor the possessions of a self, so to say that they are regarded as substantial contradicts the teachings. Similarly, as in the Lankavatara Sutra, there is the argument that shravakas do not know that there is no grasping and no grasped, but that is again refutable once we consider that without attachment to the aggregates there is no basis any more for such a duality. Hence what is called the shravakayana in Mahayana scriptures refers practitioners who misunderstood things, and not what is actually found in the Hinayana works.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2017 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

the śrāvakas maintain these dharmas — aggregates, āyatanas, and dhātus — are substantially real

Astus wrote:

Aside from terminology, it is agreed on by both parties that a shravaka does not assume a self and has no clinging to the aggregates. So while the abhidharma style presentation may be criticised as incomplete, not the realisation, as being without attachment toward phenomena is the goal even in Mahayana.

Malcolm said:

But until we come to Madhyamaka, there is no school that can escape the charge of being substantialist, including Yogacara (a form of nondual substantialism).

Astus wrote:

I have seen Madhyamaka interpreted in a similar way, where emptiness is considered some sort of ultimate substratum. Then one might argue that is the wrong interpretation, however, the same could be said about arguments put against abhidharma and yogacara as well.

Malcolm said:

But the emptiness of inherent existence is not the profound Mahāyāna emptiness free from four extremes.

Astus wrote:

Once there is no attachment to the mental aggregates, there can be not grasping at views either.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 12:32 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Since skandhas, āyatanas, and dhātus are regarded as ultimate and real, even by arhats, they do not perceive the emptiness of phenomena.

Astus wrote:

Once there is no attachment to the mental aggregates, there can be not grasping at views either.

Malcolm said:

Sure there can.

Astus wrote:

If no mental aggregate is clung to, in what form can there be attachment to any view? Unless concepts are beyond the aggregates, I do not see how that is possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your argument is internally incoherent. According your argument, a stream entrant should be Vajradhara.

Astus wrote:

How so? A stream-entrant has correct view, but still very much bound by the aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, a stream enterer is free from the fetter of attachment to wrong views. Such a person is not bound by the aggregates

Astus wrote:

A stream-enterer is still bound by the three poisons, hence attached to the aggregates. Having correct view is the beginning, not the end, and that's why there is a need for cultivation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Arhats and stream entrants have identical views of selflessness.

Astus wrote:

They both have the correct view, but only arhats are free from clinging. It is because arhats are free from clinging to any aggregates that I said above that there is no place left for any attachment. If you claim that arhats are still afflicted by some form of attachment, the object of attachment must lie beyond the aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

smcj said:

Really? Prasangika Madhyamaka? Where? By whom? That is the big no-no.

Astus wrote:

It's not that unusual. I'd say it's a possible stage in one's learning, where the two truths are completely separated, and the ultimate sounds just like concepts that one is already familiar with, like God, oneness, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Understanding that there is no ghost in the machine is a not a refutation or negation of the machine's substantiality.

Astus wrote:

The machine is not the cause of the problems, it is the illusion of the ghost. Once there is no clinging, how could it matter what the status of something is? Even the concepts about the machine are let go of.

Malcolm said:

Becoming free from the clinging to the aggregates is possible merely through understanding they are impermanent. There is no need for a nondual understanding to attain arhatship, much less stream-entry.

Astus wrote:

Understanding impermanence is the path, abandonment of all attachments is the result. The point is that without attachment there is no basis for any view.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 7th, 2017 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

One may have no attachments, but this still does not preclude one from imputing substantiality to this or that dharma.

Astus wrote:

Even if one free from attachments would have an incorrect assumption about something, it would be an assumption not grasped at.

This reminds me of a Zen story

(http://www.zenguide.com/zenmedia/books/content.cfm?t=the_gateless_gate&chapter=13).

One day Tokusan went down toward the dining room, holding his bowls. Seppo met him and asked, "Where are you off to with your bowls? The bell has not rung, and the drum has not sounded." Tokusan turned and went back to his room.

Seppo mentioned this to Ganto, who remarked, "Tokusan is renowned, but he does not know the last word."

Tokusan heard about this remark and sent his attendant to fetch Ganto. "You do not approve of me?" he asked. Ganto whispered his meaning.

Tokusan said nothing at the time, but the next day he ascended the rostrum, and behold! he was very different from usual!

Ganto, going toward the front of the hall, clapped his hands and laughed loudly, saying, "Congratulations! Our old man has got hold of the last word! From now on, nobody in this whole country can outdo him!"

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is nevertheless incorrect, and therefore, it is not surprising in the least that Arhats have an incomplete understanding of emptiness, which is the point of this whole exchange.

Astus wrote:

If by emptiness you refer to a conceptual explanation, yes, there can be misunderstandings. But if you mean freedom from the four extreme views, then they are necessarily free from those.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 at 2:14 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

You have not shown this to be so. In other words, there is a disconnect between your assertion that arhats are free from clinging to their aggregates and your assertion that they realize emptiness free from the four extremes.

Astus wrote:

The four extreme views are concepts. Concepts are within the domain of the aggregates. Arhats do not cling to the aggregates, hence they cannot have the four extreme views. Where is the disconnect here?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Arhats have the view that aggregates exist. But they do not cling to them. That is your disconnect.

Astus wrote:

If one has a view but does not cling to that view, does one actually have a view? For instance, an arhat has the view that a particular robe is his, still, it is not a view that binds him. Similarly, all teachings are recognised as pointing to liberation, and not something that one should remain attached to.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Prasangika, Conventional Analysis, and Wordly Consensus

Content:

Bakmoon said:

How can Prasangikas meaningfully talk about things that are just out of the range of ordinary beings? For example, Karma, the twelve links of dependent origination, and a lot of other teachings are not part of worldly consensus, and yet all Buddhists accept these things.

Astus wrote:

Conventional truth does not mean "popular vote", but rather what is considered reasonable by intelligent people of the society. The teachings of the Buddha are of the highest value among all conventional concepts, as the Buddha was the wisest of all. As for what prasangika stands for, it is merely a method of performing analysis with the intention of rejecting wrong views and gaining insight into emptiness. Or, as some may approach sutrayana, it is only for refuting those holding wrong views.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 9th, 2017 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

The question is not whether they are bound. The question is "what kind of realization is necessary for freedom from rebirth?" The answer is: "Not very deep."

Astus wrote:

How is that the question? What realisation is deeper/higher than what is free from all attachments, hence also free from conceptual proliferation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 10th, 2017 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Resources for Comparison of Buddhist Canons?

Content:

Astus wrote:

CBETA has several canons online: <http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/>

And the complete Taisho Tripitaka: <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php>

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon: <http://www.dsbcproject.org/>

Bibliography of Translations from the Chinese Buddhist Canon into Western Languages:
<http://mbingenheimer.net/tools/bibls/transbibl.html>

Nanjio's Catalogue: <http://www.kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~wittern/data/nanjio-catalog.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 11th, 2017 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Freedom from attachments does not equal freedom from proliferation.

Astus wrote:

When no concepts grasped, how can there be proliferation?

"There's no trail in space,
no outside contemplative.

People are smitten with objectifications (papanca),
but devoid of objectification (nippapanca) are the Tathagatas."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.18.than.html.254>)

Malcolm said:

If it did, arhats would be omniscient. They also could not fall back from the state of arhatship, but some do.

Astus wrote:

Those are clearly problematic points, but secondary.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 11th, 2017 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

now you think that arhats are tathāgatas.

Astus wrote:

The problem I'm raising here is that ascribing attachment to arhats is not supported by reason. So far there has been no substantiated argument against that. It is another issue if buddhahood is defined on the basis of the complete absence of attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 12th, 2017 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Attachment is not the issue, traces are.

Astus wrote:

By traces do you mean anusaya? If yes, the Samuccaya (p 100-101) has the same list as the <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.011.than.html>, and they need to be abandoned and destroyed

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.012.than.html>), otherwise there is still rebirth

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.038.than.html>). Even though the Srimaladevi Sutra (ch 5, BDK ed p 26-28, cf. Brunnhölzl: When the Clouds part, p

364-365) splits up the list and calls ignorance not removed by arhats, since that ignorance itself means the cognitive obscuration where one still clings to concepts, I still find no basis for assigning that to arhats. So, where do those traces exist in an arhat in your view?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 12th, 2017 at 8:14 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

He just quoted three sutras answering precisely that. What else is he supposed to do?

Astus wrote:

The three quotes merely state that

"Srāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have not abandoned all connection with traces"

"not completely destroyed traces"

"they are confused through the other traces of affliction"

and the questions raised are in response to that concept of remaining traces.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 12th, 2017 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

You asked "where" they exist in an arhat.

Where else would they exist other than in the place they always have existed?

It's not like they change places.

Astus wrote:

Where have they always existed then?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 13th, 2017 at 8:05 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Daṃṣṭrasenam, in his commentary on the 100,000 lines Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra, notes that the result of possessing those traces mentions specifically that arhats can err, gossip, can be unattractive, are forgetful, and so on.

Astus wrote:

Thanks for looking it up. The same traits are mentioned elsewhere regarding arhats as

well, aren't they? Still, nice to know.

Malcolm said:

The most important point is that śrāvakayanists in general do not meditate on the view of emptiness. As we will see below, they meditate in the four truths and this is how they attain their awakening. They realize the person as a momentary formation and this is what it means to say that an arhat realizes "the selflessness of persons." But they do not meditate directly on the view of emptiness in anyway. The Goenka Vipassana school is an excellent example of this principle.

Astus wrote:

The part where it is true is that the path described that way is what is found in the abhidharma works, although there can be differences. The part where it is not true is the Nikayas/Agamas and those Theravada teachers who don't follow the abhidhamma. Look at this description for instance: <http://measurelessmind.ca/anattasanna.html>. Also, it is quite common in Mahayana to describe arhats by their realisation of the emptiness of self, and sometimes even by the realisation of the emptiness of phenomena.

Malcolm said:

Thus, it is somewhat inane to speculate about where traces reside in an arhat. It is also somewhat foolish to assert that arhats realize the selflessness of phenomena when it has nothing at all to do with how they achieve their realization since they never even meditate the view of the emptiness of the person let alone emptiness in general.

Astus wrote:

The issue is whether they are attached to the aggregates or not. In order to keep any form of traces, obscurations, or defilements for arhats, they necessarily have to still cling to the aggregates and the areas, and what they attain then as a pseudo-nirvana is nirodha-samapatti, hence as you quote "Through perceiving sensation and perception as flaws, they solely rely on the method of pacifying them and are intoxicated with an intoxicating samadhi that lacks the wisdom that realizes the truth."

Malcolm said:

Thus we can also see there is no place where such arhats "reside" after death, no Hinayāna pure land. After their nirvana, arhats have no location per se, being like "logs floating on the ocean, moved by the waves."

Astus wrote:

Or they could be simply put into the formless realms, as I think some Zen texts do.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 14th, 2017 at 4:17 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is only the selflessness of persons, not phenomena, because there is no refutation of characteristics themselves. But, for example, in Mahāyāna, even the characteristics by which phenomena are apprehended are refuted. This is the main difference.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that is a clear difference. On the one side it's rise and fall, birth and death, while on the other it's unarisen and unceasing, unborn and undying.

Malcolm said:

The absence of a self in persons is only mentioned in these Mahāyāna sūtras

Astus wrote:

Did you do a search specifically for pudgala naitratmya? That (人無我) doesn't seem to be a common term in Chinese either, although using synonyms can turn up further results.

Malcolm said:

śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have trained in characteristics of the aggregate, etc., that lack a self because of being impermanent and so on, rather than in emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Contemplation of the three characteristics are what is said to bring about the realisation of the three gates of liberation, so there is a correlation.

Malcolm said:

It is asserted that they cling to characteristics, not that they cling to the aggregates, etc., per se.

Astus wrote:

An this is something I have difficulty to take literally on a practical level. Sure, most of the usual criticisms of arhats look valid for people obsessed with total cessation and/or systems and lists of dharmas. But I fail to see them as anything but common warnings one can find in all sorts of teachings, and that is likely the reason why Mahayana traditions kept this view of the arhat alive (at the same time, arhats in East Asia are also popular spirit/deity/bodhisattva-like beings). Although looking at the <http://www.vipassanadhura.com/sixteen.html> can give the impression that the criticism is valid, it's also possible to say that as both body and mind are let go of, there can be no hindrances left, nor even clinging to characteristics, since even those are just thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 14th, 2017 at 5:49 AM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

Personally, I think you are reading with a Mahāyāna bias, and interpolating your own view on the view of śrāvakas.

Astus wrote:

I'm afraid there is a not so small possibility of that. I got that impression yesterday right when I looked up Mahasi's Manual of Insight.

Malcolm said:

Since there is no evidence that śrāvakas negate characteristics through a vipaśyāna analysis that allows them to see through characteristics, there is also no evidence that they are free from clinging to characteristics.

Astus wrote:

The four noble truths are what is taught to be the definitive insight one needs to gain on the shravaka path. And there what one needs to recognise is how there is suffering, how suffering arises, how it ceases, and how one can bring it to cessation. In short, the goal is not to have or maintain any ideas of what characterises phenomena, but to let go of them, to end one's clinging. So, what I don't see the evidence of is how there can remain anything one keeps being hooked on anything.

Malcolm said:

One assumes that ancient Mahāyānis had ample contact and debate with those who were reputed to be śrāvaka arhats.

Astus wrote:

I'm not so sure. It rather seems to me that what they tend to refute are their own interpretations of abhidharma materials. Have you perhaps encountered this small book:

http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books2/Maha_Boowa_The_Path_to_Arahantship.pdf?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 14th, 2017 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: The attainment of the Arhats

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that arhats suffer from obscurations, and that their wisdom is insufficient to perceive the real nature of phenomena, even though they have a partial realization through which they can claim to be liberated (and liberation in Buddhadharma simply means being free of the afflictions that cause rebirth in samsara).

Astus wrote:

And my question is still the same: how can one be obscured in any way, when no aggregate is grasped at? And aggregates mean all the possible experiences that occur. So there is no physical appearance, no feeling, no thought, no state of consciousness that can delude an arhat. On the other hand, to say that an arhat clings to cessation requires the assumption that he sees the aggregates as enemies, is bound by a specific peaceful state free from appearances, and still has extreme views of existence and annihilation. I see only the latter as the object of criticism, while at the same time that

type of flawed arhat is hardly acceptable even for the shravakas, although this is a point where interpretations among them may be different. For instance:

"During fruition absorption, the mind is fully absorbed in its object, nibbāna, the cessation of all conditioned phenomena. It does not perceive anything else. Nibbāna is completely different from the conditioned mental and physical phenomena and conceptual objects that belong to this world or any other. So you cannot perceive or remember this world (i.e., your own body) or any other during fruition absorption, and you are free from all thoughts. Even if there are obvious objects around to see, hear, smell, touch, and so on, you will not be aware of any of them."

(Mahasi Sayadaw: Manual of Insight, p 295)

That description of nirvana sounds very much like the latter type of arhat. On the other hand, looking at Maha Boowa's description:

"When avijjā is extinguished, conditioned phenomena—which give rise to dukkha—are also extinguished. They have disappeared from the knowing nature of the citta. Conditioned phenomena, such as thoughts, which are an integral part of the khandhas, continue to function in their own sphere but they no longer cause dukkha. Uncorrupted by kilesas, they simply give form and direction to mental activity. Consciousness arises in the mind, purely and simply without producing suffering."

(The Path to Arahantship, p 62)

There it's only craving, only clinging that is gone, since it's not the phenomena that constitute the problem, but only attachment. And that I think is a crucial difference. Even though there are suttas where it's stated simple that one has to abandon phenomena (e.g. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.024.than.html>), but it's clarified that - just the the four noble truths state - it is craving and clinging that need to end (e.g. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.191.than.html>). In this case, it's the former type of arhat that can have no delusion regarding anything.

Malcolm said:

there is nothing there which is not anticipated by Mahāyāna critiques of the limitations of the śrāvaka teachings

Astus wrote:

No doubt that the shravaka teachings are significantly more limited. But that is not the problem here.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 15th, 2017 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Japanese Zen Buddhist Traditions.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Official sites:

<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/index.html>

<http://zen.rinnou.net/index.html>

Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Zen

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C5%8Dt%C5%8D>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rinzai_school

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%8Cbaku>

Books:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=SjfvBQAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=BnLOFwx1SpUC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=EPXEoMtND24C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=kxhiCAAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ypIL2wz3IBUC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=DxvF5XIJpnUC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=CyV4PaqMzd4C>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=uRfVBAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2ZcNsZTH6gAC>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 15th, 2017 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Lay Chan Teachers

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Is this the same Pei Xiu that corresponded with Zongmi and compiled Huang Po's records?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 16th, 2017 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: The Goal Of Meditation.

Content:

Joka said:

When one meditates, what is its goal for the individual? What is its purpose? What is meditation fulfilling?

Astus wrote:

Zanmai-o-zanmai (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 3, p 371):

To transcend the whole universe at once, to live a great and valuable life in the house of the Buddhist patriarchs, is to sit in the full lotus posture. To tread over the heads of non-Buddhists and demons; to become, in the inner sanctum of the Buddhist patriarchs, a person in the concrete state, is to sit in the full lotus posture. To transcend the supremacy of the Buddhist patriarchs' supremacy, there is only this one method. Therefore, Buddhist patriarchs practice it solely, having no other practices at all. Remember, the universe in sitting is far different from other universes. Clearly understanding this truth, Buddhist patriarchs pursue and realize the establishment of the will, training, the state of bodhi, and nirvana.

Joka said:

Also, for the poor working class slob like myself that is constantly working seven days a week, can the same kind of attainment be done with just purely mental meditation while working?

Astus wrote:

Bendowa (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 16-17):

[Someone] asks, "People who leave home get free of all involvements at once, so they have no hindrances in practicing zazen and pursuing the truth. How can a busy layperson devotedly do training and be at one with the unintentional state of Buddhist truth?"

I say: In general, the Buddhist Patriarch,⁸⁶ overfilled with pity, left open a wide and great gate of compassion so that all living beings could experience and enter [the state of truth]; what human being or god could not want to enter? Thus, when we study the past and the present, there are many confirmations of such [experience and entry]. For instance, Taisō and Junsō were, as emperors, very busy with affairs of state [but] they pursued the truth by sitting in zazen and realized the Buddhist Patriarch's great truth. Both Minister Ri (Ch. Li) and Minister Bō (Ch. Fang), serving as [the emperor's] lieutenants, were the arms and legs of the whole nation [but] they pursued the truth by sitting in zazen and experienced and entered the Buddhist Patriarch's truth. This [practice-and-experience] rests only upon whether or not the will is present; it does not relate to whether the body stays at home or leaves home. Moreover, any person who profoundly discerns the superiority or inferiority of things will naturally have belief. Still more, those who think that worldly affairs hinder the Buddha-Dharma only know that there is no Buddha-Dharma in the world; they do not know that there are no worldly dharmas in the state of Buddha. Recently in great Song [China] there was [a man] called Minister Hyō (Ch. Feng), a high-ranking official who was accomplished in the Patriarch's truth. In his later years he made a poem in which he expressed himself as follows:

When official business allows, I like to sit in zazen.

I have seldom slept with my side touching a bed.

Though I have now become prime minister,

My fame as a veteran practitioner has spread across the four seas.

This was somebody with no time free from official duties but, because his will to the Buddha's truth was deep, he was able to attain the truth. We should reflect on ourselves [in comparison] with him, and we should reflect on the present [in comparison] with those days. In the great kingdom of Song, the present generation of kings and ministers, officials and commoners, men and women, all apply their mind to the Patriarch's truth, without exception. Both the military and literary classes are resolved to practice [za]zen and to learn the truth. Those who resolve it will, in many cases, undoubtedly clarify the mental state. Thus, it can naturally be inferred that worldly affairs do not hinder the Buddha-Dharma. When the real Buddha-Dharma spreads throughout a nation the buddhas and the gods guard [that nation] ceaselessly, so the reign is peaceful. When the imperial reign is peaceful, the Buddha- Dharma comes into its own. Furthermore, when Śākyamuni was in the world, [even] people of heavy sins and wrong views were able to get the truth, and in the orders of the ancestral masters, [even] hunters and old woodcutters entered the state of realization, to say nothing of other people. We need only study the teaching and the state of truth of a true teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 17th, 2017 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Anonymous X said:

But the other part of commenting on the other schools as he does, could have a political implication that some academics might run with and accuse Zongmi of 'divide and rule' tactics, perhaps for the reason of state funding his school.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi at the time of writing those works on the Chan schools was a teacher living in Chang'an as an honoured master invited by the emperor. It seems he had no monastery or school to get sponsors for. so there appears to be no economical or political reasons behind his presentation of other groups.

Anonymous X said:

Was he considered a supreme master, a manipulator, or both, maybe?

Astus wrote:

He was considered a great teacher, a sophisticated and erudite monastic.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 21st, 2017 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Muso Soseki's Direct Pointing

Content:

Astus wrote:

What part do you call the direct pointing in that quite formal speech?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 23rd, 2017 at 7:05 PM

Title: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

Astus wrote:

Impermanence is the gateway to emptiness.

Emptiness is the gateway to non-birth.

Non-birth is the gateway to Buddhahood.

"What is the Buddha's path? It is the bodhi-mind, the mind of Nirvana. To walk on the Buddha's path is to follow the path of the Great Enlightened One, the one who attained the Great Nirvana, the one who has reached ultimate liberation. Through great enlightenment, one sees all phenomena with pure luminosity. From the perspective of departing from all defilements, the Buddha saw the ultimate truth: the non-arising and non-ceasing of all phenomena. Through complete cessation, he achieved total peace of mind. This complete cessation does not mean that everything is extinguished. It is the cessation of all defilements and habitual tendencies. After achieving cessation, an Enlightened One begins a new life, a life of selfless service to benefit sentient beings. As practitioners, we must understand impermanence. Impermanence is the gateway to emptiness.

Thus to understand emptiness, we must start with an understanding of impermanence. Emptiness, in turn, is the gateway to non-birth. By understanding emptiness, you will not be attached to life. In other words, you will transcend the two extremes and all dualities. In this way, you will be able to enter non-birth. Non-birth is the gateway to Buddhahood. Understanding non-birth, one will no longer be attached to life, one will no longer be afflicted by the miseries of life. One can learn and practice the Dharma in the cycle of birth and death and enter the path to Buddhahood."

(<http://bodhimonastery.org/ven-jen-chun.html>:

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN292.pdf>, p 53-54)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 31st, 2017 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

seeing impermanence leading to emptiness is unnatural.

Astus wrote:

Impermanence is easier to see first. It is fairly common sense to know that nothing lasts forever. Then when it's broken down to finding the substance that changes, it turns out to be nowhere, hence empty.

"when a sentient being perceives the birth of a dharma, you should have him discard the view of its nonexistence. When he perceives the death of a dharma, you should have him discard the view of its existence. If he discards these views, he will realize that

dharmas are by nature absolutely empty and definitely have no birth"
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra53a.html>, ch 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 31st, 2017 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: "highest practices" and anti-intellectualism

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

It sometimes feels to me like in our culture this approach risks turning into a Dharmic form of anti-intellectualism, and is often accompanied by "dude you can't learn Dharma from a book" (which while true in many ways, is sort of beside the point, and devalues scholarship and study). Am I just being paranoid, is it just my quirks and pet peeves, or is this a real trend that others have observed?

Astus wrote:

As I see it, the so called simple/direct methods are usually very basic practices with a lot of verbal ornamentation like "sudden enlightenment", "highest teaching", etc. They serve as entry points.

Through learning, one will comprehend dharmas. / 聞已得知法

Through learning, one will not do evil. / 聞已不作惡

Through learning, one will give up harm. / 聞已離無利

Through learning, one will gain nirvāṇa. / 聞已得涅槃

(The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit, tr 84000.co / T382p999a)

Johnny Dangerous said:

I mean, I get that one should not cling to or be conditioned by practices, that intellectual knowledge is provisional etc.. but I seem to run into the opposite sometimes - people who seem to reject "lower" practices altogether in favor of a sometimes rigid, sort of protestant approach where any "lower" practice requiring what is viewed as effort are frowned upon. Sometimes the value of studying or knowing Dharma subjects at all is questioned.

Astus wrote:

Knowledge is not provisional, it is quite essential. Interestingly, what is called the "sudden path" by both Bodhidharma (Two Entrance and Four Practices) and Dakpo Tashi (Mahamudra Moonlight, p 144) are for people established in the Dharma.

But this is really a very old problem with oversimplification. See Zhiyi:

"There is a type of meditation master who exclusively utilizes cessation-type practice and does not allow for the practice of contemplation. ... There is also a type of meditation master who exclusively utilizes the practice of contemplation and does not allow for the practice of cessation. ... Both of these types of teachers follow only one of the methods for realizing [enlightenment], and teach other people on the basis of the

benefit they have received from [their one-sided practice]. Those who study [under them] are not aware of their [one-sided] intentions. [It is like the story in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra] "one who exclusively drinks milk will have difficulty getting a drink [of cream], not to mention ghee." If people rely exclusively [on either cessation or contemplation, or on only one teaching or practice] to attain understanding, then what was the reason for the Buddha to offer such a variety of teachings? The heavens are not always clear; a doctor does not rely exclusively on powdered medicine; one does not always eat rice."

(quoted by Paul L. Swanson in <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/files/2012/11/Chih-i-on-Zen-and-Chih-kuan-8-2003.pdf>, p 8)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 31st, 2017 at 10:37 PM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

"If i look for the substance that changes it turns out to be nowhere." because everything is dependent and has no self?

Astus wrote:

Because if everything changes, then there cannot be a separate substance that does not change.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 1st, 2017 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

i think that to speak of a "substance" that does not change may be unhelpful.

Astus wrote:

Whatever that is the object of attachment is assumed to be an unchanging thing, a substance. To see that such an object is merely the product of conceptual fabrication is recognising emptiness, and thus ending attachment.

White Lotus said:

We know that all language misses the point when we are talking about emptiness as an ultimate: it is nameless, wordless and beyond all concept.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is the ultimate in that it is the absence of identification, of reification, and therefore of clinging.

White Lotus said:

In the same way 1 which is the focal point of emptiness of emptiness is too simple to

say much about. Only that 1 is 1 and independent. I am inclined to think that it is not dependent upon anything. If we say that everything is impermanent we know that there is bound to be an exception to this rule.

Astus wrote:

That is another example of assuming a substance, hence a basis of attachment and suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 3rd, 2017 at 2:36 AM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

how do you see an interest in 1 harming my practice, is it danger of attachment? Surely 1 is by its nature: non attached.

Astus wrote:

I do not know what your practice is. Upholding the precepts and cultivating calming the mind do not necessarily interfere with such an assumption. When it comes to studying, comprehending, and realising the Dharma, then it is better to be open and attentive about what is actually taught instead of approaching it with the attitude of only confirming one's preexisting views. For instance, the whole of reality can be summed up as the five aggregates, and the realisation of truth can be achieved through recognising that there is no independent entity or thing within or without the aggregates. Focusing on the aggregates, or the six sensory realms, means basing oneself on actual experience, instead of theories disconnected from one's life. As for seeing the complete unreality of oneness/singularity, here is Mipham's summary:

"To begin with, there is an analysis of the essential identity of all conditioned and unconditioned phenomena to determine whether or not there is true singularity. In the case of those conditioned phenomena of the five aggregates possessing physical form, there is a division into above, below, the cardinal and intermediate directions and the centre. Through this, it can be seen that, for something such as a vase, singularity is simply a conceptual notion applied to the various features that are the basis for such an imputation. True singularity is not established, and the same applies in the case of its component parts. The body and the limbs are also divided into parts in the same way.

In short, all that possesses physical form and is composed of material particles may be broken down to its basis, which is the infinitely small particle. And, according to the logic explained before, for that most subtle particle to be surrounded by particles in the various directions, it must have sides, which means it must have parts, and so on, in an infinite regression. If not, then however many subtle particles are gathered together, they could never grow any larger. Thus, all phenomena with material form lack true singularity.

In addition, the eight or the six collections of consciousness can not be established as

truly singular since they consist of various cognitive acts and mental states, take various features as their focus, and arise in different forms from the gathering of the four conditions, and then cease.

By analyzing everything that has the nature of arising and ceasing deriving from its own causes, even the subtlest indivisible moment can not be established, and so all phenomena included within mind and matter lack any true singularity. As for non-concurrent formations, they are simply imputations made upon the 'occasion' of mind and matter, and so they lack any essential identity. Unconditioned phenomena are imputations made with regard to the eliminated aspects of objects of negation, and are also lacking in any essential identity.

In short, all conditioned and unconditioned phenomena can not be shown to have any true singularity, and since this is not established, plurality that is made up of what is singular must also remain unestablished. And so, since there is no mode of true existence aside from being truly singular or plural, it must follow that individuals and phenomena are proven to be without inherent identity, just as it is explained more elaborately in The Ornament of the Middle Way."

(Investigation of the Essential Identity: 'Neither One Nor Many' from

<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 3rd, 2017 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Temicco said:

By who? He seems to have been invisible to the bulk of the Southern lineage teachers, being referenced mainly in Korean Zen lit.

Astus wrote:

He is considered the fifth patriarch of Huayan, and that in itself should be sufficient. He is also the primary commentator of the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra. His most outstanding spiritual heir was Yongming Yanshou, whose works have also been quite influential all over East Asia. As for his marginal role in Song era Chan compilations - on which I assume you base Zongmi's invisibility - that comes from the sectarian nature of such writings, but even in those books they did list him.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 4th, 2017 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Temicco said:

In any event, his own authority as a Zen teacher is nil outside of certain circles.

Astus wrote:

What authority do you mean? His works are still studied by Chinese Buddhists, so I don't know what more could one want.

Temicco said:

I don't mean the Jingde Chuandeng lu or anything, even just the primary and secondary writings of other Southern lineage Zen teachers.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific? What writings?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 4th, 2017 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Temicco said:

Huangbo's lectures, Foyan's writings, Dahui's letters, Hongzhi's CTEF, Wumen's Wumenguan, Yuanwu's letters, Yuanwu's Biyan lu, the majority of the sayings records translated thus far

Astus wrote:

Since Huangbo was Zongmi's contemporary, you basically mean Song era texts. The problem with that approach is that the type of Chan that Zongmi and Yongming represented were rejected by the proponents of Song era Linjizong teachers. First good example of that is Shenhui's treatment in the final version of the Platform Sutra where Huineng says to him:

"I told you it was without name or title, but you have called it the fundamental source, the buddha-nature. You've just covered your head with thatch. You've become a follower with only discriminative understanding."
(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK ed, p 78)

Dahui criticised Zongmi's views (see Morten Schlütter: How Zen Became Zen. p 120-121), but certainly even Dogen has heard of Zongmi (see Eihei Koroku, p237n78, p403-404).

Temicco said:

I believe some of Wansong's comments in Congrong lu reference him

Astus wrote:

Yes, he quotes him as Guifeng five times: case 1 (referring to his Origin of Humanity), case 42, case 45 (from his commentary on the Perfect Enlightenment Sutra), case 56, case 58 (from his commentary on the Diamond Sutra).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 4th, 2017 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Waste of precious time...?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

It feels like I am quite literally just sitting there, on my arse, staring at the floor.

Astus wrote:

What else should be there? That's why it's called just sitting.

Justmeagain said:

How do I get around this feeling of wasting precious time?

Astus wrote:

That is the desire to attain something. But there is nothing to attain.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 4th, 2017 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Waste of precious time...?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

why bother and what on earth am I doing leaving that warm bed and woman to sit on a cushion if there's no rationale for it???

Astus wrote:

It is following one's ideas about gain and loss that generates suffering. Shikantaza is the practice of enlightenment, that is, freedom from gain and loss.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 2017 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

the Buddha said that "One is One", not only one emptiness, but also 1 - 1.

Astus wrote:

Where exactly is that stated by the Buddha?

White Lotus said:

I was amazed by the Mipham quote, but feel he only addresses the samsaric notion of singularity.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying you have a new meaning for the number 1?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 2017 at 2:22 AM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

Im sorry Astus my source was: The Book of Angelus Silesius (auth. Frederick Franck), he quotes from the Avatamsaka sutra on page (?).

Astus wrote:

Search gave only this one result, that somewhat contradicts your assumption of oneness:

"The Hwa Yen sutra says: The incalculable aeons are but one moment, and that moment is no moment, thus one sees the Reality of the Universe"

(Messenger of the Heart: The Book of Angelus Silesius with Observations by the Ancient Zen Masters, p 31)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 2017 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

To say that 1 in 1 is self or not self is binary. In ideal 1, Buddha cannot be said to be the selfless self. He cannot be said to be the self that is no self. He is only and simply 1.

Astus wrote:

In what way does that relate to the four noble truths, the six paramitas, and the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment? How is that connected to freedom from attachment to concepts and emotions?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 2017 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

It seems the Buddha did not say 1 in 1; but Kegon have. I wouldn't say that this in any way weakens the proposition: 1 in 1.

Astus wrote:

It is on page 30 in "Messenger of the Heart", and it refers to a basic Huayan/Kegon teaching in relation to the third dharmadhatu, the interpenetration of principle and phenomena. Your version of an "ultimate 1" seems not in accord with Huayan teachings either. Here is Chengguan's explanation:

Take the first point, "one in one": because the first "one" does not lose its characteristics,

it has substance, which contains; because it is noumenally not different from the second "one," it can contain the second "one." Meanwhile, since the second "one" is noumenally not different from the first "one," in accord with the contained noumenon it is in the first "one," because there is no phenomenon outside of noumenon.

Second, as for "one in all," because all do not lose their characteristics, they have substance which contains; being noumenally not different from the one, they can contain the one. Because the one is noumenally not different from the all, in accord with the principle of its own oneness the one is in the all.

Third, as for "all in one," because one does not lose its characteristics, it can be that which contains, while because it is noumenally not different from the all it can contain all. The all which is contained is noumenally not different from the one, so in accord with the noumenon inherent in all it is in the one.

Fourth, as for "all in all," because the first "all" do not lose their characteristics they have substance which contains; noumenally not being different from the second "all," they therefore contain the second "all." Because the second "all" noumenally are not different from the first "all," in accord with the noumenon of the second "all" they are in the first "all." Therefore in the conclusion he says each has a reason.

(Entry into the Inconceivable, p 114-115)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 6th, 2017 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Temicco said:

Why? Which books might talk about this?

Astus wrote:

I recommend the works of Albert Welter, most probably Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu touches on the subject of the emerging Linjizong in early Song.

Temicco said:

Wait, sorry, what's this an example of?

Astus wrote:

Zongmi claimed to be a descendant/follower of Shenhui, just as Yongming followed Zongmi's teachings later. They all use a very positive and assertive language for buddha-nature.

Temicco said:

for those who are interested in the Linji zong teachings

Astus wrote:

Are you aware that in the last couple hundred years the Linjizong has been practically synonymous with Chinese Buddhism? I mean, the term means almost nothing outside of the Song and late Ming era sectarian debates.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 6th, 2017 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Zongmi on Chan

Content:

Temicco said:

if modern Chinese Buddhists connected to the Linjizong

Astus wrote:

What I meant to say that being a member of the "Linji lineage" means virtually nothing in terms of what one studies and practices. For instance, Ven. Hsing Yun is a Linji lineage member, and so is every monastic in Fo Guang Shan, while for all intents and purposes that organisation embraces all "eight schools" and propagates Humanistic Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 7th, 2017 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

White Lotus said:

It may be that Buddha is true 1 hood and emptiness both in an uncompounded unity. Form and emptiness comprise a unity. Ultimately, it is impossible for anything to be a 'compounded' substance because temporal one's do not exist.

Astus wrote:

The 4th and final dharmadhatu in the Huayan teaching is the interpenetration of phenomena with phenomena. In other words, there's just dependent origination. Or as <http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-062-012/translation> says:

"This dependent arising is the dharmakāya of all the tathāgatas. A person who sees dependent arising sees the Tathāgata."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 8th, 2017 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: What is the creation of the universe story in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_cosmology#Temporal_cosmology

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 8th, 2017 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: What is the creation of the universe story in Buddhism?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

It's also important to understand that when the Buddha was quizzed about whether the world was eternal or of finite duration, that this is one of the 'undetermined questions'. They are questions which the Buddha wouldn't answer and suggested that they be put aside.

Astus wrote:

There is a whole samyutta (Anamataggasamyutta - Connected Discourses on Without Discoverable Beginning) on the topic of samsara having no beginning, so it is not at all such a dubious or unanswered issue in Buddhism.

"Bhikkhus, this samsara is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. Suppose, bhikkhus, a man would cut up whatever grass, sticks, branches, and foliage there are in this Jambudipa and collect them together into a single heap. Having done so, he would put them down, saying [for each one]: 'This is my mother, this my mother's mother.' The sequence of that man's mothers and grandmothers would not come to an end, yet the grass, wood, branches, and foliage in this Jambudipa would be used up and exhausted. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, this samsara is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. For such a long time, bhikkhus, you have experienced suffering, anguish, and disaster, and swelled the cemetery."
(SN 15.1, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 9th, 2017 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: What is the creation of the universe story in Buddhism?

Content:

Pjotr said:

Is the meaning of "without discoverable beginning" the same as "no beginning"? Does that sutta phrase "a first point is not discerned" imply "there is no first point"?

Astus wrote:

In simple terms, yes.

III.19d. In this way the circle of existence is without beginning.

Arising by reason of the defilements and actions; defilements and actions by reason of arising; arising by reason of the defilements and actions: the circle of existences is thus without beginning. In order for it to begin, it would be necessary for the first item to have no cause: and if one dharma arises without a cause, then all dharmas would arise without causes. Now the determination of time and place show that a seed produces a shoot, that a fire produces cooking: hence there is no arising that does not have causes. On the other hand, the theory of a single and permanent cause has been refuted above (ii.65): hence the cycle of existence has no beginning.
(Abhidharmakosabhasyam, vol 2, p 400-401)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 10th, 2017 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

...or do Soto practitioners also practice Samatha and Vipassana?

Astus wrote:

What would it mean to be a "Soto practitioner" without actually practising it? Sounds like being a fisherman without ever fishing.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

is Soto Zen synonymous with Shikantaza only?

Astus wrote:

I think that depends on whom you ask. It seems to me that the mainstream answer is yes.

Justmeagain said:

Or to put it another way, does Soto Zen factor in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, Sattipatana, Jhana etc...I guess not.

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is supposed to be a "perfect and complete" practice that includes the whole path. After all, it is the practice of enlightenment.

"The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment."

(http://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/part_3/fukan_zazengi.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

While I never got much explanation of what is shikantaza when I was involved in Zen, I will say that it basically sounds like what other teachers describe as the union of shamatha and vipassana. If it's not, I'd love to know how/why it's different, other than the nomenclature used.

Astus wrote:

The traditional Zen term is the unity of samadhi and prajna.

"Good friends, our teaching takes meditation and wisdom as its fundamental. Everyone, do not say in your delusion that meditation and wisdom are different."

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 41)

Dogen basically says the same by calling zazen practice-enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

DGA said:

Dōgen elaborates it in his Shōbōgenzō.

Astus wrote:

Where exactly? Briefly in the Bendowa he rejects the option of using Tendai or other methods for meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 at 9:32 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

DGA said:

I remember reading around in book 6, in which zazen is described.

Astus wrote:

Book 6? The BDK edition has 4 volumes.

DGA said:

My point is that Dogen's descriptions of meditation don't really look or feel (if you will) like the teachings of Zhiyi.

Astus wrote:

Chan can be matched with Tiantai's sudden and perfect method of the neither sitting nor walking samadhi. Dogen's works are part of the mature Zen literature, so he uses lots of Chan lingo.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

DGA said:

I think Dogen is writing about something different from shi kan when he describes shikantaza. For starters, he wasn't a fool. If he wanted to discuss shi kan, he would have done so rather than developing a new concept to get his teaching across.

Astus wrote:

The only new thing about Dogen's approach to meditation that I can find is his focus on the physical posture. But as for what is to be done while seated, the matter of neither-thinking (hishiryo) and dropping body and mind (shinjin datsuraku), those are not different from prajnaparamita (non-abiding, no-thought, etc.).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 12th, 2017 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

rory said:

Dogen does deny any influence of Tendai shikan in Bendo wa

Astus wrote:

I have not found that part of Bendowa. What he writes there regarding shikan:

"[Someone] asks, "Is there nothing to prevent a person who practices this zazen from also performing mantra and quiet-reflection practices?"

I say: When I was in China, I heard the true essence of the teachings from a true master; he said that he had never heard that any of the patriarchs who received the authentic transmission of the Buddha-seal ever performed such practices additionally, in the Western Heavens or in the Eastern Lands, in the past or in the present. Certainly, unless we devote ourselves to one thing, we will not attain complete wisdom."

(SBGZ, vol 1, p 16)

And the footnote to the question states for "quiet-reflection" (although I do not completely agree with it):

"Shikan, lit., "ceasing and reflecting," representing the Sanskrit words śamatha (quietness) and vipaśyanā (insight, reflection), is a practice of the Tendai sect: the method of practice is almost the same as the practice of zazen explained by Master Dōgen, but in the Tendai sect the practice is not regarded as sufficient in itself." (p28n85)

rory said:

He also mentions the direct connection between shamatha and the attainment of nirvana in Hsaio chih-kuan p. 86

Astus wrote:

That is an exaggeration. The section Bielefeldt refers to is about how one can attain calmness through realising emptiness. In other words, nirvana is perfect samatha.

rory said:

compares Dogen's samadhi of self-fulfilling activity as 'unconditioned freedom' to Shinran's naturalness

Astus wrote:

I consider it a misunderstanding of both Shinran and Dogen to make such comparisons.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 14th, 2017 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

rory said:

Fascinating, which translation are you using and whose footnotes?

gassho

Rory

Astus wrote:

It's from the BDK edition (Nishijima & Cross translation) that you can find online on their site. It is also connected to the online Taisho, so you can compare it with the original easily.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Comparing shikantaza to the unity of samatha and vipasyana is not saying that it is like the gradual path of practising calm and insight, but it is like the accomplishing of both concentration and wisdom. That oneness of samadhi and prajna as the essence of Zen is explicitly stated in the Platform Sutra. It is no different from the inseparability of silence and illumination in Hongzhi's teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Is Shikantaza a requisite of being a Soto Zennie?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Zen being subitist, I thought the above kind of goes without saying.

Astus wrote:

I think so far objections were about taking samath-vipasyana to be a step by step method, that is, it doesn't go without saying. As probably with any comparison, the first step is to define the elements compared.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Shakyamuni did teach it.

Astus wrote:

If it had been taught by him, it should have been found in the sutras.

Queequeg said:

It was just expressed in a different string of sounds.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean he said one thing but meant another? Or do you refer to the general idea of reciting scripture titles?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

So are we debating whether Buddha taught the Lotus Sutra?

Astus wrote:

No, not that. Does the Lotus Sutra teach reciting its own title as a practice?

Queequeg said:

He taught single minded concentration on the real aspect of reality.

Astus wrote:

And that real aspect is a title of a scripture? Shouldn't it be something like suchness, emptiness, dependent origination, etc.?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

DGA said:

The explicit practice--the recitation of those Sino-Japanese characters--Buddha

Shakyamuni did not teach that, as you acknowledge. I think that's uncontroversial.

Astus wrote:

This is what I referred to with pointing out the absence of the practice in the scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 19th, 2017 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

A teaching that posits emptiness and dependent origination as holistically integrated in a single thought moment is complete. NMRK is a creature of this school of thought and refers to this so-called Threefold Integrated Truth.

Astus wrote:

Tendai has the practice of contemplating the threefold truth, and that is understood to be the vipasyana leading to the wisdom of enlightenment. Repeating merely the title of a text that does not even include explicitly that doctrine seems very far from that. They are further from each other than the difference between riding a bike and repeating the name of a bike.

Queequeg said:

by practicing NMRK, even with the most feeble intent, their mind has oriented to the sublime reality and they are treading the path; in time, they will become increasingly familiar with the Mind of MRK which is the Buddha's mind.)

Astus wrote:

To say that it serves as a basis for later development sounds fine to me, but not anything beyond that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 19th, 2017 at 12:46 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Thus declared Astus.

Astus wrote:

I'd rather like to find an explanation for it. As for me declaring anything, here are some passages from Huineng on the matter:

"Good friends, people of this world always recite prajñā with their mouths, but they don't recognize the prajñā of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which

doesn't satisfy one's hunger. ... To recite it orally without practicing it in the mind is [as unreal] as a phantasm or hallucination, [and as evanescent] as dew or lightning. To recite it orally and practice it mentally is for mind and mouth to correspond."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 28)

[Fada] said, "I have recited the Lotus Sutra three thousand times."

The master said, "Even if you recite it ten thousand times it won't help you understand the meaning of the scripture."

...

Fada said, "If this is so, then should one just understand the meaning and not bother to recite the sutras?"

The master said, "Can the sutras be in error? How could they impede your mindfulness? It is just that delusion and enlightenment are in the person, that harm and benefit depend on oneself. To recite with the mouth and practice in the mind is to turn the sutra. To recite with the mouth without practicing in the mind is to be turned by the sutra."
(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed, p 55, 58)

"To learn and recite is the small vehicle, to be enlightened to the Dharma and understand its meaning is the middle vehicle, and to cultivate according to the Dharma is the Great Vehicle. To penetrate all the myriad dharmas and to be equipped with all the myriad dharmas, without any defilement at all; to transcend the characteristics of the various dharmas, without anything that is attained: this is called the Supreme Vehicle."
(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed, p 63)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 19th, 2017 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

What response is there to that?

Astus wrote:

Let me rephrase it then as a question: what is the connection between recitation and insight? How does one get from repeating the title to enlightenment?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 19th, 2017 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Anything and everything is the Middleway Buddha nature. This means any practice, any train of thought fully pursued to it's end, ends in full blown enlightenment.

...

As I've suggested above, why not any other chant. Sure. Why not just Zazen. Sure why not. Any practice will work. The dung beetle attains enlightenment perfecting his craft rolling balls of shit. This is the point of departure where in Japan, craftsmanship became a spiritual pursuit. Crafting the aesthetically perfectly imperfect tea bowl, or the perfection of kata.

Astus wrote:

Seeing that all is buddha-mind comes as the final realisation, so how can that be used to validate any practice? If it were true that anything fully pursued is a liberating path, what is the point of a Buddhist teaching? I mean, there have always been maximalists, hedonists, extremists, etc. This reasoning seems to contradict both ordinary and Dharmic causality where one always needs specific causes and conditions to reach specific results.

Queequeg said:

Chanting is prescribed for the obstacle of a distracted mind. ... It's also a mnemonic sort of theory contemplation by virtue of it having been expounded by Zhiyi as the distillation/complete embodiment of the Buddha's teaching.

Astus wrote:

And in that way chanting is one of the most popular practises everywhere, even beyond Buddhism.

Queequeg said:

It's also, at a level I can only describe as mystic, a melding with the Buddha mind.

Astus wrote:

There are teachings addressing the relation between recitation/chanting and realisation of buddha-mind, for instance it is called the "real mark buddha remembrance" (實相念佛) in the Pure Land school, but there realisation is qualitatively distinct from mere verbal repetition.

Queequeg said:

From the moment you hear the Buddha's name, you've irreversibly entered the Buddha path, just as the poor man is transformed the moment he hears that he is the rich man's son.

Astus wrote:

That is also a generally accepted concept derived from the 17th chapter (The Merit of the Initial Determination for Enlightenment) of the Avatamsaka Sutra, and used to illustrate how the 1st level - raising bodhicitta - of the path is equal to the 52nd level - buddhahood. But that does not mean one can just skip the 50 stages between start and finish.

Queequeg said:

NMRK is at the most basic level, this introduction.

Astus wrote:

So is it that NMRK is meant as the first step that requires all the paramitas and stages to be followed up by? Like buddha remembrance in the Pure Land school that is meant to bring one to Sukhavati where one begins the actual training on the path of sages?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

In the Lotus Sutra traditions, the Perfect and Sudden path starts with being told of your Buddhanature - we don't wait to the final realization. This idea appears throughout Zhiyi's writings, but is perhaps most directly explained in the Zhiyi's Mohozhikuan in the section on the Six Identities. The Six Identities is an outline of Buddhist path from ordinary being to Buddha.

Astus wrote:

The six identities system is a very good example of a gradual path.

Queequeg said:

The Buddha-mind/Buddhanature/tathagatagarbha is given from the start. You can argue against that, but I will not be joining you on that excursion.

Astus wrote:

I do not argue that at all.

Queequeg said:

Since what we are dealing with is reality, it follows that any dharma pursued to its end reveals the real nature of reality. Even if you start with an utterly unfounded dharma, like the horns of a rabbit. Reality is unavoidable.

Astus wrote:

What's the point of a path if it is unavoidable? Just as described in the six identities, one needs first of all to hear about it, then through practice gradually reach complete realisation. If one has not heard about the Dharma, one will not move from the first to the second identity.

Queequeg said:

Since Buddha is innate in reality, of course we encounter Buddha sooner, hopefully, or later.

Astus wrote:

Samsara has been going on without a beginning and apparently we have failed to attain buddhahood so far.

Queequeg said:

Its not a gradual path, which seems to be what you keep trying to relate this to.

Astus wrote:

A sudden path means buddhahood right now, no development, no practice, just perfect enlightenment. Would you say that the moment one utters NMRK one has unbounded wisdom and compassion?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Except that it explicitly is not.

Astus wrote:

How so? It lists six identities. Shengyan (Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p 100-102) sums it up like this:

"The fact that all sentient beings on the earth possess the Tathāgata's wisdom and meritorious characteristics is Buddhahood in Principle.

The second level consists of people who have heard the Dharma and already know they intrinsically possess buddha-nature, the potential to become a Buddha.

People who are practicing the Dharma and can subdue (but not sever) the afflictions occupy the third level.

Those at the fourth level have purified their six sense faculties and are fast approaching entry into the noble stages.

The fifth level comprises noble bodhisattvas who have reached the first abiding stage or beyond.

The sixth level consists of true Buddhas, who have achieved the perfect fruition of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment."

This is a clear description of the gradual bodhisattva path from the beginning to the end.

Queequeg said:

We're not speaking the same vocabulary.

Astus wrote:

That's possible. In that case, could you clarify please what you mean by such terms as sudden path, etc.?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to

their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

We're talking about Lotus Buddhism, and so you need to rely on Lotus Buddhism sources for definitions.

Astus wrote:

Isn't there something from Nichiren on the matter that explains these issues?

Queequeg said:

Zhiyi defines the Sudden and Perfect Path as the path based on Buddhanature. The Perfect teaching can appear as a gradual path, but that doesn't mean it is really is gradual path.

Astus wrote:

Zhiyi taught an extensive system of various practices where the progress from ordinary being to enlightenment is logically explained. How can that be replaced by simple recitation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

What issues?

Astus wrote:

E.g.:

How the recitation of the title is enlightenment?

If so, what does enlightenment mean?

Or is the recitation an initial step towards further practice?

If so, what are those later practices?

Queequeg said:

Much of what he taught was Gradual and Distinct. He Taught Sudden and Perfect meditation only in the 7th section of Mohezhikuan. That's the Ichinen Sanzen meditation.

Astus wrote:

Here is something relevant by Rev. Kanji Tamura:

"Meanwhile, the existence of the Buddha as the concrete goal for all sentient beings is revealed in the essential section. According to Nichiren Shonin, the ichinen sanzen doctrine of the theoretical section is just a step to the ichinen sanzen of the essential

section. When the land of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, the true realm of Buddhas, was revealed for the first time in the essential section, the theory of mutual possession of ten realms integrated by the realm of Buddhas as well as the ichinen sanzen doctrine is truly realized in this world. (referring to "Open Your Eyes to the Lotus Teaching") Comparing both sections, the theoretical section is focused on taking steps upward to the realm of Buddhas while the essential section shows the salvation bestowed downward by Sakyamuni Buddha. Both sections the both upward and downward. However, the theoretical section emphasizes the self-improvement factors of the Lotus Sutra. It plainly says, "May the merits we have accumulated by this offering be distributed among all living beings, and may we and all other living beings attain the enlightenment of the Buddha!" (Chapter 7) On the other hand, the essential section describes Sakyamuni Buddha's vow to save all sentient beings based on His great compassion, saying, "I am always thinking: How shall I cause all living beings to enter into the unsurpassed Way and quickly become Buddha?" (Chapter 16) There, Sakyamuni Buddha's compassion comes down to sentient beings while sentient beings are to go up to the land of Sakyamuni Buddha by their faith. This two-way connection is the basic form of the essential section.

The ichinen sanzen doctrine of the theoretical section begins with observing the transient mind that changes moment by moment. On the other hand, the ichinen sanzen of the essential section begins with unification between the great compassion of Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha and our mind of faith. In other words, to feel Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha through our existences and our faith is the 'actuality' (or realization) of the ichinen sanzen doctrine."

(http://www.nichiren-shu.org/newsletter/nichirenschu_news/nichiren148e.pdf)

From this it seems to me that the practice of calming and contemplation is replaced by the faith that somehow Shakyamuni will transfer his buddhahood to the believers. This "somehow" is explained with the theory of interpenetration and universal buddha-nature. However, I guess because this system is based purely on faith, there is no logical connection provided for the transfer of buddhahood, nor for how realisation could happen by recitation.

Queequeg said:

there is a big chunk of this discussion that is being left out - ichinensanzen, or "Three Thousand Realms in a Single Thought-Moment". Without that, this discussion is pretty much knee capped. You can't understand Daimoku without it. I don't think you can understand Tiantai without it.

Astus wrote:

Ichinen sanzen does not explain how recitation of the title can be equal to enlightenment. Furthermore, there is no connection established between recitation and realising ichinen sanzen. This is what I really feel left out.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to

their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

rory said:

Tendai Shu of course has the concept endon sho

Astus wrote:

And that description does fit into what a sudden path is, what enlightenment at this very moment stands for.

As Seishin quotes Ven Shoshin Ichishima on the issue of ichinen sanzen and its relation to perfect and sudden enlightenment:

"Our World, the Buddha World, the world of sentient beings, or the five aggregates are all in fact the expressions of Middle Way. You can not avoid sufferings. Ignorance and delusions themselves are the object of Enlightenment. There is not any cause of suffering to be cut off. All of Fundamental Ignorance and distorted mind are involved in the Middle Way. There isn't any special path to be practiced. Our Life and Death are the manifestation of Nirvana."

(<https://tendaiuk.com/2016/05/05/ichinen-sanzen/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

I could use the example of Dogen's premise that just sitting is a natural expression of Buddhahood. Does this mean that anyone who sits zazen is a Buddha and is replete with Omniscience?

Astus wrote:

Of course it does.

Anonymous X said:

I don't think your definition of a sudden path is necessarily accurate. A path is an avenue to something, an attainment.

Astus wrote:

If a path meant something necessarily gradual, it cannot be sudden, so that means there is no sudden path.

Anonymous X said:

Spontaneous awakening is something different. Even with a spontaneous awakening, there will be an acclimation to it that could be seen as taking time, ala step by step, but even this is misleading.

Astus wrote:

Sudden enlightenment does not and can not mean some event without cause, or a chance realisation. As for the teaching of "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice", there enlightenment does not mean the attainment of buddhahood, but mostly an initial understanding.

Anonymous X said:

Once the recognition of Buddhanature takes hold, time is not of any importance. Integration is not seen as a time-space activity. It all becomes spontaneous. All dharmas are apprehended in their original nature. Nothing to do, nothing to be understood, nothing to achieve. Have I missed the point?

Astus wrote:

The traditional bodhisattva path is exactly like that, first working on understanding emptiness, then realising emptiness, and then cultivating the realisation of emptiness, until full maturation as a buddha. That is what the gradual path looks like.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

I recently came across this website here in Thailand. Have you ever heard of this https://soundcloud.com/maha_barami/disregard-all-views?in=maha_barami/sets/voice-of-dharma-monk? Luangpor Phosrisuriya Khemarato

Astus wrote:

I did not. However, in the talk you linked the context is different, but it's always good to remind oneself that all views are false.

"Through the idea that (something is) agreeable, (the ignorant) become attached (to it); separating themselves from that (idea), (the mediocre) are free from attachment; when (the lofty-minded) see (that everything), as the man created by magic, lacks an own being, they attain nirvana."

(Nagarjuna: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/viewFile/8608/251556>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2017 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

It is a symbolic action.

Astus wrote:

If that were not the case, then it would be just rhetoric to trick people.

Anonymous X said:

One can practice for many years and suddenly awaken. All awakening seems to be sudden to my understanding. That would preclude any step by step.

Astus wrote:

Gradual practice followed by a "sudden" awakening is a different issue.

Anonymous X said:

Step by step always has a division of subject/object unless there is first, an awakening to the Buddhanature.

Astus wrote:

Only buddhas are awakened to the buddha-nature.

Anonymous X said:

I never mentioned enlightenment and rarely use the word. If you mean awakening to Buddhanature, why would you need a cause if it is our intrinsic natural state? It only seems like something causes it. If it is a meditative state of mind, I would agree with you.

Astus wrote:

There is necessarily a path to liberation, otherwise there is no chance of anyone becoming free from samsara. Assuming there is no cause of awakening is considered a wrong view in Buddhism.

Anonymous X said:

In Dzogchen, they call rigpa, self-sprung.

Astus wrote:

I assume you mean rangjung (rang - self; byung - arise).

Anonymous X said:

Who is working on understanding emptiness? Who is realising it? Who is cultivating it?

Astus wrote:

It's called a bodhisattva.

Anonymous X said:

This is all symbolic, not literal.

Astus wrote:

What is the difference between symbolic and literal? Can you give examples to both?

Anonymous X said:

There is a momentum, but it is non dual and you are not in charge.

Astus wrote:

What is viryaparamita for then?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 22nd, 2017 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Concept is symbolic, direct experience is literal. Can you show me advaya? No, but you 'know' when it is the case.

Astus wrote:

In other words, all concepts are symbolic, therefore there is no difference between one word and another, as they are equally symbolic. Advaya is another concept, and it can be explained quite adequately. As for direct experience being literal, it can hardly be that, since it is without letters, i.e. words and concepts, therefore without meaning.

Anonymous X said:

This has something to do with 'hero wisdom'. What it is I can't say. I would think this is a word that would be subject to different interpretations. What is yours?

Astus wrote:

Transcendent vigour is intentional effort in cultivating the paramitas. Cultivation does not happen naturally or automatically, and such ideas only result in indolence and laziness, the very opposites of virya.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 22nd, 2017 at 4:10 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

rory said:

"Nichiren's thought focuses on realizing Buddhahood at the state of verbal identity, which he understood as the stage of embracing the daimoku of the Lotus sutra and taking faith in it.[/i]

....but "To say that "walking standing, sitting, and lying down are themselves the essence of calming and contemplation" is thus to express the insight of one awakened to original nonduality, not to deny the necessity of practice."

Astus wrote:

If I understand you correctly, you mean that the recitation of the title is an initial method

that is meant to introduce people to the Dharma, but following that it requires continued practice of other methods. That being so, how is recitation followed by what practices?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 23rd, 2017 at 2:55 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Right, cultivation is not natural or automatic, that is why I originally referred to one's Buddhanature, the nature of one's own mind.

Astus wrote:

Realising buddha-nature is how one becomes a buddha, as only buddhas experience directly buddha-nature.

Anonymous X said:

When that is recognized, there is no cultivation in the sense of a doer or a path. It happens spontaneously. Any effort is a falling back into habit energy. You don't break through habit energy with habit energy. It is a letting go of it because there is nothing that needs to be done to it. This doesn't contradict Chan and other schools and I believe inline with Zongmi.

Astus wrote:

The initial awakening given in Zongmi's system is an intellectual understanding of buddha-nature, and that is why it is equivalent to the level of faith, the first section of the 52 stages of the bodhiattva path. The subsequent gradual training means going through those 52 stages. If such progression could happen automatically or spontaneously, there would be no need to even mention step-by-step training, much less explain it in detail.

"Some say: "One must first all-at-once awaken and then should step-by-step practice." This is in conformity with [intellectual] understanding awakening. (If we speak in conformity with the cutting off of hindrances, this is like the sun's rising all-at-once but the frost's melting step-by-step. If we speak in conformity with the perfecting of attributes, this is like the fact that, upon birth, a child all-at-once possesses four limbs and six senses and as it matures step-by-step perfects its will and functions.) Therefore, the Huayan says: "When one first raises the thought [of awakening], one attains perfect awakening." Only after this are the three worthies and the ten [stages of] the noble one step-by-step cultivated and realized."

(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 153)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 23rd, 2017 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

rory said:

From experience with Nichiren Shu and Kempon Hokke Shu, they advocate study, meditation, sutra chanting, visualization, ascetic practices for the priesthood and rebirth, but they aren't original enlightenment sects...

Astus wrote:

Is there anything available online, or at least in English, on the details of those practices?

rory said:

How SGI, Nichiren Shoshu, get from only chanting to Buddhahood. I simply don't know.

Astus wrote:

That's unfortunate, as that is the big question.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 23rd, 2017 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

rory said:

sure here is a link to aragyo:

<http://www.nichiren.or.jp/english/temples/hokkekyoji/page2.php>

study: <http://www.nichiren-shu.org/practice.html>

shodaigyo meditation: <http://www.shodaigyo.org/>

SGI: <https://www.sgi.org/about-us/buddhism-in-daily-life/who-is-a-buddha.html>

Astus wrote:

Thank you. Apparently http://www.nichiren.or.jp/english/teachings/teachings_nichiren/ teaches the same:

"Because the Odaimoku embodies the essence of the Lotus Sutra, it contains all of the qualities of Buddhahood. This means that by the merit of the five characters, Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, we can attain Buddhahood by reciting the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo."

Just as in <https://www.sgi.org/about-us/buddhism-in-daily-life/who-is-a-buddha.html>:

"As with gold hidden in a dirty bag, or lotus flowers emerging from a muddy pond, we have first to believe our Buddha nature is there, then awaken and develop or "polish" it. In Nichiren Buddhism this can be done through devotion to the law contained in the Lotus Sutra and the chanting of the phrase "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo."

On the other hand, usually in Buddhism one is taught to directly address the cause(s) of

suffering and delusion, and one is given ways to remove ignorance. I do not see how repeating a few syllables could ever achieve the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 23rd, 2017 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

An intellectual understanding is not what I'm talking about. That is what all of the step by step is based on, not the recognition of your own nature. Zongmi often goes much deeper than how you are pigeon-holing him.

Astus wrote:

Could you provide some quotes from Zongmi on the matter? As for what I said before:

"Even after all-at-once-understanding awakening, the habit energy from innumerable past lives is impossible to eliminate all at once, and so one must engage in a step-by-step practice grounded in intellectual-understanding awakening."

(Zongmi on Chan, p 96)

"If one relies on awakening to practice, it is [intellectual] understanding awakening, but, if one relies on practice to awaken, it is [direct] realization awakening."

(Zongmi on Chan, p 153-154)

Anonymous X said:

When I say automatically or spontaneously, it is not a by-pass of step by step. It is a qualitatively different approach to it that is not time-based on dualistic notions of achievement. There still needs to be an accounting of everything, but it happens in a different field than the doer is operating in. That same letting go is in operation and sudden vs gradual loses its meaning. No reference point. Thusness.....

Astus wrote:

What you seem to propose is what Zongmi attributes to the Hongzhou school (and he does not agree with it):

"Once one has gained understanding awakening into this principle, everything [partakes of] the spontaneity of the heavenly real. Therefore, the principle of practice should be in accordance with this, and you should not stir mind to cut off the bad, nor should you stir mind to cultivate the path. The path is mind. You should not use mind to cultivate [the path in] mind. The bad is also mind. You should not use mind to cut off [the bad in] mind. When you neither cut off [bad] nor create [karma], but just give free rein to luck and exist in freedom, then you are to be called a liberated person. There are no dharmas to get caught up in, no buddhas to become. It is like space that neither increases nor decreases. What could you possibly add to it? Why is this so? Outside the mind nature there is not even one dharma to be apprehended. Therefore, "just give free rein to mind"

is practice."
(Zongmi on Chan, p 86)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 24th, 2017 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Anonymous X said:

'Grounded in substance' is what I was trying to say when I mentioned a qualitatively different approach.

Astus wrote:

Even the standard bodhisattva path is necessarily grounded in substance, because the practice of the paramitas require the realisation of prajnapramita first. Similarly, in the sravakayana a stream-entrant possesses the correct understanding of the view, but needs to cultivate the path to eventually attain nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 26th, 2017 at 7:33 PM

Title: Diamond Sutra Summary by Hanshan

Content:

Astus wrote:

"As all living things are deluded and upset by their views of forms and since their grasp is very hard to break, the Buddha used the Diamond mind wisdom to demolish these views one by one, in order to enable them to perceive the fundamental wisdom of the Dharma-kaya's body.

At first they clung to the forms of the five aggregates (skandhas) of body and mind and to the six sense data. They were attached to these forms while giving alms (dana) to seek merits in their quest of Buddhahood. The World Honoured One broke up this by the doctrine of non-attachment.

Next, they clung to the form of Bodhi and the Buddha broke it up by the doctrine of gainlessness.

Next, they clung to the form of Buddha lands adorned by almsgiving (dana) and the Buddha broke it up by declaring that there are no lands which can be adorned.

Next, they clung to merits which would result in the appearance of the Reward body (or Sambhoga-kaya) and the Buddha broke it up by stating that it is not in fact the completely perfect form body (Rupa-kaya).

Next, they clung to the appearance of the Trikaya which the Tathagata possessed and the Buddha broke it up by declaring that the Nirmanakaya is not real and that Sambhoga-kaya is beyond forms.

Next, they clung to the view that the Dharma-kaya must have forms, and the Buddha broke this up by declaring that the Dharma-kaya has none.

Next, they clung to the existence of a true ego in the Dharma-kaya and the Buddha

broke it up by declaring that all things are egoless.

Next, they clung to the view that the Tathagata possessed the forms of the Trikaya and the Buddha broke up this by declaring that the real is neither monistic nor pluralistic.

Thus all their false views were broken up successively one after the other, and with the elimination of all idea of form and appearance, the mind had nowhere to alight."

(Hanshan Deqing: The Diamond Cutter of Doubts, in Lu K'uan Yü: "Ch'an and Zen Teaching", first series, p 203-204)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 27th, 2017 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

You guys are caught up in the connection between the forming of sounds with the mouth, as if that is all that is implied by the practice of Daimoku. Nichiren explicitly taught that the Daimoku, more than just contemplated, more than just recited, must be "read with the body." The Daimoku is actually a teaching on taking the moment to moment nature of life, in the most mundane circumstances, and striving to live in accord with Buddhanature moment to moment, no matter how faintly understood.

Astus wrote:

What is the definition of buddha-nature? I'm asking this because there are quite a few ways to define it, and depending on that there can be different approaches to it. If, for instance, it refers to the presence of various buddha qualities, then a sudden path should mean the immediate presence of those qualities.

Queequeg said:

The practical application is the same whether Buddhanature is seen through insight or through faith. I honor you as a Buddha either way. The experience of honoring you as a Buddha has beneficial effects regardless of how my experience is informed. The effects are different - as they say, we hear the same teaching differently - but like the Dharma rain, it falls and nourishes everyone.

Astus wrote:

That description sounds to me as a skilful means to teach people the practice of humility and respect, but not really anything that brings about insight into interdependence.

Queequeg said:

If any practice can be discerned in the Lotus Sutra, its the propagation of the Lotus Sutra - the exhortation to teach even one phrase, and concomitantly describing the immense benefit of even a person who hears of the Lotus through a telephone game of 50 people and reacts with the slightest joy.

Astus wrote:

How is that any different from accumulating worldly merit that may eventually bring one to studying the Dharma? Furthermore, with propagation as the sole practice actually found in that scripture, it is hard to see how that actually covers the whole of Buddhadharma. It is like saying that obtaining faith in the Triple Jewel is the basis of enlightenment, but at the same time that is only the very first step on the path and not the entirety of the path.

Queequeg said:

There is a strong prejudice against what I will call public, engaged practice in favor of contemplation in the Buddhist community that seems distorted and exaggerated in some sense.

Astus wrote:

I have not seen that raised as an objection here.

Queequeg said:

Is it really such a more effective practice to sit in contemplation rather than engage with others, striving to see their buddhahood and try to relieve their suffering?

Astus wrote:

Interpersonal relations have been the subject of practice from the beginning under the topic of ethical discipline. As for Mahayana, the accumulation of merit - the first three paramitas - are very important. However, without wisdom meritorious acts only generate samsaric results.

"With no understanding of the meaning of absence,

But engaging only in mere studies

And failing to engage in meritorious acts-

Such base people are lost."

(Nagarjuna: <http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v31)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 28th, 2017 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Its hard to discern where you're going with your pronouncements, insistence on standards that are foreign to this particular system of thought, and apparent lack of acknowledgment of answers to previous questions.

Astus wrote:

Simply put, I'd like to make sense of what Nichiren's teaching is about. Reciting the title, the sutra, respecting others based on the assumption of inherent buddha-nature -

these are clear elements. What I still find unclear is how one gets from delusion to enlightenment. There is a general description of the bodhisattva path in Mahayana, where one needs to remove the twofold obscuration, so unless the cause of samsara (ignorance) is not accepted within the Lotus Tradition, I'm trying to figure out how those practices of recitation and respect can actually address delusion. I did go through the answers you have provided in this thread so far, I also read some explanations available online from Nichiren followers and some of the works of Nichiren as well, but it is simply not clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 28th, 2017 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

If you're really interested, I suggested a book by Brook Ziporyn above. Notwithstanding his style of presenting the subject, I think you're going to be surprised.

Astus wrote:

Thanks. And until I can actually obtain that book, isn't there anything online, like in the works of Nichiren?

Queequeg said:

Enlightenment is realizing the real nature of delusions. Once you understand that, what more is there to do with them? What is there to address?

Astus wrote:

So it is accepted in Mahayana in general.

The thorough understanding of cyclic existence -

This is referred to as "nirvana."

(Nagarjuna: <http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v6)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 28th, 2017 at 5:43 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

These are 10 important letters identified by Nichiren's direct disciple, Nikko:

Astus wrote:

That is a useful list, thank you.

Queequeg said:

And so you should understand there's nothing to do about delusion.

Astus wrote:

There is a lot to do about delusion, most importantly recognise its empty nature and that way abandon attachment to it. Otherwise it's just samsara-business as usual.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 28th, 2017 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

rory said:

The answer is Nichiren took Medieval Tendai hongaku doctrine as far as it would go. From Original Enlightenment again talking about a Medieval text Shuzenji-ketsu...Thus the achievement of full enlightenment at the stage of verbal identity is presented as a theoretical possibility, but one limited only to the most capable."

Astus wrote:

Didn't Nichiren teach according to the doctrine of Dharma decline where beings have weak faculties? Dogen did call zazen practice-enlightenment, but that seems qualitatively very far from reciting the title.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 29th, 2017 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

You asked what Nichiren is about, so here's what it means to me.

Astus wrote:

Thank you.

I'd like to sum up what I could take from it, and please tell if you agree with it or not.

"the Daimoku is about seeing Buddhature in all beings and things." means that "one enters the wisdom through faith", and "The Daimoku is an expression of this faith, a way to put it into practice." So "NMRK is the practice of seeing Buddhature in all beings and all things", and that "is the theoretical framework." That means "we rely on its expression in our lives, even as we may not understand how it is expressing as us", so to say that "we are aspects of Buddhahood, our activity is Buddha activity" is an article of faith, and that makes the various activities (" striving to be kind, compassionate, caring, supportive", etc.) "consciously framed in the path to Buddhahood."

To make it even shorter: the path taught by Nichiren is to have faith in inherent buddha-

nature and the future achievement of buddhahood, and that faith is expressed in the various practices, like the recitation of the title. Is this an accurate summary?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 29th, 2017 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

You keep trying to define it in a certain way.

Astus wrote:

Yes, a clear definition could be useful.

Queequeg said:

A single moment of thought (一念) is by definition "the Total Field of All Phenomena".

The Total Field of All Phenomena is also Buddha. This is what Zhiyi means when he says, all beings are Buddhas in principle.

Astus wrote:

I think it's important here to be precise about what Dharmadhatu (Total Field of All Phenomena) actually stands for. It means emptiness. Because both nirvana and samsara, the realm of buddhas and the realm of sentient beings are equally and completely empty, they are not different in the ultimate sense. And when one has fully realised universal emptiness, that is, one is free from clinging to views, then no phenomena is attached to.

Queequeg said:

To hear of the Buddhanature is to be apprised of this fact. Once you are told, that is how the Total Field of All Phenomena and the single thought moment are understood.

Astus wrote:

Learning of something is the first step, but it needs to be followed by understanding and realisation in order to be of actual use. That's why there are six identities, not just one or two.

Queequeg said:

Faith in Daimoku means "Trust that all phenomena without exception are aspects of Buddhahood." Notice Zhiyi did not refer to some future Buddhahood. Its an immediate insight. Daimoku is the same insight.

Astus wrote:

Here I cannot see the connection between what Zhiyi says and Daimoku. Zhiyi talks about the highest possible level of enlightenment where one is free from all identification and view. The Daimoku is a set of syllables, that may represent buddhahood, but so does the word "buddha" represent it, and while many people know

the word "buddha", that does not make them buddhas, and certainly not immediately.

Queequeg said:

The phenomena which make up moment to moment experience are not some theoretical postulate. They are the actual experience from moment to moment. They are you looking at these words on a screen. Observing the Real Aspect of Reality is this moment to moment experience.

Astus wrote:

Everyone already has moment to moment experience. But very few have realised that experiences are unborn and empty. Even momentariness is a rather unknown teaching, and that is still an approach of the shravakayana far from "perfect and sudden". In other words, just because things are already suchness, emptiness, no self, etc., that doesn't automatically make beings buddhas. Just knowing the words is insufficient for awakening, and understanding their meaning is not enough either. How can it be the whole path to just believe in words one does not even comprehend? It sounds like claiming that merely because people recite the Heart Sutra every morning and every evening that makes them sages, while even if one studies every letter of the sutra it is still not enough to be a noble bodhisattva, much less a buddha. But, I'm happy to be wrong about all this.

Queequeg said:

The faith here is adhimukti - the moment immediately following contact between the sense object and sense apparatus, where the dharma appears but before ideation about it has arisen.

Astus wrote:

I'm not sure I understand what you mean here. Why would a thoughtless state be called faith? Perhaps in some sense of "ultimate faith" can be equated with not having thoughts, but what is that good for? On the other hand, if by "before ideation" you mean nirvikalpa or nisrapanica, that is not the moment before a thought arises, but the freedom from grasping concepts through the realisation of their insubstantiality.

Queequeg said:

In the case of the daimoku, it is the approbation that the dharmas are Buddha.

Astus wrote:

How is that any different from knowing that appearances are impermanent? What I mean is that even though people know that nothing lasts forever, they cling to them nevertheless, because impermanence is merely an idea and not something fully understood and realised.

Queequeg said:

The faith you're positing is in something far more complicated and complex. An object that is in the future, and so unreal. You're trying to place this into a linear time frame - your default assumption about a gradual path. Some faith in a future achievement. That fits with your assumption about a linear gradual path, but it's not applicable here. You

have to take what you posit as linear and collapse it into a single thought moment.

Astus wrote:

Could you demonstrate how this works? For example, I like chocolate. In order to obtain chocolate, I need to go to the shop and buy it, then take it home and eat the chocolate. This is a gradual, sequential path, that goes from desire, through effort, to the satisfaction of desire. To collapse it into a single thought would mean a thought that is simultaneously desire, effort, and satisfaction, however, that sounds very much like an impossibility, as either one wants something or does not. Similarly, the path from ordinary being to buddhahood means having all sorts of emotional and conceptual afflictions to not having any of them. Even though afflictions have always been empty, that emptiness is not recognised at all, and that is why they are called afflictions. Of course, if one could just immediately be free from the myriad disturbances in a single moment of thought, that would be truly wonderful. But saying that "afflictions are bodhi" does not really help with that. So that's why I fail to see what you mean by collapsing the linear into a single thought moment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 30th, 2017 at 3:02 AM

Title: Re: If according to Nichiren Buddhism, the Buddha taught people according to their level of understanding or capacity...

Content:

Queequeg said:

Like I said, you're making this more complicated and then we have to deal with the complications you posit. What I'm referring to has nothing to do with all that.

Astus wrote:

I think I see it now, and I can only accept that Nichiren's teaching is what it is:

"Because the Odaimoku embodies the essence of the Lotus Sutra, it contains all of the qualities of Buddhahood. This means that by the merit of the five characters, Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, we can attain Buddhahood by reciting the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo."

(http://www.nichiren.or.jp/english/teachings/teachings_nichiren/)

Thank you for your answers.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: "Self inquiry" in Zen, Chan, etc

Content:

Astus wrote:

For a thorough treatment of the topic of huatou practice:

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

As for "self inquiry", that is a confusing expression. There is no self in Buddhism, so there is nothing to inquire about. Its usual sense of self-inspection, contemplating one's emotional and mental state, that is too generic to be of any use. The four bases of mindfulness (satipatthana/smrtyupasthana) is the closest probably as a methodical approach, and more commonly the practice of confession and repentance. But the Chan approach to repentance is how it's explained in chapter 6 of the Platform Sutra, and that shows how there isn't really any inquiry into anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 3rd, 2017 at 12:49 AM

Title: Re: "Self inquiry" in Zen, Chan, etc

Content:

aflatun said:

No self yes, however I was guessing that in Chan/Zen/Seon the purpose of the inquiry (assuming the use of a question that asks about a "who," as the practice seems not limited to this) was to come to this realization, i.e. the question is unanswerable, there's nothing to find, etc. Thoughts? (as we know I have much to read and learn here, just putting this out there for conversation)

Astus wrote:

The huatou is used as a meditation object, but it goes beyond the usual path by not only removing conceptualisation through concentration but maintaining focused awareness through doubt. So while initially one keeps trying to come up with an answer, in the next phase one does not simply fall into a thoughtless state but cultivates a watchful attention. Practically this covers the methods of shamatha with and without object. And then there is the so called breakthrough when even this watchful attention is gone.

Another fine introductory book for this technique by Guo Ru (a disciple of Shengyan):

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN375.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 12th, 2017 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Has anyone read "Living Yogacara" or "Inside Vasubhandu's Yogacara"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Living Yogacara is good as a general introduction for

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asian_Yog%C4%81c%C4%81ra, i.e. the

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/schools/faxiang.html> (Faxiangzong/Hossoushuu).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 13th, 2017 at 3:43 PM

Title: Re: Has anyone read "Living Yogacara" or "Inside Vasubhandu's Yogacara"?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

Does the East Asian Yogacara (Faxiang) School differ from Indian or Tibetan ones?

Astus wrote:

It is based on Indian treatises, primarily the Cheng Weishi Lun, a great summary written by Xuanzang (602–664). It is somewhat different from the Tibetan versions, as for instance neither the Abhisamayalamkara, nor the Dharmadharmatavibhaga has reached China before the 20th century.

ItsRaining said:

Did they receive influence from the Tathgatagharbha thought from texts like the Shurangama Sutra and Awakening of Faith that's popular in East Asia?

Astus wrote:

It is the interpretation of buddha-nature that made the Faxiang school controversial in the eyes of other Chinese traditions, as Xuanzang and his disciples maintained the doctrine of five gotras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 15th, 2017 at 7:09 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

All the relevant Shinran quotes for this discussion are cited in this article by Alfred Bloom:

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-ENG/bloom.htm>

Astus wrote:

It provides a quote on the matter of Amida's status:

"Nirvana has innumerable names. It is impossible to give them in detail; I will list only a few. Nirvana is called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharmakaya, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus plants, trees and land all attain Buddhahood... Dharmakaya-as-suchness has neither color nor form. From this oneness was manifested form, called Dharmakaya-as-compassion. Taking this form, the Buddha proclaimed his name as Bhiksu Dharmakara and established the 48 great Vows.... This Tathagata has fulfilled the Vows which are the cause of his Buddhahood, and is thus called "Tathagata of the fulfilled body." This is none other than Amida Tathagata."

Unfortunately I couldn't find an online version of the original (唯信砂文意), in the translation <http://shinranworks.com/commentaries/notes-on-essentials-of-faith-alone/> the above does not seem to appear. Furthermore, it does not exactly say that Amida is the dharmadhatu.

As for the quote in the last section where it reads:

"Since Amida became a Buddha
Ten kalpas have passed. So (the Sutra) says.
But he seems to be a Buddha
Older than the innumerable mote-dot kalpas."

That is more poetry than a discussion of doctrinal theories.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 15th, 2017 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I suggest if we want Zen to be more than a mindfulness practice that will get us an edge in whatever project we want an edge in, we need to reclaim awakening as the central purpose of the project."

(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2017/05/reclaiming-enlightenment-zen-small-meditation.html>)

Reclaiming awakening should start with a definition of what that is. And the one provided in the following article:

"The deepest thing is a collapsing of one's sense of self and other and finding a place of radical openness.

...

What awakening is, is an existential stance of radical openness. It does not mean there are no blind spots. It does not mean one is free of the play of those endlessly arising constellations of grasping, aversion, and death-grasping certainties. But, it does mean some part of the person who has had this experience sees or knows the freedom as well as being fully in the play of life and death. So, yes, once and forever. And, no, not free from karma or even stupid or possibly evil actions."

(http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2017/05/awakening-zen-footnote-reflection-range-awakening-experiences.html?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=socialnetwork)

What is "radical openness"? Open for what? Since it apparently does not mean freedom from afflictions and delusions, how is it related to any level of realisation as understood in Mahayana? If it were the cessation of the false assumption of subject and object, that would mean attaining at least the first bhumi according to Asanga (Great Vehicle Summary, ch 3, BDK ed p 65-66), but the qualities of one with "radical openness" falls short of an arya-bodhisattva, consequently it is really far from calling it buddhahood. Then how can this kind of awakening be anything related to the teachings of Bodhidharma, Mazu, Linji, and Hakuin?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 15th, 2017 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Modernist Pure Land teachings are not so modern

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

If the Buddha taught 84,000 paths to enlightenment, then there can be multiple interpretations of Amida and the Pure Land, according to the needs and understanding of the myriad of beings. It doesn't need to be either/or.

Astus wrote:

And there are a good number of interpretations in Buddhism about Amitabha, including the approach of considering him a symbol. However, to take Amitabha as a symbol means that there is no Pure Land Path, only the Holy Path, and that negates the possibility of other power, the central element of the teachings of Honen and Shinran.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 15th, 2017 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Modernist Pure Land teachings are not so modern

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

As one can see, Dharma-body is leading all beings to Nirvana, whether Amida is a literal Buddha or is symbolic of Dharma-body.

Astus wrote:

The universal dharmakaya is usually called the dharmadhatu, and it is another word for emptiness. But just because things are already empty/pure/buddha it doesn't mean all beings can see that. The question is how to get from delusion to enlightenment. Both Honen and Shinran agreed that they were incapable of following the path in their own lives, hence they selected the simplest possible method to attain birth in Sukhavati and cultivate the bodhisattva path there. To say that Amitabha is a mere symbol for emptiness is to say that there is no Sukhavati to attain through relying on the original vow, hence no Pure Land Path either.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2017 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

anjali said:

one possible understanding is Dogen's comment about forgetting the self and becoming one with the ten thousand things.

Astus wrote:

Dogen doesn't really fit into the whole idea of working for enlightenment, because in his

teachings practice is enlightenment itself. ("The thought that practice and experience are not one thing is just the idea of non-Buddhists." - Bendowa, SBGZ vol 1, BDK ed, p 12 / T82n2582p18b26-28)

仏道をならふといふは、自己をならふなり。自己をならふといふは、自己をわするなり。自己をわするといふは、万法に証せらるるなり。万法に証せらるるといふは、自己の身心および他己の身心をして脱落せしむるなり。

(<http://www.sets.ne.jp/~zenhomepage/genzyoukouan.htm> / <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php?mode=detail&mode2=1&num1=2582&num2=&vol=82&page=23>)

"To learn the Buddha's truth is to learn ourselves. To learn ourselves is to forget ourselves. To forget ourselves is to be experienced by the myriad dharmas. To be experienced by the myriad dharmas is to let our own body and mind, and the body and mind of the external world, fall away."
(Genjokoan, SBGZ vol 1, BDK ed, p 42)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2017 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I would think 'openness' is another word for 'empty of own-being'.

Astus wrote:

If it were so, then one should qualify for the level of an arya-bodhisattva, hence stop committing evil things. But since that is not how it's defined, it sounds rather like a temporary experience of oneness that is neither wisdom nor compassion, just an elevated state of mind, i.e. dhyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2017 at 10:28 PM

Title: Re: How is this not Advaita?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"To say that the mind is rattled and the nature is composed is the view of other ways; to say that the nature is clear and deep and the form shifts and moves is the view of other ways. The study of the mind and study of the nature on the way of the buddha are not like this. The practice of the mind and practice of the nature on the way of the buddha are not equivalent to the other ways. The clarification of the mind and the clarification of the nature on the way of the buddha, the other ways have no share in."

(Dogen:

https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/sesshin_sessho/translation.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2017 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Meido said:

If indeed "practice is enlightenment itself" accurately captures Dogen's meaning.

Astus wrote:

I think Dogen is quite clear on the matter in his Bendowa, where the matter of "practice-enlightenment" is brought up in the context of the use of zazen after enlightenment. The term goes back to the story of Huairang meeting Huineng (Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed p 67 / http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T48n2008_001#0357b19):

When Huairang arrived and did his obeisance, the master asked "Where have you come from?"

[Huairang] said, "Mount Song."

The master said, "[No matter] what kind of thing, how would it come?"

[Huairang] said, "If you say it's like a single thing, then you're off the mark."

The master said, "Then can it be cultivated and realized (修證)?"

[Huairang] said, "Cultivation and realization (修證) are not nonexistent, but defilement does not occur."

And this is the explanation of the term from the Soto Zen site's "Basic Key Terms of Soto Zen Teaching" (http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms07.pdf):

"Generally speaking, religious practice aims at improving the practitioner's religious qualities. In that case, the relationship between practice and realization is considered to be that of cause and effect. But shusho itto radically demolishes this generally accepted relationship between practice and realization. It states that they are one and inseparable. This idea is based on the concept of "the self is originally buddha", the philosophical foundation of the southern school of Ch'an which takes all living beings as originally buddha.

Therefore, we should understand that shusho itto is not merely a philosophical idea unique to Dogen Zenji, but a common view in Zen about practice and realization. In fact, although not expressed explicitly, some other Zen masters, contemporaries of Dogen Zenji, also shared the same philosophical background."

And as Dogen defines zazen:

"The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice. It is simply the dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization (修証) of totally culminated enlightenment."

(https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/gongyo_seiten/translations/p art_3/fukan_zazengi.html / <http://www.sets.ne.jp/~zenhomepage/hukanzazenngi.htm>)

So, to put it in a larger context, Dogen's neither-thinking (hishiryō 非思量) is not different from Huineng's non-thought (wúniàn 無念).

"to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed p 34 / http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T48n2008_001#0351a03)

So, even if the use of enlightenment for 證 is somewhat questionable, and actually not used that much by translators, it is not misleading.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 17th, 2017 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Turning the light around (asraya-paravrtti)

Content:

鐵觀音 said:

Any suggestion on how to do that?

Astus wrote:

Turning the light around is like self-reflection. Usually the six senses are directed outward, grasping at appearances. Taking a step back to turn the light around means to reflect on the process of perception itself, that is, how the six senses, six objects, and six consciousnesses function. The slipping point here is people conceive turning the light around as if one should find an ultimate watcher/perceiver behind phenomena, and that is why this confusion with Vedanta teachings, even though it is well known that no-self is a fundamental Buddhist doctrine, but apparently people tend to excuse it by contorted and false logic (i.e. there is an "awareness" beyond appearances, and only appearances are not self - and this is exactly the Vedanta argument).

鐵觀音 said:

It's a confirmation that zen practice is a lot more than some glorified relaxation technique.

Astus wrote:

Zen is about direct enlightenment. It has actually more to do with prajna than dhyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 17th, 2017 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But that never ought to be taken as the 'end' of anything. That is what I think he's talking about, and it makes sense to me.

Astus wrote:

This "do not stop prematurely" is a common topic in Zen texts. Or might say in Mahayana, after all, the bodhisattva path takes at least three innumerable aeons, and that length is contrasted with the very short (1-7 lives) shravaka path. Dogen scolded the kensho approach exactly because he saw it as a dead end, and in stead of it put the concept of practice-enlightenment (see: <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=20655>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 17th, 2017 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anonymous X said:

none of it touches the core of grasping. This is a wholly different matter, imo. The cutting through is reified as another concept.

Astus wrote:

There are numerous instructions on how grasping arises and how it ceases, starting with the 12 nidanas. And as Baizhang taught, one should first let go, then let go of letting go, and finally let go of the concept of letting go of letting go.

Anonymous X said:

he always insisted that he didn't know and that anyone who tells you that they do know is misleading you. ... He always insisted that it is not what you think it is. In a way, it chooses you.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like the wrong view of naturalism, of denying causality, and consequently denying the fourth noble truth and practically the whole of the Buddhadharma. That attitude denies the use of practice, even more so, it denies the need to understand what the practice is about, and instead turns enlightenment into a divine miracle, a grace of fate, a pure accident. In the kanhua tradition it is the most serious defect of merely waiting for enlightenment to happen on its own.

"Above all, don't consciously await enlightenment. If you consciously await enlightenment, you're saying, "Right now, I'm deluded." If you wait for enlightenment clinging to delusion, though you pass through countless eons, you will still not be able to gain enlightenment."

(Dahui, in Swampland Flowers, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Huang Po never gave meditative instruction.

Astus wrote:

Huangbo is quite clear on what one should do.

"You trainees should have no doubts. It is the four elements that make up your bodies, but the four elements are without a self and the self is without a master. Therefore you should understand that this [human] body is without self and without master.

It is the five skandhas that make up the mind, but the five skandhas are without a self and without a master. Therefore you should understand that the mind is without self and without master. The six senses, six types of sense objects, and the six consciousnesses, which combine together in generation and extinction, are also like this. These eighteen realms are empty, they are all empty. There is only the fundamental mind, which is expansive and pure."

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 19)

And I quoted the above as it is a very basic Buddhist teaching. But of course most of the teachings known from Huangbo are filled with direct and practical instructions. True, they do not sound like what people assume to be meditation instructions, however, those are often merely basic mindfulness and concentration practices, and do not qualify for even the shravaka level, much less Mahayana.

Anonymous X said:

He told his students that the only instruction was to refrain from conceptual thinking.

Astus wrote:

"Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 14)

Anonymous X said:

He constantly reprimanded his students when they brought up the Buddha, Sangha, Dharma.

Astus wrote:

"Someone who tries to discern me in form

Or seek me in sound

Is practicing non-Buddhist methods

And will not discern the Tathāgata"

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 26)

Anonymous X said:

His was a kind of 'no teaching' that forced the students to deal with their chattering, grasping, minds.

Astus wrote:

How can the absence of instructions make anyone deal with their problems? Beings are already without guidance and they are stuck in samsara.

Anonymous X said:

The one thing that was present was the teacher as a living example of unfettered living.

Astus wrote:

A statue of the Buddha should suffice then.

Anonymous X said:

How many people can you say you've seen who live this way? How many people have you met who have ended grasping? It's not a rhetorical question.

Astus wrote:

"if a person's mind is pure he sees the merits and ornaments of this land."
(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 79)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

dharmagoat said:

"Radical openness" describes an experience, it serves as a description rather than an explanation. The explanation is found in the experience.

Astus wrote:

An experience is meaningless without an explanation. Since "radical openness" is posited as the very goal and essence of Zen, there is already a lot of explanation surrounding this term. Evading clarification is only a source of confusion, not enlightenment.

Anders said:

if you are asking how words like "radical openness" could relate to traditional teachings, what first springs to mind is Nagarjuna's

To whomever emptiness is possible,

All things are possible.

I'm mostly reminded of Sengzhao's referring to Prajna as "dark knowing".

Astus wrote:

That stanza of the MMK (24.14) is about how the four noble truths, and dependent origination, can be valid only if there is no substance. Based on what I've found in Ford's blog, openness is like "bare attention":

"By bare attention we understand the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called "bare" because it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting to them by deed, speech or mental comment."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel121.html>)

As such, it always remains a specific state of mind, that's why it does not bring about on its own freedom from afflictions, and that's why it needs to be constantly cultivated.

Here I searched his blog and found the following passages relevant:

"Of course the Buddha offers some good news out of this twin observation that nothing is permanent and most hurt comes out of our trying to make things permanent.

That distress, that hurt continues. Until. Unless. We see through it.

Here all sorts of teachers point to a way of transparency, of openness, of finding our larger identity, something much bigger than the little self to which we were clinging as if it were so, so important."

(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2008/09/a-couple-of-words-against-souls.html>)

"I believe there is such a thing as awakening. I have experienced it. It is the direct insight into the fact we are two things at once. We are creatures woven out of a constantly moving dynamic of relationships, including genes and our experiences. And we are one. Or, I do like the Buddhist metaphor for this, we are empty. We lack any abiding essence. But that "essencelessness" is actually an openness. My experience of this is that this knowing, or again, the Zen metaphor better describes, there is a not knowing that is permanently a part of who I am. But, but both things are happening at once, the constrained and the open. In fact there is no way to unravel the temporal and conditioned from the boundless and free."

(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2009/06/the-scandal-of-the-zen-teacher-and-where-it-takes-me.html>)

"He seems to think the grand language of Zen's pointing is pointing to something outside. It isn't. Rather it is a pointing to the wondrous fact that the whole mess and every individual part is one, or rather, is nondual. And the splendid, magic thing about our human consciousness, in the make up of who we are as we are, is that we can "know" this. Rather, it is a letting go of clinging. It is, in fact, a not knowing. It is a finding of openness, of our boundlessness that exists with our vary limitations, our boundedness... Not one. Not two."

(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2011/07/confession-of-a-buddhist-atheist-a-review.html>)

"Here we're invited to surrender to the realities of the flux of events, and out of that to learn the dance of relationships, to see into the reality that we are, all of us, boundless, our essence is no essence at all, just openness, and from there to realize our lives just as they are, when not clung to, are the Dharma, the dharmakaya, the great open itself. No difference."

(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2015/02/a-fools-errand-a-small-meditation-on-the-nature-of-the-zen-way.html>)

"And I love that blessing on the pure of heart. It is a call to openness, to letting go our our grasping, to seeing into the matter of self and other and how in the last analysis there is

no difference. It is the way of wisdom, it is the way of the wise heart."
(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2015/03/the-path-of-mercy-a-meditation-on-the-beatitudes.html>)

"In the Harada/Yasutani koan curriculum, one first explores in some depth the reality of our essential openness, the fact there is no essential, but rather all that is, is. This truth of this is expressed most succinctly in the Heart Sutra and specifically in the phrase "form is emptiness, emptiness is form.""
(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2016/12/stopping-distant-temple-bell-meditation-traditional-zen-koan.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anonymous X said:

I didn't say there was no guidance, just formal instructions, a model laid out from point A to point B.

Astus wrote:

But, as you could see yourself in my previous post, there are formal and clear instructions. Furthermore, Huangbo's teachings assume the familiarity with the general Buddhist teachings that cover the extensive discussion of the threefold training.

Anonymous X said:

This seemed to be done away with in favor of the sitting practice and the 'koan' of refraining from conceptual thinking.

Astus wrote:

Huangbo's teachings contain nothing for sitting meditation or reflecting on koans. Sitting meditation is a common practice, just as sutra recitation, repentance, etc., while koan inspection is a practice that occurred centuries after Huangbo.

Anonymous X said:

They also had a living example of a 'fully awakened' being amongst them, living and shitting amongst them.

Astus wrote:

The mere presence of a buddha can be inspiring, but not liberating.

Anonymous X said:

Like I said to Malcolm, if you subscribe to a model/path, you are going to measure everything through this filter. From my perspective, this is the Great Wall, not the one in China.

Astus wrote:

Without correct view there is no liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: Turning the light around (asraya-paravrtti)

Content:

鐵觀音 said:

It sounds nice, but I was under the impression that this was not a Buddhist teaching, and that awareness ("the knowing mind is the light") was as empty as everything else. Still, I find this view more satisfying as at least it offers a reasonable interpretation of the quote.

Astus wrote:

"It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of it, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. In the same way, what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>)

"According to that non-Buddhist view, there is one spiritual intelligence existing within our body. When this intelligence meets conditions, it can discriminate between pleasant and unpleasant and discriminate between right and wrong, and it can know pain and irritation and know suffering and pleasure—all [these] are abilities of the spiritual intelligence. When this body dies, however, the spirit casts off the skin and is reborn on the other side; so even though it seems to die here it lives on there. Therefore we call it immortal and eternal. The view of that non-Buddhist is like this. But if we learn this view as the Buddha's Dharma, we are even more foolish than the person who grasps a tile or a pebble thinking it to be a golden treasure; the delusion would be too shameful for comparison."

(Dogen: Bendowa, SBGZ vol 1, BDK ed, p 14)

"Hearing the word "buddha-nature," many students have misunderstood it to be like the "self" described by the non-Buddhist Senika. This is because they do not meet people, they do not meet themselves, and they do not meet with a teacher. They vacantly consider mind, will, or consciousness—which is the movement of wind and fire¹³—to be the buddha-nature's enlightened knowing and enlightened understanding. Who has ever said that enlightened knowing and enlightened understanding are present in the buddhanature?"

(Dogen: Bussho, SBGZ vol 2, BDK ed, p 5)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anders said:

Why don't you write to him and ask him to clarify on fb then?

Astus wrote:

I already did.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

dharmagoat said:

But is meaningfulness a necessary pursuit in the case of "radical openness"? Does it add anything useful to the experience, which in itself is very clear?

Astus wrote:

Consider the following from Kamalashila's second manual:

"Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way."

(Stages of Meditation, p 134)

It is a critique of what they thought of as the Chan teaching. However, that approach of not thinking has been rebuked by Chan teachers as well:

"If you empty your minds and sit in quietude, this is to become attached to the emptiness of blankness."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 29)

Seeing the nature (kensho) is the essential requirement. To merely abide in a passive state of mind is the root of stupidity. But when it is directly recognised that there is not a single thing to attach to or discard, then one is free from all troubles.

dharmagoat said:

If the experience is one of enlightenment, how can it be confusing?

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is not an experience, but seeing that all experiences are unestablished.

"Whoever knows that nothing depends on anything has found the Way. And whoever knows that the mind depends on nothing is always at the place of enlightenment."
(Bodhidharma, Wake-up Sermon, in The Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma, p 57)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

dharmagoat said:

"Seeing", however it is meant metaphorically, still pertains to experience.

Astus wrote:

Not really. The third noble truth is the truth of cessation, the end of craving - that is not an experience. Seeing emptiness, the nature of phenomena, is the end of fabricating a self/substance, the cessation of conceptualisation, so again - that is not an experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 9:37 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anonymous X said:

How would you know what it is like to be in the presence of a Buddha or fully awakened being? There are many stories in Buddhist literature of sudden awakening in the presence of such a one.

Astus wrote:

Could you provide a few quotes from the sutras where people attained enlightenment because of the presence of a buddha?

Anonymous X said:

Do you have the correct view?

Astus wrote:

What constitutes correct view is defined by the sutras and shastras. But it can be summed up as:

all compounded phenomena are impermanent

all contaminated phenomena are suffering

all phenomena are without self

nirvāṇa is peace

(<http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-058-002/translation>)

See also:

https://books.google.com/books/about/What_Makes_You_Not_a_Buddhist.html?id=2gQm0mvsC50C

Anonymous X said:
If you say yes, show us your liberation.

Astus wrote:
"If there are those who say that they see bodhi and have attained it, we should know that they are the ones with exceeding arrogance."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>

Anonymous X said:
Thinking is not going to get us anywhere except down to the corner market for a bottle of milk. The more you rely on the written word, the further you get from any discovery.

Astus wrote:
"World-honored One, what is the cause of this quietude and vision?"
"Good son, it is purified discipline and true insight accomplished through purified hearing and reflection."
(Scripture on the Explication of Underlying Meaning, ch 6, BDK ed, p 68)

"For all bodhisattvas the cause is
The permeation of hearing [scriptural] discourse,
For nonimaginative wisdom is
True and correct reflection."
(Asanga: Summary of the Great Vehicle, ch 8, BDK ed, p 92)

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 10:13 PM
Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos
Content:

Malcolm said:
Should be:
"Could you provide a few quotes from the sutras where people attained enlightenment because of being in the mere presence of a buddha?"

Astus wrote:
Yes, that.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 11:11 PM
Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos
Content:

Anonymous X said:
You are the one providing the quotes here.

Astus wrote:

I find it a good way to avoid stating things that are incompatible with the Dharma, furthermore, it allows everyone to cross reference it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anders said:

Why don't you write to him and ask him to clarify on fb then?

Astus wrote:

He replied that "radical openness" was a term he used nowadays for awakening/enlightenment in Zen where the sense of self and other had fallen away, but he found it difficult and even foolish to attempt to express it verbally. Furthermore, he did not think there was a direct cause of it, rather discipline and practice could make one prone to such an accidental experience/moment/encounter.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2017 at 3:43 AM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Off the top of my head, the Buddha silently holds up a flower amidst a gathering of his followers. Only Kasyapa responds with a knowing smile. Hence, the transmission of the Dharma to Kasyapa, the first patriarch of Chan.

Astus wrote:

Even in that story it's not because of the mere presence of the Buddha.

Anonymous X said:

As I said before, if you believe in things like this, the stories abound.

Astus wrote:

Then it shouldn't be problematic to reference a few here.

Anonymous X said:

You have to remember that much of the early Buddhist teachings is apochryphal and some sutras are heavily disputed.

Astus wrote:

Everything in the Buddhist canons are canonical. Scriptures not found in the canons might be called apocryphal.

Anonymous X said:

Even the famous phrase attributed to Bodhidharma, "A special transmission outside of

the scriptures" is believed to have originated first in the Song dyansty.

Astus wrote:

That is not a sutra.

Anonymous X said:

Do you have a teacher, Astus? Or, do you get everything that you speak of from reading and your own meditation? It's not clear if you are involved with a specific Buddhist school or lineage. I know you mentioned you studied Buddhism at a university? Was this mostly academic work?

Astus wrote:

How is that relevant here?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2017 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

aflatun said:

Could you unpack this some? If they're not experiences what are they?

Astus wrote:

One clings to the aggregates because of the superimposition of self. When the ignorance about the emptiness of the aggregates is eliminated, there is no more superimposition, hence no more clinging.

"What is ignorance? Good sons, all sentient beings fall into various inverted views without beginning. Just like a disoriented person who confuses the four directions, they mistakenly take the Four Elements as the attributes of their bodies and the conditioned shadows of the Six Objects as the attributes of their mind. It is just like when our eyes are diseased and we see flowers in the sky, or a second moon. Good sons, the sky actually has no flowers—they are the false attachment of the diseased person. And because of this false attachment, not only are we confused about the self-nature of the sky; we are also mixed up about the place where real flowers come from. From this there is the falsely existent transmigration through life and death. Therefore it is called "ignorance."

Good sons, this 'ignorance' actually lacks substance. It is like a man who is dreaming. At the time of the dream, there is no non-existence. But when he awakens he finds that there is nothing for him to hold on to. Similarly, when the sky-flowers disappear from the sky, you cannot say that there is a definite point of their disappearance. Why? Because there is no point from which they arose. All sentient beings falsely perceive arising and ceasing within the unarisen. Therefore they say that there is 'transmigration through life-and-death.' "

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html#div-1)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2017 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

aflatun said:

Understood, but everything you've described here is an experience isn't it? Clinging, ignorance, their cessation, the aftermath, all experience is it not?

Astus wrote:

Experiences are what occur in the six sensory areas. Delusion is clinging to them, liberation is not clinging. It is called delusion, because experiences are already empty, without anything that could be clung to. Recognising the delusion of substantiality as unfounded means seeing that there is nothing to see, like when one assumes one's hat is very valuable but turns out to be worthless. Is that recognition an experience? Sounds like one, but isn't, because it means simply the end of an incorrect thought. And to make it a little bit more complicated (a tree that has never grown, sky-flowers, dreams), even that incorrect thought of a self has never been anything else but empty. To take a different approach, experiences have always been pure and the end of delusion means arriving to what has always been there, so it's nothing new, but the original nature of phenomena. So it is not an experience in the sense of something that occurs, also because something occurring is ordinarily conceived as an independent object one can hold on to, while the whole point is that such occurrences have never existed in the first place.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2017 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus has studied with a number of Zen teachers, and couple of Kagyu ones too, if I am not mistaken.

Astus wrote:

<https://eubuddhist.blogspot.com/2016/02/my-little-dharma-history.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 20th, 2017 at 2:44 AM

Title: Re: James Ford on kensho, from Pathos

Content:

boda said:

"No buddha can make people enlightened. Everyone has to do it oneself."

If I may ask, how exactly do you know this?

Astus wrote:

"By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by

oneself is one made pure. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.12.budd.html.165>)

"You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way. Those meditative ones who tread the path are released from the bonds of Mara."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.20.budd.html.276>)

Question: "Does the Buddha really save or rescue all sentient beings?"

The master said: "There are really no sentient beings to be saved by Tathagata. Since there is, in reality, neither self nor non-self, how then can there be a Buddha to save or sentient beings to be saved?

(Huangbo, <http://ymba.org/books/dharma-mind-transmission/wan-ling-record>)

"Outside mind there's no dharma, nor is there anything to be gained within it. What are you seeking? Everywhere you say, 'There's something to practice, something to obtain.' Make no mistake! Even if there were something to be gained by practice, it would be nothing but birth-and-death karma."

(Record of Linji, p 17, tr Sasaki)

One day, Guishan said to Xiangyan, "I'm not asking you about what's recorded in or what can be learned from the scriptures! You must say something from the time before you were born and before you could distinguish objects. I want to record what you say." Xiangyan was confused and unable to answer. He sat in deep thought for a some time and then mumbled a few words to explain his understanding. But Guishan wouldn't accept this.

Xiangyan said, "Then would the master please explain it?"

Guishan said, "What I might say would merely be my own understanding. How could it benefit your own view?"

Xiangyan returned to the monks' hall and searched through the books he had collected, but he couldn't find a single phrase that could be used to answer Guishan's question.

Xiangyan then sighed and said, "A picture of a cake can't satisfy hunger."

He then burned all his books and said, "During this lifetime I won't study the essential doctrine. I'll just become a common mendicant monk, and I won't apply my mind to this any more."

Xiangyan tearfully left Guishan. He then went traveling and eventually resided at Nanyang, the site of the grave of National Teacher Nanyang Huizhong.

One day as Xiangyan was scything grass, a small piece of tile was knocked through the air and struck a stalk of bamboo. Upon hearing the sound of the tile hitting the bamboo, Xiangyan instantly experienced vast enlightenment.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 191-192)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 20th, 2017 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Me too! Me too!

Content:

Malcolm said:

Correct, but indeed, as Machig Labdron says of the dharmadhātu after going through all the yānas, including Dzogchen and Mahāmudra:

The ignorant and confused are deluded

because they know and apprehend the dharmadhātu as an object [...]

All of these knowledges (rig pa)

are knowledges that know objects.

Those [knowledges that] possess objects are not true.

There is nothing to know in the mind without objects.

Whoever knows is bound by knowledge.

Astus wrote:

Something similar from the Platform Sutra (ch 7, BDK ed, p 62-63):

The master said, “That teacher’s explanation still allows perceptual understanding to exist, which is why you were unable to comprehend. I will now reveal a verse for you:

Not seeing a single dharma but maintaining the view of nonbeing

Is much like floating clouds blocking the face of the sun.

Not knowing a single dharma but maintaining one’s knowledge of emptiness

Is just like the great void generating lightning and thunder.

When such perceptual understanding arises for the slightest instant,

How can mistaken recognition ever understand expedient means?

You should understand the error of this yourself, in a single moment of thought,

And the numinous brilliance of the self will be constantly manifest.

When Zhichang heard this verse, his mind became suddenly expansive [in enlightenment], and he related a verse:

There is no reason to activate perceptual understanding,

To be attached to characteristics and seek for bodhi.

When one’s intelligence harbors a single thought of enlightenment,

How can one transcend the delusions of the past?

The self-nature, enlightened to the essential source,

Illuminates the crazed currents [of awareness].

Without entering the room of the patriarch,

In a daze, going about with two heads.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 21st, 2017 at 12:41 AM

Title: Re: Freedom From Buddha Nature by Thanissaro Bhikkhu & Zen Master Dogen

Content:

Astus wrote:

With buddha-nature Dogen does the same thing he does with most of the other

concepts and topics he discusses, that is, transforms it into a teaching on suchness as the immediate reality of experience, and indeed, what else could be rightfully called buddha-nature? But that doesn't mean this interpretation is anything new or unique, only that Dogen wanted to correct those (likely the former followers of the so called Daruma school) who falsely take buddha-nature as a self.

In his opening remarks, Dōgen dismisses several of the most common views: that the buddha nature is the potential to become a buddha, that it is the activity of cognition within us, or that it is a universal self pervading the world. Rather, he says, the buddha nature is existence itself — not an abstract principle of being, but the actual occurrence of things, or, as he puts it simply at the end of his essay, “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.”

(Bielefeldt:

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/busscho/intro.html> to the translation of Bussho)

It is said that Dogen Zenji denies Buddha-nature as an intrinsic essence, which is implied by the statement that “all have Buddha-nature,” by interpreting that sentence as “all are Buddha-nature.” But that subject was already carefully treated in Mahaparinirvana Sutra by the discussion on the self. We should understand that Dogen Zenji, following the sutra, simply criticized the popular theory of Buddha-nature in those days that interpreted Buddha-nature as some actual substance within sentient beings.

...

Dogen Zenji says that Guishan's view of no Buddha-nature is superior to Yanguan's. Sentient beings and Buddha-nature are not two separate entities which can overlap each other. If we really try to show how sentient beings are Buddha nature, there is no other way than saying, “All sentient beings have no Buddha-nature.”

(Rev. Kenshu Sugawara: http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms13.pdf, p 3)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 23rd, 2017 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: How can I be sure its valid

Content:

Zafutales said:

avoiding what the Buddha taught, being indifferent to everything or zoning out

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza is the practice of non-abiding, where one directly experiences the reality of appearances as ungraspable. Avoiding, indifference, and zoning out are all concepts one may be mistakenly attached to, if they are conceived as the correct states to be maintained.

Zafutales said:

due to these feelings of doubt

Astus wrote:

There are three ways you can address doubts. The first method is through learning - both from texts and oral explanations. The second method is through contemplating the teachings that are already learnt, particularly the teaching of dependent origination is recommended for overcoming the hindrance of doubt. The third method is applying the understanding gained through contemplation where one verifies the teaching in direct, personal experience. Shikantaza is this third method of verification practice (i.e. practice-enlightenment).

Zafutales said:

I am sitting to alleviate my suffering and to experience the true nature of my mind

Astus wrote:

Have you already clarified what suffering and the true nature are? If not, you might start there, before attempting to find something you do not know what it is - in other words, when looking for a flower it is good to be clear about what it looks like first.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 23rd, 2017 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: How can I be sure its valid

Content:

Matylda said:

in many zen manuals it is clearly stated.

Astus wrote:

Like what manuals? For instance, the one published on the official site (<http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>) gives a clear description of what and how to do. And in the <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/video/index.html> it is said "Anyone can practice it anytime and anywhere." Furthermore, if the instructions are considered, they are very simple and straightforward, especially compared to practices like Tendai's shikan, Theravada's satipatthana, or Vajrayana's deity yoga.

Matylda said:

It is for those of the highest potential.

Astus wrote:

How so? The <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/advice/fukanzanzeng.html> states: "intelligence or lack of it is not an issue; make no distinction between the dull and the sharp-witted"

And in the Bendowa:

"When people just practice with right belief, the clever and the stupid alike will attain the truth. Just because our country is not a nation of benevolence or wisdom and the people are dullwitted, do not think that it is impossible for us to grasp the Buddha-

Dharma. Still more, all human beings have the right seeds of prajñā in abundance. It may simply be that few of us have experienced the state directly, and so we are immature in receiving and using it."
(SBGZ, vol 1, BDK ed, p 21)

Matylda said:

It takes 20-30 years of strenuous practice without any results

Astus wrote:

Are you of the view that realisation is separate from the practice itself?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 23rd, 2017 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: How can I be sure its valid

Content:

Matylda said:

So do you think that popular instructions for zazen just for common people are all? and the similar way rinzai does it, exhausts entirely the issue?

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific, like what manuals? The most elaborate meditation instruction from a Soto author that I have seen was Keizan's Yojinki, otherwise it's the same every time, even if it takes up a whole book, talking about the posture and hishiryo.

Matylda said:

It doesn't matter what view I hold... it is just reality for common people, to get used to zazen under master and to continue for long long years.... then one may arrive at the point where practice and realisation are one. Just to talk about it does not enlighten anyone.. about this matter I prefer to base my confidence on words and teachings of genuine masters of soto zen in Japan.

Astus wrote:

Is Dogen considered a genuine master of Soto Zen from Japan? He wrote:

"In the Buddha-Dharma practice and experience are completely the same. [Practice] now is also practice in the state of experience; therefore, a beginner's pursuit of the truth is just the whole body of the original state of experience. This is why [the Buddhist patriarchs] teach, in the practical cautions they have handed down to us, not to expect any experience outside of practice. And the reason may be that [practice itself] is the directly accessible original state of experience."

(Bendowa, SBGZ, vol 1, BDK ed, p 12)

Matylda said:

Anyway even if one is of the view that practice and enlightenment are inseparable, then one has to have great confidence, faith etc. not to say total devotion. It is what in soto is really required.

Astus wrote:

Certainly, those qualities are essential in every Buddhist school.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 24th, 2017 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

I do not believe in literal flesh and blood Buddhas from eons before the Big Bang, and neither do I accept that the Pure Land sutras were taught by the historical Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Then I do not see how your views could ever harmonise with the teachings of Honen and Shinran.

Dharma Flower said:

If Amida Buddha is really a symbolic expression of Buddha-nature or Dharma-body, then the Nembutsu has immense power as a Buddhist practice for awakening the Buddha within.

Astus wrote:

That is not the immediate goal of a Pure Land Buddhist, nor has the recitation of the name ever been taught as a method to realise the nature of mind. Furthermore, the three minds, that are the requirements for attaining birth, include the realisation that we are incapable of attaining wisdom ourselves, and that's why reliance on the Vows are necessary.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 24th, 2017 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Please see the doctrinal statement from the Higashi Honganji that I've posted elsewhere on this forum.

Astus wrote:

http://www.higashihonganji.or.jp/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MON_vol.1_s.pdf is a general introduction in a magazine. As for a "doctrinal statement", the <http://www.hongwanji.or.jp/english/teaching/index.html> site states on their teaching:

"Attaining the "entrusting heart"--awakening to the compassion of Amida Tathagata (Buddha) through the working of the Primal Vow--we shall walk the path of life reciting Amida's Name (Nembutsu). At the end of life, we will be born in the Pure Land and attain

Buddhahood, returning at once to this delusional world to guide people to awakening."

Dharma Flower said:

Some see the Primal Vow as a literal vow made in history, while other Shinshu scholars see it as symbolic of the compassionate activity of Dharma-body in the world, leading all beings to enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

How could it lead to enlightenment to merely recite a word for a symbol of the dharmakaya? That would be like repeating the name of the mascot of a university and expecting all the knowledge provided there to simply appear in one's mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 25th, 2017 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

It appears that the Higashi Honganji uses it anywhere, in multiple places, to explain their understanding of Amida Buddha

Astus wrote:

I see, thanks. Apparently Higashi is the modernist branch that is based on the ideas of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiyozawa_Manshi.

However, there is still no explanation for how mere recitation can ever result in liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 25th, 2017 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: How can I be sure its valid

Content:

Zafutales said:

how do I know the relative ease in which I find I can 'just sit' is not some sort of self delusion and I am in fact wasting my time?

Astus wrote:

"like a man who drinks water knowing [immediately] whether it is cold or warm."
(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 25)

If you cannot verify for yourself, who can?

"Are not these matters to be perceived by the eye of wisdom?"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.152.wlsh.html>)

Perhaps the relevant question is whether one can tell the difference between delusion

and enlightenment. So here is a summary of what the goal is in Zen:

"Put down the four elements, do not cling to anything;
In this Nirvanic nature, feel free to eat and drink.
All phenomena are impermanent; all are empty.
This is the complete enlightenment of the Tathagata."

...

"The mind is a sense organ; dharmas are its object.
The two are like marks on a mirror.
Once the dust is rubbed off, the light begins to appear.
When both mind and dharmas are forgotten, this is true nature."
(Song of Enlightenment, in <http://ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/09-04/55.php> and
<http://ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/09-04/171.php>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 26th, 2017 at 5:16 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

What matters is whether they can quote Shinran's writings in support of their views.

Astus wrote:

That doesn't seem to be the case, nor is there much logic in the idea of calling oneself a Pure Land Buddhist while at the same time denying the existence of the Pure Land.

"Whoever clings to his/her own views in such manner and does not hold Pure Land and Amitabha as truly existing neither understands Ch'an nor Pure Land."

(<http://ymba.org/books/direct-approach-buddhadharma/part-ii-pure-land-sect/principle-and-action>)

"Some people say that the Pure Land is nothing but mind, that there is no Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss beyond the trillions of worlds of the cosmos. This talk of mind-only has its source in the words of the sutras, and is true, not false. But those who quote it in this sense are misunderstanding its meaning.

Mind equals objects: there are no objects beyond mind. Objects equal mind: there is no mind beyond objects. Since objects are wholly mind, why must we cling to mind and dismiss objects? Those who dismiss objects when they talk of mind have not comprehended mind.

...

Let me ask [the person who thinks Pure Land is mind-only], "When hell appears to you at the moment of death, is this not mind?" "It is mind." "Does the person fall into hell?" "Yes, he falls into hell." "Then it is obvious that since the person falls into hell, hell exists. Is it then only the Pure Land that does not exist? When the mind manifests hell, the person falls into a hell that really exists. When the mind manifests the Pure Land, isn't the person born in a Pure Land that really exists?"

(Pure Land Teachings of Master Chu-Hung, in Pure Land, Pure Mind, p 47-48)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 28th, 2017 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

If the Buddha isn't concerned with the enlightenment of others, how do we square this with the Bodhisattva ideal? I appreciate your help.

Astus wrote:

Neither a bodhisattva nor a buddha has this concept that there are beings who need saving, so why should they have a concern for something that doesn't even exist? A buddha's activities are without effort, without aim, without intention. I might say that talking about the influence or activity of a buddha is merely a figure of speech for ordinary people who cannot help keep thinking in terms of agents and actions.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Is this because all beings are empty of inherent existence?

Astus wrote:

Yes, although it might be better to say that beings are empty of beings, just as the picture of an apple is not an apple.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 6:10 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Except that such an expression could easily be construed as nihilism.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by nihilism?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 6:45 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

What I've said is, in the absence of evidence for the existence of such a literal Buddha, I

choose to look for the meaning beyond literal factuality, that Amida is another way of describing Dharma-body or Buddha-nature, a finger pointing to the moon.

Astus wrote:

Do you perhaps have evidence for the dharmakaya or buddha-nature?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 6:55 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

The power of reciting Amida's name is not dependent on our belief or doubts

Astus wrote:

"The text of the sutra says sentient beings must take a vow to be born in the Pure Land. This word "must" points to deep faith. Making vows with deep faith is precisely the Mind of Supreme Enlightenment. In sum, faith and vows are truly the guiding compass to the Pure Land. Relying on faith and vows and consistently invoking the Buddha-name is correct practice.

If your faith and vows are solid and strong, then even you recite the Buddha-name only ten times, or only once, as you are on the brink of death, you are sure to attain birth in the Pure Land. Without faith and vows, even if you recite the Buddha-name until [you achieve a level of concentration the Zen literature describes as] "wind cannot enter you and rain cannot wet you" and "you stand like a silver wall or and iron wall", you will still not have a way to be born in the Pure Land."

(<http://ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/explanation-text/main-portion/seeking-rebirth-pure-land>)

"You should pay particular attention to Faith and Vows, and wish wholeheartedly to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land ... [and not as a celestial being or a Dharma Master, however awakened, as these are still within the realm of Birth and Death]. Only then will your Faith and Vows reach Amitabha Buddha so that His Compassionate Vow may embrace you."

(Yin Kuang: Pure Land Zen, p 32)

"Rebirth in the Western Land thus requires, first of all, deep Faith and fervent Vows. Without these conditions, even if you were to cultivate, you could not obtain a response from Amitabha Buddha. You would merely reap the blessings of the human and celestial realms and sow the seeds of liberation in the future. Anyone who fulfills the conditions of Faith and Vows is assured of rebirth in the Pure Land. When Elder Master Yung Ming stated that "out of ten thousand who cultivate Pure Land, ten thousand will achieve rebirth," he was referring to those with full Faith and Vows."

(Yin Kuang: Pure-Land Zen, Zen Pure-Land; p 37)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

smcj said:

'cause we ask 'em to.

Astus wrote:

Do you think they have no knowledge of the suffering afflicting beings, or that they have no compassion to help?

smcj said:

Didn't you just say they had activities that were spontaneous?

Astus wrote:

Spontaneity is a denial of causality, so it doesn't really fit into Buddhism. The explanation used for the buddha activities is that they are motivated by their vows and appear in response to specific circumstances, while at the same time what is perceived by individual beings depends entirely on their karma.

smcj said:

That's me!

Astus wrote:

The point is to recognise that even when one encounters buddhas it's a product of one's own mind.

"Virtuous monks, you must recognize the one who manipulates these reflections. 'He is the primal source of all the buddhas,' and the place to which every follower of the Way returns."

(Record of Linji, p 9, tr Sasaki)

But this should be understood in the context of the two truths.

"If even the correct teachings (Dharma) should be abandoned, how much more so the incorrect teachings (non-Dharma)?"

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=141&Itemid=57, ch 6)

That is, buddhas are the most perfect beings, and even they are only mere concepts, so how much more so everything else?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:
Nothing is real, or nothing matters.

Astus wrote:
Nothing is real, that is a common Buddhist doctrine.

"All conditioned phenomena
Are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow,
Like dew or a flash of lightning;
Thus we shall perceive them."
(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=141&Itemid=57, ch 32)

"If those endowed with excellent faith, diligence, and devotion
meditate on the illusion-like [nature]
of illusion-like phenomena,
illusion-like buddhahood will manifest."
(Niguma: Stages in the Path of Illusion, v 4, in "Niguma, Lady of Illusion", p 54)

However, this idea of "nothing matters" is absolutely wrong, an immoral and incorrect view.

"And what is wrong view? 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is wrong view."
(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.117.than.html#micchaditthi>)

Wayfarer said:
Beings are actually just representations, really they're not beings.

Astus wrote:
I'd say even "representation" is a misleading word, as it implies something behind the appearance that is represented, while the point of "vijñaptimātra" is to realise that there is nothing beyond mere conceptualisation.

Wayfarer said:
Buddhism is often accused of being nihilist. This is said to be on account of the fact that the Buddhist śūnyatā really is just total nothingness, and the aim of the Buddhist path is complete non-existence.

Astus wrote:
Emptiness means that appearances are empty, not that there are no appearances. Also, the aim cannot be complete non-existence if there is nothing that exists in the first place.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 7:03 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I don't believe that śūnyatā equates to non-existent. In other words, empty \neq non-existent.

Astus wrote:

The first meaning of emptiness is the emptiness of person (pudgalasunyata), that there is no self (nairatmya/anatma). So, the deluded worldly person assumes that there is a self, but there are only the five aggregates. There has never been a self, but that truth is not known by a deluded being. And then if we look further, it turns out that even the aggregates are nothing concrete or substantial, therefore appearances are empty as well.

Wayfarer said:

When it is said that phenomena are unreal, that is spoken from the understanding of the tathagatha, who sees through the illusion of worldly existence. But to say that worldly things are unreal from the viewpoint of worldly life, does lead to the mistake of nihilism, which is that things are merely non-existent. That is how I understand the 'two truths'.

Astus wrote:

The reason for the teaching of emptiness is to have worldly people realise it. Buddhas do not need the teaching, deluded people need it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Maybe you should explain what you mean about spontaneity being a denial of causality.

Astus wrote:

Spontaneity means to be without cause.

Anonymous X said:

Zongmi states many times that the nature of mind is spontaneous Knowing and perfect with all merits.

Astus wrote:

Knowing/awareness is a basic quality of mind, just as a box has sides. Zongmi points to knowing in the sense of the mind being aware and at the same time unattached, in other words, neither grasping nor rejecting phenomena, it is the five aggregates without

seeing them as self. It doesn't mean that there is a separate consciousness without a cause, only that consciousness is empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 30th, 2017 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Maybe your choice of words confuses me. You said 'spontaneity is a 'denial' of causality'. This is a different definition than 'to be without cause'. There is no denial of causality that I can see. Maybe you didn't mean to put it that way?

Astus wrote:

If something can exist without any cause for its existence, that is denying causality, as it means that something can come out of nothing.

"If things arose without any causes at all,
Everything would always arise from everything.
Worldly people would not have to go through hundreds of hardships to engage causes,
Such as planting seeds, to make results arise.
If beings were empty of causes, then, just like the scent and color
Of utpala flowers in the sky, they would be imperceptible.
Yet the world, in all its intense brilliance, is perceptible.
Therefore, just like your own mind, understand that the world arises due to causes."
(Madhyamakavatara 6.99-100, in Feast of the Fortunate, p 309-310)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 30th, 2017 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

And yet when I have a piece of metal touching my peripheral nervous system these ideas become philosophical.

Astus wrote:

Check this: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.than.html>

PuerAzelis said:

Does that mean the story about existence or non-existence is true?

Astus wrote:

What story?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 30th, 2017 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Maybe we are talking about two different things here. Things arise from causes, but Mind's nature does not.

Astus wrote:

Awareness as the nature of mind means that every instance of consciousness necessarily has the quality of awareness. Besides awareness - as an inextricable aspect of every experience - other universal qualities can be mentioned, like impermanence and emptiness.

"It is like a bronze mirror. The bronze material is the intrinsic substance. The brightness of the bronze is the intrinsic functioning. The reflections that the brightness gives off are the conditioned functioning. The reflections appear [when the mirror] is face to face with objective supports. They appear in a thousand varieties, but the brightness is an intrinsically constant brightness. The brightness is just one flavor. In terms of the metaphor, mind's constant calm is the intrinsic substance, and mind's constant Knowing is the intrinsic functioning."

(Zongmi: Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 96)

It doesn't mean that there is a separate thing called the "nature of mind" or "awareness" independent of conditioned appearances. It is, just as the term implies, the nature, the quality, an aspect of mind. But mind is simply the six kinds of consciousness and the four mental aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

Just a quick note. Primordial mind is 本心 (běn-xīn/hon-shin) in Chinese/Japanese; translated as "fundamental mind" by the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. It appears in the Taisho canon 1948 times, starting with multiple references in the Madhyama Agama and even in volume/fascicle 5 of the Lotus Sutra. It's not new.

Astus wrote:

The real question is what the "original mind" is understood as. For instance, in MA 196 the term "original mind" refers to the situation where a monk has temporarily gone insane but then regained his original mind. In MA 203 the term is again used for a person with a sane mind. And those are all the results for 本心 in the Madhyamagama.

"To speak of the mirror awareness is still not really right; by way of the impure, discern the pure. If you say the immediate mirror awareness is correct, or that there is

something else beyond the mirror awareness, this is a delusion. If you keep dwelling in the immediate mirror awareness, this too is the same as delusion; it is called the mistake of naturalism.

To say the present mirror awareness is one's own Buddha is words of measurement, words of calculation - it is like the crying of a jackal. This is still being stuck as in glue at the gate. Originally you did not acknowledge that innate knowing and awareness are your own Buddha, and went running elsewhere to seek Buddha. So you needed a teacher to tell you about innate knowing and awareness as a medicine to cure this disease of hastily seeking outside. Once you no longer seek outwardly, the disease is cured and it is necessary to remove the medicine. If you cling fixedly to innate knowing awareness, this is a disease of meditation."

(Extensive Record of Baizhang, from Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 33-34)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

Imho the way mind is spoken of in the Pabhassara Sutta is fairly consistent with the idea of 本心 as I've seen it presented elsewhere.

Astus wrote:

That is a sutta quoted frequently by those who want to see atman in Buddhism, even when there are thousands of teachings explaining again and again that the mind is dependently arisen.

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an01/an01.049.than.html#fn-1>,

<https://dhammawheel.com/viewtopic.php?p=378555#p378555>,

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2014/10/29/on-the-radiant-mind/>, and

<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/8.3-Radiant-mind.-piya.pdf> unanimously agree that the radiance mentioned in that sutta is about a state of

mind experienced during absorption. So it is not like what could be understood as the nature of mind, or anything of primordial status. But there are a number of suttas where the Buddha talks about things that are always true, and those things are impermanence, suffering, no-self, and dependent origination.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

There are countless examples of the Buddha referencing defilements & the mind that abandons them throughout the suttas.

Astus wrote:

Your references are about purification, cleansing, the gradual path to develop and attain

an unblemished mind. The doctrine of "original mind" / "buddha-nature" is quite the opposite, as it means that the mind is already pure and perfect, that it does not require any cleansing but only discovery/recognition. Although it can be said that if we look into the actual details of these teachings then they are not contradictory, nevertheless, they represent different approaches, particularly at the beginning.

Admin_PC said:

Again, I'm taking the term 本心 as it's presented in places like here:

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=140&Itemid=57

Astus wrote:

The Platform Sutra is a good example of how the original mind is understood in Chan - and generally in Mahayana to some extent. While those Theravada teachers talk about "

http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_04.html ", that "

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/lee/demons.html> ", so "

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/suwat/blatant.html> " Compare that to what

http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=140&Itemid=57 says: "When you understand this one truth, you can understand all truths.",

"the ordinary person is Buddha. Affliction is enlightenment.", "Why not immediately realize in your own mind the intrinsic nature of suchness?", "those who realize the doctrine of "no thought" thoroughly understand all dharmas; those who realize the doctrine of "no thought" perceive the realm of the buddhas; those who realize the doctrine of "no thought" attain Buddhahood."

Admin_PC said:

I'm not sure where the miscommunication is, but my only intention was to define 本心 within a Buddhist context.

Astus wrote:

Original mind stands for buddha-nature in the sense of inherently pure mind. That concept does not really fit into the teaching of consciousness taught as momentary instances of experiences appearing as an effect of the contact between a sense faculty and a sense object. It also suspiciously sounds like an atman, so the whole doctrine of tathagatagarbha was apparently not too popular in India itself, unlike in East Asia.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

What do you think of this quote

Astus wrote:

It points to falling into the extreme views of existence and non-existence. In fact, grasping at any view is an error, as it is still maintaining the idea that there is something

to hold on to.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

The passage I quoted from HuiNeng contains some portions that sound fairly gradual

Astus wrote:

What section do you see as gradual? For instance:

"If you give rise to genuine prajna contemplation, in an instant all deluded thoughts will cease; if you realize your inherent nature, you awaken and you arrive at the stage of a buddha"

That is direct access to buddhahood, from delusion to perfect enlightenment.

"Realization of the original mind is true liberation."

Again, one just needs to realise it. No purification, no stages, only immediate liberating insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 31st, 2017 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

This is almost verbatim from the "gradual" links I posted above: What is "no thought"? To understand and perceive all dharmas, with a mind free from attachment and defilement, that is "no thought." When in use, this mind pervades everywhere, yet it does not cling to anything. We only have to purify our (original) mind so that the six consciousnesses exit the six gates (senses) without being contaminated or defiled by the six dusts (sense objects).

Astus wrote:

No thought in Huineng's teaching is arrived at directly and is equal to buddhahood. The gradual path - not the sudden teaching of Huineng - is where one gets to no thought stage by stage.

"When you are awakened to this teaching, there is "no thought"— you are free from recollection and attachments, and do not give rise to delusions. From your own true suchness, illuminate and observe with wisdom, neither grasp nor reject anything—this is to see your true nature and attain Buddhahood."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 3:09 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

I'm just talking about how 本心 is used in that passage. He says in that passage that it is something that needs to be realized and requires purification.

Astus wrote:

The mind is originally pure, it does not require purification. In fact, the very attempt to purify it is wrong. So Huineng says:

"If one is to concentrate on purity, then [realize that because] our natures are fundamentally pure, it is through false thoughts that suchness is covered up. Just be without false thoughts and the nature is pure of itself. If you activate your mind to become attached to purity, you will only generate the falseness of purity. The false is without location; it is the concentration that is false. Purity is without shape and characteristics; you only create the characteristics of purity and say this is 'effort' [in meditation]. To have such a view is to obscure one's own fundamental nature, and only to be fettered by purity."

(Platform Sutra, ch 5, BDK ed, p 45; T48n2008p353b10-14)

Admin_PC said:

I have no problem with the idea that HuiNeng's method is described differently elsewhere.

Astus wrote:

In my previous posts it was from the very same chapter, and the above one is from the same text, so it's not really elsewhere.

Admin_PC said:

One of the Samyukta Agama passages with 本心 is T0099_02.0278. I took a stab at translating it, but it came out ugly. It's explicitly talking about awakening in that context though.

Astus wrote:

In that sutra 本心 stands for "original intention", that is, the reason why someone goes forth from home life to homelessness.

Admin_PC said:

I totally understand there may be different nuances of the term & paths to get there, I just think when multiple passages are talking about a mind free of defilements and obscurations, they're essentially pointing to the same thing.

Astus wrote:

Except that there is no such thing as an "original mind" in the Nikayas/Agamas, nor in the Abhidharma. Even Madhyamaka and Yogacara refute such a concept. That is, the concept that the mind is inherently pure. On the other hand, it is of course the goal of all Buddhist tradition to attain complete purity, i.e. freedom from afflictions and obscurations.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Admin_PC said:

While, a mind purified of defilements is a common theme - the idea of original purity is not.

Astus wrote:

So it is. And then what an original mind stands for in those teachings that actually speak about it is another matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

There is indeed something to hold on to i.e. the raft, the teaching.

Astus wrote:

And this is the teaching:

"Therefore one should not cherish dharma or non-dharma. For this reason, the Tathagata often teaches: Bhiksus, know that my Dharma is like a raft. If even the correct teachings (Dharma) should be abandoned, how much more so the incorrect teachings (non-Dharma)?"

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=141&Itemid=57, ch 6)

Wayfarer said:

And, 'original purity' is not something fabricated.

Astus wrote:

"Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also a word provisionally invented by the First Teacher. Now, if the First Teacher provisionally invented this word, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And, if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the unconditioned does not exist."

(Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 12)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Indeed, and that was the very verse I alluded to. But there is a raft, a teaching, and there needs to be.

Astus wrote:

I meant that the teaching was to abandon all attachments.

Wayfarer said:

Of course it doesn't exist, because 'everything that exists' has a beginning and an end in time. The unconditioned doesn't come into and go out of existence, therefore could not 'exist'.

Astus wrote:

What the sutra says is that both "conditioned" and "unconditioned" are words, teachings meant for instructing people, that's why they don't actually exist.

Wayfarer said:

I find Astus' interpretation consistently falls into the side of saying 'non-existent'.

Astus wrote:

"You must discern the words of the complete teaching and the incomplete teaching; you must discern prohibitive words and nonprohibitive words; you must discern living and dead words; you must discern medicine and disease words; you must discern words of negative and positive metaphor; you must discern generalizing and particularizing words.

To say that it is possible to attain Buddhahood by cultivation, that there is practice and there is realization, that this mind is enlightened, that the mind itself is identical to Buddha - this is Buddha's teaching; these are words of the incomplete teaching. These are nonprohibitive words, generalizing words, words of a pound or ounce burden. These are words concerned with weeding out impure things; these are words of positive metaphor. These are dead words. These are words for ordinary people.

To say that one cannot attain Buddhahood by cultivation, that there is no cultivation, no realization, it is not mind, not Buddha - this is also Buddha's teaching; these are words of the complete teaching, prohibitive words, particularizing words, words of a hundred hundredweight burden. These are words beyond the three vehicles' teachings, words of negative metaphor or instruction, words concerned with weeding out pure things; these are words for someone of station in the Way, these are living words."

(Extensive Record of Baizhang, tr Cleary, p 37-38)

Wayfarer said:

Reality, the real, the dharmadhatu, is not existent or non-existent, but that which all

notions of existence and non-existence presupposes.

Astus wrote:

In other words, it seems you are proposing that there is an actual substratum.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

The highest level is reciting the Buddha-name to realize there's no Buddha apart from the mind.

Astus wrote:

How can the repetition of some syllables bring one to the realisation that there is no buddha apart from the mind?

As the Platform Sutra (ch 2, BDK ed, p 28) states:

"This must be practiced in the mind, not recited by the mouth. To recite it orally without practicing it in the mind is [as unreal] as a phantasm or hallucination, [and as evanescent] as dew or lightning."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

"If our Mind accords with the Mind of Buddha Amitabha for one moment"

Astus wrote:

How does it accord with the mind of a buddha? Although your quote says "the image of the Pure Land's golden thrones appear before us", I doubt that buddha-mind means seeing golden thrones.

Then your next quote says "reciting the name of Amitabha (Namu-Amida-Butsu) reveals this enlightenment" - however, that again does not say how or for what reason. If it were that simple and direct, then everyone reciting the name would be enlightened right there, but that is apparently not the case.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Please read the books and articles you recommended previously, and you will find the answers you are seeking. May you be happy and well.

Astus wrote:

I don't recall any of them claiming that mere recitation is sufficient for insight, that's why I'm asking you about it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 4:23 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

If Buddhahood is a principle which pervades the universe, then reciting the Buddha-name helps to remove the delusion of separateness between ourselves and Buddhahood. The purpose of Zazen is the same, to remove our delusion of separateness.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is the ultimate nature of the whole world, but merely repeating the word "emptiness" will not get one even to understanding, much less actually realising it.

As for "Reciting the Buddha's name while concentrating on Compassion and Wisdom for instance, produces great energy, concentration and joy." that is what one can get with it, although if one aims for concentration, it is better to just focus on one thing. Still, wisdom needs more than being focused. One has to use that calm and concentrated mind to actually investigate appearances in order to gain insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Have you read The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 6:54 AM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Then there's no further need to question me regarding the gradual cultivation of

enlightenment through Buddha-name recitation.

Astus wrote:

And what the

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html says is that "through the strength of wholehearted meditation on the Buddha, he will in fulfillment of his wishes be able to be born in the Buddha-land beyond". Not insight, not enlightenment, but birth in the Pure Land.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

This is your interpretive problem in a nutshell. Because you think any reference to a transcendent reality is 'like Atman' or 'substantialist', then you reject them, the consequence being that ultimately nothing is real. That is what 'nihilism' means - it is literally the assertion that nothing exists, or nothing is real.

Astus wrote:

Let's try to be more specific and concrete. All possible experiences can be categorised as the six sensory areas: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking. So, anything that can ever occur happens only within these six. It can be easily confirmed - both logically and experientially - that all experiences are impermanent and conditioned. To propose something beyond experiences, something permanent and unconditioned, means that that something cannot be experienced, it has no connection to neither bodily nor mental phenomena, therefore it does not and cannot exist, and even if it did it would be irrelevant and useless.

What is taught by the Buddha and all his descendants is that suffering is the product of clinging that comes from the ignorance about the six types of experiences being impermanent and conditioned. Therefore, any teaching that postulates a doctrine contrary to that is merely propagating ignorance.

Wayfarer said:

When I challenged you on that point, you said, sure, many Buddhists texts say that nothing is real. But they don't.

Astus wrote:

Could you show those teachings that don't?

Wayfarer said:

That is why Madhyamika is a dialectic, not a systematic philosophy.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is a method, a skilful means, just like every Buddhist teaching.

Wayfarer said:

Things that exist from one level of understanding, don't exist from another level. So for us worldly beings, chairs, tables, illnesses, accidents, and so on, really do exist, and have real consequences. Of course from another perspective, they're unreal, empty of inherent existence. But to say they're merely or simply non-existent as you do, is the mistake of nihilism (in my opinion anyway).

Astus wrote:

If you accept that things are empty of inherent existence, that means you accept that they are not real. If you say that things do have inherent existence, that means you claim that chairs, tables, illnesses, accidents, etc. are independent, eternal phenomena. Besides either having or not having inherent existence there is no third option.

Wayfarer said:

On the level of conventional reality, conventional distinctions are vital.

Astus wrote:

Where has that been denied anywhere?

Wayfarer said:

That is why the two truths teaching is so important. Things that are real on one level are unreal on another. To mistake or mix up the two levels creates a problem, it is mistaking the relative for the absolute.

Astus wrote:

The conventional truth is dependent origination, the ultimate truth is emptiness. These two truths actually stand for the same single reality. To think of them in terms of one being existence and the other non-existence is assuming an impossible duality.

So Nagarjuna says,

"That which is dependent origination
Is explained to be emptiness.
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself the middle way."
(MMK 24.18, in Ocean of Reasoning, p 503)

And Tsongkhapa sums it up as,

"So long as the two understandings - of appearance,
Which is undeceiving dependent origination,
And emptiness devoid of all theses - remain separate,
So long you have not realized the intent of the Sage."
(<http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/Three%20Principal%20Aspects.pdf>, v 11)

And before this is all assumed to be mere dialectics or rhetoric, the meditation on

dependent origination and emptiness together is an essential practice.

"Whether walking, standing, sitting, lying, or rising, he should practice both "cessation" and "clear observation" side by side. That is to say, he is to meditate upon the fact that things are unborn in their essential nature; but at the same time he is to meditate upon the fact that good and evil karma, produced by the combination of the primary cause and the coordinating causes, and the retributions of karma in terms of pleasure, pain, etc., are neither lost nor destroyed. Though he is to meditate on the retribution of good and evil karma produced by the primary and coordinating causes [i.e., he is to practice "clear observation"], he is also to meditate on the fact that the essential nature of things is unobtainable by intellectual analysis."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html, part 4)

Wayfarer said:

But it is also the meaning behind many Zen koans, as you yourself know - 'first there is a mountain' - relative truth - 'then there is no mountain' - realising emptiness - 'then there is' - harmonising both perspectives which is mastery.

Astus wrote:

Yes, there are such gradual methods, where the point is to eventually understand and realise that emptiness and appearances are not two different realms. In other words, nirvana is samsara.

Wayfarer said:

That sutta I referred to, the Nibbana Sutta, is unequivocal: there is an unborn, unconditioned, unmade, were there not, there would be no escape from the conditioned, the born, the made.

Astus wrote:

Escape to where?

Wayfarer said:

As I said, if you go to Sutta Central and search for 'unconditioned', you find many references, including many which refer to 'merging with' or 'realising' the unconditioned.

Astus wrote:

And that unborn and unconditioned is emptiness.

Wayfarer said:

That is not Vedanta - the Buddha has a different way of going about it. But their mokṣa and the Buddhist Nirvāṇa are not worlds apart.

Astus wrote:

Vedanta believes there is an ultimate perceiver, Buddhism shows that perception is a conditioned phenomenon. Vedanta's solution is to identify only with the ultimate subject as the only real thing, Buddhism's solution is to not identify with, not cling to

anything, because there is nothing to rely on.

Wayfarer said:

There is a higher truth, that is the meaning of 'abhijna'. Higher, compared to what?

Astus wrote:

Higher compared to the false idea of self.

Wayfarer said:

It doesn't mean there is a substratum or permanent unchanging substance (or subject of experience).

Astus wrote:

What does it mean then?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Shinran Shonin: "There is no Buddha apart from the mind."

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

The conclusion to The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana says that we take refuge in Amida Buddha, not as a literal flesh and blood Buddha, but instead as Suchness or Dharma-body

Astus wrote:

And even if one does that, the result is birth in Sukhavati, not enlightenment.

Dharma Flower said:

If he meditates on the Dharmakaya, the Suchness of the Buddha, and with diligence keeps practicing the meditation, he will be able to be born there in the end because he abides in the correct samadhi.

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html

It seems that, no matter what I say, you have a desire to say the opposite, instead of recognizing differences in interpretation between Buddhist paths. I even was able to find two instances in a liturgical book from the Nishi Honganji saying that Amida attained Buddhahood in the "beginningless past," just as Shinran taught. Everyone must find the Dharma path that's right for them.

Astus wrote:

There are differences. And the question I've been asking is how can mere recitation result in liberation, as there seems to be neither logical nor textual basis for that.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Path to Buddhahood in Chan/Zen

Content:

Jesse said:

Doesn't that describe the realization of an Arahant?

Astus wrote:

In Mahayana the arhat falls into identifying with the annihilation of appearances and clings to a formless absorption.

Jesse said:

In Mahayana, once this stage is realized, we intentionally take rebirth as a Bodhisattva, correct?

Astus wrote:

Mahayana is the bodhisattva path from the beginning.

Jesse said:

And this rebirth as a Bodhisattva is the pledge we take -- rebirth as a bodhisattva until all sentient beings are liberated.

Astus wrote:

The bodhisattva path begins with the arousal of bodhicitta. The goal is to become a buddha and save all beings. One does not remain stuck on a lower level intentionally.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

But the reality of the world is not being called into question, it's the attachment to it, the taking it to be something that it is not, namely, substantial, satisfying, and 'mine', which it is not.

Astus wrote:

That's the whole point of seeing that appearances are merely appearances and not substantial things, to discover that the object of attachment is purely imagined, therefore attachment itself is false. As long as one assumes real objects attachment remains.

Wayfarer said:

It is unreal, from the understanding of the Tathagata.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it the Buddha's wisdom that we all aspire to and intend to realise?

Wayfarer said:

Not ultimately real. But as I said, if you have an illness, and you are prescribed a cure,

then the difference between the cure, and a false cure, is a real difference - a matter of life and death.

Astus wrote:

What is the difference between "ultimately real" and simply "real"? As long as one is filled with hope and fear one suffers.

Wayfarer said:

That why there are degrees of reality, which is symbolised in the dharmachakra, by the eight realms of existence.

Astus wrote:

The dharmacakra (wheel of law) symbolises the noble eightfold path. The bhavacakra (wheel of existence) symbolises the six realms of rebirth. The six realms are not degrees of reality but places of birth that come from ignorance.

Wayfarer said:

We're in 'the human realm'. But the Tathagata is always shown as outside the human realm altogether. From that perspective, what we take to be real is unreal - but it's real for us, and what we do has real consequences in that context. Emptiness is not mere non-existence, it's more complicated than that.

Astus wrote:

As long as one clings to appearances, one is in samsara. With the end of clinging there is no more samsara. The cause of clinging is the belief in a self, a substance, a real existence. Seeing emptiness is how clinging is eliminated. So, why argue for being in the human realm and not aim for the vision of the buddhas?

Wayfarer said:

That is why Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche differentiates 'realisation' and 'experience'. When the distinction between 'self and other' and 'knower and known' is overcome, then one is in the domain of realisation, not experience as such.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying there is a "domain of realisation" beyond the six areas of experience?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2017 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

muni said:

'Beyond' the duality of sense and sense object, how to express that other than again having subject and sense object?

Astus wrote:

There has never been a self in any of the sensory areas, so it's not them that are the

problem, only the false assumption of there being a substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 3rd, 2017 at 5:53 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

If there were not, then why wouldn't everyone who hears, sees, and has normal sense-perception, already have realised Nirvāṇa? Is there no difference between those who have realised it, and those who have not? If there is a difference, what is that difference? What do the Noble Ones see, that the puthujjana do not see? Is what the Noble Ones see an object of sense perception?

Astus wrote:

The difference is whether one clings to appearances or not. It is the difference between "my car has been stolen" and "a car has been stolen", where in the former case one is moved by various thoughts and emotions, but not in the latter case.

Wayfarer said:

That is not a matter of asserting that objects don't exist

Astus wrote:

Asserting and negating are both imprisoning views. The reason one is taught to see that appearances are empty is to eliminate the false object of attachment.

Wayfarer said:

The way I understand it, is that realisation pertains to those who 'realise the truth of the teaching'. And the truth of the teaching is not an object of sense, but understanding of emptiness, Śūnyatā. So that is why it is 'transcendental wisdom' - because it goes beyond the domain of sensory perception. ('Gone beyond'). If it didn't 'go beyond' then Buddhists would simply be empiricists.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is simply that the six sensory objects are unestablished, without essence, ungraspable. Experiences are already empty as they are, so it is not that there is something new to gain, but the mistake of imagining a self is what needs to be removed.

"The self-notion itself does not have the identity of a self, nor does the (selfish being's) deforming habit; their natures are different.

Apart from these two there is no other (self), so it arises only as an error; liberation is therefore the termination of a mere error."

(Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra 6.2, in The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature, p 50)

Wayfarer said:

But you also know that the way that a bodhisattva and a hell-being sees things, are entirely different. That is often quoted here on this forum: the bodhisattva sees a 'glass

of water' as ambrosial nectar and the hell-being sees it as boiling pus (or something revolting).

Astus wrote:

That difference in the perception of water you mention is between hell dwellers and gods. Being a bodhisattva is not a matter of birth or perception.

Wayfarer said:

Certainly, we all aim for that understanding, but we're not there yet. So saying that the objects of ordinary experience are merely non-existent, doesn't reflect that perspective, in my view.

Astus wrote:

The point of the teaching is not to just give a description of one's erroneous views but to direct one to the correct view, and that correct view is that appearances are empty and unreal.

Wayfarer said:

So how does saying that they are non-existent, apply or help, in respect of our situation in the world? There is still relative and conventional truth, it can't simply be all swept aside. I don't think that is what 'realising emptiness' means.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness cures the dissatisfaction caused by hope and fear that come from mistaking appearances as substantial. It is not the denial of appearances or of causality.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 4th, 2017 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

If 'ignorance' gives rise to suffering, and ignorance is caused by clinging

Astus wrote:

The order is: ignorance -> clinging -> suffering.

Wayfarer said:

is 'understanding the nature of ignorance' a sensory experience?

Astus wrote:

Understanding ignorance is like understanding anything else, it is a mental process, thoughts. It's like the story of riding a boat on a foggy lake and seeing another boat coming towards you. You shout at the other boat to avoid you, but when it gets next to you it turns out to be an empty boat without anyone controlling it. Similarly, one can be upset about all sorts of things, but when it becomes clear that there is no person doing it, who can one be angry at? One can make a difference between learning that boats go

without handlers and seeing empty boats with one's own eyes. That is the difference between learning the five aggregates to be empty and actually perceiving it to be true. What perception means in this case is not finding a self anywhere.

"In the same way, a monk investigates form, however far form may go. He investigates feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go. As he is investigating form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go, any thoughts of 'me' or 'mine' or 'I am' do not occur to him."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.205.than.html>)

Wayfarer said:

I don't see how it could be.

Astus wrote:

First one assumes that there is a self who perceives and does things, that is ignorance. Then one reviews that assumption in theory and in actual experience (experience means phenomena of the six sensory domains). That way one can confirm that such assumption of a self is unfounded and false. Or as Rangjung Dorje put it:

"Looking again and again at the mind that can not be looked at,
One sees clearly just as it is the truth of not seeing.
Resolving any doubt as to how it is or is not,
May we recognize our unconfused nature by ourselves."
(<http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/mahamudra.pdf>)

Wayfarer said:

Seeing through or gaining insight into the cause of ignorance is not itself an experience - it's a realisation, although such realisations do sometimes trigger experiences (as per the excerpt from Traleg Kyabgon).

Astus wrote:

That kind of difference between experience and realisation is important to know, but there the word "experience" carries a meaning different from how I used it. Here experience stands for temporary meditative phenomena, like bliss, clarity, and thoughtlessness, while realisation stands for the personal confirmation that all experiences are impermanent and empty. Realisation is enduring because it removes the cause of suffering, that is, it is discovering that our conception of a self is unfounded. But as a mental process realisation is a temporary phenomenal event just like everything else.

Wayfarer said:

Yes, tables and chairs are dependently arisen. But they serve a purpose and have an identity, even if they are not 'ultimately real'. They are not eternal or independent, but they're also not non-existent. They're neither completely real nor simply non-existent. That is what I take the 'middle way' understanding to be.

Astus wrote:

When it is accepted that an object is dependent, it means it does not exist on its own. Not existing on its own means that there is no object that is dependent. So whatever object and its relations one may consider, it's all a conceptual fabrication and nothing more, a product of fiction. Again, that is not saying that there are no appearances at all, it is about understanding how appearances actually are. And the only reason for that understanding is to eliminate ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 5th, 2017 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Nevertheless, the Buddha doesn't fall back from the state of realisation. In that sense, it is not a temporary state, is it?

Astus wrote:

When the cause, ignorance, is gone, then clinging does not occur again, because the cause does not occur any more. It is not a state one stays in.

Wayfarer said:

The problem I am having with this point is that, in any encyclopedia entry on Buddhism, the 'two extreme views' are given as 'the object really exists' ('eternalism') or 'the object does not exist' ('nihilism'). So to say that objects don't exist, seems to me to be the 'extreme' of nihilism. Perhaps I am not understanding it correctly.

Astus wrote:

The two extreme views are sassatavada and ucchedavada, that is: eternalism and annihilationism. The definitions from the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.01.0.bodh.html>:

"There are, bhikkhus, some recluses and brahmins who are eternalists, and who on four grounds proclaim the self and the world to be eternal."

"There are, bhikkhus, some recluses and brahmins who are annihilationists and who on seven grounds proclaim the annihilation, destruction, and extermination of an existent being."

As for how it becomes the extremes of existence and non-existence, Nagarjuna explains:

"It exists" is an eternalist view; "It does not exist" is an annihilationist idea.

Therefore the wise one should not have recourse to either existence or nonexistence.

For whatever exists by its intrinsic nature does not become nonexistent; eternalism then follows.

"It does not exist now [but] it existed previously"—from this, annihilation follows.

(MMK 15.10-11, tr Siderits)

There isn't actually a view that says "nothing exists", since even saying it contradicts it. Rather, it's probably best illustrated with the teaching on rebirth, where some believe that there is an eternal soul, and some believe that with death everything is over - these are the extreme views of existence and non-existence, better put as eternalism and annihilationism (not nihilism).

"If the existent is unestablished, then the nonexistent (abhāva) too is not established. For people proclaim the nonexistent to be the alteration of the existent."
(MMK 15.5, tr Siderits)

"In fact, people say that what is the alteration of a thing is "non-existence"; however, the very thing does not exist. If it does not exist, of what would there be non-existence? Without non-existence, how do you say its antithesis, existence [of a thing], is possible?"
(Buddhapalita: Mulamadhyamakavṛtti, 15.5, tr Akira Saito, p 202)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Realization is a mental process? Perhaps you can explain this to us.

Astus wrote:

It is a mental process, as it is about confirming in personal experience the truth of the Dharma. To stay with Nagarjuna:

"Through the elimination of karma and affliction there is nirvana.
Karma and affliction come from conceptual thought.
These come from mental fabrication.
Fabrication ceases through emptiness."
(MMK 18.5, in Ocean of Reasoning, p 377)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

And I think that is a dogmatic view. The transitoriness of everything applies to the domain of name and form and to sensory experience. Power, possessions, children, the body, life, status, history, and everything else that can be experienced is transitory. But I don't believe 'awakening to the deathless' is a transitory state.

Astus wrote:

If you say that awakening is a state, it is an impermanent mental phenomenon. What I

said is that with the cessation of the cause (ignorance) the effect (suffering) cannot occur. This is what the four noble truths talk about. And that is how liberation cannot turn into bondage again.

Wayfarer said:

That is the exact phrase I was referring to. I think a lot of what is said about the non-reality of experience falls into the latter category.

Astus wrote:

The unreality of appearances would fall into the category of non-existence if there were something that could actually cease to exist. But since there has never been a self, liberation is not the destruction of self.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

If this were a mental process, then many of the posters here would have realization as many have understood the Madhyamaka emptiness. But, this is clearly not the case as most of the understanding is an intellectual one and is not on the intrinsic level of being.

Astus wrote:

There are three stages of wisdom (prajna): learning (sruta), understanding (cinta), application (bhavana). In other words, one cannot understand what one hasn't learnt, and one cannot apply what one has not understood. It is at the stage of application that one personalises the teaching on an experiential level.

Anonymous X said:

Madhyamaka is seen as a stepping stone in the so called step by step schools because it is not a direct pointing to the original nature or Tathagatagarbha. I'm not trying to diminish its importance, though. This is why I don't accept that realization is a mental process. It may 'seem' like it, but this is not realization. Of course, your definition may be different, but I see it as another concept you believe in.

Astus wrote:

Those you call "direct pointing" merely say that one should realise that the mind is empty. How is that different from Madhyamaka?

"The fields of the Buddha are all identical to space. The wondrous natures of people of this world are empty, without a single dharma that can be perceived. The emptiness of the self-natures is also like this."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 28)

"since the past this teaching of ours has first taken nonthought as its central doctrine, the formless as its essence, and nonabiding as its fundamental. The formless is to

transcend characteristics within the context of characteristics. Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts. Nonabiding is to consider in one's fundamental nature that all worldly [things] are empty, with no consideration of retaliation—whether good or evil, pleasant or ugly, and enemy or friend, etc., during times of words, fights, and disputation."

(ch 4, p 43)

Zhihuang said, "What does the Sixth Patriarch take as meditation?"

Xuance said, "What our master preaches is the wondrously peaceful and perfectly quiescent: the essence and functions are suchlike, suchlike. The five skandhas are fundamentally empty, the six [types of] sensory data are nonexistent. One does not enter and come out of [samādhi], one is neither concentrated nor disturbed. Meditation is in its nature nonabiding, and the serenity of meditation transcends abiding. Meditation in its nature is birthless, and the thoughts of meditation transcend birth. The mind is like space, but it is without any thinking of space."

(ch 7, p 69)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

No one denies the importance of emptiness, but that is only a gateway, and still a view. Even Nagarjuna cautioned against holding on to this view. It is still the self-thought grasping for a foothold.

Astus wrote:

Since Nagarjuna cautioned about taking emptiness to be a view, how could he have taught it as a view?

"The victorious ones have said

That emptiness is the elimination of all views.

Anyone for whom emptiness is a view

Is incorrigible."

(MMK 13.8, in Ocean of Reasoning, p 298)

In other words, emptiness is not a view. But, to relinquish all views, one needs to first learn and then understand what emptiness means.

Anonymous X said:

What Padmasambhava is saying in his 'Self Liberation Through Seeing With Naked Awareness' treatise is not 'merely' that mind is empty. He is inviting us to let go of all our views, thoughts, concepts about mind and anything else, for that matter

Astus wrote:

Letting go of everything, that has been the teaching of the Buddha from the beginning,

that is what it's all about, and that's what you find in Madhyamaka as well.

Anonymous X said:

and meet/be this Intrinsic Awareness that is right here, right now.

Astus wrote:

What is that intrinsic awareness? Is it the same or different from the aggregates?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Read...

Astus wrote:

I'm asking about your interpretation, your view, what you call "intrinsic awareness". If one takes it to be something other than the aggregates, it is no different from the mistaken view of the self. If it is not different from the aggregates, it cannot be called intrinsic.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

My view is unimportant.

Astus wrote:

If so, then why say "It is worthless without your own engagement, just like repeating Madhyamaka views. It's quite boring, actually to listen to it all. There's no energy in this kind of repetition."

As for my take on the matter of inherent enlightenment, the true nature of mind, etc., it is too easy to mistake these expressions as some sort of ultimate self, while the whole point is just to recognise that this whole realm of experiences is unestablished as it is, and that non-abiding is the original nature of appearances.

"This dharma body is everything,
it is like an illusory dream, continuously changing.
The passions of greed, anger, and stupidity are all
invisible, changing, and immaterial, like flowing scum.
Observe clearly the human body.
It is not solid but fragile and inconsistent
(once separated, once reassembled).

All the intentions and all the calculations are empty."
(Dharma Flower Samadhi Sutra, T9n269p286b21-24, tr Nguyen Hien)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

My only question to you is do you know this throughout your entire being? Otherwise, it is still intellectual.

Astus wrote:

Know what exactly? Whatever is written is necessarily a verbal-conceptual product. As for the intended meaning, that phenomena are unstable, that is directly perceivable to anyone. But, even though there has never been anything to cling to, it is exactly conceptualisation that creates the illusion of independent objects and subjects. So, what other knowledge is there but intellectual?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: "All Buddha-Nature is One"

Content:

DGA said:

True or false: "all Buddha-nature is one"

Astus wrote:

False.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Wayfarer said:

How to make pottery. How to play the piano. How to raise a child. How to ski.

Astus wrote:

Do those knowledges reside in the mind or the body?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Zongmi's Knowing/Jnana is not intellectual knowledge.

Astus wrote:

If you can tell what kind of knowledge it is, how is that not intellectual?

Anonymous X said:

There is no subject/object duality. If you've never experienced this, I can see how you could ask this question.

Astus wrote:

As there is neither subject to experience it, nor object to be experienced, how could anyone ever experience it?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: "All Buddha-Nature is One"

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

So how can we determine Buddha Nature at all, even in a conventional sense, using language?

Astus wrote:

Once such concepts as buddha-nature are brought up, I think it is better to clarify what is meant by them. Going for the excuse that this or that concept cannot be explained only tells that it is a concept not clearly understood. There are actually quite a few treatises and sutras on buddha-nature, not to mention meditation techniques meant to help discovering it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2017 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

Both — the division between mind and body (nāmarūpa) is formal, not actual.

Astus wrote:

In what interpretation? Rupa stands for earth, water, fire, and wind - neither of them carries any sentience. As for nama, it consists of feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention - of those perception is associated with memory.

But if the distinction is taken away - i.e. it's all just mind - then again every form of knowledge is of the same kind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are no minds without bodies, and no bodies without minds. Mind and matter are coterminous.

Astus wrote:

There is a whole realm for minds without bodies. There are also bodies without mind.

Also, if bodies are defined in terms of the experiential perspective, then they refer to the instances of certain sensory occurrences, that is: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, and those are not always present.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 1:09 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment success rate

Content:

Malcolm said:

As I pointed out already, the idea the formless realms are actually formless is a debatable point upon which there is disagreement. According to the the Theravada tradition as well as the Dzogchen tradition, there are no disembodied minds anywhere in the three realms, and with respect to the latter, not even in the bardo.

Astus wrote:

It is a debatable point that is addressed in the Kathavatthu (VIII.8, XVI.9) and refuted, i.e. the arupaloka cannot contain rupa, i.e. matter.

"You can predicate them truly of the Rupa-sphere, where there yet is matter. But this sphere is not identical with the Arupa-sphere. And if you predicate matter of the Arupa-sphere, you must show that matter agrees with the description you can truly give of the Arupa-sphere as a state of existence, a destiny, etc."

(Kathavatthu, VIII.8, tr Aung & Davids, p 220)

What source do you use regarding the Theravada interpretation?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: "All Buddha-Nature is One"

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Also, according to the Huayan teaching, all Buddha-nature is one:

Astus wrote:

The interpenetration of phenomena does not mean there is a single buddha-nature, but

that appearances are interdependent. The quote provided does not even mention buddha-nature. Furthermore, in the article given as the source mentions buddha-nature as the principle, that principle is simply emptiness, but once we arrive at the fourth dharmadhatu there is no mention of the principle at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

Buddhism is insistent that the skandhas are not the self, but does this mean necessarily that there is no self?

Astus wrote:

What kind of self could there be? Either it is the same as the aggregates or different from them. If it is the same, then it is impermanent, consequently is not a self. If it is different, then it does not have any of the qualities of the aggregates, it is unconscious and inactive, and that is something that cannot function as a self.

Supramundane said:

We can agree that the skandhas are not the self, but that does not necessarily rule out the existence of a self beyond the skandhas.... right?

Astus wrote:

It does rule it out.

Supramundane said:

could it be that once we erase the defilements obscuring the mind, the unobscured mind is the True Mind which can be conceived of as a sort of positive, a "selfless Self"?

Astus wrote:

Mind is conditioned, impermanent, empty. A self should be unconditioned and permanent. If there were a permanent self, it would either be eternally tainted or eternally pure, and no path to it would make any sense, hence Buddhism would be totally pointless and meaningless.

Supramundane said:

Perhaps it too can be viewed in a positive way instead of solely negative: then it would be a Near-vana... closer to us than we ever expected.

Astus wrote:

There are positive terms for nirvana, like peace and bliss.

Supramundane said:

It is not a negation but a presence... inside all of us.

Astus wrote:

If it is inside all of us, what is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 6:56 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

the mind is conditioned and impermanent? i'm not sure about that...

Mind and consciousness are different...

Astus wrote:

If you posit a permanent mind, that means such a mind is always aware of the same thing, or not aware at all, otherwise there is change, conditioning, impermanence. That is why an unconditioned mind is impossible and cannot exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

the mind can be cleaned of defilements, after all.... it is not intrinsically conditioned and impermanent. there is hope.

Astus wrote:

It is exactly because the mind is not permanent that it can be purified, otherwise it would be permanently tainted.

Supramundane said:

if mind is intrinsically conditioned and impermanent then what hope do we have of reaching Nirvana?

Astus wrote:

A permanent and unconditioned mind can never be changed. So either one would be already liberated or will never be liberated at all. That is why an eternal self denies the possibility of cultivation and the eventual attainment of nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

but isn't the mind boundless and intrinsically untainted?

Astus wrote:

What do you call the mind? In Buddhism there are six consciousnesses: visual-, auditory-, olfactory-, gustatory-, tactile-, and mental-consciousness. The six consciousnesses are defined by the six possible objects, as they exist dependent on each other (cf. MN 38, SN 35.93). So, when you talk of mind as boundless and intrinsically pure, what kind of mind is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

i am referring to the former. am i right to do so, according to strict interpretation of Buddhist teaching?

Astus wrote:

There are six consciousnesses, as noted above. Ideas about some sort of universal mind, etc., are neither reasonable nor proven by experience, therefore they are incorrect views. So, no, there is no basis in Buddhism for anything like what you propose here.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 8th, 2017 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Unconscious and Inactive

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is only regarding the assumption of a self. If something is permanent it is necessarily in a fixed state, hence cannot be an agent interacting with impermanent phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Unconscious and Inactive

Content:

PuerAzaelis said:

Why can we not say that it is possible that there is an unconscious element which is active in some manner, whether impermanent or not?

Astus wrote:

What has no consciousness has no intention, hence no action. That does not mean that the wind is static, but it has no will of its own.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

it is not an entity separate from the eighth consciousness.

Astus wrote:

The eighth consciousness is a provisional teaching, not something that anyone is aware of, consequently if this "knowing" is posited as one of its aspects, it makes knowing itself a mere theory.

Anonymous X said:

In its [principle] of not being in concord [with unreal thought], its substance is constant and immutable, and we view it as thusness.

Astus wrote:

Thusness is everything's true nature, not unique to the storehouse consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

According to whom? Even Candrakīrti accepts it.

Astus wrote:

Provisional, in the sense of being a convenient explanation of karma, a conventional model.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Is there anything that isn't a conventional model?

Astus wrote:

Right. My point is that it is a secondary teaching in the way that it is not directly connected to the path of liberation, it is not a necessary element.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 6:28 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course it is directly connected with the path of liberation. Otherwise there would be no purpose in teaching the ālayavijñāna.

Astus wrote:

What is the purpose of teaching it? To give a plausible explanation of the continuity of being. But as it is shown in MMK 17, establishing a continuity is not possible. How is it connected in your view?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Unconscious and Inactive

Content:

PuerAzaelis said:

How do you know?

Astus wrote:

Intention is a mental factor, so without a mind how can there be a function of mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Unconscious and Inactive

Content:

PuerAzaelis said:

Sure but what I'm asking is what we do with this idea that there is something alive and active that isn't my conscious intention.

Astus wrote:

I guess by not your intention you mean:

My anal personality, libido, denial, repression, catharsis, Freudian slips, and neuroses aren't my conscious intention.

But they seem to have an activity and a "life of their own".

A distinction is given in the

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.038.than.html>, where cetana (intention) and anusaya (obsession, tendency) are discussed in relation to

consciousness. However, what you seem to talk about are not latent tendencies but rather habits that seem unintentional only because of the lack of clarity

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.068.than.html>) regarding one's own mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 9th, 2017 at 10:28 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

MMK 17 shows only that there can be no ultimate continuum.

Astus wrote:

Since it's illusory anyway, why struggle with building a whole system of it? I mean, alayavijnana is not perceptible by anyone, it is admittedly based only on "holy teaching and proper reasoning" (Cheng Weishi Lun, BDK ed, p 83), so it's posited as a mere theoretical workaround, but even if it's better than those proposed before it, if investigated a bit, it suffers from a number of inconsistencies, starting with the problem of being a consciousness nobody is conscious of. Aside from that, alayavijnana has no practical role on the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 10th, 2017 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, its role on the path is to undergo transformation through recognizing that the seeds within it that ripen as the appearances of the three worlds are nothing other than appearances to one's mind that arise from the ālaya.

Astus wrote:

The seeds are unknown and never seen, in other words, latent, even though they're said to be the objects of the storehouse consciousness. The very supposition of such a storehouse is purely theoretical, as it's never perceived by anyone. So, when it's claimed that "it" is transformed, such a transformation doesn't occur to any being.

Malcolm said:

Your objection does not hold at all.

Astus wrote:

What part doesn't hold? Unless you know a case where there is awareness of the alayavijnana, it is nothing more than a hypothesis.

Malcolm said:

According to some kinds of Madhyamaka, no one is conscious of their own consciousness at all.

Astus wrote:

That issue of self-awareness is another matter. Alayavijnana is per definition unknown.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 11th, 2017 at 6:50 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The supposition of everything is purely theoretical. When is the last time you perceived your mental consciousness? Your statements amount to "I did not see it, so it does not exist."

Astus wrote:

Thoughts are apparent, just as the five other types of objects of consciousness. The alayavijnana, even though it is called a consciousness with innumerable seeds as its objects, there is nobody who can be aware of those seeds, so it is a consciousness without consciousness.

Malcolm said:

The seeds are inferable, and inference is a valid basis of knowledge in Buddhadharma, etc.

Astus wrote:

The seeds are deductible, but my point is that the argument used for that deduction is not good enough, as the existence of an alayavijnana is self-contradicting.

Malcolm said:

Nāgārjuna accepts the Sammitya theory of the avipranasha, but when is the last time you saw one?

Astus wrote:

He does not, but rejects both the seed theory and the non-disappearing dharma theory, and gives his interpretation at the end where he talks about empty karma. This is made clear in the commentaries and similarly summed up in Madhyamakavatara 6.39-40.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The ālayavijñāna is nothing other than the vijñāna skandha.

Astus wrote:

"What is the characteristic of consciousness? Knowing is the characteristic of consciousness."

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, I.1, p 4)

"What is consciousness? It is awareness of an object."

(Pancaskandhaprakarana, in Inner Science of Buddhists Practice, p 239)

This is held true for the six active consciousnesses, not the other two (i.e. they are not actually aware). The role of manas and citta is to maintain the continuity of afflictions when the six active consciousnesses cease. While the extra parts are said to serve as a bridge, it is also maintained that the seeds, just as the storehouse, are momentary. So,

if there is no problem with the alayavijnana ceasing every moment, why is it a problem with the six active consciousnesses? And because the alayavijnana is unconscious and momentary, the very theory of it is problematic and redundant.

Malcolm said:

Yes, he most certainly does accept this theory of karma, and states quite clearly he likes it the best out of all the Hinayāna options, before moving onto a deconstruction of karma framed in ultimate terms.

Astus wrote:

I guess you're referring to 17.13 (tr. Siderits): "I, however, shall here propose the following hypothesis that is suitable and that has been expounded by buddhas, pratyekabuddhas, and śrāvakas."

The commentaries of Kumarajiva, Mabja Jangchub, and Tsongkhapa attribute that part to an opponent, not Nagarjuna's own view or anything he accepts, but rather something that he refutes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 1:42 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The ālayavijñāna is called the appropriating consciousness with respect to its role in rebirth. It is synonymous with citta.

Astus wrote:

How does that answer the problems with it?

Malcolm said:

Either there are slight errors in the translations, or the authors themselves have erred. It is very clear that Nāgārjuna finds the concept of karma being like a debt reasonable.

Astus wrote:

Putting aside then the commentators and the tradition, why do you say it is reasonable to think that Nagarjuna finds it acceptable that there can be such a thing as a non-disappearing dharma?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 2:07 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

in the same way that debt, though not tangible, doesn't vanish until it is either paid off or forgiven.

Astus wrote:

That is the example given in 17.14, My question is, what is your reason to say that it is proposed there as a theory acceptable by Nagarjuna?

Malcolm said:

What is the object of consciousness during gestation prior to the appearance of the six sense organs?

Astus wrote:

How could there be a consciousness without anything that it is conscious of?

Malcolm said:

If you answer it has none, then you have also removed your own objection to ālayavijñāna.

Astus wrote:

No, because the problems are that it is claimed to be a consciousness that no being can ever be aware of, and that it is proposed to solve the problem of continuity when actually it is itself only momentary.

Malcolm said:

If you answer that it has one, then what is the object and what is the sense organ?

Astus wrote:

The set of manovijnana-dharma-dharmadhatu is not material to require a physical organ.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 3:57 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

He states that he accepts it provisionally.

Astus wrote:

May interpret it so if you read the opponent's position as if it were Nagarjuna's. But then similarly other sections could be read like that as well. Furthermore, Nagarjuna accepting such an eternalist view seems more contradictory than Tsongkhapa's idea of disintegratedness (zhig pa).

Malcolm said:

So the fetus is just an inert lump of matter until stage of six sense organs? Then how does it become conscious at all?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is not the product of physical development, so why would being a fetus matter?

Malcolm said:

Evidence of this unsubstantiated claim?

Astus wrote:

Evidence of what part? That the alayavijnana is momentary, or that no being can be aware of alayavijnana?

Malcolm said:

So what is the object of the manas in the womb? If it has none, you have again removed your own objection to ālayavijñāna. If it has one, what is it?

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the seventh consciousness by manas?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

I don't think you can separate consciousness from its object. Analysis cannot solve the problem you put forth. This is all about the 'substance'. Gold is the substance, all modifications are the ring, characteristics. The nature axiom takes substance as existent, Gold. Negation can never come to this understanding. This is a big distinction between the Tathagatagarbha sutras and Madyhamaka. Voidness talks about extremes, what things aren't. The 'nature axiom' talks about substance, what things actually are. For myself, Zongmi clearly explains all of this using the sutras to seal it.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi may sound very positive, but then it is taking "knowing" to be some special substance. However, that's not different from calling emptiness the self-nature of phenomena. If we care to investigate this "knowing" a bit deeper, here are Zongmi's words:

"Knowing is no mindfulness and no form. Who is characterized as self, and who is characterized as other? When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. ... With respect to understanding, it is to see that all characteristics are non-characteristics. With respect to practice, it is called the practice of nonpractice. When the depravities are exhausted, the rebirth process will cease; once arising and disappearing has extinguished, calmness and illumination will become manifest, and responsive functions will be without limit. It is called becoming a buddha."

(Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 88)

Is there a special "knowing" to be found? No, it is just realising appearances to be empty and signless, and that is what is called the actual "knowing", and that is why it is buddha-nature. The difference Zongmi emphasises between his version and the Chan of other lineages is that Zongmi not only talks about the empty part but also the aware aspect, as illustrated in his jewel metaphor.

"When one truly sees the color black, the black from the outset is not black. It is just the brightness. The blue from the outset is not blue. It is just the brightness, up to and including: all the [other colors], such as red, white, yellow, etc., are like this. They are just the brightness. If, at the locus of the color characteristics, one after the other you just see the perfect brightness of jade-like sparkling purity, then you are not confused about the jewel."

(Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 92)

And further specifies regarding the expression of "the Knowing of voidness and calm":

""Voidness" means to empty out all characteristics; it is still a negative term. Just "calm" is the immutable principle of the real nature; it is not the same as voidness and nonexistence. Knowing is the principle of revealing the thing-in-itself; it is not the same as discrimination. Just this is the original substance of the true mind."

(Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 94)

In the end, what all this talk of knowing and buddha-nature is about is to highlight that the goal is not insentience and unconsciousness, but functional wisdom that does not separate itself from appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2017 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is not an eternalist view. The avipranashas do not survive death. They are therefore not permanent. They "imperishable" only in the sense that while one is alive that "debt" remains current.

Astus wrote:

There is actually one such unperishable dharma that carries over karma to the next life.

"At the moment of rebirth there occurs a single [unperishing] with respect to all actions of the same sphere, both dissimilar and similar."
(MMK 17.17, tr Siderits)

It explains in the preceding verse the reason for maintaining one such dharma:

"If it were to be relinquished by abandonment or by transference of the action, various difficulties would result, including the disappearance of the [past] action."

(MMK 17.16)

And, if as you say, the Vaibhasika idea is something Nagarjuna agrees with, why then follow it up with a refutation of those ideas and replacing the unperishing dharma with showing that action is unperishing because it has not arisen in the first place?

"Why is an action not arisen? Because it is without intrinsic nature.

And since it is unarisen, it does not perish."

(MMK 17.21)

Malcolm said:

Because in a fetus there is no differentiation of sense perception and there can be no consciousness according to you because even the mental organ requires a mental object, otherwise it does not exist. Since a fetus prior to the six sense organ stage and contact stage (19 weeks) has no sense organs and cannot perceive anything, is it merely a lump of flesh or is it sentient?

Astus wrote:

Since the mental organ is not physical, how is it influenced by fetal development in any way?

Malcolm said:

The latter.

Astus wrote:

See <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=132789#p132789>. In brief, the seeds are latent, so if they were perceived, they would not be latent any more.

Malcolm said:

I mean the sixth consciousness.

Astus wrote:

The object of the mental consciousness are mental phenomena, i.e. thoughts. How is that related to fetal status?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just because some traditional scholars have not understood the point Nāgārjuna was making

Astus wrote:

Rather, there is no classical commentary that supports that interpretation. But let me quote a study's commentary on 17.13:

"Having refuted the santāna -theory, it is stated in Mmk 17.13 that the proper explanation will now be given. This is the explanation, which was taught by the buddhas, pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas . None of the commentaries comments on this verse. However, it seems that it may be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it could be presumed that this verse is spoken by the opponent, i.e. the avipraṇāśa - proponent, who is probably a Sāṃmatīya as stated above. This is how the verse is interpreted by all the commentaries, because all the commentaries introduce Mmk 17.21 as a refutation of the preceding verses presenting the avipraṇāśa -view. In that case, it may be asked why the opponent needs to refer to the buddhas, pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas when introducing his view. A reasonable explanation would be that he makes this reference to lend authority to his view, since he could not allow himself simply to take it for granted that the reader knew this view to be taught in the sūtras . In other words, the opponent's reference to scriptural authority (āgama) could indicate that his view was not commonly accepted. This would also be supported by the extreme lack of sources describing this view, which will be discussed below.

Secondly, it could be presumed that this verse is not spoken by an opponent but by Nāgārjuna himself.³⁷⁵ Such an interpretation could be supported by the usage of the first person in this verse, but this is not supported by the commentaries. The verse-structure in the remaining part of the chapter does not necessarily imply a refutation of the avipraṇāśa -view as it is interpreted by the commentaries. Verses Mmk 17.13-20 merely present the avipraṇāśa -concept in general terms. Mmk 17.21 onwards show that actions can be non-perishing only if they are unarisen. It is thus possible to read the latter part of the chapter in such a way that the avipraṇāśa -view is not rejected but merely (re)interpreted in a way, which agrees with the Madhyamaka-view. In that case, the reference to the buddhas, pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas in the present verse (Mmk 17.13) would merely serve to alert the reader that the author now is going to present his own view. However, such an interpretation is quite conjectural. It is very difficult to interpret the verses of Mmk as to who says what and perhaps it is also of little consequence. It may be established as a fact that all the commentaries imply verses Mmk 17.13-20 to be spoken by an opponent and this was the interpretation, which became important for the ensuing textual tradition."

(Ulrich T. Kragh:

https://www.academia.edu/3243408/2003_PhD DISSERTATION_Karmaphalasambandha_in_verses_17.1_20_of_Candrak%C4%ABrtis_Prasannapad%C4%81, p 222-223)

Malcolm said:

Since the mental organ is not physical, how is it influenced by fetal development in any way?

I guess you refuse to answer the question, since you cannot.

Astus wrote:

The question seems to be based on the assumption that the mind is produced by the body, so it should be influenced/defined by fetal development. But if it is not based on the body, then the question makes no sense.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 12:35 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

PuerAzaelis said:

according to that translator there is no doubt that 17.13-14 is Nagarjuna's response to an opponent's critique in 17.12.

Astus wrote:

Where does Siderits write that?

In the intro to ch 17 he writes: "The following thirteen verses give solutions proposed by different schools. Then beginning in verse 21 Nāgārjuna subjects these to his own critical examination."

For v 12: "The objection in verse 12 is said to come not from Nāgārjuna but from another opponent."

And for v 20: "This opponent claims his is the orthodox Buddhist view."

Then introduces v 21: "At this point we are to imagine Nāgārjuna entering the discussion. The Ābhidharmika opponents have given their different accounts of the relation between action and fruit. These accounts presuppose the real existence of action and fruit and some sort of real connection between them. Nāgārjuna retorts that no action is to be found."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 2:51 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So, what kind of a consciousness does a fetus experience in absence of sense inputs prior to the formation of the six sense organs and contact?

Astus wrote:

The mind can function just fine without input from the five bodily senses, like during sleep. As for the experiences of the fetus, the Garbhāvakrāntisūtra looks like the one giving the most detailed account. As it is summarised in

http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~ckeng/doc/Kritzer_Reading_3.pdf:

"First of all, the sūtra, in its description of each of the first four weeks, stresses the suffering of the embryo, which is said to lie in filth, like a lump. The sense organs and consciousness are all in the same place, as if in a pot, and the embryo is very hot and in great pain."

Apparently there is a whole book dedicated to the matter as well -

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=6zUIDwAAQBAJ>

Malcolm said:

You are basically advocating for a Cartesian substance dualism, Astus. It is a very problematical view, apart from your dogmatic and unreasonable rejection of ālayavijñāna.

Astus wrote:

I have not advocated any sort of dualism, merely questioned the assumption that somehow consciousness requires a physical basis. As for the issue of alayavijnana, I do not reject it as a convenient and provisional teaching that can be used to some extent. What I have an issue with is that the alayavijnana does not really solve the problems it is claimed to fix in terms of presenting a logical foundation for the continuity of being, while at the same time it is not even necessarily the only way to tackle the difficulty of comprehending karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

But then his note to 17.13-14 includes ideas from the Akutobhaya and Chandrakirti which appear to support those stanzas.

Astus wrote:

They are explaining the points presented by the opponent, not supporting them. Candrakirti also brings up the matter in Madhyamakavatara-bhasya 6.39 (tr Tsultrim & Jampa):

"In the case of some [systems], in answer to the dispute stating, "the action is ceased; how would the effect arise from that action that has already ceased?" – in order to present the capability of an action that already ceased [they] imagine

1. a consciousness-basis-of-all (alaya vijñāna), or
2. another feature like a debt-contract, not not wasting, or
3. acquisition, or
4. a continuum of consciousness that is stained by imprints of actions.

In the case of that [system] in which an action is not produced by its own essential nature (i.e., the Prasangika), ceasing that [action] does not [inherently] exist and nor is it impossible for the effect to arise from the non-disintegrated. Hence, actions not disintegrating, the relationship of actions and effects, becomes very extremely admissible."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

PuerAzelis said:

I can't see how that helps your point it only appears to hurt it.

Astus wrote:

Candrakirti lists four different ways others tried to solve the problem of connecting a ceased cause with a later arising effect. Among those ways he lists the concept of the unperishing dharma exemplified by the debt-contract. Then he offers the Madhyamika solution that since there has never been an arisen cause there cannot be a ceased cause either.

Because the difficulty with karma comes from connecting cause and effect, what is behind that problem is the concept of a cause that was annihilated, in other words, one of the extreme views. Recognising that there is no such thing as a cause that could cease to exist, the problem of connecting separate things turns out to be false. Then if it's asked how can there still be cause and effect, the answer is that it's a mere nominal appearance, an illusion, just like with everything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

So there is a True Mind? How do we access it then?

Astus wrote:

There is a very simple and practical instruction:

"When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness. If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone. Therefore, even though you fully cultivate all the practices, just take no mindfulness as the axiom. If you just get the mind of no mindfulness, then love and hatred will spontaneously become pale and faint, compassion and wisdom [prajna] will spontaneously increase in brightness, sinful karma will spontaneously be eliminated, and you will spontaneously be zealous in meritorious practices."

(Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 88)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, like a debt.

Astus wrote:

The problem with the position mentioned in the MMK and by others is the idea that there needs to be a connection between action and fruit, as it's based on a substantialist approach, something that Madhyamaka does not need to posit. A debt is something that stays around until it is repaid, so it is conceived as an enduring entity. But I think the alayavijnana is still a better concept for conventional use than an unperishing thing.

Malcolm said:

He also proposes a solution: causes are neither the same as nor different than their effects, taking care of both the identity and difference issues with one stone, and avoiding the issue of temporal simultaneity and discontinuity.

Astus wrote:

Where is that proposed by him? As for the simple approach:

"Sometimes, a long period of time elapses after the action has ceased, but no matter—know that its fully ripened result will most certainly arise, and there is absolutely nothing contradictory about its doing so."

(Mikyo Dorje, in *The Moon of Wisdom*, p 111)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2017 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

all that remains is the idea that I owe you some money.

Astus wrote:

What holds the idea of a karmic debt then?

Malcolm said:

With the example of milk and butter.

Astus wrote:

Could you please be more specific about the location of that section?

Malcolm said:

Yes, like a debt collector calling in a note.

Astus wrote:

What/Who is karma's debt collector?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 14th, 2017 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

if you consider karma a convention, it does not really matter which convention you choose to use as long as it is rational, and functions conventionally. If we call karma a debt, it is just fine.

Astus wrote:

I do not disagree with that. The only contention that there was was about whether using the debt metaphor and the unperishing dharma as a Madhyamaka version should be acceptable. Otherwise, as long as the basic functions of karma remain intact, any explanation can work, just as you say.

Malcolm said:

Milk and curd location is MMK 13:6

The only rational way to understand this section is to understand that causes and their effects are neither the same nor are they different. It is more fully explained by Buddhapaṇita than Candrakīrti.

Astus wrote:

"Therefore, neither a thing itself nor another thing can alter. Because neither a thing nor another thing can alter, there is consequently no "alteration".
(Buddhapaṇita: MMK-vṛtti 13.6, tr Saito, p 184)

I'm not sure if this is the right example for "causes are neither the same as nor different than their effects, taking care of both the identity and difference issues with one stone, and avoiding the issue of temporal simultaneity and discontinuity". Rather, as it says in the commentary, the idea of something becoming another thing is mistaken, because there is no thing in the first place.

As for causes and effects:

"Since things devoid of intrinsic nature are not existent,
"This existing, that comes to be" can never hold."
(MMK 1.10, tr Siderits)

"Since origination, duration, and cessation are not established, there is nothing that is conditioned.

And in the absence of the establishment of the conditioned, what unconditioned thing will be established?

Like an illusion, like a dream, like the city of the gandharvas,
so origination, duration, and cessation are declared to be."
(MMK 7.33-34, tr Siderits)

"Effect and cause, as well as the characterized and the characteristic,
feeling and that which feels, and whatever other things there are,
Not only is there no prior part of saṃsāra,
there is as well no prior part of any existents."

(MMK 11.7-8, tr Siderits)

So about karma:

"Defilements, actions, and bodies, agents, and fruits,
are similar to the city of the gandharvas; they are like a mirage, a dream."

(MMK 17.33, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 14th, 2017 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, it clearly states that milk does not become butter, but there can be no butter in absence of milk: enforcing two things, homogeneity of causes and effects (i.e., butter will not come from water) and avoiding the identity issue I mentioned above.

Astus wrote:

Yes, milk cannot become curd, nor can there be curd from something other than curd.

"If alteration pertained to it, then milk itself would be curds.

On the alternative, what else but milk would come to have the nature of curds?"

(MMK 13.6, tr Siderits)

So, according to Buddhapalita (tr Saito, p 183, 184), the two options mean that

1. "If a thing itself were thought to alter, in that case, according to you, milk itself would necessarily be curd."
2. "If you do not say that because "curd" belongs to milk, milk itself is curd, what other than milk can be "curd"? Do you say that curd itself can be "curd" and is curd itself, or do you say that water can be "curd" and water is curd? Therefore, neither a thing itself nor another thing can alter. Because neither a thing nor another thing can alter, there is consequently no "alteration"."

Since curd cannot come from milk, nor from something else, alteration is impossible. It does not give a third option of how there can be curd.

Mabja Changchub comments:

"Change is something that, without analysis, is merely apparent to what the opponent accepts as being direct perception. When the reality of the situation is investigated, however, change is seen to be impossible."

...

"Similarly, if the earlier situation were itself what changed, it would mean that milk could become yogurt while still remaining milk. On the other hand, if it were something other than the initial situation that undergoes change, it would be something other than

milk, such as water, that turns into yoghurt. This, however, is impossible. Discussing this point, the Noble Sūtra of the Source of Jewels states:

No phenomenon arises or disintegrates;

There is no death, no transference, and no aging.

This is what the Lion of Men has taught,

And in this he has established hundreds of beings."

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka is not just a simple refutation of entities, as you seem to think.

Astus wrote:

What more is there to it?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 14th, 2017 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It enforces rationality with respect to conventional truth through the negation of essences.

Astus wrote:

That is a very good point.

On the other hand, every Buddhist tradition seems to attempt to build a rational system, beginning with Abhidharma. And compared to others, Madhyamaka does not build much, but rather relies on what others have already set up.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 14th, 2017 at 6:20 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka is charged with making sure it all makes sense.

Astus wrote:

How so? Madhyamaka is a complete teaching as it is, so are others as well. Even in a several vehicles setting, as in Tibetan Buddhism, Madhyamaka is used separately, not as a correction. So, I'm not sure what you're referring to here.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 15th, 2017 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka is strictly a critical school, and does not offer basis, path, and result that is in anyway distinct from Yogacāra.

The role of Madhyamaka is to make sure that Buddhist assertions remain in line with the Buddha's teaching of emptiness and dependent origination — that's all.

Astus wrote:

If one should apply the reasoning provided in Madhyamaka to all doctrines, there can be neither basis nor path, much less anything to attain as a result.

"One who is a real goer does not perform a going of any of the three kinds.

Neither does one who is not a real goer perform a going of any of the three kinds.

One who is a both-real-and-unreal goer does not perform a going of any of the three kinds.

Thus there is no going, no goer, and no destination."

(MMK 2.24-25, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 16th, 2017 at 12:15 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This passage does not negate the convention of going. It only negates the motion of nondependent entities.

Astus wrote:

As the Madhyamaka convention goes, conventions are not debated. But once conventions are analysed, there is nothing left to posit or rely on. That's why establishing things like basis, path, and result are not the Madhyamaka method.

By the way, a "dependent entity" (unreal goer) doesn't make more sense than an independent one (real goer).

"Given the nonexistence of intrinsic nature, how will there be extrinsic nature (parabhāva)?

For extrinsic nature is said to be the intrinsic nature of another existent (parabhāva)."

(MMK 15.3, tr Siderits)

"Moreover that on which he depends does not exist by virtue of intrinsic nature.

And how can what does not exist intrinsically exist extrinsically?"

(MMK 22.9)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 16th, 2017 at 12:58 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:
Anonymous X said:
Zongmi states:

Astus wrote:
That is Zongmi's take on the
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogachara#The_Three_Natures, not a teaching on
tathagatagarbha.

Anonymous X said:
To my mind, you must add in to the Madhyamaka equation the truth of the
Tathagatagarbha to complete the picture.

Astus wrote:
Can you define what the tathagatagarbha is and why it would need to be added?

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, June 16th, 2017 at 2:49 AM
Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:
Malcolm said:
Madhyamaka does not establish a basis, a path, and result. No one said they did. They accept the basis, path, and result put forward by general Mahāyāna, as witnessed by the Madhyamaka commentaries (by Vimuktisena, Haribhadra, etc.) on the Abhisamayālaṅkāra. You were the one who claimed that Madhyamaka was a complete and independent teaching, not me.

Astus wrote:
I wrote that Madhyamaka is a complete teaching, and not something that is meant simply to be used as a correction for other systems. But if it were used as an arbiter over others, then their methods would suffer from it. And before calling it a complete teaching, I also noted that it is not a doctrine establishing things on its own but relying on others, as a response to you stating that Madhyamaka not only negates but enforces rationality. So now when you write that they accept what others put forward, that is exactly what I meant by building on others, and not rationalising others.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, June 16th, 2017 at 3:57 AM
Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:
Malcolm said:
Madhyamaka is just a means of enforcing correct view.

Astus wrote:
Do you not consider it a valid path for non-conceptual wisdom?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 16th, 2017 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Madhyamaka is not a path. If you want a path, look at Mahāyāna.

Astus wrote:

Then call it a method, doctrine, system, teaching, school, tradition, etc. The question is whether Madhyamaka (and Yogacara perhaps) is taken as a theoretical basis, or something that has extensive role in how the bodhisattvayana is applied, particularly in the area of prajnaparamita. Reducing Madhyamaka (and probably the whole of sutrayana) into a mere theoretical background may be fine from a Vajrayana perspective, but the way its own authors seem to have thought of it is quite different.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 20th, 2017 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

But what is Nirvana? Is it nothingness or is it eternal life of some non-self consciousness? Or non-dualist consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Trying to establish oneself in some form of consciousness is the root of suffering. Nirvana is relinquishing all that clinging.

"Not even "non-existence" qualifies as nirvāṇa.

How much the less might "existence" qualify as such?

The complete end of attachments to existence or non-existence—

The Buddha described this as essential to nirvāṇa."

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Ratna_excerpts/Ratna_X-20_X-01.pdf, v 42, tr Dharmamitra)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 20th, 2017 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

Supramundane said:

but we have no choice but to have a consciousness

Astus wrote:

What is that consciousness? Certainly nothing independent or unconditioned (see:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>), consequently it is impermanent, unsatisfactory, impersonal, and empty.

Supramundane said:

the buddha was very clear that Nirvana is not nihilism nor is it a heaven.

Astus wrote:

See this from Nagarjuna

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Ratna_excerpts/Ratna_X-20_X-01.pdf, v43-45):

"Were one to provide a summary description of "wrong view,"
One would refer to "dismissing cause-and-effect as non-existent."
This causes one to become filled with non-meritorious karma
And is the weightiest cause for entering the wretched destinies.

Were one to provide a summary description of "right view,"
One would refer to "believing in the existence of cause-and-effect."
This is able to cause one to gain a full measure of merit
And is the most superior cause for rebirth in the good destinies.

Through wisdom, "existence" versus "non-existence" is stilled,
One steps beyond [ideas about] "merit" versus "non-merit,"
And one transcends [concern over] "good" versus "bad" destinies.
The Buddha described this as tantamount to gaining liberation."

That is how nirvana is neither existence nor non-existence. Furthermore
(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Ratna_excerpts/Ratna_X-20_X-02.pdf, v 58-60):

"Disinclination to seize on [views asserting] existence or non-existence
Originates with discernment of the meaning of reality.
If [one claims this entails] falling into a "non-existence" attachment,
Why not [also] claim this entails falling into "existence" attachment?

If one claims that, by refuting [views validating] "existence,"
One falls by force of logic into implicitly validating "non-existence,"
Then, following this same logic, by refuting "non-existence,"
Why wouldn't one fall into implicitly validating "existence"?

This non-validation of words, actions, or thoughts [as ultimately real]
Is a result of reliance on bodhi.
If one claims this entails an implicit fall into validating non-existence,
Why would that not also entail a fall into validating existence?"

That is how both extremes are averted and there is no falling into "nihilism".

Supramundane said:

if it is a state then one would suppose that such state would end upon our deaths but in fact if Nirvana is 'the deathless door', then i assume it would continue even after the death of our earthly bodies. am i right?

Astus wrote:

All states are conditioned, therefore unstable, unreliable, and illusory. Nirvana is seeing the various states of consciousness for what they are and so not making up any attachment to them. Also, the idea that one's existence ceases at death is what is called the wrong view of annihilationism (or as somewhat erroneously simplified: "nihilism"), while the idea that one has a non-ceasing existence is the view of eternalism or permanence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 22nd, 2017 at 6:35 AM

Title: Re: Is the "Self" a "Rabbit's Horn"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"In that case, what is the root of bondage?" asked Drom.

Atisa: "It is the grasping at self."

"What is this grasping at self?" enquired Drom.

"This is something that wants all positive qualities for oneself alone and wants others alone to take on all misfortunes."

"Then please explain this in such a manner so you can say 'This is selfgrasping,'" asked Drom.

Atisa replied: "Where would one find something of which it could be said that 'This is the reified self-grasping?'"

"In that case, please explain to me how it is that [this self-grasping] wants everything and transfers [all] blames onto others."

Atisa replied, "Upasaka, why even ask me? This is pervasive in sentient beings. You know this, so what need is there to ask? Even so, I have also seen attachment and aversion labeled as self-grasping."

"Atisa, there are people who possess such forms of grasping?"

"Where do they exist?" responded Atisa.

"They are [within] our own mental continuum," replied [Drom].

"Upasaka, what is one's own mental continuum?"

"It is that which wants everything and grasps [at it all]replied Drom.

Atisa: "I, too, would say the same."

"Where does this self-grasping reside?" inquired Drom.

"It is devoid of parts, and I have never seen it myself. There is nothing that abides where there is nowhere to abide. I do not know the colors and shapes of something with no reality," replied [Atisa].

Drom then asked, "If this is so, how can something so feeble exist?"

Atisa responded, "Can't one perceive mirage water, a double moon, dream horses and elephants, and so on?"

"Master, these are delusions."

Atisa said, "I accept this to be so. It is not that he, self-grasping, indulges in attachment and aversion on the basis of being existent. Dogs bark in the wilderness because of an empty container, and our mindstream is greatly perturbed with no ground [at all]."

(The Jewel Garland of Dialogues, ch 6, in The Book of Kadam, p 121-122)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 23rd, 2017 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Do we have free will?

Content:

Astus wrote:

"I have not, brahmin, seen or heard such a doctrine, such a view as yours. How, indeed, could one — moving forward by himself, moving back by himself — say 'There is no self-doer, there is no other-doer'?"

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.038.niza.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 25th, 2017 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Do we have free will?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Could you expand on what 'other-doer' refers to?

Astus wrote:

It's just "others", everyone else, other beings, other people. There's also an analysis of the sutta by Piya Tan <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/7.6-Attakari-S-a6.38-piya.pdf>.

Wayfarer said:

I think the parallel view in Buddhism would be the idea that 'all human actions are bound by karma, nobody can act in any way other than what their karma dictates.' And that is not what Buddhism teaches, obviously, because if it were true, then there would be no point in teaching!

Astus wrote:

It is a difference made between old and new karma, i.e. past acts and present acts (see: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.145.than.html>). On a conventional level there is agency, there is intention. But when analysed, it's all empty (no doer) and dependently arisen (causally bound). Where this topic of "free will" actually comes up is how karma is interpreted in Buddhism and by others, and that shows that the moral responsibility lies with the individual being according to Shakyamuni, while other theories (see: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html>) deny that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 28th, 2017 at 7:43 PM

Title: Re: "Near-vana"....?

Content:

White Lotus said:

Is a Buddha empty? Or is a Buddha independent and unconditioned. If so, how?

Astus wrote:

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard form as the Tathagata?" "No, lord." "Do you regard feeling as the Tathagata?" "No, lord." "Do you regard perception as the Tathagata?" "No, lord." "Do you regard fabrications as the Tathagata?" "No, lord." "Do you regard consciousness as the Tathagata?" "No, lord."

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard the Tathagata as being in form?... Elsewhere than form?... In feeling?... Elsewhere than feeling?... In perception?... Elsewhere than perception?... In fabrications?... Elsewhere than fabrications?... In consciousness?... Elsewhere than consciousness?" "No, lord."

"What do you think: Do you regard the Tathagata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?" "No, lord." "Do you regard the Tathagata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?" "No, lord."

(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.002.than.html>)

"The Tathāgata is neither identical with the skandhas nor distinct from the skandhas; the skandhas are not in him nor is he in them; he does not exist possessing the skandhas. What Tathāgata, then, is there?"

...

"But one who has taken up a mass of beliefs, such as that the Tathāgata exists, so conceptualizing, that person will also imagine that [the Tathāgata] does not exist when extinguished.

And the thought does not hold, with reference to this (Tathāgata) who is intrinsically empty,

that the Buddha either exists or does not exist after cessation.

Those who hypostatize the Buddha, who is beyond hypostatization and unwavering, they all, deceived by hypostatization, fail to see the Tathāgata.

What is the intrinsic nature of the Tathāgata, that is the intrinsic nature of this world.

The Tathāgata is devoid of intrinsic nature; this world is devoid of intrinsic nature."

(MKK 22.1, 13-16, tr Siderits)

"The notion of person, the notion of sentient being, and the notion of life span are also not notions. And why? Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 29th, 2017 at 6:37 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

I am vaguely aware of a controversy between sudden and gradual approaches in Ch'an.

Astus wrote:

There wasn't really such a controversy, it was something made up initially by Shenhui to criticise Shenxiu's descendants. But that's like charging Buddhists with idolatry.

tomamundsen said:

At any point, did Ch'an masters advocate for sudden enlightenment being perfect Buddhahood? Or is it simply kensho?

Astus wrote:

First of all, "kensho" means "seeing nature" and seeing nature is becoming buddha, even if some teachers have altered the meaning and came up with this distinction of "kensho" and "satori", the classic doctrine is as it's been stated from the beginning. As it's in the "Bloodstream Sermon" of Bodhidharma (tr Red Pine): "To find a Buddha, you have to see your nature. Whoever sees his nature is a Buddha." (X63n1218, p2b19) "To find a Buddha all you have to do is see your nature. Your nature is the Buddha." (p2c3-4) "Whoever sees his nature is a Buddha; whoever doesn't is a mortal." (p2c19)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 29th, 2017 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Temicco said:

a lack of discussion of post-awakening practice in Tang dynasty Zen texts associated with Huineng's line, as well as in most gongan collections.

Astus wrote:

There is no post-awakening practice aside from the practice of awakening itself. This is clarified by Jinul, a known advocate of "sudden enlightenment, gradual cultivation" very well:

"Nevertheless, although you must cultivate further, you have already awakened suddenly to the fact that deluded thoughts are originally void and the mind-nature is originally pure. Thus you eradicate evil, but you eradicate it without actually eradicating anything; you cultivate the wholesome, but you cultivate it without actually cultivating anything. This is true cultivation and true eradication."

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 226-227)

"One has the sudden awakening to the fact that one's nature is originally free of affliction and that one is originally in full possession of the uncontaminated (anāsrava) wisdom-nature that is no different from that of the buddhas. To cultivate while relying on this [awakening] is called Supreme-Vehicle Seon; it is also called the pure Seon of the tathāgatas. If thought-moment after thought-moment one continues to develop one's

training, then naturally one will gradually attain to hundreds of thousands of samādhis." (p 227)

"Some people do not realize that the nature of merit and demerit is empty; they sit rigidly without moving and suppress both body and mind, like a rock crushing grass. To regard this as cultivation of the mind is a great delusion." (p 228)

"If you claim, "Initially control conditioned thought with calmness and subsequently control dullness with alertness; these initial and subsequent counteractive techniques subdue both dullness and agitation and one thereby will access quiescence": this is [samādhi and prajñā] as practiced by those of inferior faculties in the gradual school. Although [this approach also] claims that alertness and calmness should be maintained equally, it cannot avoid clinging to stillness as its practice." (p 230-231)

"In the case of an accomplished person, the meaning of maintaining samādhi and prajñā equally does not involve any specific activity, for he is inherently spontaneous and unconcerned about place or time." (p 231)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 30th, 2017 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

tomamundsen said:

So are you effectively saying that Ch'an is entirely a sudden school? And that the "controversy" was more about polemics of accusing other schools as being gradual (inferior)?

Astus wrote:

Yes. Also note that the idea of a sudden teaching is not exclusive to Chan, but applies to Tiantai and Huayan as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 1st, 2017 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'm interested in the apparent conflict between this statement, and the often-observed practice in Buddhist monasteries, where zazen does indeed comprise long hours of sitting motionless in dhyana, according to many accounts.

Astus wrote:

As it is said in the quote you provided from Buswell, "meditators comprise only a small

percentage of the monks", while the majority in Korea are Jogye monastics, a Seon school. It is rather a myth that Chan equals Dhyana just because the words are etymologically related.

Wayfarer said:

Why do you think in some places, the idea of 'sitting motionless' is admonished, but in other places, it seems to be regarded as fundamental to Zen practice?

Astus wrote:

Hardly any classic Zen text talks of sitting meditation. Even Dogen's Shobogenzo is mostly about other topics (see a little calculation <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=202742#p202742>). As for what is considered the daily routine of a monastery, that is quite a different matter, and it is nothing universal, except perhaps the morning and evening ceremony. In any case, a good number of Zen works are critical of practically every aspect of monastic life, from prostrations to pilgrimages, and seated meditation is just one of the many things one can be overly occupied with. But being critical does not mean rejecting or forbidding, only that none of those constitute the essence of the Buddhadharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 1st, 2017 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Although I have always found that commitment to daily sitting is a basic part of engaging with the dharma, because otherwise I'm just another urban-dweller who thinks about it.

Astus wrote:

"When I was first at the temple, we simply practiced. We worked and prostrated. Every day we chanted and read sutras. We were not told their meaning. It didn't matter. We simply went through the process. We cut down on our attachment to the things around us, cut down on the things in our heads, cut down on our discriminations. This was a good method for us. However, for modern lay people such training would be inadequate. Many of my disciples have questioned these methods. With no emphasis on what they think practice is — meditation, prostrations, chanting — they feel that life in the monastery is not particularly different from their lives at home. What's the point, they say. At home we work, here we work. At home we cook, and we cook here, too. Why did we bother to leave home? Where is the practice?

What would you say to such disciples? Is life at home and life at the monastery the same? Someone just mentioned attitude, and that is entirely correct. The way we approach what we do at the monastery is not quite the same as the way most lay people approach what they have to do."

(<http://chancenter.org/cmc/1992/05/31/life-in-a-chan-monastery/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 1st, 2017 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Practice is remembering what we have forgotten, and we have to practice continuously, but never with the idea of gaining something.

Astus wrote:

Zongmi writes this about the Jingzhong school's main teaching:

"The 'three topics' are: 'no remembering, no mindfulness, and do not forget.' The idea is as follows. Do not recall past sense objects. Do not anticipate glorious events in the future. Constantly be yoked to this wisdom, never darkening, never erring; this is called do not forget. Sometimes [the three topics are]: no remembering external sense objects; no thinking of internal mind, dried up with nothing to rely upon (do not forget as above). 'Precepts, concentration, and wisdom' correspond respectively to the three topics." (Zongmi on Chan, p 181)

Wayfarer said:

Actually there are two meanings to 'right recollection' (smṛti) which in Buddhist terminology is both 'remembering' and 'mindfulness'. The external meaning is recollecting the teachings i.e. being able to recite them. The inner meaning is 'remembering the True Nature'. That is more what I was referring to.

Astus wrote:

In Chan "right recollection" (zhengnian 正念) is no recollection (wunian 無念 / asmṛti). Being mindful is practice, no-mindfulness is enlightenment.

"To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch2, BDK ed, p34; T48n2008, p351b5)

"All [deliberate] activation of cultivation is false activity.

To guard one's abiding is not true serenity."

(ch7, p61; p356b21)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 1st, 2017 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So there is 'true serenity'? Or is that also 'no serenity'? It seems whatever one says, there is a quotation that it negates it. Better probably to make no statement, as no statement seems to be a true statement.

Astus wrote:

The point is simply to recognise that all states are impermanent and empty. Thus there is no state to cultivate. That is true serenity.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 1st, 2017 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

seeker242 said:

However, what about cultivating "the state" that recognise that all states are impermanent and empty? Because the fact that all states are impermanent and empty, is not immediately obvious, if it was then no one would attach to them.

Astus wrote:

First there is the path (prayogamarga & sambharamarga) to gain recognition (darsanamarga), then there is the training to habituate (bhavanamarga) it, eventually arriving at no practice (asaiksamarga). That is called the http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Five_paths. The sudden way is going directly to the realisation of no practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 2nd, 2017 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

It's a lot easier and quicker to simply recognize that all practice is an attempt to change, modify, or become something rather than go through all 'paths' that only lead back to this recognition of deception. Contemplation of this is the only requirement that I can see which can reveal what the 'search' is all about and how it prevents one from being present in the moment.

Astus wrote:

Practice is about learning to let go by comprehending the emptiness of appearances. The sudden path differs from the gradual in that it goes directly to wisdom instead of building up morality and meditation first, and that's how it is less a matter of method and more of individual capacity. As for "being present in the moment", while I don't know what you exactly mean, it doesn't sound like anything but a futile attempt of being somewhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2017 at 1:56 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

What is the sudden path? What does that have to do with what is, presently, at any given moment? Isn't any path something you do, engage in? What does that have to do with your present experience of the body?

Astus wrote:

"The self-nature is without error, without stupidity, and without disruption. In moment after moment of thought, prajñā illuminates, constantly transcending the characteristics of dharmas. Independent and autonomous, he apprehends everything—how could there be any positing? The self-nature becomes enlightened itself, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the dharmas. The dharmas are quiescent—how could there be a progression?"

(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK ed, p 75)

"If one comprehends the mind and the objects, then false thinking is not created again. When there is no more false thinking, that is acceptance of the non-arising of all dharma. Originally it exists and it is present now, irrespective of cultivation of the Way and sitting in meditation. Not cultivating and not sitting is the Tathagata's pure meditation."

(Record of Mazu, in Sun-Face Buddha, p 68)

Q: What method must be practiced to attain liberation?

A: Only by practicing the Dharma of Sudden Enlightenment can we attain liberation.

Q: What is Sudden Enlightenment?

A: "Sudden" means instantly stopping false thought. "Enlightenment" means [awareness] that one attains nothing.

(Dazhu Huihai: <http://ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

"Question: What is the essential method for sudden enlightenment in the great vehicle? The master said,

You all should first put an end to all involvements and lay to rest all concerns; do not remember or recollect anything at all, whether good or bad, mundane or transcendental - do not engage in thoughts. Let go of body and mind, set them free.

With mind like wood or stone, not explaining anything with the mouth, mind not going anywhere, then the mind ground becomes like space, wherein the sun of wisdom naturally appears. It is as though the clouds had opened and the sun emerged."

...

"Question: How can one attain a mind which is like wood or stone in the presence of all situations?

The master said,

All various things have never of themselves spoken of emptiness; nor do they themselves speak of form, and they do not speak of right, wrong, defilement, or purity. Nor is there mind which binds and fetters people; it is just because people themselves give rise to vain and arbitrary attachments and that they create so many kinds of understanding, produce so many kinds of opinion, and give rise to so many various loves and fears.

Just understand that the many things do not originate of themselves; all of them come into existence from one's own single mental impulse of imagination mistakenly clinging to appearances. If you know that mind and objects fundamentally do not contact each other, you will be set free on the spot. Each of the various things is in a state of quiescence right where it is; this very place is the site of enlightenment."

(Extensive Record of Baizhang, in Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 77-78, 79)

"No-mind refers to the absence of all [states of] mind. ... This mind is the mind of no-mind. Transcending all characteristics, there is yet no difference between sentient beings and Buddhas. If you can just [attain] no-mind, then that is the ultimate [state of enlightenment]. If a trainee does not instantly [attain] no-mind but spends successive eons in cultivation, he will never achieve enlightenment. He will be fettered by the meritorious practices of the three vehicles and will not attain liberation."

...

"To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed., p 15, 16; 20)

"One thought of doubt in your mind is Māra. But if you realize that the ten thousand dharmas never come into being, that mind is like a phantom, that not a speck of dust nor a single thing exists, that there is no place that is not clean and pure—this is Buddha. Thus Buddha and Māra are simply two states, one pure, the other impure.

In my view there is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no past, no present. Anything attained was already attained—no time is needed. There is nothing to practice, nothing to realize, nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Throughout all time there is no other dharma than this. 'If one claims there's a dharma surpassing this, I say that it's like a dream, like a phantasm.' This is all I have to teach."

(Record of Linji, p 12-13, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2017 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Is this really any different from what I've been saying? I agree with all of the above, but don't see any 'path', Buddha, or self-nature.

Astus wrote:

That's the point, it is not a path in the sense of going somewhere stage by stage, but a realisation. Hence I said that its main character is arriving directly at wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2017 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Buddhahood?

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Then why do you refer to the quotes instead of your own wisdom?

Astus wrote:

Those are words from canonised texts, thus they are more definitive in Chan than whatever I'd write on my own.

Anonymous X said:

The realization must be your own, happening in your body complex, not a re-ification of another's words.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't matter what my realisation is, since on a forum there are just words.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2017 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Synthetic view of Chan / Zen / Seon

Content:

Astus wrote:

Might start with Wikipedia:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chan_Buddhism

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_Seon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Zen

Then there is <https://books.google.com/books?id=smNM4ElP3XgC>.

Finally there is Dumoulin's two-volume work:

https://books.google.com/books?id=Y1_YAAAAMAAJ,

https://books.google.com/books?id=hfMkpD_Xr3sC. It is somewhat outdated, but nothing similar has been published yet as far as I know.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 5th, 2017 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: From Impermanence to Buddhahood

Content:

Strive said:

Can Buddhahood be considered immortality? When I read things like the bliss body or rainbow body that's what it sound like.

Astus wrote:

Normally it is a being that is called immortal, and in that sense nobody of the six realms

has a never ending life, eventually even gods die and are born again. On the other hand, samsara has no beginning, nor do beings simply stop being reborn, hence in a way everyone is already immortal. And that sense of immortality is what may give rise to the view of an eternal soul, just as people assume an enduring identity based on the continuity of day to day life. Projecting this very flawed view on buddhas is twice wrong. First because it lacks the understanding of what life is, and second because it lacks understanding of what a buddha is.

The one thing that is called immortal (i.e. deathless - amata; unceased - aniruddha), and that is nirvana. Similarly, it is also called the unborn (ajāta), the unarisen (anutpāda). So Nagarjuna sums it up:

"Not abandoned, not acquired, not annihilated, not eternal,
not ceased, not arisen, thus is nirvāṇa said to be."
(MMK 25.3, tr Siderits)

At the same time, not only nirvana can be described as such, but also the nature of everything as well:

"The nature of things is to be, like nirvāṇa, without origination or cessation."
(MMK 18.7)

That is why

"There is no distinction whatsoever between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.
There is no distinction whatsoever between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra."
(MMK 25.19)

Hence the nature of the world is no different from the nature of a buddha:

"What is the intrinsic nature of the Tathāgata, that is the intrinsic nature of this world.
The Tathāgata is devoid of intrinsic nature; this world is devoid of intrinsic nature."
(MMK 22.16)

From here when the matter of the rupakaya is looked at, and in particular the unceasing activities of the sambhogakaya, it has to be viewed on the basis that assuming a being, an entity is already a false concept, and a view that buddhas are completely free from.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 5th, 2017 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Matylda said:

Today people can say whatever they like, teach whatever they THINK and call all this junk ZEN. Scary...

Astus wrote:

I don't see how it is scary to have freedom of religion, but you can find most of the traditional state control for instance in China. Otherwise, aside from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Buddhists, weird things might come up as well, like the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanghyang_Adi_Buddha. Also, the fusion of various forms of nationalism and Buddhism in Asia is also a product of state control (e.g. <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ngier/BudJapNat.htm>, found in <https://books.google.com/books?id=0LBhBAAAQBAJ>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 5th, 2017 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Matylda said:

What scary is, is not religious freedom, but freedom to say uneducated folks whatever one thinks and sell it nicely wrapped in ZEN decoration.

Astus wrote:

That is what freedom of religion means.

Matylda said:

zen is simply not represented by Japanese teachers in the West

Astus wrote:

There might be a few Zen groups without direct connection to Japanese teachers, but it seems that the majority of them has Japanese origins. And since most of the teachers were authorised by Japanese ones, the current quality is not some independent event.

Matylda said:

Tibetan tradition is on the contrary represented by many lamas and Rinpoches in the West, so it is much easier to see what is true dharma and what is not.

Astus wrote:

What constitutes true Dharma should not be defined by the person saying it. So perhaps the http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_reliances should be one of the first things people learn of Buddhism.

Matylda said:

With zen it simply happens that the education level is simply very low, knowledge is on the verge of ignorance.

Astus wrote:

That is most likely what appeals to many, that in Zen you don't study things, you just sit.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 6th, 2017 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

Matylda said:

Buddha did not teach freedom of religion

Astus wrote:

Did he teach then to restrict the beliefs of other people? Did he establish an authoritative institution to govern religion? Did he advise rulers to support only some but not other religious groups?

Matylda said:

it is recent concept

Astus wrote:

The 12th <https://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html#FOURTEEN>:

Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, honors both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honors them with gifts and honors of various kinds. But Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, does not value gifts and honors as much as he values this -- that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one's own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honor other religions for this reason. By so doing, one's own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one's own religion and the religions of others. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought "Let me glorify my own religion," only harms his own religion. Therefore contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions.

Those who are content with their own religion should be told this: Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, does not value gifts and honors as much as he values that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. And to this end many are working -- Dhamma Mahamatras, Mahamatras in charge of the women's quarters, officers in charge of outlying areas, and other such officers. And the fruit of this is that one's own religion grows and the Dhamma is illuminated also.

Matylda said:

in the context of dharma talking freely nonsense is really bad

Astus wrote:

However, there is no single person or organisation to tell what is nonsense and what is not. Already in India there were 18/20 early schools, and more appeared later and in other countries. If there had been only one group that decided things, likely Mahayana could not have ever emerged, not to mention all the numerous changes and reforms

over the centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 7th, 2017 at 6:05 PM

Title: Re: Are demons mentioned in Buddhism actually just bad karma?

Content:

Ervin said:

I was wondering if demons mentioned in Buddhist scriptures are simply the bad karma that we experience?

Astus wrote:

All painful events are products of bad karma, from annoying neighbours to the hell realms.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 16th, 2017 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Are demons mentioned in Buddhism actually just bad karma?

Content:

pael said:

Events or experiences? Loud sounds disturbs me very much, but everyone I know loves loud sounds. Is this karma or what?

Astus wrote:

Events are experiences. Liking something is taking it as good, disliking something is taking it as bad. That's how one's mental conditioning (karma) defines all perceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 17th, 2017 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Term in Rinzaï Roku

Content:

Astus wrote:

The term lingyin 靈音 seems particular to the Linjilu, so here ling 靈 is a qualifier for yin 音, thus the translation "wondrous voice" (Sasaki) or "miraculous sound" (Watson). <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E9%9D%88> has a good number of meanings, and can be a member of <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb//rad-stroke/b9748.html>.

From the http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X69n1322_001#0006b02 (tr Cleary):

In the teaching hall the master said, "The spiritual light (<https://www.buddhistdoor.org/tc/dictionary/details/%E9%9D%88%E5%85%89>) shines alone, far transcending the senses and their fields; the essential substance is exposed, real and eternal. It is not contained in written words. The nature of mind has no defilement; it is basically perfect and complete in itself. Just get rid of delusive attachments, and merge with realization of thusness."

From Jinul (Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 129):

"When falsity is extinguished, the mind will be numinous and dynamic (靈通); then the effulgence of superpowers will appear in response."

He also quotes Zongmi (p 214):

"When delusion is extinguished, the mind will become numinous and dynamic (靈通) and, in response, will make manifest its function of penetrating illumination."

Another compound often used by Jinul (p 219):

"Since all dharmas are like dreams or conjuring tricks, deluded thoughts are originally calm and the dusty sense-spheres are originally empty. At the point where all dharmas are empty, the numinous awareness is unobscured. That is, this mind of void and calm, numinous awareness (靈知) is your original face"

Now if we turn to Linji, the use of ling 靈 is mainly for the vividness of apparent experiences (tr Sasaki, p 240):

"The three realms do not of themselves proclaim: 'We are the three realms!' But you, followers of the Way, right now vividly (目前靈靈) illumining all things and taking the measure of the world, you give the names to the three realms."

(p 273):

"Moreover, names and phrases are not of themselves names and phrases; it is you, who right now radiantly and vividly (目前昭昭靈靈) perceive, know, and clearly illumine [everything]—you it is who affix all names and phrases."

To connect the two meaning of vividness and wondrous, it means the unabiding perception (e.g. of sound 聲, p 227):

"Those are not the six supernatural powers of a buddha, which are entering the world of color yet not being deluded by color; entering the world of sound yet not being deluded by sound; entering the world of odor yet not being deluded by odor; entering the world of taste yet not being deluded by taste; entering the world of touch yet not being deluded by touch; entering the world of dharmas yet not being deluded by dharmas. Therefore, when it is realized that these six—color, sound, odor, taste, touch, and dharmas— are all empty forms, they cannot bind the man of the Way, dependent upon nothing."

And comparing to an echo (p 275):

"When the place of arising or extinguishing of a single thought in your mind is not to be found, as with a sound reverberating throughout space (響應空), and there is nothing

anywhere for you to do"

Finally, the original sentence to be considered (p 252):

"if you don't seek him, then he's right there before your eyes, his wondrous voice (靈音) resounding in your ears."

We can say that his voice being wondrous stands for hearing without attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 17th, 2017 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Reliance on Rites and Rituals

Content:

Astus wrote:

"What is adherence to observances and rituals (śīlavrataparāmarśa)? It is the admission, inclination, idea, point of view, opinion of him who considers observances and rituals or the five aggregates of attachment constituting the basis, as being pure, just (or providing deliverance) and leading to emancipation. Its function is to supply a basis for fruitless efforts."

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 13)

"The view which considers as cause that which is not cause, or as the path that which is not the Path, is called śīlavrataparāmarśa: namely, to consider Maheśvara, Prajāpati, or any other entity which is not a cause of the world as a cause of the world; to consider the rituals of suicide,—entering into fire or drowning—as a cause of a heavenly rebirth when they do not in fact procure heaven; or to consider morality and ascetic practices as the only path to deliverance when they are themselves not the only path to deliverance, nor the "knowledges" (jñāna) of the Sāṃkhya and the Yogins which are not a path to deliverance; and so too the rest."

(Kosha, vol 3, p 778)

"Rules-and-vows clinging is the adherence [to the view that] purification comes through rules and vows, according as it is said: "Herein, what is rules-and-vows clinging? ... That purification comes through a rite, that purification comes through a ritual, that purification comes through a rite and ritual: such view as this ... such perverse assumption is called rules-and-vows clinging""

(Visuddhimagga, p 591 / online ATI p 649)

"Any precept & practice life whose essence is training,
and the holy life whose essence is service:

This is one extreme.

Any who say, "There's no harm in sensual desires":

This, the second extreme."

(<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.6.08.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 18th, 2017 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Reliance on Rites and Rituals

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I take this reference to 'considering as a cause, that which is not a cause' is reference to the idea of a Creator?

Astus wrote:

The cause as

- "to consider Maheśvara, Prajāpati, or any other entity which is not a cause of the world as a cause of the world"

- "to consider the rituals of suicide,— entering into fire or drowning—as a cause of a heavenly rebirth when they do not in fact procure heaven"

So it is both to the idea of a creator, and the idea of certain actions leading to heavenly birth (could add other actions as well, like the heroic actions of a warrior, as taught in SN 42.3-5).

Wayfarer said:

One could easily think that the first 'extreme' is what Buddhists generally do - but one would be mistaken.

Astus wrote:

The reason such an extreme is avoided is that the precepts are not the whole of the path, nor do they bring about liberation on their own. Furthermore, the various elements and stages of the path are understood as only means to an end, not end in themselves, hence there is no precept, practice, or view one should remain bound to, as stated in the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.024.than.html> and the <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.4.09.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 15th, 2017 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Soto Zen Quotes

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Kind speech" means, when meeting living beings, first of all to feel compassion for them and to offer caring and loving words. Broadly, it is there being no rude or bad words. In secular societies there are polite customs of asking others if they are well. In Buddhism there are the words "Take good care of yourself!" and there is the disciple's greeting "How are you?" Speaking with the feeling of "compassion for living beings as if they were babies" is kind speech. We should praise those who have virtue and should pity those who lack virtue. Through love of kind speech, kind speech is gradually nurtured. Thus, kind speech which is ordinarily neither recognized nor experienced manifests itself before us. While the present body and life exist we should enjoy kind speech, and we will not regress or deviate through many ages and many lives. Whether

in defeating adversaries or in promoting harmony among gentlefolk, kind speech is fundamental. To hear kind speech spoken to us directly makes the face happy and the mind joyful. To hear kind speech indirectly etches an impression in the heart and in the soul. Remember, kind speech arises from a loving mind, and the seed of a loving mind is compassion. We should learn that kind speech has the power to turn around the heavens; it is not merely the praise of ability.

(Dogen: Four Elements of a Bodhisattva's Social Relations, in SBGZ, vol 3, BDK ed, p 41)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 16th, 2017 at 3:32 AM

Title: Re: Soto Zen Quotes

Content:

CedarTree said:

Seems you haven't been around much! Hopefully you are a Zen monk these days?

Astus wrote:

"When we fail, it is already progress to understand that we have failed. We train ourselves by making that failure a stepping-stone for a pace forward. The practice of Buddhism is to realize that the present success is the hundred failures of the past. When we understand that, no confusions or disturbances will arise."

(Takashina Rosen: A Tongue-Tip Taste of Zen, in T. Leggett: A First Zen Reader, p 49)

"I wonder why we are always avoiding and running away from the real purpose of life. I think is because of our anticipatory nature, a dream of something else, something better, than what one already is. This dream arises from our attachment to the ego. So we continue to roam about, motivated by our unconscious fixed idea that we dislike ourselves as we are."

(Hogen Yamahata: The Other Shore, p 32)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 17th, 2017 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

When something is dependently arisen, it implies that the something is not unconditioned. If you assert that emptiness is dependent arising or dependent co-arising, and if you also assert that emptiness is empty as well, then you would be implying that emptiness is not unconditioned. Your reply did not address the logical problem raised.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness merely stands for the absence of substance in appearances, that's why the problem raised as a contradiction between conditioned and unconditioned is a non-issue. It is the fact of being conditioned that makes appearances empty, since a substance means not being subject to conditions. Because appearances are

conditioned, they are without a substance. That is how dependent origination and emptiness are one and the same. It also explains why there is no ultimate reality, only the ultimate truth that all phenomena are without essence.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 18th, 2017 at 3:09 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

Are you arguing that the emptiness of emptiness is therefore superfluous, irrelevant or over-reaching in meaning, etc.?

Astus wrote:

There can be over

http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Twenty_kinds_of_emptiness, including emptiness of emptiness. The reason behind that is to clarify that there are no exceptions, everything is without an essence, and being without essence is also not an essence. The whole of Buddhadharma is about ending attachment. To posit anything that is ultimately worth being attached to (note: skilful means should be grasped up to a point) goes against the very basics of the Buddha's teaching. So, even the teaching of emptiness is only a means to an end. As the http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html says, "If even my correct teachings are to be abandoned, how much more incorrect teachings?"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 19th, 2017 at 6:56 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

it is unskillful to use words that results in logical contradiction

Astus wrote:

What contradiction?

A passages from Mazu:

"Not obliterating the conditioned; not dwelling in the unconditioned. The conditioned is the function of the unconditioned; the unconditioned is the essence of the conditioned."

(Sun-Face Buddha, p 67)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: buddhas and sex

Content:

Astus wrote:

One of the 32 major marks is the retracted male organ.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

There is "no existence in a cessation of which we can describe its nonexistence" (Sutta Nipatta). Thus there is nothing left over, positive or negative.

Sherab said:

I could not find your quotation in Sutta Nipata.

Astus wrote:

The matter of what happens after death to a liberated one is discussed in several suttas:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.086.than.html>,

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#sn44>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017 at 3:06 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

And your point is?

Astus wrote:

It is about what Malcolm mentioned: when there is nothing that ceases, it is not annihilation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2017 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

It still does not mean that there is ultimately no natural state of any sort.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like an argument for an invisible elephant in a room where no elephant is found.

Sherab said:

I was arguing for an ultimate reality which is the source for our illusory relative reality.

Astus wrote:

An ultimate cannot cause a relative thing, first because a cause cannot be ultimate, and second because of different nature (ultimate-relative). There is neither an ultimate basis nor a source in Buddhism, there is only dependent origination.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2017 at 3:06 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

That is because you have assumed the ultimate as something permanent and unchanging.

Astus wrote:

Something is either permanent or impermanent. If the proposed ultimate is impermanent, why even call it the ultimate? If you may respond that it is not something, then it is necessarily nothing, in which case it does not exist, hence there is no ultimate at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2017 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Anonymous X said:

It always seems to me that trying to talk about the ultimate is sort of a waste of time. What is the point?

Astus wrote:

The ultimate is what one wants to achieve, to understand, to become. An ultimate existence is the false belief in a self, and as such it needs to be clarified and seen through in order to be free from it. The ultimate truth is what liberates from all suffering, and as such it is the final goal of the path. So there are good reasons to talk about the ultimate.

Anonymous X said:

If the point of Nagarjuna is to bring us to the abandonment of all views, is this not the same as the abandonment of discursive thinking?

Astus wrote:

The aim is never a blank, wordless state, but wisdom and clarity. If it were the case that thoughts and concepts are bad and their absence is good, then one could gain liberation just by losing consciousness. But the point is to recognise the nature of

thoughts as insubstantial, as empty, thus end attachment and identification.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2017 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Anonymous X said:

I can tell you that it is not a blank, wordless state. ... Wisdom begins to function without the obstruction of discursive mind.

Astus wrote:

If there is no discursive mind, there are no words, no concepts, no comprehension. How is it not a wordless state then?

Anonymous X said:

It is not that thoughts are bad. It is that they cannot comprehend what is.

Astus wrote:

The whole world is whatever is defined by thoughts, hence terms like vijñaptimātra and nāmamātra. Also consider what mind actually is as defined by the four mental aggregates (vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra, vijñāna), and the five universal mental functions (vedanā, saṃjñā, cetanā, sparśa, manaskāra).

Anonymous X said:

Attachment and identification are absent when you let go of your view, that is if you don't reify another view.

Astus wrote:

Clinging is gone, but the functions are not.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 26th, 2017 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

I repeat, you are stating something that I have addressed early in this discussion.

Astus wrote:

The only place you seem to have addressed this was on <https://dharmaheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=401570#p401570>. There you state that the ultimate is both functional and impermanent. Such a statement actually turns the ultimate into the relative.

Sherab said:

If you do not address my reasoning or arguments, it is difficult to make headway in the

discussion as we are merely talking past each other.

Astus wrote:

If there are other arguments from you I missed, please quote/link them.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 27th, 2017 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Sherab said:

As I have mentioned before, it is because you have assumed that dependent arising is identical to temporal causality.

Astus wrote:

There is no atemporal causality, as effect must follow cause. If it is not causality, then there is neither dependence, nor origination. That's why it can only be temporal causality.

Sherab said:

I have explained previously that dependent arising is very broad and can encompass more than mere temporal causality.

Astus wrote:

It wasn't an explanation, it was a simple statement.

<https://dharmaheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=403789#p403789>:

"You have also assumed dependent origination as identical to temporal causality."

That's all.

Sherab said:

When I discuss a subject with others, I make it a point to read and understand what is being said so that I don't waste the other person's time and effort with a reply that is not to point.

Astus wrote:

Very good approach. So are there any arguments aside from the claim that they exist somewhere?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 28th, 2017 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Anonymous X said:

No-mindfulness is often spoke of in Chan terms.

Temicco said:

I think you maybe mean "no-mind". Zen is about having no conditioned mind. It does teach mindfulness -- namely, mindfulness of ones nature, stability in unconditioned mind.

Anonymous X said:

I believe Zongmi is one of the worthies that used the term no-mindfulness.

Astus wrote:

no-mind: 無心 (wuxin / mushin)

no-mindfulness (also: no(n)-thought): 無念 (wunian / munen)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2017 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Temicco said:

The translation nuance for that second one is huge, though. Is 念 the word normally used for smṛti?

Astus wrote:

Yes, 念 is the word normally used for smṛti. E.g. 正念 saṃyaksmṛti, 念佛 buddhānusmṛti, 念安般 ānāpānasmṛti, 四念處 catvārisṛtyupasthānāni. However, that is not the word's exclusive meaning, so it is not that straightforward. Rather, what one should look for is the definition provided in the same text where a term is used.

A recommended reading:

<http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/documents/Sharf,%20Mindfulness%20and%20Mindlessness%20in%20Early%20Chan.pdf> by Robert Sharf.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2017 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Anonymous X said:

One more quote: Zongmi “Even during delusion there is Knowing. Knowing from the outset is non-delusion. Even the arising of thoughts is Knowing, [but] Knowing from the outset is no mindfulness, up to and including: [at the locus wherein] pity, joy, happiness, hatred, love, and dislike [appear] one after the other they are all Knowing. Knowing from the outset is voidness and calm. It is void and calm and yet Knowing. Then you are not confused at all about the mind nature. The above all differs drastically from [the ideas of] the other lineages.”

Vasana said:

Maybe it would be useful to see what the translation of 'knowing' is in that excerpt since there are definitely nuances related to the knowing capacity of mind in T.B. I don't claim to know much about Zen but I suspect that your interpretation isn't representative of the teachings given the clarifications in this thread on mindfulness/no-mindfulness.

Astus wrote:

Knowing/awareness 知 in the teachings of Shenhui and Zongmi might be equated with terms like rigpa/vidyā and yeshe/jñāna. However, the later tradition (i.e. Patriarchal Zen) was quite critical of that concept.

"Knowing and understanding are the great faults of the Buddhadharma. Heze, who was an illegitimate heir of Caoqi, used them. The Vimalakīrti(nirdeśa) sūtra says, "Remove what it has." The Lotus Sutra says, "Remove the shit and take the wages." These are all states of knowing and understanding. For this reason knowing and understanding are obstacles to correct views, like rancid rice offered to starving ghosts, like bad water being used to pollute the field of the mind, which is not as good as looking at Zhaozhou's character mu."

(Hyujeong: The Greatest Faults in Seon: the Two Characters Knowing and Understanding, in The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 239-240)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2017 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan Zen

Content:

Vasana said:

is it clear if the schools you're talking about are distinguishing between the 'knowing' related to dualistic mind or to the 'knowing' related to non-conceptual, direct cognition? Both might be called 'knowing' but the latter is not a conceptual view.

Astus wrote:

Knowing/awareness 知 is a specific term here, and it is not confused with the conceptual mind.

"The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. This calm Knowing of voidness and calm is precisely the mind of voidness and calm that Bodhidharma formerly transmitted. Whether you are deluded or awakened, mind from the outset is spontaneously Knowing. [Knowing] is not produced by conditions, nor does it arise in dependence on sense objects. Even during delusion the depravities are Knowing, but [Knowing] is not the depravities. Even during awakening the divine transformations are Knowing, but Knowing is not the divine transformations. Thus, the one word "Knowing" is the source of all excellence. Because of delusion about this Knowing there arises the characteristic of a self. When one calculates self and mine, love and hatred spontaneously arise. According to the mind of love or hatred, one does good or bad, and, as retribution for this good or bad, is reborn in one of the six rebirth paths, life after life, birth after birth, cyclically, without end."

(Zongmi: Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 88)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 7th, 2017 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Can you practice without a teacher?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dogen writes:

"If you want to study the supreme Buddhist Truth, you have to visit excellent Buddhist masters in far-off China. Reflect upon the vigorous road that is far beyond intellectual thinking. If you cannot find a true master, it is better not to study at all."
(<https://terebess.hu/zen/dogen/GakuDoYoJinShu.pdf>)

Brad Warner comments:

"Notice, though, that Dogen never said don't do zazen without a teacher, he just said don't study Buddhism without one. Although doing zazen is a form of studying Buddhism, it won't do most folks any harm at all to sit zazen on their own. Just don't get too gung-ho about it."
(<http://hardcorezen.info/do-i-need-a-teacher>)

After all, <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html> is a fairly simple practice, and you can find several <http://antaiji.org/en/dharma/okumura-mind-and-zazen/>. If you actually do zazen you can recognise for what role you need a teacher for.

Huineng said:

"If you do not become enlightened by yourself, then you must seek a great spiritual compatriot, someone who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle, to indicate directly the correct path for you. ... If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking — don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself."
(Platform Sutra, ch2, BDK ed, p 33)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2017 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Relative vs. Ultimate Truth

Content:

spiao said:

I just want to check if I'm thinking in the right direction.

Astus wrote:

The conventional/relative truth is whatever is held as valid by people, or simply

dependent origination. The ultimate truth is the absence of substance, i.e. emptiness.

So, unlike in your file, inter-dependence is the relative truth, causality, appearances. The middle way is not a third option, but the lack of extreme views.

As for your questions:

- "the conclusion is already built in the premise", the two truths doctrine is not an argument but an educational device
- "Is there any phenomenon that has inherent existence?", no
- "what about abstractions and concepts", they are the products of imagination, nothing more

Explanations:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_truths_doctrine

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/>

Patrul Rinpoche: <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/two-truths-view-mahayana>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 28th, 2017 at 4:15 PM

Title: Re: NOT another Jhana Thread

Content:

Zafutales said:

I have seen reference at times to Shikantaza being likened to the Fourth Jhana - can someone elucidate the rationale for this please?

Astus wrote:

There can be three reasons for that assumption: not understanding shikantaza, not understanding dhyanas, not understanding either.

If it's the first one, then one mistakes a stable and calm mind as the proper mental state of zazen. In other words, the ghost cave of liberation.

If it's the second one, then one mistakes only a little bit of concentration as a dhyana.

If it's the third one, then one is completely lost in one's own ideas and fails to rely on the correct teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 28th, 2017 at 7:44 PM

Title: Re: NOT another Jhana Thread

Content:

Zafutales said:

I mean if one was sitting in Zazen and specifically Shikantaza how would one be able to rely upon or validate one's experience?

Astus wrote:

There are two sides here. First, the typical answer is that it is for the teacher to validate the disciple. As it is stated in the <http://www.cttbusa.org/6patriarch/6patriarch16.asp>:

“That was acceptable before the time of the Buddha called the Awesome-Voiced King. But since the coming of that Buddha, all those who ‘self-enlighten’ without a master belong to other religions which hold to the tenet of spontaneity.”

Second, shikantaza is itself the practice of verification, whereby one directly recognises that all experiences are ungraspable, hence there is no experience to be validated.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 28th, 2017 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

It's rather easy to believe that as Nirvāṇa and samsara are not two, then we have nothing further to seek, that we are already enlightened. You hear that a lot in various forms of modernised Buddhism and other spiritual philosophies - you perfect as you are, there is no need to strive for anything. 'Lucky is one with nothing further to seek'.

Astus wrote:

The misleading word here is "perfect". The true nature of life, the universe, and everything is: impermanent, dissatisfying, and impersonal. Those are not exactly the common associations for the word "perfect". What sentient beings love is stability, pleasure, and importance, the very opposites of how things really are. But even though one ceaselessly pursues the illusion of perfection, there is no end to the chase. Therefore, when the real qualities of existence are seen, it is through the relinquishing of the lives long pursuit of perfection that one arrives at aimlessness, the total extinction of seeking. Such peace is attained not because there is anything to gain, nor because there is something to let go, but because it has become clear that life cannot be fixed, that all hopes and fears are utterly baseless and fabricated.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 28th, 2017 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

there remains a quality of perfection

Astus wrote:

Remains where?

Wayfarer said:

I am reminded of Lex Hixon's commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā: when perception of

the world is no longer burdened with the imputed meanings that are attached to it on account of attachment, it is perceived in its suchness, tathata, as an aspect of boundless Reality: ineffable, limitless, boundaryless, frontierless, divisionless, identityless, infinite, transparent, harmoniously functioning, open, free, elusive, deep, pure, empty, sublime, calmly quiet, at peace, and blissfully awakened. (Hixon 1993) That is why Prajñāpāramitā is referred to as the 'perfection of wisdom', isn't it?

Astus wrote:

Not really. That kind of perfection you mention is more of a poetic interpretation.

“Pāramitā” means “reaching to the other shore.” Because it is able to reach to the other shore of the great sea of wisdom and because it reaches to its very boundaries and utterly exhausts its most ultimate limits, it qualifies as “perfect” in its “reaching to the other shore.”

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf, ch 30, tr Dharmamitra)

"What is meant by Paramita? It is a Sanskrit word which in our language means 'arrived at the other shore,' and is explained as 'apart from production and extinction.' When one is attached to states of being, production and extinction arise like waves on water. That is what is meant by 'this shore.' To be apart from states of being, with no production or extinction, is to be like freely flowing water. That is what is meant by 'the other shore.' Therefore it is called 'Paramita'."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, tr BTTS, p 124)

Wayfarer said:

which is expressed in the Buddhist-inspired artwork and iconography of China and Japan. Actually I recall being told that Chinese fine ceramics often have a deliberate slight imperfection or flaw so as to denote the imperfection of all compound things. But they are beautiful, nonetheless.

Astus wrote:

I think you mean <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kintsugi>.

Here is Nagarjuna on not seeking anything:

"Then again, if the bodhisattva refrains from taking up the practice of any particular dharma, because he does not apprehend any dharma whatsoever, he may thereby succeed in realizing prajñāpāramitā. How can this be the case? All practices are essentially false and unreal. In some cases, they possess faults in the near term. In other cases, they possess faults in the more distant term.

In the case of unwholesome dharmas, in the near term, they are involve karmic transgressions. In the case of good dharmas, there may be a time when, after a long while, they become so transformed that one becomes attached to them and thus generates distressful suffering on their account. In that case, they involve karmic transgressions in the distant term.

These circumstances are analogous to the certain cases involving both fine food and

bad food, both of which have been mixed with poison. When one eats the bad food, one immediately becomes displeased. When one eats the fine food, although one will immediately be pleased, still, after a long while, in both cases, one's life will be stolen away. In fact, neither of the two should be eaten. All good and bad practices are comparable to these circumstances.

...

If one is able to practice the dharma of "no practice" in this manner, in every case, nothing whatsoever is gained. Inverted views, falseness, and afflictions are finally not produced at all. Because one remains as pure as empty space, one succeeds then in realizing the true character of dharmas. One takes having nothing whatsoever which is gained as that which is gained."

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf, ch 30, tr Dharmamitra)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 29th, 2017 at 6:09 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

As long as there is suffering, there is enlightenment, freedom from suffering. This is the Third Noble Truth.

Astus wrote:

How does that relate to the <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/heartstr.htm>?

"There is No Truth of Suffering,
Of the Cause of Suffering,
Of the Cessation of Suffering,
Nor of the Path.
There is No Wisdom, and
There is No Attainment Whatsoever."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 29th, 2017 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The definition of Prajñāpāramitā which I am familiar with is 'perfection of wisdom'. I am inclined to retain that definition.

Astus wrote:

Perfection is an English rendering of paramita, but not the only one. A standard Chinese translation is du 度 that means to pass, to cross over, while the Tibetan is pha rol tu phyin pa, i.e. go to the other side. So apparently they both followed the traditional Buddhist understanding when translating the word. After all, the paramitas are not the

end but the means.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 29th, 2017 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Monlam Tharchin said:

Astus, which term would you prefer for paramita? I leave it untranslated when talking about them.

Astus wrote:

I don't really have one.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 29th, 2017 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

seeker242 said:

Everywhere! If samsara is nirvana and nirvana is perfect, then it must follow that samsara is perfect also.

Astus wrote:

What does it mean to be perfect then?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 30th, 2017 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

seeker242 said:

It could mean "stability, pleasure, etc." like in the previous examples. It could also mean "complete, not lacking anything, etc.". In this context, I think the latter is more appropriate.

Astus wrote:

Are you saying that samsara can be described as stable, pleasurable, and not lacking anything? Those would be the very opposites of impermanent, dissatisfying, and insubstantial.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 30th, 2017 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: Zen Forum International

Content:

anjali said:

Also, maybe the Zen community is utilizing other online platforms like facebook more effectively.

Astus wrote:

For one, the " <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SotoZenGlobal/> " group on facebook is quite active.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 30th, 2017 at 7:10 AM

Title: Re: Zen Forum International

Content:

jake said:

Why do you think people prefer FB?

Astus wrote:

A number of logical reasons have already been given here by Passel and Kim. Or we could just say that nowadays discussion boards are not trending as much as social networks.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 1st, 2017 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: The concept of the teacher's "blessings"

Content:

Astus wrote:

"So when you supplicate them, even though, like your root guru, they cannot hand you attainment. or fruition; yet, like your root guru, they can influence and help you. It is not panicularly that by supplicating them they are pleased and therefore decide to share their spiritual wealth with you. It is rather that the devotion you generate in your supplication causes this blessing simply to occur."

...

"Supplication produces blessing, and although the blessing is understood as something given to you, something that somehow engulfs you from outside, in fact blessing really isn't given to you at all. When you supplicate, you generate faith and devotion. That faith and devotion cause the appearance of what we call blessing."

...

"To say that the blessing of Dharma enters into you does not mean that through receiving an empowerment you can immediately fly in the sky, or that you become intoxicated with some kind of mysterious spiritual drunkenness. It means simply that having received the empowerment, something changes. There will be at least a little increase in your faith and devotion, at least a little increase in your diligence. These changes in you are the principal blessing or benefit of the empowerment process. For example, many people have told me that they were previo·usly unable to understand or settle on the validity of Buddhism, but then, for one reason or another, they received the Kalachakra empowerment from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and thereafter have been intensely involved in practice. That is an instance of the blessing of empowerment. It is

not necessarily that they are practicing Kalachakra, but that, because of that empowerment, they are practicing Dharma."

(Khenchen Thrangu: Creation and Completion, p 114, 117, 151)

"The Tibetan is jin gyi lab pa and means to be transformed through a certain environment and influence. This is the meaning of "blessing" from the Buddhist point of view. It denotes a total transformation from the core of our being, which is induced by different things happening around us. Empowerment, in its actual sense, should lead us to receive this blessing and to undergo a genuine and complete transformation."

(Ringu Tulku: Daring Steps Toward Fearlessness, p 133)

"Such an infusion of blessing can take place without any difficulty. It comes through invocation originating from one's faith and veneration. A devotee with deep faith receives a powerful blessing. One with medium faith receives a medium blessing. One with lesser faith receives the lesser blessing. It is the nature of things that one cannot receive spiritual blessing without faith. For those practitioners who have failed to gain deep understanding, there is no other way except that of worshiping the guru with faith, and through meditation invoking his blessings. Even those who have gained understanding should continue to have faith in their guru as a means of strengthening and perfecting their inner development."

(Gampopa quoted in Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 136-137)

"Our capacity to receive the compassion and blessings of the teacher and the Three Jewels, therefore, depends entirely on devotion and faith.

Once, a disciple called out to the master Jowo Atisa, "Jowo, give me your blessing!"

"Lax disciple," Atisa replied, "give me your devotion ... "

So absolute unwavering trust, arising from extraordinary faith and devotion, is indispensable. It opens the door to taking refuge."

(Patrul rinpoche: Words of My Perfect Teacher, p 176)

"The guru's blessings are always present, day and night. The buddhas and bodhisattvas, all the masters of the lineage, and your personal root guru are always full of blessings, continuously, throughout the three times. But how do these blessings saturate our own mind-stream to bring us to maturation? This happens when the concepts of me and mine have melted away in the state of devotion. It is this ego that prevents blessings from ripening our stream-of-being. The concept of self melts away in the atmosphere of devotion. This is when the warmth of blessings permeates you completely."

(Tsoknyi rinpoche, in Dzogchen Essentials, p 13)

"Devotion is the root of blessings, the basis for receiving blessings. Blessings definitely do exist, so we should know what they are and what the role of devotion is in receiving blessings. Otherwise, there is not much point in devotion.

Blessings are contagious, so to speak, and are transmitted in a fashion that is rather like catching a cold. If somebody has a cold and you are too close, you catch a cold too.

Likewise, if you get close to a master who has blessings, they can be transmitted to you. Blessings here mean the sense of some power of realization or power of samadhi, some kind of atmosphere of realization that is naturally present. You move close to him, in the

sense of opening yourself up through devotion and making sincere, heartfelt supplications. In other words, you lower your defenses, whatever doubts and suspicions that prevent you from being "infected" with the blessings. The moment you do that, you catch a cold as well. Devotion is a very deeply felt and sincere emotion, which comes from the bottom of one's heart. It is partly a sense of really rejoicing, rejoicing in the qualities that are embodied in the teacher. At the same time, there is a sense of gratitude for the teacher's incredible kindness. This combination of rejoicing and gratitude is what opens us up, what generates devotion.

Devotion can be toward the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, in terms of truly rejoicing in and appreciating their amazing qualities, of knowledge and compassion, and so forth. To be open toward that and rejoice in those qualities is one aspect of devotion. At the same time, when we understand how it benefits ourselves to train in the recognition of our basic nature, we feel gratitude, an appreciation of the kindness.

Otherwise, there could be many kinds of devotion. There is the devotion that is simply love, love generated by the thought, "He was nice to me, so I like him." There is devotion that is an admiration, in that you feel in awe of a person or thing. Then there is devotion inspired by some kind of longing to emulate someone-you want to be like that as well. However, in the beginning, devotion is some kind of fabrication. We are trying to feel in a certain way, trying to open up. It is artificial, but it makes us grow closer to understanding the view, in the sense that devotion opens us up to realize emptiness, makes it easier. When some authentic experience of emptiness strengthens devotion even further, at that point it is no longer artificial or contrived. We may begin by trying to feel devotion, and then, later on, actual experience allows it to become totally uncontrived. Uncontrived devotion springs out of the experience of the view. Because when there is some seeing in actuality of what is called rigpa or ordinary mind, the natural mind that really solves or liberates disturbing emotions-when the conceptual frame of mind is opened up. by this recognition-then we have a personal taste of the value and the worth of the practice. It is that real appreciation that is uncontrived devotion. In this way, devotion and the view of emptiness mutually strengthen one another."

(Tsoknyi rinpoche, in Dzogchen Primer, p 163-164)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 2nd, 2017 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: The concept of the teacher's "blessings"

Content:

smcj said:

There is no Dharma called "blessing", no magical force called "blessing". If there was, the Buddha, being compassionate, would have blessed us all into nirvana long ago. Buddhas are neither omnipotent or capable of unilateral action. The request/receptivity must be initiated by sentient being.

Astus wrote:

Blessing is a positive change in relation to one's progress on the path to liberation. It is a specific case of receiving merit transference that comes from the appreciation of enlightened beings, while the generic meaning of receiving merit is the agreeing with

any wholesome act, and that is a beneficial form of shared karma.

On the one hand, it can be said that it's all in one's mind, particularly for two reasons: all perceptions are mental fabrication, and karma is strictly individual. On the other hand, it is an inspiration originating from others, because without awareness of enlightened beings, no appreciation can occur, and without appreciation there can be no blessing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 3rd, 2017 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

seeker242 said:

I'm saying a world that is impermanent, dissatisfying, and insubstantial can be considered complete, not lacking anything when you don't desire it to be some other way.

Astus wrote:

"Originally there being no moving and nothing to be obtained is called the Buddha-Dharma, the Buddha's truth. The Buddha-Dharma lies just in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. Adding even a bit to it is impossible, whereas taking away just a bit is also impossible. Realizing this, you will not waste even the slightest energy. As soon as you estimate it by deliberation to be something marvelous and mysterious, you already have nothing to do with it."

(Eisai: A Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 145; emphasis added)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 5th, 2017 at 12:59 AM

Title: Re: Satthipathana Sutta: Best Translation AND original text

Content:

Astus wrote:

Soma Thera: <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html>

Ven. Analayo: <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/direct-path.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 5th, 2017 at 3:09 AM

Title: Re: Satthipathana Sutta: Best Translation AND original text

Content:

Astus wrote:

For the originals:

<http://www.tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/s0102m.mul8.xml>

<http://www.tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/s0201m.mul0.xml>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 6th, 2017 at 4:14 PM

Title: Re: How is the Mind-Body Problem Treated in Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This relationship between body and mind is what falls under the so called unanswered questions regarding the identity of sarira (body) and jiva (soul). The short answer is that Buddhism has an experiential view, as shown in the teachings on the five aggregates and six sensory domains, where physical and mental phenomena are not substantially differentiated.

"If there is the view, 'The soul and the body are the same,' there is no living of the holy life; and if there is the view, 'The soul is one thing, the body is another,' there is no living of the holy life. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: 'With birth as condition, aging-and-death.'"
(SN 12.35)

"Bhikkhus, when what exists, by clinging to what, by adhering to what, does such a view as this arise: 'The soul and the body are the same'?"

...

"Bhikkhus, when what exists, by clinging to what, by adhering to what, does such a view as this arise: 'The soul is one thing, the body another'?"

...

"But without clinging to what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, could such a view as that arise?"

"No, venerable sir."

(SN 24.13, 14)

"Master Gotama, what is the cause and reason why these various speculative views arise in the world: ... 'The soul and the body are the same' or 'The soul is one thing, the body is another'..."

"It is, Vaccha, because of not knowing form/feeling/perception/volitional formations/consciousness, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation that those various speculative views arise in the world"

(SN 33.1-5)

"As to the various views that arise in the world, householder, 'The world is eternal' "" - these as well as the sixty-two speculative views mentioned in the Brahmajala: when there is identity view, these views come to be; when there is no identity view, these views do not come to be."

(SN 41.3)

"Vaccha, wanderers of other sects regard the eye thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self.' They regard the ear . . . the nose . . . the tongue . . . the body . . . the mind thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self.' Therefore, when the wanderers of other sects are asked such questions, they give such answers as: 'The world is eternal' . . . or 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death.' But, Vaccha, the Tathagata, the

Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, regards the eye thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' He regards the ear . . . the mind thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' Therefore, when the Tathagata is asked such questions, he does not give such answers."

(SN 44.7)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 6th, 2017 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: The Bamboo Flutes of Japan's 'Monks of Emptiness'

Content:

Astus wrote:

A recommended reading from Gunnar Jinmei Linder is

https://books.google.com/books/about/Deconstructing_Tradition_in_Japanese_Mus.html?id=NeekMwEACAAJ (<http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:488776/FULLTEXT01.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 6th, 2017 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: The Void

Content:

Relinquish said:

In truth, any given 'particular thing' (for example, a 'tree') exists in a state of constant change, which is to say that 'the tree' is in fact a 'process' rather than a 'thing'.

Astus wrote:

A process is no less an illusion than a thing. For something to be a process you need past, present, and future. For a process you need something to change from one moment to the other. So, a "process tree" is as absurd as a "thing tree".

Relinquish said:

This process can ONLY be occurring if the necessary conditions are present.

Astus wrote:

Here the process is already used as a thing that is in relation with other things.

Relinquish said:

In this way, 'the tree' naturally includes the entirety of the rest of the universe within it's own existence, and so there is no REAL difference between 'the tree' and 'not the tree'.

Astus wrote:

That's saying that the child includes the entirety of its ancestors, however, a child is not the parents, so such a statement is nonsense.

Relinquish said:

Fundamentally, all the different processes are actually arbitrarily delineated,

impermanent 'features' of the eternally cyclic Process of Being (the only Process that ever actually occurs in Reality, commonly known as the universe).

Astus wrote:

While a simple tree may be called conceptual, fabricating capitalised terms like "Process of Being" is only drawing legs on a painted snake.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 9th, 2017 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Yunmen Wenyan

Content:

pokii said:

Yunmen is , was, will, be..one of the most important moments in chan/zen history...

Astus wrote:

How so?

pokii said:

Why are his words not used, explained, understood, and so on..

Astus wrote:

Shenxiu and Shenhui were verifiably important historical teachers, however, their teachings were abandoned and forgotten almost completely in a few hundred years.

"in the course of the future there will be monks who won't listen when discourses that are words of the Tathagata — deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness — are being recited. They won't lend ear, won't set their hearts on knowing them, won't regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works — the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples — are recited. They will lend ear and set their hearts on knowing them. They will regard these teachings as worth grasping & mastering."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn20/sn20.007.than.html>)

pokii said:

Would you please say, if you will, something about him, or anything you would about Yunmen?

Astus wrote:

If one examines this thoroughly, it's stone-dead.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 10th, 2017 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: By way of welcome: Let's drink some tea!

Content:

Astus wrote:

Tea washes the mouth.

"Meditation was a labour, all night long, but
When you brewed tea, I felt infinitely glad.
Just one cup of tea, and the dark clouds were banished,
Feeling cool to my very bones, all worry vanished."
(Muuija: With Thanks for the Tea and an Answer to the Questions, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 9, p 90)

Tea washes the bowl.

"When one is hungry, and can eat, the rice is tastier,
Waking from sleep, and sipping tea, the tea is sweeter.
This place is poor, and since no one knocks at the door
In the empty hermitage, its a joy to be with Buddha in a niche."
(Wongam: Written at leisure, in CWKBv9, p 131)

Tea washes the brain.

"Everything is just as it is from the beginning, not created.
Why toil away to seek the truth from outside?
All you need is concentration, not arousing the mind.
If thirsty, boil tea, if you feel tired, go to bed."
(Preceptor Naong: Reply to Monk Bo's Request for a Verse, in CWKBv9, p 214)

The kettle can never be emptied.

"All his life, the novice should
Brew tea for Master Zhaozhou.
When the mind is gone and the hair is white
What need is there to recite Nanzhou?"
(Cheongheodang: Seon Master Toun, in CWKBv9, p 320)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 14th, 2017 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Meido said:

It doesn't make sense to seek out lineages, methods, styles and so on, and certainly not to choose a teacher based on them. This is because the path is actualized within human relationship with a teacher with whom one shares affinity. One should therefore just seek one's shisho, the teacher (of any tradition) with whom one has deep affinity, and take that relationship as the foundation of one's path and the source of lineages, methods, and the rest. To seek a teacher based on those things rather than affinity is exactly backwards.

In Zen this ties into what is meant by "transmission outside the scriptures, not dependent on words and letters": the lifeblood of the path is realized within face to face human relationship, that is, within the ba ("field") of the teacher. It is also related to what is meant by "direct pointing at the mind" as the function of the teacher.

Astus wrote:

That sounds to be the very opposite of one of the four reliances: "Rely on the teaching rather than the person." (Nirvana Sutra, 4.3, BDK ed, p 193; http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T12n0374_006#0401b25, also Vimalakirti Sutra ch 13 http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0475_003#0556b17), that Nagarjuna explains as "Relying on the truth in itself is keeping to the twelve categories of texts and not keeping to the authority of a person." (MPPS, ch 15, tr Lamotte-Chodron, p 425; http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T25n1509_009#0125a28). Mipham explains this point in the following manner: "No matter what kind of person a teacher is, he cannot purify or liberate you. If the teaching he gives is truly meaningful, it is proper to adhere to it. But if it is not meaningful, it is improper to adhere to it. Thus, one should not rely on the person but on the teaching." (Gateway to Knowledge, vol 3, p 123) Shengyan talked in a similar fashion: "If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters." (<http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0027>)

In light of the above, why would the person be the most important in Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2017 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Malcolm said:

You apparently missed the word "qualified."

Astus wrote:

That word was not used in that post. Still, even if it goes without saying that only qualified teachers are meant, why focus on the individual rather than the message? For instance, what qualifies a teacher in PP8000 (tr Conze) is the teaching:

Subhuti: Who are those good friends of a Bodhisattva?

The Lord: The Buddhas and Lords, and also the irreversible Bodhisattvas who are skilful in the Bodhisattva-course, and who instruct and admonish him in the perfections, who demonstrate and expound the perfection of wisdom. The perfection of wisdom in particular should be regarded as a Bodhisattva's good friend. All the six perfections, in fact, are the good friends of a Bodhisattva. They are his Teacher, his path, his light, his torch, his illumination, his shelter, his refuge, his place of rest, his final relief, his island, his mother, his father, and they lead him to cognition, to understanding, to full

enlightenment. For it is in these perfections that the perfection of wisdom is accomplished.

Similarly in the Lotus Sutra (ch 10, BDK ed, p 158):

"After my parinirvāṇa, if there are any sons and daughters of a virtuous family who expound even a single line of the Lotus Sutra in private to even a single person, they should be acknowledged as the ambassadors of the Tathāgata. They have been dispatched by the Tathāgata and carry out the Tathāgata's work. As for those who extensively teach among the common people, know that they are yet greater ambassadors."

And the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment (ch 5, BDK ed, p 77):

"When they meet a good friend (kalyāṇamitra) and rely on the dharmic practice of the causal ground taught by him, there will be sudden and gradual [aspects] in their approach to practice. If they encounter the path of the true practice of the unsurpassed enlightenment (bodhi) of the Tathāgata, all will attain buddhahood regardless of whether their capacities are great or small. If sentient beings encounter someone with errant views in their quest for a good friend, they will never attain true enlightenment"

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2017 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

DGA said:

Who has done this?

Astus wrote:

How do you read then Meido's words?

"In Zen this ties into what is meant by "transmission outside the scriptures, not dependent on words and letters": the lifeblood of the path is realized within face to face human relationship, that is, within the ba ("field") of the teacher. ... I'd have just told him to go elsewhere. The reason is that it means to me he is not seeking relationship with a teacher and community in order to actualize Zen."

DGA said:

The point is that you need a relationship with a living teacher to actualize the teachings, to realize them for yourself.

Astus wrote:

I think "need" is too much. Rather it is recommended.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2017 at 1:55 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Dan74 said:

I think the importance of the relationship with a qualified teacher is that

1. He/she can identify where a student is stuck and given the students karmic package, how best to deal with this 'stuckness' - which practice/teaching is appropriate
2. Can act as a mirror to the student in which he/she can see their own projections/clinging/aversion reflected back to them
3. Basically do all they can to motivate and inspire the student to persevere with practice including modelling and giving a taste of what it is like

Astus wrote:

According to the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment one better avoid having expectations toward teachers:

"The Buddha preaches that in the gradual perfection of such a person, he should seek a good friend so as not to fall into errant views, but that if he produces likes and dislikes in regard to what he seeks, then he will not be able to enter the ocean of pure enlightenment."

(ch 9, p 96)

"If those good friends are close to them, they should cut off their pride. If those good friends are distant from them, they should cut off their anger. The occurrence of states of attraction and aversion is like empty space."

(ch 10, p 101)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 16th, 2017 at 2:21 AM

Title: Re: Anyone knows Vinitaruci or his zen practice?

Content:

Temicco said:

The early Thien tradition has a particularly bad track record as far as blatant fraud is concerned

Astus wrote:

Do you know any tradition with a good record?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 16th, 2017 at 2:21 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Meido said:

Is this controversial?

Astus wrote:

No. Thank you for the clarification.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: and because they are synonymous with Mind, they are sentient beings

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

how Ven Dōgen connects the dots from mental objects to sentient beings? What does "mind" and "sentient being" in this context mean without the intersection of 5 sense consciousnesses?

Astus wrote:

There are no mental objects outside the mind, and what has mind is a sentient being.

Look at some other translations:

The meaning of “all living beings,” as described now in Buddhism, is that all those that have mind are “living beings,” for minds are just “living beings.” Those without mind may also be “living beings,” for “living beings” are just mind. So minds all are “living beings,” and “living beings” all “have the buddha-nature.” Grass, trees, and national lands are mind itself; because they are mind, they are “living beings,” and because they are “living beings” they “have the buddha-nature.”

(tr Nishijima-Cross, SBGZ BDK ed, vol 2, p 21)

In “all living beings” spoken of here on the way of the buddha, those with minds are “all living beings”; for the mind is living beings. Those without minds are similarly living beings; for living beings are mind. Therefore, all minds are living beings, and living beings all “have the buddha nature.” The grasses, trees and lands are mind; because they are mind, they are living beings; because they are living beings, they “have the buddha nature.”

(tr Carl Bielefeldt in <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/dharma/pdf/26eF.pdf>, p 19)

Then consider the followings:

"When stupid people hear talk of “mind here and now is buddha,” they interpret that ordinary beings’ intellect and sense perception, which have never established the bodhi-mind, are just buddha. ... “The mind that has been authentically transmitted” means one mind as all dharmas, and all dharmas as one mind.” ... “Mind as mountains, rivers, and the earth is nothing other than mountains, rivers, and the earth. There are no additional waves or surf, no wind or smoke. Mind as the sun, the moon, and the stars is nothing other than the sun, the moon, and the stars. There is no additional fog or mist. Mind as living-and-dying, coming-and-going, is nothing other than living-and-dying, coming-and-going. There is no additional delusion or realization. Mind as fences, walls,

tiles, and pebbles is nothing other than fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles. There is no additional mud or water. Mind as the four elements and five aggregates is nothing other than the four elements and five aggregates. There is no additional horse or monkey. Mind as a chair or a whisk is nothing other than a chair or a whisk. There is no additional bamboo or wood. Because the state is like this, “mind here and now is buddha” is untainted “mind here and now is buddha.””

(Soku-shin-ze-butsu, SBGZ BDK ed, vol 1, p 65, 68, 69)

"Thus, the words now spoken by the Tathāgata, “The triple world is only the mind” are the whole realization of the whole Tathāgata, and his whole life is the whole of this one saying. The triple world is the whole world; we do not say that the triple world is the same thing as mind. The reason is that however brilliant in all aspects the triple world is, it is still the triple world." ... "We should clearly realize in practice that “the suitably transforming Dharma bodies of the buddhas” are all of “the triple world.” The triple world has “no outside,” in the same way, for example, as the Tathāgata has “no outside,” and in the same way as fences and walls have “no outside.” Just as the triple world has “no outside,” living beings have “no outside.””

(Sangai-yuishin, SBGZ BDK ed, vol 3, p 62, 64)

"The realization of the Buddhist patriarchs is perfectly realized real form. Real form is all dharmas. All dharmas are forms as they are, natures as they are, body as it is, the mind as it is, the world as it is, clouds and rain as they are, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, as they are; sorrow and joy, movement and stillness, as they are; a staff and a whisk, as they are; a twirling flower and a smiling face, as they are; succession of the Dharma and affirmation, as they are; learning in practice and pursuing the truth, as they are; the constancy of pines and the integrity of bamboos, as they are."

(Shoho-jisso, SBGZ BDK ed, vol 3, p 62, 64)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 5:55 AM

Title: Re: and because they are synonymous with Mind, they are sentient beings

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

There are no mental object outside the mind, but are there no objects outside the mind?

Astus wrote:

An object is what is perceived, what is perceived is a mental object.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: and because they are synonymous with Mind, they are sentient beings

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

So it's not that the rock has a separate mindstream, according to the Ven Dōgen quote, it's that the rock is in your head. Not sepearte after all

Astus wrote:

Dogen does not discuss things in that way. Look at his comment on the story quoted in Sangai-yuishi (SBGZ BDK ed, vol 3, p 66-67):

They never understand "the triple world is mind alone," they never negate understanding of "the triple world is mind alone," they never express "the triple world is mind alone," and they never negate expression of "the triple world is mind alone."

His point is simply to see without clinging to concepts. That's why insentient things are buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 3:25 PM

Title: Re: Wall Gazing

Content:

lovekuanyin said:

If you stare long enough, the mind turns into emptiness. ... it is important to continue practicing this everyday until all delusions are emptied.

Astus wrote:

Insight (vipasyana) is to recognise that all thoughts are empty as they are. Trying to make the mind empty is an endless endeavour. So, as Huineng said (Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 29):

"If you empty your minds and sit in quietude, this is to become attached to the emptiness of blankness." and

"there are deluded people who empty their minds and sit in quietude without thinking of anything whatsoever, claiming that this is great."

furthermore (ch 6, p 47):

"One must not become immersed in emptiness, protecting one's tranquility. One should study extensively and become learned [in the scriptures], recognizing one's own fundamental mind and attaining the various principles of Buddhism."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Dharma Wheel Heavy Weights

Content:

CedarTree said:

Tell us about your practice history, what were some big stand out things that you think happened or insights or things you learned or experienced and so forth that helped bring you to where you are now.

Astus wrote:

I can mention some generic titles, but I'm not at the point of working on my autobiography.

- Nanquan's cat & satipatthana
- Nothing is still something
- One mind and no mind
- This bamboo is long, that one is short
- The mind cannot be found
- Karma is thoughts

CedarTree said:

And where are you now? *Meaning what are you doing, studying, practicing, and how do you see your life and practice as well as others and others practices*

Astus wrote:

This week I began to read The Great Commentary by Vimalamitra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 at 8:48 PM

Title: Re: and because they are synonymous with Mind, they are sentient beings

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

I think it's likely a translation issue.

Astus wrote:

It is true that there is no plural marker, however, there is the word "all" (一切 / みな) used in places to clarify that it is all beings.

いま佛道にいふ一切衆生は、有心者みな衆生なり、心是衆生なるがゆゑに。無心者おなじく衆生なるべし、衆生是心なるがゆゑに。しかあれば、心みなこれ衆生なり、衆生みなこれ有佛性なり。草木國土これ心なり、心なるがゆゑに衆生なり、衆生なるがゆゑに有佛性なり。

(<http://www.shomonji.or.jp/soroku/genzou03/index.html> / T2582_.82.0097c11-T2582_.82.0097c17)

It would also be a good idea to look into other works in the Shobogenzo where this concept of "insentient buddha-nature" is discussed.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 23rd, 2017 at 4:39 AM

Title: Re: and because they are synonymous with Mind, they are sentient beings

Content:

DGA said:

What is meant by mind in the passage quoted and ensuing discussion?

Astus wrote:

Seeing, hearing, sensing, thinking. The six consciousnesses.

DGA said:

How does it follow that all things have Buddha nature if one sees without clinging to concepts?

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature is suchness. When there is no attachment to ideas, that is seeing things as they are.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 23rd, 2017 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

What troubles me about this is that only detachment, only letting go, is an end in itself. But what about that gives rise to bodhicitta? Where is the 'energy of compassion'?

Astus wrote:

Bodhicitta is the will to enlightenment, the aspiration to buddhahood, so it comes at the beginning, not at the end. The energy of compassion is what? Do you mean the effort to <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=320928#p320928>?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 23rd, 2017 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Nothing further to seek...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I don't know what! I just know that it is.

Astus wrote:

As an extension to what Malcolm said, it is one of the main points of the buddha-nature teachings that through removing the defilements the buddha qualities appear. In other words, there is nothing else needed but getting rid of the afflictions.

"It is only this One Mind that is Buddha; there is no distinction between Buddhas and sentient beings. However, sentient beings are attached to characteristics and seek outside themselves. Seeking it, they lose it even more. Sending the Buddha in search of the Buddha, grasping the mind with the mind, they may exhaust themselves in striving for an entire eon but will never get it. They do not understand that if they cease their thoughts and end their thinking, the Buddha will automatically be present."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 13; highlight added)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 23rd, 2017 at 11:30 PM

Title: Re: Vipasyana Meditation

Content:

Dharmasherab said:

I want to know about the Vipasyana meditation methods used in Mahayana as well as in Vajrayana (but not Theravada).

Astus wrote:

Zhiyi:

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm

<http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-9843-9780824873776.aspx>

Madhyamaka:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=qylyQHr3AacC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=y6HzxLUC7rQC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=pbQDAAAACAAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=vJVDCUcwirgC>

Mahamudra:

https://books.google.com/books?id=_C8qAwAAQBAJ

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Ty-Kp4co9-wC>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=lKd9CAAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=rUjUBgAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 24th, 2017 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: Dharma Wheel Heavy Weights

Content:

CedarTree said:

Only one thing you mentioned was unclear to me and I would like you to explore it a bit.

"This bamboo is long, that one is short". I have an idea but I rather you show me your understanding and the origin of this teaching.

Astus wrote:

Master Yunmen quoted Dharma teacher [Seng] Zhao's words:

"All individual entities (dharma) are without difference — [yet] one must not stretch the duck's [legs] and shorten the crane's, level the peaks and fill up the valleys, and then think that they are not different!"

(Record of Yunmen, p 193, tr App)

"Within and without (the cosmos) is calm. Co-operation has ceased.

Thus, restoring the union, the Sage withdraws into silence.

Therefore a sutra says: 'Dharma do not differ (from each other)'. Does it tell us 'to stretch the legs of the duck and cut short those of the crane', to pull down the mountains and fill up the valleys in order to smooth out life? If only you can understand that the diverse is of the relative order then it loses its diversity. Therefore a Sutra says: 'Marvellous, World-honoured One, taking your stand in oneness you say that the dharma vary'. It also says: 'Prajna and the dharma are neither one nor two'. This we may believe."

(Chao Lun, ch 3, p 79, tr Liebenthal)

"He who holds to True Rightness does not lose the original form of his inborn nature. So for him, joined things are not webbed toes; things forking off are not superfluous fingers; the long is never too much; the short is never too little. 9 The duck's legs are short, but to stretch them out would worry him; the crane's legs are long, but to cut them down would make him sad. What is long by nature needs no cutting off; what is short by nature needs no stretching. That would be no way to get rid of worry."

(Zhuangzi, ch 8, p 61, tr Watson)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 24th, 2017 at 1:24 AM

Title: Re: Vipasyana Meditation

Content:

Dharmasherab said:

Seems very useful.

Astus wrote:

Here are some good classical works containing vipasyana instructions that are available online:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>

http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_T0614_SutraConcentration_2009_0.pdf

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 24th, 2017 at 4:33 AM

Title: Re: Vipasyana Meditation

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

Śāriputra asked, "The inconceivable samādhi cannot be attained?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "The conceivable samādhi has an appearance that can be captured while the inconceivable samādhi has no appearance to be captured. All sentient beings have attained the inconceivable samādhi. Why? Because all mental appearances are

not the [true] mind. Therefore, the [mental] appearances of all sentient beings and the appearance of the inconceivable samādhi are the same, not different.”

It is the interpretation of the latter part that I am wondering on: "Because all mental appearances are not the [true] mind." I am wondering about "not" and "[true]" here.

Astus wrote:

舍利弗言：「不可思議定不可得耶？」

文殊師利言：「思議定者，是可得相；不可思議定者，不可得相。一切眾生實成就不思議定。何以故？一切心相即非心故，是名不思議定。是故一切眾生相及不思議三昧相，等無分別。」

(http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T08n0232_002#0729c08)

As the square brackets suggest, the word "true" was added by the translator, but it does not really belong there. The inconceivable samadhi cannot be attained (不可得), because it has no characteristics (相 - this is translated by Rulu as "appearance") that could be grasped (得 - attained, Rulu: captured). Sentient beings have the inconceivable samadhi, because they are empty, as was discussed in the first fascicle (T232p726b23-c19). Similarly, thoughts (心相 - Rulu: mental appearances) are mindless/inconceivable (非心 - acitta, acintya), in other words: empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 25th, 2017 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Astus wrote:

You need a teacher for what? If it is information, they are all found in books. If realisation, how can anyone make you realise anything?

As far as the Nikayas go, it is not a teacher (acariya) one needs, but good friendship (kalyanamittata).

"And what is good friendship? Here, in whatever village or town a clansman lives, he associates with householders or their sons—whether young but of mature virtue, or old and of mature virtue—who are accomplished in faith, virtuous behavior, generosity, and wisdom; he converses with them and engages in discussions with them. Insofar as they are accomplished in faith, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in faith; insofar as they are accomplished in virtuous behavior, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in virtuous behavior; insofar as they are accomplished in generosity, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in generosity; insofar as they are accomplished in wisdom, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in wisdom. This is called good friendship."

(AN 8.54, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi,

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.054.nara.html#friendship>; see also:

https://accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html)

As for the Mahayana:

"Bodhisattvas on the beginning level, intent on practising prajna
To seek unsurpassed bodhi, get close to good and wise friends.
How to obtain great wisdom and merit? Should be from prajnaparamita.
That is how all buddhadharma and merit are attained from good friends."
(Ratnagunasamcayagatha 15.1-2, tr from http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2012/T0229_,08,0680a28.html)

"The mind not being intimidated and such,
Those who teach the lack of nature and so on,
And abandoning the antagonistic factors of these
Means being mentored in every way."
(Abhisamayalamkara 1.36, tr Brunnhölzl)

Both the Astasahasrika (PP8K) and the AA commentaries explain that the good friend is the one who teaches prajnaparamita, in particular that all appearances are empty, while the bad friends are those who teach hinayana. See: PP8K 1.2, 15.1, 22.1, 30.1; and Gone Beyond, vol 1, p 282-283; Groundless Paths, p 123-124, 422.

The Diamond Sutra gives the following summary of who teaches what:

"The dharmas spoken by the Tathagata cannot be grasped and cannot be spoken. They are neither dharmas nor no dharmas. And why? Unconditioned dharmas distinguish worthy sages."

and

"all Buddhas and all Buddhas' Dharma of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi come forth from this Sutra. Subhuti, the Buddhadharmas spoken are no Buddhadharmas."
(ch 7 and 8, in www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/prajparagen2.pdf, p 102, 106)

Huineng explains that like this:

"Good friends, if you wish to enter into the profound dharmadhatu and the samadhi of prajna, you must cultivate the practice of prajna and recite the Diamond Sutra. Thus will you attain seeing the nature. You should realize that the merits of this sutra are immeasurable and unlimited. They are clearly praised within the sutra; I cannot explain them fully here. This teaching is the Supreme Vehicle: it is preached for those of great wisdom, it is preached for those of superior capacities. Those of small capacities and small wisdom who hear it will generate doubt."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

He also says,

"You should each contemplate your minds and each see the fundamental nature. If you do not become enlightened by yourself, then you must seek a great spiritual compatriot,

someone who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle, to indicate directly the correct path for you. This spiritual compatriot will have a great background and will, so to speak, lead you to the attainment of seeing the nature. This is because the spiritual compatriot is able to manifest the causes of all the good dharmas. All the buddhas of the three periods of time and the twelve divisions of the canon are fundamentally and naturally immanent within the natures of people, but if you cannot become enlightened yourself, you must seek a spiritual compatriot's instructions in order to see [the nature]. If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking — don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself. This is not the case! Why? Within your own minds there is a spiritual compatriot [who will help you] become enlightened by yourself! If you activate the false and deluded, you will become all mixed up with false thoughts. Although some external spiritual compatriots may be teachers, they cannot save you. If you activate the correct and true and contemplate with prajna, in a single instant [all your] false thoughts will be completely eradicated. If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 33)

There are people who believe that a teacher is needed to point to the nature of mind and transmit the Dharma. However, the nature of mind cannot be shown, nor is there a Dharma that could be transmitted.

"In my view there is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no past, no present. Anything attained was already attained—no time is needed. There is nothing to practice, nothing to realize, nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Throughout all time there is no other dharma than this. 'If one claims there's a dharma surpassing this, I say that it's like a dream, like a phantasm.' This is all I have to teach."

(Record of Linji, p 12-13, tr Sasaki)

What do teachers give then?

Yaoshan hadn't been to the lecture hall for a long time.

The temple supervisor said, "We've all been looking forward to your giving us a lecture."

Yaoshan said, "Ring the bell."

As soon as the monks had gathered for the lecture, Yaoshan got up from his seat and went back to the abbot's quarters. The supervisor followed and asked why he didn't say anything, since he had agreed to speak to the monks.

Yaoshan said, "They have teachers to teach them sutras and they have teachers to teach Abidhamma, so what is there left for me to do?"

(Record of Yaoshan, in Soto Zen Ancestors in China, p 63)

So Yunmen made it clear:

Having entered the Dharma Hall for a formal instruction, the Master said:

"All of you who come and go for no reason: What are you looking for in [this monastery] here? I only know how to eat and drink and shit. What else would I be good for?"

"You're making pilgrimages all over the place, studying Chan and asking about the Dao."

Let me ask you: What have you managed to learn in all those places? Try presenting that!"

Again, he said: "In the meantime, you cheat the Master in your own house. Is that all right? When you manage to find a little slime on my ass, you lick it off, take it to be your own self, and say: 'I understand Chan, I understand the Dao!' Even if you manage to read the whole Buddhist canon— so what?!"

(Record of Yunmen, p 154, tr App)

And Huanglong explained further:

Huanglong addressed the monks, saying, "Before I came up here to speak there was nothing in my mind. But now that I've come up here there are a lot of questions. I dare to ask you whether the great vehicle of our school is found in such questions and answers. If it were to be found in such speech, then doesn't the scriptural canon have questions and answers? Yet it is said that [the way of Zen] is transmitted outside of the scriptural teachings. It is transmitted to individuals who are great Dharma vessels. If it can't be found in words, then even if you ask all sorts of excellent questions, what, after all, is the point of doing so? ... If you want to talk about it, then you can say that it can't be realized through mystical perception or self-perfection. Nor may it be said to be a result of some all-encompassing understanding. The buddhas of the three worlds have only said you must know yourself. In the entire canon of scripture this can't be explained. ... Those who leave home must have heroic resolve, cut off the two heads, and practice in seclusion in the house of the self. Afterward they must throw open the door, get rid of the possessions of that self, and then receive and meet whatever comes, giving aid to any in need. In this way the deep compassion of Buddha can be in some small measure repaid. Aside from acting in this manner, there is nothing else."

Huanglong then struck the meditation platform with his whisk and left the hall.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 403-404)

The story of Dongshan is a good example:

Once, when Yün-yen was making some straw sandals, Tung-shan approached him and said, "I would like to have the Master's eyes."

Yün-yen said, "Where have yours gone?"

"Liang-chieh has never had them," replied Tung-shan.

Yün-yen said, "Supposing you did have them, where would you put them?"

Tung-shan said nothing. Yün-yen said, "Isn't it the eye that desires eyes?"

"It is not my eye," replied Tung-shan.

"Get out!" thundered Yün-yen.

(Record of Dongshan, p 26-27, tr Powell)

And later when asked about Yunyan:

Because the Master was conducting a memorial feast for Yün-yen, a monk asked, "What teaching did you receive while you were at Yün-yen's place?"

The Master said, "Although I was there, I didn't receive any teaching."

"Since you didn't actually receive any teaching, why are you conducting this memorial?"

asked the monk.

"Why should I turn my back on him?" replied the Master.

"If you began by meeting Nan-ch'üan, why do you now conduct a memorial feast for Yün-yen?" asked the monk.

"It is not my former master's virtue or Buddha Dharma that I esteem, only that he did not make exhaustive explanations for me," replied the Master.

(p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 25th, 2017 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

One cannot get Dharma from black marks on white paper.

Astus wrote:

I think a good number of sutras disagree with that.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 25th, 2017 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Vipasyana Meditation

Content:

Anonymous X said:

And, why does no one here refer to the Mahasatipattana Sutta for instruction in Vipassana practice?

Astus wrote:

Because it's not a Mahayana scripture.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 25th, 2017 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Wall Gazing

Content:

Anonymous X said:

Vipassana, via wise reflection, seems to be much more than this. Not only are thoughts empty, not self, all experience is seen to be dependently originated, unstable, and unsatisfying. This manifests the 4 Noble Truths in its entirety, I think.

Astus wrote:

Dharmas are merely thought products. Hence seeing the emptiness of thoughts is seeing the emptiness of everything.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 26th, 2017 at 2:18 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

No they don't.

Astus wrote:

"Those who grasp at emptiness slander the Sutras by maintaining that written words have no use. Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/PlatformSutra_DharmaJewel.pdf, ch 10,, p 383-384, tr BTTS)

"Wherever this sutra is taught, read, recited, copied, or wherever it is to be found, one should build a seven-jeweled stupa of great height and width and richly ornamented. There is no need to put a relic inside. Why is this? Because the Tathāgata is already in it."

...

"The bodhisattvas are exactly like this. If they have not yet heard, understood, or been able to practice this Lotus Sutra, they should be known as people who are still far away from highest, complete enlightenment. If they hear, understand, contemplate, and are able to practice it, they realize that they are certainly nearing highest, complete enlightenment. Why is this? Because the highest, complete enlightenment of all the bodhisattvas is within this sutra. This sutra opens the gate of skillful means and reveals the marks of the truth."

(Lotus Sutra, ch 10, BDK ed, p 161, 162)

Mañjuśrī said: "In the ocean I always expounded only the Lotus Sutra."

Then Prajñākūṭa questioned Mañjuśrī, saying: "This sutra is profound and subtle. It is a jewel among sutras and rare in the world. If sentient beings diligently strive to practice this sutra, will they immediately become buddhas or not?"

Mañjuśrī answered: "Yes, they will."

(ch 12, p 183)

"if there are sentient beings who hear this sutra and who devoutly understand, accept and maintain, and read and recite it, they will definitely attain this Dharma, and will not doubt it. How much more so if they cultivate according to its explanation!"

...

"This sutra extensively explains the inconceivable anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi of the buddhas of the past, present, and future. Therefore, heavenly emperor, if good men and women accept and maintain, read and recite, and make offerings to this sutra, that is tantamount to making offerings to the buddhas of the past, present, and future."

(Vimalakīrti Sutra, ch 13, BDK ed, p 171-172)

"Sutras of this type should, during the final period after my nirvana, be circulated

extensively throughout Jambudvīpa by you and others with your numinous power, so [the Dharma] is not cut off."

...

"If in the future there are good men and women who seek the Mahayana, I will make certain that they get hold of such sutras. Using their power of mindfulness, I will cause them to receive and maintain, read and recite, and extensively explain them for others. "World-honored One, if in the latter age there are those able to receive, maintain, read, recite, and explain them for others, one should understand that these will all be established by Maitreya's numinous power."

(ch 14, p 177, 178)

"Those who study this scripture will gain an opening into the true dharma, becoming excellent physicians themselves. You should understand, however, that those who never study it will be blind, lacking eyes of wisdom, their sight clouded by ignorance." (Nirvana Sutra, ch 3, BDK ed, p 105)

"To his disciples the Tathagata teaches in succession the ninefold canon of scriptures so that they may become thoroughly familiar with that dharma. It is only after this that he teaches the hidden treasury that is the tathāgatagarbha, expounding the Tathagata's permanence for his disciples. The Tathagata expounds the Mahayana scripture, the Great Nirvana Sutra in this way for those who have already made their resolution for awakening as well as for those who have not, thereby creating a karmic cause for bodhi in both, with exception of the icchantikas. Thus, good man, this Mahayana scripture, the Great Nirvana Sutra, is immeasurably, innumerably, and inconceivably rare. You should understand it to be the most skilled of all skilled physicians, foremost and superior, the king among sutras."

(p 294)

"If one hears this sutra or retains even one four-line verse of it, that person will then access the stage of the Buddha's knowledge; one will be able to proselyte sentient beings with appropriate expedients and become the great spiritual mentor (kalyanamitra) of all living things."

(Vajrasamādhi Sutra, ch 1, p 58, tr Buswell)

"If there is a sentient being who keeps this sutra, then in all other sutras he will have nothing more to seek. The dharma of this scripture encodes all dharmas and includes the essentials of all sutras. It is the unifying thread of the dharmas of all these sutras." (p 302)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 26th, 2017 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your citations do not support your point.

Astus wrote:

Hearing is mentioned, yes, next to reading, although the premise in the text is that all sutras were verbally given by Shakyamuni, so even referring to any textual format is contradictory. At the same time, all the sutras exist as scriptures, in written form, and not as memorised speeches, hence the very fact of being able to quote them here supports my point.

Also, hearing doesn't necessarily mean hearing from another. Here is how Asanga/Maitreya describes studying the scriptures:

"The teaching as objective is discovered by the three wisdoms, (born of) learning, (reflection, and meditation, respectively,) when one with faith focuses on its stated meaning (learned) through mental verbalization, when one recognizes the fact that its objective appearance is because of mental verbalization, and when one fixes the mind itself (exclusively) upon the nominal (life systems). And this discovery of the threefold objective is based upon the previously mentioned (three baskets of the teaching)." (Mahayanasutralamkara 11.6-7, p 116-117; ed Thurman)

Mental verbalisation makes it inner hearing, and that is learning. But look at the words of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongming_Yanshou, from the first fascicle of his major work, the Zongjing Lu:

"I now cite the words of the original teacher [Śākyamuni] to train and instruct disciples, encouraging their practice by having them follow his statements; to know the implicit truth [zhong] through reading the Dharma, and not rush around searching for it elsewhere; to personally realize the Buddha's intention." (Albert Welter: Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu, p 249)

"beginners commencing their studies, at a point prior to initiating self-reflection themselves, deny the correct implicit truth [zhengzhong] of the sage's teaching [i.e., the scriptures], what practices will they rely on for their progress? Even if they do not conceive erroneous views themselves, they will still encounter heterodox teachers wherever they go. As a result, I look to the original truth [i.e., the scriptures], because what [other] teachers convey is erroneous." (p 257)

"if one wants to investigate the Buddha-vehicle, one will read extensively from the treasure storehouse [i.e., Buddhist scriptures]. Each and every [scripture] forces one to understand the truth about one's own self; utterance after utterance causes one to mysteriously unite with true mind. One simply should not grasp onto written texts as the highest meaning, forming [artificial] views according to the words. One should directly seek out the message written down in the corpus of Buddhist scriptures, tacitly uniting with the truth that is inherently implicit [benzhong]. At that point, the wisdom that does not depend on any teacher reveals itself, and the way of heavenly truth is no longer obscure.

...

On account of this, realize that the teaching has the power to assist one on the Way [to

awakening]. Those beginning their study of Buddhism should never forget this, even for an instant. I know very clearly that the benefits of Buddhist teaching are immeasurable. That is why I sought out [the sources of Buddhist teaching] and collected them here."
(p258)

Yongming's words agree with what Asanga wrote:

"If one has not yet awakened to suchness in wisdom in regard to conscious construction-only, then how can he infer this understanding? He can do so by reflecting upon the scriptures and by true reasoning."
(Great Vehicle Summary, ch 2, BDK ed, p 39)

Malcolm said:

Without hearing the Dharma from a qualified teacher, one will not understand what one is reading.

Astus wrote:

Unless you mean someone explaining the contents, what difference is there between listening to somebody reading the words aloud, and just reading them for oneself?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 26th, 2017 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Syncretism between different schools/sects of Buddhism

Content:

Dharmasherab said:

As a prospect for the future, the same principles behind the formation of Buddhist syncretic movements like Fo Guang Shan and Rime movement could be used on a larger scale to help mutual understanding and corporation between Mahayana and Theravada.

Astus wrote:

I think FGS and Rime are fairly different. FGS is an actual organisation, while Rime is more a philosophy. The philosophy upheld in FGS is the Humanistic Buddhism of Yinshun, and that itself is not particularly syncretic. There is a still existing misunderstanding about Chinese Buddhism that there were/are distinct schools like in Japan, while it's actually more like various fields of study that people can pursue within the framework of a shared monastic institution.

Among the challenges in establishing Buddhism in a new place, one of the bigger ones is consolidating the monastic system within a society. However, renouncing the worldly life doesn't look like a major concern on this forum for instance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 26th, 2017 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Isn't instruction by the guru fundamental in Vajrayana? The guru embodies the dharma, and unless the student has a relationship with the guru, then their own obstructions will always undo whatever effort they try to make.

Astus wrote:

Empowerment is fundamental. After that it is for the individual to put in the necessary effort.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 27th, 2017 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

conebeckham said:

you cannot take refuge or any sort of personal liberation vows from a book, not to mention bodhisattva vows, in any extant lineage, from a book either

Astus wrote:

"As far as receiving the lay precepts is concerned, you can visit this temple if you have the means and the capacity to do so. Otherwise, why get so fixated on travel? All you need is to have an earnest, sincere mind, repent your transgressions before your home altar for seven consecutive days and express the wish to receive the precepts by yourself. ...

The most important thing is to do so in an utterly sincere frame of mind – in which case, the benefits and virtues of receiving the precepts are the same whether you do so by yourself or through a monk or nun.

You should not think that receiving the precepts in such a manner is not in accord with the Dharma. You should know that the method described above follows the wise teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha in the Brahma Net Sutra."

(Pure-Land Zen, Zen Pure-Land: Letters from Patriarch Yin Kuang, p 43-44)

Brahma's Net Sutra:

"If, my disciples, after my passing, you want with a sincere mind to receive the bodhisattva precepts, you should take the vows on your own in front of a buddha or bodhisattva."

Taehyeon's Commentary:

"Carrying out the reception of precepts on one's own is done as is explained in roll 41 of the Bodhisattvabhūmi-śāstra. As for "[No teacher] within a thousand li": If you receive the precepts on your own like this, won't your merit will be weak? No. Because even if there is a lack of present conditions, your mind is intense. As it says in roll 53 of the Yogācārabhūmiśāstra: "Whether receiving the precepts on your own or receiving them from someone else, if your sincerity in maintaining them is equal, there is no difference in merit.""

(Exposition of the Sutra of Brahma's Net, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 11, p 360, 362)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 27th, 2017 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

The main point however is that one cannot receive the Dharma by reading books. One must hear the Dharma from living teachers.

Astus wrote:

"Of course if you have someone to teach the texts to you, that is best. But even if you do not, you should read them and rely upon them as the guru of the dictates of the sugatas. By studying these texts you will actually learn things that will help your experience of meditation, chiefly by comparing what you have experienced to what is described in the text.

...

If you read these texts with the motivation that you are doing so in order to help your practical experience of meditation, then you will discover a great deal in them that will be helpful in just that way. You will come across something that will reveal a point that you have been unable to understand or unable to apply, and you will all of a sudden be certain saying, "Ah, this is how it is!" That is actually receiving the pointing out from the guru who is the dictates of the Sugatas.

Great masters of the past said that dharma texts are "the teacher who never gets mad at you," [laughter] because your relationship with the book is entirely up to you. For example, if you do not understand something and you read it again and again and again, unlike a teacher who might get upset at being asked the same question a hundred times, the book will never get angry at you for reading the same passage again for a hundred times. If while studying the texts you all of a sudden run out of time and have to put the book away abruptly and quickly, the book will never get angry at you for closing it. In that way, this guru who is the dictates of the Sugatas is very convenient to study with and very beneficial to your experience and realization."

(Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche: Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p 157, 158)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 27th, 2017 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

As for the rest of his statement, he is merely being kind. But it is not to be taken very seriously.

Astus wrote:

He discusses the "dictates of the Sugatas" at an earlier section, in the context of the four types of guru as a prerequisite for mahamudra.

"In short, the basic instructions of meditation cannot be gained simply through reading books, or [by figuring it out by oneself, or from unqualified teachers without authentic lineage.]

However, while relying upon the root guru, the personal guru who holds the lineage, one comes also to rely upon the second guru, which is the dictates of the Sugatas, or the teachings of the Buddha [and other realized beings]. While one bases one's practice upon the oral instructions of one's root guru, one augments this by studying the teachings of the Buddha, the commentaries on his teachings by the great mahasiddhas, and the texts of instruction of the lineage of practice and accomplishment. Through augmenting the oral instructions of one's guru in this way, one clarifies and reinforces them by relying upon the written teachings of other Buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is therefore important to actively pursue the study of dharma texts."

(p 25-26)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 27th, 2017 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

As I said, you cannot learn the Dharma from books. You need a teacher.

Astus wrote:

If it is as you say, what is the role of all the scriptures, treatises, etc.?

Here's what Ven. Shengyan said:

"First, by reading the scriptures we can realize mind, or "illuminate the mind." When we engage in sutra recitation, we make use of the sutra as a mirror to reflect back the reciting mind. This mind, prior to practice, is full of darkness and ignorance. We take the sutra as a mirror by which we can model our behavior, until our minds fuse with the sutra, and we directly realize the nature of our minds.

Second, sutra recitation helps us to understand the meaning behind the sutras. Many recitations help clarify the meaning. When I was a novice, I asked my master the meaning behind the scriptures, and all he said was, "Just keep reading, and you'll understand." Now I realize that complete familiarity with the sutras will naturally elicit the meaning behind them.

I tell this to my disciples in Taiwan, but my monks and nuns refuse to understand. They ask, "Why don't you explain the sutra first? Then it will be easier to read and memorize."

Third, sutra recitation can be samadhi or one-pointed concentration practice. I teach my disciples to use their ears to listen while they follow the chanting and not think about the meaning. Use the mind to be fully aware of hearing as well as of one's own recitation."

(<http://chancenter.org/cmc/1996/05/26/reading-sutras-as-a-spiritual-practice/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 27th, 2017 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

I already explained this to you.

Astus wrote:

Could you point to the post in this thread about it? I could not find it.

Malcolm said:

Reading is part of reflecting on the Dharma, the second wisdom. All those texts you mention, however, are meant to be heard first.

Astus wrote:

That looks like a concept that exists only in the Tibetan tradition. So, for instance, if anyone wanted to study the Golden Light Sutra, they could go to <https://fpmt.org/education/teachings/sutras/golden-light-sutra/> and then they "must listen to the entire sutra in order to receive the full transmission from Lama Zopa Rinpoche." Then, once hours of Tibetan chanting has been heard, they can go and read the text in English.

Is there any reason for this system?

Does it also work in Chinese? Just because one can listen to not only two hours of the <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOFIjdLI-M0>, but also 8 hours of the https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7iF_lU1gJI, 9.5 hours of the <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erYePBILVP4>, and 50+ hours of the 80 fascicle <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpJd3xvoJYHdZ3T1oJuwBVuexAr7u7TcB>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

conebeckham said:

Find me a Buddha who reached nirvana without a teacher.

Astus wrote:

Being a buddha - aside from Vajrayana perhaps - means awakening on one's own, without a teacher, hence one of the names of buddhahood is wisdom without a teacher (無師智), also called self-made wisdom (自然智).

Shakyamuni told this to Upaka, the first person to meet after his enlightenment: "All-abandoning, released in the ending of craving: having fully known on my own, to whom should I point as my teacher? I have no teacher, and one like me can't be found." (<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html>). And there is also this

contemplation of the Buddha in another sutta: "in this world with its devas, Maras, & Brahmas, in this generation with its brahmins and contemplatives, its royalty and common-folk, I do not see another brahmin or contemplative more consummate in virtue than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring and respecting him" (<https://accessinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn06/sn06.002.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Losal Samten said:

Without empowerment in Akanishta Gandavyuha from the buddhas, a bodhisattva can never pass beyond the 10th bhumi.

Astus wrote:

Bodhisattvas learn from countless buddhas. But who was the teacher of Siddhartha Gautama?

"Which teacher did you apply to for teaching?"

[The Tathāgata] answered, "I have no teacher nor any teaching. I am unsurpassed. I have my own insight into the very profound Law. I have obtained what others could not obtain."

(Buddhacarita 15.5-6, BDK ed, p 107)

"Venerable Gautama, with whom did you practice religion?"

Monks, the Thus-gone One replied to the Ājīvika with this verse:

"I do not have any teacher;

There is no one like me.

I alone am the perfect Buddha,

Cool and without any flaws."

(<http://read.84000.co/#UT22084-046-001/chapter%2026.10-11>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 4:54 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Astus wrote:

also called self-made wisdom (自然智).

Admin_PC said:

Interesting, because that's not the only way to use that term. 自然 (Cn = "ziran", Jp = "jinen") is used (esp by Shinran) for "naturalness" or "spontaneous" - not anything "self-made". It's defined

<https://books.google.com/books?id=hQ6lGvyMZMMC&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=%E8%87%AA%E7%84%B6+one%27s+own+nature&source=bl&ots=TXWlR->

Kx0Z&sig=HqhZBR_DF2zfJv-
jHnFJbsWfOGY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwir36igsN_XAhWL6YMKHUuVARkQ6AEIOjA
E#v=onepage&q=%E8%87%AA%E7%84%B6%20one%27s%20own%20nature&f=false:
ziran is doing what comes naturally, out of one's own nature.
So in that sense, it could either be thought of in the sense of "spontaneous wisdom" or
"wisdom of one's own nature".

Astus wrote:

Ziran 自然 as spontaneity or naturalness is a non-Buddhist/Daoist interpretation. In
Buddhism it is a translation for svayambhū and 自然智 is svayambhū-jñāna. The two
terms (無師智, 自然智) are combined in the
http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T12n0374_018#0468a12 as 無師自悟 - teacherless self-
enlightenment.

Zongmi criticised spontaneity (自然) in his Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity (tr Peter N.
Gregory; http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T45n1886_001#0708b09):

"Again, their claim that the myriad things are all spontaneously engendered and
transformed and that it is not a matter of causes and conditions means that everything
should be engendered and transformed [even] where there are no causes and
conditions. That is to say, stones might engender grass, grass might engender humans,
humans engender beasts, and so forth. Further, since they might engender without
regard to temporal sequence and arise without regard to due season, the immortal
would not depend on an elixir, the great peace would not depend on the sage and the
virtuous, and benevolence and righteousness would not depend on learning and
practice. For what use, then, did Lao- tzu, Chuang- tzu, the Duke of Chou, and
Confucius establish their teachings as invariable norms?"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

All kinds of buddhas.

Astus wrote:

I specifically asked Siddhartha, as within the context of that life.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 6:00 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

The question is inapplicable to nirmanakāyas.

Astus wrote:

How so? The whole life of a nirmanakaya is for the education of beings. So it is not some accident that Siddhartha had no teacher, that one of the primary characteristics of a buddha is that it is he who turns the wheel of Dharma in a time when there is no Dharma.

“The Tathagata, bhikkhus, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is the originator of the path unarisen before, the producer of the path unproduced before, the declarer of the path undeclared before. He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, the one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become possessed of it afterwards.

“This, bhikkhus, is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the Tathagata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, and a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom.”
(SN 22.58, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi, p 901)

"the Buddha is omniscient, independent, without a teacher; he preaches the Dharma without having heard it from another."

...

"The Buddha, who is omniscient (sarvajñā), independent and without a teacher, cannot say: "Thus have I heard." If the Buddha said: "Thus have I heard", the objection could be made that the Buddha did not know the thing [before having heard it]."

(Nagarjuna: MPPS, vol 1, ch 3, tr Lamotte-Chodron, p 82, 87)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is inapplicable because while the Buddha demonstrated the play of attaining buddhahood, in fact he did not attain buddhahood in that lifetime.

Astus wrote:

And the demonstration had a purpose, didn't it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

However, the Buddha taught it was necessary to rely on a teacher.

Astus wrote:

Necessary/needed and beneficial/recommended are not the same.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Admin_PC said:

I'm not exactly sure what Yongmi's on about, but I seriously don't see how "self-made wisdom" even fits here. That would mean it was something fabricated.

Astus wrote:

The problem Zongmi highlights is the assumption that there is such a thing as causeless becoming. The Ratnagotravibhaga explains this buddha quality in this way:

"Being realized by oneself.

It is cognizable without any help of others;"

(RGV 1.7ab, tr Takasaki, p 156)

And the commentary (p 157):

"Thus, not having heard the Buddhahood, which is a quite marvellous and unthinkable sphere, from somebody else, but having perfectly cognized its unutterable nature 'by one self', i.e. by means of self-born knowledge which needs no teacher"

Jamgon Kongtrul's commentary (Buddha Nature, p 104):

"Since it must be realized by means of self-sprung primordial wisdom being self-aware, it is not a realization due to outer conditions such as other people's utterances and so on."

So the reason I translated it as "self-made" (cf. "self-generated" in Lotus Sutra, ch 3, BDK ed, p 61) is because it refers to a buddha attaining it on his own, not because it just appears for no reason at all, since if that were the case, buddhahood would be a random event.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Necessary, not just beneficial.

Astus wrote:

The quotes you provided talked of the benefits and recommended having a good friend. Do you perhaps have some sources stating it as a necessity?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 28th, 2017 at 11:42 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Admin_PC said:

At the same time, one of the listed synonyms is 無功用智.

...

So I imagine the full nuance is somewhere between cause-less & gained directly through one's own struggle. Wisdom that manifests naturally through the ripening of original vows & practices - with no direct, intentional exertion.

Astus wrote:

The definition in RGV (tr Takasaki, p 157) is: " It is free from efforts [anābhoga / 自然] because all dualistic views [prapañca / 戲論] and false discriminations [vikalpa / 虛妄分別] have ceased to exist [upaśānta / 寂靜]." And it is also used in the context of buddha activity: "Thus, as being Tathāgata, though it is immutable and of the characteristic of non-activity, the whole action of the Perfectly Enlightened One proceeds without any effort, ceaselessly and uninterruptedly as far as the world exists."

So, the sense of manifesting naturally because of past efforts applies to the second part, however, even there the absence of discrimination is a key factor.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 29th, 2017 at 12:29 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

The quotes I provided are imperatives.

Astus wrote:

Imperatives are what one should do, it is the recommended way. A necessity, a need, is somewhat stronger and more restrictive.

"If one should find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behavior, resolute,
having overcome all obstacles, one should
live with him, satisfied and mindful.

But if one does not find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behavior, resolute,
like a king who has abandoned a conquered realm,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

Surely, we praised the excellence of companionship:
one should resort to companions one's equal or better.
Not obtaining these, as one who eats blamelessly

one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn."
(Snp 1.3, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi, p 163)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 29th, 2017 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is talking about associates, not teachers. It is therefore irrelevant.

Astus wrote:

The word translated as companion (sahāya) is a synonym for friend (mitta), as it's shown clearly in the same poem a few stanzas later where the "evil companion" (pāpaṃ sahāyaṃ) is opposed to the "eminent friend" (mittaṃ uḷāraṃ). There are also the Sigalovada Sutta (DN i.186) and the Meghiya Sutta (AN 9.3 / iv.357) where the two words are exchangeable.

"One should avoid an evil companion,
who shows what is harmful, one settled in
unrighteousness.
One should not freely associate
with one who is intent and heedless;
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

One should resort to the learned, a bearer of Dhamma,
an eminent friend gifted with ingenuity.
Having known the benefits and removed doubt,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn."
(Snp 1.3, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi, p 164-165)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 29th, 2017 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, so what? You are still citing passages about what kind of associates one should have. Thus, they are entirely besides the point.

Astus wrote:

They are about the good friend one should have, or as you translated, the virtuous mentor, what is often simplified to the word teacher. Furthermore, the point that is still left unaddressed is that a recommendation is not a requirement.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 29th, 2017 at 9:23 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Nirvana Sūtra states:

Son of a good family, all sentient beings are just the same — without serving a virtuous mentor, they will not perceive the nature of the Buddha.

And:

Those who do not know how to serve the virtuous mentor will not know the very secret tathāgatgarbha.

And:

One who does not rely on a virtuous mentor is a person who has not entered into the teaching of the Bhagavan Buddha, called "one with perverted craving." Such a person cannot be cured by the Bhagavan Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Yes, that's more along the line of what I thought of as a requirement, a necessity.

"By not being able to get close to a good spiritual advisor, despite the fact [that each of them] has the buddha-nature, they cannot see it.

...

Like the athlete in the story who bemoaned the loss of his jewel when it was in fact inside his body, living beings are in a similar situation. Because they do not know how to approach a good spiritual advisor, they remain unaware of the hidden treasury that is the tathāgatagarbha, and they study and practice the doctrine of nonself. This is analogous to the mundane person who asserts the existence of self but does not understand the true nature of self. My disciples may also be like this. Because they do not know how to approach a good spiritual advisor, they study and put into practice the doctrine of nonself but they, too, do not understand the point of [the doctrine of] nonself. And if they do not understand the true nature of nonself, then how could they understand the true nature of self?"

(Nirvana Sutra, BDK ed, vol 1, p 231)

Apparently the Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra has significantly more to say about teachers than the Surangamasamadhi or even the Nirvana Sutra.

"If this bodhisattva regards his teacher as he would regard the Buddha, he will master the meditation quickly. If he does not honor his good teacher, if he is disrespectful to his good teacher and imposes upon him, then even if he studies this meditation for a long time, keeps it for a long time, and practices it for a long time, if he does not honor his good teacher he will quickly lose it. ...

This bodhisattva should regard as a buddha whatever monk, nun, layman, or laywoman from whom he hears this meditation, and he should venerate the place where he hears the meditation."

(BDK ed, p 46; also on p 29)

The sutra also has advice for lay men and women (p 50-52), stating that "he should always have great love for his good teacher" and a "laywoman should always honor her good teachers", but there are also other things they should do. A layman: "he should not drink wine or give it to other people to drink; he should not have intercourse with women—neither should he himself do so, nor should he advise other people to do so; he should not have any affection for his wife and children; he should not long for sons and daughters; he should not long for property; he should always think longingly of abandoning [household life] and undertaking the life of an ascetic; he should always maintain the eightfold fast and for the duration of the fast he should always keep the fast at a Buddhist monastery;" And a laywoman: "she should not take any notice of lucky days; she should not be flirtatious; she should not be unrestrained; and she should not have desires."

Further clarifications on the requirement to have a teacher and the service provided to them:

"they should first honor and serve their good teachers and regard them as buddhas, and only then should they recite this meditation."
(p 85)

"Bhadrapāla, any bodhisattvas who, hearing of this meditation, wish to go to that place and hear and strive for this meditation, should serve their teachers for ten years or one hundred years; they should make them offerings and venerate them totally. These bodhisattvas should not be self serving but should follow their teachers' teaching. They should always be grateful to their teachers."
(p 97)

"Setting aside these offerings, which are simply not worth mentioning, you should always cut off your own flesh and offer it to the good teacher; you should never begrudge him your person, much less anything else. You should serve the good teacher just as a slave serves his master. Those who seek this meditation should know this. Having mastered this meditation they should hold fast to it and always be grateful to their teachers."
(p 101-102)

Malcolm said:

As I said, it is an imperative, not an option.

conebeckham said:

Im-per-a-tive.

Adjective 1.Of vital importance; crucial. 2. Giving an authoritative command; imperative.

Noun An essential or Urgent thing.

Sounds necessary to me.

Astus wrote:

The difference I mean is like between "do not be lustful" and "no lustful mind can attain

absorption", or in this case: "one should have a teacher" and "cannot be done without a teacher".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 30th, 2017 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: keep up (meditative) awareness in anethaesia

Content:

Dolma said:

keep up (stay in) (meditative) awareness when getting an anethaesia (narcosis) during an operation.

Astus wrote:

If it is something to be maintained, it is conditioned. If it is conditioned, it is impermanent and empty. One might maintain whatever state of mind one imagines, but the next moment it is gone anyway, and then who can say whether it was real at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 30th, 2017 at 3:26 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Bristollad said:

They just seem like instructions and reasons for the instructions, not instructions and recommendations

Astus wrote:

There can be various reasons for an instruction. To establish the necessity of something, other options have to be excluded.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 30th, 2017 at 5:20 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Bristollad said:

I still don't understand the distinction you are trying to draw.

Astus wrote:

A common instruction is to renounce worldly life, and even to leave communal life and stay in an isolated place. It does not mean that everyone has to become a hermit, or that everyone has to leave their home, even when those conditions are considered beneficial on the path. For instance, here are some strong words from Dogen:

"None has succeeded to the right action of the Buddha-Dharma, and none has received the authentic transmission of the great truth of the Buddha-Dharma, without leaving family life. Notwithstanding scant pursuit of the truth by laypeople as upāsakas and

upāsikās, there is no past example of one arriving at the truth. When we arrive at the truth, we inevitably leave family life. How can people who are not able to leave family life succeed to the position of a buddha? Nevertheless, for the last two or three hundred years in the great kingdom of Song, people calling themselves priests of the Zen sect have habitually said, "Pursuit of the truth by a layman and pursuit of the truth by one who has left family life are just the same." They are a tribe of people who have become dogs, for the sole purpose of making the filth and urine of laypeople into their food and drink. Sometimes they say to kings and their ministers, "The mind in conducting the myriad affairs of state is just the mind of patriarchs and buddhas, other than which there is no mind at all." Kings and ministers, never having discerned right preaching and right Dharma, delightedly bestow on them gifts such as the titles of master. The monks who speak such words are Devadattas. In order that they might feed upon tears and spit, they produce childish and demented talk like this. They are deplorable. They are not the kindred of the Seven Buddhas. They are demons and animals."
(Sanjuichi-bon-bodai-bunpo, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 4, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 30th, 2017 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

No teacher, no path.

Astus wrote:

So it is stated clearly for Vajrayana.

"Entering the door to the teachings of Secret Mantra Vajrayana depends upon two things: ripening and liberation. Unless you first obtain the ripening empowerments, you are not authorized to hear even a single verse of the tantras, statements and instructions. (Unauthorized) people who engage in expounding on and listening to the tantras will not only fail to receive blessings; they will create immense demerit from divulging the secrecy of these teachings."
(Tsele Natsok Rangdrol: Empowerment, p 15)

"The door to Secret Mantra is empowerment that brings maturity.

The generation and perfection stages both bring freedom.

Observance of samaya is the favorable condition.

These three define the path of Mantra, faultless and supreme.

Without reception of empowerment,

No attainment can there be,

For that would be like wanting ghee from pressing sand.

And though one strives in teaching, learning, meditation,

One will go to hell.

While those who have empowerment

Are the Buddhas heirs."

(Jigme Lingpa: Treasury of Precious Qualities, 10.14-15, in vol 2, p 8)

But is there anything like that in the sutras and treatises? Are Abhidharma, Pramana, Madhyamaka, or Yogacara bound to a teacher as Tantra is?

For instance, Jamgon Kongtrul writes in the Treasury of Knowledge (Buddhist Ethics, p 41-42):

"There are countless scriptural references to the need for working with a spiritual guide. The Condensed Transcendent Wisdom Scripture states: Worthy students who respect spiritual teachers

Should always remain close to learned masters

Because from them the virtues of the wise spring. The Flower Array Scripture states: O child of the universal family, all your virtuous qualities issue from your spiritual guide. You can encounter and receive instructions from one only if you have cultivated merit and wisdom for oceans of eons. Otherwise, to meet a spiritual guide may prove more difficult than coming upon the most rare of gems. Therefore, never tire of honoring your spiritual guide. Given that a student wishes to attain the state of an omniscient buddha, the basic premise is that it is necessary for him or her to work with a spiritual guide. The reason is that the individual does not know how to cultivate merit and wisdom or to clear away obscurations. Examples consistent with this proof are the enlightened ones of the three times. The converse can be illustrated by solitary sages and other examples."

The above is under the heading of "The Necessity of Working with a Spiritual Guide". However, this is not the exclusive necessity as it is for Vajrayana, plus the reasoning contradicts the second quote.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 1st, 2017 at 3:25 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Admin_PC said:

Maybe we should talk about the various nuances of the term "teacher"? Astus touched on it before with discussion of the term "kalyanamitra" vs "guru". There seems like there may be different levels to the term.

Astus wrote:

If the monastic side of things is put aside, then there aren't really any clear cut definitions, even though there seem to be a few general ideas of what a teacher is. So, here's my first take on it:

Primarily, when there is a talk of a personal teacher, that sounds like having a therapist/coach who guides one's every step on the way to enlightenment. Naturally, such a teacher is assumed to be enlightened, who can tell whatever the disciple needs, hence no instruction or request is absurd enough. This vision of the awakened master - a fairly romantic notion - is the basis of guru worship gone wrong.

Secondly, there are the great teachers who one can listen to from the crowd, and their mere presence is a blessing, or at least that's how you can feel. They can talk like as if they were personally answering your deepest questions, and if you have the rare chance of asking, the reply is something that at the same time touches your heart and keeps you contemplating it even years later. These masters keep the system of teaching tours alive.

Thirdly, there are the rather ordinary looking local teachers, who regularly lead the weekly meditation sessions and perhaps give speeches too. There seems to be no reason to think much about them, since they themselves are devoted disciples of a great teacher (who may occasionally visit).

Fourthly, there are those not called teachers at all, but who are the long standing members of the group, and who help with event organisation and guiding the newcomers.

Finally, there can be someone, who is likely just a fellow practitioner, but with whom you can talk to about both mundane and supramundane topics, a person you can spend quality time with, and whom you may actually call a good friend.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 1st, 2017 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

conebeckham said:

There are also personal teachers who have ongoing relationships with students, and who can guide students gradually based on that relationship.

The sort of personal communication that exists in such relationships is the basis by which students are guided. This was frankly the norm in Vajrayana in Tibet, for those who were committed to practice, whether in retreat or not.

Astus wrote:

Is that not the local teacher?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 1st, 2017 at 7:00 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

conebeckham said:

not according to your definition...

These personal teachers are much more than that.

Astus wrote:

It can be extended, or call it another type, etc. I was mostly referring to the requirement

of availability for such a personal teacher you mentioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 1st, 2017 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course there are. There are reams of passages that define the qualities of a kayānamitra. The terms guru and kalayānamitra are intimately connected in Mahāyāna Sūtras.

Astus wrote:

The reason I mentioned the exclusion of the monastic side is because it seems most of the kalyanamitras are within a renounced environment. Also, what types of good friends would you list?

"Great enlightening beings have ten kinds of spiritual friends. What are they? Spiritual friends who cause them to persist in the determination for enlightenment; spiritual friends who cause them to generate roots of goodness; spiritual friends who cause them to practice the ways of transcendence; spiritual friends who enable them to analyze and explain all truths; spiritual friends who enable them to develop all sentient beings; spiritual friends who enable them to attain definitive analytic and expository powers; spiritual friends who cause them not to be attached to any world; spiritual friends who cause them to cultivate practice tirelessly in all ages; spiritual friends who establish them in the practice of Universal Good; spiritual friends who introduce them to the reaches of knowledge of all buddhas. These are the ten."

(Flower Ornament Scripture, p 1027)

"Now, one who has resolved to begin practice and who desires to cultivate calming-and-insight must first fulfill five conditions related to outward circumstances. The first is the requirement that one maintain purity in practice of the moral precepts [as a bhikshu/ni].

...

The fifth [of the five prerequisite conditions] requires that one draw near to good spiritual friends. Good spiritual friends are of three types:

1)

[Externally-Protective Good Spiritual Friends]

The first is the "externally-protective" good spiritual friend who provides necessary provisions, makes offerings, and is well able to take care of the practitioner's needs, doing so in a fashion which precludes any mutual disturbance.

2)

[Identical-Practice Good Spiritual Friends]

The second is the "identical-practice" good spiritual friend together with whom one cultivates a single path. Each provides the other with encouragement and inspiration while refraining from mutual bother or disturbance.

3)

[Instructive Good Spiritual Friends]

The third is the “instructive” good spiritual friend who instructs and delights the practitioner with teachings about the internal and external skillful means associated with the Dharma entryway of dhyāna absorption. This is the conclusion of the summary clarification of the five kinds of necessary prerequisites."

(Zhiyi: Xiaiozhiguan, in Essentials of Buddhist Meditation, p 39, 51)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 4th, 2017 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Yes, you need a teacher.

Content:

Yuren said:

But I disagree if someone wants to make an absolutist statement and say: "it's impossible to make any progress without a personal teacher"

There are always rare exceptions: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mushi-dokugo>

Astus wrote:

That is not the appropriate example, because the need of a teacher discussed here is about starting on the path and not about qualifying as a teacher. And while there were some notable teachers (e.g. Hanshan Deqing, Zibo Zhenke, Hakuin Ekaku, Gyeongheo Seong-U) in the history of Zen who never received certification from another, they were all monks. Although it is another question if a general training could qualify people to master specific methods, as those Zen teachers actually did. Nevertheless, the bigger question at this point is whether it is possible for someone to learn Buddhism only from books (also perhaps audio/video materials) and that way gain correct understanding.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 5th, 2017 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: Did the Buddha teach the Mahayana sutras?

Content:

KiwiNFLFan said:

Maitreya spoke of seven reasons why Mahayana Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha. Does anyone have the text?

Astus wrote:

It's in chapter 1, verse 1 of the Mahayanasutralamkara (The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature, p 7-8).

(The universal vehicle is the word of the buddha) because it was not previously predicted (as a danger); because the (vehicles) began together; because it is beyond the scope (of theology); because it is self-evident; because it must be since it exists, and there would be no such thing if it did not; because it has medicinal power; and because it has more to it than words.

Commentary:

"Because it was not previously predicted;" if the universal vehicle was fabricated by someone at a later time in order to interfere with the true Dharma, why did the Lord not predict it, as he did predict other future dangers?

"Because (the vehicles) began together;" it is obvious that the universal vehicle began at the same time as the disciple vehicle and not later. So why should one imagine it is not the word of the buddha?

"Because it is beyond the range (of theology);" this magnificent and profound Dharma is not within the range of theology (tarkikanam), since such a (Dharma) is not found in the theological treatises of the religious (tīrthikas). It is quite impossible that they should have taught this, since they do not believe in it even (now) when they hear it taught.

"Because it is self-evident;" even if the universal vehicle was taught by some enlightened being other (than Sākyamuni Buddha), that also proves it to be buddha-word, since a buddha is anyone who becomes perfectly enlightened and then teaches such (a vehicle).

"Because it must be since it exists, and there would be no such thing if it did not;" since there is a universal vehicle, its very existence proves it to be the word of the buddha, since there is no other universal vehicle. Or, if there were no universal vehicle, its nonexistence would entail the nonexistence of the disciple vehicle as well. It is unreasonable to insist that the disciple vehicle is the word of the buddha and the universal vehicle is not; for without a buddha-vehicle, buddhas could not originate, (and could not teach any disciples).

"Because it has medicinal power;" if one practices the universal vehicle, it serves as the ground of all nonconceptual intuitions, thereby becoming the medicine for all the mental addictions. It is therefore the word of the buddha.

"Because it has more to it than words;" its import is not just its literal meaning.

Therefore, adherence to its literal meaning cannot support the notion that it is not the word of the buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 6th, 2017 at 1:55 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

The primary Western myth of Zen is that Zen practice and awakening are psychological affairs.

Astus wrote:

Aside from Hakuin's incorporation of breath techniques, do you know of any other Buddhist school in East Asia that did something similar?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 6th, 2017 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Meido said:

The general approach to Zen practice as a yogic or wholly psycho-physical undertaking rather than something purely psychological and intellectual doesn't originate with Hakuin, as I have said before in other threads. The records of early (Kamakura) Zen in Japan clearly show that this emphasis existed strongly in the teachings of the late Song Chan masters (e.g. Bukko) who arrived in Japan.

Astus wrote:

Are there instructions or descriptions discussing such practices? For instance, Wumen Huakai and Gaofeng Yuanmiao were mostly the contemporaries of Bukko, but I have not seen them discussing such techniques, so that suggests - perhaps incorrectly - that physical practices were not part of mainstream kanhua Chan. Dogen could also be mentioned, even though he was in China in the early 13th century. So, while it might be a misconception that Chan (and Buddhism in general) is rather disembodied, some sources to the contrary could help clarify it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 6th, 2017 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

It must be the case that he carried these kinds of instructions with him, though whether they were passed on in any significant way is anybody's guess.

Astus wrote:

The https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yijin_Jing is a "qigong" manual attributed to Bodhidharma, and one of the sources of "Shaolin kung-fu", even though it was actually written in the early 17th century.

Malcolm said:

Perhaps these Indian techniques never gained the popularity they experienced in India and the Himalayas because China already had a sophisticated medical system with an elaborate and functional anatomy and physiology.

Astus wrote:

Likely such methods from India were incorporated in some format into Daoist teachings, as similar techniques (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tao_yin) have been applied by them even before Buddhism appeared in China.

Malcolm said:

In any case, after the fall of the Gupta, In India we see the evolution of body-based systems of practice and trend away from the intellectual edifices of Madhyamaka and Yogacara, a trend away from intellectual analysis towards yogic experience. It is obvious to me, that this fusion of yogic praxis with local understandings of anatomy and physiology becomes a more prominent feature of Mahāyana practice as time moves on.

Astus wrote:

Xuanzang visited India after the Guptas, but apparently his Yogacara couldn't compete with the native works of Zhiyi and Fazang. Even during the Yuan dynasty the later Indian developments in Buddhism could not penetrate Chinese Buddhism.

Malcolm said:

My point is that there is no reason to assume that Chan and Zen practice are not similarly influenced by body-based yogic experience, and that there has been very little translated yet into English that really speaks to such things — since academic scholars are generally more interested in intellectual analysis, even when they dress it up in poetry.

Astus wrote:

If there are translations of Daoist alchemy and yoga, not just philosophical works, why would Chan be an exception?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 8th, 2017 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

The point is that one cannot find in any early and later Chinese zen texts much information about zazen direct instructions, if any then they are very obscure.

Astus wrote:

That's because Chan was not conceived as the "meditation school", especially not in the format of emphasising sitting. Quite the contrary, as one can see in the Platform Sutra and other teachings, that approach of focusing on calm contemplation was rejected, simply because that is at best the gradual path of the bodhisattva. At the same time, since meditation sutras and treatises were already available, it would have made no sense to repeat them, so instead one could just read those if needed, as for instance recommended by Zongze's manual (坐禪儀) in his/Baizhang's Qinggui (百丈清規, The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 255-257).

Matylda said:

And it does not mean that they were not existant. They were passed simply in face to face manner.

Astus wrote:

Don't you think it strange that while it was the Chan school that started to publish private instructions and personal stories on a large scale somehow wanted to keep their take on meditation secret?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 8th, 2017 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

What do you mean by 'Chan school that started to publish private instructions'? Where and how?

Astus wrote:

Mainly in the lamp transmission (傳燈) and sayings records (語錄).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 8th, 2017 at 3:21 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

SunWuKong said:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anapanasati>

Astus wrote:

That is mindfulness and not control of breath (pranayama).

SunWuKong said:

Tiantai and Chan.

Astus wrote:

Tiantai has the "http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm", while in Chan the whole curriculum of calming and contemplation was categorised as a lower level practice.

SunWuKong said:

its worth noting in this context, that the four foundations it is practiced in is body (the body as the body, distinct from perceptions of the body), feelings (perceptions), mind (mind/heart), and Dharms

Astus wrote:

The smṛtyupasthāna is considered mainly a śrāvakayāna method.

SunWuKong said:

Also worth noting is the practice spills over into what's termed Wuji (primordial) QiGong - which is practiced awareness of breathing + centering the awareness of the body in the dan tien + allowing the mind to be empty

Astus wrote:

In what teaching?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 8th, 2017 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

They do not contain zazen instructions which we are talking about.

Astus wrote:

I did not write zazen instructions, I wrote "private instructions and personal stories". It could also be added that meditation manuals were very much present both in the format of translated scriptures and treatises from India, and those authored in China. So if Chan had had anything to add there, it would have done so.

Matylda said:

Moreover academic assertions that zen was not conceived as the "meditation school", especially not in the format of emphasising sitting etc. is mere intellectual fabrication and misses greatly the point.

Astus wrote:

Can you show something that proves the "academic assertions" wrong? As for how I take it, Chan was posited as the supreme vehicle above the bodhisattvayana, so the standard Mahayana methods are not within the scope of Chan teachings. Of course, that does not mean those are rejected.

I think Baizhang explains this quite well:

"The complete teaching discusses purity; the incomplete teaching discusses impurity. Explaining the defilement in impure things is to weed out the profane; explaining the defilement in pure things is to weed out the holy.

Before the nine-part teaching had been expounded, living beings had no eyes; it was necessary to depend on someone to refine them. If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. You should not speak this way to a worldling beyond measure, someone like Vimalakirti or the great hero Fu. If one is speaking to an ascetic, the ascetic has already given his assent three times and his discipline is complete. This is the power of discipline, concentration, and wisdom. To still speak in this way to him is called speaking at the wrong time, because the speech is not appropriate to the situation; it is also called suggestive talk. To an ascetic one must explain the defilement in pure things - you should tell him to detach from all things, existence, non-existent, or whatever, to detach from all cultivation and experience, and even to detach from detachment.

While in the course of asceticism, one strips away influences of habit. If an ascetic cannot get rid of the diseases of greed and aversion, he too is called a deaf worldling; still he must be taught to practice meditation and cultivate wisdom."

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 29-30)

Zongmi put it this way:

"(In the Buddha's preaching of the previous five teachings, some are gradual and some

are sudden. In the case of [sentient beings of] medium and inferior capacity, [the Buddha] proceeded from the superficial to the profound, gradually leading them forward. He would initially expound the first teaching [of Humans and Gods], enabling them to be free from evil and to abide in virtue; he would then expound the second and third [teachings of the Lesser Vehicle and the Phenomenal Appearances of the Dharmas], enabling them to be free from impurity and to abide in purity; he would finally discuss the fourth and fifth [teachings], those that Refute Phenomenal Appearances and Reveal the Nature, subsuming the provisional into the true, [enabling them] to cultivate virtue in reliance on the ultimate teaching until they finally attain Buddhahood. In the case of [sentient beings of] wisdom of the highest caliber, [the Buddha] proceeded from the root to the branch. That is to say, from the start he straightaway relied on the fifth teaching to point directly to the essence of the one true mind. When the essence of the mind had been revealed, [these sentient beings] themselves realized that everything without exception is illusory and fundamentally empty and tranquil; that it is only because of delusion that [such illusory appearances] arise in dependence upon the true [nature]; and that it is [thus] necessary to cut off evil and cultivate virtue by means of the insight of having awakened to the true, and to put an end to the false and return to the true by cultivating virtue. When the false is completely exhausted and the true is present in totality, that is called the dharmakāya Buddha.)" (Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity, p 58)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 12th, 2017 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

By whom?

Astus wrote:

By those who say that the sravakayana is the four noble truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 12th, 2017 at 6:09 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, the four foundations of mindfulness are found throughout all Buddhadharma.

Astus wrote:

And the four noble truths are not? Also, do you know a Mahayana tradition that actually practises what is written in the Satipatthana Sutta? However, even if the four foundations of mindfulness are discussed, it is differentiated from the sravakayana version, or simply reinterpreted.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 12th, 2017 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are far more sources for the four foundations of mindfulness than that sutta. Mahāyāna is very rich with them.

Astus wrote:

The question still remains: who practises them? Also, what constitutes a "Mahayana smṛtyupasthāna" is not the same as in Theravada. Hence it is neither practised nor accepted because it is viewed as a sravaka method.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 12th, 2017 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: All is One

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Two comes from one,
Yet do not even keep the one.
When one mind does not arise,
Myriad dharmas are without defect."
(Sengcan: <https://terebess.hu/english/hsin3.html#7>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 13th, 2017 at 6:36 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are of course differences in the presentations, but it is incorrect to state that the four foundations of mindfulness are absent in Mahāyāna, which was your contention above.

Astus wrote:

My points above were: 1. the four foundations of mindfulness is considered a hearer method, 2. the method taught within Mahayana is different from those in the sravakayana. So, I am not debating that there are various methods called four foundations of mindfulness in Mahayana, it's just that they are not identical to what one finds in Theravada.

Malcolm said:

People studying Abhidharma in the Tibetan tradition practice them in the same manner.

Astus wrote:

I presume you mean the Kosha here, hence it is in the context of the Sarvastivada and

Sautrantika teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 14th, 2017 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Obviously your first contention is wrong since the four foundations of mindfulness are found by that name in countless Mahāyāna sūtras.

Astus wrote:

The name is there, the content varies.

Malcolm said:

Any practice done with Mahāyāna motivation becomes a Mahāyāna practice.

Astus wrote:

Motivation is only one half.

"If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 3)

"Having generated the great mind to realize bodhi, it is necessary to recognize what constitutes the essence of the bodhi mind. Now, as for the substance of the bodhi mind, if one fails to generate it from one's true mind, there is no source through which one might succeed in reaching bodhi. On account of this, it is essential that one differentiate clearly [what it is]. Only then does this result in Dharma practice which corresponds to correct causality."

(Peixiu: http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Bcitta_excerpts/Bcitta_X-01_X-05.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 15th, 2017 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

This refers strictly to āryabodhisattvas. It does not refer to bodhisattvas on the paths of accumulation or application.

Astus wrote:

What I meant is that vow is not enough, one also needs some level of understanding, faith, renunciation, and compassion, since without those even the vow is baseless. So for instance the Surangama Sutra teaches that even before one enters the ten stages of faith, one must obtain "dry wisdom", called dry because it is without sensual desire.

Then the ten stages of faith means faith, remembrance, zeal, wisdom, concentration, non-retrogression, protection of the Dharma, reflection, discipline, and vow show the necessary qualities needed to progress to the following three times ten stages, then four additional practices, until one reaches the ten bhumis.

Hyjeong wrote about those 55 levels:

"The fifty-five stations are simply the results obtained after resting the mind and removing falsities. Therefore, before completing the full (final) station (of buddhahood), if you reach level one, you will be satisfied with gaining a little and give rise to a pride in knowing and understanding the Dharma (completely). But in the end, if you enter great awareness (enlightenment), the former stations you passed through will all be illusions, and be useless states. Therefore a patriarchal teacher said, "I would rather die than walk through the fifty-five stations.""

(Abstracts of the Essentials of the Mind Dharma, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 231)

And Huangbo:

"there is fast and slow in realizing this mind: there are those who attain no-mind in a single moment of thought after hearing the Dharma; those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten faiths, the ten abodes, the ten practices, and the ten conversions; and those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten stages [of the bodhisattva]. In spite of the length of time it takes them to [attain it, once they] reside in no-mind there is nothing else to be cultivated or realized. Truly without anything to be attained, true and not false [is no-mind]. Whether it is attained in a single moment of thought or at the tenth stage [of the bodhisattva], its efficacy is identical. There are no further gradations of profundity, only the useless striving of successive eons."

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 16)

So Linji said:

"But because you students lack faith in yourselves, you run around seeking something outside. Even if, through your seeking, you did find something, that something would be nothing more than fancy descriptions in written words; never would you gain the mind of the living patriarch. Make no mistake, worthy Chan men! If you don't find it here and now, you'll go on transmigrating through the three realms for myriads of kalpas and thousands of lives, and, held in the clutch of captivating circumstances, be born in the wombs of asses or cows."

(Record of Linji, p 8, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 15th, 2017 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:
I don't accept the 55 level scheme.

Astus wrote:
I don't think that's a problem, since it is not important in Zen except for some advocates of gradual practice. The point still remains, however, that to have the bodhisattva motivation one needs some level of faith and understanding as well.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, December 15th, 2017 at 10:51 PM
Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen
Content:
Malcolm said:
Your answer is a non sequitur.

Astus wrote:
In that case I was simply wrong in my presumption that by that you were rejecting the whole section on there being more to Mahayana than having motivation.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, December 16th, 2017 at 12:21 AM
Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen
Content:
Malcolm said:
any practice one with Mahāyāna motivation becomes a Mahāyāna practice

Astus wrote:
How can motivation be a sufficient criteria? That would mean even a mistaken idea about the path leads to buddhahood.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, December 18th, 2017 at 4:10 AM
Title: Re: Western Myth of Zen
Content:
Malcolm said:
Mistaken ideas about the path are impediments to awakening, but they are not impediments to gathering accumulations, devotion, and so on, and gradually, one will overcome such mistakes, especially if one learns to train in ultimate bodhicitta, śamatha and vipaśyāna.

Astus wrote:
True, it is the beginning of the path and one may have erroneous views. Still, in order to establish motivation, it has its own conditions.

The Awakening of Mahayana Faith (ch 3, tr Hakeda, p 79) talks of three possible types: "Briefly, three types of aspiration for enlightenment can be distinguished. The first is the aspiration for enlightenment through the perfection of faith. The second is the aspiration for enlightenment through understanding and through deeds. The third is the aspiration for enlightenment through insight." There faith is the very beginning, where one has to cultivate three minds: "The first is the mind characterized by straightforwardness, for it correctly meditates on the principle of Suchness. The second is the mind of profoundness, for there is no limit to its joyful accumulation of all kinds of goodness. The third is the mind filled with great compassion, for it wishes to uproot the sufferings of all sentient beings." (p 80-81)

Asanga defines a mahayanika this way: "What is a person belonging to the Great Vehicle? It is a person who, having obtained or not the attainments, dwelling in the Dharma of the Bodhisattvas, having sharp faculties by nature, set on the liberation of all beings, having the intention of attaining unestablished Nirvana, dependent on the Canon of the Bodhisattvas, practicing the major and minor virtues by means of the cultivation of vigor, ripens beings, cultivates the pure stage of the Buddhas, receives the prediction and attains Perfect Awakening." (Abhidharmasamuccaya, tr Boin-Webb, p 200)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 22nd, 2017 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Upside Down Thinking

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Buddhism is about being clear about the mind that you have."

Mindfulness is a popular cloud.

"See what is actually happening in the moment."

It is seeing only if one can tell the difference between the wholesome and unwholesome, but it becomes practising only when unwholesome thoughts are not generated anew and those already there abandoned, and wholesome thoughts are generated and those already there are cultivated. It is then that there is some difference made.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2017 at 4:57 PM

Title: Re: "Summarizing" Buddhadharma

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

The profoundly, truly, and absolutely clear mind encounters any thing/dharma whatsoever, and awakening is understood/has happened.

Astus wrote:

That seems to attempt to summarise only awakening, not the whole of Buddhadharma.

1. "profoundly, truly, and absolutely" - What do these adverbs stand for? What is a superficial compared to profound, a false to true, a relative to absolute type of clear mind?
2. "clear mind" - What mind and clean from what?
3. "encounters" - Since mind and thing encounters, does that mean they exist separately? If they are not separate, how can they encounter?
4. "awakening" - Awakening to what?
5. "is understood/has happened" - If understood, was it understood after the encounter, or simultaneously with encounter? If it's happened, has it happened only once or every time there is an encounter?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2017 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: What practices would Madhyamakin and Yogacarins actually have done?

Content:

Astus wrote:

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras and
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_texts#Samadhi_Sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2017 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: What practices would Madhyamakin and Yogacarins actually have done?

Content:

Vasana said:

The end of analysis results in the nonconceptual union of shamatha/vipassana.
Correct madhyamika view leads to direct cognition / direct yogic perception.

Astus wrote:

That is a fairly late interpretation that fuses Madhyamaka with Yogacara and Pramana, furthermore, it does not specify the methods used.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 26th, 2017 at 3:27 AM

Title: Re: What practices would Madhyamakin and Yogacarins actually have done?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

Any particular sutra out of these you recommend?

Astus wrote:

Unless you read Chinese, just go through everything available in English. Also, there are mainly two additions to what was already taught in the sravaka texts: the contemplation (through visualisation and recitation) of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the contemplation (through analysis) of the emptiness of appearances. Because of the latter addition, Madhyamika and Yogacarīn works are also instructions for meditation.

Some meditation focused scriptures and a treatise:

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http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_T0614_SutraConcentration_2009_0.pdf

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http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Pratyutpanna_Surangama_1998_0.pdf

- http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_ThreePureLandSutras_2003_0.pdf

- <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>

- <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra20.html>

- Kumārajīva:

https://web.archive.org/web/20150518100726/http://www.thichhangdat.com/files/Master_Thesis.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 26th, 2017 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Karma in Mahāyāna

Content:

markatex said:

In the Nikayas/Agamas, it's said that not everything that happens is the result of karma. I was under the impression (perhaps wrongly) that the Mahāyāna sutras state otherwise. Is this correct? Are there Mahāyāna texts where this is discussed?

Astus wrote:

Even the Nikayas do not say that there are experiences not from action. Please read Thanissaro Bhikkhu's introduction to the

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.021.than.html>. As it is stated in the Kosha (vol 2, p 477): "by reason of the collective action of beings, there appears the first signs of a future physical world", so the physical world itself appears because of past action. As for Mahayana, the three worlds are nothing but the fabrications of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 26th, 2017 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: How did the originally pure nature become defiled?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

Many texts and practitioners talk about how the mind was originally pure: Huineng, Shen Xiu, Chen Guang, Awakening of Faith, etc but if so how did it become deluded?

Astus wrote:

It is not that first there is a pure ground that gets defiled, but the true nature of defilement has always been purity. The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana, for instance, has an extensive explanation on what being deluded means.

ItsRaining said:

And if something pure can be deluded what stop the pure minds of the Buddhas from becoming afflicted again?

Astus wrote:

Ignorance has no beginning, while if the cause of delusion is removed, there is no basis upon which it can recur.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 27th, 2017 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: How did the originally pure nature become defiled?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

The Awakening of Faith says that Ignorance can perfume Tathata, so ignorance which in reality Tathata itself can effect the pure suchness? But then this ignorance can't rise again once removed because it's cause is extinguished?

Astus wrote:

The treatise differentiates between the permeation of ignorance and the permeation of suchness. The former is how delusion originates, the latter is how enlightenment comes about. Then "Because of the cessation of ignorance, there will be no more rising of the deluded activities of mind." But it is not the case that suchness is in any way affected or changed: "The essence of Suchness knows no increase or decrease in ordinary men, the Hinayanists, the Bodhisattvas, or the Buddhas. It was not brought into existence in the beginning nor will it cease to be at the end of time; it is eternal through and through."

Let's translate this into other terms. The aggregates are impermanent. Conceiving the aggregates as permanent is ignorance, but it does not negate impermanence. Realising that the aggregates are impermanent is liberating knowledge, but it does not make the aggregates impermanent. Once the wrong view of permanence is completely gone, there is no more basis for attachment to arise again.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 27th, 2017 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Eternal != Perpetual

Content:

MiphamFan said:

"eternal" to the mediaevals was not the same as "perpetual". "Eternal" means something outside of time completely, while "perpetual" is something that still exists

within time itself.

Astus wrote:

What is atemporal is not functional, has no connection to anything, therefore it simply does not exist. At the same time, whatever exists is necessarily functional and temporal. See arguments in chapter 9 of Aryadeva's Catuhsataka.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 6th, 2018 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Sarvāstivāda vinaya section

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

the section of the Sarvāstivāda vinaya

Astus wrote:

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T23n1435_037#0269c15

cf. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe20/sbe20018.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 18th, 2018 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: How do I go deeper into Zen practice?

Content:

mddrill said:

What should I do if I want to go deeper into my Buddhist practice, but don't really know how to go about it or even I'm looking for? I've heard something about taking refuge and vows, would that be a good place to start?

Astus wrote:

While seeking for the ideal teacher, you could try to clarify the basics of Buddhism:

<http://hsingyun.org/books/core-teachings/>

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/publications/free-literature/>

<http://www.fgsitc.org/booklet/page/7/>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 23rd, 2018 at 6:51 PM

Title: Re: What counts as a Buddhist teaching?

Content:

Astus wrote:

“There are five things, Bhāradvāja, that may turn out in two different ways here and now. What five? Faith, approval, oral tradition, reasoned cogitation, and reflective acceptance of a view. These five things may turn out in two different ways here and now. Now something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and

false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistakable. Again, something may be fully approved of...well transmitted...well cogitated...well reflected upon, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be well reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistakable. Under these conditions it is not proper for a wise man who preserves truth to come to the definite conclusion: 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/en/mn95>)

"Though certain recluses and brahmins claim to propound the full understanding of all kinds of clinging...they describe the full understanding of clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, and clinging to rules and observances without describing the full understanding of clinging to a doctrine of self. They do not understand one instance...therefore they describe only the full understanding of clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, and clinging to rules and observances without describing the full understanding of clinging to a doctrine of self."

(<https://suttacentral.net/en/mn11>)

"Wherever, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is not found in a Teaching and Discipline there a true ascetic is not found, there a second true ascetic is not found, there a third true ascetic is not found, there a fourth true ascetic is not found. But wherever, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is found in a Teaching and Discipline there a true ascetic is found, there a second true ascetic is found, there a third true ascetic is found, there a fourth true ascetic is found. In this Teaching and Discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is found, here a true ascetic is found, here a second true ascetic is found, here a third true ascetic is found, here a fourth true ascetic is found."

(<https://suttacentral.net/en/dn16>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 25th, 2018 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Seeking enlightenment (satori/bodhi)

Content:

MattiV said:

Now, one of the most remarkable things about certain ideas in Zen Buddhism is that it seems to be aimless in the every day sense of the word.

Yet millions of practitioners of various schools of Buddhism seek enlightenment. But in Zen Buddhism - as I have understood it - the very act of seeking is an obstacle, a hindrance, a no-no. Am I right or just confused?

Astus wrote:

A Zen practitioner definitely must have goals, particularly those specified in the four great vows of every bodhisattva: save all beings, eradicate defilements, learn all teachings, and attain buddhahood. Without those vows there is no Zen.

Aimlessness (apramiti) is one of the three gates of liberation, the other two are signlessness (animitta) and emptiness (sunyata). When it is taught that one should not

seek anything, it means that there is nothing to seek, because all appearances are ungraspable. It is not about intentionally trying to not look forward to enlightenment or to pretend that one is merely sitting without any purpose.

MattiV said:

As for me, I'm happy to just sit and try to improve my awareness. I'm seeking neither my true self nor an egoless pure awareness.

Why? Because I don't have the slightest idea what those are about, what they mean.

Astus wrote:

If, as you wrote, your practice is counting/following the breath, then you should consider reading up on how breath awareness should be actually cultivated. On the one hand, you can find good resources by Theravadin authors on Anapanasati, or you can check out teachings closer to Zen, like

http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm,

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/chanmed1.pdf,

<http://www.thienvientuquang.org/kinhsach/english/KeysToBuddhism.pdf>, and various works by Thich Nhat hanh.

MattiV said:

Of course I want to become a better person. But it seems to me that words like 'trying' 'improving', 'wanting', 'becoming' etc. have been blown to pieces in Zen Buddhism, or in some versions of it.

Astus wrote:

That is a misinterpretation, somewhat. True, if one can actually get to see that all experiences are originally unestablished hence there is nowhere to abide, then that is realising the futility of seeking. But to intentionally not seek peace, liberation, and wisdom, that is the wrong direction.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 30th, 2018 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and liberation

Content:

Zafutales said:

Can someone help me understand how 'Silent Illumination' (Shikantaza) can help bring about an end to suffering?

Astus wrote:

There are some differences between Mozhao and Shikantaza, mostly that the latter has a special emphasis on posture. But they both teach the same old practice of no-thought and no-mind as you can find it in the Platform Sutra. In other words, when the mind does not grasp at the six senses, there is no abiding anywhere, hence no craving nor suffering emerges. And in order to to grasp, not to abide, one only has to see directly that the six sensory phenomena are absolutely unstable, in other words empty, and that emptiness is the true nature.

Zafutales said:

if we can sit quietly allowing thoughts to drop away then we will experience our true nature – is it a similar ‘method’ when using Silent Illumination and Shikantaza?

Astus wrote:

Dogen wrote:

"In recent years, however, stupid unreliable people have said, "In the effort of zazen, to attain peace of mind is everything. Just this is the state of tranquility." This opinion is beneath even scholars of the Small Vehicle. It is inferior even to the vehicles of humans and gods. How can we call such people students of the Buddha-Dharma?"
(Zazenshin, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 116)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 30th, 2018 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Silent Illumination and Liberation?

Content:

Zafutales said:

how ‘Silent Illumination’ (Shikantaza) can help bring about an end to suffering?

Astus wrote:

Silent means to be without attachment, illumination means to be aware. Consider your hearing. The ear contains no sound, it is totally silent, and at the same time, it hears all sounds, it is totally illuminating. If there were an original sound, no other sound could occur. If one wanted not to hear any sound at all, it would only mean a constant struggle with noises. Hence the only thing to do is to not do anything, the ear naturally hears without getting stuck at any sound. This is true for the other five senses as well. Therefore, there is no ending of suffering, because suffering itself is false. Suffering is the delusion of trying to hold on to or avoid some sound. Once it becomes clear that no sound can be kept or pushed away, there is no more craving and no more dissatisfaction.

Zafutales said:

if we can sit quietly allowing thoughts to drop away then we will experience our true nature

Astus wrote:

The true nature should be seen before a thought arises, when a thought arises, when a thought has arisen, when a thought disappears, and when a thought has disappeared. If it is a nature that can be hidden, it is not true at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 30th, 2018 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: How are Madhyamaka and Yogacara teachings actually realised?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

But how did they realise the specific teachings in their systems? If they practiced the same things why were their teachings/realisation different?

Astus wrote:

While there are shared practices, just as Buddhism in general shares techniques with other Indian religions, when it comes to the wisdom part, Madhyamaka and Yogacara use different contemplations than the Sravaka Abhidharmikas. So you could say that samatha practices are mostly common, vipasyana is mostly not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 5th, 2018 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: "All Buddha-Nature is One"

Content:

DGA said:

"all Buddha-nature is one"

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature is a quality, not an object, and that quality is emptiness.

"The Mind is Buddha. All Buddhas and all sentient beings have the same Buddha-Nature and one Mind. Therefore, Bodhidharma came from the West only to transmit the One-Mind Doctrine. However, since the mind of all sentient beings is the same as original Buddha-Nature, there is no need to practice; for if one recognizes one's own Mind and sees one's own Nature, there is nothing at all to seek outside oneself. But how is one to recognize one's own Mind? Just that Mind itself that wants to perceive the Mind - that is your own Mind, which is as void as Original Mind and is without words and function."

"Just know, above all, that non-differentiating Mind is the Buddha, that Buddha is the Mind and that the Mind is voidness. Therefore, the real Dharmakaya is just voidness. It is not necessary to seek anything whatsoever, and all who do continue to seek for something only prolong their suffering in samsara."

(Huangbo, in the <https://ymba.org/books/dharma-mind-transmission/wan-ling-record>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 7th, 2018 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen Buddhism the "Successor" of Classic Taoism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Please look at Chengguan's words:

豈言象之能至。故云迴出。又借斯亡絕以遣言思。(T36n1736_p0002b19)

Words may resemble very much. But the cause (behind it) is very different. We borrow the words but not accept their meaning.

言有濫同釋教者。皆是佛法之餘。(T35n1735_p0521 b15-16)

Those who go too far and equate [false teachings] with Buddhism are all outside of the Buddhadharma.

無得求一時之小名。渾三教之一致。習邪見之毒種。為地獄之深因。開無明之源流。遏種智之玄路。誠之誠之。(T36n1736_p0107 a11-13)

Do not seek after the trivial reputation of a single age and confuse the three teachings as one. Studying the poisonous seeds of false views is a deep cause for being born in hell, opens up the wellspring of ignorance, and blocks of the road to omniscience. Take heed! Take heed!

Guifeng Zongmi on Confucianism and Daoism:

"The main thrust of the non-Buddhist teachings, however, is to establish the conduct for humanity, not to inquire into its ultimate origin. The myriad things discussed in the two teachings are limited to the phenomenal world. Although they point to the great Dao as the root, they do not completely explain agreeability and adversity, arising and ceasing, purity and defilement, or causes and conditions. Consequently, those who practice these teachings are not aware that the doctrines are provisional and cling to them as perfect teachings."

(Treatise on the Origin of Humanity, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 149)

Dogen wrote:

"no student of Kongzi and Laozi has ever fathomed the Buddha-Dharma. People today of the great kingdom of Song mostly uphold the principle of agreement between Kongzi and Laozi and the Buddha's truth. It is the gravest of wrong views"

"Kongzi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Huizi, and suchlike are just common people. They could not reach the level of even a srotāpanna of the Small Vehicle; how much less could they reach the level of the second [effect] or the third [effect] or an arhat of the fourth [effect]? That students, however, out of ignorance, put them on a par with the buddhas, is "in the midst of delusion, deepening delusion." Kongzi and Laozi are not only ignorant of the three times and ignorant of the many kalpas; they are not able to know one instant of mindfulness and not able to know one moment of the mind. They do not bear comparison even with the gods of the sun and the moon and they cannot equal the four great kings and the hosts of gods. Whether in the secular sphere or beyond the secular sphere, [seen] in comparison with the World-honored One, they are straying in delusion."

(Shizen-biku, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 4, p 268, 275-276)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 8th, 2018 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

The point is whether or not reciting the name of Amida Buddha brings one closer to realizing our true Buddha-self.

Astus wrote:

Mere recitation of words may facilitate achieving a concentrated mind, but that is as far as it can bring oneself.

"People say, "Your own mind is the Pure Land, so you cannot be born in the Pure Land; your own nature is Amitābha, so Amitābha cannot be seen." These words seem to be correct and yet are wrong. That buddha has no craving or anger, so do I also have no craving or anger? That buddha transforms hell into lotus flower (realms) as easily as turning over his hands, yet I always fear falling into hell because of the power of karma, so how can there be this transformation into a lotus flower (realm)? That buddha contemplates the endless worlds as if they were in front of his eyes, but I still do not even know matters beyond the intervening wall, so how can I see the worlds of all directions as if they are in front of my eyes? Therefore, even though everybody's nature is Buddha, since in practice they are sentient beings, if we refer to their attributes and functions, they are as far different as heaven and earth."

(Hyujeong: Seonga Gwigam, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 123-124)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 8th, 2018 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

This is from the Surangama Sutra

Astus wrote:

That is not a reliable translation. See the <http://www.buddhisttexts.org/surangama.html> (p 232-233; cf. <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra08.html>):

"The basis of my practice was mindfulness of the Buddha. I became patient with the state of mind in which no mental objects arise. Now when people of this world are mindful of the Buddha, I act as their guide to lead them to the Pure Land. The Buddha has asked us how we broke through twenty-five sages speak of enlightenment to enlightenment. In order to enter samādhi, I chose no other method than to gather in the six faculties while continuously maintaining a pure mindfulness of the Buddha."

Two things should be specifically noted. The first one is that in the sutra this method is not selected as the best one. The second is that it talks about how one establishes a connection with a buddha, and it is used in the Pure Land school as a reference about how one can gain birth in Sukhavati. What is used as the Chan/Zen method is that of Avalokitesvara, not Mahasthamaprapta.

Dharma Flower said:

According to the above passage, those who recite the name of Amida Buddha can, in the present time or in the future time, attain Buddhahood "without any other expedient means." This is to say that the Nembutsu itself is sufficient for seeing into and realizing

our own Buddha-nature.

Astus wrote:

It says only mindfulness of buddha, not recitation. Mindfulness of buddha in Zen is not recitation by mouth, nor even focusing on thoughts, but as Daoxin said:

"the mind which is "thinking on Buddha" is called thinking on no object ... Why is this? Consciousness is without form. The Buddha lacks any outer appearance. When you understand this truth, it is identical to calming the mind"

(Early Ch'an in China and Tibet, p 108, tr David Chappell;

<https://www.dailyzen.com/journal/the-fundamental-expedient-teachings>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 10th, 2018 at 6:09 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

This is from Master Chin Kung speaking on the Surangama Sutra

Astus wrote:

Master Chin Kung is a teacher of the Pure Land path that does not seek enlightenment in this life. He considers Mahasthamaprapta as the one to introduce single minded concentration. But it is not about gaining enlightenment in one life. Please see the below quotes from <http://www.amitabha-gallery.org/pdf/mck/BuddhismAwakeningCandW.pdf> your quote is originally from:

"Without being born into the Pure Land and meeting Buddha Amitabha, we will only fulfill the second and third vows of severing all afflictions and mastering all methods but will find it difficult to attain Buddhahood.

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, both Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva had reached the level of equal enlightenment and vowed to be born into the Pure Land. I was surprisingly pleased to discover this when I gave talks on the Avatamsaka Sutra. I wondered why enlightened Bodhisattvas in the Avatamsaka World would want to be born into the Western Pure Land. Considering how wonderful their own world was, it seemed unnecessary for them to do so but after thinking about it, I realized that they had vowed to go there to be able to attain Buddhahood in a shorter time. If not for this, there would be no reason to go to the Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha.

Suddenly, I realized that if we wanted to attain the perfect complete enlightenment, we needed to go to the Western Pure Land."

(p 57)

"It was the Avatamsaka Sutra that guided me to Pure Land Buddhism. I lectured on this sutra for seventeen years. Later, I only lectured on the "Chapter of Samantabhadra's Conduct and Vows" from the Avatamsaka Sutra. During these seventeen years, I deeply comprehended the meaning of the Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva in guiding beings to the Western Pure Land. This Pure Land is the essence and the final

destination of the Avatamsaka. From this experience, I realized that the ancient masters were right."
(p 95-96)

"most people do not realize the true value of Buddha Name Chanting. So, the Buddha had to teach all the sutras to guide sentient beings to the Pure Land. Master Shandao told us that the only purpose for all Buddhas to manifest in the world is to tell us of the original vows of Buddha Amitabha."
(p 99)

Talking about himself:

"What about me? I am determined to go to the Pure Land. I will not remain in this world to continue to bear the suffering."
(p 109)

The closing words of the book:

"When we recite consistently without interruption, we will soon feel an increase in our wisdom, serenity, and purity of mind. Diligent practice of this method together with unwavering belief, vows, and living a moral life can ensure fulfillment of our wish to reach the Western Pure Land."
(p 136)

Dharma Flower said:
According to Master Chin Kung above, the Surangama Sutra teaches that we can attain Buddhahood, in this lifetime, from mindfully reciting the name of Amida Buddha.

Astus wrote:
Master Ching Kung definitely does not teach such a thing, nor does the Surangama Sutra state that.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, February 11th, 2018 at 5:58 PM
Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective
Content:
Dharma Flower said:
Master Chin Kung advocates the dual practice of Ch'an and Pure Land.

Astus wrote:
Dual practice means cultivating the mind in this life and vowing to be born in the Pure Land in the next life. The level of one's cultivation now defines the rank one can gain in the Pure Land. Here are the four possibilities of Zen-PL practice connection from Yongming with the explanation of Zongben:

"First: Zen without Pure Land. Nine out of ten people take the wrong road here. If objects

appear before them [as they meditate], they immediately follow them off. This choice means that people only [strive to] illuminate reality-nature, and do not make vows to be born in the Pure Land. But as long as they flow along in this world "Endurance," there is the danger of falling back [into delusion] ... Second: Pure Land without Zen. Of ten thousand who practice [Pure Land Buddhism], ten thousand go [to the Pure Land]. They just get to see Amitabha Buddha: what worry is there that they won't be enlightened? This choice means that they have not yet illuminated reality-nature, but they just vow to be born in the Pure Land. Because they are riding upon the power of Buddha, they are sure to be free from doubt. Third: Both Zen and Pure Land. This is like putting horns on a tiger [adding to its already formidable powers]. In this life these people will be teachers, and in lives to come they will be buddhas and patriarchs. Since they profoundly comprehend the Buddha Dharma, they can be teachers to devas and humans. Moreover, they take vows to go to the Pure Land and ascend quickly to the stage from which there is no falling back ... Fourth: Neither Zen or Pure Land. This brings the torments of hell for ten thousand eons, with no one to rely on. They do not understand the principles of Buddha, nor do they make vows to be born in the Pure Land. They sink down [into the sea of suffering] for eternal ages with no way to get out."

(Pure Land, Pure Mind, p 68-69)

As you quoted:

"These three factors are the cornerstones of Pure Land Buddhism. If they are present, rebirth in the Pure Land is achieved. Faith means faith in Amitabha Buddha's Vows to rescue all who recite His name, as well as faith in one's own Self-Nature, which is intrinsically the same as His (to recite the Buddha's name is to recite the Mind). Vows are the determination to be reborn in the Pure Land – in one's pure mind – so as to be in the position to save oneself and others. Practice generally means reciting the Buddha's name to the point where one's Mind and that of Amitabha Buddha are in unison – i.e. to the point of singlemindness. Samadhi and wisdom are then achieved."

These three elements clarify the requirements of practice very well. Based on faith and vows one can gain birth, without them there is no birth in the Pure Land. The aim of practice, the way the mind is cultivated, is through developing one-pointed concentration, and that is called union. This type of buddha-remembrance samadhi is a high level of samatha/calming practice. Although it might be called a Zen practice, it is Zen only in the common sense of dhyana, not the Zen of Bodhidharma. The practice that matches the Zen of the patriarchs is the real mark buddha remembrance. You can read more about the four methods <https://ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/essentials-pure-land/5-practice-buddha>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 12th, 2018 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

I think we might need to politely agree to disagree.

Astus wrote:

What is there to disagree with? The term "one mind" does not appear in that passage in any of the translations in Chinese, nor even in Suzuki's English translation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 13th, 2018 at 4:29 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

ItsRaining said:

I see this quote a lot from the Lanka a lot in Chinese That which is void is know as the One Mind. The One Mind is the Tathagatabarbha. Tathagatabarbha is the trapped Dharmakaya

寂灭者，名为一心。一心者，即如来藏。如来藏，亦是在缠法身

Astus wrote:

That is not in the Lankavatara, but the

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T48n2016_004#0434c04, where it is claimed to be a quote from the Lankavatara. Only in http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/zh-cn/T16n0671_001#0518c20 there is something similar: Nirvana is called one mind, one mind is called tathagatagarbha, entering the realm of personal wisdom (sva-pratyatma-gati-gocara) is the anutpattika-dharma-ksanti-samadhi. (寂滅者名為一心，一心者名為如來藏，入自內身智慧境界，得無生法忍三昧。)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 14th, 2018 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: Traces of scholasticism in (Zen) Buddhism

Content:

MattiV said:

do I really have to spend a lifetime to understand the various distinctions in the (Zen) Buddhist tradition?

Astus wrote:

If you want to understand the various distinctions, then most likely. If you want to focus on gaining a foothold in the tradition - entering the gate of no gate - then the quickest way is to follow an authentic teacher's instructions and practise as if your head were on fire.

As for some practical/companion literature for Zen practice:

Yunqi Zhuhong: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=qGPDBAAAQBAJ>

Seosan Hyujeong: Seonga Gwigam (http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/collected_works.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 16th, 2018 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: Best Taisho Tripitaka translation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html has not been translated to English, only some texts in it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 19th, 2018 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Recommendations for Yogacara works?

Content:

Astus wrote:

-

http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Beta_T1593_SummaryoftheGreatVehicle_2003.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=475 (PDF)

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahayana-sutra-alamkara-karika>

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madhyanta-vibhanga-karika>

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidharma-samuccaya>

-

http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_ThreeShortTreatises_2017.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=787 (PDF)

-

http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Alpha_ThreeTextsonConsciousnessOnly_1999.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=456 (PDF)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 20th, 2018 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Recommendations for Yogacara works?

Content:

Matt J said:

The prime text of Chan used to be the Lankavatara.

Astus wrote:

The Lankavatara was relevant within the East Mountain ("Northern") School, but the Diamond Sutra was the most prominent with the Southern School, and continues to be up until today. There are only three commentaries on the sutra itself in the Taisho: T1789, 4 vols, by Zongle (Linji Chan, 1318–1391); T1790, 1 vol, by Fazang (Huayan, 643–712); T1791, 10 vol, by Baochen (?-688?). But there are other commentaries in the Zokuzokyo, in volumes 17 and 18 there are 14 in all (2 from Tang, 3 from Song, 8 from Ming, 1 from Qing era), like X321, 3 vols, by Zhiyan (671?-722?); X323, 6 vols, by Shanyue (Tiantai,

1149-1241); X324, 4 vols, by Zhengshou (Yunmen Chan, 1147-1209); X329, 9 vols, by Zhixu (Jingtu, 1599-1655).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 21st, 2018 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Recommendations for Yogacara works?

Content:

Matt J said:

Is it your position that the Lankavatara was not passed down from Bodhidharma to the early Patriarchs?

Astus wrote:

As for the role of the Lankavatara Sutra: "Although this scripture apparently had some kind of mysterious appeal to the followers of early Ch'an, there is no evidence that its contents had any particular impact on the development of the school." (John R. McRae: The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism, p 29)

And even if the Lankavatara Sutra was used to some extent by the early Chan teachers - although there is little evidence for that - the later tradition clearly did not use it much. Just a quick search showed that in the Blue Cliff Record the sutra is referenced twice, in Dahui's letters and the Book of Serenity quoted once and referred to once, and in the Collected Works of Chinul, in Dogen's two works (Shobogenzo, Eihei Koroku), in the Records of Baizhang and Linji there is no mention of it at all.

Matt J said:

I would say now that Zen draws a lot of its teaching from the Tathagatagarbha/Yogacara strands of Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

Chan was supplemented mostly by Sanlun (Madhyamaka), Tiantai, and Huayan teachings, if we want to specify particular sets of doctrines. Neither the Faxian (Yogacara) teachings, nor the Yogacarabhumishastra is used as a source material to support Chan teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 21st, 2018 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Recommendations for Yogacara works?

Content:

Matt J said:

I'm not really sure why you want to divorce Zen from the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

This is only about the role of the Lankavatara Sutra in Zen, nothing more.

Matt J said:

Some quips from Red Pine, who knows more than me about Chan and the Lankavatara

Astus wrote:

That does not show the role of the sutra in Zen, it only makes a number of generic statements based on personal assumptions.

Matt J said:

As for Yogacara, you're probably the first scholar/practitioner I've come across who denies that Yogacara had an influence on Zen/Chan.

Astus wrote:

Perhaps it'd be better to be more specific about what is meant by "Yogacara" and what counts as an influence. Xuanzang died in 664, Shenhui was born in 684, Mazu was born in 709, so if there had been a Yogacara influence, it should have been that of Xuanzang's. But even if we consider the Dilun and Shelun, as thecowisflying noted, there should be some doctrinal correspondence pointed out for that. However, it doesn't look like that Zen had anything like that, but if you have something to the contrary, please show.

This doesn't sound very Yogacara to me:

"since the past this teaching of ours has first taken nonthought as its central doctrine, the formless as its essence, and nonabiding as its fundamental."
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

Another summary from a few hundred years later:

"Question: What is the characteristic of this school?

Answer: The Zen school has the Diamond Sutra and the Vimalakirti Sutra as its main references. Its principle is that the mind is nothing other than the Buddha. A mind freed from clinging to anything constitutes its religious act. Its purpose is [to cause people to realize] that everything that has its own characteristics is empty of self-nature. Since the Buddha handed down the robe and bowl to Kasyapa, transmission from master to disciple has not changed. Details are known from the records."

(A Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 101)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 22nd, 2018 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: Dharma Wheel Heavy Weights

Content:

Drenpa said:

Have you commented here on DW at greater length about the insights gained from these stories/koans?

Astus wrote:

No, I have not. But if there is a koan you want to discuss with others, why not open a topic for that in the Zen section?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 23rd, 2018 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Recommendations for Yogacara works?

Content:

Matt J said:

Many Zen practitioners seem to take it as a given--- ... After all, Vasubandhu is listed as a Zen Patriarch

Astus wrote:

In that case it shouldn't be difficult to compare some works of Vasubandhu with the works of some Zen teachers and show the correspondences.

Matt J said:

You can also read Hakuin elucidate on the Eight Consciousnesses and the Four Cognitions in Cleary's *Kensho: The Heart of Zen*. The Four Cognitions is interesting because he talks about the three kayas and the transformation of consciousness, both very Yogacara.

Astus wrote:

Talking of the eight consciousnesses, the three bodies, and the four wisdoms is not unique to Yogacara. Both Hakuin and Jinul teach that the bodies and wisdoms exist inherently, but that is contrary to what you find in the *Mahayanasamgraha* or the Cheng Weish Lun. Furthermore, Hakuin very much simplifies the function of the bodies and wisdoms, as it is common within Zen.

Matt J said:

One can look at Chinul's *Straightforward Explanation of the True Mind* in the same text.

Astus wrote:

That text differentiates right at the beginning the scriptural and the patriarchal teachings. Furthermore, it talks of inherent buddha-nature, a concept that is denied not only by the doctrine of the five gotras, but also how the mind is understood in Yogacara.

Matt J said:

Yogacara flavored ideas

Astus wrote:

It seems that is a different flavour.

Matt J said:

Here's a bit from Ma Zu, in *Zen's Chinese Heritage* by Andy Ferguson: Believe that your own mind is Buddha. This very mind is buddha mind.

Astus wrote:

Not according to Yogacara, where this mind is very much the product of defilements.

Matt J said:

he brought with him the text of the Lankavatara Sutra

Astus wrote:

It already existed in Chinese.

Matt J said:

using it as the seal of the mind-ground of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

The ground is the alayavijnana in Yogacara, not some sort of pure consciousness.

Matt J said:

A bit of Hui Hai, from Zen: Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening by John Blofeld:

A: Mind is the root.

Astus wrote:

Again, nothing specific to Yogacara. Look at the first two stanzas of the <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.01.budd.html>:

"Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow."

Matt J said:

While on Blofeld, here is some Huang Po, from his Zen Teaching of Huang Po: This Mind, which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible

Astus wrote:

All eight consciousnesses are momentary, definitely not indestructible.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 26th, 2018 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

In Zen practice, it's often said there's nothing to attain. This is because the practice itself is an outward expression of the Buddha-nature we already are, which has been obscured by the deluded ego.

Astus wrote:

As long as the nature is obscured, it cannot be expressed.

Dharma Flower said:

From a Zen perspective, Pure Land practice is an expression of our original nature,

which is the same as Amida Buddha's. In reciting the name of Amida and bowing to his image, we humble the ego-self to let the Amida-self shine through.

Astus wrote:

With the obscuration present, all actions are the products of ignorance.

"If you don't see your nature, invoking Buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings, and keeping precepts are all useless."

(Bodhidharma: Bloodstream Sermon, tr Red Pine)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 26th, 2018 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

The point is not to purify the mind, but instead to uncover the innately pure mind, through gradual cultivation.

Astus wrote:

What's the difference between purifying and uncovering? Both stands for removing all elements of obscuration. But how can recitation remove them?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 27th, 2018 at 3:52 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

has been endorsed by trustworthy teachers and masters throughout Buddhist history.

Astus wrote:

By those who aimed for birth in Sukhavati, not as a method for liberation in this life.

Dharma Flower said:

Amitabha is our own Buddha-nature, and that the Pure Land is the innately pure mind.

Astus wrote:

That doesn't validate recitation as the appropriate practice to realise it.

Dharma Flower said:

Whatever motivates you to practice a good Buddhist practice is the right motivation.

Astus wrote:

Not really. Motivation itself is a defining factor of what one's practice is good for.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 27th, 2018 at 4:09 PM

Title: Re: The Interpenetration of Principle & Phenomena

Content:

Astus wrote:

If it were as you stated, why cannot reciting "bodhi, bodhi" make one awakened? Also, how come that those millions of Pure Land practitioners were/are not all enlightened beings despite regularly reciting the name? Even such well known Amitabha devotees like Honen remained deluded beings all their lives, furthermore, it is a basic point of the Pure Land teachings that one should recognise being ignorant and sinful.

Dharma Flower said:

In reciting the name of Amida Buddha, we are calling the name of our true nature, awakening the Buddha within. This is due to the interpenetration of principle and phenomena.

Astus wrote:

True nature, the principle, is just the absence of self-nature, while the phenomenal aspect, the conventional nature, is the name, the concept. So, while people have names, there is no person behind the name, there is nobody to call. Therefore, calling the name of true nature is no different from shouting in an empty house. There is none to answer.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 27th, 2018 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: "One Mind" in Hua Yen thought

Content:

Sherab said:

even ultimate truth is merely a conventional truth.

Astus wrote:

Ultimate has a meaning only relative to conventional, hence it is a conventional concept like all other concepts, otherwise one would have to claim that there is an ultimate concept.

Sherab said:

This would mean that the ultimate is a convention just like the relative.

Astus wrote:

So it is.

Sherab said:

As the ultimate truth is also a conventional truth, and since you said that the ultimate truth is the perception of emptiness of dependently originated phenomena, that very perception is not a perception of emptiness etc. but is merely labeled as a perception and is every bit as illusory as any perceived relative phenomena.

Astus wrote:
Even emptiness is empty.

Sherab said:
So even perception of emptiness cannot be trusted as a true perception. In fact, nothing can be trusted as true whether relatively or ultimately once the statement that the ultimate truth is merely a conventional truth is accepted.

Astus wrote:
Nothing should be trusted at all. When the mind abides nowhere, that is when it is free from clinging.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, February 27th, 2018 at 10:33 PM
Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective
Content:
Dharma Flower said:
Numerous books are freely available on Pure Land teachings from a Ch'an/Zen perspective, particularly through the YMBA.

Astus wrote:
Could you quote a few sentences from those works that clearly state one can attain liberation in this life through the exclusive practice of recitation?

For instance, in <https://ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/essence-sutra> to the Shorter Sutra it's explicitly stated that recitation is the way to attain birth:

"Reciting the Buddha-name with faith and vows is a true causal basis for the Supreme Vehicle. The four kinds of Pure Land [the Land Where Saints and Ordinary Beings Dwell Together, the Land of Expedient Liberation, the Land of Real Reward, and the Land of Eternally Quiescent Light] are the wondrous fruits of the One Vehicle. If you have the causal basis, then the result is sure to follow.

...

The powerful function of this sutra is to enable us to be reborn in the Pure Land and never fall back. Rebirth in the Pure Land can be categorized in terms of the Four Pure Lands, and also into nine grades in each land. Here I will give a brief explanation of the characteristics of the Four Lands.

If you recite the Buddha-name without cutting off your delusions of views and thoughts, depending on how scattered or how concentrated you are, you are reborn in the level of the Land Where Saints and Ordinary Beings Live Together.

If you recite the Buddha-name to the point of singlemindedness (phenomenal level), your delusions of views and thoughts are cut off and you are born in the land that is the fruit of practicing expedient means: the Land of Expedient Liberation [where Arhats live].

If you recite the Buddha-name to the point of singlemindedness (noumenon or inner truth level), and you smash from one to forty-one levels of delusion and ignorance, then

you are born in the Pure Land of Real Reward [where Bodhisattvas live].
If you recite the Buddha-name to the point that ignorance and delusion are totally cut off, this is the highest reward and you will be reborn in the Land of Eternally Quiescent Light [where the Buddhas dwell]."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 28th, 2018 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: The Interpenetration of Principle & Phenomena

Content:

Sentient Light said:

the point you're trying to make here

Astus wrote:

It is simply that recitation in itself is insufficient as a method for liberation in this life. The biography of Hai Xian shows that he practised many virtues and lived a renunciate life, and that is already a lot more than simply intoning the six syllables a few times in one's living room every day.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 28th, 2018 at 7:04 PM

Title: Re: The Interpenetration of Principle & Phenomena

Content:

Sentient Light said:

Solid point, but afaik, only Shinran explicitly teaches only recitation. Honen was well-practiced in many additional methods.

Astus wrote:

Honen was the one who started the teaching of senju nenbutsu in Japan, where simply the oral recitation of the name is sufficient for attaining birth. The four auxiliary practices are subordinate to nenbutsu and their application is conditional.

Sentient Light said:

Many of the masters I listed also practiced Chan/Thien and some Tantra.

Astus wrote:

In other words, they practised buddha remembrance within the larger framework of the six paramitas.

Sentient Light said:

the quiescence of the mind results in direct perception of one's Buddha-nature and penetrating insight into the nature of phenomena.

Astus wrote:

Even non-Buddhists can attain the various dhyanas, so a quiet mind is insufficient for liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 2nd, 2018 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:

Grigoris said:

It seems like a fine distinction based on the fact that there was no conception of an atman in phenomena so the Buddha's teaching on anatman was not enough to cover the emptiness of phenomena too.

Malcolm said:

Yes, this is the observation made about Nikaya/Agama sūtras.

Astus wrote:

The view that sravakas do not know the emptiness of phenomena is more a Yogacara interpretation than a universal one. After a number of quotes - e.g.

<https://suttacentral.net/en/sa297>

(<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.035.than.html>) - from the Agamas the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mah%C4%81praj%C3%B1%C4%81p%C4%81ramit%C4%81upade%C5%9Ba> states:

"In place after place within the sutras of the Śrāvakas are discussions such as these which explain the emptiness of all dharmas."

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf, http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T25n1509_018#0193c01)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 3rd, 2018 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

But also: the āgamāḥ do not necessarily equal "śrāvaka Buddhadharma". Śrāvaka Buddhadharma is also Abhidharma, treatises, etc.

Astus wrote:

If it is said that sravakas do not see the emptiness of dharmas, but believe that dharmas are self-existent, and that belief is taught not in the agamas but in the abhidharma, then which abhidharma is taught by the Buddha before the Mahayana sutras?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 3rd, 2018 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Great Discourse on the Emptiness of Dharmas and its analogue do not really discuss the emptiness of phenomena, it refers to the emptiness of persons.

Astus wrote:

It might not be the best example, but that's how it is interpreted in the MPPS. And there is a reason to say that it confirms the emptiness of appearances, because it talks of how there is no self in dependent origination, in other words, appearances are empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 3rd, 2018 at 7:09 AM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:

Malcolm said:

One can infer the selflessness of phenomena from teachings in the Agamas, but it is not directly taught there.

Astus wrote:

Nor is it taught that they are self-existent, hence nothing to oppose the emptiness of appearances to. And as far as the aggregates and sense-areas go, they are taught to be without self many times.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 3rd, 2018 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This the selflessness of the person, not of phenomena.

Astus wrote:

The selflessness of person is that there is no person, only the aggregates, while the selflessness of phenomena is that the aggregates themselves are without essence. The sutra talks about how phenomena themselves are dependent and without any will of their own, so it matches what the Lankavatara Sutra (2.24, tr Red Pine) says: "And what does it mean to know that dharmas have no self? It means to be aware that the self-existence of the skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas is imaginary, that the skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas are devoid of a self or anything that belongs to a self, that the skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas are assemblages tied to desire and karma and that they arise from the interplay of conditions but are themselves passive, and that all dharmas are like this."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 4th, 2018 at 2:12 AM

Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?

Content:
Malcolm said:
it is not extensively mentioned in these texts.

Astus wrote:
And the reason for that is that dharmas are not taught to have/be svabhava in them either, furthermore, even the concept of dharma as a fundamental element is missing. And according to Bhikkhu Bodhi (Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p 3): "Even in the Abhidhamma Pitaka itself the dhamma theory is not yet expressed as an explicit philosophical tenet; this comes only later, in the Commentaries."

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, March 4th, 2018 at 5:04 AM
Title: Re: What are the General Mahayana Teachings?
Content:
Malcolm said:
Whatever the case may be, the issue is not addressed at length in the Nikayas/Agamas.

Astus wrote:
So it is.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, March 11th, 2018 at 4:49 AM
Title: Re: Nāgārjuna's Fourfold Negation & Śrāvakayāna
Content:
Coëmgenu said:
How does venerable Nāgārjuna's fourfold (or eightfold) negation build, via logic, inference, sūtra-citation, etc, upon the various negations presented in śrāvakayāna (i.e. Sarvāstivāda, Mahāsāṃghika, Theravāda/Pāli, etc) literature?

Astus wrote:
It is merely a format to negate all possibilities, an extension on denying the extremes of existence and annihilation. It is not an argument in itself.

Coëmgenu said:
And, a last question: from where does this treatment of the Chariot simile by the venerable Candrakīrti originate? Which text does he discuss it in?

Astus wrote:
Madhyamakavatara 6.151-161.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, March 11th, 2018 at 6:06 PM
Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thinking in terms of tradition and lineage is not a particularly useful approach, because it focuses only on people and communities instead of the precepts and the teachings. Neither tradition nor lineage mean much in terms of view and practice. At the same time, traditions themselves usually try to include everything that there is in Buddhism, and build a more or less systematic interpretation of all the teachings, thus showing the same approach of inclusiveness as those who today want to embrace the divergent teachings and methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2018 at 1:28 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is not true. They mean everything. For example, you will never find creation and completion stage in common Mahāyāna, nor the view of four-fold emptiness in Śrāvakayāna.

Astus wrote:

Is common Mahayana a tradition? What lineage claims to be its upholder?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2018 at 2:07 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

we define traditions based on the disciplines we follow.

Astus wrote:

In that case those who take the five precepts, the bodhisattva vows, and the samayas, can follow sravaka, bodhisattva, and vajrayana teachings at the same time. After all, one of the four main Mahayana vows is mastering all teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2018 at 7:17 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

as long as they take care not to mix up the different levels of teachings.

Astus wrote:

So being "Drukpa Kagyu" or "Rinzai Zen" is not an issue and has no relevance. That's why I said that tradition and lineage were not the key factors.

Malcolm said:

With respect to the last point, however, that is really oriented towards mastering the five sciences.

Astus wrote:

What I referred to was the https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=verse_of_four_universal_vows, and that says "Dharma gates", meaning Buddhist teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2018 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

If you start practicing Vajrayana, you will no longer be someone who practices Rinzai, and vice versa.

Astus wrote:

Neither Vajrayana nor Rinzai Zen means a specific method but they include various teachings and techniques, don't they?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 12th, 2018 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

Vajryāna does in fact mean a specific method: creation stage and completion stage, which themselves depends on empowerment.

Astus wrote:

Is there anything in Vajrayana that could not be categorised under those two stages? If no, are all creation and completion stage practices equal? If no, why call it a specific method, when they are actually large categories of numerous methods? Furthermore, what would not allow someone to practise first a sadhana of Tara, then contemplate on Joshu's Mu, and finish off with observing the disgusting nature of the body?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Grigoris said:

Nothing would "not allow" you to do this. But why would you?

Astus wrote:

There might be some who find it beneficial to combine practices like that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Simon E. said:

Sounds like a smorgasbord

Astus wrote:

How is it any different from complex groupings of teachings like what you see in Huayan, Tiantai, Nyingma, and Kagyu?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

one cannot randomly use one completion method given in one system with that of another system

Astus wrote:

But one can use them systematically, like what is itself a combination of different methods from all three systems: the six dharmas of Naropa. And if one has learnt different techniques from different teachers, it is quite normal to practise them, from which comes a person who can then teach such previously diverse techniques as a single set. Isn't that rather the usual situation, while knowing only one technique and having a single teacher is fairly rare?

Malcolm said:

What people do in their own caves is their own business, but I have never heard Vajrayāna master teach Joshu's mu. It isn't needed.

Astus wrote:

The need arises from what works.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 4:23 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is how we roll in Vajrayāna. If you mix systems, it is considered very bad.

Astus wrote:

What was the point in history when systems became frozen and no new lineages emerged?

Malcolm said:

That is very bad, not allowed, and the Dharmapālas of both systems will become unhappy and punish the offender.

Astus wrote:

That being so, it seems to be more of a Vajrayana issue, as nobody else is concerned with keeping the teachings and methods separate, even if there were periods when "purity of the tradition" was deemed important.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Simon E. said:

the teachings of those two schools are posited on a relationship with a bone fide teacher of the lineage. They are not stand alone buffets.

Astus wrote:

Are all teachers the same, or are there differences in terms of what they specialise in? If there are specialists, it means one has to study with more than one in order to learn things beyond the basics (or sometimes even just the basics).

The Brahma Net Sutra (BDK ed, p 50) has this as one of the minor precepts:

"Do Not Miss a Chance to Attend Dharma Lectures

My disciples, the Vinaya scripture is lectured on everywhere. When a large house is the venue for a Dharma lecture, newly awakened bodhisattvas should bring their sutra and vinaya scrolls and go to the place of that Dharma teacher to listen and ask questions. Whether the venue is under the trees in the forest, or in a room owned by the sangha, or any other place, you should listen to the best of your ability. If you fail to attend such a lecture, this constitutes a minor transgression of the precepts."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Miroku said:

do you mix suddenly rinzai things into your teachings although you might be only slightly familiar with them?

Astus wrote:

Zen is not a matter of method but a matter of realisation. Once the nature of mind is realised, the buddha-mind can manifest the skilful means. So the main benefit a teacher can provide is appropriate, personal instructions, therefore they can be practically anything.

"If they use their hands, I hit them on the hands. If they use their mouths, I hit them in the mouth. If they use their eyes, I hit them in the eye. ... There is no fixed doctrine to give to people, only methods to cure diseases and release bonds."

(Recorded Sayings of Linji, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 33)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2018 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

Tsongkhapa was really the last Tibetan to initiate the founding of a new lineage of teachings.

Astus wrote:

How does that compare to the revealed teachings in Nyingma, like the Longchen Nyingthig and the Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo?

Malcolm said:

The original question involved mixing different levels of teachings.

Astus wrote:

It was along the lines of "we don't need to limit ourselves to one tradition, and we can take the best parts of many traditions as it helps us in our practice and daily life".

Malcolm said:

Lineage is the most important thing in Vajrayāna because the practice in general involves initiation into various mandalas, and the procedure must be like impressing a seal in wax.

Astus wrote:

Although this I haven't really heard about actually happening - except perhaps by Yogi Chen - if the method and transmission is left intact, any Vajrayana practice could be incorporated into another system, like in Tendai, could it not? Tantric rituals are still present in Chinese Buddhism, just as they were there in Zen in Japan before the 18th century reformations.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2018 at 4:27 AM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, this means mixing levels of teachings.

Astus wrote:

Integrating into one's practice the various levels of discipline for instance is a viable and recommended approach, while at the same time it's also possible to stick to only one type. On the other hand, at least for sravaka and bodhisattva precepts, there are arguments (and traditions) both for and against such mixing.

Malcolm said:

There is no such thing as the "best parts of many traditions" because all Buddhadharma is perfect in the beginning, middle, and end.

Astus wrote:

But there are always individual preferences. And although it may not seem fruitful to mix one's own salad, eventually, through increasing familiarity and deepening of understanding, one arrives at a view that matches one of the systems. And even if not, one's discipline, concentration, faith, and mindfulness strengthens.

Malcolm said:

once you have joined Vajrayāna teachings, you won't really be a Tendai, etc., practitioner anymore.

Astus wrote:

Why would that be?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 14th, 2018 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: A Zen story that stayed with me for decades

Content:

Drenpa said:

some definitive source re how these stories are used traditionally with a teacher

Astus wrote:

The classic way where stories are used for training is phrase contemplation (<http://sweepingzen.com/kanhua-chan/>). For the short version, read Wumen's comment on Zhaozhou's Wu. For a longer explanation see http://hsuyun.budismo.net/en/dharma/chan_sessions2.html. For an extensive explanation read http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 16th, 2018 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

My particular favorite are these words from the Tientai and Ch'an master Ou-i

Astus wrote:

That quote does not say that simply reciting the name is equal to the realisation of buddha-nature. In fact, <https://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas/explanation-text/main-portion/practice> about the practice, just before explaining its two levels:

"If you hear [the Buddha-name] and believe in it, if you believe in it and make vows, then you are fit to recite the Buddha-name. If you do not have faith and do not make vows, it is as if you never heard [the Buddha-name] at all. Merely hearing the name of Amitabha [without faith and vows] may become a long-term causal basis [for your enlightenment], but it cannot be called the "wisdom that comes from hearing""

Dharma Flower said:

In terms of my personal practice, I am interested in learning about Pure Land teachings from a Ch'an/Zen perspective.

Astus wrote:

Then you might also consider those who did not view name recitation as equal to Zen practice. Such teachers were Bodhidharma, Huineng, Linji, Dogen, and Hakuin, just to mention the most well known ones.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 16th, 2018 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

ItsRaining said:

A lot of teachers do use recitation as a Chan practice though, I think Chinul and Hanshan Deqing both wrote a short text on recitation from a Chan perspective.

Astus wrote:

Of course, recitation can be used for meditation. But for what purpose is the important question. There are two goals one can reach with it: calming the mind, and attaining birth in Sukhavati. Insight, or in Zen terms: seeing the nature of mind, is not within the practice's scope. One common difference between the interpretations of Pure Land and Zen teachers is that those who advocate recitation (and other forms of recollection) of Amitabha within Zen emphasise the need to have not only pure morality but also a calm mind in order to attain birth, while Pure Land teachers emphasise vow and faith as the essential conditions of birth, and recitation as a support for them. What nobody seems to claim is that with recitation alone one could actually attain enlightenment in this life.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 16th, 2018 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

ItsRaining said:

Though by the end it is no longer just a verbal recitation.

Astus wrote:

That's the thing, it changes into a different sort of practice than repeating the name, hence it is no longer recitation. Such a practice of buddha-remembrance was already taught by Daoxin (see <https://www.dailyzen.com/journal/calming-the-mind>), and in the Pure Land tradition it is called the <http://eubuddhist.blogspot.hu/2015/10/real-mark-buddha-remembrance.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 26th, 2018 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

distinction Zen makes between kensho and full Buddhahood

Astus wrote:

That's not a generally accepted distinction.

Dharma Flower said:

According to Zen master Hakuin, a Nembutsu practitioner can experience kensho or small enlightenment through reciting the Nembutsu, with the understanding that the Buddha-nature within is ultimately the same as Amida Buddha's:
<https://www.lionsroar.com/the-hidden-lamp/>

Astus wrote:

That is a story - not a statement by Hakuin on nenbutsu - but even there, the realisation does not come about because of nenbutsu.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 27th, 2018 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: Pure Land teachings from a Zen perspective

Content:

Dharma Flower said:

Please see this post from Meido Moore Roshi, I'm sorry if I've misinterpreted it:
<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=441660#p399918>

Astus wrote:

He did not write that Hakuin had confirmed such a view where nenbutsu could be the cause of kensho. In fact, he wrote: "nothing to do with Nembutsu itself really".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 27th, 2018 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Matt J said:

These traditions rely on at least three claims to support its contention: 1) that consciousness, stripped of all bliss, mental, energetic, and physical bodies, has no distinguishable characteristics;

Astus wrote:

If one removes all characteristics, clearly there are no characteristics left. The difference between substantialists (e.g. Vedanta) and insubstantialists (Buddhists), is that the latter does not assume an invisible essence once the onion layers (pancakosa/panca(upadana)skandha) are gone.

Matt J said:

The issue with the Buddhist view is that the mind is not physical, so what keeps minds apart? If the mind is bound or bordered in some way, this boundary or border should be discoverable within the mind.

Astus wrote:

What keeps thoughts apart? Does being apart make any sense without spatial dimensions? In any case, minds have different causes and conditions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 12:41 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Rick said:

To call Brahman an "invisible essence" is to impute attributes to attributelessness.

Astus wrote:

As long as it is assumed to exist, (not to mention being conscious and blissful), there is an assumption of essence. But if it is not considered existent, then there is nothing to talk about.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

it suggests that it is possible to peel the layers back and get to some "zero".

Astus wrote:

In a way it is possible, and that is the standard analysis performed in vipasyana.

"when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found."
(Bhavanakrama, in Stages of Meditation, p 129)

Queequeg said:

one utilizes concepts to remove concepts... in practice it would seem this would just lead to infinite regression

Astus wrote:

Not at all. One first has to eliminate wrong views with the right view, then it is possible to become free from views.

"Remedying illusion by means of an illusion is like rubbing sticks together to make fire: with the two sticks serving as cause to one another, flames burst forth, the sticks are consumed, their ashes fly away, and the smoke disappears, [leaving nothing behind]."
(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 2, in Apocryphal Scriptures, BDK ed, p 62)

Queequeg said:

If I'm conceptualizing, I prefer the idea of a nexus of causes and conditions to illustrate the nature of self. One can leave the causes and conditions in place, without peeling them back, and still get some notion of the "self" to be some meta effect of these intersecting causes and conditions.

Astus wrote:

Either by contemplating the elements or dependent origination, in both cases one looks into how experiences lack an enduring essence.

"If a bodhisattva attains a fixed mind, he should observe that the twelve links are empty and without a proprietor. Ignorance does not perceive that it creates conduct. Conduct does not perceive that it has arisen from ignorance. Conduct simply arises conditioned by ignorance. It is just like a sprout arising from the seed of a plant. The seed does not perceive that it produces the sprout. Nor does the sprout perceive that it has arisen from the seed. Likewise up to old age and death. [The bodhisattva] observes and realizes that each of these twelve links has neither proprietor nor self. It is just like plants of the external [world] that have no proprietor. Merely out of wrong views one misconceives that there is self."
(Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation, BDK ed, p 74)

Queequeg said:

Incidentally, I think the concept of a nexus of causes and conditions very aptly illustrates how discrete mindstreams can be posited while also illustrating how such mindstreams can relate to each other.

Astus wrote:

Minds cannot intersect, nor relate to each other directly.

"The conscious construction of the difference between oneself and others is engendered from the seminal permeation of belief in self."
(Summary of the Great Vehicle, BDK ed, p 37)

And,

"Knowledge of those,
[Who claim] to know other minds,
Is unreal,
Just as one's knowledge of one's own mind
[Is unreal]."
(Vimsatika, v 21, in A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience, p 274)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

My point is, the onion or plantain tree as a metaphor leaves something to be desired.

Astus wrote:

Is <https://dharmaheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=441900#p441900> that "it assumes characteristics to peel back, suggestive of a process replete with all manner of concepts - one utilizes concepts to remove concepts... in practice it would seem this would just lead to infinite regression."? If so, let me answer to the below point.

Queequeg said:

This is using a process of analysis which I suggested above leads to an infinite regression. If done meticulously. Why? Because there is always a remainder.

Astus wrote:

The quoted example of sticks burned by their fire is quite universal in Mahayana. Let me give here Tsongkhapa's (The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path, vol 3, p 344-345) more extensive response to the objection.

Objection: Since analytical discrimination of the meaning of selflessness is conceptual, it is contradictory that it should produce the nonconceptual sublime wisdom. This is because there must be harmony between an effect and its cause.

Reply: The Bhagavan himself spoke about this using an example. The Kasyapa Chapter Sutra (Kasyapa-parivarta-sutra) says:

Kasyapa, it is thus. For example, two trees are dragged against each other by the wind and from that a fire starts, burning the two trees. In the same way, Kasyapa, if you have correct analytical discrimination, the power of a noble being's wisdom will emerge. With its emergence, correct analytical discrimination will itself be burned up.

This means that the wisdom of a noble being emerges from analytical discrimination.

Kamalasila's second Stages of Meditation says:

Thus, yogis analyze with wisdom and when they definitely do not apprehend the essence of any thing ultimately, they enter into the nonconceptual concentration. They know that all phenomena lack essence. There are some whose meditation does not involve the use of wisdom to investigate the essence of things; they only cultivate the sheer and complete elimination of mental activity. Their conceptions never end and they never know the absence of essence because they lack the light of wisdom. Thus, when the fire which is a precise understanding of reality arises from correct analytical discrimination, then - as in the case of the fire from the friction of two sticks rubbed together - the wood of conceptual thought is burned up. This is what the Bhagavan said. Otherwise, since it would be impossible for an uncontaminated path to arise from a contaminated path, an ordinary being could not attain the state of a noble being because of the dissimilarity between the cause and the effect. In the same way, it is evident that there are limitless cases of dissimilar causes and effects, such as the production of a green seedling from a gray seed, the production of smoke from fire, and the production of a male child from a woman. A noble being's nonconceptual sublime wisdom is perceptual knowledge of the meaning of selflessness - the emptiness of the object of the conception of the two selves. In order to develop that sort of wisdom at a higher stage, your meditation must now precisely analyze the object of the conception of self and realize that it does not exist. Therefore, although this is conceptual, it is a cause which is very conducive to the nonconceptual sublime wisdom. As previously cited, the King of Concentrations Sutra says:

If you analytically discriminate the lack of self in phenomena

And if you cultivate that precise analysis in meditation,

This will cause you to reach the goal, the attainment of nirvana.

There is no peace through any other cause.

Therefore, Kamalasila's third Stages of Meditation says,

Even though it has a conceptual nature, its nature is one of proper mental activity.

Therefore, because it engenders the nonconceptual sublime wisdom, those who seek the sublime wisdom should rely upon it.

Queequeg said:

In practice, one takes the analysis to the limits of one's experience, but if you're completely honest, there is always a remainder, and so one can't be sure all analysis has been exhausted; we can only extend to the limits of our analysis.

Astus wrote:

There are very clear boundaries given in Buddhism, commonly in the format of the five aggregates and six sensory areas (see the Loka Suttas at SN

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.082.than.html> and

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ati/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.044.than.html>).

"Subhuti: How does perfect wisdom instruct the Tathagatas in this world, and what is it that the Tathagatas call 'world'?"

The Lord: The five skandhas have by the Tathagata have declared as 'world' [loka].

Which five? Form, feeling, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness."

(PP8K, 12.2, tr Conze)

A larger list of "all things" is found in the abhidharma works.

Queequeg said:

The whole point of the metaphor suggests that the mistake that the nexus is a self is unsupported.

Astus wrote:

One relevant issue here is whether that nexus is real or not. If there is a network of things, one could just call that one's true nature, one's self, like one can call the conglomeration of parts one's body.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

There is something more in the analytical approach that is not mentioned. It's the Buddha's teaching of the selflessness of dharmas.

Astus wrote:

The insubstantiality of appearances is covered within analysis.

Queequeg said:

That bridges the chasm between analytical consideration and real wisdom. When the Buddha's teaching is heard, then our analysis is not primary exploration but rather evaluation and confirmation of the Buddha's teaching. When we have analyzed enough that the Buddha's word is true, we leap the chasm and enter the Buddha wisdom through faith.

Astus wrote:

If the end result is not direct perception, then it is not wisdom one achieves. Accepting the teaching because one trusts it is OK, but it's not enough for eliminating ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Accepting the teaching because one trusts it is OK, but it's not enough for eliminating ignorance.

Queequeg said:

Agreed, except not just ok, essential.

Astus wrote:

There are faith followers and there are dharma followers.

"What is a person who follows trust (sraddhanusarin)? It is he who, having acquired the equipment and having weak faculties, applies himself to the comprehension of the Truth while recalling the instruction given by others.

What is a person who follows the teaching (dharmanusarin)? It is he who, having acquired the equipment and having sharp faculties, applies himself to the comprehension of the Truth, by himself recalling the teaching dominated by the Truth." (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 202-203, tr Boin-Webb)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 30th, 2018 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

I'm referring to faith as the necessary disposition to even begin the path. If there is no faith, then one will not even hear the teaching. There has to be a disposition where one accepts what one hears is true, at least tentatively, without knowing whether it actually is true. All of us, without exception, started that way. We did not know Dharma before we heard it, but we listened with a modicum, at least, of faith, and thereby internalized it enough to take it seriously.

Astus wrote:

That initial faith is not related to the move from analysis to insight, as it is a condition for hearing, not for contemplation and application.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 31st, 2018 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

With wisdom our analysis does not become an endless austerity.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by endless austerity?

Queequeg said:

From whence wisdom?

We receive it from the Buddha.

How do we receive it?

By listening with faith.

Faith is essential.

Astus wrote:

I did not say there is no need for faith on the path. What I say is that faith is not the

bridge between contemplation and insight.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 31st, 2018 at 2:45 AM

Title: Re: 'Dharmas do not arise'

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I do encounter this declaration on DharmaWheel regularly, but I don't understand it.

What I always want to say is 'but I still have to mow the lawn'. So - what does it mean?

Astus wrote:

Consider the basic definition of conditionality:

"When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.1.03.than.html>)

Arising and ceasing are one of the common characteristics of phenomena. The goal in Buddhism is to leave the unstable conditioned realm for the stable unconditioned liberation. When extinction is realised, there is no more birth. That way no birth, or no arising, as a synonym of nirvana.

"The Knowledge of Destruction with the Knowledge of Non-Arising is Bodhi."

(Kosha ch 6, v 67a-b; vol 3, p 1023)

So when it comes to Mahayana, that dharmas are unborn is like that dharmas are emptiness, as these terms emphasise not only that there is no svabhava, but also that nirvana is not apart from samsara. The reason for calling appearances unborn can be summarised like this:

"Being does not arise, since it exists. Non-being does not arise, since it does not exist.

Being and non-being [together] do not arise, due to [their] heterogeneity. Consequently they do not endure or vanish.

That which has been born cannot be born, nor can that which is unborn be born. What is being born now, being [partly] born, [partly] unborn, cannot be born either."

(Sunyatasaptati 4-5, tr Lindtner)

On the practical side, the realisation of appearances as unborn is one of the central attainments of a bodhisattva.

"They are wholly detached from mind, intellect, consciousness, thought, and ideation. Unattached, not grasping, equal to space, having entered into the nature of openness - this is called having attained acceptance of the nonorigination of things.

Then, imbued with this acceptance, as soon as enlightening beings attain the eighth

stage, Immovability, they attain the profound abode of enlightening beings"
(Flower Ornament Scripture, ch 26, p 765)

"And how do bodhisattvas become adept at avoiding views of arising, duration, and cessation? Since whatever exists is like an illusion or a dream and its existence does not arise from itself, from another, or from a combination of both, but as a distinction of one's own mind, they therefore see external existence as nonexistent, consciousness as not arising, and conditions as not combining but arising due to projections. When they see that all internal or external dharmas in the three realms cannot be grasped and are devoid of self-existence, their views of arising cease. And once they know that the self-existence of everything is illusory, they attain the forbearance of non-arising. And once they attain the forbearance of non-arising, they avoid views of arising, duration, and cessation. This is how bodhisattvas become adept at distinguishing and avoiding views of arising, duration and cessation."
(Lankavatara Sutra, ch 30, tr Red Pine)

"Mañjuśrī, all dharmas are equal [in their emptiness]. Because they are equal, they do not abide. Because they do not abide, they do not move. Because they do not move, they rely on nothing. Because they rely on nothing, they have no place. Because they have no place, they have no birth. Because they have no birth, they have no death. If one can see dharmas in this way, one's mind is not deluded. Because one's mind is not deluded, one accords with true reality. Because one accords with true reality, one does nothing. Because one does nothing, one does not come. Because one does not come, one does not go. Because one does not go, one is in unity with true suchness. Because one is in unity with true suchness, one follows dharma nature. Because one follows dharma nature, one's mind does not move. Because one's mind does not move, one has no expectations. Why not? Because one has attained bodhi. If one has attained bodhi, one does not abide in any dharmas. Because one does not abide in dharmas, one realizes that they have neither birth nor death, neither names nor appearances. Mañjuśrī, if sentient beings are attached to dharmas, their afflictions arise. If their afflictions arise, they cannot attain bodhi."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra46.html>)

"If you can comprehend that the myriad phenomena are unborn, that [deluded] mind is like an illusory transformation, so that you are everywhere pure, this is enlightenment."
(Recorded Sayings of Linji, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 21)

At that time, the Buddha proclaimed to Simwang Bodhisattva: "Oh son of good family! The acquiescence to the nonproduction of dharmas [means to realize that] dharmas are originally unproduced. Since all practices produce nothing, there is no way to practice this nonproduction. So achieving the acquiescence to nonproduction is in fact a deception."
(Vajrasamadhi Sutra, p 118, tr Buswell)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 4th, 2018 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Samatha and vipassana in Seon

Content:

Varis said:

From what I understand jigwan practice comes from Tiantai.

Astus wrote:

Not so. Samatha and vipasyana are standard categories in Buddhism everywhere. Furthermore, Huayan teachings, and not Tiantai, are the most prominent in Korea aside from Chan. As an example, Dushun, first teacher of Huayanzong, wrote (in Cleary's translation): "Cessation and Contemplation in the Five Teachings of the Hua-yen" (http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T45n1867_001). But as for what Chou himself practised, that would require studying his writings first.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 10th, 2018 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are some whose meditation does not involve the use of wisdom to investigate the essence of things; they only cultivate the sheer and complete elimination of mental activity. Their conceptions never end and they never know the absence of essence because they lack the light of wisdom.

Queequeg said:

They go on contemplating endlessly trying to find "nothing", ie. analysis without remainder. Pursuing an impossible end is, in my view, and endless austerity.

Astus wrote:

Kamalasila in the quote says that those who do not perform proper analysis do not end their conceptualisation, even if they temporarily suspend it. So it is the opposite of what you say.

Queequeg said:

Do you yourself know your assertion to be true? You don't need to answer that. Its rhetorical. You can if you want to, though.

Astus wrote:

The assertion that one can eliminate wrong views through learning, understanding, and contemplation? It works in science, works in philosophy, works in everyday life, and it works in Buddhism as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 2:31 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:
Their conceptions never end
What do you call that? I call that an endless austerity.

Astus wrote:
"Their conceptions never end" refers to those who do not analyse correctly but merely suspend thinking. If analysis is correct, it ends all conceptualisation, because it brings about the realisation that all appearances are empty.

See also the commentary on the quoted section by HHDL (Stages of Meditation, p 134):

"In order to understand the true nature of things, it is vital that a practitioner use intelligence and wisdom in the process of examination. As the author clearly states, the mere elimination of mental activity does not constitute meditation on suchness. When mentally inactive, an individual may not be misconceiving the self, but he or she also lacks any sense of discerning selflessness; this sheds no light, and so the individual is not free from the fabrications of misconceptions."

Queequeg said:
Again, do you know this? Or are you inferring?

Astus wrote:
It is an inference.

Queequeg said:
If sheer analysis worked, then the Buddha's insights about reality should have emerged ubiquitously.

Astus wrote:
Did non-violence emerge ubiquitously? If not, does that make it an incorrect morality?

Queequeg said:
the Buddha's insights have been limited to the Buddha and those who have taken refuge in him and his teachings.

Astus wrote:
Why wouldn't it be so? Even among those who have faith in the Triple Jewel there are people without correct morality, correct meditation, and correct wisdom.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 2:43 AM
Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?
Content:

Queequeg said:
My point, and I'm not sure where you stand based on this statement, is that the realization of emptiness is not possible without the Buddha pointing it out to you first.

Malcolm said:

Revise "Buddha" to "virtuous mentor," and we are in perfect agreement, though Astus will vehemently disagree.

Astus wrote:

The disagreement is not whether one needs to learn, but how learning can happen. For instance, Nichiren did not have a teacher who told him all he had then imparted on his disciples.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 4:55 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

From whence wisdom?

Astus wrote:

To quote from the same book (p 77):

"Without the practice of wisdom, the first five of the six perfections cannot actually become practices of perfection. In order to cultivate such wisdom, you must first cultivate the genuine unmistakable philosophical view that is known as the view of the Middle Way, or Madhyamika."

Also, on the relationship between wisdom and faith (p 90):

"Unless the "child of noble family," or a practitioner, is able to develop the wisdom of special insight, generation of faith based on knowledge is not possible. Of course, a person can have devoted faith, but when he or she develops faith as a result of comprehending ultimate reality, it is supported by reason and knowledge."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nichiren studied under many Dharma teachers. Thus, your example is invalid.

Astus wrote:

So by the requirement for a teacher you accept any Buddhist teacher, even if the encounter is minimal and later one does not even (fully) agree with that person?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 2:40 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

If this is a general question, that's another story.

Astus wrote:

It is a general one, not about Nichiren in particular.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 3:18 PM

Title: Re: Mind-streams: Separate?

Content:

Queequeg said:

All this is well and good, but none of it accounts for the source of wisdom. Hence, without wisdom, no wisdom.

Astus wrote:

It does account for it: "cultivate the genuine unmistakable philosophical view"

The traditional triplet (<https://suttacentral.net/dn33/en/sujato>): "wisdom produced by reflection (cintāmayā paññā), learning (sutamayā paññā), and meditation (bhāvanāmayā paññā)"

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=443398#p443398> summed it up nicely:

"Prajñā, wisdom, is the result acquired from hearing the Dharma, reflecting upon it, and cultivating what was heard and reflected upon."

Asanga (Summary of the Great Vehicle, ch 8, BDK ed, p 92; elaborated on in chapter 3):

"For all bodhisattvas the cause is
The permeation of hearing [scriptural] discourse,
For nonimaginative wisdom is
True and correct reflection."

Summary of the relationship between the three causes (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 188-189, tr Boin-Webb):

"How does one become [a person] dwelling in the teachings (dharmaviharin)? One does not become [a person] dwelling in the teachings only through the practice of listening (erudition) and reflection (srutacintaprayoga) without having recourse to meditation (mental cultivation) (bhavanam anagamyā). Neither does one become [a person] dwelling in the teachings only through the practice of meditation (mental cultivation) (bhavanaprayoga) without having recourse to listening (erudition) and reflection (srutacintam anagamyā). It is by having recourse to both, by living according to both,

that one becomes [a person] dwelling in the teachings. What consists of listening (erudition) (srutamaya) should be understood by means of study, recitation and predication (udgrahayasvadyayadesana). What consists of mental cultivation (bhavanamayd) should be understood by means of the practice of concentration (samadhiprayoga) and dissatisfaction (asamtusti). The practice of concentration should be understood by means of constant and careful practice (satatyasatkrtyaprayoga) and unperturbed practice (aviparitaprayoga). Dissatisfaction should be understood by means of practice aimed at an [as yet] untasted (anasvadita) higher tranquillity (uttarasamatha)."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 13th, 2018 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and breathing

Content:

rory said:

Bhikshu Dharmamitra translated:

Zhiyi: Six Dharma Gates to the Sublime: A Classic Meditation Manual on Traditional Indian Buddhist Meditation

Astus wrote:

In that work Zhiyi modifies and expands on one of the Indian methods of anapanasmrti. It does not include any sort of "energy" (qi/prana) practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 15th, 2018 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and breathing

Content:

ItsRaining said:

I remember reading a Tiantai text that did teach it, I don't remember if it was by Zhiyi or someone else though. It recommended Zhiyi's six sounds as well as the movement of Qi around the body.

Varis said:

Zhiyi taught the six sounds? They feature quite prominently in various texts about nourishing life practices in the Daoist cannon, and in particular in the writings of Dao Hongjing, who organized the teachings of the Shangqing sect.

rory said:

Livia Kohn in Daoist Body Cultivation University of Hawaii Press, 2006

states that Zhiyi in Xiuxi zhiguan zuochan fayao discusses the 6 healing breaths.

Astus wrote:

It is found in chapter 9 of

http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/EBM_excerpts/EBM_X-16_X-09.pdf, on page 8 of that pdf. The same in the Chinese original is

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T46n1915_001#0471c26.

Salguero (in *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*, p 103-105) writes that Zhiyi makes use of Chinese healing concepts there and differentiates it from the Indian method of twelve breaths by using different words (qi 氣 and xi 息) for "breath".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 16th, 2018 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and breathing

Content:

Anders said:

"some dude somewhere sat down and discovered this"

Astus wrote:

Would you say the same of other beliefs, like the five elements and the forces of yin and yang? Then Zou Yan might be that "some dude". But there are several other "energy" views out there, so just as combination with Chinese concepts can be acceptable, we might as well integrate readily available Hermetic, Kabbalistic, or any New Age system.

Anders said:

The more essential proof is, I think, in the continuous upholding of such methods in the lineages as the seal of authentication.

Astus wrote:

Tradition is no proof, otherwise the Vedas should be accepted as well. As the Buddha said (<https://suttacentral.net/mn95/en/bodhi>):

“There are five things, Bhāradvāja, that may turn out in two different ways here and now. What five? Faith, approval, oral tradition, reasoned cogitation, and reflective acceptance of a view. These five things may turn out in two different ways here and now. Now something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken. Again, something may be fully approved of...well transmitted...well cogitated...well reflected upon, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be well reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken. Under these conditions it is not proper for a wise man who preserves truth to come to the definite conclusion: ‘Only this is true, anything else is wrong.’”

Anders said:

What matters is that great masters over many centuries have used it as a scripture of great profundity and utility.

Astus wrote:

Some did, some did not, and some rejected them. So, instead of relying on one's choice of great masters, why not on doctrinal and practical qualities? After all, where the authenticity of the Vaipulya sutras are defended (e.g. *Mahayanasutralamkara*, ch 1), the

argument is not that "Nagarjuna liked it", or "Sthiramati commented on it".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 16th, 2018 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and breathing

Content:

Anders said:

Tradition and living lineage is not the same thing. At least not in the sense that the pali canon uses the term.

Astus wrote:

How so? A tradition that is still alive (and not, for instance, recreated or revived) means that it's been passed down through the generations.

Anders said:

it more or less is.

Astus wrote:

What does 'it' stand for here? That the argument for the Mahayana scriptures is mainly just references to respected teachers?

Anders said:

What has been ignored, or rejected, by the great masters is generally subsequently ignored and rejected by later lineages.

Astus wrote:

If this refers only to Zen lineages, then it's one of the differences between lineages what textual materials they rely on. Being of a particular lineage then also defines whom they consider to be "great masters".

Anders said:

When it comes to stuff like energetic practices - sure, why not?

Astus wrote:

It is only a matter of fitting them into a Buddhist context.

Anders said:

I think there is a difference between tom dick and harry doing so and generations of realised masters doing so though.

Astus wrote:

Since there can be no realisation outside Buddhism, nothing could be accepted that cannot be traced back to the Buddha himself. If that is not an important criteria, then there is no difference between there being or not being a history of past teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

Karma is intentional action. Only beings have intention, not groups, hence there is no such thing as collective karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

You think that a group of people acting together with a single goal cannot have similar or identical motivations?

Astus wrote:

People can have numerous things in common and imagine there to be an identity based on seemingly shared attributes, but that will not make them identical, nor create a new sentient entity. Even on a conventional level group identities are nominal. For example, people can eat together, but it doesn't mean they have one mind and one stomach.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 9:16 PM

Title: Re: Academic learning is not directly proportional to realization

Content:

Ogyen said:

The point is to not confuse academic learning for realization, which happens a lot.

Malcolm said:

people read some eloquent words and think the person who wrote them is a great realizer

Astus wrote:

It is just forgetting not to rely on the person but rely on the teaching. A common mistake. On the other hand:

'It's through discussion that a person's discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning'
(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.192.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Mantrik said:

the real debate is whether they share any vipaka or if that only arrives individually.

Astus wrote:

It's always an individual's decision, hence the consequences are individual as well.
There is no such thing as a group mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Academic learning is not directly proportional to realization

Content:

Malcolm said:

If that is the case, than you and I have been found out for the frauds that we are.

Astus wrote:

Quotes are meant to lend credibility to the content, thus avoiding the misperception of being considered the source. It is also standard academic (and Buddhist) procedure. E.g. Shinran's Kyogyoshinsho is like 90% quotes. Therefore I can keep drinking Coke, etc., without worrying about what I share on FB.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

we know that our shared reality is formed as a consequence of our similar past actions.
We also know that the actions of others effect us.

Astus wrote:

No reality is shared, because experience is not shared. It is rather just conceptual categories that seem to create a shared world. Similarly, others' actions cannot affect us, as all experiences are the products of one's own conditioning.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 at 11:40 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

So you disagree with the Six Realms model then?

Astus wrote:

No, why would I? Although the 5 realms model has its advantages.

Grigoris said:

It is ridiculous to say that the actions of other's do not effect us. If I punch you in the head, believe me, it will effect you. For quite some time too.

Astus wrote:

"Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither the heavens nor other people can impose upon me."

(http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=5)

"Through enduring the disparagement of others in the present life, the bad karma from the prior lives can be removed, and one can attain peerless perfect enlightenment."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 16)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: Academic learning is not directly proportional to realization

Content:

Malcolm said:

Serious much?

Astus wrote:

A monk asked, "What do you say about finding meaning in speech?"

Baofu said, "What speech is that?"

The monk looked down and didn't answer.

Baofu said, "The sword of function is like lightning. Thinking about it is futile!"

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 302)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 at 2:01 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

This is talking about karma vipakka arising from our previous actions, it is not prove that my actions do not effect you. ... The fact that something needs to be endured (from others), is evidence of the effect (of others).

Astus wrote:

If beings suffer/enjoy the consequences of their own actions, how could they also suffer/enjoy the actions of others?

"This third category, ascription of karma, means that you experience the results of the karma you create. Results will ripen in the skandas related to the actor, and not to others. The Collection of the Abhidharma says:

What does the ascription of karma mean? One experiences the maturation of the karma one has created. It is uncommon to others and, so, is called ascription.

If that were not the case, the karma that was created could be wasted or there could be the danger of facing a result that one had not created. Therefore, in the sutra it says:

That karma that is created by Devadatta will not mature in the earth, water, and so forth

But that karma will ripen in the skandas and ayatana of that particular individual To whom else would this karma result?"

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 119-120)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

cyril said:

Then, in this case, by analogy, the positive karma acquired by rejoicing in another one's meritorious deeds wouldn't result in vipaka similar to that of the doer?

Astus wrote:

Agreeing with the actions of another is a mental, and possibly a verbal act, but not a bodily one. Because it strengthens a similar intention, the result is similar. However, the act is not the same, and when the result occurs the conditioning of the mind is not the same either.

Furthermore on "sharing karma":

"By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one made pure. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another."

(<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.12.budd.html.165>)

"It can't be wrested away. It follows you along. When, having left this world, for wherever you must go, you take it with you. This fund is not held in common with others, & cannot be stolen by thieves."

(<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.1-9.than.html#khp-8>)

"It may seem like a contradiction to dedicate merit when each person in samsara enjoys or suffers the results of only his or her own negative or positive actions, but no conflict really exists. Just as the results of the virtuous or evil deeds we create cannot be transferred to another person, neither can we take away someone else's negative karma or take our own virtue and transfer it to another person."

(Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche: King of Samadhi, p 120)

"we do not really exchange the karma we haven't created, with karma created by others.

Karma cannot be transferred or eliminated by giving and taking practice"
(Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche: <http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/sevenpoints.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

shaunc said:

At the moment in South Africa there's political parties calling for the killing of white people. Considering white South Africa's previous treatment of black people couldn't this be a case of collective karma ripening.

Astus wrote:

It rather sounds like anger.

"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred.

(<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.01.budd.html.3>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

The actions of white people in the past is ripening as anger against them.

Astus wrote:

That is not karma. If one is angry with another, that anger does not hurt the other person, it hurts the one who is angry. Furthermore, the anger is not caused by the other person, it is generated by one's own thinking.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

As I understand, it's not that we share karma with our fellows, but I think it's fair to conceive that beings have complementary karma - our friends influence our thoughts, words and actions.

Astus wrote:

We hear what we "want" to hear, and listen to those who say things that we like, that way strengthening how we are conditioned.

Queequeg said:

We can influence each other to habituate thoughts, words and deeds.

Astus wrote:

Every experience is defined by one's interpretation. That's how ignorance is the root of samsara.

Queequeg said:

In acting out our karma, good and bad, others have complementary karma in the sense that when we harm others, those others were karmically inclined to suffer harm, and the same for helping others.

Astus wrote:

Sounds to me like a possible justification of evil acts.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

We all live in a completely sealed and self-enclosed vacuum after all.

Astus wrote:

"Since the Buddhas have stated

That the world is conditioned by ignorance,

So why is it not reasonable [to assert]

That this world is [a result of] conceptualization?"

(<http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 37)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Only in Sarvastivada.

Astus wrote:

How so? Who says that conventional phenomena are not based on dharmas?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

it ridiculous to say that we do not effect each other through the actions of our three doors, when we so glaringly obviously do.

Astus wrote:

In other words, your view is that there are experiences that are independent of one's mental conditions (aka karma), that they happen to people because of sheer coincidence. Is that what you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Malcolm said:

All buddhist tenets (Sautrantika on up) apart from Sarvastivada, subscribe to Anya-apoha theory, which is the Buddhist refutation of truly existent universals.

Astus wrote:

It's not a question if they take those dharmas as empty or not, but whether they are conceived as elements behind conventional appearances. They are considered a background layer, even if there are other layers beyond.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Ogyen said:

where did the "sheer coincidence" idea come into play from?

Astus wrote:

If an experience is not a result of one's own doing, that means one can suffer the consequences of external causes and conditions. Those personally unrelated events were what I called coincidence, because anything can happen to anyone without the individual being responsible for them. So, if a branch falls on somebody, that is just "bad luck".

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

If things were the way you say, there'd be no intelligible conversation between anyone.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. If it were the case that one could influence the other, then one could make

the other understand. However, even the Buddha could not enlighten Ananda nor change the mind of Devadatta.

Queequeg said:

I think your idealism is a handicap.

Astus wrote:

What I say is that because experiences are defined by one's mental conditioning, no matter what occurs, it is not because others' make it happen, or because of some external force, but because of one's own delusion. If it were the case that independent factors controlled one's experience, there would be nothing to be done about those, and neither one's behaviour nor one's mental purity would matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 19th, 2018 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: On Buddhism and Nominalism

Content:

Malcolm said:

That does not make Dharmas universals. A universal is cowness, for example.

Astus wrote:

But the dharmas could be called universals for actual instances of experience, however, I don't know of anyone who conceived a theoretical list of dharmas existing separately from dharmas as experience, hence they are not universals.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Ogyen said:

Is it your doing that you were raped? No! So is it a coincidence because it isn't your doing?

Astus wrote:

Good and bad experiences are the result of good and bad deeds. That is the basic concept of how action and result work (see: <https://suttacentral.net/mn135/en/bodhi>). Furthermore, the results are not produced by someone else, but everybody is an heir to one's own actions. At the same time, it is also not the case that there are really agents, it is only dependent origination (<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.18/en/bodhi>; also <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.37/en/bodhi>). In fact, not just one or two things, but the whole world is a product of dependent origination (<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.44/en/bodhi>). So, to say that there are things happening to oneself because of others' will or because of different independent factors, does not fit into what the Buddha taught about karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

So how does learning happen then? What is the role of a Buddha if, as you posit, essentially there is no interaction and influence between beings?

Astus wrote:

"If one wishes to see the Buddha, then one sees him. If one sees him, then one asks questions. If one asks, then one is answered, he hears the sutras and rejoices greatly. He reflects thus: "Where did the Buddha come from? Where did I go to?" and thinks to himself: "The Buddha came from nowhere, and I also went nowhere." He thinks to himself:

The three realms—the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm—these three realms are simply made by thought. Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathāgata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha. The mind does not itself know the mind, the mind does not itself see the mind. A mind with conceptions is stupidity, a mind without conceptions is nirvana. There is nothing in these dharmas that can be enjoyed; they are all made by thinking. If thinking is nothing but empty, then anything that is thought is also utterly nonexistent."

(Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 26)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Ogyen said:

We were talking about "coincidence" in the way you had posited

Astus wrote:

I simply put forward the reasons why no coincidence can happen, but that both good and bad experiences are the products of one's karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 6:14 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

Yes, ultimately. But at the relative level? That's what we are talking about when it comes to Nirmanakaya.

Astus wrote:

It does explain the relative level being a product of the mind. In the case of ordinary beings, experiences are what a deluded mind imagines out of ignorance. The nirmanakaya that is seen by beings, it is called illusory, and it exists as the mistaken perception of deluded beings, who are, however, have the right level of merit to encounter a buddha in some form. Here is Mipham's summary for how the nirmanakaya can be understood:

"The appearance of bodily form is like the reflection of Indra, the resounding of enlightened voice is like the great drum of the gods, the pervasiveness of the knowledge and compassion of enlightened mind resembles a cloud, the various ways of displaying emanations resembles Brahma, the pervasiveness of wisdom is like the sun, the secret of enlightened mind is like a jewel, the secret of enlightened speech is like an echo, the secret of enlightened body is like the sky, and the deeds that benefit others are like the ground."

(Gateway to Knowledge, vol 3, 21.172)

Another explanation, from Jamgon Kongtrul's commentary on the Uttaratantra Shastra:

"Being of the nature of a [mere] representation,
the nirmana[kaya] is similar to the golden image."

...

"The nirmanakaya, which appears to all sentient beings in common, is like the golden image. Because of the power resulting from the realization of the absolute kaya, it has the effect or nature of appearing to the minds of the disciples as a mere representation of whatever form is suitable to train any of them."

(Buddha Nature, p 173)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 5:30 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

We know that all appearances have the nature of illusion, but this does not mean that there are no appearances.

Astus wrote:

Being illusion means it is conditioned by ignorance, it is distorted by mental habits, by karma. In other words, all beings experience what they project as the inner and outer world. That is why I say there is no shared karma, no mutual influence, rather the very idea that there are interacting beings is one of the core delusions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 8:45 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:
Grigoris said:
So we are not interacting?

Astus wrote:
We are interacting in our own minds. We each have the concept of communicating with another person, but it all happens within the scope of separate minds. Experience is individual, as there are no shared sense-fields, and the interpretation applied to experience is also individual.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 10:16 PM
Title: Re: Collective karma
Content:
Malcolm said:
the traces of other minds are sufficiently strong to generate appearances for ours.

Astus wrote:
Such a possibility would mean that one could put thoughts into another's mind, and if that could happen, then one stream of consciousness could cross another stream and become one.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 10:24 PM
Title: Re: Collective karma
Content:
Grigoris said:
of course there are shared sense fields, even if we experience them individually.

Astus wrote:
As Malcolm said, what I meant was that things are experienced individually. What you see as light is not what I see as light. What you think as light is not what I think as light. Furthermore, you cannot even show me what you see, what you think.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 10:30 PM
Title: Re: Collective karma
Content:
Malcolm said:
The material aggregate is defined as all physical sense organs and AND objects made of the four elements.

Astus wrote:
There are both sense-faculties and sense-objects for all 6 sense-fields, and from their

meeting arises the respective sense-consciousnesses. Or this can be looked at from the experiential perspective, where there are sense-consciousnesses conceptually split into faculties and objects.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 10:37 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

No, it doesn't.

Astus wrote:

Why not? The mind stream consists of one momentary thought followed by another momentary thought. If there is a moment that is identical for two streams, it becomes the single cause of the following moment of thought, thus there is only one stream of thought left.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

You equate the perception of an appearance with "having thoughts put into one's mind"

Astus wrote:

Perception exists in consciousness. If one can make another's consciousness perceive something, that is no different from being able to put a thought into another's mind, as it means one can control another's mind.

Queequeg said:

Do we need to break down how that is silly?

Astus wrote:

Please do.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

What you are arguing is a philosophical point that presumes our subjective consciousness is some unique mystery.

Astus wrote:

The argument is regarding the subjective experience. Brain scans and biological analysis have nothing to do with it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 20th, 2018 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Queequeg said:

You're skipping several steps.

Astus wrote:

Going with the abhidharma model makes no difference, as the external factors are not experienced, only the resultant consciousness is what is registered at all. There the moments of sensory consciousnesses are meaningless, it is only with the processing of impressions by the mind-consciousness that any basic apprehension can occur.

Queequeg said:

this view of the individual as being hermetically isolated in the mind is a biased view.

Astus wrote:

Even when the original source of a consciousness is an external object, since such objects do not possess any meaning or value, everything is necessarily interpreted and defined according to each beings mental conditioning. In what way is one not bound by one's preconceptions?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 21st, 2018 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

minds can appear directly to each other without the need for some intermediary. This is what the ability to know the minds of others shows us. Thus is not an ability restricted to awakened folks.

How does it work? A mind which grasps signs is something which can appear to the mind of others.

Astus wrote:

It is exactly direct perception that cannot happen, as that would mean having the same state of mind. What might be said is that one can conceive a representation of another mind, just as one can see only representations of physical objects.

"[Consciousness] is only said to perceive the minds of others because it is like a mirror in which appear seemingly external objects. It cannot immediately perceive [others' minds]. What it immediately perceives are its own transformations. Therefore, a scripture says, "There is not the slightest dharma that is capable of seizing other

dharmas. It is just that when consciousness is born, it appears resembling images and is said to seize things." As with having the minds of others as objects, so with form, etc." (Cheng Weishi Lun, ch 7, in Three Texts on Consciousness Only, BDK ed, p 239; in Tat: p 523; http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/T1585_,31,0039c15:1585_,31,0039c16.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 21st, 2018 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Astus wrote:

you cannot even show me what you see, what you think.

Grigoris said:

Of course I can.

Astus wrote:

Showing it would mean that I experience exactly the way you experience, that my visual consciousness is identical to yours, etc.

Grigoris said:

The fact that there can be mutually understood communication is a testament to that. The fact that teaching and learning can occur is a testament to that. The fact that socialisation occurs is a testament to that.

Astus wrote:

Those do not explain how within anyone's experience there can be something independent of one's mental conditioning. Even when there are group activities, each member experiences and comprehends alone, without any means to perceive with the mind of others.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 21st, 2018 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

The above is mistaken, and is posited on a realist perspective.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by direct perception of others' minds then?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

For example: $1+1=2$ REGARDLESS of your mental conditioning.

Astus wrote:

Mathematical truths mean nothing to those who know nothing about mathematics, i.e. they do not exist for them. If you propose that mathematics is real, independent of minds, that might be so, but they still do not exist for those without relevant knowledge.

Grigoris said:

In most situations communication occurs via a medium. But it seems that you believe that communication cannot occur at all, unless it is directly from mind to mind.

Astus wrote:

Let's review again what I said:

Karma and its results are strictly individual

(<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444263#p444263>).

Experience is defined by one's own interpretation

(<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444461#p444461> &

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444463#p444463>).

Therefore:

Individual experiences are the results of karma of the individual

(<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444540#p444540> &

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444727#p444727>).

Interaction with others is within the scope of individual karma

(<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=444732#p444732>).

Grigoris said:

If that is your hypothesis, you have to prove it.

Astus wrote:

Which one of the above you do not agree with? Is your view then, that:

- Karma is not strictly individual?
- Ignorance is not the root of dependent origination?
- Karma is not responsible for one's experiences?

I presume it is the third one. In other words, there must be exceptions from what occurs to a being, that are not the products of one's karma and not distorted by one's mental conditioning.

Grigoris said:

So you think that a Buddha's awakened mind is conditioned?

Astus wrote:

A mind is necessarily conditioned. But that's another matter. The problem with assuming that not all experiences are the results of karma means that even when one has attained liberation from karma, all sorts of experiences continue to occur that one

can never be free from. In other words, there is no liberation from a conditioned mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 3:46 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

can perceive the intrinsic characteristics of the conceptual image existing in the other person's mind. It does not mean they share the same "thought."

Astus wrote:

That is a perception of a reflection, a copy, a simulacrum of those characteristics, in other words, a representation. Why? Simply because it is the god's perception of a characteristic, not that other being's. To make it not merely a representation, there should be thoughts apart from minds.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 5:43 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

Even if I have no grasp of mathematics, I know that two individual phenomenon make a pair.

Astus wrote:

How do you know? Is that an information inherent in the perceived object, or is it rather an understanding arrived at by inference?

Grigoris said:

So you believe a Buddha's mind is conditioned and thus cannot see things for what they are. You believe that a Buddha is afflicted by ignorance.

Astus wrote:

A mind is conditioned, because it is functional, and functioning requires change, causes, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

an image is a representation. All perceptions of characteristics are representational.

Astus wrote:

Then why do you call that a direct perception?

Malcolm said:

For example, there is a story of a monk of whom devas were fond. They cast their mind forth one day, looking for this monk, and unable to locate him, they went to the Buddha and asked what had become of him. The Buddha replied, "Why, he became an arhat, he is sitting right there in samadhi."

What had happened? The arhat in samadhi was not grasping any signs, and so his mind disappeared from the mental sight of these devas.

Astus wrote:

Check out Dogen's Tashintsu (BDK ed: vol 4, ch 79). Aside from stories, do you know any text that explains knowing other's minds like that? By the way, the standard list of what kinds of minds are perceived includes whether it is liberated or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus, surely you know what a pratyakṣa is and what it entails.

Astus wrote:

"The cognition in which there is no conceptual construction is perception."

(Dignaga: Pratyaksapariccheda, in Dignaga on Perception, p 25, tr Hattori)

However:

"By the power of meditation the yogin can have such clear representations that they appear to him almost like the specific forms of the mind of another person, just as deities will bestow grace on a person by appearing in their dreams etc. So even the yogin does not directly grasp another person's mind through his representations. He can be said to know another person's mind only in the sense that the representations which appear in his own mind have the same form as those in another person's mind. therefore yogipratyakṣa is called perception only for the sake of convenience."
(Dharmakīrti: Samtanantara-siddhi, in Mind Only, p 217-218, tr Wood)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 22nd, 2018 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

But now you are avoiding my question again: Of course I can. The fact that there can be mutually understood communication is a testament to that. The fact that teaching and learning can occur is a testament to that. The fact that socialisation occurs is a

testament to that.
Are you denying these occur?

Astus wrote:

I do not deny the occurrence. What I say is that they can only occur
<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=28365&p=444984#p444984>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2018 at 2:07 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, this is what we mean when we say that one can have a direct perception of another's mind.

Astus wrote:

In that case, knowing other's mind is not a counter-example to all experiences being within the scope of individual karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2018 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Vasana said:

To me it seems to reconcile the points made in this thread. A Summary of Shared and Unshared Abodes

there are no external objects to function as observed conditions aside from consciousness, nor are the external environment or other seemingly shared appearances anything more than the objective aspect of the inner consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Good catch. The difference is that in this topic it is through the way karma is defined that it can be deduced - at least in my interpretation - that experiences are exclusively personal as a consequence of karma being personal.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 23rd, 2018 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Grigoris said:

I think that the major mistake you are making is in reifying the personal/subjective. You seem quite happy to point to the emptiness of everything, except yourself. You grasp at the importance of your subjective experience but do not seem to recognise that ultimately this is empty too.

Astus wrote:

So far it's been only about the concepts of collective and then shared karma. I might note here that I have not gone into discussing how they are empty, rather how those ideas are contrary to individual karma. As for the nature of individual karma, it is of course fictional.

"There is no doer of a deed
Or one who reaps the deed's result;
Phenomena alone flow on—
No other view than this is right."
(Visuddhimagga 19.20)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2018 at 2:41 AM

Title: Re: Collective karma

Content:

Vasana said:

2-truths alarm bells ring

Individual karma may ultimately be fictional but it's still conventionally functional as the ongoing flow of the Twelve Nidānas and the serial linking of the aggregates between lives.

Astus wrote:

Why ring?

"Phenomena alone flow on"

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 24th, 2018 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Beginning

Content:

Mila said:

as a pure practitioner, how should one consume food?

Astus wrote:

"And how is physical food to be regarded? Suppose a couple, husband & wife, taking meager provisions, were to travel through a desert. With them would be their only baby son, dear & appealing. Then the meager provisions of the couple going through the desert would be used up & depleted while there was still a stretch of the desert yet to be crossed. The thought would occur to them, 'Our meager provisions are used up & depleted while there is still a stretch of this desert yet to be crossed. What if we were to kill this only baby son of ours, dear & appealing, and make dried meat & jerky. That way — chewing on the flesh of our son — at least the two of us would make it through this desert. Otherwise, all three of us would perish.' So they would kill their only baby son,

loved & endearing, and make dried meat & jerky. Chewing on the flesh of their son, they would make it through the desert. While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, [crying,] 'Where have you gone, our only baby son? Where have you gone, our only baby son?' Now what do you think, monks: Would that couple eat that food playfully or for intoxication, or for putting on bulk, or for beautification?"

"No, lord."

"Wouldn't they eat that food simply for the sake of making it through that desert?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of physical food to be regarded. When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended. When passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended, there is no fetter bound by which a disciple of the noble ones would come back again to this world."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.063.than.html>; see also: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel105.html>)

"O Subhūti, if you are able to be universally same about eating, then the dharmas are also universally same; if the dharmas are universally same, you should also be universally same about eating. If you can practice begging like this, you may accept the food.

If, Subhūti, you refrain from eradicating licentiousness, anger, and stupidity, yet are not equipped with them; if you do not destroy the body, yet accord with the single characteristic; if you do not extinguish stupidity and affection, yet generate wisdom and emancipation; if you use the characteristics of the five transgressions to attain emancipation, without either emancipation or bondage; if you do not perceive the four noble truths, yet do not fail to perceive the truths; neither attaining the results [of becoming a streamenterer (srotāpanna), and so on,] nor not attaining the results; neither being an ordinary [unenlightened] person nor transcending the state (lit., "dharma") of ordinary person; neither being a sage nor not being a sage; accomplishing all the dharmas yet transcending the characteristics of the dharmas — then you can accept this food.

Subhūti, you should only accept this food if you can neither see the Buddha nor hear the Dharma, nor the six teachers of heterodox paths— Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, Maskarin Gośālīputra, Saṃjayin Vairāṭīputra, Ajita Keśakambala, Kakuda Kātyāyana, and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra, who were your teachers, following whom you left home, [so that] at the defeat of those teachers you were also defeated—then you can accept this food. If, Subhūti, you can enter into the heterodox views and not reach the other shore; abide in the eight difficulties and not attain the absence of difficulty; identify with the afflictions and transcend the pure dharmas; attain the samādhi of noncontention; if all sentient beings generate this concentration; if the donors do not name you their field of blessings; if those making offerings to you fall into the three evil destinations; if you join hands with the host of Māras and make them your co-workers; if you do not differentiate yourself from the host of Māras and the sensory troubles; if you bear resentment toward all sentient beings; if you revile the Buddha, denigrate the Dharma, and do not enter the Sangha; and if you never attain extinction— if you are like this then you can accept the food."

(Vimalakīrti Sūtra, ch 3, BDK ed, p 88-89)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018 at 10:35 PM

Title: Re: Romance of the Heart Sutra

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 13th, 2018 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: If the Mahayana Sutras were not spoken by the Buddha what authority do they hold?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

what of the texts which speak from the perspective of the Buddha about the state of being a Buddha and other extremely high attainments?

Astus wrote:

The descriptions of the paths and attainments are works based on the Buddha's words just like other parts of the Dharma. Even if they are not found in the early texts, there is a logical development, so they can be viewed as teachings drawing out the implications, in other words, exegetical and explanatory writings. Furthermore, many of the so called Mahayana ideas can be found in Northern Indian abhidharma works.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 14th, 2018 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: If the Mahayana Sutras were not spoken by the Buddha what authority do they hold?

Content:

ItsRaining said:

So do you think basing concepts of the Buddha from expansions of logical implications is accurate or something that should be relied on? For example, the Lotus Sutra says: Because the Dharma that the buddhas have attained is foremost, unique, and difficult to understand. No one but the buddhas can completely know the real aspects of all dharmas—that is to say their character, nature, substance, potential, function, cause, condition, result, effect, and essential unity.”

Astus wrote:

The higher/greater wisdom/knowledge of a buddha is accepted by all Buddhist schools. For instance, a buddha is omniscient, as the Patisambhidamagga (ch 72, PTS ed, p 131, tr Nanamoli) states: "It knows without exception all that is formed and unformed, thus it is omniscient knowledge".

ItsRaining said:

What Mahayana ideas are found in Northern Abhidharma works?

Astus wrote:

I don't know such a list, but here are some examples: intermediate state, the various differences between the three vehicles, the buddha qualities, the difference between afflictive and non-afflictive ignorance, and even the emptiness of dharmas (in the Satyasiddhi-shastra).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 20th, 2018 at 5:58 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

shanyin said:

How do you attain enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

With bodhicitta and the six paramitas.

For more:

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/bsam-ez_book_page.htm

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/vbcitta_book_page.htm

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhisattvacary%C4%81vat%C4%81ra>

<http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Shikshasamucchaya>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 2018 at 3:41 PM

Title: Re: Dharmavidya's Authorization to teach

Content:

SonamTashi said:

if he can't prove his own transmissions and permissions from all of these schools are legit, should he be taken seriously at all?

Astus wrote:

The question is rather why take someone seriously as a teacher. Transmissions and permissions (if and when they even exist) are representatives of a certain level of commitment, effort, and learning. But it is what is represented that can make someone worthy of respect.

To be a teacher, the basic requirement is to know more than the student. To be a teacher of a specific subject, the requirement is knowledge of that subject. To be a Dharma teacher, the requirement is that what is taught is in accordance with the Buddhadharma. So what could be looked into is whether Dharmavidya teaches what he claims to teach.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 27th, 2018 at 3:18 PM

Title: Re: Shakyamuni stabilizing his wisdom?

Content:

Temicco said:

Are there any Mahayana teachings, sutra or otherwise, that discuss the matter of Shakyamuni stabilizing his awareness of his nature and bringing it to its full expression?

Astus wrote:

Any account, description, or explanation of the bodhisattva path is that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2018 at 5:02 AM

Title: Re: Shakyamuni stabilizing his wisdom?

Content:

Temicco said:

Sure, but I am wondering about its relation to Shakyamuni in particular.

Astus wrote:

The Jatakas tell many stories of his past lives. So do numerous sutras. I am unaware of any particular scripture describing Siddhartha's journey on the bodhisattva path in a systematic manner.

Temicco said:

Also, sutras generally don't present the path quite like a tradition's own teachings do, to my knowledge.

Astus wrote:

The Avatamsaka Sutra is one of the main sources in East Asian Buddhism, as it is the basis of both the 10 bhumis and the 52 stages system.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 28th, 2018 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Shakyamuni stabilizing his wisdom?

Content:

Temicco said:

Yes, it just does not present things in the same way as vernacular teachings.

Astus wrote:

The bodhisattva path describes how one grows in abilities, masters teachings and samadhis, and eliminates various hindrances. How is that any different?

Examples related to specific samadhis:

"To learn archery, a student has to practice for a long time to acquire the skill. Because of his longtime practice, he now shoots without using his mind, and all his arrows hit the target. I have trained in the same way. When I started learning the inconceivable samādhi, I had to focus my mind on one object. After practicing for a long time, I have come to accomplishment. I now am constantly in this samādhi without thinking."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>)

"One who wants to develop insight into true suchness should ponder that one's mind in its true nature has neither birth nor death, nor does it abide in perception through faculties, such as seeing, hearing, and knowing. One should ignore the thoughts of differentiation. Then one can gradually pass the four samādhis of the formless realm—Boundless Space, Boundless Consciousness, Nothingness, and Neither with Nor without Perception—and attain the Samādhi of the Likeness of Emptiness. After one has attained the Samādhi of the Likeness of Emptiness, one's coarse differentiation through sensory reception, perception, mental processing, and consciousness will not be active. From then on, one's training and learning will be under the protection and care of beneficent learned friends who have great lovingkindness and compassion. As one trains assiduously, overcoming all obstacles, one can gradually enter the Samādhi of the Silent Mind. Once one has attained this samādhi, one can then enter the Samādhi of the One Action. After one has entered this Samādhi of the One Action, one will see innumerable Buddhas and will take wide-ranging and far-reaching actions, with one's mind set in the Position of Firm Belief."
(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra12.html>)

An example for the stages and practices:

"Good son, you should understand that all these stages are included in the four purifications and the eleven aspects. The four purifications are able to encompass the ten stages because the purification of superior intention encompasses the first stage, the purification of superior discipline encompasses the second stage, the purification of superior thought encompasses the third stage, and the purification of superior wisdom encompasses the excellences evolved in the subsequent stages. You should understand that [this purification] is able to encompass all the stages from the fourth to the last Buddha stage. You should understand that in this fashion these four purifications are able to encompass all the stages."
(Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed, p 77)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 4th, 2018 at 4:50 AM

Title: Re: Nagarjuna on Awareness

Content:

Tirisilex said:

I'm talking about like that Yogacara and cittamatra says that only the mind exists.

Astus wrote:

Neither Asanga nor Vasubandhu say that somehow mind would be ultimately real.

"But how does he understand the reality pattern? By abandoning any idea about conscious construction-only!"

(Asanga: Mahayanasamgraha, ch 3, BKD ed, p 65)

"One does abide in the realization
Of mere [representation of] consciousness
When one does not perceive also a supporting consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that,
[Namely, the grasping of the supporting consciousness]."
(Vasubandhu: Trimsika, v 28, tr Kochumuttom)

As for Nagarjuna, how could anything be exempt from being empty, when even nirvana is such?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 4th, 2018 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Content:

WeiHan said:

5. Splitting the Sangha - I have read that this is also impossible unless you lived in Buddha's time.

PeterC said:

It's possible today, but you would need to cause a certain number of members of the ordained Sangha to oppose others on a specific doctrinal topic - so basically it's very unlikely that you would have achieved this without consciously trying to do so

Astus wrote:

Doctrines do not define the Sangha, precepts do. So someone would actually have to reconstruct the Vinaya in order to cause a split. And that has not really happened, ever.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 4th, 2018 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Content:

PeterC said:

Sanghabheda is defined pretty well in the sutras. I can dig out the references if you'd like. It is, as they say, a thing.

Astus wrote:

If you have a different definition, please provide it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Content:

WeiHan said:

5. Splitting the Sangha - I have read that this is also impossible unless you lived in Buddha's time.

PeterC said:

It's possible today, but you would need to cause a certain number of members of the ordained Sangha to oppose others on a specific doctrinal topic - so basically it's very unlikely that you would have achieved this without consciously trying to do so

Malcolm said:

No, WeiHan is correct, in fact, just the other day during the Lamdre Triple vision teachings, HH Sakya Trizin mentioned this specifically.

Astus wrote:

Vasubandhu writes about the schism that causes birth in Avici for a kalpa:

"Where does schism take place?

100b. Elsewhere.

Not where the Tathagata is found Schism is impossible where the Master is to be found, for the Tathagata cannot be conquered and his word is full of authority."

(AKB 4.100, vol 2, p 683)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 at 3:45 PM

Title: Re: How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Content:

PeterC said:

Decent summary of the relevant citations here: https://info-buddhism.com/sangha_schism.html

Astus wrote:

Apart from the Parikuppa Sutta (AN 5.129), that's all Vinaya proceedings. There is also the Sanghabheda Sutta (Iti 18) not mentioned in that article.

As for a not Vinaya but Sutra definition, here's a Mahayana take:

"And what is meant by disrupting the sangha? When the assembly of different characteristics that form the skandhas is utterly destroyed, this is what is meant by disrupting the sangha."

(Lankavatara Sutra, ch 57, tr Red Pine)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Content:

Motova said:

How Does One Purify the Five Heinous Crimes in Sutra?

Astus wrote:

From the Platform Sutra (ch 6, BDK ed, p 52-53):

"I have a formless verse, which, if you are able to recite it, will cause you upon hearing these words to melt away in a single instant the delusions and transgressions of numerous eons. The verse goes:

Deluded people cultivate blessings but do not cultivate the Way,
Saying only that to cultivate blessings is the Way.
The blessings from charity and offerings may be unlimited,
But the three poisons are originally created in the mind.

Attempting to cultivate blessings and wanting to extinguish their transgressions,
They may attain blessings in later lives, but their transgressions will still exist.
They should simply eradicate the conditions of transgression within their minds:
This is called true repentance within the self-nature.

Suddenly enlightened to the true transgression of the Mahayana,
Eradicating the false and practicing the correct, they are without transgression.
Studying the Way is to always contemplate the self-nature:
This is to be identical with all the buddhas.

Our patriarchs have transmitted only this sudden teaching,
And you should all vow to see the nature and be identical to them.
If you wish to see the dharmakāya in the future,
Transcend the characteristics of the dharmas and wash them out of your minds.

Make an effort to see for yourself, don't be despondent!
Later, in a single moment, you will suddenly cut off [your thoughts, thus] ending them forever.
If you would be enlightened to the Mahayana and see the nature,
Reverentially hold your palms together [in the anjalimudrā] and seek it in utter sincerity."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 12th, 2018 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Mahamudra: differences and similarities

Content:

Astus wrote:

The three/four bodies exist inherently and perfectly as the nature of mind according to both Dzogchen and Mahamudra. What more could one ever attain than buddhahood?

"The Dharmakaya is the emptiness of the natural state of reality; the Sambhogakaya is the clarity of the natural state; the Nirmanakaya is the movement of energy that arises from the inseparability of emptiness and clarity.

...

"In Dzogchen, realization means understanding that the mind is Buddha. The empty nature of mind is Dharmakaya, the clarity of mind is Sambhogakaya, and all the manifestations of mind (including the passions) are Nirmanakaya. ... When we practice, the emptiness we discover within the mind, within ourselves, is the Dharmakaya; the subtle existence of clarity, self-understanding, is the Sambhogakaya; and whatever concepts, memories, or passions manifest are the Nirmanakaya."

(Tenzin Wangyal: Wonders of the Natural Mind, p 157, 163)

"In the teaching there is an explanation of the three dimensions, the three kayas of the Base, Path, and Fruit. If you read many books, particularly Mahayana texts, then you understand that these three kayas explain some qualities of enlightened beings. In the real sense, it is not only the explanation of enlightened beings, but also the explanation of our condition. It is very important to know this from the beginning. Essence is empty, and is Dharmakaya. Nature is clarity, and means manifestation, and is Sambhogakaya. And Energy without interruption means Nirmanakaya. When we are in a state of contemplation, we are in those three states. When we have that knowledge through introduction, we have discovered our real Base."

(Chogyal Namkhai Norbu: Dzogchen Teachings, p 78)

"one's mind that does not exist anywhere and is free from all conceptual elaborations and is experienced as empty space is the dharmakaya. Yet this emptiness is not like nothing whatsoever or like inanimate matter, rather this emptiness is self-cognizing, self luminous awareness with the characteristic of manifold cognition, this is the sambhogakaya. The unobstructed radiance of this emptiness manifesting its own forms as manifold objects is the nirmanakaya."

(Karmapa Wangchug Dorje: Mahamudra - The Ocean of True Meaning, p 292)

"The nonarising essence of the mind itself is dharmakaya, its unobstructed expression is sambhogakaya, and its function manifesting in any way whatsoever is nirmanakaya. These three kayas are again spontaneously present as an indivisible identity. To recognize and settle on this natural state is called perfectly realizing the faultless and correct view. A view different from this-a view or meditation imputed through intellectual concepts of assumption or through attributes of reference such as being free or not free from extremes, high or special, good or bad, and so forth-has never been taught as the view of mahamudra."

(Tsele Natsok Rangdrol: Lamp of Mahamudra, p 13)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 13th, 2018 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Pointing-Out-Instructions and Zen

Content:

DesertDweller said:

would you say there is the substantial difference between these and what we learn in Zen about the nature of the Mind, for instance in the Platform Sutra or Bodhidharma's sermons?

Astus wrote:

All Buddhist schools agree that the nature of the mind is insubstantial.

"Those who wish to become the Sugata's Disciples,
Or Pratyekabuddhas, or likewise, Kings of the Dharma –
Without resort to this Patience they cannot reach their respective goals.
They move across, but their eyes are not on the other shore."
(Ratnagunasamcayagatha 2.38)

"The Buddha's offspring, the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas,
The gods, and the dharmas which lead to the ease and happiness of all the world, -as
many as there are,
They all have issued from wisdom, the foremost perfection,
And yet wisdom does not ever get exhausted, nor does it increase."
(28.466)

"Whether one wants to train on the level of Disciple, or Pratyekabuddha, or Bodhisattva,
- one should listen to this perfection of wisdom, take it up, bear it in mind, recite it,
study it, spread it among others, and in this very perfection of wisdom should one be
trained and exert oneself."
(PP8K 1.2)

"Since thus, in ultimate truth and as things stand, such a dharma which could
constitute a being whose heart is set on enlightenment cannot be apprehended, where
do you get the idea that "this one belongs to the vehicle of the Disciples, that one to the
vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas, that one to the great vehicle"?"
(16.4)

"There is really no establishment of various vehicles, and so I speak of the one vehicle;
but in order to carry the ignorant I talk of a variety of vehicles."
(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.56)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 13th, 2018 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: Dzogchen and Mahamudra: differences and similarities

Content:

kalden yungdrung said:

if the Path is different the Fruit is also

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature is obscured by the two types of defilements. Once they are gone, that is complete buddhahood. So it is understood to be the path and fruit in all Mahayana. How is Bön any different from that?

"Twofold wisdom causes release from the two veils.
Since there is the one that is free from ideation
and the one ensuing from this in post-meditation,
it is held that there are [two] primordial wisdoms."
(Uttaratantra v 174, in Buddha Nature, p 186)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 14th, 2018 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Pointing-Out-Instructions and Zen

Content:

DesertDweller said:

I'm interested in the essential difference, if any, between the Dzogchen pointing-out and Zen's.

Astus wrote:

Pointing out instruction can have different meanings in Vajrayana. First of all, it is useful to differentiate between the instruction given and the instruction received. The instruction given can have various forms, including the common threefold set of mental, symbolic, and verbal transmission. The instruction received can have three main forms, as something learnt, as something understood, and as something recognised. Ideally a pointing out happens when the listener gets a taste of the so called natural state. Practically I'd say it's more often the case that one receives the instructions as a teaching, then goes to comprehend and realise it on one's own.

Zen does not have any formal set of pointing out instructions, because on the one hand it is always up to the situation, and on the other the student has to make the journey on his own (i.e. the teacher's job is not to feed people with more ideas, but to assist in overcoming pre-existing concepts).

DesertDweller said:

what is it about these Dzogchen instructions that makes them "work"? And do they "work" differently than they do in Zen?

Astus wrote:

Both Zen and Vajrayana have prajnaparamita as their essence. What distinguishes them are the assisting methods applied. Vajrayana focuses on devotion, hence guruyoga is the core practice. Zen is somewhat more diverse and flexible, but taking the most common method of Kanna Zen (看話禪), there are three essentials (三要): great faith, great determination, and great doubt (大信根, 大憤志, 大疑情), from which the feeling of

doubt is emphasised the most, thus the saying: Great doubt, great awakening. Small doubt, small awakening. No doubt, no awakening. (大疑大悟。小疑小悟。不疑不悟。) The feelings of devotion and doubt are somewhat on the opposite sides, however, they are equally understood to be important emotional supports for gaining insight, even if they don't function the same way (that is, in Zen doubt is eventually broken through, while in Vajrayana devotion is perfected to the highest level where the guru is the nature of mind).

DesertDweller said:

do the pointing-out instructions in Dzogchen actually "work" as an "initiation" (empowerment), or merely as an effective means, accompanied by a certain grace, of directing the student to his/her Mind?

Astus wrote:

Empowerment is itself an effective means of directing the student to the nature of mind. A pointing out instruction is not exactly an empowerment in the sense that it focuses only on showing the student the nature of mind, but does not provide a whole set of creation and completion practice of a deity. That's why a pointing out instruction is equated to the fourth empowerment, but not the first three.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 15th, 2018 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra and Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Depending on whether one is using the Mahamudra or Dzogchen approach, there are different terminologies, but the actual training is essentially the same."

(<https://www.lionsroar.com/two-great-paths/>)

"Although the teachings on essence mahamudra and dzogchen of the natural state use different terminology, in actuality they do not differ at all. ...

As the great master Trampo Terton Sherab Oser wrote:

Mahamudra and dzogchen

Differ in words but not in meaning.

In terms of ground, path, and fruition, ground mahamudra is the nonarising essence, unobstructed nature, and expression manifest in manifold ways. The dzogchen teachings describe these three aspects as essence, nature, and compassion."

(Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, in Lamp of Mahamudra, p xiii, xiv)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 16th, 2018 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: original as misnomer

Content:

Supramundane said:

I often come across references to Original Mind, Nature, etc.in discussions of

Buddhism (especially Zen).

Astus wrote:

If you want the East Asian teachings on such matters, start with the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana. It talks of "original enlightenment" (benjue 本覺).

"The essence of Mind is free from thoughts. The characteristic of that which is free from thoughts is analogous to that of the sphere of empty space that pervades everywhere. The one [without any second, i.e., the absolute] aspect of the world of reality (dharmadhatu) is none other than the undifferentiated dharmakaya, the "essence body" of the Tathagata. [Since the essence of Mind is] grounded on the dharmakaya, it is to be called the original enlightenment. Why? Because "original enlightenment" indicates [the essence of Mind (a priori)] in contradistinction to [the essence of Mind in] the process of actualization of enlightenment; the process of actualization of enlightenment is none other than [the process of integrating] the identity with the original enlightenment."

(Awakening of Faith, BDK ed, p 17)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 18th, 2018 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: original as misnomer

Content:

Supramundane said:

Perhaps the Trikaya is a reflection of the middle way too?

Astus wrote:

Not really. The trikaya doctrine is meant to explain the different aspects of a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2018 at 3:40 PM

Title: Re: original as misnomer

Content:

Supramundane said:

how then can there be an 'original mind' or 'true self'???

Astus wrote:

The purpose of such terms is to encourage people, to inspire, to posit an attractive goal.

"Self" is what "buddha" means. "Permanence" is what "dharma body" means. "Bliss" is what "nirvāṇa" means. "Purity" is what "dharma" means.

...

"Nonself" [actually] denotes "saṃsāra." "Self" denotes "tathāgata." "Impermanence" denotes "śrāvakas" and "pratyekabuddhas." "Permanence" denotes the "dharma body of tathāgatas." "Pain" (*duḥkha) denotes "all other paths." Bliss (*sukha) denotes "nirvāṇa" itself. "Impurity" denotes "created dharmas." "Purity" denotes "the true

teaching of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.” All these are what I call the “noninversions.” It is by means of what is not inverted that one can understand the meaning of letters. If you want to separate yourself from the four inversions, you must understand permanence, bliss, purity, and self in this way.”
(Nirvana Sutra, vol 1, BDK ed, p 59, 60-61)

"the reason why the Tathagatas who are Arhats and Fully-Enlightened Ones, teach the doctrine pointing to the Tathagata-garbha is to make the ignorant cast aside their fear when they listen to the teaching of egolessness and to have them realise the state of non-discrimination and imagelessness."
(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.28, tr Suzuki)

"[The sutras of the second turning of the wheel of Dharma] state in numerous places that all knowable [phenomena] are in all ways empty like a cloud, a dream, or an illusion. Why is it then, that in [the sutras of the third turning of the wheel of Dharma] the Buddha, having said this, declared that buddha nature is present within beings?

With regard to faintheartedness, contempt for inferior beings, perceiving the untrue, disparaging the true nature, and exceeding self-cherishing, he said this to persuade those who have any of these five to abandon their defects.

The final truth is in every respect devoid of anything compounded.
The poisons, karma, and their product are said to be like a cloud and so on."
(Uttaratantra, v 156-158, in Buddha Nature, p 40-41)

Supramundane said:
do the three bodies --the Nirmanakaya, Dharmakaya and Sambhogakaya --- correspond to:

- 1) physical body, mental body and the Law
- 2) Body, Mind and Enlightenment
- 3) Form, Essence and Clarity
- 4) Body, Mind and Emptiness
- 5) Body, Mind and Rainbow Body?

Does one mediate between the other two?

Astus wrote:
The nirmanakaya is how ordinary beings perceive/conceive a buddha, i.e. the human aspect. The sambhogakaya is how arya-bodhisattvas perceive/conceive a buddha, i.e. the devotional and meditational aspect. The dharmakaya is the true nature of a buddha, i.e. emptiness, free from perceptions/conceptions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 20th, 2018 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: original as misnomer

Content:

Supramundane said:

Some Zen masters seem to advocate such a state of non-conceptual thoughts as the goal of meditation, changing the awareness of observing the world into becoming part of it.

Astus wrote:

What sort of Zen is that? Huineng is quite clear on the matter of what is the proper method and what is a mistake:

"The most important thing is not to become attached to emptiness. If you empty your minds and sit in quietude, this is to become attached to the emptiness of blankness. ... Furthermore, there are deluded people who empty their minds and sit in quietude without thinking of anything whatsoever, claiming that this is great."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 28-29)

"What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.

"If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view."
(ch 2, p 33-34)

"Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts."
(ch 4, p 43)

Supramundane said:

However, IMO, if our goal in life is to recapture some sort of Eden of childhood, whereby we think like a child and are unable to avail ourselves of language, we would be no further ahead.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha himself rejected such an approach:

"If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back. Which four? There is the case where he does no evil action with his body, speaks no evil speech, resolves on no evil resolve, and maintains himself

with no evil means of livelihood. If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.078.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 25th, 2018 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: Is everything "one" or are we just inter-connected without a center?

Content:

Polarbear said:

is just interconnected or if also everything is part of something bigger

Astus wrote:

Interconnected means how one thing is always caused and sustained by other factors, in other words, nothing is self-reliant. In case of a human body, it cannot function without air and food for instance. Contemplating that sort of dependency one should recognise that the body cannot be trusted, as it exists only because of factors we do not control.

The point of the teaching of interdependence is not to imagine some sort of magical bond between all beings, but to recognise how fragile and causally bound life is. Then it becomes clearer that assuming a oneness or something bigger is also the wrong approach that looks for stability where there is none.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 25th, 2018 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Is everything "one" or are we just inter-connected without a center?

Content:

Vasana said:

there is at least some connection between all beings as taught in Mahayana.both in terms of 'mother sentient beings' and the fact that the clothes on our back, food on our plate, technology were using and so on is due to the kindness and/or efforts of others.

Astus wrote:

Contemplating that samsara has no beginning

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn15/sn15.014.than.html>) is meant to

raise the sense of renunciation, while considering other people's kindness is to develop gratitude (<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an02/an02.031.than.html>).

Neither are about establishing the concept that there is an invisible connection. And the reason for that is that all beings are responsible for their own actions and reap the fruits of their own deeds (<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 26th, 2018 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Satipatthana practice and Shikantaza

Content:

JMGinPDX said:

reflecting on satipatthana during shikantaza practice?

Astus wrote:

I don't know what exactly you mean by satipatthana, as that practice has various approaches in Theravada itself, and there are other forms preserved in Mahayana traditions too. If you want to see a Zen take on it, check out Dogen's Sanjushichihon Bodaibunpo (三十七品菩提分法 / 37 bodhipaksadharma) found in his Shobogenzo. There are also Thich Nhat Hanh's works, in particular his commentary (Transformation and Healing).

In a way, the essence of satipatthana is the cultivation of sati and sampajanna (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn47.2/en/bodhi>), as emphasised by the disciples of Ajahn Chah, and such qualities can be seen as very much present in zazen as well. So if you take satipatthana less as a four staged method and more as a practice of mindfulness in general, it comes closer to the ideal form in Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 26th, 2018 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: Is everything "one" or are we just inter-connected without a center?

Content:

seeker242 said:

And what about Metta? Is metta not used to "establish a connection"?

Astus wrote:

One develops kindness in order to attain the 11 benefits (see: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.016.than.html>), and possibly even liberation (<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.052.than.html>). Even the four means of attraction (samgrahavastu / 四攝法) are about liberating beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 26th, 2018 at 10:19 PM

Title: Re: Is everything "one" or are we just inter-connected without a center?

Content:

Vasana said:

Connectivity and interdependence are a fact of reality it's just that on the ultimate side, no entities are truly established.

Astus wrote:

I'm not talking of any ultimate level, more like "middle level" (conventional analytical/philosophical), that I think the OP is asking about. Of course, connections do make sense on the ordinary conventional level, but that does not require much Buddhist explanation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 27th, 2018 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Accuracy of internet koans

Content:

shanyin said:

Are some koans on the internet innacurate (imperfect)?

Astus wrote:

Many are usually from " https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_Flesh,_Zen_Bones ", like that story you quoted. If you want to know the classical koans, check classical collections (the three most popular that are available in English:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gateless_Barrier,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Cliff_Record,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Equanimity). But there are several large collections of Zen stories, both canonical and extra-canonical.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2018 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

kausalya said:

The destination is the same, but the steps are different. All roads lead to Rome, but it is only prudent to stick to one road if you want to get there as fast as possible (and you should, if the goal is to develop bodhichitta).

Astus wrote:

There is only one road, ekayana, to the same destination. Stylistics and terminology may differ, but that does not change the content.

kausalya said:

Lineages also exist so that some measure of control can be exerted over who is allowed to teach, and their realizations can be verified as genuine beforehand.

Astus wrote:

That is an idealistic reinterpretation of lineage. People are not only allowed to teach, but they should teach, especially those committed to liberating all beings. There is no general supervising institution exerting some sort of quality control on monastics or the laity.

kausalya said:

A free-for-all would result in people having access to inappropriate methods, running the risk of injuring themselves or others in the process.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha's words are available to everyone, as they should be. Grabbing the snake at the wrong end is always a risk.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 28th, 2018 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: Tradition shmadition, lineage shmineage

Content:

kausalya said:

Ekayana, as far as I understand it, is an expression of shunyata.

Astus wrote:

Ekayana means one vehicle.

"A Tathāgata teaches sentient beings the Dharma only through the single buddha vehicle. There is no other, neither a second nor a third."

(Lotus Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

"There is really no establishment of various vehicles, and so I speak of the one vehicle; but in order to carry the ignorant I talk of a variety of vehicles."

(Lankavatara Sutra, 2.56, tr Suzuki)

"To dispel all impurities, there is no antidote to apply apart from knowing the suchness of phenomena.

Suchness does not rely on the divisions of phenomena's manifestations,

And the intelligence that perceives suchness is also not multiple.

Therefore, you taught the unequalled and inseparable vehicle to sentient beings."

(Madhyamakavatara 12.36, in "The Karmapa's Middle Way", p 544-545)

kausalya said:

It doesn't negate the need to find a coherent path and stick to it.

Astus wrote:

The Buddhadharma is a path.

kausalya said:

when the Buddha said for us to light our own way

Astus wrote:

It is actually explained quite clearly:

"Therefore, Ananda, be islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge.

And how, Ananda, is a bhikkhu an island unto himself, a refuge unto himself, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, seeking no other refuge?

When he dwells contemplating the body in the body, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome desire and sorrow in regard to the world; when he dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, the mind in the mind, and mental objects in mental objects, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome desire and sorrow in regard to the world, then, truly, he is an island unto himself, a refuge unto himself, seeking no external refuge; having the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, seeking no other refuge."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html>)

Interestingly, this island of mindfulness is also called the one-way path (ekayana):

"this is the one-way path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the passing away of pain and displeasure, for the achievement of the method, for the realization of Nibbāna, that is, the four establishments of mindfulness."
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn47.1/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 29th, 2018 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Prayers, to who?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A teaching to be considered here:

"Householder, there are these five things that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world. What five? Long life, householder, is wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world. Beauty ... Happiness ... Fame ... The heavens are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world. These are the five things that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world. These five things, householder, that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world, I say, are not obtained by means of prayers or aspirations. If these five things that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world could be obtained by means of prayers or aspirations, who here would be lacking in anything?"
(<https://suttacentral.net/an5.43/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 1st, 2018 at 12:52 AM

Title: Re: Accuracy of internet koans

Content:

shanyin said:

Can someone give me a koan from one of those books?

Astus wrote:

"Daily life itself is a hwadu, so there is no need to receive a hwadu from others or to give a hwadu to others. Your very existence is a hwadu. Thus, if you are continuously holding on to a hwadu someone else gave you, when will you be able to solve your original

hwadus? Trying to solve another person's hwadu is like turning empty millstones or spinning a car's wheels without moving forward.
Your body itself is a hwadu. Birth itself is a hwadu. Work itself is a hwadu. The vast universe is a hwadu. If you want to add more hwadus to these, when will you be able to taste this infinitely deep world we live in?"
(Daehaeng Kun Sunim: No River to Cross, p 55)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 3rd, 2018 at 2:53 PM

Title: Re: Accuracy of internet koans

Content:

shanyin said:

What's a hwandu?

Astus wrote:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hua_Tou.

Jogy website:

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=37

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 5th, 2018 at 1:55 AM

Title: Re: Differences in the practice of satipatthana among followers of different turns of the wheel of Dharma.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here is some literature:

Mahaprajnaparamitasastra, ch 31 (Migme Chodron translation: vol 3, p 947-965)

Sikhsasamuccaya ch. 13

(https://archive.org/stream/FourApplMindfulnessMahayana/SgiksnasamuccayaOn4ApplicationsUpdatedJuly2017_djvu.txt)

Madhyantavibhaga 4.1 (look into commentaries for details)

Mahayanasutralamkara 18.43-45 (lists 14 unique qualities found in smrtyupasthana as bodhisattva practice)

Dōgen: Sanjūshichi-bon-bodai-bunpō (BDK ed. of Shobogenzo, vol 4, p 3-6)

Niguma: Lady of Illusion, p 95, 98-100

Berzin: <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/abhidharma-tenet-systems/comparison-of-buddhist-traditions/the-four-close-placements-of-mindfulness-in-mahayana>

Sujato: http://santifm.org/santipada/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/A_History_of_Mindfulness_Bhikkhu_Sujato.pdf,

17.5

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 6th, 2018 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

clyde said:

Must one size fit all?

Astus wrote:

One size must fit all, otherwise there is no path. It is rather a matter of what size one imagines there.

clyde said:

But the goal of Zen (and all Buddhist traditions) is awakening and living in accord with the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

There is actually no rule that one has to train under a specific teacher for a specific length of time in Zen in order to attain awakening. It is a fairly individual matter how long it takes for a person to realise that there is nothing to gain nor to lose. Nor is it said that one should simply settle with the first person that looks like what one imagines a teacher to be. Furthermore, following a teacher is no guarantee for anything.

But(!), there can be, and likely is, a huge amount of misconception about Buddhism in anyone's head who is just getting to know it. A proper teacher is really a convenient way to learn, just as becoming a member of a community is similarly beneficial. While in the end it is up to each person to develop the factors of enlightenment, it can hardly happen without being clear about what they are and how to make them come about.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 6th, 2018 at 3:19 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Matylda said:

Ultimately without teacher there is no zen practice

Astus wrote:

So Huineng said,

"If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking — don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself. This is not the case! Why? Within your own minds there is a spiritual compatriot [who will help you] become enlightened by yourself! If you activate the false and deluded, you will become all mixed up with false thoughts. Although some external spiritual compatriots may be teachers, they cannot save you. If you activate the correct and true and contemplate with prajñā, in a single instant [all your] false thoughts will be completely eradicated. If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 33)

And Dahui,

"I just believe that this matter can't be transmitted and can't be learned. You must realize on your own, awaken on your own, affirm on your own, stop-to-rest on your own, and then you will for the first time get to the end of things."

(Letters of Dahui, p 89)

But even if it is maintained that there is no Zen without a teacher, it is taught that there is no Zen without the pure precepts of the renunciates.

The Buddha taught,

"Therefore, Ānanda, one who practices entering samādhi while practicing meditation in stillness without renouncing sexual activity is like one who cooks sand in the hope that it will turn into rice. A hundred thousand eons might pass and it would still be nothing but hot sand, since it wasn't rice to begin with. It was merely sand.

In seeking the wondrous enlightenment of the Buddha while you still have sexual desire, you may gain some understanding of that wondrous enlightenment, but that understanding will be rooted in sexual desire. If the basis of your understanding is sexual desire, you will continually be reborn among the three lowly destinies, bound to the cycle of death and rebirth with no hope of escape. Then how will you find your way to practice and realization of the Thus-Come Ones' nirvana?"

(Surangama Sutra, ch 7.1, new BTTS translation, p 265)

And Eisai,

"The Buddha's teachings regard keeping precepts as preceding everything else. If anyone breaks moral precepts regulated by the Buddha, and calls himself a child of the Buddha, it can be compared to a subject who won't obey the monarch's orders but who [still] calls himself a subject of the monarch."

(Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 125)

And Dogen,

"The lifeblood of the buddhas and the patriarchs is nothing other than their leaving family life and receiving the precepts. Someone who has not left family life is never a Buddhist patriarch. To see the buddhas and to see the patriarchs is to leave family life and to receive the precepts."

(Shukke, in SBGZ, vol 4, BDK ed, p 148)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

Matylda said:

There is no zen practice without zen teacher.

Astus wrote:

What counts as Zen practice?

If it is non-thought, then if one can do it, there is nothing more to explain, and if one cannot do it, one is not yet practising.

If it is something other than non-thought, but rather various methods to achieve it, then it is no different from the gradual path that is explained in all the scriptures and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

WuMing said:

... and in order to do so, you have to receive the instructions of a teacher to be able to do it, right?

Astus wrote:

Dahui's letters are filled with instructions. But of course it might help to hear the same repeated from the high seat.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

WuMing said:

so, there is a difference between reading instructions in a book and receiving instructions directly from a teacher, isn't it!?

Astus wrote:

Is there a difference between writing and speaking?

"Since they maintain they have no need of written words, they should not speak either, because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They also maintain that the direct way cannot be established by written words, and yet these two words, 'not established' are themselves written."

(Platform Sutra, ch 10, tr <http://www.cttbusa.org/6patriarch/6patriarch20.asp>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 4:06 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

WuMing said:

here is a quote from Dogen's Bendowa (emphasis is mine): practice the way of zazen under the guidance of a true teacher

Astus wrote:

That means only one thing in Dogen's writing, himself. That is because he denies the realisation of all Buddhist teachers who brought the Dharma from China before him, and he viewed only his teacher as the sole upholder of not simply Zen but the whole Buddhadharma. In other words, what Dogen claims (or rather propagates) is that unless you become his disciple, you cannot attain liberation.

WuMing said:

To understand the dharma and attain the way can only be the result of studying with a teacher.

Astus wrote:

Any reason why that would be so?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

clyde said:

I defer to Zen teachers to define the "Zen tradition" and most (all?) Zen teachers hold that the tradition requires a living, face-to-face student-teacher relationship. So, a 'true Zen student' has a Zen teacher, which is why I consider myself a 'student of Zen' and not a Zen student.

Astus wrote:

Every skill and science has its teachers, because on the one hand there are people who like to share their knowledge, and there are people who like to listen to others. This is nothing unique in Zen. But while a discussion on history means talking about historical events, apparently lots of discussion about Zen is about the people who teach and who study it. In that way Zen looks more like the shallow analysis of modern politics where people consider only the individual politicians and their followers, instead of politics on the social, economic, and the philosophical level. Probably the reason for that is the idea that Zen is some undefinable practice that cannot be spoken of, hence instead of clarifying what is what, it is left to those who are assumed to be the experts in this mostly unknown matter. At the same time, there is the fear that unless one attends a specialist, one will fall into unfounded conceptual constructs and misinterpret everything. But isn't it because of leaving Zen a vague something that it is so easy to be trapped into wrong views about it? Just because there are hundreds and thousands of reliable sources to study mathematics, it does not mean people no longer want to learn it from the experts of the field, and at the same time there is little confusion about the difference in expertise of a freshman, a secondary school teacher, and a Fields Medalist. Similarly, there are village Zen priests, there are abbots, there are highly ranked masters, and as for genuinely enlightened teachers, that is rather a matter of personal opinion. But none of that actually informs us what Zen is, just as living with a mathematician does not magically make one understand mathematics.

clyde said:
practiced without a teacher

Astus wrote:
Is practice a communal activity, or two-person activity? If not, and it is an individual effort, then no practice happens with a teacher. A teacher can explain and advise, but can neither show it, nor give it.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 5:22 PM
Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher
Content:
smcj said:

Because without a teacher one must rely on one's own faulty awareness as one's guide. Unawareness will always interpret Dharma as something other than what it is.

Astus wrote:
All practitioner must develop for oneself correct mindfulness (samyaksmṛti) and wise attention (yoniso manaskara). But I think you mean right view, i.e. correctly knowing and understanding the Dharma, what is obtained by learning, and learning happens through listening to Dharma speeches and reading Dharma books. Of course, without learning there is little chance of arriving at correct view, and without correct view there is no correct understanding and correct cultivation.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 9:21 PM
Title: Re: Purify a disease
Content:
Norden said:
I am kind of fear I will develop the disease

Astus wrote:
It seems that the disease you actually have is fear, so what could be treated is fear.

Norden said:
what particular wholesome deed do I need to do to neutralize or counteract this particular disease, if any?

Astus wrote:
You might want to look into some teachings on karma first:
<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.099.than.html>,
<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.101.than.html>,
<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.014.than.html>.

"The result of kamma is an inconceivable matter that one should not try to conceive; one who tries to conceive it would reap either madness or frustration."
(AN 4.77, tr Bodhi)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 7th, 2018 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

WuMing said:

Of course, no doubt about that, but it is very wise to check back with the teacher in order to not go astray. This is the danger of doing it by oneself alone, as I see it. It is good to check ones understanding with a teacher, a real person, to avoid fooling oneself.

Astus wrote:

According to <http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0027> the primary factor is that a teacher should have a correct view, and in order to be able to tell that, the disciple must have knowledge of the Dharma. So in the end it always comes down to matching view with what is taught in the scriptures. As it's said in the <https://suttacentral.net/dn16/en/sujato>:

"If they're not included in the discourses or found in the Vinaya, you should draw the conclusion: 'Clearly this is not the word of the Buddha. It has not been correctly memorized by those senior mendicants.' And so you should reject it. If they are included in the discourses and found in the Vinaya, you should draw the conclusion: 'Clearly this is the word of the Buddha. It has been correctly memorized by those senior mendicants.' You should remember it."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 8th, 2018 at 3:35 PM

Title: Re: Dont follow a lineage (etc.), follow a teacher

Content:

clyde said:

Zen, the tradition, is a religious institution (or institutions)

Astus wrote:

Zen is a very loose term applied to a chain of concepts within East Asian Buddhism. Institutionally it has always existed within the framework of the monastic tradition, and to that added its main defining idea of lineages.

clyde said:

and as such it's to its leaders to determine what is and is not part of their tradition.

Astus wrote:

Today there are bigger and smaller organisations (Soto, Jogye, Fo Guang Shan, etc.), but even within those there isn't much of doctrinal unity, not to mention all the Western Zen

communities that can operate in complete independence apart from any Asian hierarchy.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 9th, 2018 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Purify a disease

Content:

Norden said:

If we do not know the precise cause and result, can we at least know the general idea?

Astus wrote:

Of course, there are such descriptions, see:

<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.than.html>

Norden said:

Then why in order to counteract the karma of leper is inconceivable?

Astus wrote:

What's already done is done, it cannot be changed. What one can do is to avoid repeating the same, thus reaping the results again.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 9th, 2018 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: doctrinal unity

Content:

clyde said:

While there are differences in doctrinal emphasis (and practices) between the lineages, I think there is a fair degree of doctrinal unity.

Astus wrote:

What I meant is the absence of a requirement to comply with a specific set of doctrines within the various organisations. It can be said that there is a fair degree of unity even in the whole of Buddhism, more in East Asian Mahayana, and even more if we look at only e.g. Korean Zen. But I have not yet heard of an institution that outlines the particular teachings that they consider orthodox, unlike the major Christian churches.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 9th, 2018 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Purify a disease

Content:

Norden said:

What I meant was the general idea of cause and effect of leper. Cula-kammavibhanga talks more about five precepts and the transgressions.

Astus wrote:

Leprosy is an illness that can turn one ugly, hence look at the causes of those two: anger and ill-temper.

Norden said:

Since we do not know what type of unwholesome deed causes leper, therefore it's imponderable, is that what you're saying?

Astus wrote:

What that quote says is that it is futile to guess all the consequences of an action. Even if you had the ability to remember your previous lives, you still could not tell what actions would cause what in your present and future lives.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 9th, 2018 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: No gods / No superior entities

Content:

croco said:

Which form of Buddhism fits the criteria?

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is a path of developing oneself and helping others to develop. In that way every Buddhist has complete freedom in what they are willing to undertake as their practice. However, as with any group of people, communities have their own set of practices that often involve rituals. Such rituals within Buddhism normally involve at least some references to so called supernatural entities, like guardian deities and ghosts, although groups run by Westerners may lack most or all of that.

Buddhist practice as a lay person is primarily about upholding the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Precepts, and this is quite universal within all schools. So, teaching those five precepts to one's children is the optimal approach, as <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/iti/iti.3.050-099.than.html#iti-074>. There are also some <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html#to-children> regarding the duties of parents toward their children, where the first two elements are restraining them from evil and encouraging them to do good. You may also read how the Buddha taught his own son, Rahula, when he was only 7: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.061.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 11th, 2018 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: The 'Democracy' of the Pure Land Path

Content:

如傑優婆塞 said:

<https://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice/note-pure-land>

It is a democratic method that empowers its adherents, freeing them from arcane metaphysics as well as dependence on teachers, gurus, roshis and other mediating authority figures

Astus wrote:

That is a half-truth. There are still teachers in the various PL organisations, there is also a hierarchy within those communities, etc. It is just a common human desire/behaviour to follow other people. At the same time, all Buddhist paths require the individual to proceed on the way on his own, nobody can push or pull instead of the practitioner.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 14th, 2018 at 3:53 PM

Title: Re: proclaiming awakening

Content:

clyde said:

The Buddha proclaimed

Astus wrote:

The regular affirmation of the Buddha's enlightenment all over the sutras is not really about what he claimed but about affirming Buddhism as true. That is why you can find that statements about the Buddha come to be grander and grander as you go from the Nikayas towards the Tantras.

clyde said:

reluctant to talk about their attainments or that of their students

Astus wrote:

There is little need for that when the system does that for you. For instance, a Zen master is supposed to be an equal of the Buddha by the fact of being affirmed as a Dharma heir; similarly, a tulku - i.e. nirmanakaya, or the telling Chinese term "living Buddha" (huofo 活佛) - is a fairly obvious expression defining the status of someone as enlightened.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 14th, 2018 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: Reliance on a master

Content:

Rion said:

Can anyone explain the contradiction?

Astus wrote:

There are some significant differences between traditions in terms of how the Buddha is conceived.

You might want to check Guang Xing's study

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=DTWZLMGFFgkC> as a little background info.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 14th, 2018 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: doctrinal unity

Content:

Anders said:

Is this needed?

Astus wrote:

No. It's actually the point that Zen does not mean a specific teaching or method.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 15th, 2018 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: doctrinal unity

Content:

clyde said:

there are practices and teachings that differentiate Zen from other Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) traditions and define the Zen tradition, yes?

Astus wrote:

What are those unique teachings and practices?

Kanna Zen is likely the most unique element, and it encompasses almost everything one can associate with the general view of Zen. The problem with that is that it was first propagated in the 12th century, and it is not embraced universally.

As for teaching, sudden enlightenment is possibly the term that can cover the central theme of Zen teachings, as long as we take it to include the belief that it is possible to directly perceive the nature of mind without prerequisites (discipline, meditation, study), and that the nature of mind is identical to the nature of buddhahood. As for practice, non-thought is likely the essence of all methods, meaning the absence of grasping at concepts, behind what lies the view that from grasping at thoughts emerge everything.

Why then does not this mean a doctrinal unity? Because not setting up a doctrine to be upheld is the very path itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 15th, 2018 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: proclaiming awakening

Content:

clyde said:

The Buddha's affirmation wasn't merely claiming that the path was true

Astus wrote:

It's not the Buddha's claim, it is the tradition's claim, the disciples' validation of themselves by asserting the trustworthiness of their teacher.

clyde said:

I don't believe that all Buddhist teachers are enlightened regardless of their status or title

Astus wrote:

Apart from the Buddha and the Dharma, the third jewel is the Sangha. Trust in the Sangha is as important as trust in the other two.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2018 at 3:29 AM

Title: Re: proclaiming awakening

Content:

clyde said:

Why don't living Buddhist teachers do the same? Or are none of them enlightened?

Astus wrote:

Because such a claim is basically counterproductive. It only deepens the divide between teacher and student, strengthens unrealistic expectations, and generates an unhealthy personality cult. On the other hand, saying that one's teacher was a great being, a buddha in person, etc., means that the teaching transmitted is beneficial, valuable, and true.

"If he claims to have gained something, he is arrogant. If he claims to have realized something, he is arrogant. If he claims to have attained liberation, he is arrogant."
(The Definitive Vinaya, in Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p 271)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2018 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: proclaiming awakening

Content:

clyde said:

We read this of the Buddha and other Buddhist teachers in the suttas, sutras, and other ancient texts.

Astus wrote:

Apart from the Buddha himself, who do you know of who proclaimed their attainment, especially in front of lay people?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2018 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: doctrinal unity

Content:

clyde said:

This was summarized by Bodhidharma, the First Zen Patriarch: A special transmission outside the scriptures;

No dependence on words and letters;

Direct pointing to the mind of man;

Seeing into one's nature and attaining Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

How does that quatrain match with what I wrote?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 16th, 2018 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: doctrinal unity

Content:

clyde said:

(admittedly this is a bit of a stretch)

Astus wrote:

It is.

clyde said:

“No dependence on words and letters;” = “the absence of grasping at concepts”

Astus wrote:

That may fit, unless one reads it with the previous line and takes it to mean rejecting doctrines and scriptures.

clyde said:

“Direct pointing to the mind of man;” = “directly perceive the nature of mind”

Astus wrote:

Somebody else pointing it out and oneself perceiving it are not the same, even if there can be a causal relationship.

clyde said:

“Seeing into one's nature and attaining Buddhahood.” = “the nature of mind is identical to the nature of buddhahood”

Astus wrote:

It sounds more like one being the cause and the other the result.

Why all that doesn't really give a doctrinal unity is that neither the nature, nor the way one can see it is specified.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 20th, 2018 at 9:12 PM

Title: Re: Bodhicitta is fleeting...

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

“Why bother to save you if you’re such a jerk!”

Astus wrote:

All beings are jerks. To expect otherwise is delusion that, obviously, all beings suffer from. Also, the idea that one can save another is one more delusion. The bodhisattva path is therefore to save all beings while it is clear that there is nobody to save anybody. Without the latter part it is not the bodhisattva path, rather some sort of messiah complex.

For usual teachings on the issue, check topics like relative and ultimate bodhicitta, and kshanti-paramita.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 23rd, 2018 at 11:19 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Is there anything that cannot be negated in Buddhism? Can one's existence be negated?

Astus wrote:

A monk asked Zen master Dasui, “When the aeonic fire engulfs everything, is this annihilated or not?”

Dasui said, “Annihilated.”

The monk said, “Then it is annihilated along with everything else?”

Dasui said, “It is annihilated along with everything else.”

The monk refused to accept this answer. He later went to Touzi Datong and relayed to him his conversation with Dasui.

Touzi lit incense and bowed to the figure of the Buddha, saying, “The ancient buddha of West River has appeared.”

Then Touzi said to the monk, “You should go back there quickly and atone for your mistake.”

The monk went back to see Dasui, but Dasui had already died. The monk then went back to see Touzi, but Touzi had also passed away.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 181; also partly in Blue Cliff Record 29)

Rick said:

Or would it be right-er in Buddhism to say: I neither am, nor am not, nor neither, nor both?

To what extent does the answer depend on the Buddhist school/tradition?

Astus wrote:
The buddhas said “I am.”
They taught as well that self does not exist.
They also said that self
And no-self are completely nonexistent.
(Mulamadhyamakakarika 18.6, tr Padmakara)

A monk once asked Mazu, “Apart from the four propositions and beyond the hundred negations, I ask the teacher to directly indicate to me the meaning of [Bodhidharma’s] coming from the west.”

The great teacher [Mazu] said, “I am tired today, and cannot explain it for you. Go ask [Xitang] Zhizang.”

The monk asked [Zhi]zang, and [Zhi]zang said, “Why don’t you ask the teacher?”

The monk said, “The teacher had me come ask you.”

[Zhi]zang said, “Today I have a headache, and cannot explain it for you. Go ask brother [Baizhang Huai]hai.”

The monk asked [Baizhang Huai]hai, and [Huai]hai said, “When I reach here, after all I do not understand.”

The monk related this to the great teacher [Mazu], and Mazu said,

“[Zhi]zang’s head is white, and [Huai]hai’s head is black.”

(Eihei Koroku, p 591; also in Blue Cliff Record 73)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2018 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

What about the kind of existence with which a process is said to exist?

Astus wrote:

Belief in continuity is that something exists from one moment to the next. That is basically eternalism. Madhyamaka goes to the point where even momentary existence is refuted, not just a continual one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2018 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

is this true for all Buddhists?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

boundless said:

I mean at least for Nirvana, the Theravada view seems quite different. ... Note the description of Nirvana as "permanent". Is the Madhyamaka view that Theravada is "eternalist" in some sense?

Astus wrote:

Quite the opposite, sravakayana is often characterised in Mahayana as annihilationist, because of nirupadhisesa-nirvana. Nirvana is permanent in the sense that there is no more birth, ever.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 25th, 2018 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Per process philosophy what 'exists' are dynamic events. Madhyamaka refutes the existence of fixed substances, not of dynamic events. Or?

Astus wrote:

Does that dynamic event exist in the present, the past, or the future? If it is in the past or the future, it is non-existent. If it is in the present, how is it an event?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2018 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

Here, maybe Nirvana can be said to be "permanent" in the sense that it is unrelated to time.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is the complete extinction of the three poisons, see this repeated again and again in the Asankhata-samyutta. Without the afflictions there is no more rebirth, this is clear from all the teachings on dependent origination (e.g. Nidana-samyutta).

Everything that can be called a type of awareness or consciousness is included under the five aggregates and six areas, all of them conditioned. If nirvana is posited as an existent object, either it is conditioned (can be perceived), or it is fictional (cannot be perceived). The reason nirvana is not called non-existent is twofold: because there is liberation, and because it is the end of conceptualisation (see:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.174.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2018 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

no enduring substances, only 'momentary events of experience' called actual entities

Astus wrote:

If there are momentary events, those events themselves have a becoming phase, an enduring phase, a decaying phase, and a cessation phase; in other words: birth, ageing, illness, death. That way a momentary event has its own past, present, and future as well, and that is how even momentary existence cannot be established.

Rick said:

The *flow* exists, but there is no-thing (no substance) that is flowing.

Astus wrote:

Is there a river without water?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2018 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Yes, an actual entity has duration = its own localized past, present, and future.

Astus wrote:

Hence while there is an assumption of momentary existence, it cannot be established as actually a momentary existent.

Rick said:

Is there a solid table without any solid particles?

Astus wrote:

A river without water would be a wooden table without the wood. A table without solid particles would be water without wet particles. So one is movement/form without an object that moves/has a form; the other is an object with constituents that lack the qualities present in the object. Both are problematic, but in different ways.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2018 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Is there solidity without any solid particles?

Astus wrote:

If a composite object's quality does not exist in its elements, where is the quality from? If it cannot be from its constituents, and it cannot be from something other than what it

is made of, nor is it possible for something to occur from nothing, then such a quality cannot exist at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 27th, 2018 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Nice in theory

Astus wrote:

It is a theoretical proposition that an object may have a quality without there being any cause of that quality. No matter how long you beat the table, it cannot have any relevance to prove the theory correct or wrong.

Rick said:

Not sure how Buddhism explains it

Astus wrote:

Buddhism does not debate conventional reality. It only points out that it is merely conventional, that is, conceptual fabrication.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 28th, 2018 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Neither exists nor doesn't exist; beyond the vicissitudes of existence. ... That is why it can only be known by un-knowing, hence, back to via negativa and apophaticism. 'He that knows it, knows it not.'

Astus wrote:

The position of "neither is nor isn't" is one of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catu%E1%B9%A3ko%E1%B9%ADi>, while the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aj%C3%B1ana> approach of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanjaya_Belatthiputta is clearly not the Buddha's version, as also refuted in the Brahmajala Sutta under the "doctrines of endless equivocation".

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 29th, 2018 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So nirvana must be existent, then?

Astus wrote:

Of course, in the Theravadin abhidharma nirvana is one of the four ultimate (paramartha) dharmas, and it is the sole unconditioned (asamskrta) dharma. In other abhidharma systems, including the Yogacarīn, nirvana is an unconditioned dharma. So what should be looked into is what being a dharma means, after all, in Buddhism everything is eventually a dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 29th, 2018 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Advaita does pretty much the same thing.

Astus wrote:

Vedānta posits a single existent being and negates everything else. Buddhism only points out that appearances are fictional, and does not establish a true being apart from that. Hence one is atmavāda, the other is anatmavāda.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 29th, 2018 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

prof. Peter Harvey in the chapter 2 of his book

Astus wrote:

It is not stated that nirvana is self. One simple reason is that sentience, or consciousness, cannot be unconditioned. So, there are all sorts of nice sounding teachings about nirvana that can be easily confused with notions like Soul, God, etc., but those are expedient teachings, that are meant to motivate people, to build some level of faith. When it eventually comes to reasoning and cultivation, nirvana is just the complete end of afflictions. And as the extinction of the cause of suffering - i.e. the third noble truth - it is necessarily permanent and happy, therefore, in a sense, as it happens in Mahāyāna, it can even be called self.

But remember the Mulapariyāya Sutta, that while an ordinary person conceives a self in some relation to nirvana, the practitioner "should not conceive [himself as] Nibbana, he should not conceive [himself] in Nibbana, he should not conceive [himself apart] from Nibbana, he should not conceive Nibbana to be 'mine,' he should not delight in Nibbana. Why is that? Because he must fully understand it, I say."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 29th, 2018 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So the argument about whether conventional objects really exist, or the way in which they exist, is really about whether they embody or comprise 'own being' - which they don't. But it doesn't mean they don't exist.

Astus wrote:

If we go by the abhidharma approach, then all dharmas - conditioned and unconditioned - are svabhava, in that they are distinct, individual categories. If we go by the prajnaparamita approach, then all dharmas - conditioned and unconditioned - are nihsvabhava, in that they are contextual and conceptual categories. Therefore there is no difference between nirvana and other dharmas in terms of having or not having self-existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

it cannot be (rightly) said that brahman is the single existent being.

Astus wrote:

Is vedanta undecided on the nature of Brahman? Here is a little Sankara then:

"Then, what is the Atman? It is of the nature of

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satcitananda> (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss).

What is Sat? Sat is that which remains unchanged in the three periods of time."

(<http://practicalphilosophy.in/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/tattvabodha.pdf> 16.1-2)

"The wise should discriminate between the Self and the not-Self for the bondage. Only then does one know the Self to be Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, only then, does one become happy."

"Brahman is Existence-Knowledge-Absolute, extremely pure, Supreme, Self-existing, Eternal, Indivisible-Bliss, not essentially different from the inmost Self , and absolutely without parts. It is ever victorious."

(<https://realization.org/down/sankara.vivekachudamani.chaitanya.pdf> 152, 225)

"Unlike the knowledge gained through the eye etc. the Knowledge of the Knower does not cease to exist. It is said that, 'the Knowledge of the Knower does not go out of existence '. The Knower, therefore, is always of the homogeneous nature of Knowledge."

"That oneself exists is undoubted. You may call it Knowledge, Self or whatever i you like.

But Its non-existence cannot be admitted as It is the Witness of all things existing and non-existing.

That by which the non-existence of things is witnessed must be real. All would be ignorant of the existence and non-existence of things if that were not the case. Therefore yours is a position which cannot be accepted."

(Upadesasahasri 2.15.18; 2.16.31-32, tr Sw Jagananda)

"That is, it is through this Self known as 'Being' that all this Universe is imbued with Self ; and there is no other Self for this which passes through births and deaths ; as has been declared in such other Vedic texts as-'other than this, there is no Seer, other than this, there is no Heaven' (Brhada. Upa. III. viii. 11.)-that through which all this Universe becomes imbued with Self is its origin, called 'Being', which is True and Absolutely Real. Hence, it is this that is the Self of the Universe, its counter-form, its very essence, its very Soul."

"Objection: - "The assertion 'that thou art' may be a figurative one, just as a man endowed with courage and other qualities is spoken as 'you are a lion'. (So 'That thou art ' may mean that thou art like the That, 'Being')."

No; because it has been taught that Being, one, without a second, is the only real Entity-like 'clay' being the one entity pervading all products of clay. If it were a more figurative expression, the knowledge thereof could not be spoken of as bringing about that mergence into Being where 'the delay is only so long' etc., because all figurative notions are false (unreal). - just like the notions 'you are Indra', 'you are Yama'."

(Chandogya-Upanisad-Bhasya, 6.8.7; 6.16.3. p 339, 365)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

has zero attributes

Astus wrote:

Existence (sat) is not an attribute (guna).

"After rejecting the object portion one should accept the Self as the knower free from all qualifications. The ego, the object portion, is also like the part of the body cut off. The Self of which the whole of the object portion is the qualification is different from it. Bereft of all qualifications It has an independent existence like that of a man possessing a variegated cow."

(Upadesasahasri 2.6.4-5, p 99)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

how do we reconcile

Astus wrote:

Your quote refers to the difference between conceptual and experiential, learning and realisation.

" (Question):—Then how is it that Brahman is said to be known through the śāstras or scriptures?

(Answer):—All the words which are used to impart a true knowledge of Brahman only give us to understand Him indirectly, by implication; they fail to denote Him directly. The mental cognition which is generated by a word has a form, and so fails to reach the self-conscious Brahman; thus cognitions recede from Him along with the words."

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-taittiriya-upanishad/d/doc79846.html>.16)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 1:37 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

The question of whether or not existent is a predicate

Astus wrote:

The quote is from the Bhagavad-Gita-Bhasya 13.12, and if you read on to the next two stanzas, Sankara reinforces that the Brahman exists. Furthermore, in his commentary to 13.12 he explains the Gita as it is referring only to objects, and of course the "knower of the field" is not the field, hence not an object of cognition that could be labelled. But the point is always to lead one to the true self, so even when seemingly everything is negated, a single ultimate remains. Without that soul left alone the whole teaching of Vedanta would just turn into a different doctrine.

Rick said:

brahman cannot be said to existent, but it can be experienced to be existent

Astus wrote:

It is not only called existent, but has to be named existent. A small section of one of Sankara's many commentaries should not serve as a basis of interpreting all his teachings. But yes, there is a recognised difference between words and realisation, just like in everyday life, otherwise there would be no need for all the religious practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Rick said:

Can we agree that brahman does not exist in the way that people (non-enlighteneds, like me) think it exists?

Astus wrote:

That basically means that one is incorrect until one is correct, that is, until one understands as it is, one has the wrong idea. Once it is understood correctly, it becomes clear that it is not the thoughts but the perceiver.

Rick said:

The trick here is that brahman cannot be experienced, because it is not an object.

Astus wrote:

It is the always present final subject, i.e. the self. As it is conscious, it is experienced by itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 2:26 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

That's was the point that I was making, i.e. that not all Budddhists went as far as the Madhyamaka (and the Sautrantika) in their negation of ontological status of Nirvana (and of "dharma" in general).

Astus wrote:

Ontologically talking is perhaps going a bit too far, as the meaning of "dharma" is more along the line of category than substance.

boundless said:

in Shravakyana the anatman teaching does not rule out the possibility of something unconditioned and not unreal

Astus wrote:

Being a cessation does not make it unreal.

"is called Nibbāna because it is a departure from craving, which is an entanglement. Though Nibbāna is onefold according to its intrinsic nature, by reference to a basis (for distinction), it is twofold, namely, the element of Nibbāna with a residue remaining, and the element of Nibbāna without the residue remaining. It is threefold according to its different aspects, namely, void, signless, and desireless."
(A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p 258-259)

"In fact nibbāna, as an unconditioned reality, has simply the nature of cessation called "the characteristic of peacefulness" (santilakkhaṇā). It is the cessation of the defilements and the rounds of suffering. Or, it is the nonexistence of conditioned phenomena (saṅkhāra), the cessation of conditioned phenomena, and the opposite of

what is conditioned."

"If the nibbāna element does not exist, then the cessation of the mental and physical processes or the aggregates could not happen. Thus it is not true that the nibbāna element is nothing, like the concept of nonexistence. Being the object of path and fruition, it is obvious in an ultimate sense. And because it is so obvious, the constantly arising mental and physical processes or aggregates in a person who practices correctly do not arise anymore after that person's parinibbāna. Then, they are able to cease forever. It means that the cessation is something that can be obvious."

(Mahasi Sayadaw: Manual of Insight p 454, 456)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 30th, 2018 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Malcolm said:

Cessations are not nonexistences, since in cessation there is no existence of which one may speak of a nonexistence.

Astus wrote:

Cessation refers to the end of afflictions, so it is in a way the non-existence, or annihilation of afflictions. What it is not the annihilation of is the self, since that has never existed in the first place.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 2nd, 2018 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

more or less the same as darkness. Darkness is unreal

Astus wrote:

Is there or isn't there darkness? If you say darkness does not exist, there should always be light. But quite clearly there is darkness, as a sensory object. Similarly with nirvana, there is a perception of the end of suffering, called path-consciousness and result-consciousness in Theravada (<https://www.budsas.org/ebud/nina-abhidhamma/nina-abhi-23.htm>). But the key part is that the defilements are eliminated permanently, and that's how the different levels of the noble path are defined, while following the entry of each stage - change of lineage consciousness - there is always a few moments of perception of the unconditioned, meaning the experience of the cessation of suffering.

boundless said:

because it is simply the absence of light (and nothing else).

Astus wrote:

One standard definition of nirvana is that it means peace. Peace, similarly to darkness

and space, is a type of absence, a lack of trouble. While one can sing odes to how great and wonderful peace is, it is still simply no struggle.

boundless said:

Nirvana is seen as "real", non-fictional, not a mere designation, not a blank nothing, not a mere absence and so on etc

Astus wrote:

<https://discourse.suttacentral.net/t/nature-of-nibbana/3096/4> put it nicely:

"Extinguishment is ontologically negative but psychologically positive."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 3rd, 2018 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Matt J said:

what happens to an arhat after death

Astus wrote:

No ignorance, no consciousness, no birth.

"Just as if a great mass of fire of ten... twenty... thirty or forty cartloads of timber were burning, into which a man simply would not time & again throw dried grass, dried cow dung, or dried timber, so that the great mass of fire — its original sustenance being consumed, and no other being offered — would, without nutriment, go out. In the same way, in one who keeps focusing on the drawbacks of clingable phenomena, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging, illness & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress."

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.052.than.html>)

Destination of arhat: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.085.than.html>

Destination of the Tathagata:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.086.than.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 4th, 2018 at 6:11 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

as Ven. Dhammanando <https://dhammawheel.com/viewtopic.php?t=25336#p364997> in the other Wheel, according to the "classical" or "traditional" Theravada view Nirvana was not seen as the mere absence.

Astus wrote:

I think Mahasi Sayadaw is a fairly traditional teacher of Theravada. He writes in <http://www.aimwell.org/On%20the%20Nature%20of%20Nibbana.pdf> (p 60-61 and 63-64):

"Since nibbāna means the cessation of mind, matter, and mental formations, suggestions have often been put forward that it signifies nothing and is thus useless. However, nibbāna is absolute reality, the reality of the nullification of the activities of mind, matter, and mental formations to which the knowledge of the Path, Fruition, and reviewing (paccavekkhaṇa) is inclined. ... It is only the Path and its Fruition that can exterminate defilements, and this extermination will bring the cycle of suffering to an end. This cessation of suffering is real. Buddhas and Arahants actually reach this stage, and after their parinibbāna all sufferings come to an end."

"In nibbāna there are no such things as mind or mental concomitants, which can be met with in the sense-sphere or form-sphere. It naturally follows that mind and matter that belong to the thirty-one planes of existence are totally absent in nibbāna. However, some would like to propose that after the parinibbāna of the Buddha and the Arahants, they acquire a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna. Such an extraordinary way of thinking may appeal to those who cannot do away with self or ego.

With regard to this proposition a learned Sayādaw reasoned that if there is a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna, there must also be a special kind of rebirth which gives rise to a special kind of old age, disease, and death, which in turn bring about a special kind of sorrow, lamentation, suffering, distress, and despair. When the teachings explicitly say cessation, it will be improper to go beyond it and formulate an idea of a special kind of existence. Extinction points to nothing other than Nothingness. Nibbāna, which is not involved in mind and matter, cannot be made to get involved either in this world or in other worlds."

boundless said:

I do not find a "mere absence" as "inaccessible to ratiocination"

Astus wrote:

It likely is, since there is a common tendency to turn it into a mystical object that, although cannot be clearly defined, but is assumed to be definitely an eternal existent.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 4th, 2018 at 3:54 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

boundless said:

Nirvana is not nothing

Astus wrote:

It is not nothing, in the sense that it is indeed the liberation from suffering. Saying that

nirvana does not exist means that there is no end of birth and pain. Not to believe in nirvana means denying the goal of the path. But it does not mean a different form of existence or a special state of mind, it is rather the cessation of dependent origination.

boundless said:

he does not say that there is mind or matter in Nirvana.

Astus wrote:

Without consciousness there is no experience, no sentience. So if it is accepted that the five aggregates come about because of ignorance, when ignorance ceases there is no cause for the becoming of aggregates, and without the aggregates there is no being to talk of in any sense. But that is about nirvana in itself. The other part is where nirvana is the object of consciousness, when it is actually experienced by a noble person. To quote another sayadaw on this:

"When The Buddha says we must know and see the world as void, He means that we must know and see it as void of permanence (nicca), void of happiness (sukha) and void of self (atta). In ordinary language, we may say that you must see absolute zero. But this does not mean that your consciousness is absolute zero: your consciousness is fully aware: it is the object that your consciousness knows and sees which is absolute zero. The object that your consciousness is fully aware of and knows and sees is the Nibbana element: the Unformed Element (Asankhata-Dhatu)."
(Pa Auk Sayadaw: Knowing and Seeing, p 27)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 4:33 AM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Malcolm said:

Correction, there is no coming about of the upādāna-skandhas.

Astus wrote:

Further extension then, that there is the saupadisesa-nibbanadhatu and the anupadisesa-nibbanadhatu, as per the <https://suttacentral.net/iti44/en/ireland> and others. The aggregates without clinging remain only until parinirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This the extreme of cessation. Not acceptable in Mahāyāna as CW points out.

Astus wrote:

It is not acceptable for a bodhisattva to go for total cessation, but it was not an agreed

concept that the sravaka nirvana is only a temporary samadhi, as it is apparent in the five-gotra teaching of Yogacara.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In Mahāyāna, it is certainly the case, for example, the Lanka Sutra.

Astus wrote:

Only those of the undetermined lineage change to the bodhisattva path.

"[The Buddha] has taught a single vehicle to lead word-hearers of undetermined [lineage], other bodhisattvas [of undetermined lineage], and [bodhisattvas] of determined lineage into the Great Vehicle."

(Mahayanasamgraha 10.32, BDK ed, p 115-116)

Here is Xuanzang's explanation on the state of nirupadhisesa-nirvana (Cheng Weishi Lun, book 9, chapter 4, part 5, section 1.2.2, p 761-763, tr Wei Tat):

"The Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas, you say, are in possession of the Nirupadhisesa. Is there not a Sutra which teaches that they are not in possession of Nirupadhisesa? If they are in possession, why is it said that they are not? But the same Sutra [the Srimala Sutra] teaches that they do not in any way possess Nirvana. Is one going to maintain that Sopadhisesa is also lacking in them? In fact, as long as their 'body and intelligence' (i.e., their body and their mind) remain, the Sravakas and other saints of the two Vehicles - that is to say, the niyatagotras (saints of indeterminate nature) - have Jneyavarana. The duhkhopadhi (that is to say, 'that which serves as support for suffering') not having been exhausted, the principle of Parinirvana remains latent. It may therefore be said that they are not possessed of Nirvana.

This does not mean that they are really devoid of Sopadhisesa Nirvana, that is to say, the 'Reality' or Tathata revealed by the exhaustion of Klesavarana.

But, since they have not yet realized the complete Parinirvana, one says that they have not the Nirupadhisesa: this does not mean that, later, when their body and intelligence have been destroyed, they will not suffer the exhaustion of duhkhopadhi and the resultant Nirupadhisesa Nirvana.

In other words, if the Srimalasutra teaches that the saints of the two Vehicles are not possessed of Nirvana, one should understand that this refers to the fourth Nirvana, i.e., the Apratisthitanirvana, in which the Bodhisattva does not stay or reside, not the first three.

Furthermore, this declaration that the saints of the two Vehicles have not the Nirupadhisesa refers only to the aniyatagotras (saints of indeterminate nature) : these Arhats, at the very moment of their attainment of Sopadhisesa Nirvana, determine to turn their mind towards the supreme Bodhi. By the power of their pure meditation and

contemplation and of their pious vows and resolutions, which proceed from compassion, they 'conserve' their bodies and continue their residence for long periods of time in Samsara instead of entering into the Nirupadhisesa as do the niyatagrota saints of the two Vehicles.

The latter, i.e., the niyatagrota saints whose mind is fixed on arhatship, and not on Buddhahood, have a great predilection for Parinirvana. They obtain the contemplation of pudgalasunyata, thus realizing immediately the Bhutatathata which results from this sunyata; they completely destroy the Klesavarana, the cause of rebirth, thereby attaining the Sopadhisesa Nirvana which is revealed on the basis of 'Reality'. The klesas which produce rebirth for these saints having been exhausted, there is no reason for a new existence to be produced, especially when the actual duhkhopadhi (the physical body) comes to perish spontaneously. The other samskrtadharmas (active, functioning dharmas), since they no longer serve as a supporting basis (upadhi), are abandoned at the same time as the duhkhopadhi. As a result of this, the Nirupadhisesa Nirvana which supports itself on Reality will be manifested. Although at this moment (when the duhkhopadhi has come to an end) the body and intelligence of the two Vehicles no longer exist, nevertheless, as these saints have previously effected the destruction of this duhkhopadhi, one can attribute Nirupadhisesa to them.

At this moment, [in view of the complete disappearance of all cittanimitta,] there remains only the pure Tathata (the first of the ten Tathatas set out at the beginning of this section), exempt from the ten nimittas, placid, tranquil, non active, beatified. From the point of view of Tathata, it is said that the saints of the two Vehicles are not different from the Buddhas; but since they are not possessed of Bodhi and those activities that are directed to the salvation of others, it is said that they are different from the Buddhas."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is a Mahāyāna forum. Pure aggregates continue in buddhahood. See Mahāyānasamgraha. In Mahāyāna, there is also so-called nonabiding nirvana.

Astus wrote:

The issue is related to the Theravadin view of nirvana, where all conditioned dharmas must cease at the end, as they are the products of ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nevertheless, Yogācāra does not teach that the aggregates utterly cease.

Astus wrote:

It would not be remainderless nirvana if aggregates remained. The alayavijnana ceases for arhats, as Vasubandhu says in the 5th stanza of the Trimsika.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Via Negativa

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, this is also wrong. What about rocks, are they products ignorance in the Theravada view? No.

Astus wrote:

Dharmas, as in reference to the sentient being, i.e. nama and rupa.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 5th, 2018 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The ālaya contains the seeds of affliction, so of course during liberation it reverts in everyone, thus even the Tathāgata is an arhat.

Astus wrote:

According to the Cheng Weishi Lun, arhat there refers to arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas equally.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2018 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So, therefore your idea that Yogacara advocates a total cessation for arhat is completely unfounded based on the reasoning you gave, i.e., that there is no continuation upon the cessation of the ālaya.

Astus wrote:

Why would that be? Just because the alayavijnana ceases for both arhats and buddhas, it does not mean that their attainment is the same. For buddhas there are the causes accumulated over the bodhisattva path to generate the buddha-bodies. But the causes are absent for arhats, hence there is no cause for the emergence of anything.

"Samanantarapratyaya, a condition qua antecedent, means that the eight actual consciousnesses (darsana and samvittibhaga) and their Caittas (to the exclusion of

Rupa, the Viprayuktas, the Bijas, and the Asamakrtas) constitute a preceding group which passes away to give place to a subsequent group of the same species, opening the way to that group and acting in such a way that it immediately comes into being. ... At the moment of entry into Nirupadhisenanirvana (Final-Nirvana-without-residue, i.e., Nirvana without vestiges of reincarnation), the mind is extremely weak and, in consequence, has not 'the strength to open the way and lead'. Further, it does not produce a subsequent dharma of a similar nature. Hence it is not Samanantarapratyaya. How do you explain this?

It has been truly said in the Yogasastra that 'if, immediately after the former consciousness-associates, the latter consciousness-associates are born, then the former are the Samanantarapratyaya of the latter.' (Yogasastra, 3 and 51, and Vikhyapana, 18)."

(Cheng Weishi Lun, 4.1.2, p 537-539)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2018 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Śravaka arhats take on a mental body due to their traces of ignorance, as Asanga explains clearly in the Mahāyānottaratantraśāstravyākhyā

Astus wrote:

Such a mental body is fine if it is not considered the final destination of an arhat, hence it is of the undetermined category who moves on to the bodhisattva path. After all, the Ratnagotravibhaga is about the buddha-gotra. So unless you say that Yogacara does not posit the doctrine of different gotras, arhats and pratyekabuddhas must attain true nirupadhisena-nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2018 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point is that the pure aggregates do not cease contra your assertion.

Astus wrote:

The pure form of the aggregates are present during sopadhisena-nirvana - that is what the word means - but its other part, nirupadhisena, means exactly that there is no support (upadhi), i.e. skandhas present. However, Yogacara works discuss the transformed skandhas only for buddhas (Mahayanasutralamkara 9.41-45; Mahayanasamgraha 10.5), but not mentioned for those of the two vehicles. Xuanzang also discusses the issue as

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=459641#p459641>. Also, arhats without nirupadhisena-nirvana can only fit into the system of ekayana, but not of the five gotras

where sravakas and pratyekabuddhas reach a final and definite goal. As Vasubandhu notes in his commentary to the Lotus Sutra (Tiantai Lotus Texts, BDK ed, p 135): "It is not the case that those who have not originally produced the thought of enlightenment, such as ordinary people and the disciples who are fixed [in the Small Vehicle], are able to attain it."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 6th, 2018 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Nevertheless, since arhats have traces of ignorance, this is sufficient to maintain their continuums, albeit not as a birth in any of the three realms.

Astus wrote:

I'm not arguing to prove that the Yogacara interpretation is correct, only to show that they had no problem accepting what is taught by sravakayana schools about the destination of arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 7th, 2018 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The fault is that śravakas enter into a mental body in a permanent cessation with no chance of escape without intervention. Otherwise, the yogacarins too would be at fault for accepting cessation as an extreme.

Astus wrote:

"A case may exist where there is neither the mental organ nor the element of the mental organ, as in the case of him who has attained Nirvana without a remainder (nirupadhisesanirvana)."

(Abhidharmasamuccaya 1.1.1, p 26)

If arhats of a fixed nature - i.e. no change to the bodhisattva path - are in a mental body that is permanent, then that is actually an eternalist interpretation. Accepting nirupadhisesa-nirvana is not an extreme of cessation, rather the reverse of dependent origination. It is also less problematic than to claim an eternal continuum.

"One might claim that things exist—

That there is neither permanence nor yet annihilation.

For existence is a continuity

Of causes and effects that rise and then subside.

But if existence is a continuity

Of causes and effects that rise and are destroyed,

Since what has been destroyed does not arise again,
It follows that the cause has been annihilated."
(MMK 21.15-16, tr Padmakara)

When there is an end, it is annihilation. When there is no end, it is eternity.

"Since the aggregates' continuum
Is like the light shed by a lamp,
To say they have an end is incorrect—
As also that they are unending."
(MMK 27.22)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 10th, 2018 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: Gaden Mahamudra

Content:

Lobsang Chojor said:

I've received received a HYT empowerment and the lama indicated the importance of practicing mahamudra and said we had permission to practice it. My question is, is the lung of the 1st Panchen Lama's mahamudra root text vital before you start the practice of mahamudra in the gelug tradition?

Astus wrote:

Can't say anything about the Gelug setup, but in HYT the fourth empowerment is mahamudra, so technically you already know what to practice. The specific teachings focusing on mahamudra itself might be used as theoretical support.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 13th, 2018 at 2:55 PM

Title: Re: Gaden Mahamudra

Content:

Astus wrote:

in HYT the fourth empowerment is mahamudra

Malcolm said:

No.

Astus wrote:

Why?

"The "word empowerment" is given in order to introduce you to the actual innate wisdom, which is the seven aspects of mahamudra"
(Dakpo Tashi Namgyal: Light Rays from the Jewel of the Excellent Teaching, in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 487)

"The fourth empowerment is that of the word or mahamudra. It's like talking or pointing out instructions with the words. But the meaning is mahamudra. So then one practises with the essence of one's mind."

(Mingyur Dorje Rinpoche: <http://www.samyeling.org/buddhism-and-meditation/teaching-archive-2/mingyur-dorje-rinpoche/vajrayana-and-empowerment/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 14th, 2018 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

shanehanner said:

is Kenshō considered the first Bhumi

Astus wrote:

Going by the stages is the gradual path. Seeing nature means the realisation of buddha-mind, and as such it is the attainment of buddhahood.

"[The teaching that one can] cultivate the six perfections and the myriad practices in order to achieve Buddhahood—this is the progressive [approach to Buddhahood]. Since beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha [who achieved that state] progressively. Just be enlightened to the One Mind and there will not be the slightest dharma that can be attained—this is the true Buddha."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 14th, 2018 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

krodha said:

Realization and insight are always sudden and immediate

Astus wrote:

An unstable realisation is not realisation at all, only a passing feeling. Attaining a stage of the path means not losing it later.

krodha said:

but just as in other Buddhist systems, that knowledge is unstable and must be carefully cultivated from then on in order to eventually actualize buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Knowledge does need actualisation, hence the process of learning, understanding, and cultivation. But then seeing nature would mean not the perception of buddha-mind, but merely the concept that mind is buddha.

krodha said:

Temicco shared some excerpts that demonstrate this

Astus wrote:

Clearly, there are various teachers with various teachings.

krodha said:

I found this quite interesting, especially given the much asserted “non-gradual” view of Zen.

Astus wrote:

Yangshan said:

"The roots of delusion are deep. They're difficult to cut off and uproot. So [the Buddha] established expedient means to grab your attention. These are like showing yellow leaves to a crying child, who imagines they're gold and thus stops crying. You act as though you're in a shop where someone sells a hundred goods made from gold and jade, but you're trying to weigh each item. So you say that Shitou has a real gold shop? Well in my shop there's a wide range of goods! If someone comes looking for mouse turds then I give him some. If someone comes looking for real gold then I give it to him."
(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 187)

krodha said:

Evidently the equipoise and post-equipoise process that other systems deal with is also very much the case for Zen, and in this sense initial awakening can be viewed as something like first bhūmi, with equipoise beginning as fragmented and becoming slowly less so as obscurations are exhausted.

Astus wrote:

"Those with deluded minds appear to be cultivating and seeking buddhahood, but they are unenlightened to their self-natures. Hence are they of small capacities. If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one's own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, p 32)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 14th, 2018 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

What about the Lotus Sūtra, which appears to make the very audacious claim that there is no "pari" nirvāṇa, in it's Tathāgatāyusṣpramāṇaparivartaḥ Ch 15?

Astus wrote:

Yogacara teaches apratisthitanirvana for bodhisattvas, just like Madhyamaka. There is

no cessation of anything, as there is nothing to cease.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 15th, 2018 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

krodha said:

The insight is what one does not lose, but the experiential equipoise resting in a direct knowledge of one's nature does indeed come and go.

Astus wrote:

If there is an equipoise, that is a temporary state of mind, not the buddha-mind.

krodha said:

But equipoise in jñāna does indeed lapse back into normal vijñāna because the view is unstable due to habitual patterns of grasping and conceptual proliferation.

Astus wrote:

An arya bodhisattva from the first bhumi is free from samsara, and does not perceive anything as real, but it is taught that not even on the tenth bhumi can they perceive the dharmakaya. So, if one sees buddha-mind, one is a buddha.

krodha said:

Initial knowledge merely requires a recognition of the dharmatā of mind or phenomena. The equipoise that the knowledge results from is initially fragmented and unstable however.

Astus wrote:

That is fine for the gradual path of the paramitas, but not for the supreme buddha-vehicle, i.e. Zen.

krodha said:

However these are Zen teachers, and their description of the path is very much like those we find elsewhere, such as Dzogchen for example. The fluctuation between equipoise and post-equipoise is a common theme.

Astus wrote:

What you cannot find is any precise description of the path, like what you see in practically every other school. That's because Zen is per definition not gradualist. That doesn't mean teachers cannot employ methods meant for less capable people, hence Yangshan's remark about selling both gold and mouse turd.

krodha said:

a rare few may have that capacity, but not the vast majority

Astus wrote:

Zen was meant for the rare few only.

krodha said:

This is addressing those who have not yet known equipoise at all.

Astus wrote:

It explicitly says that cultivation of anything is the gradual path of the deluded, while seeing the nature eliminates defilements permanently. Without defilements what is there to practice?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 15th, 2018 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

Meido said:

Of course you can. The Rinzai Zen path for one is extremely well defined.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific here please? I mean, the descriptions of the path are like the Visuddhimagga, Yogacarabhumisastra, Abhisamayalamkara, or the various lamrim texts. The closest to those I know of are the works of Zongmi and Yongming, but even those are quite sketchy, relatively speaking.

Meido said:

Crucial details to actualize the path are not found in popular books, however, and are largely clarified through oral instruction.

Astus wrote:

If it is not clearly delineated how ignorance is turned into wisdom, how could they qualify for explaining the path?

Meido said:

I read it rather to say that common cultivation of external practices must always fall short lacking seeing the nature, so it seems I agree with Krodha's take.

Astus wrote:

If so, how is there any difference between the gradual path of the paramitas and Zen?

Meido said:

If one does not know what is actually meant by that samadhi, then even with kensho the path is still barely begun in terms of actualization.

Astus wrote:

Is there a definition of that samadhi, that specifies it and points out how it is different from, for instance, the Surangama-samadhi?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 16th, 2018 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

Meido said:

Zen considers the paramitas to be wholly fulfilled within the path of recognizing one's nature and then, taking that as the foundation of subsequent practice, dissolving habitual delusion along the path of embodying seamless realization.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that the paramitas are fulfilled at seeing the nature, or after eliminating all afflictions at the end of subsequent practice? The former does not make sense to me, while the latter option seems to mean that Zen proposes a parallel path, or maybe the same path in a different format.

Meido said:

Who cares about gradual vs. sudden at that point?

Astus wrote:

It is a matter that concerns the status of Zen in relation to the other schools and the general Mahayana teachings. If it does not offer a method more efficient than others, it is simply a Chinese, and then a Japanese, presentation of Mahayana, and not a separate path (at least in terms of substance).

Meido said:

the fulfillment of vipashyana and shamatha in non-departure from the seamless upwelling of what is recognized in kensho.

Astus wrote:

Usually the unique views of a school has their role in vipasyana, where one has to experientially validate them. So if there is such a samadhi in Zen, what is the view that is confirmed there?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 17th, 2018 at 1:43 AM

Title: Re: Kenshō the first Bhumi?

Content:

Meido said:

I meant they are fulfilled within the overall path.

Astus wrote:

I asked because of what is found in Huangbo's teachings that those who do not find a teacher to instruct them in the sudden path should follow the gradual Majayana of the sutras. It is also said there that the result of three uncountable kalpas and sudden

awakening is the same buddhahood. But if such subitism is not accepted, there is only the gradual bodhisattva way.

Meido said:

It's fine to describe this as a different or uncommon approach. Torei describing this:...
None of this applies to our patriarchal school, which surpasses expedient means. ...

Astus wrote:

But there are all sorts of expedient means in Rinzai Zen, aren't there? On the other hand, every genuine practitioner strives for full awakening, no matter the school. What I gather from what you write is that it's OK to call Zen an instance of Mahayana that conforms to the general progressive way of the bodhisattva path, whereby kensho can be equated with the attainment of faith, as taught by Jinul.

Meido said:

What is the view of kensho?

Astus wrote:

It is supposed to be the cessation of views, wouldn't you agree?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 17th, 2018 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Post-awakening cultivation in Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

The works of Guifeng Zongmi are from the Tang era, and he was the proponent of sudden awakening followed by gradual cultivation. He also writes that the Hongzhou school taught sudden awakening and sudden cultivation. That double suddenness is there in the few teachings of Mazu, the whole of Huangbo, and Dazhu Huihai, all from the Tang times. The extensive record of Baizhang is a little less subitist, while the Platform Sutra, and the teachings of the Oxhead and Baotang schools are quite on the sudden side of cultivation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 26th, 2018 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Information about Bodhisattvas and other Buddhist teachings

Content:

Trilobyte said:

can you all recommend any resources that are not too confusing to read?

Astus wrote:

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/ancientsgrfx.pdf is a useful summary.

Other works of possible interest:

<http://chancenter.org/cmc/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/ChanPracticeandFaith.pdf>
<http://chancenter.org/cmc/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/The-Bodhisattva-Precepts.pdf>

<http://www.fgsitc.org/ghosts-and-the-afterlife/>
<http://www.fgsitc.org/the-buddhist-perspective-on-the-supernatural/>
<http://www.fgsitc.org/on-becoming-a-bodhisattva/>
<http://www.fgsitc.org/the-eighteen-arhats/>
<http://www.fgsitc.org/the-wheel-of-rebirth/>

You can also go through what Wikipedia offers:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manjushri>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%E1%B9%A3itigarbha>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avalokite%C5%9Bvara>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samantabhadra>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maitreya>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahasthamaprapta>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80k%C4%81%C5%9Bagarbha>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrapani>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budai>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skanda_%28Buddhism%29
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acala>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahakala>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamantaka>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yama_%28Buddhism%29

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 3:03 AM

Title: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Astus wrote:

"One thing that clergy affiliated with all the Zen denominations in Japan hold in common is the belief in a Zen lineage (Zenshū 禪宗) of dharma transmission said to have been founded by the Buddha Shakamuni, established in China by the Indian monk Bodaidaruma, and subsequently transmitted to Japan by numerous Japanese and Chinese monks."

(https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=zen_school)

Historical studies of Zen, over nearly a hundred years, have shown in depth that the lineages of Zen were fabricated and re-fabricated from the beginning down to the modern era. So far I have not seen anyone addressing that from the Zen side. But without a historical lineage what is the "separate transmission"? Without lineage all the "transmission of lamp" collections are mere literary works. Without lineage there is no family to be a member of. Without lineage what is left to call Zen?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 2:33 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

seeker242 said:

That's almost like saying without any historical genealogy records of your family, that go back all the way to your first ancestors, you don't have one.

Astus wrote:

The birth of a human has definitive conditions, but not so the birth of a patriarch. So it is rather like claiming nobility and a castle with half a dozen villages by writing a story about how one's great-great-grandfather was knighted by the king of Estonia.

seeker242 said:

Seeing true nature and saving all beings with it.

Astus wrote:

Can you tell the true nature is seen without a master's confirmation?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 2:52 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

passel said:

Three lineages, not one.

Astus wrote:

Primordial lineage - it's not actually a lineage, but rather renaming buddha-nature to look like the supposed content of transmission

Transmission lineage - without such a transmission being unbroken, how can it come down through the ages?

Organizational lineage - such a lineage holder is mainly a Tibetan idea

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

seeker242 said:

the real problem in that scenario is not the lack of confirmation, but the requirement of "nobility".

Astus wrote:

So are you basically saying, what I assume KeithA meant as well, that there is no need

for lineage in Zen?

seeker242 said:

Even without a master, that is still what is left to call "zen".

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't you say that practising Zen requires an authentic, i.e. someone with a transmission, master?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

KeithA said:

if a proposed lineage is easily disproved by basic historical research, it doesn't change my practice. ... No teacher = no Zen. The lock can't be opened without the key.

Astus wrote:

If the lineage is untrue, who qualifies as a Zen teacher?

KeithA said:

There are certainly lineages that go far enough back to be useful.

Astus wrote:

What is far enough? A century, two centuries, or five? Or perhaps it's the number of generations, like three or thirteen? In any case, the Zen lineage gains its meaning from going all the way back to Shakyamuni. Without that it's not the transmission of the Buddha's seal.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

seeker242 said:

If "authentic" means "can be historically traced back 2,000+ years", no I don't think that's required.

Astus wrote:

Then who is authentic, without a lineage?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 30th, 2018 at 10:17 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

KeithA said:

My belief is that the Buddha's Seal has been transmitted. We just don't have an accurate list of human beings to portray that.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that you believe it was not transmitted by humans? Or it was transmitted by humans, but it is somehow not known by whom exactly?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

KeithA said:

In a mundane sense, the latter.

Astus wrote:

Then it seems you are on the same page as Ven. Shengyan was:

"There may be inaccuracies in the history, but there need be no doubt about the reality of the transmission. I know very well that I had a Shih-fu, and that my Shih-fu likewise had a Shih-fu. From Sakyamuni Buddha on, throughout the history of Buddhism in India, great emphasis was placed on the transmission between a Master and a disciple. ... The names of the people in the line of transmission may not be correct, and the history of the lineage may also be confused by the appearance of monks with the same name at different times and in different places. I do not know the name of the grandfather of my grandfather, but I would never doubt that my grandfather had a grandfather."

(<http://www.chancenter.org/chanctr/ddp/channews/12-1996.html>)

However, that interpretation does not fit how lineages were created, as there are not simply administrative errors in the records, but rather they were produced on the tip of the quill of the authors those texts. To give a modern example, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyeongheo> is the father of modern Korean Zen, but he not only had never received transmission in person, he didn't have a Zen teacher either, nevertheless, there is apparently a lineage that was created for him by the subsequent generation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 3:29 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

But they are still meaningful (to me).

Astus wrote:

But what is that meaning? A degree from an accredited educational institution means

something because there is some level of quality control. But I guess you would not really find a degree trustworthy if it had been bought online from some no-name virtual university. There isn't really any officially appointed committee that reviews the qualifications of a teacher and to whom he may then nominate as an heir, so comparing dharma-transmission with a medical degree only works if that degree signifies a training given by a single individual and then printed on his home computer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Sentient Light said:

I think a lot of academics say the patriarchs' lineage is not historically backed, because they are working with the idea that "lineage" refers to something like the Rule of Two with the Sith.

Astus wrote:

It's not an academic invention, rather it is how the tradition presents itself, and how it is believed to be by most (Western) adherents.

Sentient Light said:

What are we calling authentic exactly?

Astus wrote:

What you described is about how outstanding individuals are incorporated into quasi-historical representations. It lacks the point where such lineages serve as the basis of strengthening one's own agenda, i.e. the very reason that a lineage is set up, as that is how it gains relevance in the present.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 2:48 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

If there is such a great master from 80 years ago and your teacher studied under his student for 20 years, who in his turn studied under the master for a long time, yes, this is meaningful.

Astus wrote:

The great master from 80 years ago was great because of his reputation in his life, or a reputation spread by those claiming to be his heirs. There are a good number of possibilities of how someone is eventually viewed as a great master. When one can be called great because of his own merits, the spiritual sons and grandsons may just use his renown to seem great - and that is usually the purpose of calling someone one's ancestor, especially when what was supposedly passed on is not a particular doctrine,

so it's not like being the propagator of a unique meditation technique or a distinctive explanation of the Dharma.

Dan74 said:

Whether or not the master's lineage is unbroken matters little.

Astus wrote:

Broken lineage means that at one point a link had no teacher, no ancestor. If it does not matter whether the chain is continuous, then it does not matter at all, since it is not functional any more in connecting the present with the past.

Dan74 said:

It is simply that there are so many subtleties to the Dharma and even more to teaching it, that discovering them without a proper guide is extremely unlikely. Lineage is some partial guarantee of such a guide.

Astus wrote:

Being a member of a lineage is not the same as extensive learning and in depth practice. They may match, but there is no causal connection. What qualifies someone to be a guide is usually just a question of where the student is.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 3:18 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Jeff H said:

Where lineage seems to me to be important is in presenting a holistic model, as opposed to DIY Buddhists who try to cobble together a personal practice based on cherry picking bits and pieces from very different schools. In this sense a lineage arises from a collection of similarly inclined and trained masters over time who have evolved a cohesive system of study/practice that can be shown to produce positive results for students who apply it holistically.

Astus wrote:

That's rather the opposite of what lineage stands for in Zen. A cohesive and systematically set up package of doctrines is what's called jiao/kyo (教) and in Zen it is put in opposition to chan/zen (禪), although there have also been those who talked of a harmony or unity between them, but that just shows how separate they are viewed (note the slogan: separate transmission outside doctrine jiao wai bie chuan 教外別傳). See also the quote <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=463178#p463178> of this topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

Or one may indeed be a pratyekabuddha, very unlikely but possible and legitimate and it restarts the chain.

Astus wrote:

A pratyekabuddha by definition cannot teach, nor has any connection with the Dharma. Someone who first turns the wheel is called a buddha. Since I have already mentioned him, let's look at Gyeongheo's story. First of all, he was a monk and he was able to study the scriptures (unlike monastics who were illiterate). That already puts him in the category of people who maintain a higher level of moral discipline and has an advanced level of knowledge of the Dharma. He also did intensive practice to attain realisation. (N.B. all these qualities are also true for Shenxiu in the Platform Sutra) And what actually made him the reviver of Seon was his work in teaching and organising.

Dan74 said:

To me, it stands to reason that one is more likely to find depth of practice and mastery of teaching methods within a lineage than outside.

Astus wrote:

Lineage does not mean training. For instance, Ven. Shengyan received Dharma transmissions not because he studied under Dongchu and Lingyuan but as a recognition of the work he's been doing.

Dan74 said:

My wife is a potter, and not a day goes by that she doesn't feel grateful to her teacher who imparted to her so many secrets and tricks of the trade that could only be discovered over many generations, ie lineage.

Astus wrote:

Lineage is not about learning, it is a quite different matter. Again, think of the Platform Sutra's (fictional, not historical, but still important) story about Shenxiu and Huineng. Shenxiu was the good disciple, Huineng an illiterate layman who spent very little time there. Even though Shenxiu was proficient in the three trainings, but Huineng was the true embodiment of the real teaching, a living buddha, and that's what the transmission signified.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Jeff H said:

implications for present day practitioners

Astus wrote:

That there is no transmission apart from the teachings.

Jeff H said:

if it could be proven that there is no direct line back to Shakyamuni.

Astus wrote:

First of all, what would need to be proven is that there is a line. Secondly, it's been made clear long ago that the Zen lineage going back to the Buddha is a fabrication.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

This is basically your long-term quest to prove that teachers aren't as important in Zen as they are made out to be, Astus?

Astus wrote:

Not really. It is primarily about the very concept of lineage, and the implications that such a concept has. The role and qualities of a teacher is not the only thing that it involves.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Jeff H said:

there is a qualitative difference between reading Tsongkhapa and sitting at the feet of my teacher as she talks about his teaching.

Astus wrote:

The difference between a transmission apart and inseparable from the teachings lies in whether you can measure what a teacher says against what you find written in the works of Tsongkhapa. In other words, a teacher explains but does not own the tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 31st, 2018 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

passel said:

If 'lineage' or 'transmission' are hard to describe, 'the teachings' is just as hard.

Astus wrote:

The transmission, at least in Zen, is per definition indescribable and inconceivable. The teachings, however, are clearly within the realm of language.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 1st, 2018 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

passel said:

But didn't you say earlier in this thread that the only transmission is the teachings?

Astus wrote:

That was in response to the question of what should be the implications of the disappearance of the concept of lineage.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 1st, 2018 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Wayfarer said:

not necessarily in need of external legitimization. What is being 'handed over' or communicated, after all, is an understanding, a way of seeing, a realisation. Nothing material is handed from master to disciple.

Astus wrote:

Transmission (as confirmation) of enlightenment is exactly an external legitimisation, the very opposite of the idea taught in the sutras of confirming the truth of the Dharma for oneself.

Wayfarer said:

an institutional legitimacy which is used to distinguish the bona fides of genuine teachers to distinguish them from the self-appointed.

Astus wrote:

Quite far from it. Remember the monastic system where the most important authority, the power to ordain, is based on ordination-age. Similarly, older monks taught younger ones. The system of a special lineage was meant to elevate a select few above everyone else, an elite community who claimed to be above the rest.

Wayfarer said:

It's like a quality control mechanism.

Astus wrote:

Not quality, power control.

Wayfarer said:

the gist of the teaching is as elusive as Mahakasyapa's smile, isn't it?

Astus wrote:
How so?

Wayfarer said:
And I think to question whether the flower sermon is historically accurate is to miss its point.

Astus wrote:
The point is to elaborate on an event that is assumed to have actually happened. The only thing it talks of is affirming the transmission, but intentionally does not discuss the content.

Wayfarer said:
Think back to the original sermons - the Buddha and the wanderers who heard him. What were they actually given, apart from an understanding?

Astus wrote:
Not understanding but a teaching, that is practically a summary of the whole of the Dharma. Even the Buddha couldn't make others gain understanding, he could only talk of it. Note that only one of the five actually attained insight.

Wayfarer said:
But there still has to be some way of sorting genuine teachers from enthusiasts and hangers-on.

Astus wrote:
That seems to be a concern of today's Westerners and not the tradition, likely because of the general absence of the monastic community. Traditionally if one person disagreed with another's interpretation of the Dharma, or another's views in general, it resulted in a reasoned refutation of the other's doctrines, or they simply disregarded each other, and sometimes there were other types of unseemly attacks. But in general the harmony of the community is more important than whether one believes that Amitabha is a nirmanakaya or a sambhogakaya, just as you can see current institutions accommodating monks and nuns of various views and practices.

Wayfarer said:
And I'm sure the Mandarin bureaucracy would demand some kind of documentation if Buddhism was to be countenanced as a State religion (which it was).

Astus wrote:
That is a fairly positive image of a state that cares about the quality of religious education, or a supremely powerful and oppressive regime that pays attention to the details. However, that didn't really happen. First of all, Buddhism was only occasionally the favoured religion, but never the state religion. The main form of control the emperor used over Buddhism was the limitation of ordination, and it was the ordination certificates that actually mattered. The second important form of control was over the nomination of abbots that needed approval from the local landlord who was the main

sponsor of the monastery. But as for what sort of Buddhist doctrine an individual monk follows, that is quite inconsequential, as long as it is not some sort of agitation against the status quo.

Wayfarer said:

So there's plenty of reasons to provide such a legitimising account as the lineage records.

Astus wrote:

As you can see, there was no need for that, not from the perspective of the government, nor from the perspective of the people.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 1st, 2018 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Jeff H said:

A teaching is given by the teacher and a subsequent understanding arises within the student. Isn't that a transmission?

Astus wrote:

It is a form of transmission, but not what is meant in Zen. In Zen it is about the direct transmission, so called "mind to mind", of buddhahood. Let's turn again to the <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/index.html>:

[https://global.sotozen-](https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=seal_of_the_buddha_mind)

[net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=seal_of_the_buddha_mind](https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=seal_of_the_buddha_mind)

"Buddha-mind (busshin 佛心) is the awakening (bodai 菩提, S. bodhi) that turns ordinary beings into buddhas. The Zen lineage is said to transmit Shakamuni's buddha-mind from master to disciple "without relying on scriptures" (furyū monji 不立文字). That wordless "mind to mind transmission" (ishin denshin 以心傳心) is likened to the kind of non-verbal communication that takes place when a carved seal (in 印), used in East Asia as a legally binding signature, is inked and pressed on a piece of paper. The awakened mind of the master presses directly, as it were, on the mind of the disciple, thereby replicating itself. A disciple whose understanding of the dharma is formally approved and documented by a master is also said to have received a "seal of approval" (inka 印可)."

[https://global.sotozen-](https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_lineage)

[net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_lineage](https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_lineage)

"An unbroken line of dharma transmission that is traced back through many generations of teachers and disciples."

https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_lamp

"A metaphorical expression, which likens the dharma (hō 法) to the "flame of a lamp" (tō 燈) which can be passed to another lamp (i.e. from master to disciple) and thus be kept

burning forever. In the Zen tradition, the transmission of the formless, ineffable buddha mind (busshin 佛心) down through the lineage of ancestral teachers (soshi 祖師) is referred to metaphorically as "transmission of the flame" (dentō 傳燈)."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2018 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

The very concept of lineage is a bloody good idea

Astus wrote:

What do you find good about it?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2018 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

close teacher-student relationship, necessary training and realisation as well as a family spirit, all of which I find to be of immense value in Zen training.

Astus wrote:

That is about community and its organisation, something that you find all over Buddhism and practically any religion, not lineage.

Dan74 said:

As someone who is not part of a lineage (not transmitted or authorised in any way), I may be completely off-base.

Astus wrote:

But you can be a part of the community, so that shows well how lineage and community are two different matters.

Dan74 said:

a transmitted teacher

Astus wrote:

That is where lineage has a role, the nomination of a teacher, and how a teacher is perceived by others.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2018 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think 'power control' is a rather cynical view, isn't it? Is there only 'power' at stake? Isn't 'quality' intrinsic to it?

Astus wrote:

Power is connected to lineage, as it was created and used for that purpose. If there were an intrinsic quality there, and that quality is stated to be buddha-mind, then it would mean all patriarchs, past and present, are buddhas.

Wayfarer said:

The elusive nature of Zen realisation is intrinsic to Zen, isn't it? Its nature is such that literally can't be simply written down or specified.

Astus wrote:

It can be easily written down and specified, as it's actually been by people from Bodhidharma to Shengyan, although views can show differences, as it was delineated first by Guifeng Zongmi.

Wayfarer said:

I give you a formula for creating X, you repeat the steps in the formula and you get X.

Astus wrote:

That is what a path is. If you deny that there is a path, that is practically the negation of Buddhism.

Wayfarer said:

I added the bolds to note the emphasis on metaphor in such descriptions.

Astus wrote:

Calling it a seal and a lamp are the metaphors. The point is what they are metaphors of: the direct communication of buddhahood.

Wayfarer said:

The awakened mind of the master presses directly, as it were, on the mind of the disciple, thereby replicating itself.

Astus wrote:

As it were - that is not "as if it were", but just as it is, meaning perfect enlightenment is replicated perfectly.

Wayfarer said:

I wonder if you have read Bernard Faure and Stephen Heine's critical accounts of Asian Buddhist traditions? Particularly Faure's *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*?

Astus wrote:

Reducing Zen to mere rhetoric is another topic. For the current one about lineage the

relevant sources are works like "The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism", "Seeing through Zen", "Fathering Your Father", "The Mystique of Transmission", "The Will to Orthodoxy", "Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism", "How Zen Became Zen", "Monks, Rulers, and Literati", "Enlightenment in Dispute", "Leaving for the Rising Sun", etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 2nd, 2018 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Wayfarer said:

only one was enlightened, right? Yet they all heard the same thing. So what's the difference between the one who got enlightened and those who didn't?

Astus wrote:

In one word: karma. Understanding is not automatically attained by learning, and realisation is not automatically attained by understanding. They are conditions, but there are other conditions as well that need to be met, hence the seven factors of enlightenment.

Wayfarer said:

the meaning has to be realised. That's why it's different to science.

Astus wrote:

Reading Fermat's last theorem and understanding it are not the same, then being able to prove it is again another matter.

Wayfarer said:

it's not in the least dependent on anything other than your ability to follow those steps.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha taught the path. It's up to each person to follow it. How is that different?

Wayfarer said:

The result is the same for anyone who is capable of following the instructions.

Astus wrote:

That is the idea in Buddhism as well. Follow the path and attain liberation.

Wayfarer said:

But there's something else involved in Zen, which is the 'realisation of the way'. And that is 'first person'.

Astus wrote:

The difference between the realisation of following through a chemistry handbook and a Dharma handbook is that the end result of the former can be confirmed by others, but

for the latter only the individual can confirm it. But if it is believed that a master can tell whether the disciple attained liberation - and that is a highly debatable point, also relevant to the topic of transmission - then both the scientific and the Buddhist path are objectively verifiable.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

Yes, indeed lineage and community are different.

Astus wrote:

Since communities do not depend on it, what is the good about lineage?

Dan74 said:

Lineage, the way I see it, is an empowerment to lead a community, to foster and continue one in which these qualities, this functioning, live on.

Astus wrote:

Dharma transmission in Zen is about the passing on of enlightenment. Where does that include community management? Is it only buddhas who can lead communities? The Vinaya itself does not talk about the need for Dharma transmission to become an abbot.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

Since master-to-student transmission is important in Zen, the very core of Zen

Astus wrote:

As the Zen lineage is historically not true, what is transmitted?

Dan74 said:

Do you have a better method in mind for achieving these aims?

Astus wrote:

There are numerous ways to pass on a tradition, to educate people, to measure the level of understanding of students, and to manage a community. Lineage is not needed for any of that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 2:41 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

passel said:

If you keep looking for something called 'lineage' outside of all these other things you keep describing you will never find it. But that's just basic Madhyamaka- I'm not really sure what this thread is even about

Astus wrote:

Here are some examples of what a lineage is:

<https://kwanumzen.org/our-lineage/>

<http://londonzen.org/lineage/>

<http://www.ciolek.com/wwwvlpages/zenpages/haradayasutani.html>

<https://boundlesswayzen.org/our-lineage/> (this accepts the Indian patriarchs to be fabricated)

<https://www.pacificzen.org/ancestors-relatives-and-welcome-guests/> (this one not only openly says that the lineage is fictional, but also intentionally added new names)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 2:44 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Well haven't you answered your own question, then?

Astus wrote:

How so? The Zen lineage is an East Asian thing, even the Tibetan idea works differently, so clearly lineage is not the only possible organising method in Buddhism, but at the same time it is quite central to Zen. The question is: if this central element of Zen is unfounded, what then?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

what I don't get is what specifically do you object to.

Astus wrote:

Lineage, and its transmission, is based on the idea that it is an unbroken connection between today's living master going back to Shakyamuni Buddha. That is where the legitimacy of the transmission lies, that it is the seal of the buddha-mind. If there is no chain of ancestors going back to the Buddha, then there is no legitimacy, it is not the transmission of the buddha-mind.

That's why the topic, that in light of modern historical studies of Zen, the idea of an

unbroken lineage does not hold up, therefore its basis of legitimacy has disappeared. What can then be pointed to that can uphold Zen's validity?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The fact that the understanding that is at its basis is real.

Astus wrote:

Whose understanding is it? Also, does it have to be given by another, or can someone arrive at it on one's own?

Wayfarer said:

I think the idea that something has to be literally transmitted is interpreting the idea a little too literally.

Astus wrote:

If there is a real understanding transmitted, how is that not something literal?

Wayfarer said:

Maybe re-phrase it as 'the historical veracity of the lineage records are not needed for any of that'. That appears to be the view taken by at least some of the organisations you link to above. Why not go with it?

Astus wrote:

If there is no need for historical veracity, would you accept someone as a legitimate teacher who made up his own lineage?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

they didn't take such a literal interpretation of many 'tenets of faith'.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean they did not think that the transmission from teacher to disciple actually happened in the past, as it is described in the many volumes of transmission records?

Dan74 said:

But in Zen, the point has always been to see it and then to pass on the Lamp, whoever gets it, sees Chaochou face to face, see the Buddha face to face. So fundamentally, it's never been obsessed with historical accuracy, AFAICT.

Astus wrote:

Dogen's view was rather strict - and that's what the 18th century https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms20.pdf of Soto relied on - regarding transmission. He wrote (Menju, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 3, p 211): "If even one ancestor, one master, or one disciple failed to give or to receive the face-to-face transmission they would not be the buddhas and the patriarchs." In the same text he criticises Jianfu Chenggu who claimed Dharma inheritance directly from Yunmen (partly because he was basically dissatisfied with the teachers of the era). Similar concerns regarding the truth and purity of the lineage emerged later in both China and Japan. At the same time, if it is fine to be flexible with lineage, would it be alright today if somebody claimed to be a direct heir of Yunmen? (Side note: a modern case of similar situation is that of Hsuan Hua who is said to be an heir of the long ceased https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guiyang_school.)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 3rd, 2018 at 6:16 PM

Title: Re: Zen without Lineage

Content:

Dan74 said:

I take it as an expression of gratitude to all those who carried and passed on the Lamp.

Astus wrote:

If the lineage is not real, there was no passing on of any lamp, unless the nature of transmission is reinterpreted, like for instance saying that those who studied with Kusan Sunim can all be considered his heirs, or those who follow his particular style in teaching, or some other version.

Dan74 said:

I don't recall ANY teisho or Dharma talk who even mentioned literal interpretation of the lineage. So from where I stand it's a bit of a strawman you are fighting here.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't look like a straw man to me. Look at what is said by the following major institutions:

The official site of the Rinzai-Obaku school states:

"With Shakyamuni's recognition of Mahakashyapa began the "direct transmission from master to disciple" that Zen emphasizes as the particular characteristic of its history as a tradition."

(http://zen.rinnou.net/whats_zen/history.html)

The Soto Zen Buddhist Association site informs everyone:

"Lineage is a very important aspect of Soto Zen. The appropriate and authentic

transmission of the Soto Zen tradition from teacher to student occurs when a fully authorized teacher formally recognizes one of their students as ready to carry and teach the Soto Zen tradition. Transmission is marked by ceremony and is publicly communicated as a way to help establish the authority of a Zen teacher. The chain of transmission over time and multiple generations is called a "lineage."

(<http://szba.org/lineage-identifications/>)

The Jogye Order's website teaches:

"The Dharma that the Buddha gave to the Venerable Kāśyapa through the mind-to-mind transmission like a lamplight so that it would not die out, has passed through many teachers and has been inherited up till today. These teachers are called the proper masters of the lineage or true masters of the lineage. Patriarchal Seon and Ganhwa Seon have cherished the tradition that has transmitted the Dharma that has given the seal of approval to the state of enlightenment and the pride in that distinctive enlightenment."

(http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=6)

See also the introduction of the current patriarch of the Jogye order, Jinje seonsanim, http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=2030, and the account of his awakening:

"At this time the Master made Jinje sunim his Dharma successor and the 79th Patriarch of the lineage passed on through Master Huineng and Master Linji of China, one of the few intact lineages in the world. "

(http://www.jinje.kr/eng/01_master/03_3.php)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 5th, 2018 at 1:33 AM

Title: Re: Shenphen Rinpoche on Reading Dzogchen Texts

Content:

pemachophel said:

Most of you in the West think that by reading dharma books, you will develop understanding of the dharma. While it is natural to read, you will only develop an intellectual understanding. Wisdom, however, must come from meditation. For example, you cannot understand the teachings of the Great Perfection, Dzogpa Chenpo or any of the secret mantrayana teachings through reading. In fact, if you read Dzogchen books, you are likely to harm your understanding when the real teachings are given to you.

Astus wrote:

On the other hand, reading the sutras not only teaches one the very words of the Buddha, but also grants one incalculable amount of merit. Also, reading the various treatises gives one correct intellectual understanding, that can shed light on the genuine meaning in a reasonable fashion, thus give it into the reader's hand to use the view for authentic insight and ultimate enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 5th, 2018 at 2:36 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

1) Is there any bliss , joy or enjoyment in enlightenment actually? If not, why do we aim for that?

Astus wrote:

"This Unbinding is pleasant, friends. This Unbinding is pleasant."

When this was said, Ven. Udayin said to Ven. Sariputta, "But what is the pleasure here, my friend, where there is nothing felt?"

"Just that is the pleasure here, my friend: where there is nothing felt.

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an09/an09.034.than.html>)

To see how nirvana is bliss it is necessary to comprehend how samsara is pain. As the second noble truth states, from craving arises suffering. The object of craving is primarily something we see as pleasurable. That perception of enjoyment is the gratification (assāda), then the suffering ensuing is the danger (ādinava), but there also a way out from it, i.e. the path, called the escape (nissarana). So there is a clear difference between how the ignorant and the wise experiences things, as you can see for yourself in the

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.nypo.html>.

MatthewAngby said:

Do we become vegetable state beings in enlightenment , sitting tightly in blank space?

Astus wrote:

There is actually a realm of nothingness exactly for those who find such an existence desirable. That is still samsara. As long as there is a longing towards any state of being or non-being, for that long there is birth and pain.

"Bhikkhus, there are these two views: the view of being and the view of non-being. Any recluses or brahmans who rely on the view of being, adopt the view of being, accept the view of being, are opposed to the view of non-being. Any recluses or brahmans who rely on the view of non-being, adopt the view of non-being, accept the view of non-being, are opposed to the view of being.

Any recluses or brahmans who do not understand as they actually are the origin, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these two views are affected by lust, affected by hate, affected by delusion, affected by craving, affected by clinging, without vision, given to favoring and opposing, and they delight in and enjoy proliferation. They are not freed from birth, aging and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; they are not freed from suffering, I say."

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.011.ntbb.html>)

MatthewAngby said:

If everyone became buddhas and there is no more to liberate , can buddhas still do anything at all?

Astus wrote:

That is assuming buddhas to be just like common beings. They look like that only for common beings, who cannot comprehend anything else. But that is not the true nature of buddhas.

"Someone who tries to discern me in form

Or seek me in sound

Is practicing non-Buddhist methods

And will not discern the Tathāgata"

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 26)

MatthewAngby said:

Can Buddha perceive sentient beings and environments or pure lands? Or do they see nothing and sort of become blind? Can Buddha hear sounds and music? Do they enjoy music or do they become lifeless and emotionless when they hear it? Do buddhas have thoughts? If they don't, then won't it be like brain dead and like emotionless beings?

Astus wrote:

The problem is not with the senses or the sense objects, but with craving and attachment.

"the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye, but whatever desire & passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds... The nose is not the fetter of aromas... The tongue is not the fetter of flavors... The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect, but whatever desire & passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. There is an eye in the Blessed One. The Blessed One sees forms with the eye. There is no desire or passion in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well-released in mind."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.191.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 5th, 2018 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

Why wouldn't we strive to become a god then, and also accumulate merit to sustain our next rebirth in a good realm...

Astus wrote:

That is what everyone does normally in samsara, but hardly anyone attains. And even if heavenly birth is attained, it shall pass.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 6th, 2018 at 1:38 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

Have to sacrifice the enjoyments and the luxuries of the gods to reach the deathless state, but then in the deathless state I don't even know if they party or have fun.

Astus wrote:

You should familiarise yourself with the story of the Buddha's half-brother Nanda, about whom it was said: "He's leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. The Blessed One is his guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs." See in the <https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.3.02.than.html>.

There is also the teaching from the Sakya school called

<http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/sachen-kunga-nyingpo/parting-four-attachments>:

"If you are attached to this life, you are not a true spiritual practitioner;
If you are attached to saṃsāra, you have no renunciation;
If you are attached to your own self-interest, you have no bodhicitta;
If there is grasping, you do not have the View."

For more on that see this <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jetsun-drakpa-gyaltsen/parting-four-attachments> and/or this <http://hhsakyatrizin.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Parting-from-the-4-Attachments.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 8th, 2018 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Caodong vs. Soto

Content:

falcon said:

differences between the China practice of Caodong and the Japanese practice of Soto?

Astus wrote:

Do you mean now or in the early 13th century? If now, then Chinese Buddhism is fairly uniform, and lineages have only nominal meaning. If in the 13th century, then there are some studies on the matter (by Steven Heine, William M. Bodiford, Carl Bielefeldt, etc.) of how Dogen transformed what was in China, and then there were further changes over the centuries within Soto.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 8th, 2018 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Caodong vs. Soto

Content:

falcon said:

The be all end all to practicing Soto Zen means to study what Dogen and Keizan taught right?

Astus wrote:

There is nearly 800 years of history between Dogen and today, so there is actually quite a lot one could study. Taking a practical approach is another matter, and it is more about participating in the temple (or Zen centre in the West) activities and following the guidance of a teacher.

falcon said:

The rest over the years from 13th century to now is almost irreverent no? Because not much has changed to the essential points?

Astus wrote:

The very idea that one should study the works of Dogen is from the 17th-18th century reformation of Soto, just like a good number of other things that today qualify this school.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 12th, 2018 at 1:21 AM

Title: Re: Caodong vs. Soto

Content:

PeterC said:

If I remember correctly, it was only after studying in Japan that he started teaching, and before going to Japan he had already spent a lot of time in retreat after receiving yinke.

Astus wrote:

1961 - six years solitary retreat

1969 - six years in Japan, obtains PhD at Rissho University

1975 - goes to the US to teach

1976 - Dongchu gives Caodong transmission

1978 - Lingyuan gives Linji transmission

(<http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about2.aspx?sn=44>,

http://old.shengyen.org/e_content/content/about/about_01_2.aspx?PageID=2)

PeterC said:

innovations in his teaching

Astus wrote:

See: http://chinesebuddhiststudies.org/previous_issues/chbj2301Jimmy%20Yu%203-38.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 13th, 2018 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: Signs from the Dakinis?

Content:

Void said:

What are possible so-called "signs from the dakinis", which seem to indicate significant training progress in Mahamudra (and most likely also in Dzogchen)?

Are there quotes in Mahamudra or Dzogchen literature which describe those?

Astus wrote:

'At this stage the meditator will acquire some power of supernormal cognition and will receive prophetic directions from his yidam and dakini. ... If the meditator has failed to acquire the spiritual power capable of producing both beneficial and harmful effects, has failed to gain supernormal cognition, and has also failed to receive any prophetic directions from the dakinis despite the fact that he has realized the great level of one flavor, then this condition might well be the consequence of his having violated the sacred bond or having been affected by a close associate who has abandoned his faith.' (Mahamudra: the Moonlight, p 397-398)

"Prophetic directions from the dakinis" refers to the protective role of the dakinis.

Regarded as the custodians of the secret Supreme Yoga, the dakinis have been looked upon by Buddhist mystics as the protectors from forces of destruction and unscrupulous profaning.'

(n 208, p 465)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 15th, 2018 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Dalai Lama says 'Europe belongs to Europeans'

Content:

Astus wrote:

The current issue of the 'migrants' looks very much like the same old racist and antisemitic fear mongering. It is unfortunate if the Dalai Lama has little understanding of what slogans like 'X-land belongs to X-people' means to the majority.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 17th, 2018 at 2:10 PM

Title: Re: Travelling to heavens and pure realms

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

Is there any methods that allows one to travel to the heavens (Tusita's inner courts) or sukhavati without waiting for another 70-80 years before death?

Astus wrote:

Of course there are. Check out the
http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Pratyutpanna_Surangama_1998_0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=463.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 17th, 2018 at 2:24 PM

Title: Re: Four Noble Truths as a list of landmarks.

Content:

Viach said:

the FNT is more like a list of successive landmarks(so that you do not get lost) than a set of two pairs of logical statements

Astus wrote:

The so called landmarks are the stages of realisation: stream-entrant, once returner, non-returner, and arhat. All four stages require the contemplation of all four truths.

Viach said:

Also other buddhist lists are the same lists of landmarks: the Four Seals, the Twelve Nidanas, the Noble Eightfold Path, 37 Factors of Enlightenment, etc.

Astus wrote:

Not really. Although Vasubandhu did relate the 37 factors to the 5 paths, that is not the general interpretation, and it looks somewhat forced and tentative.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 19th, 2018 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha Full English Translation December 2018

Content:

Seeker12 said:

first complete English translation of Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha

Astus wrote:

That has been available in English for a while now. See the BDK edition for instance:
http://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Beta_T1593_SummaryoftheGreatVehicle_2003.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=475.

Seeker12 said:

the most important and comprehensive Indian Yogacara text

Astus wrote:

That would be the Yogacarabhumisastra, translated to English only partially.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 20th, 2018 at 2:47 PM

Title: Re: Travelling to heavens and pure realms

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Wanting to get there will never get you there.

Astus wrote:

Virya-paramita is quite essential.

"If one fails to practice vigor, then one will not succeed in bringing forth dhyāna absorption. If one does not bring forth dhyāna absorption, then one cannot even succeed in being reborn in the domain of a Brahma Heaven king. How much the less might one hope to gain realization of the path to buddhahood?"

(Nagarjuna: http://www.kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-10.pdf, p 6)

"If one exhorts oneself intensely and labors at it diligently,
He may burrow into the ground and be able to reach a spring.

The case with vigor is just the same as this.

There is nothing sought which will not then be gained.

If one is able to accord with Dharma in practicing the Path,

Whoever then is vigorous and thus refrains from indolence

Will definitely succeed in garnering innumerable fruits

And such rewards as these will then never be lost."

(Nagarjuna: The Perfection of Vigor, p 7-8)

Also look into the concept of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%83vega>.

"As if struck by a sword, as if his head were on fire, a monk should live the wandering life — mindful — for the abandoning of sensual passion."

(That 1.39, tr Thanissaro)

"Just as one whose clothes or head had caught fire would put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness, and clear comprehension to extinguish [the fire on] his clothes or head, so that bhikkhu should put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness, and clear comprehension to abandon those bad unwholesome qualities."

(AN 6.20, tr Bodhi)

"Short is the life span of human beings,

The good man should disdain it.

One should live like one with head aflame:

There is no avoiding Death's arrival."

(SN 4.9, tr Bodhi)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 20th, 2018 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: Travelling to heavens and pure realms

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I was thinking more of the principle of 'abandoning hope of fruition'.

Astus wrote:

But that is a hope one should not abandon until the fruition is right in one's hands.

Without intention there is no action, without action there is no result.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 21st, 2018 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Travelling to heavens and pure realms

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'm responding to the OP, not 'laying down a law'.

Astus wrote:

What should not be aspired to? Travelling to heavens/buddha-fields, talking to highly realised beings, or clarifying doubts? It is said that it worked for Asanga.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 21st, 2018 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Travelling to heavens and pure realms

Content:

Wayfarer said:

How could he visit 'Sukhavati heaven' in a reasonable time-frame - like, a few months, or a year maybe? Any tips?

Astus wrote:

I have already recommended one way to do that

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=465589#p465589>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 23rd, 2018 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: The Decline and Fall of Chinese Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism in China, like practically everywhere else, has always been bound to the political sphere. Albert Welter himself has a nice work on the topic:

<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195175219.001.0001/acprof-9780195175219>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 24th, 2018 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Gil Fronsdaal - The Bodhisattva and the Arhat: Walking Together Hand-in-Hand

Content:

Astus wrote:

"Beyond the effect of arhathood, not a single atom or a single dharma of surplus remains — how much less could the truth of samyaksambodhi remain?"

(Arakan by Dogen, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 275)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 1st, 2018 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Yun Men Master, Guo Gu Roshi, a simple question:

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

saying this in a Western ... culture is completely different than saying it in a traditional Buddhist culture

Astus wrote:

That. At the same time, a large part of Chan literature lost its meaning in China after a hundred or so years, not to mention outside China, as it relies heavily on Chinese culture and language. So the interesting part is how the literature of the past was then turned into practice by Dahui. Consequently we can either play word association, or just project whatever is imagined to be the "true meaning".

bokki said:

Yun Men Master, Guo Gu Roshi, a simple question: a student of the way asked yunmen, "what is buddha?"

yunmen replied, "dried shitstick."

Astus wrote:

Here's one linguistic FYI from the introduction of The Letters of Chan Master Dahui Pujue (p24): dried turd (ganshijue 乾屎橛; literally, "dried shit in the shape of a short wooden peg," but sometimes misunderstood as "shitscraping spatula")

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 1st, 2018 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Yun Men Master, Guo Gu Roshi, a simple question:

Content:

bokki said:

the shit stick, or dry turd...what about that?

Astus wrote:

If you check Yunmen's sayings (Urs App's translation was reprinted this year by Shambhala), it appears that the text uses 'shit' for conceptualisation (§41, §53, §175, §271), while 'dried shit' (§71, §144, §226, §236) is for teaching.

Someone asked, "What is Shakyamuni's body?"
The Master said, "A dry piece of shit."
(Yunmen's sayings, §85; T47n1988p550b14-15)

This becomes quite tame then, as it practically repeats the age old saying that the (real) body of the Buddha is the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 1st, 2018 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

since these arhats will not arise from this samadhi of cessation without intervention, their samadhi is for all intents and purposes, permanent (but not eternal).

Astus wrote:

Proposing a permanent mind is the very opposite of the doctrine of impermanent composites. But if it is interrupted, it is not permanent, nor is it the type of arhat that does not switch to the bodhisattva path.

Malcolm said:

The nonabiding nirvana of a buddha means that the continuum of a buddha never ceases, all that ceases for them is the two obscurations.

Astus wrote:

What is the cause of body and mind if not ignorance?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2018 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Ignorance is a cause of defiled body and mind. Aspirations and merit are the cause of a Buddhas body and mind. Those causes are limitless therefore the series never ceases.

Astus wrote:

Arhats eliminated ignorance, but lack aspirations and merit, hence no cause for continuation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2018 at 4:55 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

They did not eliminate all traces and the knowledge obscuration, therefore they have not eliminated all causes. Ergo, they have causes which sustain their continuum's.

Astus wrote:

Are arhats still attached to their aggregates? Are they still in samsara? If not, what continuum is outside the three realms?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2018 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

on account of a latent ignorance, acquire and exist in a subtle mental body brought about by their former untainted karma.

Astus wrote:

Are arhats still attached to consciousness? If so, they are not free from samsara, and not really arhats. If not, then one has to propose a 'subtle mental body' apart from the five aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 4th, 2018 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Supramundane said:

could you elaborate

Astus wrote:

If the 'subtle mental body' refers to the mental aggregates, then an arhat must still be attached to the aggregates, hence that person cannot actually be called an arhat. But if it is something beyond the aggregates, then there are actually six aggregates. So, in either case, the idea that an arhat is stuck in a subtle mental body contradicts either the definition of arhatship or the doctrine of the five aggregates, unless there is somehow a third option.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 8th, 2018 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

JMGinPDX said:

puts me off when reading Zen texts in particular is the anti-Hinayana (e.g. Theravada) bias present in much of the literature.

Astus wrote:

Since Zen has never coexisted with Hinayana before the 20th century meeting in Western countries, this is all rather rhetorical. Plus Mahayana had almost no contact with Theravada in India, so equating Hinayana with Theravada is not completely correct, although calling it Sravakayana is accurate. In any case, having a Hinayana approach in Zen is not about actual schools, but about a certain mistaken interpretation of the teaching, where one clings to cessation and the idea of nirvana apart from samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2018 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Are Buddhas formless or form?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A monk asked Zen master Guizong, "What is Buddha?"

Guizong said, "When I tell you it becomes something else."

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 370)

"Those who have conceptions of the Buddha,
Who, beyond conception, is unbounded,
Are blinded by those very concepts;
They do not behold the Tathagata.
The nature of the Tathagata
Is the nature of this world of beings.
The Tathagata is without intrinsic being;
This world of beings is without intrinsic being."
(Nagarjuna: MMK 22.15-16, tr Padmakara)

"Jetsun Mila's position regarding primordial wisdom. He said this unfabricated awareness is beyond words and conceptual thoughts such as existence or non-existence, eternalism or nihilism, and so forth. It will not be contradicted whatever name is used to express it. Primordial wisdom is also like this. Those who would be expected to be scholars— even if they asked the Buddha himself—I don't think he would say one way or the other. Dharmakaya is beyond conception, unborn, free from elaborations."

(Gampopa: JOoL, p 286, tr Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche)

"Space and the Dharma body are without any dissimilar characteristics (lit., "characteristics of differentiation"). The Buddhas and sentient beings are without any dissimilar characteristics, samsara and nirvana are without any dissimilar characteristics, and the afflictions and bodhi are without any dissimilar characteristics. To transcend all characteristics is to be a Buddha. Ordinary people grasp at [their sensory] realms, while religious persons grasp at the mind. For the mind and the realms to both be forgotten is the True Dharma. To forget the realms is relatively easy, but to forget the mind is extremely difficult. People do not dare to forget the mind, fearing that they will fall into the void (i.e., the emptiness of space) with nowhere to grab hold. They do not understand that the void is without void, that there is only one true Dharma

body."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 9th, 2018 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Are Buddhas formless or form?

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

Um, why would you want to even forget the sensory realms and mind? That sounds to me like escaping the outer and inner worlds dude, and again, does that mean they (buddhas) are without mind and sensory perceptions , which sounds to me personally like a person that is dead and unconscious.

Astus wrote:

Being buddha means freedom from identification. As long as there is something pointed at to be the buddha, that is just ordinary deluded perception, where one keeps grasping at appearances and generating dissatisfaction. Let me quote this entertaining and educational story from the Vimalakirti Sutra (ch 3, BDK ed, p 95-96):

The Buddha told Ānanda, "You go inquire about Vimalakīrti's illness."

Ānanda addressed the Buddha, "World-honored One, I dare not accept your instruction to go inquire about his illness. Why? I remember once in the past, the World-honored One had a slight illness requiring cow's milk [as medicine]. I took my bowl and proceeded to the gateway of a great brahman home.

"While I was standing there Vimalakīrti came and said to me, 'O Ānanda, why are you standing here with your bowl so early in the morning?'

"I said, 'O retired scholar, the World-honored One has a slight illness requiring cow's milk, and so I have come here.'

"Vimalakīrti said, 'Stop, stop, Ānanda! Do not speak thus. The Tathāgata's body is the essence of vajra. [In it] the evils are already eradicated and the host of goods universally assembled. What illness could it have, what vexation could there be?

"Go silently, Ānanda—do not revile the Tathāgata, and do not let anyone else hear such coarse talk. Do not allow the gods of awesome power and virtue and the bodhisattvas who have come from pure lands in other directions to hear these words.

"Ānanda, even a small degree of blessings (i.e., merit) allows the wheelturning sage king (cakravartin) to be without illness—how could the immeasurable blessings of the Tathāgata fail to exceed his in every regard?!

"Go, Ānanda—do not make us experience this shame. If brahmans in the heterodox paths hear this, they will think, "Who is this teacher, who is unable to save himself from illness but would save others of their ills?" Sir, go in secret haste and do not let anyone hear this.

"You should understand, Ānanda, the bodies of the Tathāgatas are bodies of the Dharma, not bodies of longing. The Buddha is the World-honored One, who has transcended the triple world. The Buddha's body is without flaws, the flaws having been extinguished. The Buddha's body is unconditioned and does not fit the [conventional] analytic categories. A body such as this—how could it be ill, how could it be vexed?'

“At the time, World-honored One, I was really ashamed that I might have mistakenly heard what the Buddha had said in spite of being so close.

“I then heard a voice from space saying, ‘Ānanda, it is as the retired scholar has said. It is just that the Buddha has appeared in this evil age of the five corruptions and manifests this Dharma to emancipate sentient beings. Go, Ānanda. Take the milk without shame.’

“World-honored One, the eloquence of Vimalakīrti’s wisdom is like this. Therefore, I cannot accept [your instruction] to go inquire about his illness.”

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 13th, 2018 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Foxy said:

Hi, I was talking to a friend today and I was surprised to find out that zen masters like Huangbo and Yunmen, Wumen, Bodhidharma, never taught nor sat seated meditation to realize true nature. Is this true? I always assumed that zen and meditation were inseparable.

Astus wrote:

Although it is common to relate Zen and dhyana, that is merely an etymological connection. The central theme of Zen is to see the nature of mind and become buddha through that, not through various gradual techniques. It was Dogen, in 13th century Japan, who equated actual seated meditation with enlightenment, however, it's important to note that he did not posit zazen as a way toward a goal, but as the goal itself, plus he was against the idea of seeing nature (kensho) as something to be realised.

One day the Councilor Wang visited the master. When he met the master in front of the Monks’ Hall, he asked, “Do the monks of this monastery read the sutras?”

“No, they don’t read sutras,” said the master.

“Then do they learn meditation?” asked the councilor.

“No, they don’t learn meditation,” answered the master.

“If they neither read sutras nor learn meditation, what in the world are they doing?” asked the councilor.

“All I do is make them become buddhas and patriarchs,” said the master.

The councilor said, “Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts.”

“I always used to think you were just a common fellow,” said the master.

(Record of Linji, p 38, tr Sasaki)

Q: What is dhyana and what is contemplation?

A: The non-arising of a single thought is dhyana. The original nature is your increate Mind. Contemplation in samadhi happens when opposites and external objects do not cause a single thought to arise.

...

Q: Does he who practices stilling the mind do it only while sitting in meditation?

A: The practice of stilling the mind means not only doing it while sitting, but also while walking, standing or lying down and, uninterruptedly, during all other actions at all times. This is referred to as truly abiding in permanence.

(Treatise On Entering The Tao of Sudden Enlightenment, tr Lok To)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 14th, 2018 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Foxxxy said:

Is this true?

Meido said:

Almost certainly not. But Zen does not rely upon zazen or any other specific practice.

Astus wrote:

It should be perhaps added that meditation is one of the many standard practices in a monastery, just like chanting and studying sutras, various rituals, and upholding the precepts. Did the teachers of past follow the Vinaya? Did they recite scriptures and dharanis? Of course. But none of the common practices themselves make Zen, nor do they qualify it, and that's why they are not discussed, nor is there a Zen version of those.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 14th, 2018 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

Ehu Dayi's Zuochan Ming ("Inscription on Sitting Meditation")

Foxin Bencai's Zuochan yi ("Guidelines for Sitting Meditation")

Changlu Zongze's Zuochan yi ("Guidelines for Sitting Meditation")

Astus wrote:

Those are works from the 12th and 14th centuries, plus they are rather short, more like reminders than manuals. The rest you mention are not teachings on seated meditation, but brief references to it, showing the marginal nature of the matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 12:08 AM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

but they show quite clearly that the idea that "zen masters like Huangbo and Yunmen, Wumen, Bodhidharma, never taught nor sat seated meditation to realize true nature" is not the case.

Astus wrote:

But what is lacking are the Tang era instructions by the ancestors of the so called five schools (note: there are some attributed to the putative Northern School). On the other hand, moving to Song times, there is kanhua chan as the favoured method, and it remained such down to this day.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

Which instructions, specifically? Do you mean e.g. the Lengqie shizi ji?

Astus wrote:

I mean the works like the Ru dao an xin yao fangbian famen 入道安心要方便法門, Xiu xin yao lun 修心要論, Dasheng wu fangbian 大乘五方便, Yuan ming lun 圓明論, and Guanxin lun 觀心論.

Temicco said:

what about the Caodong?

Astus wrote:

It was a short lived project that eventually incorporated the same kanhua path. On the other hand, nianfo, and especially name recitation, has been a popular practice in Chan communities, and it still is, but often neglected by Westerners.

Temicco said:

I think the idea of zuochan being non-essential is appropriate, but the idea of it being marginal such that it merits complete de-emphasis goes a bit too far.

Astus wrote:

It depends on who you read. Those who emphasised sudden enlightenment had to relegate meditation to the gradual techniques.

"[The teaching that one can] cultivate the six perfections and the myriad practices in order to achieve Buddhahood—this is the progressive [approach to Buddhahood]. Since beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha [who achieved that state] progressively. Just be enlightened to the One Mind and there will not be the slightest dharma that can be attained—this is the true Buddha."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

What was your point about them again?

Astus wrote:

That they discuss actual meditation methods.

Temicco said:

Starting when do you propose that Caodong incorporated the same kanhua path?

Astus wrote:

I have no information on that. But it seems that the Ming era revivers of Caodong, Zhanran Yuancheng and Wuming Huijing, were not the advocates of silent illumination but they seem to fit in doctrinally and practically with everyone else.

Temicco said:

He is not explicitly commenting on sitting meditation here.

Astus wrote:

The fifth paramita is mediation.

Temicco said:

Anyway, even if he had designated it as a gradual technique, I don't see how that would matter. It does not contradict my view whatsoever.

Astus wrote:

At the beginning of the Extensive Record of Baizhang a useful difference is made between the ignorant and the practitioner, or the beginner and the advanced disciple. And Chan is for the advanced practitioner.

"If you are speaking to a deaf worldling, you should just teach him to leave home, maintain discipline, practice meditation and develop wisdom. ... If one is speaking to an ascetic, the ascetic has already given his assent three times and his discipline is complete. ... To an ascetic one must explain the defilement in pure things - you should tell him to detach from all things, existence, non-existent, or whatever, to detach from all cultivation and experience, and even to detach from detachment.

While in the course of asceticism, one strips away influences of habit. If an ascetic cannot get rid of the diseases of greed and aversion, he too is called a deaf worldling; still he must be taught to practice meditation and cultivate wisdom."

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 29-30)

Later he also states (p 35): "If you fast and control yourself, practice meditation and cultivate wisdom, these are afflicted roots of goodness."

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 3:20 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

Yes, I agree. So do the later texts that I mention.

Astus wrote:

Those later texts are hundreds of years apart from the early ones, so there is actually a big gap during the Tang era.

Temicco said:

Even Huango arguably does, too.

Astus wrote:

He does not. He merely mentions sitting peacefully. But throughout the text he denigrates all effort and all practice as deluded attempts of the gradual path.

"However, there is fast and slow in realizing this mind: there are those who attain no-mind in a single moment of thought after hearing the Dharma; those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten faiths, the ten abodes, the ten practices, and the ten conversions; and those who attain no-mind after [passing through] the ten stages [of the bodhisattva]."

(Huangbo in Zen Texts, BDK edition, p 16)

It's either the sudden or the gradual path. And sudden means enlightenment right at the moment of hearing the Dharma. What more would be needed?

"To become profoundly enlightened into [this truth]— right now, and that's it! Perfect and sufficient, nothing is lacking. One may cultivate energetically for three eons, passing through the various stages. Then in a single moment of realization one realizes only that originally one was oneself a Buddha, with not a single thing that could possibly be added."

(Huangbo, p 17)

Temicco said:

Yes, but the term dhyana was used in specific ways in the sutras, and can't necessarily be equated with the "chan" in "zuo chan" just because the words are the same. The perfection of dhyana always occurs in discussions of the 6 paramitas, but the term "zuo chan" is not used like this nor associated with the paramitas in any Chan literature I've ever read. So, I think it is a misreading to think that the meaning is the same.

Astus wrote:

That might be so. But then it should be also mentioned that not only chan has a different meaning, but so does zuo, hence it is not about any cultivation, nor any posture.

"Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called 'seated' (zuo). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called 'meditation' (chan)."

(Platform Sutra, ch 5, BDK ed, p 45)

Temicco said:

Yes, I don't doubt that. But really, this only supports my view -- meditation is not the essential point, but nevertheless it does not merit complete de-emphasis. It is an expedient with a long history, and is a favoured expedient in most Zen texts as far as I can see.

Astus wrote:

Sure thing, just as all the other elements of Mahayana, meditation is used.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

one has to put aside any sense of getting something or achieving some result from meditation.

Astus wrote:

There is the gradual practice model used by Zongmi, Yongming, and Jinul, where practice does have a meaningful purpose. Dogen is a different case, although there is not much of a detailed system for it. However, the idea of aimless action fits only the level of buddhas, and that cannot be used for those who are not yet on the stage of complete awakening, even though there is a difference between not anxiously craving for enlightenment and genuine aimlessness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 15th, 2018 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

To practice without a sense of personal gain, is not the same as practicing without any sense of purpose.

Astus wrote:

That still sounds like a high level aim, that would require insight into no-self. Why not go with bodhicitta?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 16th, 2018 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Temicco said:

That is "Huineng"'s view, and Shenhui's, but neither Huangbo nor Linji nor Zhaozhou say that their own mention of "sitting" is not meant literally.

Astus wrote:

For Huangbo, here's <https://www.ymba.org/books/dharma-mind-transmission/chung-ling-record>: " Sitting properly and peacefully, not bound by the world - this alone is called liberation!"

For Linji, he mentions sitting twice in a positive context, and three times in negative. There is also a significant difference between them, as the positive statements regarding sitting do not really refer to meditation. One is about Linji himself sitting quietly (穩坐, p 11 in Sasaki), and interviewing visitors, and the other is about the enlightened monk sitting leisurely in the monastery hall (不如無事、向叢林中、床角頭交腳坐, p 21 in Sasaki). On the other hand, the three negative mentions are specifically about meditation practice. The first one (p 17) calls it heretical, and talks of the practice of stillness and illumination, the second one (p 24) talks of the motionless posture as mistaken for the patriarchal way, and the third one (p 29) talks of the dedicated solitary practitioner who sits for long periods of time as mere karma generation. So from this it is quite clear that Linji did not talk of sitting meditation as something related to Zen (in the sense of sudden enlightenment).

Temicco said:

Clearly Zen is not inescapably about sitting -- there are plenty of quotes dismissing such an idea, including the Platform sutra quote -- but I don't think that attitude should be brought as an interpretive lens to every mention of "sitting" in Zen texts.

Astus wrote:

Agreed. I merely brought it up with relation to how the word zen can be interpreted.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 16th, 2018 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: One hand clapping

Content:

shanyin said:

I'd like to know what it is. I want to do this koan because I want something to think about especially during meditation.

Astus wrote:

This looks like a common version: 両掌相打って音声あり、隻手に何の音声がある。

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 17th, 2018 at 3:59 PM

Title: Re: One hand clapping

Content:

shanyin said:

could you translate?

Astus wrote:

"There is the sound of both palms hit together, but what is the sound of one hand?"

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 17th, 2018 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Pedagogy: Teachings on How to Teach

Content:

Astus wrote:

The basics from the Buddha:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.111.than.html> (AN 4.111) - like taming a horse

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.159.than.html> (AN 5.159) - how to teach

Summary from <https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/to-teach.htm>.

Mahayana:

The <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=22185#p22185>

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=21820#p21820> from the Bodhisatvacaryānirdeśa

Zen ideas from Linji:

"Whenever someone comes here seeking I immediately go out and look at him. He doesn't recognize me. Thereupon I don various kinds of robes. The student, assigning some meaning to this, straightway falls into words and phrases. What a pity that the blind shavepate, a man without the eye [to see], grasps at the robe I'm wearing and declares it to be blue or yellow, red or white! When I remove the robe and enter the state of purity, the student takes one look and is immediately filled with delight and longing. Then, when I cast off everything, the student is stunned and, running about in wild confusion, cries, 'You have no robe!' If I say, 'Do you know me, the man who wears these robes?' he'll abruptly turn his head around and recognize me through and through."
(tr Sasaki, p 26)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 17th, 2018 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: Pedagogy: Teachings on How to Teach

Content:

Astus wrote:

There's chapter 12 of the Mahayanasutralamkarabhasya discussing teaching.

"The Lord Buddha did not, in fact, teach the (ultimate) Dharma, since it is individually

realized within. Still, the compassionate ones, like huge boa-constrictors, (first) attract people toward their own reality with their reasonable teachings, (which work) like the boa's paralyzing saliva, and (then) make them fall into the gaping mouth of their own peace, which is perfectly pure, universal, and inexhaustible."

(v 2, tr Thurman)

"The bodhisattvas' perfect teaching should be recognized as extensive, doubt-dispelling, acceptable, and twofold in its demonstration of reality.

The teaching of these best heroes is gentle, modest, tireless, clear, varied, reasonable, intelligible, non-exploitive, and universal.

The speech of the victor-children is powerful, gentle, eloquent, sensible, appropriate, non-exploitive, measured, and expansive.

(The bodhisattvas' syllables are perfect because they) teach, explain, are adapted to the vehicles, soothe, make sense, are appropriate, liberate, and favor."

(v 5-8)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 18th, 2018 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

Meido said:

that path of practice in fact has quite a lot to do with the body.

Astus wrote:

Do you know sutras that discuss physical practice? Or is it discussed only in Rinzaï works?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 19th, 2018 at 2:45 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

passel said:

b) divergent evolution- a common body of probably early Indian textual sources that both are drawing from.

Temicco said:

Or, oral instructions.

Astus wrote:

Meditation texts were translated to Chinese very early:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras.

For Dogen's sources, see "Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation" by Carl Bielefeldt. The "manuals" themselves are mostly a copy-paste job from Zongze, and a little further Zen rework on them. But this small collection of Song era zazen instructions are not like the

traditional Buddhist manuals, and it is telling that Zongze refers his readers to more extensive sources (see: The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 257). In other words, it should be kept in mind that Zen was not a school closed off from the larger Buddhist tradition, and it should not be treated separately from Mahayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 20th, 2018 at 4:32 PM

Title: Re: Did zen masters teach seated meditation?

Content:

passel said:

detailed postural instruction in any of those texts, and if so, can you nail down any probable dates?

Astus wrote:

The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation (Chan Miyao Fa Jing 禪祕要法經, T15n613) is dated to the 2nd or 3rd century in origin by Ven. Dr. Yuanci, and it does have a description of posture at p243b24-27.

Here are Zongze's Zuochanyi and the Chan Miyao Fa Jing's relevant sections:

sit in the full cross-legged (lotus) position or in the half-lotus position. The left hand is placed on the right hand and the thumbs of both hands touch. The body is held straight in sitting, with [the ears balanced in line with the shoulders] and the nose and abdomen vertically aligned. The tongue rests on the upper palate, the lips and teeth are firmly closed, and the eyes remain slightly open so as to avoid falling asleep.

結跏趺坐。或半跏趺。以左掌安右掌上。兩大拇指相拄。正身端坐。令耳與肩對。鼻與臍對。舌拄上腭唇齒相著。目須微開。免致昏睡。

結跏趺坐，齊整衣服，正身端坐，偏袒右肩，左手著右手上，閉目以舌拄腭

Sit in the full cross-legged position, have the robe in order, the body is held straight in sitting, bare the right shoulder, the left hand rests on the right hand, eyes closed and tongue against the palate.

Note that those two texts are separated by around a thousand years, and still you find that a significant portion matches word by word.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2018 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: Honen or Shinran?

Content:

Astus wrote:

As I take it, the difference can be summed up like this:

Honen: faith is within nenbutsu.

Shinran: nenbutsu is within faith.

Practically, Shinran can be seen as a faithful follower of Honen, even if he used different expressions.

"In the Tannisho, Shinran expressed his Faith, saying that 'Shinran ... entrusted himself to the teaching of the Venerable Master (Honen) ---- that we are saved by Amida merely through the utterance of the Nembutsu.' Does this not contradict the above explanation on Faith and Nembutsu?

The teaching of Honen or Shan-tao was characterised by the emphasis on the Nembutsu in contrast to other sundry practices as required in different schools. However, the Nembutsu in Shan-tao's and Honen's teachings is the utterance of Amida's Name based upon true Faith. It is not the Nembutsu of self-power but it represents Amida's characteristic method of salvation as proclaimed in the Vow. Shinran used this expression, too, especially when he referred to Shan-tao's or Honen's teaching."

(<http://www.nembutsu.info/standard/significance.htm>)

A benefit of studying Honen is that he speaks directly and clearly, while Shinran seems to me more poetical, possibly because Honen wanted to establish his take on the Pure Land path, while Shinran already had something to build on.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 26th, 2018 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: I believe the lower realms can be emptied in a day

Content:

Astus wrote:

'(To say that) "the Buddha appears in the world and saves sentient beings" are words of the nine-part teachings; they are words of the incomplete teaching. Anger and joy, sickness and medicine, are all oneself; there is no one else. Where is there a Buddha appearing in the world? Where are there sentient beings to be saved? As the Diamond Cutter Scripture says, "In reality, there are no sentient beings who attain extinction and deliverance."'

(Extensive Record of Baizhang, in Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 71)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 1st, 2018 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Nibbana Is Giving Up, Letting Go, and Being Free, Ajahn Chah

Content:

Astus wrote:

That's a bit misleading title. The text defines nibbana as "Nibbana means not grasping. Nibbana means not giving meaning to things. Nibbana means letting go." And continues: "Making offerings and doing meritorious deeds, observing moral precepts, and meditating on loving-kindness—all these are for getting rid of defilements and craving, for making the mind empty—empty of self-cherishing, empty of concepts of self and other—and for not wishing for anything, not wishing to be or become anything." The idea

of "being free" seems somewhat out of place there. When it comes to freedom, there is the "mind is free of desire, free of defilement, free of craving", "freedom from selfishness", or "freedom from all these conditions and phenomena". But just being free, that's likely just another vague selfish concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 1st, 2018 at 3:20 PM

Title: Re: Nibbana Is Giving Up, Letting Go, and Being Free, Ajahn Chah

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

....It's Ajahn Chah dude, did you read it or try to get the gist of it?

Astus wrote:

It's the title of that article I called misleading. The same text in the <https://forestsangha.org/teachings/books/the-collected-teachings-of-ajahn-chah-single-volume?language=English> has the title "About Being Careful". As for what "being free" would look like, that is different from the usual meaning of the term where it stands for doing and experiencing whatever one pleases.

"We practise to be free of suffering, but to be free of suffering does not mean just to have everything as you would like it, have everyone behave as you would like them to, speaking only that which pleases you. Don't believe your own thinking on these matters."

(Collected Teachings of Ajahn Chah, p 211)

"This is freedom: not to cling to conventions. All things in this world have a conventional reality. Having established them we should not be fooled by them, because getting lost in them really leads to suffering."

(p 22)

"In this way we can dwell in a natural state, which is peace and tranquillity. If we are criticized, we remain undisturbed. If we are praised, we are undisturbed. Let things be in this way; don't be influenced by others. This is freedom."

(p 82)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 2nd, 2018 at 2:39 AM

Title: Re: Nibbana Is Giving Up, Letting Go, and Being Free, Ajahn Chah

Content:

kirtu said:

The title is the product of editing. But what are you objecting to?

Astus wrote:

The product of editing.

kirtu said:

I'd have to disagree with you. This is completely a standard Theravadin presentation. Why do you think this constitutes a "vague selfish concept"?

No, "doing and experiencing whatever one pleases" <> "being free". The former is a teen boy definition of freedom and is thus inadmissible (and in fact teen boys who use that definition seriously give themselves a bad name and a bad reputation). The latter refers to at least the momentary freedom from the three poisons.

Astus wrote:

We don't seem to disagree. It is freedom from the three poisons that is the goal, not a conventional concept of freedom.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: What does emptiness mean and why does it matter?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

what is wrong (if anything) with distinctions? If so then how is the negation of distinctions liberating?

Astus wrote:

I assume by distinction you mean vikalpa (分別).

Nagarjuna writes (MMK 18.5):

"Liberation is attained through the destruction of actions and defilements;
actions and defilements arise because of falsifying conceptualizations;
those arise from hypostatization;
but hypostatization is extinguished in emptiness."
(tr Siderits)

"Release occurs when action and defilements cease.
Actions and defilements are derived from thoughts,
And these come from the mind's construction.
Emptiness is what arrests them."
(tr Padmakara)

Menzan Zuiho gives us this explanation (Jijuyu-Zanmai, in Heart of Zen, p 43-44):

"Mumyo (fundamental delusion) is called illusory mind. It is the source of the rounds of delusory life and death from the immeasurable past. It is our discriminating mind which obstinately clings to body, mind, the world, and all things, as being the way we have perceived and recognized them until now. For example, although something good is not always good, we hold stubbornly to what we think is good. Something evil is not always evil, yet we become attached to our own judgment and make it a preconception. Even if you think something is good, others may think it is evil. Even if you think something is

evil, others may think it good. And, even if both you and others think something may be good or evil today, fundamentally such judgments merely accord with illusory mind which manifests itself in the form of one's own knowledge, views, and experiences. This is true not only of our judgments about good and evil, but also our views about being and non-being, hatred and love, etc. All these differentiations in regarding all existence arise from illusory mind."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 at 4:31 AM

Title: Re: What does emptiness mean and why does it matter?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

I understand the need to see myself as empty but what is the point of seeing, say, inanimate objects as empty? Why does seeing the coffee cup as empty help me - if at all?

Astus wrote:

The main idea of emptiness is the elimination of attachment. Slapping the label of emptiness on objects certainly makes little sense, and one should quickly move on from that level before it becomes problematic. Objects are called empty because they are not one's self, nor one's possession, so "I am the cup" and "This is my cup" are mere misconceptions generating suffering. The more abstract sounding doctrine of emptiness of phenomena (dharma-sunyata) is not about inanimate objects, but rather doctrinal categories (i.e. dharmas) called mere concepts, therefore without first learning about dharmas, there is not much use of worrying about that. So, you are right, a coffee cup is not an issue, but it becomes one the moment you take it to be meaningful, important, or in other words: personal.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 at 5:49 AM

Title: Re: reading Dogen's Shobogenzo

Content:

DGA said:

I have PDFs of all four volumes of the RPK translation of the Shobogenzo. I've not opened them yet.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the Nishijima-Cross translation published online by <https://www.bdkamerica.org/bdk-tripitaka-digital-downloads?>

DGA said:

I'd appreciate some suggestions on where to start

Astus wrote:

If it is the BDK edition, then in my opinion that translation is not the best first choice

(that would be Tanahashi's). Perhaps start from the back where more general Mahayana topics are "Dogenised".

DGA said:

any commentaries that may have been translated in English.

Astus wrote:

I have not heard of any such thing. You can try the Soto journal <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/journal/index.html> for the probably best translations with annotation, and other related articles. And of course there are some more popular chapters discussed by various teachers (e.g.

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=LZXwAQAAAJ>,

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=VoREDwAAQBAJ>,

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Ehk8DwAAQBAJ>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: reading Dogen's Shobogenzo

Content:

DGA said:

Would you mind elaborating on why you prefer Tanahashi's translation to the BDK edition?

Astus wrote:

It simply felt like an easier read, although otherwise not necessarily the most accurate translation. But probably you should decide it for yourself.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 at 10:05 PM

Title: Re: How is enlightenment achieved in madhamaka and tiantai?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

My question is: did nagarjuna ever categorically offer a positive means or ANYTHING at all about what enlightenment is or how to get there?

Astus wrote:

Regarding the path, check Ratnavali, Suhrillekha, Yuktisastika, and Sunyatasaptati. Also look at Aryadeva's Catuhsataka. Madhyamaka in the early times differed from the Abhidharma approach in that it took a different view to vipasyana. Later Madhyamaka is another matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 7th, 2018 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: How is enlightenment achieved in madhamaka and tiantai?

Content:
Marc said:
Could you please elaborate a bit on this distinction?

Astus wrote:
The abhidharma approach is to break down conventional phenomena to ultimate constituents, i.e. dharmas, so there is no person, there are only the five aggregates, and those five are impermanent, etc. The madhyamaka approach is to break phenomena down to nothing. In the end the goal in both cases is to eliminate grasping at experiences.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, November 8th, 2018 at 9:47 PM
Title: Re: How is enlightenment achieved in madhamaka and tiantai?
Content:
Marc said:
the distinction that you draw between early & late Madhyamaka as regard to Vipasyana & Abhidharma.

Astus wrote:
With the further development of Mahayana through the emergence of Yogacara things got more detailed regarding the bodhisattva path and practices, as you can see in the works of Candrakirti, Haribhadra, Santaraksita, Kamalasila, Santideva, Atisa, etc.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, November 12th, 2018 at 3:14 AM
Title: Re: Pure land transcending the triple realm?
Content:
jhanapeacock said:
Where does in the mahayana suttas is mentioned this? Is there a proof of this?

Astus wrote:
It seems to be more of a matter of reasoning regarding buddha-lands. Two important reasons for positioning Sukhavati beyond samsara are that (1) it came into existence due to Dharmakara's vows and (2) beings born there are driven by a wish for liberation. It is neither a result of ignorance, nor for the perpetuation of it.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, November 13th, 2018 at 10:49 PM
Title: Re: Lotus Vs wisdom Vs flower garland sutra worldview?
Content:
nichiren-123 said:
I thought abhidharma was practically demolished by nagarjuna?

Astus wrote:

Not at all. On the one hand, you can take Madhyamaka as a different layer of teachings. On the other hand, not all abhidharma interpretations fall within the problematic points that Nagarjuna argued against.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 13th, 2018 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Lotus Vs wisdom Vs flower garland sutra worldview?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

How do these three teachings link together in a coherent way?

Astus wrote:

Question: "I am not going to ask you how to negate one level through another level. But how do you not negate one level, if not through another?"

Answer: "Yesterday I planted the eggplant, today the winter melon."

(Muzhou Daoming, T51n2076p291b21-23, tr from Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, p 109)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 14th, 2018 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: Lotus Vs wisdom Vs flower garland sutra worldview?

Content:

Admin_PC said:

The SAT Daizokyo says the phrase only occurs in 4 texts:

PeterC said:

what he's done is worse than selective selective quotation.

Astus wrote:

Quoting only the section 法界對法界起法界 is not Ziporyn's idea, but Zhili's (see: http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T46n1928_p0706c11). Ziporyn discusses the passage in his <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=51274> on p 20.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 14th, 2018 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Lotus Vs wisdom Vs flower garland sutra worldview?

Content:

PeterC said:

常坐 is the chapter title from 摩訶止觀?

Astus wrote:

Yes, the section about "constant sitting".

PeterC said:

Would you consider Ziporyn's discussion of that phrase in the review to be a fair representative of conventional reading of it?

Astus wrote:

I am not familiar enough with Tiantai to judge.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 15th, 2018 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Non conceptual thought

Content:

MatthewAngby said:

This sounds like the most blank and agitated situation ... like a state where you can no longer know what an object is, and you are always in a state of wondering what the object is, thus like a child who is always confused and never getting the answers.

Astus wrote:

You are right. A blank mind is not a mind free from concepts but a mind stuck in dark ignorance. As the Platform Sutra (ch 4, BDK ed, p 43) summarises it nicely: "Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts." The point is not to block or eliminate experiences, but to have no attachment to, or identification with them.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 16th, 2018 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: omniscient? infallible?

Content:

clyde said:

Do you believe the Buddha was omniscient? Do you believe the Buddha was infallible?

Astus wrote:

"take a certain teacher who claims to be all-knowing and all-seeing, to know and see everything without exception, thus: 'Knowledge and vision are constantly and continually present to me, while walking, standing, sleeping, and waking.' He enters an empty house; he gets no alms-food; a dog bites him; he encounters a wild elephant, a wild horse, and a wild cow; he asks the name and clan of a woman or man; he asks the name and path to a village or town. When asked, 'Why is this?' he answers: 'I had to enter an empty house, that's why I entered it. I had to get no alms-food, that's why I got none. I had to get bitten by a dog, that's why I was bitten. I had to encounter a wild elephant, a wild horse, and a wild cow, that's why I encountered them. I had to ask the name and clan of a woman or man, that's why I asked. I had to ask the name and path to a village or town, that's why I asked.' A sensible person reflects on this matter in this way: 'This teacher makes such a claim, but he answers in such a way. This spiritual life is unreliable.' Realizing this, they leave disappointed."
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn76/en/sujato>)

See more on the matter: <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/buddha-omniscience.pdf>.

"However, I would like to point out that attaining Buddhahood and understanding the ultimate nature of things does not mean the enlightened person does not need to formally learn anything, such as French or about the philosophy of Kant. To realize the nature of reality and to understand things on the empirical level of everyday life are quite different. Of course, these two worlds are not in opposition, as mentioned in connection with the yoga of one taste. However, it is evident that one who has attained the ultimate truth will not automatically be well versed in all fields of knowledge."
(Traleg Kyabgon: The Essence of Buddhism, ch 17)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 16th, 2018 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: A request to explain Vajrayana to a common Mahayanika

Content:

Anders said:

What's the main talking points of vajrayana that distinguishes it from common Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

Like Mahayana developed a Buddhist pantheon of buddhas and bodhisattvas to be used instead of common deities, Vajrayana integrated/developed devotional, ceremonial, imaginative, magical, and physical practices. In that way it is a more coherent and versatile way. Compare it with the presence of dharanis, rituals, and occasional body related (yoga, mudra, prana, etc.) techniques in Theravada and East Asia.

Anders said:

What's the deal with deity yoga?

Astus wrote:

It's next level buddhanusmrti, where you identify with not just the mind but also the body of a buddha. Compare that with the approaches to buddha-remembrance in Theravada, in Pure Land Buddhism, and in Zen.

Anders said:

How do you get around the whole "we eat meat, drink alcohol, have sex and engage in the kleshas still call this wisdom" practice thing without just discarding the classical Buddhist view of these matters altogether?

Astus wrote:

I'd say that is quite in line with how the bodhisattva activities within samsara allows all that. It's just that here again it's visible how Vajrayana took the next step, and instead of keeping it rhetorical, made it a practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 16th, 2018 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: A request to explain Vajrayana to a common Mahayanika

Content:

paël said:

What these yogas are?

Astus wrote:

E.g.: <http://chancenter.org/cmc/chan-practice/moving-meditation/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 18th, 2018 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Difficulty in discussing Mahayana across traditions

Content:

DGA said:

What is an authoritative text or source across Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

There is actually a large collection of texts from India that are present in both the Chinese and the Tibetan canon, plus the Pali canon - or at least the Sutta Pitaka - is generally regarded as buddhavacana.

DGA said:

What's authoritative in this sub, and what is less authoritative or not at all authoritative?

Astus wrote:

Whatever scriptures and treatises both parties accept can be used for reference, otherwise there are two valid sources: reasoning and experience.

DGA said:

According to Mahayana Buddhism, the history of Mahayana Buddhist doctrine is a narrative and catalogue of decline.

Astus wrote:

Whose interpretation of Mahayana is that? The Prajnaparamita and Vaipulya sutras were taught to beings with purer mind than the sravakas, and Tantras are claimed to be taught to those who were even more superior.

DGA said:

Innovations in the teachings are not improvements; they are signs of degeneration

Astus wrote:

Calling them innovations makes sense only if Mahayana sutras are viewed as historically later works, and that is a very modern view, not the traditional one.

Furthermore, taking the historical perspective, later works are usually based on earlier ones, so they should actually be viewed as further extensions at least, not degeneration.

DGA said:

This suggests that the canon of Mahayana texts recorded in Sanskrit, prior to the decline of Buddhism in India, must be more authoritative for the purposes of pan-Mahayana discussion than, say, later Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, or Korean doctrinal systems.

Astus wrote:

If it is OK to accept texts that are not the actual teachings of Shakyamuni, i.e. all the Mahayana scriptures, why look down on those composed beyond the Indian cultural sphere?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 19th, 2018 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land - Some Doubts and Weak Faith

Content:

Nosta said:

Its just my rational mind working a lot...

Astus wrote:

There is also a rational way to approach the Pure Land teachings, seeing how it is within the context of the whole of Buddhism. It requires first of all getting your mind around fundamental concepts, like rebirth, the various realms, karma, and dependent origination as the fundamentals. Then the specifics for the Mahayana path: the bodhisattva vows, buddha-lands, emptiness, and mind only. Based on those, it can become clear that it is actually possible to attain birth in a buddha-land through the establishment of faith, vow, and practice on the person's end, and the conditions defined by Amitabha's vows.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 20th, 2018 at 6:40 AM

Title: Re: the six consciousnesses (vijñanas)

Content:

clayde said:

I understand that light reflected from objects and making contact with the eye gives rise to eye consciousness, but how do thoughts which are sensed by the mind giving rise to mind consciousness arise?

Astus wrote:

The 18 dhatus is a simple and easy model (until you turn the page and delve into abhidharma). The eye sees (contacts) a visual object (not light, unless light itself is the object), and from the contact (seeing) emerges visual consciousness. Note that neither the organ nor the object is directly known, only the visual consciousness is the point where there is any awareness that there is something seen. Similarly with the other five.

Mind consciousness is no different, as it is generally believed that on the one hand there is mind and on the other there are thoughts, whereby it is when there is a thought in one's mind that there emerges a consciousness of an idea, in other word, one thinks of something.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 21st, 2018 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: 5 wordly desires

Content:

seeker242 said:

So it's often said, by some, the human beings have 5 desires. Desire for food, sleep, sex, fame/reputation and wealth. Where does this come from? Some particular sutra?

Astus wrote:

It seems to be a later formation in Chinese Buddhism. I found a mention of three desires (三欲) - sleep, sex, food and drink - in Zhizhou's (678-733)

http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X34n0636_p0037a16 that adds fame separately. But as five desires (五欲), it is listed in Yiru's (1352-1425)

http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/P182n1615_p0151b06, saying that it originates from the Huayan tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 22nd, 2018 at 2:50 AM

Title: Re: the six consciousnesses (vijñanas)

Content:

Grigoris said:

Not exactly. Light has to be present for eye sensation to happen. So it is not 100% correct to say that the eyes sees objects not light, because that would mean the eye could see them in the absence of light too.

Astus wrote:

It is in the context of the 18 dhatus that it can be said that light is not the object of seeing. As for other models, that is another story.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 25th, 2018 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: The Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I have made this comment on the slide I have prepared for this sutra

Astus wrote:

The Nirvana Sutra is not controversial in Mahayana, and the ideas of permanence, bliss, self, and purity as characteristics of buddha-nature appear elsewhere too (e.g.

Srimaladevi Sutra, ch 12; <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra52a.html>, ch 3), but more importantly the tathagatagarbha doctrine became the mainstream view.

Wayfarer said:

However the Buddhist conception can be differentiated because the 'true self' is, in fact, empty of self!

Astus wrote:

The buddha-nature teaching does not negate the doctrine of emptiness and no-self. What it adds is that the buddha-qualities are not developed through the bodhisattva path but it's what all beings are like when they have no more attachment. So, for instance, when one has relinquished anger, there is love automatically.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 26th, 2018 at 6:13 PM

Title: Re: Bhavanga citta & ālayavijñāna

Content:

mechashivaz said:

Are these two thought to be identical, and likewise, identical to tathāgatagarbha ?

Astus wrote:

Alayavijnana is like bhavangacitta (a concept found mainly in Theravada commentaries, not the canon), both function as a basis for the continuation of a being and carries karma. Saying that the tathagatagarbha is within/identical to alayavijnana is another development in Mahayana not taught by Asanga, Vasubandhu, or Xuanzang.

mechashivaz said:

What's the text of Asanga discussing this and is it available?

Astus wrote:

Chapter 1 of Mahayanasamgraha. However, Asanga most probably had no knowledge of the Theravada doctrine (if the concept of bhavangacitta had existed at that time at all), and even states that sravakas are not familiar with this idea.

mechashivaz said:

If they're thought to be identical to tathāgatagarbha how would karmic seeds carry to rebirth or is it that the karmic seeds its self contains tathāgatagarbha? Any clarifications are most welcome!

Astus wrote:

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html explains in detail.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 29th, 2018 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: "Alone, seated atop the Great Mountain"

Content:

shanehanner said:

Does anyone know the source of this quote? I'm pretty sure that's the quote, or it's something very similar.

Astus wrote:

A monk asked Baizhang, "What is extraordinary?" Baizhang said, "Sitting alone on the mountain." The monk bowed; Baizhang then hit him.

(Blue Cliff Record, case 26, BDK ed, p 148)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 1st, 2018 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

How does Zen understand these things?

Astus wrote:

Since Zen lacks a doctrinal system, it cannot be said it has any specific interpretation. Individual teachers may have.

LastLegend said:

I've heard mind consciousness has to die once in order to pass through the gate of samsara.

Astus wrote:

It refers to the cessation of manas, the relinquishing of attachment to self. The term "great death" seems to have been used first by Yuanwu Keqin, and it might originate from a Zhaozhou story included in the Blue Cliff Record (case 41), where he comments:

"A man who has died the great death has no Buddhist doctrines and theories, no mysteries and marvels, no gain and loss, no right and wrong, no long and short. When he gets here, he just lets it rest this way. An Ancient said of this, "On the level ground the dead are countless; only one who can pass through the forest of thorns is a good hand." Yet one must pass beyond that Other Side too to begin to attain. Even so, for present day people even to get to this realm is already difficult to achieve."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 1st, 2018 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

What's your take on that?

Astus wrote:

It is standard Mahayana (non-abiding nirvana) glazed with dramatic metaphors. Don't grasp things, don't grasp the absence of things, don't make a concept of not grasping anything - thus you have the three gates, or three deaths. In the end, the story is always the same since the four noble truths, craving and clinging perpetuates samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 1st, 2018 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

What mind that knows not to grasp? What that mind looks like when it doesn't grasp?

Astus wrote:

A mind that has learnt the Dharma knows that grasping ends in suffering. The mind does not have any look in the first place, regardless of the presence or absence of grasping.

Even now there are things and beings one is attached to, and towards everything and everyone else there is no attachment (see:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.011.than.html>). One should not look for some special state of mind, rather address the cause of pain itself: ignorance. The way emphasised in various Zen texts is to stop grasping at concepts immediately, because it is based on ideas that attachment arises, and the path that ends clinging to thoughts is simply recognising them as unsubstantiated, unreliable, ungraspable.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 2:15 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Ok through eyes, mind that sees?

Astus wrote:

Better not assume mind to be an actual agent. Rather follow the classic teaching: as a result of contact between the eye and visible object visual consciousness arises.

LastLegend said:

I don't think that is Zen. Stop grasping or grasping is still grasping to one end. Still discriminating mind.

Astus wrote:

You can continue that indefinitely, like not discriminating and discriminating is still grasping, etc.

"The essence of the Way is detachment. And the goal of those who practice is freedom

from appearances."
(Bodhidharma, in Wake-up Sermon, tr Red Pine, p 47)

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 3:17 AM
Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature
Content:
LastLegend said:
Okay. What is making this statement if not discriminating mind?

Astus wrote:
Discrimination is quite essential on the path. After all, it is only wisdom that can ultimately defeat ignorance.

"The childish are attached to forms;
The moderate attains detachment;
By knowing the nature of forms,
Those of supreme intellect are free."
(Nagarjuna: Yuktisastika, v 55, tr Thupten Jinpa)

"To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood."
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 5:23 AM
Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature
Content:
LastLegend said:
Ok the discriminating consciousness is not clean, so it cannot be fully called wisdom as long as there is one end created by discriminating consciousness to lean on. It's actually ignorance or attachment of self.

Astus wrote:
Discrimination is part of the path, it is what takes one to the result. Exactly because one is not yet free from grasping one has to use correct discrimination.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 6:10 AM
Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?
Content:
Malcolm said:
The Śrī Mālādevi Sūtra points out that arhats and pratyekabuddhas, as well as bodhisattvas, have not in fact abandoned all afflictions.

Astus wrote:

That is the former case, where arhats are not free from clinging to the aggregates, so not really arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Sure, but it's the very thing that needs to be dissolved at the end. In its 'pure' state by itself is easy mistaken for realizing Buddha nature. This is often the case for practitioners.

Astus wrote:

If there is correct discrimination, there is no mistake, and necessarily eliminates even the clinging to discrimination.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 6:43 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Yes, if that falls under wisdom. No, by discrimination, there is attachment which there is self.

Astus wrote:

If wisdom is already without attachment, then it cannot lead to freedom from attachment, only discrimination can. But if you deny that discrimination can lead to freedom, since we are left without any means, it is literally impossible to attain liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 7:45 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Wisdom cannot be a thought (with intention) created by discriminating consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Where does wisdom come from?

LastLegend said:

I was told that consciousness changes constantly and because of that there is an open

gap to enter great samadhi that's through meditation practice.

Astus wrote:

A gap between two moments of consciousness? In that case that gap is unconsciousness, hence no mental activity can happen.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Not according to definition of "arhat" in the lower schools. But, they are still arhats from the POV of the Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

So the arhat of ekayana is not the arhat of triyana (that includes Mahayana as well), and since no ekayanist has a sravaka motivation, their arhat idea has never actually been aspired to by anyone, thus nobody to convince or argue with on the superiority of bodhisattvayana. In other words, the ekayana arhat is a straw man.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

At the state of 'pure' discriminating consciousness, you can stand witness to your unborn nature and that is non-discriminating knowing nature.

Astus wrote:

Discrimination is the ability to tell the difference between things, it is perception, recognition. Or there has to be a difference between discrimination and perception, where discrimination is perception distorted by false preconceptions, like the idea of self. If discrimination is defined that way, then for correct perception to happen one must eliminate the mistaken ideas, hence the need for study (sruta), reflection (cinta), and cultivation (bhavana) that establishes correct concepts and involves investigating appearances (dharmavicaya), in other words: insight (vipasyana).

LastLegend said:

Witnessing is not the same as realizing because of the very recognition and distinguishing that nature itself is a product of discriminating consciousness. But at that mixed state (of recognizing nature and still being fabricated by discriminating consciousness), if you are able to sustain without arising discriminating intention or mental creation, that is wisdom.

Astus wrote:

Here it seems no difference between discrimination and perception is made, but still seems that for some reason discrimination/perception eventually has to go away. But if that were to happen, consciousness could not actually function in any meaningful way. That likely means taking a blank mind as the ultimate.

LastLegend said:

I was told that the practice is consciousness knowing itself until it dissolves which means there is no subject and object remaining. The moment of great death.

Astus wrote:

The elimination of subject and object in Yogacara is the result of arriving at the correct view of consciousness only through conceptual effort. What does "consciousness knowing itself" mean in your interpretation? How one knows one's mind, with what method?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 2:46 AM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Discriminating consciousness has established itself as the mechanism that drives us. ... Consciousness within that mixed state still arises in form of discriminating intention. The perception or thinking cannot be discriminating intention.

Astus wrote:

Is discrimination then intention? Or is there intention and separately discriminating intention? If the latter, what is the discriminating part, what is its role? If the former, intention is a basic mental function, just like perception, so there can be no mind without it.

LastLegend said:

That meditation the very consciousness is taken as the object but it is the subject. The accurate way is it knows itself.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is momentary. If a single moment of awareness is aware of itself, how is it not two minds? Or the mind knowing itself is a more complex matter, like thinking about how mind functions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 2:59 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, since the Lankavatara points out that arhats are roused from an equipoise of cessation and then set on the bodhisattva path, their motivation now redirected towards full buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

What I mean by a straw man arhat is that per definition an arhat is one no longer attached to the aggregates. If that meaning is changed, then it is not the same idea. The ekayana description rather fits a non-returner who resides in the pure abodes.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Does Consciousness Continue After Cessation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

the Mahāyāna definition supersedes the Hinayāna definition since it is a higher tenet system.

Astus wrote:

But this is not a Mahayana-Hinayana difference, but an ekayana-triyanā one. Furthermore, ekayana doctrines also affirm that arhats realise that the aggregates are not self, therefore such a person is necessarily free from attachment to the body, the feelings, the concepts, and any state of mind, unless the pudgala-nairātmya for śrāvakas is a mere intellectual belief. But if it is genuine realisation, there can be no appearance or state that binds them, so there is no reason to be stuck in any equipoise either.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

I was told that discrimination and intention are two but as soon as there is discrimination intention immediately arises.

Astus wrote:

What is discrimination then?

LastLegend said:

The gist is habits created by consciousness and sustained over many lifetimes lumped together as self, ignorance, etc.

Astus wrote:

Habits are not discrimination either. So, what is the role, function, act of discrimination?

LastLegend said:

I was told that we cannot fully understand until we pass the fence, so it's really beyond my understanding but you can recognize that discrimination immediately followed by intention in your mind.

Astus wrote:

If it cannot be known what discrimination is, how can anyone get over it? That's like going to an unknown place where one can never arrive, simply because it cannot be told when one is there.

LastLegend said:

Practice is utilizing discriminating consciousness but it helps to reduce habits towards samadhi and great samadhi.

Astus wrote:

If one does not know what discrimination is, how can it ever be utilised?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 11:07 PM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

It's what you are using right now at your mind.

Astus wrote:

To read and write a lot of mental functions are used. Which one is discrimination?

LastLegend said:

The role and function of discriminating consciousness is to perpetuate old habits and create new ones when it deludes you.

Astus wrote:

In that case telling the difference between things - i.e. discriminating - is not discrimination, since that does not necessarily involve habituation, while mindlessly repeating things counts as an act of discriminating consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Mind consciousness, ignorance, and nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you don't discriminate, how do you know what to write?

Astus wrote:

If it is not defined what discrimination is, how could its appearance be identified? I'm asking you, because it seems I have a different view about discrimination than you do,

so it'd be better if you could specify what you mean by it.

LastLegend said:

If you are able to clearly discern all mental events, then that's wisdom. But you cannot do that 24/7 and do it without errors because old habits kick in, so discriminating consciousness deludes, opposite of clearly knowing.

Astus wrote:

As I take it, discernment is discrimination, so if we use my interpretation, discriminating consciousness can also be a source of clarity, because what matters is not the act of discrimination, but the concepts one applies when discriminating.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 5th, 2018 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: thoughts vs. emotions

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

For the Mahamudra/Semde instructions which involve looking at the color, shape, coming and going etc. of thoughts, does one practice with what we term "emotions" in the same way?

Astus wrote:

It could be said that when it comes to analysing appearances on the mental side, also called the moving mind, then generating strong emotions is the recommended way at the beginning.

Johnny Dangerous said:

There is no distinction made here between emotion and thought is there?

Astus wrote:

Only to the extent of their obvious nature, of how strong they appear. That's why first using anger and lust is easier.

Johnny Dangerous said:

So actually, I would ask for the same reason whether in this particular instruction, sense data can also count as "thoughts".

Astus wrote:

Check out the 9th Karmapa's instructions on meditating on appearances. Step one: appearances are mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2018 at 2:48 AM

Title: Re: thoughts vs. emotions

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

seems like establishing that all appearances are mind is the standard direction

Astus wrote:

Yes, that it is. It should also be kept in mind that emotions fall under the category of samskara within the five aggregates, and under the mental concomitants (caitasika) within the abhidharma systems, often as primary and secondary afflictions (klesa & upaklesa). As for the basic feelings (vedana) of pleasant, painful, and neutral, they too exist as mental phenomena. But all that is basic Buddhism, not particularly Mahamudra, however, it serves as the fundamental perspective on what is what. I recommend this teaching on <http://www.purifymind.com/ObstaclesPath.htm> that gives a practical perspective.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 7th, 2018 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: Mahabheriharakapariivarta sutra

Content:

White Lotus said:

Does anyone here know where i can get an English translation of the Great Drum Sutra.

Astus wrote:

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra19.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 14th, 2018 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Question about Nagarjuna's Heart of Dependent Origination

Content:

Seeker12 said:

What is being referred to as extremely subtle entities that may be regarded with nihilism, lacking precise and thorough knowledge?

Astus wrote:

Entities is a general term here (vastu / 事), so it can be taken to refer to the aggregates, to name and form, to the basic constituents of a being. The first half of the sixth stanza is the continuation of the second half of the fifth discussing causal relation between lives, where there is nothing transferred nor anything annihilated.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 15th, 2018 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Question about Nagarjuna's Heart of Dependent Origination

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

Does the Chinese text have Ven Nāgārjuna, in the terminology of the translation, relate 事 to 理?

Astus wrote:

No. That is most likely a Chinese innovation.

Coëmgenu said:

Do you know where the text is in the Taishō Canon?

Astus wrote:

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T32n1651_001

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T32n1654_001

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 24th, 2018 at 3:26 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen Buddhism need Four Noble Truths? If so, why?

Content:

Viach said:

Does Zen Buddhism need Four Noble Truths? If so, why?

Astus wrote:

If you mean whether Zen can be taught without mentioning the term "four noble truths", then yes, it can be. If you mean whether Zen teaches something independent from the meaning of the four noble truths, then no.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 30th, 2018 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Beginner in Mahamudra

Content:

Zolbec said:

What is the most complete and best introduction for beginners in Mahamudra?

Astus wrote:

Essentials of Mahamudra by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche should be the one that is quite thorough but at the same time not too complicated.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 7th, 2019 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: How does the Buddha eat?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Putting food on the altar is a practice of giving and reverence, thus one feeds the inner buddha. You can find nice stories in the Dazhidulun of Nagarjuna (in Dharmamitra's translation: Nagarjuna on the Six Perfections & Marvelous Stories from the Perfection of Wisdom).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2019 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

Thomas Amundsen said:

What about two-fold emptiness? I thought this is asserted as being absent from Hinayana and Pratyekabuddhayana.

Astus wrote:

The emptiness of dharmas is an interesting one, as the concept of "dharma" (in the sense of the ultimate constituents of the world) is not found even in the Abhidhamma (Pali canon), but only the commentaries. At the same time, the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patisambhidamagga> (1.1.47; 2.20) is clear on the matter that the six senses and their objects are empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2019 at 6:17 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

As Shantideva said:

Astus wrote:

What they (pre-modern Mahayana apologetics) do not and cannot address is the historical argument. Apparently the academic view is not contested regarding Mahayana scriptures being later works, consequently it is currently not debated that the Nikayas and Agamas represent the oldest strata of scriptures and everything else is later, i.e. nothing else could be connected directly to Siddhartha Gautama himself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2019 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

we don't rely on placing words in the mouth of a putative historical Buddha

Astus wrote:

That is how a sutra is defined, that it was spoken by the Buddha. If there is no need for that, then what is the differentiating factor between Buddhavacana and other teachings?

PeterC said:

Being dated as the oldest texts doesn't make it certain that they corresponded to anything the historical Buddha said or did

Astus wrote:

Since the scriptures form the basis for all teachings, and of all the scriptures the Agamas are the primary, it still makes all other works later. Saying that even the Agamas cannot be confirmed as the Buddha's teachings does not change that all the texts following it depend on the Agamas - therefore they are like later commentaries and reflections, or you could say improvements.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 10th, 2019 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

Interdependent origination, emptiness, tathagatagarbha...not history.

Astus wrote:

Are those not Buddhist teachings exactly because they are attributed to the Buddha in the scriptures?

PeterC said:

You're reducing this all to chronology, and ultimately that's a very limiting view of the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

It is a historical issue whether Mahayana was taught by Shakyamuni or not. If the Dharma is separated from the source and viewed as an idea on its own, that is a different matter then, and in that case one has to argue based on logic (e.g. prove that tathagatagarbha is true).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

Malcolm said:

That very much depends on what one means by "history." All the history books available to me in Tibetan, for example, assert very strongly Mahāyāna was taught by the Buddha. The only history books that dispute this claim are by western academics, who have no real practical interest in Buddhadharma anyway. For them, it is an intellectual game.

Astus wrote:

Presenting past events with an ideological bias is certainly a more common approach, especially when it comes to nationalism and religion. One of the main goals of history as an academic discipline (similarly to other scientific studies) is to eliminate such distortions as much as possible. So far it seems that there is no person or group trying to defend traditional views. Or do you know Tibetans (or others) who attempt to refute

the academic history of Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 3:38 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The religious imagination of the Mahāyāna is of a completely different order to the earlier schools. Such ideas as the three bodies of the Buddha, the Infinite nature of the Cosmos, and other cardinal points of the Mahāyāna, are not stated explicitly in the earlier texts.

Astus wrote:

Most of such "Mahayana ideas" are present in non-Mahayana sources, like Dharmaguptaka, Mahasamghika, and Sarvastivadin teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

The existence of a living practice tradition is infinitely more valuable than a speculative historiography.

Astus wrote:

When being a tradition is an important element of a teaching's validity, then it is an interpretation of history that becomes a validating element, thus historical research may invalidate such a teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

If you're reading a teaching given by, say, a Arya Bodhisattva to an entourage of non-human recipients, then there's a limit to what historical research can actually tell you.

Astus wrote:

One can start with checking the paper, the ink, the type of script, the language used, etc.

PeterC said:

I don't think it gets to assert precedence over the way history had been done in other periods on the basis of such a short track record.

Astus wrote:

That sounds like saying that truth depends on the ancestry of a field of study and not the methodology and other tools used.

PeterC said:

nor does it attempt to answer questions they particularly care about

Astus wrote:

If a teaching is valid because of the lineage and tradition, that is a historical view. If a teaching is valid because of other reasons, then past events do not matter.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 6:34 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

I'm used to reading lineages that start with, say, Samantabhadra, and go through several non-human teachers. How am I to validate those through historical research?

Astus wrote:

Why should you? On the other hand, I assume when it comes to lineages of Lu Sheng-yen and such, then critical thinking and research is quite appropriate, wouldn't you agree?

PeterC said:

I am just cognizant of their many limitations.

Astus wrote:

Isn't that what proper scholarship requires?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 7:03 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

Wayfarer said:

so many layers of meaning in the apparently simple teachings of 'the first turning' which could then be interpreted and give rise to whole schools.

Astus wrote:

Between the Agamas/Nikayas and Mahayana there was a lot happening, particularly the so called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Buddhist_schools, like the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lokottarav%C4%81da>. If viewed in that chronology, there is a quite organic continuity where distinguishing Hinayana from Mahayana is not that straightforward.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

History is really an exercise in telling stories that make events of the past more readily comprehensible to people in the present. It's a branch of literature. I'm always going to be interested in research on the sources of Dharma texts. However I can't see a situation in which that research is going to change anything about how one practices.

Astus wrote:

Are people influenced by the various stories of the Buddha, his disciples, and later masters? If yes, then history matters. As for the influence of historical research on practice, it's often found in reform and revivalist movements. Some possible examples:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C5%8Dnen>,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menzan_Zuih%C5%8D, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taixu>

& https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_Shun,

<http://eng.cheontae.org/info/loader.php?hcode=jongjo/joongchangjo>, the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agon_Shun,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%ADch_Thanh_T%E1%BB%AB.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 9:25 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

Malcolm said:

The question is whether history matters, rather whose history matters. And, Peter points out, history is not science.

Astus wrote:

It may not be a science, but there are still ways to evaluate various historical evidences. So it shouldn't be a matter of individual preference, or history should not be viewed any different from fiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 9:58 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

These are people using the materials of the past to construct something new. It's not the same thing.

Astus wrote:

What would be the same thing?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 14th, 2019 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Does Mahayana lose its entire validity...

Content:

PeterC said:

The criteria for it being the Buddhadharma is consistency, not historicity.

Astus wrote:

Consistency with what?

Doctrinal consistency would require to have a basis, a consensus on what are definitely the teachings of the Buddha, then to that other teachings can be compared. For instance, there is what is called the four great references (cattaro mahapadesa), as found in AN 4.180 and DN 16, where it is stated: "If they're not included in the discourses and found in the texts on monastic training, you should draw the conclusion: 'Clearly this is not the word of the Blessed One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. It has been incorrectly memorized by that mendicant.' And so you should reject it."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 15th, 2019 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Interesting excerpt from the (Hindu) Mahanirvana Tantra

Content:

Grigoris said:

it differs only very slightly from Buddhist Tantra.

Astus wrote:

The quoted section is fairly standard Vedanta philosophy. Do you have any Buddhist tantra in mind that sounds very similar?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 17th, 2019 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Interesting excerpt from the (Hindu) Mahanirvana Tantra

Content:

Grigoris said:

Maybe WE are the one's that are making the mistake in assigning concrete characteristics, when the text is actually allegorical/metaphorical?

Astus wrote:

Vedanta is quite clear on the matter, and there Brahman/Atman is the (only) absolutely real entity. If for some reason Tantra contradicts the Vedantin understanding of Atman, it is not stated anywhere in the quoted section.

Grigoris said:

But if the Hindu Tantric path is so mistaken then how is it that there are 4 Nath Siddhas (5 if you include the kapala siddha Kapalaka) included in the list of 84 Mahasiddhas?

Astus wrote:

Stories and doctrines do not necessarily match.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019 at 5:38 PM

Title: Re: Ālayavijñāna, the storehouse consciousness, and the process of rebirth

Content:

Red Spinifex said:

The Ālayavijñāna, the storehouse consciousness, that induces rebirth and the manifestation of one's existence after rebirth, while the Ālayavijñāna itself is not the entity that is reborn. Is this a correct description or interpretation of the process?

Astus wrote:

There is only one consciousness with 8 functions that are called the eight consciousnesses. The function of the storehouse is similar to the common concept of memory, a storage for latent mental phenomena. The latent cannot be separated from the manifest part, so it is not correct to say that somehow the 8th consciousness is not born with the others. In fact, it's the 8th (and the 7th) that ensures the continuation throughout the realms.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019 at 7:14 PM

Title: Re: Ālayavijñāna, the storehouse consciousness, and the process of rebirth

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So even though it is born with others, it must exist in the intermediate state so as to ensure continuation, musn't it?

Astus wrote:

Beings may exist in the intermediate state, and beings have consciousness. There is no consciousness separate from beings. When a being is born, the consciousness is there too.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 24th, 2019 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Ālayavijñāna, the storehouse consciousness, and the process of rebirth

Content:

Wayfarer said:

is plainly profoundly different to what we understand as existence, as it's not physical.

Astus wrote:

The majority of realms in Buddhism are not physical in the same sense, and there are also the formless states of existence. One still has a sort of fine material body in the intermediate state.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 26th, 2019 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Sutras on Sexual Misconduct

Content:

Miroku said:

what sutras are talking about sexual misconduct in general

Astus wrote:

Sutras where precepts are mentioned discuss it in general, but they don't go beyond what you find in the early scriptures. It's summed up in the Upasaka Precepts Sutra:

"If one has sex at an inappropriate time or place, with someone who is a virgin, not one's wife, or not a woman, one is guilty of the sin of sexual misconduct."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra33f.html>, tr Rulu;

http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T24n1488_p1069a04)

Another way to put it, as in the Avatamsaka Sutra:

"This Bodhisattva is satisfied with his own wife and never pursues the wife of another. He does not even lust for his wife or concubines, or for women under his protection, betrothed to his relatives, or protected by the law, much less actually have sex [with them], much less in a perverted way."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra36b.html>, tr Rulu,

http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T10n0279_p0185a29)

The last two words, however, are interesting, as the "perverted way" (非道, i.e. amārga) is what is defined as non-vaginal intercourse by the various treatises. However, Theravada does not have that element of definition of sexual misconduct, as even the Atthasalini (vol 1, p 130, tr Tin) lists only the various forbidden women. The Abhidharmakosabhasyā includes it as "Intercourse with one's own wife through a forbidden way." (vol 2, p 652), but does not provide a definition for it, while Wangchuk Dorje (Jewels from the Treasury, p 348) does. The <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225297.html> is quite clear on the matter, and it even gives a reason why other orifices should be avoided:

"If one has intercourse with one's own wife (kalatra) when she has taken a vow (samādānaśīla), is pregnant (garbhīṇī) or is nursing a child (pāyayanti) – or in a forbidden way (amārga) – that is the illicit practice of sexual activity."

(http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T25n1509_p0156c08)

"By a forbidden manner (amārgasthāna) means anything that is not by way of the female

organ (yoni). The mind of the woman loathes [such practices] and to force her to such improprieties merits the name of illicit sexual practice."
(http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T25n1509_p0156c17)

The Siksasamuccaya (ch 4) lists non-vaginal sex (tr Bendall-Rouse (p 80): "So too of the man who uses his wife against kind."; " <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/269/112> "; http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T32n1636_p0091a02) along with bestiality and rape as causes of falling into the deepest cold hell.

Miroku said:
maybe mentioning homosexuality/homosexual behaviour

Astus wrote:
There is a Pudgalavadin/Sammittiya abhidharmic work ("Tridharmaka Sastra" http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T25n1506_p0022a18) where the "perverted way" (非道) - counted as the third form of sexual misconduct, the other two being those protected by secular and religious laws - includes intercourse with "lewd men" (婬男) and "incomplete men" (不成男), the latter being a likely reference to pandakas; however, apart from those two, the first perversion is not about the wrong orifice but sex with women who have recently given birth and unwed women.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, January 27th, 2019 at 5:02 PM
Title: Re: Madhyamaka school practices
Content:
Javierfv1212 said:
practice just like classical Indian Madhyamikas practiced?

Astus wrote:
For the early ones look into the Mahaprajnaparamitopadesa (tr <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra>), other treatises from the era (see <http://kalavinka.org/>), scriptures like the Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sutra, Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sutra, Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation, etc. (available from <https://www.bdkamerica.org/bdk-tripitaka-digital-downloads>). You should also familiarise with Sarvastivada methods (e.g. http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/Methods%20of%20spiritual%20praxis%20in%20the%20Sarvastivada_Suen_2009.pdf) and the so called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras, as Madhyamaka mostly followed those.

For the later times, when Sarvastivada was changed to Yogacara, you can go by Haribhadra, Santaraksita, and especially Kamalasila and his Bhavanakrama. Might also add here most of what you can learn from the Tibetan traditions (e.g. Atisa and the Kadampas).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2019 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Sutras on Sexual Misconduct

Content:

Miroku said:

even sutra writings discourage from a same sex behaviour.

Astus wrote:

Some mention it, but most of them do not. In any case, it is advisable to look at the reason behind the various precepts. In case of sexual misconduct, there are those against harm (the classical set of protected individuals), those against disrespecting the Dharma, and those against excessive behaviour. Sex with another man (note: texts assume male readership) is the third kind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 28th, 2019 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Sutras on Sexual Misconduct

Content:

Miroku said:

Would you please elaborate on the third reason?

Astus wrote:

Excessive behaviour as overindulgence in lustful activities, at least that is a possible take on the matter, although it could as well be a mistaken interpretation, since prostitutes and concubines are accepted entertainment, and in that case what we see in the commentarial and Mahayana literature is a reflection of Indian social norms (compare that with the Japanese Buddhist take on male love - e.g. [https://www.academia.edu/10034080/The_Red_Thread_Buddhist_Approaches_to_Sexuality by Bernard Faure](https://www.academia.edu/10034080/The_Red_Thread_Buddhist_Approaches_to_Sexuality_by_Bernard_Faure)).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 30th, 2019 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka school practices

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

Am I missing any other classical sources?

Astus wrote:

The <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra>, you shouldn't miss that. Ven. Dharmamitra also translated from that the discussion of the six paramitas as " http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm ", and there is the http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/mspw%20book%20page.htm as an educational extra.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 1st, 2019 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Sutras on Sexual Misconduct

Content:

pael said:

What if one's wife is a virgin?

Astus wrote:

It refers to girls under the protection of parents. When she becomes a wife, from then on she's under the protection of the husband.

pael said:

When women is considered as a wife?

Astus wrote:

Traditionally when the parents give the woman to the groom.

The same line is translated in a more succinct manner by Shih Heng-ching (BDK ed, p 173) as: "If at an improper time or place one has sexual contact with women other [than one's wife], one commits the offense of sexual misconduct."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 3rd, 2019 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Viach said:

Did Buddha practice Four Noble Truths or did he simply discover them as a result of his practice?

Astus wrote:

"And, monks, as long as this — my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be — was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its deities, Maras, & Brahmas, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. But as soon as this — my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be — was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its deities, Maras & Brahmas, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. Knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'"

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 9th, 2019 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Piercing the empty sky

Content:

Astus wrote:

The meaning is summed up by Tony Duff (Gampopa Teaches Essence Mahamudra, p 59 n153) as: "You can hold up a spear or lance and whirl it around in the space above your head but nothing happens because the lance is being flourished within space. It is a metaphor for excellent practice in which the actual state of emptiness has been met."

A whole teaching using the simile: <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-eight-flashing-lances/>

"Because nothing is attained, the Bodhisattva, through reliance on prajna paramita, is unimpeded in his mind."

(<http://www.cttbusa.org/heartsutra/heartsutra.htm>)

"The bodies and minds of all sentient beings

Are altogether like an illusion.

The attribute of the body belongs to the four great elements;

The nature of the mind derives from the six types of sense objects.

Since in essence the four great elements are distinct from one another,

Who could constitute the one who holds them together?

If one gradually practices in this way,

Everything in its entirety will become pure,

Undisturbed, and pervade the dharmadhātu.

There will be no striving, going along with things, stopping, or extinguishing,

Nor will there be anyone who realizes it."

(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 3, in Apocryphal Scriptures, BDK ed, p 69-70)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 12th, 2019 at 4:00 PM

Title: Re: How many times did the Buddha set forth 4BI in 46 years of preaching?

Content:

Sentient Light said:

The canon is very explicitly a selection. It is recorded that some teachings were not kept in the canon, and then different lineages began to curate and organize what they had in different ways. In all likelihood, the 4NT (despite what tradition claims) probably came later on, maybe in the middle of the Buddha's career rather than the beginning, and was developed as a mnemonic device to encapsulate the teachings.

Astus wrote:

What do you base those claims on?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 12th, 2019 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Zen and patriotism

Content:

Viach said:

Is Zen Buddhism compatible with patriotism: after all, in the Buddhism context, patriotism is only a kind of affection?

Astus wrote:

It depends on one's level of Buddhism. For ordinary people they are compatible, as long as one maintains the precepts. For those with bodhisattva motivation, it is something to be left behind for the sake of universal compassion and unbiased view.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 at 9:19 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

It is a root, a base, ever present (unchanging) field within which (changing) content of consciousnesses can be perceived.

Although you could argue that this base awareness "arises" as co-dependent to its content (eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc) and is therefore impermanent and changing, I respectfully see that as a conclusion based on a limited interpretation of observation of rising and falling phenomena of the mind (content of consciousness).

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is necessarily conscious of something. If there is nothing it is conscious of, it cannot still be called conscious, otherwise unconsciousness is consciousness. This is the same with all the other senses. Seeing is seeing something. If nothing is seen, that is not called seeing.

See: MN 38, SN 12.61, and MMK ch 3 & 9

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

Understanding_2 is nondualistic: Consciousness is like an always-present field in which apparent objects arise and fall.

Astus wrote:

That is a common, but illogical, belief in an independent subject, i.e. a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Vasana said:

If you accept the 8 consciousness model and the alaya-vijnana then there will always be an underlying basis that is unborn and so it doesn't 'end' either. The unborn and unceasing continuity is experienced as either Jnana/ yeshe or vijnana / namshe .

Astus wrote:

Alayavijnana in Yogacara is very much momentary and empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Encountering Zen Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

Hsing Yun: <http://hsingyun.org/books/core-teachings/>, and other

<http://www.fgsitc.org/booklets/>

Guo Ru: <ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN375.pdf> (slow download)

Sheng Yen: <http://chancenter.org/en/publication/free-books>

Thich Thanh Tu:

<https://tienvnguyen.net/images/file/G5gYJdC51AgQAHUb/keystobuddhism.pdf>

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/index.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

What's the ill logic?

Astus wrote:

That there can be an independent consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 3:08 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

Doesn't the opening salvo of the MMK pretty much annihilate causality?

Astus wrote:

Chapter one discusses the reality of conditions, and, as one could expect, conditions are very much unreal and fabricated. But that's not an annihilation of conditions, or causality, but rather its clarification, where it is in dependent origination that there is no origination, and not that there is no origination at all.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 4:09 PM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

Dgj said:

in Zen all is mind. The definition of "monism"

Astus wrote:

Should start with the definition of mind. See what Mazu said (Sun-Face Buddha, p 62):

"Those who seek the Dharma should not seek for anything.' Outside of mind there is no other Buddha, outside of Buddha there is no other mind. Not attaching to good and not rejecting evil, without reliance on either purity or defilement, one realizes that the nature of offence is empty: it cannot be found in each thought because it is without self-nature. Therefore, the three realms are mind-only and 'all phenomena in the universe are marked by a single Dharma.' Whenever we see form, it is just seeing the mind. The mind does not exist by itself; its existence is due to form. Whatever you are saying, it is just a phenomenon which is identical with the principle."

And Huangbo (Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 13):

"The Buddhas and all the sentient beings are only the One Mind—there are no other dharmas. Since beginningless time, this mind has never been generated and has never been extinguished, is neither blue nor yellow, is without shape and without characteristic, does not belong to being and nonbeing, does not consider new or old, is neither long nor short, and is neither large nor small. It transcends all limitations, names, traces, and correlations. It in itself—that's it! To activate thoughts is to go against it! It is like space, which is boundless and immeasurable."

The mind they talk of is the emptiness of the common consciousness of thoughts and feelings. All is mind means all is fabricated and empty.

"if you realize that the ten thousand dharmas never come into being, that mind is like a phantom, that not a speck of dust nor a single thing exists, that there is no place that is not clean and pure—this is Buddha."

(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 12)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

Are you saying the MMK says that there IS arising/origination 'outside of' dependent origination?

Astus wrote:

It is in dependent origination there is no origination, but it does not negate dependent origination. Just as in birth there is no birth, that's why it's birth. In other words, that appearances are empty does not mean there are no appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That doesn't seem to put the case for why Zen is not monistic. Perhaps you might comment on that particular point?

Astus wrote:

If there is no singular entity upheld as the substrate of everything, then it cannot be monistic. So, not all is mind, because there is no mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

Observational data equally supports one or the other.

Astus wrote:

An independent, permanent awareness cannot be observed or experienced in any way, because either it is always apparent or never, otherwise it is not permanent. Consequently the assumption that an unchanging awareness is observed is neither reasonable nor perceptual.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

BUT dependent, impermanent awareness cannot be [directly] observed either. We can

only observe impermanent phenomena that arises and fall and based on that make various premises

Astus wrote:

Awareness is an impermanent phenomenon that arises and falls, hence observable even by your definition.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

These are not awareness itself.

Astus wrote:

There is no awareness itself, i.e. an independent awareness. An independent awareness could exist without being aware of anything, and that leads us to an unaware awareness.

LordByronX said:

1. How can you differentiate the two? What is awareness and what is an object of cognition?

Astus wrote:

The differentiation is nominal, because there is no awareness on its own, only consciousness of objects. There is awareness of acts of consciousness (the so called manovijnanadhatu), and that is how perception of mind is possible.

LordByronX said:

2. If awareness was permanent. How would your observation of arising and passing phenomena be different? How would you differentiate your observational experience from an experience where awareness would be (or is) impermanent?

Astus wrote:

A permanent awareness cannot have changing perceptions, otherwise it'd be a changing and impermanent awareness. So a permanent awareness is permanently aware of the same thing, and cannot be aware of change.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 14th, 2019 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

The opening verse of the MMK doesn't refute arising, it refutes non-dependent/non-empty arising.

Right?

Astus wrote:

Yes, it refutes actual arising.

Liberation Bodhisattva asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, when a sentient being perceives the birth of a dharma, what view should he discard? When he perceives the death of a dharma, what view should he discard?"

The Buddha answered, "Bodhisattva, when a sentient being perceives the birth of a dharma, you should have him discard the view of its nonexistence. When he perceives the death of a dharma, you should have him discard the view of its existence. If he discards these views, he will realize that dharmas are by nature absolutely empty and definitely have no birth."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra53a.html>, ch 2)

"A magician causes forms to appear,
Creating horses, elephants, chariots, and so on.
But though they appear they do not exist at all.
Know that all phenomena are like that.
In the dream of a young woman
She gives birth to a son and then sees him die.
She is happy when he's born and sad when he dies.
Know that all phenomena are like that.
In the night the reflection of the moon
Appears on clear, undisturbed water,
But it is empty of a moon and there is nothing to grasp.
Know that all phenomena are like that."

(<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh127.html>, 9.24-26)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

The Buddha said:

There is, monks, an unborn — unbecome — unmade — unfabricated.

Wayfarer said:

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.8.03.than.html>

Astus wrote:

Of course there is. In Theravada there is only one such dharma (nirvana), while in Yogacara there are up to eight asamskṛta dharmas. And how did the Buddha define it? Check out the <https://suttacentral.net/sn43>. It gives a straightforward definition (e.g. SN 43.1, tr Bodhi):

"And what, bhikkhus, is the unconditioned? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this is called the unconditioned."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

So there is <dependent> arising on the conventional level, but on the ultimate level there is no arising. Right?

Astus wrote:

Right. But it should not be forgotten that conventional and ultimate are not two different realms, the two truths are only used for the sake of explanation, while eventually one has to comprehend that the conventional is mistaking the conventional for the ultimate, and the ultimate is seeing the conventional as simply conventional.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

Sherab said:

Is there a holder for the lust, the hate and delusion?

Astus wrote:

See the <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.048.than.html> that talks in brief of the difference between the five aggregates and the five clinging aggregates. It is clinging to the aggregates that is removed with liberation, not the aggregates themselves. The <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.191.than.html> also states clearly how it is clinging that brings about suffering, not the senses and their objects. So, if you want to name a holder of afflictions, that is the aggregates and elements, but calling them holders is quite misleading, since afflictions themselves are mental phenomena, so they operate in that context, but they are not the only mental phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

An independent awareness could exist being aware of everything including itself.

Astus wrote:

There can be no interaction between a permanent entity and changing entities, because perception of change means change in the perceiver, which cannot happen to an independent thing.

LordByronX said:

In my view consciousness is something abiding, a permanent field.

Astus wrote:

Such a view is neither logical nor provable.

LordByronX said:

A permanent awareness could be a field within which changing perceptions appear - arise and fall. This would not affect the field in any way.

Astus wrote:

If the field is not affected, then the field is insentient, dead, unconscious, therefore it is not aware of anything. Awareness of change is change in perception, hence not permanent.

LordByronX said:

In many instances of Buddhist text what I read is similarly called "original or pure mind."

Astus wrote:

That refers to emptiness, that there is no permanent mind. The impure and false mind is the one that attaches to the idea of self, that is, the idea of a permanent perceiver and doer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

bridif1 said:

What was the need behind the development of new vehicles and teachings?

Astus wrote:

Check <http://santifm.org/santipada/2010/sects-sectarianism/> by Bhikkhu Sujato.

bridif1 said:

Were those developments necessary for the achievement of the ending of suffering?

Astus wrote:

Yes and no. Yes, because people have this need. No, because it's mostly repeating the same in different form.

bridif1 said:

Were the teachings of the Buddha not good or complete enough?

Astus wrote:

"From the Mahāsāṃghika school

Will seven schools separate,
And from the Sthaviravāda eleven.
These are the twenty schools.
These eighteen and the original two
All derive from the Mahayana.
Neither correct nor incorrect,
I say that these will arise in the future."
(The Sutra of Mañjuśrī's Questions, ch 15, BDK ed, p 99)

bridif1 said:
Why was it necessary to give more "turnings" to the Wheel of Dharma?

Astus wrote:
Different ears need different words.

bridif1 said:
Was the Buddha wrong in some of its teachings?

Astus wrote:
The Buddha can never be wrong.

bridif1 said:
What do you think of the idea found in the Pali Canon that the Buddha made no distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrines, and that he taught everything that was required to uproot suffering and its causes?

Astus wrote:
Calling a teaching esoteric is a technique. It's not about actually hiding something, but rather about calling attention to it.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 10:58 PM
Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?
Content:

Rick said:
Awareness_2 (non-dual) is, by definition, permanent (more accurately: not of time) and non-experienceable. The only 'hard' evidence is the word of the sages recorded in the scriptures.

Astus wrote:
Since it is not experienced by anyone, the "word of the sages" is meaningless. As the Buddha said in the <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.095x.than.html>:

"Suppose there were a row of blind men, each holding on to the one in front of him: the first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. In the same way, the statement of the brahmans turns out to be a row of blind men, as it were: the

first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. So what do you think, Bharadvaja: this being the case, doesn't the conviction of the brahmans turn out to be groundless?"

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 15th, 2019 at 11:38 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

Does any Buddhist school entertain the possibility that a person could have an accurate intuition <not based on experience, or evidence, or logical reasoning> of what's really goin' on here?

Astus wrote:

Such a person is called a faith follower (saddhānusārī), see e.g.

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn25/sn25.001.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2019 at 6:59 AM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

Sherab said:

But are the five aggregates unborn, unmade etc?

Astus wrote:

The aggregates are impermanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2019 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: If all is mind then how is Zen not monistic?

Content:

Sherab said:

The question then is why the need to label the destruction of lust etc as unconditioned?

Astus wrote:

There is the category of conditioned, and so there is the category of unconditioned, or in other words, there is samsara and there is nirvana. It is the unique teaching of the Buddha that instead of pointing to God, Soul, Essence, etc. as the ultimate, he taught liberation from birth and suffering as the final elimination of afflictions. And he also shown the many versions of mistaking the various mental states and realms as the ultimate. Similarly to other terms, like karma and brahmana, the Buddha gave a new meaning to what a person should strive for.

Sherab said:

I would argue that it would be inaccurate to say that it is unconditioned since it can be argued that nirvana is dependent on the destruction of lust etc. One could even argue that the Buddha by teaching dependent origination and emptiness, was actually teaching that there is no dharma that is unconditioned. Yet the Buddha did talk about the unconditioned. It seemed so unnecessary.

Astus wrote:

There are conditioned states where one finds no lust, but those are temporary. The final destruction of afflictions is called the unconditioned because there is no coming back to samsaric states.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2019 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

haha said:

Another point is the attainment of complete Buddhahood that was not addressed in Pali cannon.

Astus wrote:

The numerous special attributes of the Buddha was quickly set up, mostly after his parinirvana, as a way of elevating the Teacher above common people. But when we come to the matter of actually attaining buddhahood, the goal becomes synonymous with the ultimate doctrine, emptiness in Prajnaparamita and the nature of mind in later teachings. As it's summed up in Zen, the Buddha is mind, and the mind is Buddha. So practically buddhahood is not different from the goal given in the Nikayas: freedom from attachment to the aggregates and sensory areas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2019 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Highly recommended:

<https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/theunconditioned.pdf> - a Dharma talk by Jeff Shore.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 16th, 2019 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

haha said:

Just understanding the selflessness of person does not bring the understanding selflessness of phenomena. Have Sravakas understood the selflessness of the

phenomena? If not, then how could the goal be same? How do you address this issue?

Astus wrote:

That distinction between the emptiness of personality and appearances is merely about a doctrinal disagreement. Practically it's not possible to say that the aggregates have the attributes of self but there is no self. One is either attached to the body and mind or not. Nobody disputes that arhats do not cling to the aggregates. Since there is nothing left to grasp at, it cannot be said that there is any defilement left.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 17th, 2019 at 2:16 AM

Title: Re: Zen and patriotism

Content:

Matylda said:

non-attachment as people understand it now leads to pure negativism and finally to nihilistic views.

it is for sure not mahayana teaching. neither zen mahayana.

Astus wrote:

What do you base that on?

"The essence of the Way is detachment. And the goal of those who practice is freedom from appearances. The sutras say, Detachment is enlightenment because it negates appearances."

(Bodhidharma: <https://terebess.hu/zen/bodhidharma-eng.html#wakeup>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 17th, 2019 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Viach said:

" arose in me " So 4NT is the result of practice. Only the result could arise.

Astus wrote:

All four truths have "three rounds": view, practice, result. In that order are they to be fully realised.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 17th, 2019 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Sherab said:

From the Udana 8.1 alone, it is possible to conclude that there are two types of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

There are thousands of suttas where it is taught again and again that consciousness is impermanent, unsatisfactory, impersonal, and empty, while there are a few stanzas - not even proper explanations - suggesting a different type. From this it should be clear that one should not base one's interpretation on a handful of poetic lines, but rather on what was clearly and often taught by the Buddha. Apart from scripture, an unconditioned consciousness is also contradictory and illogical that no Buddhist tradition held up as real, because such a concept is nothing else but a self view.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Astus wrote:

the conventional is mistaking the conventional for the ultimate, and the ultimate is seeing the conventional as simply conventional.

Rick said:

Is the ultimate in red the same as the ultimate in green?

Astus wrote:

They don't have the same meaning. When the conventional is mistaken for the ultimate, it means that one assumes that there is a substance, that behind concepts there are real entities, and that is how ordinary, i.e. conventional, view looks like. On the other hand, what is called the ultimate truth is seeing that there is no substance, that concepts are just mere concepts without any reality, so that's how conventional is just conventional.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Sherab said:

Is there a dimension which is atemporal?

In Einstein's Relativity,

Astus wrote:

Unlike Einstein's Relativity, Buddhism operates within the framework of the five aggregates and eighteen elements. Is there anything atemporal in Buddhism? Yes there is: nirvana. Is nirvana a type of consciousness? No, it is not.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 6:13 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

stevie said:

Does that meant that Nirvana is NOT gnosis or gnoseological knowledge?

Astus wrote:

Please define "gnosis or gnoseological knowledge".

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Supramundane said:

can you please elaborate? does it say in any sutra that nirvana is atemporal?

it is unconditioned and not subject to dependent origination, but does this mean it is atemporal?

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is agreed by all to be unconditioned, and unconditioned means that it is without arising, duration, and cessation, or in other words: unborn and undying, something that some Mahayana sutras even call permanent. So it is atemporal because it is unconditioned. One common synonym of nirvana is amṛta, what literally means deathless, but is also a word for the nectar of gods that makes them immortal.

“Venerable sir, it is said, ‘the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, the removal of delusion.’ Of what now, venerable sir, is this the designation?”

“This, bhikkhu, is a designation for the element of Nibbāna: the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, the removal of delusion. The destruction of the taints is spoken of in that way.”

When this was said, that bhikkhu said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, it is said, ‘the Deathless, the Deathless.’ What now, venerable sir, is the Deathless? What is the path leading to the Deathless?”

“The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this is called the Deathless. This Noble Eightfold Path is the path leading to the Deathless; that is, right view ... right concentration.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.7/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

stevie said:

but the crucial point of my question is that both terms refer to a (meaning) content, let it be any content whatsoever, a content of let's say 'mind'.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana may be categorised as an object of consciousness, just as space can be a visual object.

"A vision in space is a being, so they declare.

A vision like that of space, so should you consider that object!

Thus has the vision of Dharma been expounded by the Tathagata.

But it is not possible to report on that vision by definite statements [that differ from it]."
(Ratnagunasamcayagatha, 12.257, tr Conze)

"If you say definitively that space exists, then space is not the Dharma body. If you say definitively that the Dharma body exists, then the Dharma body is not space. Simply refrain from creating an interpretation [of the existence] of space, and space will be the Dharma body. Refrain from creating an interpretation [of the existence] of the Dharma body, and the Dharma body will be space."

(Huangbo: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

haha said:

If there are still some limitations, then there should or must be some defilement.

Astus wrote:

Abilities and limitations are the products of actions, not defilements. That's why a bodhisattva has to accumulate merit over uncountable aeons.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 8:52 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

stevie said:

So your negation of Nirvana being 'a type of consciousness' was not meant to be a categorical negation because it can be an object of consciousness. However consideration that consciousness is impermanent but Nirvana is atemporal may entail further conceptual issues because they should be categorical different which is in contradiction to how consciousness has been defined before.

Perhaps the term 'consciousness' is merely not appropriate in the context of Nirvana considering its use in conventional buddhist teachings?

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is the complete cessation of defilements. Is it possible to experience cessation, like when one no longer feels attracted to an object? In a way, yes, one can know that.

On the other hand, such cessation is not actually an object to be observed. That's why

it's similar to observing space, as space is not really a visual object, but rather an absence.

"However completely one explores the entire space,
Seeing will completely cease, for space is infinite.
Similarly, one explores inner and outer reality,
But one will not find any essence – not even a subatomic particle!
The mind thus explored is inconceivable;
Hence seeing nothing is seeing it indeed."
(Shavaripa, quoted in Mahamudra: The Moonlight, p 193)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

haha said:

That liberation does not mean omniscience. There is still obscuration to omniscience. One can say there are two root causes of avidya or dukkha: Klesa Avarana and Jneya Avarana. Due to the fear of Samsara, one seeks Nirvana. Could the result be the same without being free from two Avaranas?

Astus wrote:

Since it is accepted that arhats no longer cling to any of the aggregates, where could jneyavarana remain when one is free from both physical and mental appearances?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 18th, 2019 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: What was the reason behind the development of new vehicles?

Content:

haha said:

One cannot figure out where the affliction of "unconscious beings of form realm" remains.

Astus wrote:

That's not the same, as the effects of past actions can occur because one is still attached to the aggregates. But for those who have no clinging at all, it is not possible to establish any obstruction to take effect at any point.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2019 at 4:38 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

LordByronX said:

Why would a permanent mind (Consciousness) and Emptiness be excluding each other?

I find these two deepest realizations of Buddhism and Vedanta quite compatible. In a certain paradoxical way maybe, but why would the "final ground" not be paradoxical in a way that it is both this and that.

Astus wrote:

A permanent mind means an unchanging observer apart from everything else, and that is not only unreasonable from a Buddhist doctrinal point of view, but also impractical from an experiential perspective.

From the logical side a permanent mind cannot interact with appearances, hence must be either completely unaware or stuck in a fixed state of being conscious always of the same thing.

From the practical side, one has to completely disassociate oneself from all impressions and focus solely on remaining the watcher, while in Buddhism one lets go of everything completely, even being the one who is aware, and simultaneously not excluding or avoiding any experience.

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal writes (Mahamudra: The Moonlight, p 195-196):

"some untutored [meditators], having experienced the sensation of the even state of tranquility – the meditation known as “mind watching the mind” – asserted that they had achieved insight into the mind. ...

The term “seeing the mind” is a simple designation for understanding the mind’s unreality, which is detached from the beginning from all modes of existence or nonexistence. The nature of mind is such that there is nothing – not even the infinitesimal end of a hair – that is a conceivable or perceptible object or observer. The intrinsic nature of mind is undefinable and unimaginable, yet it is timeless and immutable. The Prajnaparamita-samchayagatha explains it thus:

Sentient beings speak of having seen the sky,
But one should examine how one has seen the sky!
In the same manner the Tathāgata has shown
The way of seeing reality.

Saraha says:

From the beginning the nature of mind is pure like space.
In the process of looking, seeing comes to an end.

Savari elaborates:

In the process of searching for all that manifests as mind and matter
There is neither anything to be found nor is there any seeker,
For to be unreal is to be unborn and unceasing
Throughout the three periods of time.
That which is immutable
Is the state of great bliss.

He further states:

In the act of self watching the self,

A solitary self remains;

In observing this self, one does not see it.

This is undefinable since there is neither observer nor observation.

Who can comprehend

That which is undefinable?

Naropa comments:

The mind has the nature of luminous clarity,

Wherein there is no substance,

Not even the infinitesimal end of a hair."

Or Baizhang (Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 33):

"To speak of the mirror awareness is still not really right; by way of the impure, discern the pure. If you say the immediate mirror awareness is correct, or that there is something else beyond the mirror awareness, this is a delusion. If you keep dwelling in the immediate mirror awareness, this too is the same as delusion; it is called the mistake of naturalism."

And Dogen (Bussho, tr <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/dharma/pdf/25eF.pdf>):

"Many students, hearing the term "buddha nature," have falsely reckoned that it is like the "I" in the alien path of Śreṇika. This is because they have not met a person, they have not met themselves, they have not seen a teacher. They have foolishly thought that the mind, mentation, and consciousness moved by wind and fire are the knowing and comprehending of the buddha nature. Who said that the buddha nature has knowing and comprehending? While perceivers and knowers may be buddhas, the buddha nature is not knowing and comprehending. Much less does the perceiving and knowing with which one refers to the buddhas as perceivers and knowers represent the perceiving and knowing in the false understandings you talk on about, the preceiving and knowing of the motion and rest of wind and fire."

And Foyan (Instant Zen, p 38):

"Let me give you an illustration. People have eyes, by which they can see all sorts of forms, like long and short, square and round, and so on; then why do they not see themselves? Just perceiving forms, you cannot see your eyes even if you want to. Your mind is also like this; its light shines perceptively throughout the ten directions, encompassing all things, so why does it not know itself?

Do you want to understand? Just discern the things perceived; you cannot see the mind itself.

An ancient said, "The knife does not cut itself, the finger does not touch itself, the mind does not know itself, the eye does not see itself." This is true reality."

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2019 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Very happy to see this fundamental principle stated in such an unequivocal manner.

Astus wrote:

"As a sword cannot cut itself, or as a finger cannot touch its own tip, Mind cannot see itself."

(Lankavatara Sutra, Sagathakam, v 568, tr Suzuki)

"The Guardian of the World himself has said

That mind cannot be seen by mind.

In just the same way, he has said,

The sword's edge cannot cut the sword."

(Bodhicaryavatara 9.17-18, tr Padmakara)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2019 at 4:32 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Sherab said:

Do you interpret the highlighted portion that there is no consciousness?

Astus wrote:

It says that consciousness has no essence. In other words, it is empty. Just like everything else.

Sherab said:

If your answer is no, there is still a consciousness, then you would have contradicted what you said in your reply to me here:

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=30573&start=100#p483621>

Astus wrote:

Just because nirvana is not a type of consciousness, it doesn't mean there is no consciousness at all.

Sherab said:

why is there no consciousness in nirvana?

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is neither a place nor a being, but the cessation of defilements. When one stops feeling thirsty, that phenomenon of disappearance is not itself a consciousness, is it? Or you can think of all sorts of cessations, like clouds vanishing, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2019 at 6:56 PM

Title: Re: Compendium of the Mahayana: Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha and Its Indian and Tibetan Commentaries By: Asanga and Karl Br

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

Why put so much time and energy into studying the view of the Chittamatrīn school which is just an intermediate view rather than studying the Madhyamika Prasāngika school which is Buddha's ultimate intention and the views that lead to liberation and enlightenment?

Astus wrote:

It is an intermediate view for those who subscribe to a specific Madhyamaka interpretation. Prasāngika is a Gelug idea, so it is quite unrealistic to expect everyone to agree with Tsongkhapa. As for the reason of studying Yogācāra, it is the most comprehensive and extensive Indian Mahayana doctrine that there has ever been, so you cannot really go wrong with it. Furthermore, even Tsongkhapa studied Yogācāra teachings, so where is the issue here?

Tsongkhapafan said:

Chandrakīrti extensively refutes the Chittamatrīn view in Guide to the Middle Way

Astus wrote:

Kicking down straw men is not that difficult.

Tsongkhapafan said:

therefore isn't it better to study Nāgārjuna, Chandrakīrti, Āryadeva and Śāntideva and try to realise the meaning of these teachings?

Astus wrote:

Studying Madhyamaka does not mean one cannot study other things as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 20th, 2019 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Rick said:

Similarly the mind can see the mind, if a part of the mind separates from and observes the rest.

Astus wrote:

In that case there are at least 2 minds, what contradicts the idea that the mind is what perceives, and also that the mind is unitary.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 20th, 2019 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Grigoris said:

I dunno, in Mahamudra we spend half our time using our mind to observe our mind...

Astus wrote:

The common self-awareness is not necessarily the same as the theory that there is an unchanging unitary consciousness aware of itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 20th, 2019 at 5:53 AM

Title: Re: Compendium of the Mahayana: Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha and Its Indian and Tibetan Commentaries By: Asanga and Karl Br

Content:

Tsongkhapafan said:

I contest the idea that Prasangika is a Gelug idea.

Astus wrote:

The distinction between Prasangika and Svatantrika is a Tibetan innovation that was emphasised by Tsongkhapa and spread by the Gelugpas. But let me know if you find an Indian source for it.

Tsongkhapafan said:

Buddha Shakyamuni taught the Prasangika view when he delivered the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra at Rajagriha. This view was clarified and expounded by Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons.

Astus wrote:

Did they call it Prasangika Madhyamaka?

Tsongkhapafan said:

I don't expect everyone to agree with Tsongkhapa but I would expect them to agree with Buddha Shakyamuni, Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti.

Astus wrote:

Why Chandrakirti? He was a marginal teacher until Tsongkhapa.

Tsongkhapafan said:

You seem very dismissive of Chandrakirti's refutation - why?

Astus wrote:

Not that I don't like what he wrote, but I don't think he is a reliable source to represent

Yogacara, hence he did not refute what Yogacarins taught.

Tsongkhapa said:

Sure, we can study anything, but it's the value of our study that matters. Life is short.

Astus wrote:

How can you differentiate between valuable and worthless without studying extensively?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 20th, 2019 at 5:58 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Grigoris said:

All I am saying is that in Mahamudra this idea that consciousness cannot observe consciousness seems to be debunked.

Astus wrote:

"If you operate under the assumption that the self-awareness spoken of in mahamudra, the self-awareness spoken of in valid cognition, and the self-awareness refuted in Madhyamaka are all the same, then you will definitely perceive a contradiction. However, the term self-awareness is used differently in each of these three contexts." (Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p 103)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 22nd, 2019 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Psychology Science -v- Mindfulness / Awareness 'Methods'

Content:

Matman said:

The Science of Psychology seems to suggest that, spending time 'Thinking / Reasoning' over one's emotional problems (including deep reflection on, and discussion of, them) - is a vital part of learning to 'come to terms' with, accept - and resolve - our issues.

Astus wrote:

There are teachings and methods in Buddhism that are used in a similar way, to understand and counteract harmful thoughts and feelings.

Matman said:

Is this 'at odds' with the Zen Buddhist Zen 'Awareness Method', where the more favoured approach seems to be, simply 'become aware of / and watch' difficult thoughts and feelings, but do not 'engage' or try to 'interact' with them?

Astus wrote:

Zen is based on the view that the mind is originally pure, while all thoughts, feelings, and impressions are unestablished phenomena. The way of Zen is not about merely watching but about actualising the original mind that is naturally unafflicted and free.

Matman said:

Might the Buddhist 'simple awareness' approach, result in 'difficult' thoughts, feelings, emotions being filed-away unresolved (out of mind) once an Awareness Session ends (due to a need to 'move on' to practical necessities like chores etc). In which case, do those 'difficult' thoughts, feelings, emotions' tend 'later' to return, again and again because they have not been 'engaged' with?

Astus wrote:

That could be the case if one were to take passive observation as the proper method, however, it is not. Furthermore, Zen is not restricted to those short periods on a cushion.

Matman said:

Is it, perhaps, essential to use 'both' the Psychologist and Buddhist Methods, but at different times?

Astus wrote:

Psychology is a different system than Buddhism, so they should be handled separately. But it's also important to recognise that Buddhism is not just Zen, and Zen is not about maintaining an artificial mental state of simple awareness.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 23rd, 2019 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This concept of there being two minds is an attempt at establishing a self independent of the aggregates, one of the four possible ways people may imagine their true self. It's been refuted from the beginning under the topic of satkaya-drsti, and later in Mahayana as a matter of pudgala-nairatmya.

"Having determined that the five aggregates are not solid entities that make up the self, we might conclude that there is, however, a solid self or "me" that is distinct from these ever-changing five aggregates. But our experience is that all our perceptions and all our conceptualizations arise from these five perceptual aggregates, so we would have to propose a self that is a single uncompounded entity that is independent of our perceptual experience and therefore would be beyond thought. But all our experience of the world arises from these aggregates. A self, or a soul, beyond the compounded aggregates would necessarily have to be an existent entity that is uncompounded, non-experiential, and inconceivable. But if there were such a self that was solid and real, how would happiness and suffering in the ordinary world initially arise? A self beyond the aggregates would not experience changing events of the aggregates and, like uncompounded space, would be beyond contact, benefit, and harm. A self separate from the aggregates would never be able to function in the ordinary world where things arise and fall. We would never have experienced any of the compounded events that we experience. Thus, there is no self beyond the aggregates."

(Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche: The Open Door to Emptiness, ch 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 23rd, 2019 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Coëmgenu said:

IMO like I said earlier this is a nice harmonization, but there is a reason why you don't find "these views" in Ven Sujāto's rendering. This is because there is no term in the Pāli that corresponds to the word "views". This is a commentarial addition.

Astus wrote:

There is also the Walshe translation:

"When, monks, a monk understands as they really are the arising and passing away of the six bases of contact, their attraction and peril, and the deliverance from them, he knows that which goes beyond all these views."

The Chinese version should not be forgotten either.

梵動經 (T1n1, vol 14, p94a3):

若比丘於六觸集、滅、味、過、出要，如實而知，則為最勝，出彼諸見。

Ichimura (Lengthy Discourses, BDK ed, vol 3, p 31):

"If a bhikṣu acquires insight into the causal concatenation of the six senses and contact with their objects (i.e., sensation, its cessation, its gratification, its danger, and the method of its transcendence), universally as they really are, this would be his highest achievement, [precisely] because this insight goes beyond the theories contained within the sixty-two variations."

Jianhua (A Critical Translation of Fan Dong Jing, p 88):

"When, (bhiksus), a bhikṣu understands as they really are the origin and passing away of the six bases of contact, their satisfaction, unsatisfactoriness, and escape from them, then he understands what transcends all these views."

Back to Sujato's translation from the Pali:

"When a mendicant truly understands the six fields of contacts' origin, ending, gratification, drawback, and escape, they understand what lies beyond all these things."

"these things" are clearly the 62 views, because that's what has been discussed, those are what emerge out of clinging to the six fields. The proposition that there is something beyond them would mean a 7th field, and a basis of attachment, something one would

rightly call a self. However, as it's been repeated in the sutta again and again (Sujato translation):

"He understands this, and what goes beyond this. Yet since he does not misapprehend that understanding, he has realized extinguishment within himself. Having truly understood the origin, ending, gratification, drawback, and escape from feelings, the Realized One is freed through not grasping."

Not grasping is what goes beyond grasping, that's how the round of suffering ends.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2019 at 6:00 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So my interpretation of the Brahmajala is that it is a critique of any and all kinds of speculative views (all of which are ultimately based on self either existing or not existing) so as to 'go beyond'. Its subject is the attaining of genuine jñāna, not the speculative views of philosophers and others.

Astus wrote:

Since there is nothing that can be known beyond the six senses, assuming something beyond them is par excellence speculation. See also the <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=484351#p484351>.

"All you need do is not follow discriminations, because none of the three causes arises when the three conditions of the three continuities of the world, living beings, and karmic retribution are cut off. Then the madness of the Yajnadatta in your mind will cease of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi."

(<http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama/shurangama15.asp>, 4.109-110)

It's often taught that this mind is buddha, and there is no buddha outside mind. It's not another mind one should look for, but only look into this common mind filled with emotions and ideas, and see that it's already unestablished and ungraspable as it is.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2019 at 7:17 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

We are not realising the true nature.

Astus wrote:

It's the true nature of the six sensory areas and five aggregates that is to be realised, and not something apart from them. That's one of the main points of the oft recited Heart

Sutra, don't you agree?

Wayfarer said:

What is the translation of 'abhijna'?

Astus wrote:

The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism: superknowledge, "specifically referring to a set of supranormal powers that are by-products of meditation"

PTS Pali-English Dictionary: special knowledge, psychic powers

Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines: higher powers, supernormal knowledges

FaXiang - A Buddhist Practitioner's Encyclopedia: 神通 (shén tōng) - supernatural power

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2019 at 7:40 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The definition of abhijna is super-knowledge. 'Abhi' is 'higher' - the question is, 'higher' along what axis? 'Higher' compared to what? Why is it that 'abhijna' cannot be known to the empirical sciences?

Astus wrote:

What do you base that definition on?

Wayfarer said:

Isn't it because empiricism restricts knowledge to only what can be validated by sense-experience? So there's a higher dimension which empiricism can't comprehend, by definition. That is 'higher knowledge'.

Astus wrote:

There are six senses. If something is beyond them, it'd take a seventh sense to perceive it. Is there a seventh sense in your interpretation?

Wayfarer said:

I found this passage the other day said to be from the Mahayana Angulimala Sutra:

Astus wrote:

The aggregates are empty, but that doesn't mean there are no aggregates, rather that they're empty of substance. Your quote says nothing new, since the qualities of noble beings are well known.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 24th, 2019 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'll go with the one you quoted the definition from the Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

That dictionary, like the others, refer to the six abhijñas, five of which are aptly called psychic powers (magical powers, clairvoyance, clairaudience, remembering past lives, telepathy), while the sixth is the "extinction of the contaminants (āsravakṣaya, P. āsavakkhāya)" that is unique to liberated beings.

Wayfarer said:

Jñāna is not simply the product of the senses, otherwise animals and the unenlightened would possess it.

Astus wrote:

Don't forget the sixth sense: mind. The mere operation of the senses does not define their quality, e.g. eagles have better sight than moles. There are vast differences even among humans with regard to their mental abilities and their proclivities.

As for what jñāna may stand for, the

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/progress.html> is one version, while the four wisdoms (catvāri jñānāni, 四智) taught in Yogacara is a speciality of buddhahood. There is also knowing and seeing according to reality (yathābhūtañānadassana) that means a complete understanding of the four noble truths and the various dharmas (four elements, five aggregates, six senses, etc.) - see https://store.pariyatti.org/Excursions-into-the-Thought-World-of-the-P257li-Discourses--PDF-eBook_p_4673.html, ch 16. There are also the four reality wisdoms (catvāri yathā-bhūta-parijñānāni, 四如實智) in Yogacara, that means the comprehension after investigation that "names, objects, essences, and differences" are mentally fabricated (see: Mahayanasamgraha 3.7; e.g. BDK ed, p 63-64). So, the point is, knowledge/wisdom should be specified in terms of what is known/understood.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2019 at 6:25 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So the psychic abilities and "knowledge of extinction of the contaminants" would be generally categorised as 'extra-sensory perception', would they not?

Astus wrote:

In ordinary Western parlance, yes. In Buddhism, no. For instance, clairvoyance, or divine eye, is still visual perception, just like common human seeing, but on a different level. But literal 'extra-sensory perception', experiencing something beyond the six senses, is impossible.

"The supernormal knowledges of supernormal power, divine hearing, and divine sight,

make up the first application of mindfulness, that is, the body as an application of mindfulness, for they have rupa, color and shape, for their object. The supernormal knowledge of supernormal power has four external ayatanas, with the exception of sound, for its sphere. And divine hearing and divine sight have both sound and rupa for their domain."

(AKB 7.44d, vol 4, p 1162)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2019 at 6:38 AM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The latter reference links to the same source that Astus refers to above.

Astus wrote:

Thanissaro's explanation is not found in Mahasi Sayadaw's

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/progress.html> that you linked.

Mahasi provides a short commentary on the matter of "viññanam anidassanam" in

Manual of Insight, p 464-466. Bhikkhu Sujato discusses the idea in his post:

<https://sujato.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/vinna%E1%B9%87a-is-not-nibbana-really-it-just-isn%E2%80%99t/>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 25th, 2019 at 5:41 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'm sorry but this makes no sense to me.

Astus wrote:

For the Buddhist context of how the operation of the senses is conceived see e.g.:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayatana> on Wikipedia

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180901114929/https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/lam-rim/the-five-aggregates/the-5-aggregates-12-cognitive-stimulators-18-sources> by Dr. Alexander Berzin

<https://abhidharmakosa.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/chapter-1-dhatu.pdf> - a summary from the Abhidharmakosabhasyam

Wayfarer said:

Through clairvoyance, you're not seeing by virtue of light that is captured by the retina and images received by sensory means. It is super-sensory, by definition.

Astus wrote:

Yes, but not in the context of the six sensory areas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 26th, 2019 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Sherab said:

If the above does not show that there is a consciousness beyond the all, then what is this consciousness that has NOT been experienced through the allness of the all?

Astus wrote:

Here's Piya Tan's take on it:

"In short, this stanza, "[t]he consciousness without attribute, without end, radiant all around" refers not to nirvana (as suggested by the Commentaries) but to the nature of the arhat's mind, that is, awakened consciousness, as commonly understood in the Suttas, that is, as one unfathomable: "of the one who is gone to his setting [one who has gone out], there is measuring" (atthaṃ gatassa na pamaṇam atthi) (Sn1076)." (<http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/11.7-Brahma-Nimantanika-S-m49-piya.pdf>, p 95)

Sherab said:

To me, it is clear from the above that the consciousness mentioned is beyond the range of the all, and only a Buddha is qualified to make such a claim. No other being can make such a claim.

Astus wrote:

This is a question of hermeneutics, how one approaches the scriptures and makes interpretations. In this case, the idea of a special consciousness beyond consciousness is not supported by the Pali Canon in general, nor by the later Theravada tradition, and it is only a few poetic lines that one can single out and fabricate a new explanation.

An unestablished consciousness is in line with the other teachings found in the scriptures, therefore it is a more defensible angle to take than trying to prove an unprovable concept of unchanging awareness. Unestablished consciousness is simply where there is no more grasping at the aggregates, so it is what one finds in the four noble truths and all over the Canon. See the <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.053.than.html> for instance.

Furthermore, why bother with the sravaka teachings when it is so much easier to find ideas that resemble an ultimate self in Mahayana? Like the "four virtues" (四德) in the Nirvana Sutra: permanence, happiness, self, purity (常樂我淨).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 26th, 2019 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent?

Content:

Sherab said:

I never said that the consciousness beyond the all is unchanging/permanent, or changing/impermanent. This is because whatever is beyond the all is necessary beyond the range of words and concepts. Word and concepts arise from and within the all.

Astus wrote:

If it is beyond the six sensory areas, that means it cannot have the attributes of those, and that includes conceivability, perceptibility, dependency, and impermanence. More importantly, it is like the finest lady of the land who's never been seen.

“Suppose, Potṭhapāda, a man were to say: ‘Whoever the finest lady in the land is, it is her that I want, her that I desire!’ They’d say to him: ‘Mister, that finest lady in the land who you desire—do you know whether she’s an aristocrat, a brahmin, a merchant, or a worker?’ Asked this, he’d say, ‘No.’ They’d say to him: ‘Mister, that finest lady in the land who you desire—do you know her name or clan? Whether she’s tall or short or medium? Whether her skin is black, brown, or tawny? What village, town, or city she comes from?’ Asked this, he’d say, ‘No.’ They’d say to him: ‘Mister, do you desire someone who you’ve never even known or seen?’ Asked this, he’d say, ‘Yes.’

What do you think, Potṭhapāda? This being so, doesn’t that man’s statement turn out to have no demonstrable basis?” “Clearly that’s the case, sir.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn9/en/sujato>)

Sherab said:

The consciousness beyond the all can be said to be unestablished because it is not found or established by a dualistic mind, i.e a mind that grasps at a self and other, since the all necessarily involves subject-object differentiation and what is beyond the all is beyond subject-object differentiation.

Astus wrote:

When there is nothing to perceive, there is no perceiver either. As Vasubandhu wrote (Trimsika v 28, tr Kochumuttom, p 259):

"One does abide in the realization
Of mere [representation of] consciousness
When one does not perceive also a supporting consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2019 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: Infinite Eons and Enlightenment

Content:

LoveFromColorado said:

This would mean that we have experienced every single state of awareness, from the lowest hell to the highest heaven as well as enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is freedom from the 6 realms, the end of birth and death. So beings may go round and round without ever attaining liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 2nd, 2019 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: Kwan Um School of Zen

Content:

KiwiNFLFan said:

standard Jogye teachings

Astus wrote:

I have not seen such a thing. Jogye is an institution, not a doctrine.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2019 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Is relative truth nullified in higher stages of Chan / Zen?

Content:

well wisher said:

Is relative truth nullified in higher stages of Chan / Zen?

Astus wrote:

Zen deals with the mind, and the mind is often described with two concepts: essence and function. In essence the mind is empty and pure. In function it is whatever occurs, all phenomena. Essence and function are not two different things, not two separate minds, but simply one common way to describe the mind. There is no essence without function, and there is no function without essence. But one can make the mistake of grasping only one of them, or dividing them.

Delusion is being fooled by function, where one is attached to one's thoughts, feelings, and sensory impressions.

Beginning practitioners are often fooled by essence, where they want only peace, motionlessness, transcendence, the absolute.

After some experience one recognises that dealing with function is inevitable, so there is a process of harmonisation, of balancing, of integration of the two sides.

Further on one can arrive at the point where essence and function are inseparable, where non-thought is in the midst of thought, and it becomes possible to cultivate genuine Zen.

The final stage is simply that there is no more cultivation done, no more effort needed, as essence has never been apart from function, nor function from the essence.

So, is the relative truth, the function, nullified? Yes and no. Yes, because there is no

more mistake about what the function is. No, because the relative does not go anywhere.

well wisher said:

if you consider relative truths, where one person might consider some virtues are good whiles are might think its bad.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism - regardless of school - does not teach moral relativism. Karma is unavoidable.

well wisher said:

So does "absolute truth" even exist? If so, what is it ? Is it the total cessation of all unwanted conditioning and sufferings in one's own mind and existence, replace with total benevolence and harmonious calmness and pure freedom? Or what else?

Astus wrote:

The absolute truth is that there is ultimately no truth to hold on to, i.e. all concepts are fleeting and baseless. Liberation comes from seeing that the universe (nor the multiverse) has nothing reliable, nothing to attach to.

well wisher said:

Maybe some higher stages cannot be expressed by words and labels, but can only be experienced in one's own actual reality?

Astus wrote:

Dreaming of an unseen higher realm is aiming for the absolute. A good start, but not a place to get stuck at.

well wisher said:

So in the end, I guess 5 precepts are only a rough general guideline to go by, but perhaps should NOT be pursued to the point of extreme degree nor extreme obsession;

Astus wrote:

The five precepts are for lay people as a guidance. It is a sort of minimal requirement. Compare that to the 250 precepts of monks, the 10 major and 48 minor precepts for bodhisattvas, and the other innumerable vows.

well wisher said:

And that the CESSATION OF SUFFERING in the part of the 4 noble truths is actually a greater goal to aim for?

Astus wrote:

The precepts are means to an end, and that end can be different things, from this worldly benefits up to complete enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2019 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness - is it really ever 'switched-off'

Content:

Matman said:

Are we ever really in a mental state where consciousness is totally absent?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is momentary, mental states rapidly occur and cease. To conceive the mind as continuous is one of the common basis of believing in an enduring existence.

Matman said:

This seems to indicate that consciousness is 'always' present, but gets turned-down / dampened at times, e.g. when we sleep.

Astus wrote:

That is an assumption, a projection of a substance beyond appearances.

Matman said:

Has this fact any direct relevance to the way Mahayana Buddhists understand 'consciousness'?

Astus wrote:

When there is a sound, there is ear-consciousness. When there is no sound, there can be no awareness of sound either.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2019 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness - is it really ever 'switched-off'

Content:

Grigoris said:

In the Abhidhamma there is the bhavanga citta which is like a baseline level of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Bhavanga-citta is a Theravada doctrine, but it's not taught in the Abhidhamma Pitaka, only in later commentaries and treatises. Other schools have not developed such a concept, that's how introduction of the alayavijnana was not a straightforward matter for the Yogacarins.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 3rd, 2019 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness - is it really ever 'switched-off'

Content:

Grigoris said:

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha:

Astus wrote:

That is a text from the 11th-12th century. You can find the word bhavanga used in the Patthana, translated as life-continuum by U Narada, but not specifically defined. It is in Buddhaghosa's works (5th c.) where you can find the first definitions (e.g. Vism 14.114; Atth 270). In any case, just as in the case of the alayavijnana, at parinirvana there is no more continuity of consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2019 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness - is it really ever 'switched-off'

Content:

Sherab said:

I never know what momentary really means.

Astus wrote:

That arising and cessation happens in the same moment.

Sherab said:

When a consciousness cease, does it cease into utter nothingness?

Astus wrote:

One cannot even step into the same river twice, so why would mind states persist?

Sherab said:

If it does, how come out of utter nothingness a new moment of consciousness can arise?

Astus wrote:

Various Abhidharma and Yogacara treatises have answers for that, if you really want to know, where they discuss causality. Apart from that, you can go with Madhyamaka (and Yogacara) where one recognises that ultimately it's all just a mirage, an illusion. It depends on how deep you want to go.

Sherab said:

If when a consciousness cease, it does not cease into utter nothingness, then what does it cease into?

Astus wrote:

Cessation does not mean going from one place to another. Cessation means the end of functioning, the end of existing, because the supporting conditions have changed and no longer support it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2019 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: Is there a Buddhist Word for this?

Content:

Matman said:

He calls it the Pain-Body, but it seems somewhat different to what I understand the Buddhist Term 'dukkha' to mean.

Astus wrote:

Suffering (duhkha) is the result of afflictions

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleshas_%28Buddhism%29), and afflictions are what influence the mind in a harmful way as a consequence of past actions (karma).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 4th, 2019 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Consciousness - is it really ever 'switched-off'

Content:

Matman said:

wired-up to a brainwave monitor

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is understood to be non-material in Buddhism.

Matman said:

Is it the view, that Pure Awareness (Total Presence) is a facet of Consciousness, or do you see it as something else?

Astus wrote:

The other way around, ordinary consciousness is the manifestation of the originally pure mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 6th, 2019 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: Infinite Eons and Enlightenment

Content:

Aemilius said:

I think this is refuted by Madhyamaka and the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. Samsara has no reality, there is no real samsara. According to Chandrakirti, for example, Nirvana is that nothing arises or ceases (with an essence or essentially).

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is a Buddhist school, so it cannot and does not refute liberation. Nirvana is defined as unborn and undying by the Abhidharmikas, and it is contrasted with samsara where birth and death happens. What you find in Madhyamaka is that the nature of samsara is identical to nirvana, because both are empty, so samsara is a mistaken perception. This is not the same as denying the presence and efficiency of ignorance whence samsara originates. After all, the very purpose of Madhyamaka is to

eliminate ignorance and thus liberate beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 7th, 2019 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Infinite Eons and Enlightenment

Content:

Aemilius said:

It does refute liberation (as a possession of a self or a being) in the MMK, and so does the Diamond Sutra. 24. Totally pacifying all referents and totally pacifying fixations is peace. The Buddha nowhere taught any dharma to anyone.

Astus wrote:

No Buddhist school assumes a self, so nobody said that liberation was a possession of anyone, hence nothing new here. Madhyamaka has the explicit goal of bringing beings to peace (i.e. nirvana), just look at the homage/dedication right at the beginning of MMK that has the same term used as in 25.24: "prapañcopaśama", the stilling/quieting/stopping (upaśama) of hypostatization/fabrication/proliferation (prapañca). See 18.5 (tr Siderits) on how liberation and fabrication relate to each other:

karmakleśakṣayān mokṣaḥ karmakleśā vikalpataḥ |
te prapañcāt prapañcas tu śūnyatāyāṃ nirudhyate ||

Liberation is attained through the destruction of actions and defilements; actions and defilements arise because of falsifying conceptualizations; those arise from hypostatization; but hypostatization is extinguished in emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 7th, 2019 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: Tobacco in Buddhism

Content:

haha said:

basis in sutra?

Astus wrote:

Tobacco was brought to India in the 17th century (no Buddhism in India by then), so if the story is about tobacco, it is quite modern.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 9th, 2019 at 4:46 PM

Title: Re: Term for 'Mind' in Awakening of Faith

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The principle is "the Mind of the sentient being." This Mind includes in itself all states of being of the phenomenal world and the transcendental world. On the basis of this Mind, the meanings of the Mahayana may be unfolded. Why? Because the absolute aspect of

this Mind represents the essence (svabhāva) of the Mahayana; and the phenomenal aspect of this Mind indicates the essence, attributes (laksana) and influences (kriyā) of the Mahayana itself.

I am interested in what character or word that has been translated as "Mind" in this passage.

Astus wrote:

心

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T32n1666_001#0575c20, c21-25:

所言法者，謂眾生心，是心則攝一切世間法、出世間法。依於此心顯示摩訶衍義。何以故？是心真如相，即示摩訶衍體故；是心生滅因緣相，能示摩訶衍自體相用故。

"The word "principle" means the mind of sentient beings. This mind embraces all dharmas in the mundane and supramundane worlds. On the basis of this mind the meaning of Mahayana is revealed. Why? Because the suchness aspect of this mind shows the essence of Mahayana, (while) the causal and conditional aspect of the arising and ceasing of this mind can show the attributes and operation of Mahayana's essence itself."

(tr Sung-Bae Park, in Wonhyo's Commentaries on the "Awakening of Faith in Mahayana.", PhD dissertation, 1979, p 166)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 9th, 2019 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Term for 'Mind' in Awakening of Faith

Content:

Simon E. said:

It seems to posit an agreed definition of 'mind' shared by all readers a priori.

Astus wrote:

What mind is is one of the main topics of the treatise.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 11th, 2019 at 6:08 PM

Title: Re: Beginner in Mahamudra

Content:

Simon E. said:

What said was that one can't actually practice Mahamudra without wangs.

Astus wrote:

Mahamudra does not require empowerment, only within the context of deity yoga, also called tantric Mahamudra and the path of means. But the Mahamudra that is also called sutra Mahamudra and the path of liberation, the speciality of the Dagpo Kagyu, has no such prerequisite.

"if one follows venerable Gampopa's system in elucidating Mahamudra alone, it is not necessary to bestow the empowerment upon devotees"
(Mahamudra: the Moonlight, p 124)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 12th, 2019 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Beginner in Mahamudra

Content:

Simon E. said:

actual teachers of Vajrayana Dharma rather than scholars of an eclectic bent.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific there? Do you mean you hold Sakya Pandita's view as the definitive, and others' as "eclectic"?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 12th, 2019 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Infinite Eons and Enlightenment

Content:

Aemilius said:

Diamond Sutra Ch. 27...Similarly in The Heart Sutra

Astus wrote:

Things are already empty, so there is nothing to be free from, nor anyone to be liberated. However, unless emptiness is seen, one is stuck in delusion and samsara. That's why there are the teachings, like the Diamond and the Heart Sutra, to show the true nature of the world as unestablished and unobtainable. This goes back to the very basics of Buddhism: although there has never been a self, without recognising that there is no escape from suffering.

"To attain is not to attain; there is nothing to attain or to lose - this is called the attainment of the Realization of the Nonarising of Dharmas."

(How to Kill with the Sword of Wisdom, in A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras, p 62)

The Buddha asked Mañjuśrī, "When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, does he attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "When a Bodhisattva sits in a bodhimaṇḍa, he does not attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Why not? Because the appearance of bodhi is true suchness. Not finding a speck of dharma to capture is called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Because bodhi has no appearance, who can sit and who can rise? For this reason, I see neither a Bodhisattva sitting in a bodhimaṇḍa nor anyone realizing anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi."

...

"Those who know that in bodhi there is no attainment of Buddhahood will quickly attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi."

(<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>)

"If you understand this doctrine, you should also understand that there is nothing whatsoever to be attained. Knowing that there is nothing to be gained or attained is the realization of the Dharmakaya of Buddhadharma. If one harbors any thought whatsoever of gaining or attaining, he holds the wrong view and, being a person of overweening pride, is labeled heterodox."

(<https://ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

"The realization that "nothing is attained" breaks through phenomenal and principle hindrances, and the understanding that the Dharma cannot be fully explained in words breaks through the hindrance of language. In this way, "non-attainment" is the only true attainment, and is what allows us to return to our intrinsic nature, which is inherently pure."

(<http://hsingyun.org/cultivation-without-attainment/>)

"Non-wisdom is the true wisdom, non-attainment is the true attainment."

(<https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/heartv11.htm>)

"'No attainment' is true attainment. So I already told you about the Heart Sutra. It says, 'There is no attainment, with nothing to attain.' You must attain 'no attainment.'"

(Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake: Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn, p 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 16th, 2019 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: another sutra classification beside tiantai

Content:

mansurhirbi87 said:

Do you know if there is another kind of sutra classification beside that one of Zhiyi or Tiantai school ?

Astus wrote:

The word for it is panjiao (<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%95%99%E5%88%A4>), i.e. doctrinal classification, and different schools and teachers have set up such schema.

Apart from the

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach70.htm#t701>, there are the

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach59.htm#t594>,

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach61.htm#t614>,

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/teach66.htm#t661>, and

others like what you find in Shingon by Kukai. There is a study on this topic by Bruno

Petzold: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=iZH29oilulkC>; and another by Chanju Mun:

https://books.google.hu/books/about/The_History_of_Doctrinal_Classification.html?id=dpPYtAEACAAJ.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2019 at 6:33 PM

Title: Re: question on distinguishing mind from it's nature

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Could be a Mahamudra question too:

Once a person begins to have some confidence in distinguishing mind from it's nature, is there any particular point in working with conventional thoughts and appearances in meditation anymore, rather than simply resting in the nature of mind? Is it now time to examine the relationship between the nature of mind and the minds contents?

Astus wrote:

After View and Meditation comes Conduct, may also be called Enhancement. It is integrating what one has learnt into life.

"although various authoritative scriptures and oral instructions have taught different types of conduct as means to enhance one's practice, the essential key points are as follows: Cut your worldly attachments completely and live companionless in secluded mountain retreats; that is the conduct of a wounded deer. Be free from fear or anxiety in the face of difficulties; that is the conduct of a lion sporting in the mountains. Be free from attachment or clinging to sense pleasures; that is the conduct of the wind in the sky. Do not become involved in the fetters of accepting or rejecting the eight worldly concerns; that is the conduct of a madman. Sustain simply and unrestrictedly the natural flow of your mind while unbound by the ties of dualistic fixation; that is the conduct of a spear stabbing in space."

(Lamp of Mahamudra, p 58)

How to work with various appearances:

<http://www.purifymind.com/ObstaclesPath.htm>

A shorter summary of the same:

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/khenpo-gangshar/removing-hindrances-sustaining-realization>

A famous song of Milarepa:

<http://unfetteredmind.org/milarepas-song-to-lady-paldarboom/>

<http://levekunst.com/milarepas-song-to-the-girl-paldarbum/>

[http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/A%20-](http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/A%20-%20Tibetan%20Buddhism/Authors/Thrangu%20Rinpoche/Commentaries%20on%20The%20Songs%20of%20Milarepa/The%20Story%20of%20Nyama%20Paldarbum,%20Song%20of%20Milarepa.htm)

[%20Tibetan%20Buddhism/Authors/Thrangu%20Rinpoche/Commentaries%20on%20The%20Songs%20of%20Milarepa/The%20Story%20of%20Nyama%20Paldarbum,%20Song%20of%20Milarepa.htm](http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/A%20-%20Tibetan%20Buddhism/Authors/Thrangu%20Rinpoche/Commentaries%20on%20The%20Songs%20of%20Milarepa/The%20Story%20of%20Nyama%20Paldarbum,%20Song%20of%20Milarepa.htm)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2019 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: question on distinguishing mind from it's nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

It should also be noted, that when it comes to actually dealing with defilements, one uses whatever works. There is no point in giving too much importance to the idea of being a practitioner of this or that method only, in other words, clinging to a special identity.

"Bhikkhus, there are taints that should be abandoned by seeing. There are taints that should be abandoned by restraining. There are taints that should be abandoned by using. There are taints that should be abandoned by enduring. There are taints that should be abandoned by avoiding. There are taints that should be abandoned by removing. There are taints that should be abandoned by developing."

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn2/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 18th, 2019 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

Since this is in the Kagyu forum it is appropriate to reference Kagyu authorities.

Astus wrote:

See chapter 20 of Jewel Ornament of Liberation. Primordial wisdom (or "pristine awareness" in Holmes' translation) is twofold in nature: ultimate and conventional. The ultimate is non-conceptual, free from elaboration, so it is very much pointless to try to categorise it as something. The conventional is how all appearances are seen as illusory.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2019 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

Kongtrul obviously was making the point he wasn't talking about a being's mind—either sentient or enlightened.

Astus wrote:

The ground, primordial purity, is exactly the nature of mind. It's not an abstraction, or a separate entity.

smcj said:

Gompopa was writing before Dolpopa.

Astus wrote:

Gampopa's description is not different from Kongtrul's:

"Intrinsic awareness is devoid of substantiality and therefore indivisible from emptiness. Based on this indivisibility, the character comprises two pristine wisdoms: the pristine wisdom of the primordially pure nature, which is free of mentation, and the pristine wisdom of the spontaneous character, which is the original radiance glowing deep within."

(Myriad Worlds, p 207)

smcj said:

I am putting forward the idea of a transcendent or primordial (depending on how you want to talk about it) substratum.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-mind is not a substratum, only if it's incorrectly conceived as such, like grasping the wrong end of a snake.

"If you apprehend this basis of emptiness that is empty of both existence and nonexistence as something that is established by its essence separately [from everything else], no matter how you label it—such as an inconceivable self, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Īśvara, or wisdom—except for the mere name, the meaning is the same." (Mipham quoted by Brunnhölzl in 'In Praise of Dharmadhatu', p 105)

"Bhikkhus, you may well cling to that doctrine of self that would not arouse sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who clings to it. But do you see any such doctrine of self, bhikkhus?"—"No, venerable sir."—"Good, bhikkhus. I too do not see any doctrine of self that would not arouse sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who clings to it."

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn22/en/bodhi>)

A recommended teaching on the topic is

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=azieVNVB6aYC> by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 19th, 2019 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The Buddha Nature teachings are very different from what is found in the Pali agamas

Astus wrote:

Not that much actually. The main twist is that the manifestation of the buddha qualities is not a product of merit accumulation but of wisdom, and that is in contrast to the earlier view of Mahayana as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2019 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

dudette said:

Guys do not misunderstand me but these views on Shentong which you are discussing here really remind me of mystical christianity, mystical islam, hinduism and all other theistic religions.

Astus wrote:

Shentong, just like other systems using the tathagatagarbha doctrine (which is the majority of Mahayana actually), can be mistaken for substantialist ideas, just as other elements of Buddhism can be mistaken for annihilationist views. Both are instances of wrongly conceiving the Dharma and falling into extreme views.

dudette said:

How come this type of view managed to get into buddhism in the first place?

Astus wrote:

It did not. Eternalism is not accepted by any Buddhist school. The difficulty in understanding Buddha-mind teachings is the same as with understanding emptiness: one jumps to extreme conclusions without thoroughly comprehending the teachings.

dudette said:

I mean there has to be some logical explanation why Shentong view is taught as the fundamentals for buddhism in DW.

Astus wrote:

First of all, this is a diverse forum, and Shentong does not have a special position. As for the popularity of Shentong among Kagyu and Nyingma teachers, there can be various explanations, but a short one is that it fits well with Vajrayana ideas.

Secondly, this is not so different from standard Theravada, and even less from the more philosophically lax teachings like the Thai Forest tradition. What is translated as "primordial wisdom" and "pristine awareness" is the Tibetan yeshe that is the equivalent of Sanskrit jñāna, what in Pali is ñāṇa, i.e. knowledge. It is the ultimate in a similar sense that in the Abhidhamma system there are lokuttara citta, and the phala citta have nibbana - the unconditioned - as their objects. So, just as the Abhidhamma can be misread as a dry theoretical and atomistic philosophy, so can various Mahayana teachings can be mistaken for eternalist ideologies. But as long as one remembers that the whole point of every Buddhist doctrine is to give a path to liberation through removing all attachments, one can avoid extreme views.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2019 at 10:04 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature in Zen

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

I know that in East Asian Buddhism, Buddha Nature is emphasized. Is there any special emphasis or perspective on this idea in Zen which differentiates it?

Astus wrote:

Do you ask if there is a special "Zen theory" of buddha-nature? If so, then the answer is no. First of all, because there is no such systematic doctrine that can be called "Zen". Secondly, because teachings that are conventionally labelled Zen simply rely on established Mahayana doctrine.

Apart from the above two points, a common and quite central concept in most Zen teachings is that the "mind is buddha", that is, that the nature of mind is identical to the nature of buddha. This forms the basis of the sudden awakening style, that one simply has to recognise one's own mind to be originally empty and thereby attain liberation from all defilements and ignorance.

So, if you really want to know the authentic Zen perspective, then just see right now that your current chain of thoughts is without any basis, that there is nothing to rely on anywhere, and there has never been anything that could be gained or lost.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2019 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

There seem to be three different objections to my postings on Shentong here.

Astus wrote:

'Some of the assertions made by the Shentong masters seem to disagree with the Madhyamaka view and agree with the statements of non-Buddhists, particularly those of Vedanta. There have been many misunderstandings and refutations of this philosophy in Tibet. In order to clear up these misunderstandings, I will quote some points extracted from the teachings of Taranatha, which Jamgon Kongtrul quotes in the Treasury of Knowledge. Taranatha says:

'Some scholars cite the Lankavatara Sutra, which says: If buddha nature has all the marks and signs, then isn't it the same as the atman of the non-Buddhists? In reply, the Buddha said, "It is not the same because it is emptiness."'

(Ringu Tulku: The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, p 224)

'both Shentong and Rangtong are free of the fault of not being Madhyamaka. They accord in espousing a view free of all fabricated extremes. Not only that, but in most schools of Tibetan Buddhism there were masters who were lineage holders of both systems, and nobody looked upon them as having wrong views.'

(Ringu Tulku, p 232)

'Most people think that, in terms of its Madhyamaka alignment, the Kagyü school is a monolithic bloc of staunch supporters of Shentong-Madhyamaka ("other-empty Madhyamaka"). However, as should be clear by now, there are quite a number of masters in this school who do not follow what is known as Shentong. Even Milarepa sometimes adopts a typical Rangtong ("self-empty") approach in his enlightened songs.¹⁰³² Still, the reader may be wondering why a book on Madhyamaka in the Kagyü lineage has thus far barely mentioned the term "Shentong," much less presented the system it refers to. The answer is simple and may be shocking to some: There is no Shentong-Madhyamaka nor any need to make one up. The subdivision of Madhyamaka into "self empty" and "other-empty" is obsolete.

Before I am excommunicated from the Kagyü lineage for making this statement, let me say that I am just going by what the Eighth Karmapa and Pawo Rinpoche say in *The Chariot of the Tagbo Siddhas* and *The Commentary on The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. I also want to make it clear from the outset that the reason for such a statement is not at all to deprecate the contents or the value of the teachings that came to bear the name Shentong in Tibet. Rather, the reason is quite the contrary, since what is called Shentong is nothing other than the Yogacara (Yoga Practice) system of Maitreya, Asanga, and Vasubandhu, also called "the lineage of vast activity." Just like Centrism, in its rich entirety, this system is a distinct, well-established, and—at least in India—unequivocally renowned system of presenting the teachings of the Buddha.' (Karl Brunnhölzl: *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, p 445)

'Question: I do not know if Rinpoche is familiar with Vedanta in the sense of Brahma's being ultimate reality and everybody's true nature being of the true nature of pure consciousness. Could he explain perhaps the difference between these two views? Rinpoche: The difference between the Hindu view and this view is that the Hindu view asserts the existence of a self, atman. The Buddhist presentation of the buddha nature also talks about the genuine self, but the genuine self is a name that is given in Buddhism to the transcendence of the self posited by the Hindus and the nonself posited by the shravakas. That is the difference. And it is a big difference.' (Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, in *Shenpen Ösel*, issue 14 (vol 6, no 1-2) p 139)

'There is a great difference between "true self" as taught in the Hindu traditions and as taught in the Mahayana system. In the first sense the term "true self" denotes a self that is eternal, unique, and independent. "True self" as taught in the Uttara Tantra Shastra is equivalent to the state of peace in terms of complete freedom from any conceptual elaboration. This state of peace has only been given the name of "true self." There is a mere similarity in terms. The Mahayana system does not hold the view of an eternal, unique, and independent self. Between light and darkness, for instance, there is only a similarity inasmuch as they are both things (Skt. bhava, Tib. dngos po) fulfilling a function. Apart from that they contradict each other; there is not the slightest similarity.' (Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, in *Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra with Commentary*, p 344-345)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2019 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature in Zen

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

history and doctrines of East Asian Buddhism and Zen.

Astus wrote:

Start with

http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html (full book version including some commentary:

https://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Beta_T1666_AwakeningofFaith_2005.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=483), as it is likely the most influential treatise on the topic in East Asian Buddhism.

'Question: If such is the meaning of the principle of Mahayana, how is it possible for men to conform themselves to and enter into it?

Answer: If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks, nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks, nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it. And when they are freed from their thoughts, they are said to have entered into it'

(AFM)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 20th, 2019 at 11:34 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Karma Dondrup Tashi said:

You know I hate to say it but a "mere" similarity is a similarity.

Astus wrote:

Don't leave out where he states: 'Apart from that'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2019 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

Shentong posits an ultimate that is completely real.

Astus wrote:

The various Abhidharmika systems posit real ultimates as well, and Yogacara (i.e. Shentong) has up to 8 unconditioned dharmas (see: Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 23). The more important question is what one calls the ultimate.

'What is taught in the Shentong tradition? The first major teaching of the Shentong is

that all phenomena are mind. This view holds that all things are created by the mind. There is nothing that exists separate from the mind. Because all appearances are the mind, nothing has an existence of its own. Not only do objects have no true existence, but the perceiver of objects has no existence either. Since both subject and object have no true existence, both phenomena and the mind itself have no true existence either. When we accept this view, we see that the true nature of phenomena is emptiness. In summary, the teachings of the Shentong tradition hold that there is no reality to outer phenomena and no reality to the mind.' ...

'The Shentong tradition holds that there is the "element" (Skt. dhatu) or Buddha-nature (Skt. tathagata-garbha), also known as the dharmadhatu, and this element contains all the qualities of Buddhahood and its nature is emptiness. Buddha-nature is present within all beings at all times. It is realized at the attainment of enlightenment. But Buddha-nature is not the same as a permanent or eternal self (Skt. atman) posited by many Hindu religions. It is not the self, because the self is thought of as a real entity, whereas the Buddha-nature does not exist as an entity. Rather, Buddha-nature is devoid of its own nature. It is empty. Therefore, it is not the same as a self. By removing the obscurations and by realizing the Buddha-nature, living beings will achieve Buddhahood.'

(Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, p 114-116)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2019 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

the idea that both Shentong and Hinduism assert that the relative is completely unreal and the ultimate completely real.

Astus wrote:

What do completely, real, and unreal signify?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2019 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

I can't find my copy of KTGR's "Progressive Stages". I think it is on p.66, 2nd paragraph. If somebody else wants to post it be my guest.

Astus wrote:

'The perfectly existent nature truly exists because it exists in a non-conceptual way. In the Cittamatra the perfectly existent nature is said to be mere emptiness, in the sense of freedom from the conceptual process of distinguishing outer perceived objects as different in substance to the inner perceiving mind. In the Shen-tong it is said to be the

non-conceptual Wisdom Mind itself. It is indeed empty of the conceptual process of distinguishing outer perceived objects as different in substance to the inner perceiving minds. It is also empty of the conceptualizing process that creates the appearance of a divided consciousness (vijñāna) i.e. a stream of discrete moments of consciousness with perceiving and perceived aspects. It is completely free from any conceptualizing process and knows in a way that is completely foreign to the conceptual mind. It is completely unimaginable in fact. That is why it can be said to truly exist.'
(Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness, Longchen Foundation, 1994, p 84)

See also what Vasubandhu says on the matter:

'The imagined nature is said
To be defined both as existent and as nonexistent,
For on the one hand it is grasped as existent,
While, on the other,
It is totally non-existent.

The other-dependent nature is said
To be defined both as existent and as nonexistent,
For, it exists as an illusion,
It does not exist, though, in the form in which it appears.

The absolutely accomplished nature is said
To be defined both as existent and as non-existent,
For, it exists as a state of non-duality,
It is also the non-existence of duality.'
(Trisvabhavanirdeśa, v 11-13, tr Kochumuttom)

As it is summed up by Thrangu Rinpoche:

'The nature of the thoroughly established does not exist, but that very non-establishment, just as it is, is true.'
(Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes, p 48)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 22nd, 2019 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

Practically speaking, I think the decisive difference pertains far more to conventional reality rather than ultimate.

Astus wrote:

Both sides of the two truths show significant differences, and the unity of the two is very much an exclusively Buddhist view. Buddha-nature is not simply some ultimate awareness, but it refers to the buddha qualities, the buddha bodies, and the buddha

knowledges/wisdoms. For the Advaitins liberation means the end of all transitory appearances, similarly to the Samkhya teaching where Prakrti completely stops, and only the ultimate remains that practically does nothing apart from being absorbed in itself. So, the Buddhist view is that the ultimate is essentially empty and functionally active, while the Hindu one is that the ultimate is essentially substantial and functionally inactive.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 22nd, 2019 at 9:12 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

For Advaitins enlightenment is knowing that the person = atman = brahman.

Appearances don't end, don't even change in terms of their appearance.

Astus wrote:

That is the temporary situation of a jivanmukta who is still affected by prarabdha-karma, and after videhamukti (death) there is the total isolation in Brahman, i.e. kaivalya, where "not even an appearance of duality remains" (Vedantasara 6.226).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 22nd, 2019 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

Sometime, rarely, a living jivanmukta attains nirvikalpa samadhi, in which apparent objects are absent.

Astus wrote:

It is another good example of difference between the two systems. In Buddhism nirvikalpa-jnana (non-conceptual wisdom) does not eliminate phenomena.

'Question: When one directly realizes the ultimate, does that mean that conventional phenomena just become non-existent or go away?

Rinpoche: As for appearances of conventionalities or conventional appearances, for beginners indeed when in this state of meditative equipoise in which the mind is set evenly, fully and in a balanced manner upon the ultimate, such conventional appearances do disappear. However, when the dharmata has become fully and completely manifest, they do not. Finally, just while things are empty they appear and right when they appear, just when they appear, they are at that time empty. If it were not that way, then it would be the case that emptiness on the one hand and appearance on the other were contrary. Are those two contrary? No, they are not. It is not thus necessary that the dawning of one entails the disappearance of the other. Temporarily as one is moving along the path that is the state, but in the end no: they dawn together.' (Thrangu Rinpoche, in Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata, p 77)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 22nd, 2019 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

How about after the death of a Buddhist enlightened being? Is it similar to a Vedantic paramukta?

Astus wrote:

No. Just consider all the functions and activities of a buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 23rd, 2019 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

I get that bodhisattvas agree to keep being reborn over and over and over to help nudge suffering beings towards liberation. But don't any enlightened beings get to retire and like ... melt into the universe in utter bliss when they shuffle off the mortal coil?

Astus wrote:

'Buddha activity is spontaneous because through their knowledge of variety, they do not need to think, "For whom am I doing this?" or "What way should I do this?" because they automatically know for whom and by what means they are going to act. Through the knowledge of how-it-is they understand that everything is nonexistent, unborn, and has no actual reality. So when they are acting, they do not hesitate wondering if everything is real. Knowing true emptiness, they know precisely how to act. In this way buddha activity is spontaneous and devoid of any thought and at the same time corresponds exactly to the needs of the beings they are helping.'

'Buddha activity has an unceasing character because from the very beginning, the Buddhas committed themselves to the goal of achieving Buddhahood for the sake of other beings. Secondly, the Buddhas saw the similarity between themselves and other beings and understood that if they managed to achieve Buddhahood, then everyone else could also become a Buddha. A third reason for this ceaselessness is that the number of beings is infinite and the Buddhas will never stop acting to help them until samsara is finished. So as long as there are beings in samsara, buddha activity will continue.'

(Thrangu Rinpoche, in The Uttara Tantra: A Treatise on Buddha Nature, p 166-167, 169)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 23rd, 2019 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

stevie said:

The failure here is in the initial question: there is no ultimate to be realized but all fabrications can dissolve. And when fabrications dissolve everything and nothing dissolve. It's simply cessation of consciousness due to cessation of ignorance.

Astus wrote:

Non-fabrication does not mean either a sudden disappearance of everything, nor the total cessation of mental functions. Non-fabrication means not taking appearances to be substantial, to be personal, and that way not forming attachments to them. There are actually a lot more things and beings one has no emotional relationship with than things and beings with what one has. That way one can recognise a bit of how freedom from attachment looks like.

stevie said:

But the Rinpoche just keeps on fabricating. Why does he? I don't know, maybe because he takes some of his concepts to be true, e.g. his concept 'dharmata'.

Astus wrote:

Please review what buddhahood entails: <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/lam-rim/refuge/the-qualities-of-buddha-s-omniscient-mind>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2019 at 1:51 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

I have refined my position to say that I think Shentong is panentheistic.

Astus wrote:

"Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world."

(<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism/>)

What is God in Shentong?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2019 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

Ultimately established Wisdom Mind.

Astus wrote:

Wisdom Mind is jnana, knowledge, and in particular the knowledge of suchness, the absence of apprehender and apprehended. It is not like God, because it is not an entity,

nor is it the basis of entities, as the whole world emerges from ignorance, not knowledge, and continues to exist because of ignorance. Although beyond the impure mind there is the pure mind, saying that knowledge causes ignorance would be quite problematic.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2019 at 6:31 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

You're hip to the fact that we're not talking about a given individuals mind, right? Think Dharmadhatu.

Astus wrote:

Dharmadhatu as the ultimate nature of everything is emptiness, only as the ultimate nature of sentient beings is there emptiness with awareness. In other words, insentient entities are neither conscious nor capable of developing or possessing any level of wisdom. Furthermore, minds are not shared on any level.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2019 at 7:01 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

smcj said:

That's Nagarjuna's view.

Astus wrote:

The enlightenment of the insentient is a concept you can find in East Asian Buddhism, but not in Tibetan Buddhism. However, please provide a source for this idea taught in Shentong that the insentient have wisdom. In the meantime:

The Expanse of the Basic Element of Being

When used in terms of ultimate reality, the Sanskrit words dharmadhātu or just dhātu are understood in two main ways, which are reflected by two different Tibetan words that translate the latter term. In its most general way, dhātu in dharmadhātu refers to the ultimate nature of all phenomena—being equivalent to emptiness—which is usually translated into Tibetan as dbyings (“expanse,” “space” or “vastness”). If dhātu signifies specifically the nature of the mind of sentient beings in the sense of buddha nature as the most basic element of their entire being, it is typically rendered as khams (lit. “element”). To be sure, these two meanings and their Tibetan renderings are not necessarily regarded or employed in a mutually exclusive way. Still, generally speaking, they represent the understanding of (dharma)dhātu in Madhyamaka texts and the texts on buddha nature, respectively. Obviously, in the Dharmadhātustava and its commentaries, the term is clearly used in the latter way.
(Brunnhölzl, In Praise of Dharmadhātu, p 63-64)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 24th, 2019 at 7:06 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dharmadhatu as the ultimate nature of everything is emptiness, only as the ultimate nature of sentient beings is there emptiness with awareness.

Wayfarer said:

So, empty of relative phenomena, but not empty of own-being, a facet of which is awareness (cit).

Astus wrote:

Only buddha-nature is called other-empty, but it does not have any 'cit', only 'jnana'.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2019 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Syllabus

Content:

Astus wrote:

For a general overview:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=fjU6AwAAQBAJ> by Johannes Bronkhorst

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Z3FuzkBnOxAC> by Paul Williams

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4p717ciuTFMC> by Peter N. Gregory

<https://books.google.com/books?id=cy980CH84mEC> by John Powers

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 28th, 2019 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: Laymen who attain arhantship must enter the Order or attain parinirvana

Content:

prsvrnc said:

when a layman attains arhantship he must either enter the Order or pass away? How do liberated arhats living in this conventional world get by and survive (if not a trust fund)?

Astus wrote:

The answer is found in your quote: 'The fault does not lie with arahantship but with the state of a layman'. Similarly, <https://suttacentral.net/kv4.1/en/aung-rhysdavids> states: 'Now for the Arahant the lay-fetters are put away, cut off at the root, made as the stump of a palm tree, incapable of renewed life or of coming again to birth. Can you say that of a layman?' It should be clear that lay life is not simply the absence of ordination, but the whole system of living as a householder where one is bound by and engaged in

various worldly duties and obligations.

Note: the above is the Theravada position on arhatship.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 1st, 2019 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Buddha Nature in Zen

Content:

SunWuKong said:

Tathāgatagarbha in Zen more than likely involves a debate between (1) and (2), negation vs. luminosity.

Astus wrote:

Those are Tibetan issues. Better go with East Asian doctrines when discussing Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 3rd, 2019 at 3:06 PM

Title: Re: Upcoming translation of Moonbeams of Mahamudra (2019)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Henrik Havlat's translation "Mahamudra: The Ocean of True Meaning" is available. So it's more like one specific translation is restricted, but neither the Tibetan, nor another translation. In any case, Thrangu Rinpoche's commentaries are very beneficial and to the point.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2019 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

hinges much more on how language is understood than it does metaphysics

Astus wrote:

There are crucial ontological differences between Vedanta and any Buddhist (including Shentong) views. Vedanta holds consciousness an absolute, and rejects everything else. Mahamudra takes consciousness to be empty, and at the same time inclusive of all appearances. This shows well in how the two systems approaches meditation, where in Vedanta one removes impermanent phenomena and stays in the pure consciousness, while in Mahamudra one removes only attachment but does not reject appearances.

tobes said:

Vedanta means most precisely: "accepting the (epistemic) authority of the Vedas"

Astus wrote:

No. It means end (anta) of "lore" (veda), and refers to the Upanisads, as Vedantins

mainly base their teachings on those texts.

tobes said:

The acceptance of the Vedas is predicated on realist notions of language, which the Indian grammarians

Astus wrote:

Vedanta teaches only one ultimate, everything else (including language) is a product of ignorance and is unreal.

tobes said:

ultimate truth is non-conceptual and non-linguistic. Finger at the moon et al.

Astus wrote:

That is not a uniquely Buddhist concept. Vedanta also aims to go beyond all mental products, but in a somewhat different manner than Buddhists, and that's where one should pay attention to.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2019 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Simon E. said:

Genuine Vajrayana is posited first and last on the authority of its lineage holders.

Astus wrote:

'Many religious traditions abound, hailed
as oral and single-recipient transmissions.
They are acceptable if they agree with the tantras,
but otherwise they are compilations of falsifications.
There is also no harm in accepting the transmission
of teachings in dreams, visions of gods,
and the like, so long as these accord
with sutras and tantras.
But if they do not accord with all the sutras and tantras,
they should be known as demons' blessings.
A master, too, should be perceived as a master
if he is in harmony with the sutras and tantras.
But, master or no, be indifferent toward him
if he does not teach in accord with the Buddha's teaching.'
(A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes, v 532-535, p 166)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 4th, 2019 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Simon E. said:

Are you saying that the Vajrayana is NOT posited on the authority of its lineage holders?

Astus wrote:

It is primarily the collection of tantras that defines what Vajrayana is.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2019 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

conebeckham said:

Vajrayana Buddhism relies on the oral transmission of explanations of the tantras, themselves.

...

The text do not stand alone. At all.

Astus wrote:

I am not contradicting that at all. I called the tantras the primary definitive source because they are used as the basic reference by the teachers.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2019 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

Where do you think that leaves the question of Brahman though?

Astus wrote:

The central point of Vedanta is the oneness of Atman and Brahman, as those are only seemingly separate but actually they are the singular pure consciousness (see e.g.: Vedantasara 1.27). The qualities that apparently distinguish the person (jiva) from the lord (isvara) come from ignorance (Vedantasara 2.35), and they are unreal, just like the rest of creation.

tobes said:

But the definition I gave is widely accepted as a central feature of what it means in relation to other Indian philosophical-Dharmic streams.

Astus wrote:

Vedanta takes knowledge as the only path to liberation, and rejects rituals as effective for that purpose.

tobes said:

How could one accept the authority of the Vedas (including the last ones/Unpanishads)

whilst rejecting language as unreal? Given that, the Vedas are basically rituals to order the cosmos framed around sound?

Astus wrote:

Everything is unreal except pure consciousness, that's what advaita means, but it's not the same as denying the Vedas' authority.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2019 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

My understanding is that the ultimate fruit of each is realization of nonduality. If this is true, how could there be any difference between the two? There ARE no two!

Astus wrote:

Nonduality does not have the same meaning in Buddhism and Vedanta. In Buddhism it refers to the lack of extremes, while in Vedanta it is affirming one and negating everything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2019 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

But both distill down to: There is no essential difference between <apparent> X and <apparent> Y. No?

Astus wrote:

Please elaborate. What are X and Y?

Rick said:

That which is affirmed in Advaita Vedanta (brahman) is not an object, not a subject, can neither be said to exist nor not to exist (Shankara).

Astus wrote:

Atman/Brahman is the sole existent according to Advaita.

"The Real is: Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Brahman, one without a second"
(Vedantasara 2.33)

"whose own nature is Being, Consciousness, Bliss -- this is the Self."
(Tattvabodha)

"Brahman is Existence-Knowledge-Absolute, extremely pure, Supreme, Self-existing,

Eternal, Indivisible-Bliss, not essentially different from the inmost Self , and absolutely without parts. It is ever victorious. This Absolute Oneness alone is Real since there is nothing other than the Self. Truly, there is no other independent entity in the state of full realization of the supreme Truth."

(Vivekacudamani 225-226)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 5th, 2019 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Rick said:

It's the ultimate mystery, the unknown, sans attributes, beyond (direct) experience, no words/thoughts apply. (And even that is just another description of the ineffable.)

Astus wrote:

Then that is another difference between Buddhism and Vedanta, because what can neither be experienced nor inferred is truly unknowable and as such it is like being in love with a woman one has never known (as in the <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.09.0.than.html>), a meaningless idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 6th, 2019 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

It's timely to recall here the differentiation of 'experience' from 'realisation'.

Astus wrote:

There are two generally recognised sources of knowledge (pramana): perception (pratyaksa) and inference (anumana). When it comes to scriptural sources (sabda), it can be used only where there is agreement between the debaters on what constitutes accepted works, therefore in arguments between very distinct systems (like Vedanta and Buddhism) it is practically useless. As for ascertaining the ultimate truth, it is called yogic perception (yogapratyaksa), attained on the path of seeing (darsanamarga), and for Kagyupas it is the introduction to the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 7th, 2019 at 3:07 AM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think that is what corresponds with jñāna, is it not? Or, more specifically to the Buddhist context, Prajñāpāramitā.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is the direct experience of emptiness.

Wayfarer said:

In any case, with respect to the distinction between realisation and experience, I understand that gnosis of any kind pertains to the realm of realisation rather than experience.

Astus wrote:

"If there is no fixation involved in the process, positive spiritual experiences (nyam in Tibetan) will start to lead you to having spiritual realizations (togpa in Tibetan)."
(Mind at Ease, p 46)

Realisation is not just any kind of knowledge, it is the knowledge of emptiness that means the absence of attachment. Experiences and realisation together is the ideal path (see: Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 312-315).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 7th, 2019 at 4:44 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

What's at stake in this discussion though is this: that we Buddhists charge Vedantins with clinging to existence, in lieu of how Brahman is metaphysically described. I think if that is the assertion, one needs to genuinely enter into the metaphysical debates and make that case sufficiently. Particularly because some great scholars actually think that key texts in that tradition - eg Gaudapadiya Karika - were composed by Mahayana Buddhists.

Astus wrote:

Gaudapada, Sankara, and their followers are explicit in their rejection of Buddhism, so both parties actually agree that their systems are not the same, hence this is not a debated point. See e.g. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mandukya-upanishad-karika-bhashya/d/doc143804.html>. It is rather the avoiding of definitive statements regarding the views of Buddhists and Vedantins that results in confusion, while actually both sides put in immense efforts to elaborate and specify their doctrines.

tobes said:

how tenable is that charge really, in yogic practice?

Astus wrote:

Very much. Compare the methods of pancaskandha and pancakosa. One results in the skandhas without self, the other results in the affirmation of self and the negation of the kosas.

tobes said:

Someone mentioned a Swami who watches a lot of tv during the day because of the notion of maya/illusion. I think this is a profound point of distinction, because the Buddhist will be much more careful about causation.

Astus wrote:

This is how differently they view the two truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 7th, 2019 at 11:30 PM

Title: Madhyamaka and Right View

Content:

stevie said:

Keeping in mind that views as such are confusion, 'views' as understood acc. to Nagarjuna.

Astus wrote:

Correct view is a basic factor of the path, even in Madhyamaka. After all, that is one of the main reasons for the teachings.

"If higher birth and freedom is your quest,
You must become accustomed to right views.
Those who practice good with inverse views
Will yet experience terrible results.
Know this truth: that men are ever sad,
Impermanent, devoid of self, impure.
Those who do not have close mindfulness,
Their view four times inverted, head for ruin."
(Letter to a Friend, v 47-48)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 2:52 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

how conventional reality is understood (and practiced), than it does how the ultimate is defined

Astus wrote:

It is important to remember that the two truths in Mahayana are not opposites, nor parallels, but complementary. There is no ultimate apart from the conventional, no emptiness apart from appearances. On the other hand, in Vedanta only one is affirmed as real and everything else is negated as unreal.

tobes said:

In this case, a great deal hinges on the difference between 'like an illusion' and 'is an

illusion'. If one takes the latter route, one is sailing mighty close the Vendantic sea.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism doesn't get to the point where phenomena are utterly negated. Appearances can be likened to an illusion or called an illusion, what matters is the intended meaning of those terms. Things are/like illusions because they are not substantial, i.e. empty, but being empty is not denying things, it's negating the misunderstanding about things that causes attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

stevie said:

And as far as Madhyamaka is concerned, if you refer to Madhyamaka as a philosophy then since philosophy is a worldly phenomenon and thus is based on views you are generally right but referring to Madhyamaka as a practice you are not generally right since e.g. in the context of practicing non-abiding Madhyamaka (Apratishthānavāda) one does not abide on/in anything and thus a view is impossible. But of course if the practice is not yet finally completed and one slips out of practice due to weakening mindfulness then one will again abide on/in views and thus the dichotomy 'appropriate vs. inappropriate views' is relevant again.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka is a set of teachings. When one is without elaboration, one abides in non-conceptual wisdom, then there is no point calling it Madhyamaka, only if one wants to specify what non-conceptuality means within Madhyamaka, but then one is within the realm of views. So even the correct understanding and practice of non-conceptuality is a key factor, because Vedantins and Buddhists understand not the same meaning for nirvikalpa. For Vedantins it's the elimination, the total absence of concepts, while for Buddhists it is not being attached to concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

Samvrti is still explicitly defined by Tsong Khapa as 'concealing' - and he is one of the most robust defenders of the notion of two truths being complementary.

Astus wrote:

Sure, it is concealing, since it primarily signifies the mistaken conceptions of ordinary beings. It is a later step where the two truths are realised as undivided. First one aims from samsara to nirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 5:06 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

muni said:

How can "one" be real, and "everything else" not, which is then "things" are "negated"..... by what? What sees this, what thinks this, what believes this? What experiences this? How can there be a real lasting self on its own? It would vanish when it is on its own!!! How is there "any kind of reality or self on its' own", without there "being an other" perceiving or thinking there is such?

Astus wrote:

The Atman/Brahman doesn't actually do anything in Advaita (apart from just being conscious), so when it comes to the matter of what can understand, it is the intellect (buddhi). You can find the arguments for an ultimate self in Sankara's and others' works, if you really want to dig into it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

tobes said:

Again, this sounds a lot more like Samkhya where there is hard division between mind and matter. Surely Brahman being a synonym for reality, encompasses all that is done and all that is not done. i.e. the entire play of seeming plurality-phenomena-causation-time etc is Brahman.

Maybe a modern synonym for Brahman would just be: the universe. It's definitely doing stuff!

Astus wrote:

According to, for instance, Visistadvaitins, that may be so, but for those following Gaudapada and Sankara creation is the product of ignorance and it is unreal (e.g. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mandukya-upanishad-karika-bhashya/d/doc143767.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 6:48 PM

Title: Re: Brahman and Atman in Kagyu?

Content:

muni said:

If that intellect is the same as the consciousness, then it could be like clarity emptiness but other words? Inseparable?

Astus wrote:

No, atman and buddhi are separate.

muni said:

by it is impossible to be there a one Self on itself neglecting other, whether this is then seen as a wrong one or a right one. It just has no ground to stay.

Astus wrote:

The self is believed to be the ultimate unchanging knower, and never the known. It is not uncommon that a meditator finds the perceiver/watcher/witness as independent of all the perceived phenomena, and thus assumes it to be the true mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 8th, 2019 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka and Right View

Content:

stevie said:

Would it be acceptable for you if I said: 'to apply Madhyamaka reasoning to be able to drop all views and thus attain non-abiding on any view whatsoever'?

Astus wrote:

That is the usual process, and it is the process, the method, that is called Madhyamaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 11th, 2019 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: "Avoid conceptualizations"

Content:

138Velo said:

quotes the Buddha from the Dhammapada

Astus wrote:

Actually, it is a quote from the Tibetan version of the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udanavarga>

(<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=71&level=2&cid=110538>, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170209062353/padmasambhava.ru/dharma-theory/library/udanavarga/>), that is not the same as the Dhammapada, nor does that stanza have any parallels in it.

138Velo said:

I just want to make sure I understand the word "conceptualizations" in this context.

Astus wrote:

If you follow Chodron's explanation about the four

<https://dhammawiki.com/index.php/Vipallasa>, that is fine.

138Velo said:

The only reason I ask is that I'm a little confused as to why it doesn't say "wrong conceptions" in the first line and the 3rd line if they are the same, so perhaps my interpretation is incorrect. I have to assume the original language must use different words for this? Or is it just a different way of saying the same thing, and I'm getting into the weeds on a trifle.

Astus wrote:

Lines 1 and 3 use the same word. Sanskrit: saṃkalpa; Tibetan: kun rtog (which is the same as rnam rtog, i.e. vikalpana, according to Rockhill, in Udanavarga, p 9). The word 'wrong' is added by Sparham, that's why it's in brackets. In any case, it most likely refers to the basic mistakes (i.e. ignorance about the true characteristics of things) that can be overcome by wisdom.

"Completely overcome by [wrong] conception
People develop irresistible attachments
And see [objects] as clean; the objects of
Attachment increase and their bonds ensnare them.
Those who enjoy calming wrong conception,
Always mindful to meditate
On ugliness, loosen their bonds
By completely giving up their craving."
(Udanavarga 3.1-2, tr Sparham)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

Astus wrote:

John R. McRae's translation:

'How are householders able to cultivate this meditation? Through the fruits of their karma of faith they can reject all material wealth, take refuge in the Three Treasures, and accept the five precepts. Neither evading, breaking, defiling, or being remiss in the precepts, they can accept the ten wholesome paths (i.e., not violate the ten precepts) and bring about the generation of the various types of wholesomeness. Cultivating chaste behavior, they will destroy the five desires. Without generating jealousy, they will have no affection for wives and children but will always take pleasure in leaving home and accepting the eight precepts. Whenever they go to the monasteries they will have feelings of shame. They will always feel reverence toward those who have left home. Never keeping secret the Dharma, they will always take pleasure in teaching others. They will think with affection and reverence of the preceptors, teachers, and those who preach the Dharma. They will think of their parents and spiritual compatriots as if thinking of the Buddha. They will reside with their parents and spiritual compatriots, helping them live in peace. This is how householders can cultivate this dharma of meditation.'

(The Sutra of Mañjuśrī's Questions, BDK ed, p 131)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 2:30 AM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

Grigoris said:

So basically to cultivate this samadhi a lay person should become a monk or nun?

Astus wrote:

Not at all. The sutra describes the expected behaviour of a devout householder.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

Queequeg said:

Applied to marriage as elective choice, the lack of affection comes across as cold, but also raises the question, why would one bother with marriage and children if one is only going to emotionally abandon them?

Astus wrote:

'Affection' (McRae), or 'passionately attached' (Swanson), are translations for 'ài' (愛), the word that in Buddhist texts are usually for craving (*tṛṣṇā*, *rāga*), but can also mean attachment, while in non-Buddhist contexts it means love. So literally the scripture says 'do not love your wife and children' (不愛妻子). It only makes sense that a householder should recognise the dangers and drawbacks of the emotional bonds for family. Of course, if one has no family and prefers renunciation over marriage, then such a person should definitely not marry (or engage in any form of sensual relation). But when one is already a family person, then seeing how the earthly love for one's family perpetuates suffering is certainly a higher level of wisdom.

The Siksasamuccaya (tr Goodman, p 81-82) has some quotes on the matter as well:

'The Inquiry of Ugra also says:

He should abstain from sexual misconduct, satisfied with his own wife, not longing for the wives of others, looking around with an eye free from attraction and a disenchanted mind. He should frequently attend to and reflect on the thought, "Sensual desires are perpetual suffering."lxvi When thoughts of sensual desire arise in him towards his own wife, and he comes under the influence of reactive emotions, then, seeing the foulness of his wife and with a frightened mind, he should not be bound by attachment to engaging in sensual pleasures, and should always reflect on impermanence, nonself, and impurity. And he should direct his mind as follows: "I should not engage in sensual pleasures even in my thoughts. How much less should I engage in erotic love or the contact of sexual organs?"

The same text says:

A bodhisattva should think about his wife in three ways. What are the three? She is my companion in pleasure and play; she is not my companion in the next world. She is my companion in eating and drinking; she is not my companion in experiencing the evolution of actions. She is my companion in happiness; she is not my companion in suffering. And another three: he should conceive of her as an obstacle to moral discipline, as an obstacle to meditative stability, and as an obstacle to wisdom. And another three: he should conceive of her as a thief, as a prisonguard, and as one of the guards of Hell.'

Nevertheless, while abstaining from any and all sensual activity is preferable, upholding moral behaviour is sufficient for householders. It is not much different from the idea of chastity.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

Queequeg said:

This whole line of practice is, frankly, shitty.

Astus wrote:

Asubha practice is usually not taught to the laity, partly because they rarely aim for renouncing lust.

Queequeg said:

That object happens to be another human being.

Astus wrote:

The object is one's conception of an external stimulus.

Queequeg said:

condemned as Hinayana

Astus wrote:

The https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugrapari%E1%B9%9Bcch%C4%81_S%C5%ABtra is a Mahayana sutra quoted in a Mahayana treatise (<https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Shikshasamucchaya>) by a Mahayana teacher (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shantideva>). Mahayana works rarely accept family life as a viable alternative to renunciation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

如傑優婆塞 said:

It's interesting when compared and contrasted to this list...

"In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the West be ministered to by a husband:

Astus wrote:

From The Sutra on Upasaka Precepts, ch 14 (BDK ed, p 71-72):

'The west represents one's wife. If anyone can provide his wife with garments, food, bedding, medicine, and adornments such as necklaces set with precious stones, he is making offerings to the west. The wife responds in fourteen ways: (1) in whatever she does, she does her best; (2) she is constantly at work and never gets lazy, (3) she completes whatever she does; (4) she does things promptly without losing time; (5) she often entertains guests; (6) she cleans the house and bedding; (7) she is loving and speaks gently; (8) she instructs servants gently; (9) she keeps property well; (10) she rises early and goes to bed late; (11) she cooks well; (12) she is patient in receiving teaching; (13) she covers up [her husband's] faults; and (14) she takes care of her husband when he is sick.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 16th, 2019 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Guidance for Lay People

Content:

Queequeg said:

It's cultivation of aversion, whether it's the being or one's idea of the being that is denigrated.

Astus wrote:

It is revulsion/disgust/turning away (nirveda), as contemplation of foulness (asubha) is the primary antidote for greed (raga).

Queequeg said:

Fortunately we have higher teachings that don't require such cultivation of basically wrong view as a cure for one's fault.

Astus wrote:

Meditation on impurities is a technique meant to overcome the misperception of impure things as pure that forms the basis of desire. If someone is not much affected by desire, then it is possible to skip to more subtle techniques to remove the root of lust. But there is no teaching where one can remain enjoying samsara and at the same time be free from it.

Nagarjuna wrote:

'The three poisons are not destroyed by themselves, and there is no other way to destroy them than to contemplate the inner and outer physical characteristics

(ādhyaṭmika bāhyakāyanimitta) to which one is attached [but that are repulsive]. The three poisons are destroyed only after this contemplation. That is why the bodhisattva who wants to destroy the poison of lust (rāgaviṣa) contemplates the nine notions [so as to teach them to beings].'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225636.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 17th, 2019 at 3:27 PM

Title: Re: Recommend an English Translation of Kamalashila's (c. 9th century CE)

Bhāvanākrama

Content:

SunWuKong said:

Trying to find method for the Indo-Tibetan practice of vipaśyanā.

Astus wrote:

'Meditation and The Concept of Insight in Kamalasila's Bhavanakramas', a thesis by Martin Adams, contains a good translation of the three treatises.

SunWuKong said:

Any other ancient texts on vipaśyanā given consideration.

Astus wrote:

There are quite a lot if you call ancient everything before the 18th century, unless by "Indo-Tibetan" you mean works written by those few Indians who went to Tibet, in which case apart from Santaraksita and Kamalasila you should check out Atisa (e.g. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=F9aEDwAAQBAJ>).

For early sources see e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras, especially the references section where you find some translations and studies.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 17th, 2019 at 4:19 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Brunelleschi said:

absolving karma through hearing the name of a bodhisattva clashes with the concept of karma as something strictly individual.

Astus wrote:

Karma is strictly individual in Mahayana as well.

'The third point is [ownership — the fact] that actions determine your personal lot. The consequences of the actions that someone has done will be experienced by that person

alone: they come to maturity in the aggregates of their doer and in no one else.'
(Gampopa: Ornament of Precious Liberation, IV.6, tr Holmes)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 17th, 2019 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Wayfarer said:

How is that reconciled with the Pure Land principle that the recitation of the Nembutsu is all that is required for rebirth in Sukhavati regardless of one's acts?

Astus wrote:

Not even recitation is required according to some, only faith and vows. However, faith and vows are the individual's action (karma) to attain birth. What Amitabha made possible through his vows were the conditions sufficient for attaining birth. So it's like a school that accepts all applicants, but it does not mean non-applicants enter. As it's expressed in Honen's famed stanza
(<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/honenpoems.html>):

'There is no place where the moonlight
Casts not its cheering ray;
With him who has the seeing eye
Alone that light will stay.'

On the other hand, if one being could actually change the 'karma' of another, then buddhas would have already saved everyone.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 17th, 2019 at 9:37 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clases with the concept of individual karm

Content:

Brunelleschi said:

Transformation of the seed of karma is not a thing in Theravadan Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

Not so. See e.g.: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.099.than.html>

There is no real difference between Buddhist schools regarding karma, only about how the functioning of karma is explained.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2019 at 4:02 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

smcj said:

“Blessings” are what alters karma.

Astus wrote:

Blessing is a consequence of faith, it is not an external magical power changing people's karma, but a product of one's own devotion.

'The compassion and blessings of the Three Jewels are inconceivable, but nevertheless their ability to reach into us depends entirely on our faith and devotion. If you have immense faith and devotion, the compassion and blessings you receive from your teacher and the Three Jewels will be equally immense. If your faith and devotion are just moderate, the compassion and blessings that reach you will also be moderate. If you have only a little faith and devotion, only a little compassion and blessings will reach you. If you have no faith and devotion at all, you will get absolutely nothing. Without faith, even meeting the Buddha himself and being accepted as his disciple would be quite useless'

(Patrul Rinpoche: Words of My Perfect Teacher, p 173)

'Whether those blessings enter your being depends not on the object of your devotion but on your own mind. We've all heard the story about the old lady who had incredible faith and devotion toward a dog's tooth, thinking that it was the BUddha's tooth. Though it was just a dog's tooth, she received the Buddha's blessings and attained enlightenment, which was due not to the thooth but entirely to her strong faith and devotion.

The enlightened mind of the buddhas is free of partiality, so whether you receive their blessings or not depends on the strength of your devotion and your dedication to your practice.'

(Penor Rinpoche, in An Ocean of Blessings, p 9)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2019 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clases with the concept of individual karm

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Extinction of Karma is the point of practice in Theravada.

Astus wrote:

Extinction of greed, anger, and ignorance is the point of any Buddhist path. Removing all past karma, that is a sort of Jain idea, and not a Buddhist one.

Johnny Dangerous said:

AFAIK in Theravada, you cannot have something like Vajrasattva-style purification,

where karmic fruits ripen in a less severe way due to a practice, much less a blessing... you can just eliminate causes.

Astus wrote:

The impact of the result of past actions depends on the present state of mind. Please read the <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.099.than.html>. At the same time, there is no removal of past karma in Mahayana either, as one cannot just dive into the storehouse consciousness and root out seeds, rather through enlightenment the eight consciousnesses are transformed into the four wisdoms.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 18th, 2019 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

smcj said:

I think it's pertinent to this thread.

Astus wrote:

How so? It is a practice. Furthermore, it is a practice about realising that the actual nature of one's mind is pure. It is not a new idea either. See for instance:

'In meditating on one's mind, there is no mind one can seize, except the mind that comes from one's perverted thought. The mind, present in such a form rises from one's false imagination. Like the wind in the sky, which has no foothold. Such a form of the law neither appears, nor disappears. What is sin? What is blessedness? As one's own mind is void of itself, sin and blessedness have no existence. In like manner all the laws are neither fixed nor going towards destruction. If one repents like this, meditating on his mind, there is no mind he can seize the law also does not dwell in the law. All the laws are emancipation, the truth of extinction, and quiescence. Such an aspect is called the great repentance, the greatly adorned repentance, the repentance of the non-sin aspect, and the destruction of discrimination. He who practices this repentance has the purity of body and mind in the law but free as the flowing water.'

(The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue, tr Bunno Kato, p 223)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual karm

Content:

Matt J said:

lack of any sort of alayavijnana that can carry karmic seeds. Rather, the mind was simply a series of states of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

The idea of seeds (bija) is a Sautrantika one, while the alayavijnana (not identical to bhavanga-citta) is a Yogacara concept. Other schools had other explanations.

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw (The Workings of Kamma, p 15, n 56) refers to this passage in the Visuddhimagga (XX.96, ATI ed, p 658):

'There is no heap or store of unarisen mentality-materiality [existing] prior to its arising. When it arises, it does not come from any heap or store; and when it ceases, it does not go in any direction. There is nowhere any depository in the way of a heap or store or hoard of what has ceased. But just as there is no store, prior to its arising, of the sound that arises when a lute is played, nor does it come from any store when it arises, nor does it go in any direction when it ceases, nor does it persist as a store when it has ceased (cf. S IV 197), but on the contrary, not having been, it is brought into being owing to the lute, the lute's neck, and the man's appropriate effort, and having been, it vanishes—so too all material and immaterial states, not having been, are brought into being, and having been, they vanish.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

smcj said:

Both citations are fully supportive of receiving blessings.

Astus wrote:

Sure, receiving blessings is one of the primary methods in Vajrayana. The point is, however, that blessings do not come from an external source.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Wayfarer said:

the same conditions will always give rise to the same effects.

Astus wrote:

However, conditions change, hence effects change. Furthermore, the lute simile is used for the entire set of nama-rupa, and there is nothing beyond nama-rupa. This absence of a substratum beyond nama-rupa is one of the key points of the referenced section, and in relation to karma it's meant to demonstrate the lack of any karma carrier.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

smcj said:

My point being that the DW dismissiveness of religious faith and external divinity in Vajrayana should not go unchallenged.

Astus wrote:

This is not about having issues with faith and various beings.

One can receive blessings because of one's faith and devotion, that is why the level of purity of the object one believes in does not matter. So it is irrelevant whether the teacher is enlightened or not, and it is irrelevant whether the relic is real or fake, one receives blessings even from a fake/ordinary object as long as there is devotion, and does not receive blessings even from a real/supreme object if there is no devotion.

On the other hand, various buddha-lands have various conditions, so it does matter where one aims to gain birth, because the requirements differ. That is why mindfulness of Amitabha is called the easy way, because the requirements are easy to meet, while gaining birth in other buddha-lands is usually not possible for ordinary beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: Are there esoteric schools of Mahayana in Chinese tradition?

Content:

Astus wrote:

https://www.academia.edu/25175930/Is_there_really_Esoteric_Buddhism?fbclid=IwAR3Wa5nmvYgXZ9-DejSr-qdsF7jj7qJSn70uYCvBUc0rfsaoCBhhAljyzQ by Richard D McBride

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 19th, 2019 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Queequeg said:

different rates of (perceptible) change.

Astus wrote:

Somewhat relevant:

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2019 at 6:09 AM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Queequeg said:

Isn't focusing on what is unchanging what one does in practicing faith?

Astus wrote:

One puts faith in the Triple Jewel, however, those are not permanent. There are unconditioned dhammas (the number depends on the system), but having faith in them might be a bit strange (e.g. faith in space). So, one should rely on, i.e. have faith in, what is conducive to liberation, and that's how faith itself is a factor on the path to enlightenment.

BTW, the difference between the duration of material and mental moments is mentioned in Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p 154, 156-157.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2019 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I have to confess I am rather uncomfortable with that claim.

Astus wrote:

What part? Faith in the Triple Jewel, or that they're not eternal? And why?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2019 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?)
clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

Wayfarer said:

That they're not eternal.

Astus wrote:

Faith in the Triple Jewel is quite specific. The standard script for their recollection (anussati) and praise (vandana) (SN 55.1, tr Bodhi; cf

<https://suttacentral.net/sf137/san/sander> as what's used in

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc82362.html> by Nagarjuna):

"Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple possesses confirmed confidence in the Buddha thus: 'The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.'

He possesses confirmed confidence in the Dhamma thus: 'The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise.'

He possesses confirmed confidence in the Sangha thus: 'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals—this Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.'"

Wayfarer said:

The reason being that the critique of impermanence (or more broadly 'the three marks') applies to the skandhas/aggregates which I parse as 'the phenomenal domain'. But the principles of Buddhism - dependent origination and karma - always obtain. They don't only apply some of the time but not other times; which is why they are realised and taught by all the Buddhas of the 'three times'. Isn't that so?

Astus wrote:

Principle and phenomena cannot be separated, there is no impermanence apart from impermanent things, no emptiness apart from the five aggregates. So although it could be said that things are always impermanent, there is no such thing as impermanence that is eternal.

'The conventional is taught to be emptiness;

The emptiness itself is the conventional;

One does not occur without the other,

Just as [being] produced and impermanent.'

(<http://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/Awakening%20Mind%20Commentary.pdf>, v 68)

Although the truth of how things are is always valid, so pratyekabuddhas can attain liberation (MMK 18.11-12), they do so without the presence of a teacher, of a teaching, and of a community - i.e. the Three Jewels.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 2019 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

SunWuKong said:

The karma from "your" past and "your" present affects more than just you, it affects everyone.

Astus wrote:

That would mean if one commits something evil, another will suffer the consequences of that act, in which case it's impossible to be free from suffering, since one is not

responsible to what is experienced.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 21st, 2019 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

SunWuKong said:

People do commit evils and others do suffer as a result, correct? Freedom from suffering means one might receive the result, but they are already gone beyond...

Astus wrote:

Blaming others for one's problems, like waiting for others to fix one's problems, results in passivity and negates the point of practising the path. Furthermore, it means that people are incapable of defining what happens to them. That is why the Buddhist doctrine of karma means that the effects of actions fall on the one who did them. See the quote from Gampopa posted in this thread

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=490237#p490237>. And here is a commentary to it by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche:

'The third section describes how karma is always experienced by its creator. A loose translation would be a boomerang that always returns to the person who throws it. If we consider our actions and we ask, "Who will experience the results?" It is said that the earth will not experience the results., neither will stones or somebody else. The result will inevitably return to oneself, to the same body considered the self. If you have done something then the result will not be experienced by your children or by your neighbor, which is totally impossible. Whatever you do will necessarily come back to you; you and nobody else will have to experience the result. And there is no possible mistake; everything will return to you just because you were the one who did it.' (The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 87)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2019 at 1:13 AM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

SunWuKong said:

I was speaking about harmfulness and harming, which you seem to deny, even though it's one of the 5 precepts.

Astus wrote:

The subject is action and effect. The Buddhist view is that everybody experiences the effects of one's own actions. You seem to claim that one can experience the fruits of others' deeds, a view that is incompatible with the Buddha's teachings.

"Student, beings are owners of karmas, heirs of karmas, they have karmas as their progenitor, karmas as their kin, karmas as their homing-place. It is karmas that differentiate beings according to inferiority and superiority."
(<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.nymo.html>)

'When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: "For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither the heavens nor other people can impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection.'" (http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/enUS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=57)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 22nd, 2019 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Theravadan critique - absolving karma through Bodhisattvas (other power?) clashes with the concept of individual kar

Content:

SunWuKong said:

But that's not to say others have not been harmed in the process.

Astus wrote:

Whatever pain or pleasure one experiences, they are the products of one's actions. That includes those inflicted on oneself by others.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 23rd, 2019 at 6:02 PM

Title: Re: Karma and the Definition of Time

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The whole world is cause and effect; excluding this, there is no sentient being.

From factors (which are) only empty, empty factors originate.'

(Nagarjuna: The Stanzas of The Heart of Interdependent Origination, in '

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf ', p 58)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 24th, 2019 at 4:08 AM

Title: Re: Becoming a Buddhist Scholar

Content:

mani said:

How does one becomes a Buddhist scholar? How to get started? Where to study? How to do it if one doesn't have any money?

Astus wrote:

If by scholar you mean an academic person, some answers have been provided, but there is no need to focus on US universities, there are several options in Europe and Asia as well.

But if you mean scholar in a more general or traditional sense, you should get started by reading, and keep doing that, until you've become well read in Buddhism. Then it's up to you how deep you want to go in what subject.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 27th, 2019 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: 18 dhatu and samjna and vedana

Content:

Si-va-kon said:

I want to understand which of the 18 dhatus are samjna, vedana and samskara.

Astus wrote:

The dharmadhatu.

'These three skandhas, with avijnapti and unconditioned things, are the dharmayatana, the dharmadhatu.'

(AKB 1.15b-d, vol 1, p 73, tr Pruden)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2019 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Emotions = suffering?

Content:

mariel.hespanhol said:

In the Four Seals, it is said that all emotions are suffering.

Astus wrote:

It is generally a good approach to look for the original term instead of an English translation.

The Tibetan has that seal as all <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asava> (zag bcas) are duḥkha (sdug bsngal ba). At the same time, in the Dharmasamgraha (<https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Dharma-Sangraha/Dharmas-041-060.htm#toc14>) it is all compounded (saṃskāra) are suffering, while the <http://www.fodian.net/world/0599.html> (http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T15n0599_001) has all beings (一切皆) suffer (苦).

mariel.hespanhol said:

Am I wrong to interpret that this sentence simply means that duality is suffering?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you understand by duality. It is probably better to say that all actions

with (i.e. tainted by) clinging are related to suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2019 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Liberate all living beings

Content:

Norden said:

Bodhisattva vows not to attain nibbana before save all living beings.

Astus wrote:

A bodhisattva vows not to attain the nirvana of the sravakas (aka nirupadisesa-nirvana) but the mahaparinirvana of the buddhas (i.e. apratisthita-nirvana), in other words, a bodhisattva aims for buddhahood and not arhatship.

Norden said:

Samsara will always exist. Even the Buddha couldn't save all living beings, how is it possible for a Bodhisattva to save all living beings?

Astus wrote:

Buddhas do not stop liberating beings.

'Without conceptual thoughts or efforts, Buddhas manifest benefit for sentient beings spontaneously and unceasingly.'

(Gampopa: Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 297)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 1st, 2019 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

is there any evidence of such interpretations in the canon?

Astus wrote:

The very first speech of the Buddha, the <https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/bodhi>, has it: 'This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed' ('Taṃ kho panidaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ bhāvetabban'ti). The Four Noble Truths itself tells exactly that the eightfold path is the path leading to the cessation of suffering. You may also look into the <https://suttacentral.net/sn45> for basic teachings on the N8P.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 2nd, 2019 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Insect karma

Content:

ydnan321 said:
I've heard that from a sutra

Astus wrote:
Any concrete title?

ydnan321 said:
the Buddha pointed at an ant and said that it had taken rebirth continuously as an ant in the same place where the past 6 Buddhas had resided. That is infinitely long... I've heard stories where animals obtained human or even heaven rebirth upon hearing the Buddha's preaching or come in contact with Buddha's holy objects...

Astus wrote:
There are implicit (neyartha) and explicit (nitārtha) teachings. Stories, especially those that involve animals, are likely to be like the fables of Aesop, not doctrinal statements.

ydnan321 said:
Why has this ant that had been residing in the same place with the past 7 Buddhas was then not able to escape its ant rebirth?

Astus wrote:
It'd be good to first know the whole story before one starts weaving further thoughts around it.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, May 3rd, 2019 at 6:03 PM
Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?
Content:

Viach said:
The Path as a result of the practice can be developed, it can arise, it can be born. The Path as a set of practices can't be developed, it can't arise, it can't be born. The Path as a set of practices can only be practiced.

Astus wrote:
The path is what one practices. There are no practices to get to the path. And the goal of the path, liberation, is what is the result of practice, not the practice itself is the result.

As it's said of the Noble Eightfold Path: "This is the only path; there is none other for the purification of insight. Tread this path, and you will bewilder Mara."
(<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.20.budd.html.274>)

Viach said:
the Buddha did not use phrases like 'practice of Path' or 'to practice the Path'.

Astus wrote:
It is right there as the fourth noble truth. But if you mean the Buddha did not use the

English word "practice", you are right. What you find, however, is the word 'bhāveti', and it means 'to cultivate' and 'to develop'.

Katame aṭṭha dhammā bhāvetabbā? Ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo seyyathidaṃ—
sammādiṭṭhi, sammāsaṅkappo, sammāvācā, sammākammanto, sammāājīvo,
sammāvāyāmo, sammāsatī, sammāsamādhī.

What eight things should be developed? The noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn34/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 3rd, 2019 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

Does anyone know if Pali/Sanskrit has a word identical to the English word "practice"? And if so, why did the Buddha not use it, but use the word 'bhāveti'?

Astus wrote:

To <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practise>:

1. Perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to acquire, improve or maintain proficiency in it.
2. Carry out or perform (a particular activity, method, or custom) habitually or regularly.

Bhāveti does have a meaning similar to practising something. One of its derivatives is bhāvanā, that is commonly translated as meditation. Another word for practising is paṭipajjati, related to paṭipadā ('means of reaching a goal or destination, path, way, means, method, mode of progress') - see

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=491432#p491432>: 'dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā' (the way leading to the cessation of suffering) -, and it means 'to enter upon (a path), to go along, follow out (a way or plan), to go by; fig. to take a line of action, to follow a method, to be intent on, to regulate one's life'

'What is the Truth of the Path (mārgasatya)? It is the means by which one understands suffering (duḥkhaṃ parijānīte), abandons the origin [of suffering] (samudayaṃ prajāhāti), attains the cessation [of suffering] (nirodhaṃ sāṅgātkaroti) and cultivates the path (mārgaṃ bhāvayati). This, in brief, is called the characteristic of the Truth of the Path.' (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 140-141)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 4th, 2019 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

Obviously, if the Path were a set of practices, the Buddha would use the word *paṭipajjati*, related to *paṭipadā*. But, he used the word *bhāveti*, associated with the word *bhāvanā*, i.e. Path is a description of the eight qualities of a meditative state already achieved. (Path is stable stay (in time and in circumstances) in this meditative state). Q.E.D.

Astus wrote:

Meditation is not something that just is, it is cultivation, it is training, it is practice. A path is something that leads from one place from another, it is not where one stays around. Also, you're neglecting the Four Noble Truths.

good practice - *kalyāṇa vatta*

'But there is this kind of good practice that has been instituted by me now, which leads to complete disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. And what is that good practice? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is the good practice instituted by me now, which leads to complete disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana.'

(MN 83.21)

in these things you should all train - *tattha sabbeheva ... sikkhitabbaṃ*

'So, bhikkhus, these things that I have taught you after directly knowing them—that is, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right kinds of striving, the four bases for spiritual power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, the Noble Eightfold Path—in these things you should all train in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing.'

(MN 103.3)

comes to fulfilment by development - *bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati*

'The view of a person such as this is right view. His intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his mindfulness is right mindfulness, his concentration is right concentration. But his bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified earlier. Thus this Noble Eightfold Path comes to fulfilment in him by development. When he develops this Noble Eightfold Path, the four foundations of mindfulness also come to fulfilment in him by development; the four right kinds of striving also come to fulfilment in him by development; the four bases for spiritual power also come to fulfilment in him by development; the five faculties also come to fulfilment in him by development; the five powers also come to fulfilment in him by development; the seven enlightenment factors also come to fulfilment in him by development.'

(MN 149.10)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 5th, 2019 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

Yes, Arians are staying in one place. This place is called reality (the way it is). This is the "practice"(bhāveti) of vipashyana. They walk the path (the path of seeing (darshanamarga) and the path of intense contemplation (bhavana marga)) from the first bhumi (one place) to the tenth (another place).

Astus wrote:

You are missing the first two parts of the path, the way how one arrives at the third, the path of seeing.

'the path is fivefold: [1] path of preparation (sambhāramārga), [2] path of application (prayogamārga), [3] path of vision (darśanamārga), [4] path of cultivation (bhāvanāmārga), and [5] path of conclusion (niṣṭhāmārga).'

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 141)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 5th, 2019 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

On the first two paths ones do not practice 8NP.

Astus wrote:

All eight paths and three trainings are used during the first two paths. Just look at what those paths are made up of in Patrul Rinpoche's summary. At the same time, recognise that what Patrul Rinpoche describes follows the Yogacara interpretation of those paths where they fit the 37 bodhipaksadharma into a path system.

Or do you believe that there are different practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom when it's on one path or another? The application of mindfulness is the application of mindfulness, whether it's on the first or the fourth path.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 5th, 2019 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

They are fundamentally different: the first are based on the dualistic mind, the second on the non-dual prajna.

Astus wrote:

Even for a noble being there are afflictions, and afflictions can exist only based on a

dualistic mind, hence the need for practising.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 5th, 2019 at 6:09 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

Afflictions are based on a dualistic mind, but not practice(of the fourth path). These are different things.

Astus wrote:

Since noble beings have afflictions, their practice is not based purely on non-dualistic prajna either. So, where is the difference between the application of mindfulness on the different paths?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2019 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Viach said:

Practitioners on the first two paths have no the wisdom that was realized on the path of seeing. They have nothing to get used to. The difference is here.

Astus wrote:

There are stages. First one learns (śruta), then one understands (cintā), and after that one cultivates (bhāvanā) the teaching. All three are different
https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Three_wisdom_tools.

'Firm in his cultivation, endowed with teaching and reflection, he will be capable of giving himself up to meditation.'
(AKB VI.5ab; vol 3, p 911)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2019 at 3:37 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

There is a path to cessation/liberation and there is a 'path' to buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Only if you do not accept the ekayana doctrine is there three paths.

Sherab said:

The former path is a path in the relative. The latter path is a 'path' in the absolute. The

former path is causal; the latter path is not.

Astus wrote:

Do you deny the necessity of accumulating merit and wisdom? If not, then it is very much a relative and causal path to buddhahood. If yes, then you deny the whole possibility of attaining buddhahood.

Sherab said:

Logically speaking, there is no path that can take a practitioner from the conditioned to the unconditioned. This is because what is conditioned and what is unconditioned are mutually exclusive.

Astus wrote:

There is no such thing called the unconditioned. It is the cessation of ignorance, the elimination of the two types of obscurations, that brings about enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 6th, 2019 at 6:39 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

Accumulation of merit and wisdom is not denied.

Astus wrote:

then it is very much a relative and causal path to buddhahood

Without the unconditioned there is no liberation from the conditioned. Udana 8.3

'Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also a word provisionally invented by the First Teacher. Now, if the First Teacher provisionally invented this word, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And, if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the unconditioned does not exist.'

(Samdhinirmocana Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 12)

Admittedly, a straightforward read of Udana 8.3 is impossible for those who believe that the relative is all there is.

Because it is relative, how could it be assumed to actually exist? Hence appearances are empty, and there is no emptiness apart from appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2019 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

As I mentioned before, logically speaking, there is no path that can take a practitioner from the conditioned to the unconditioned. This is because what is conditioned and what is unconditioned are mutually exclusive.

Astus wrote:

That is an erroneous logic that fails to take account of what conditioned and what unconditioned mean, of what the conventional and what the ultimate truth are. From the same chapter 2 of the Samdhinirmocana Sutra (BDK ed):

'if the descriptive marks of ultimate meaning were entirely different from the marks of conditioned states of being, then those who have already gained insight into truth would not have expunged images of conditioned states of being. And if they had not expunged images of conditioned states of being, then they would not have attained liberation from bondage to those images. Not being liberated from those images, they would not be freed from bondage to their gross weaknesses. Not being freed from bondage to gross weaknesses, those who have gained insight into truth would have been unable to attain the quiescent cessation of supreme skill or full, perfect awakening. ...

Suviśuddhimati, neither is it the case that those who have gained insight into truth have not been able to expunge all the images of conditioned states of being, for they have indeed been able to expunge them. It is not the case that those who have gained insight into truth have been incapable of liberation from bondage to the images of conditioned states of being, for they have indeed been capable of such liberation. It is not the case that those who have gained insight into truth have been incapable of liberation from bondage to gross weaknesses, for they have indeed been capable of such liberation. It is precisely because they have been capable of liberation from these two obstacles that they have been able to attain the quiescent cessation of supreme skill and to realize full, perfect wisdom. Therefore, the opinion that the descriptive marks of the truth of ultimate meaning are entirely different from the descriptive marks of conditioned states of being is not reasonable. If some say that the marks of the truth of ultimate meaning are entirely different from the marks of conditioned states of being, from the above argument you should understand that this opinion is neither intelligent nor truly reasonable.'

(p 18-19)

'On the other hand, if the descriptive mark of the truth of ultimate meaning were entirely different from conditioned states of being, then it would not be true that all conditioned states of being are manifestations only of the absence of self, of the absence of essence. The marks of ultimate truth would then simultaneously be held to be characterized in two different manners, one of defilement and one of purity. But, Suviśuddhimati, these marks of conditioned things are indeed different. Those who practice meditation do search for ultimate meaning in the conditioned states of being they have seen, heard, understood, and known. Also, all conditioned states of being are indeed manifestations only of the absence of self, the absence of essence, and they are rightly termed marks of ultimate truth. It is not true that it is simultaneously characterized in two manners, one of defilement and one of purity.'

(p 20)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 8th, 2019 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

Yes, but why should this imply that the relative is all there is?

Astus wrote:

No such implication was made. The point is that there is no unconditioned apart from the conditioned, furthermore, that there is a path to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 9th, 2019 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

there is a path to temporary liberation and a path to permanent liberation.

Astus wrote:

So, there is agreement on the matter of there being a path one needs to follow in order to become liberated.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 10th, 2019 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

The path to permanent liberation is non-causal.

Astus wrote:

Among the three unconditioned dharmas (AKB I.5-6, vol 1, p 59-61) there are two types of cessation: with and without analysis, of which the former means nirvana, and the latter just ordinary cessation of things. So liberation has not only a cause in general, but it must be specific, hence the requirement for a path that leads one to freedom from afflictions. As Wangchuk Dorje explained:

'Cessation that is analytic is cessation attained by the power of analyzing suffering and the other noble truths with full knowing. Its essence is a cessation that is a removal of defiled dharmas.'

(Jewels from the Treasury, p 104)

Also, a path means a way that takes one from point A to point B. It is per definition causal, hence a "non-causal path" cannot exist.

'you absolutely must not maintain your mind in a state of waiting for awakening. If you maintain your mind in a state of waiting for awakening, then the eye of the Way will be blocked by the waiting state of your mind.'

(Letters of Dahui, p 311)

'People in many ages from the ancient past to the present have thought that the words "when the time has come. . ." are about waiting for a time in the future when the buddha-nature might be manifest before us. [They think that,] continuing their practice with this attitude, they will naturally meet the time when the buddha-nature is manifest before them. They say that, because the time has not come, even if they visit a teacher and ask for Dharma, and even if they pursue the truth and make effort, [the buddhanature] is not manifest before them. Taking such a view they vainly return to the world of crimson dust and vacantly stare at the Milky Way. People like this may be a variety of naturalistic non-Buddhists.'

(Dogen: Bussho, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 11th, 2019 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

The cessation achieved by arhats is from following a causal path. That is why the Buddha has to awaken them subsequently from their temporary cessation and lead them to buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Analytical cessation applies to both sravakas and bodhisattvas.

'Pratisamkhyanirodha is of two kinds: a. obtained by the destruction of bonds, that is to say, obtained when one has cut off the klesas that cause rebirth; b. obtained by the destruction of barriers, that is to say, realized when all remaining barriers have been cleared away.'

(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 765, tr Wei Tat)

Sherab said:

The non-causal path cannot involve any effort. To maintain the mind in a state of waiting for awakening is an effort.

Astus wrote:

Where liberation is without cause one can do nothing to become liberated, and that's why such an incorrect view can be called waiting for awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 12th, 2019 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

If analytical cessation is all that is needed, then the Buddha need not awaken arhats so

as to lead them to buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

It is a type of cessation, and as such can apply to both the complete elimination of klesavarana and jneyavarana, as the provided quote from the Cheng Weishi Lun states. It does not mean that the nirvana of arhats and buddhas are identical. What it means is that the elimination of hindrances requires wisdom, it doesn't happen on its own (i.e. without cause and effort).

Sherab said:

One of the gates of liberation is wishlessness or without intent. Intent or wish is an action, an effort. To wait has the aspect of expecting something. That is an action, an effort.

Astus wrote:

Wishlessness is a type of samadhi, it doesn't mean a practitioner should be without aspiration and effort. To put it another way, there is relative and there is absolute bodhicitta, and one needs both of them. Similarly, one needs both method and wisdom, where method includes the viryaparamita.

'All of you Bhikshus! You should always single-mindedly and diligently seek the way out of all the moving and unmoving dharmas of the world, for they are all decaying, unfixed appearances.'

(http://www.cttbusa.org/bequeathed_teaching/sutra.htm)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 13th, 2019 at 4:19 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

You have not explained why arhats need to be awakened by the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

I have not even touched that topic, so what explanation do you want?

Sherab said:

There are the other two gates of liberation: signlessness and emptiness. They do not mean that the practitioner should be without discrimination of signs and without discrimination of emptiness? (warning: double negatives)

Astus wrote:

The problem is not with the phenomena that occur, it is with the identification with and grasping at them. Aiming for blankness is the wrong approach.

Sherab said:

I don't understand this part of the quotation: "... unmoving dharmas of the world ...

decaying, unfixed appearances". What do you think are the unmoving dharmas of the world that are decaying, unfixed appearances?

Astus wrote:

Moving dharmas refer to the kamadhatu, unmoving dharmas refer to the rupadhatu and arupadhatu (as they're the dhyana realms), so together they mean the three realms, the whole of samsara. (<http://ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/07-13-2/86.php>)

Sherab said:

If the relative is all there is

Astus wrote:

See my <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=492136#p492136>. Also note that the doctrine of the two truths is fairly universally accepted among Buddhists.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 14th, 2019 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Are there such phrases in the canon?

Content:

Sherab said:

subsequently to follow a non-causal path to attain permanent liberation.

Astus wrote:

What non-causal path would that be? Sravakas change to the bodhisattva path that consists of accumulating wisdom and merit through the cultivation of the paramitas, i.e. a causal path.

Sherab said:

It is not a non-causal path.

Astus wrote:

What is a non-causal path?

Sherab said:

Then the quote that you provided previously does not imply that there is no non-causal path.

Astus wrote:

Since both sravakas and bodhisattvas attain liberation through analytical cessation, and analytical cessation involves intention, effort, etc., it is not without cause. Apart from those two what could you call a non-causal path?

Sherab said:

was intended to show that there is a non-causal path.

Astus wrote:

That sutta says nothing about a path. It simply states that there is nirvana, the unborn and undying, the cessation of suffering. Therefore, it is relevant for the 3rd noble truth, the goal, but not the path (i.e. the 4th noble truth).

Sherab said:

In fact, it is more indicative of the relative is NOT all there is.

Astus wrote:

Agreed, and that was not a contended point. What does that have to do with what sort of non-causal path?

Sherab said:

If the relative is all there is

Astus wrote:

That is not anyone's position, consequently problems of a non-existent position are not actual problems.

Sherab said:

If the relative is all there is, the cessation of consciousness results in annihilation.

Astus wrote:

Since there has never been a self, what/who is annihilated? Also, consciousness is impermanent, rises and ceases every moment, so you might as well say that there is annihilation all the time, however, because there is also birth every moment, it is not really annihilation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2019 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: Do Bodhisattvas and non-historical Buddhas "exist"?

Content:

KiwiNFLFan said:

do Bodhisattvas, Dharma Protectors, non-historical Buddhas like Amitabha and the Medicine Buddha actually "exist"?

Astus wrote:

Yes, although calling them "non-historical" is questionable.

KiwiNFLFan said:

What I mean is, is there an actual being called Avalokiteshvara out there somewhere, presumably in a non-corporeal form, who listens to the cries of the world and helps those who call upon Him/Her?

Astus wrote:

Yes, but only beings in the formless realms have no body.

KiwiNFLFan said:

Also, does this vary across schools of Mahayana Buddhism? Are some schools more likely to say that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are real, while others are not?

Astus wrote:

People accustomed to a materialist view have trouble dealing with some basic parts of Buddhism. Nevertheless, even if somebody cannot yet accept a different view and needs think of them as symbols, just by appreciating the symbolism there is a connection.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 15th, 2019 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Are yidams and Tibetan Buddhist "deities" actually real?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The dharma protectors serve entirely to increase all favorable conditions for our dharma practice and to help us remove the various obstacles which can arise in our dharma practice. It is very important that we really believe that they are really there and that we have confidence in their power to help. If we do not have this complete confidence, we will receive little benefit from them.'

(Thrangu Rinpoche, in The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2019 at 2:07 AM

Title: Re: Are yidams and Tibetan Buddhist "deities" actually real?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The question of the degree of existence of the yidams is often asked. Yidams really exist, but in a way different from ours, because they are not conditioned by karma.

Avalokita, for example, is an emanation of the compassion of all the Buddhas, appearing with the intention of helping all beings. It is a totally pure manifestation from its origin, and is in no way the result of karmic causes supplying the white color of its body, the lotus in the left hand, the rosary in the right hand, and the other characteristics. The different traits and attributes of Avalokita are only the formal expression of compassion.

Likewise, its two eyes mean that it possesses perfect knowledge and compassion. With the first eye, it completely knows the totality of phenomena of the cycle of existence and liberation. Having the eye (Tibetan, chen) of compassion, unceasingly (Tibetan, re) it watches (Tibetan, zig) beings with love. Consequently, its name in Tibetan is Chenrezig. The silks and jewels are worn to indicate that it is endowed with all the qualities of Awakening.'

(Kalu Rinpoche: Secret Buddhism, p 22-23)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2019 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Do Bodhisattvas and non-historical Buddhas "exist"?

Content:

KiwiNFLFan said:

So if only beings in the formless realms have no body, then do Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Ksitigarbha etc have some form of body, even if it isn't the flesh and blood body of a human being?

Astus wrote:

Bodhisattvas, similarly to other beings, are reborn in the three realms. The difference between the rebirth of noble (awakened) and ordinary beings is that the former is not driven by afflictions but by compassion and vows.

KiwiNFLFan said:

Also, is it okay for Mahayana Buddhists to pray to Buddhas/Bodhisattvas for help with day-to-day problems, the way Christians or Hindus pray to their God(s)?

Astus wrote:

Of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 16th, 2019 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: Do Bodhisattvas and non-historical Buddhas "exist"?

Content:

£\$&^@ said:

is a literalist interpretation and is not taught by all Vajrayana teachers.

Astus wrote:

What part is not taught? That bodhisattvas are born in samsara, that the birth of arya bodhisattvas is different from ordinary beings, or that it is OK to pray to them?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 27th, 2019 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

DharmaChakra said:

Traditions are separated by cultural differences only

Astus wrote:

Differentiating the three families (gotra) of sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and buddha is an Indian Buddhist doctrine that is accepted by all surviving Buddhist schools, regardless of location.

'The nirvedhabhagiyas are of three types by reason of the distinction of the three gotras

or families. The ascetic belongs to the family of the Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas or Buddhas; and Heat, the Summits, etc., are of the family of the ascetic who cultivates them.'

(Abhidharmakosabhasyam, vol 3, p 940, tr Pruden)

DharmaChakra said:
the essence of the practices is one

Astus wrote:
What essence?

DharmaChakra said:
Intellectuals study concepts ... Yogis study states of being

Astus wrote:
States of being are concepts as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 31st, 2019 at 4:08 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Astus wrote:

It doesn't really make sense to unify schools. Mahayana includes and accepts the Agamas and Abhidharma works, while if a Theravadin were to accept Mahayana scriptures and treatises that would simply make that person a Mahayana follower, unless they come up with a new explanation of how the Mahayana is a subsidiary of the Theravada doctrines, thus not unifying the schools but actually creating a new one.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 2nd, 2019 at 6:40 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

The current form of Theravada is a 19th century reformation movement.

Astus wrote:

That is a serious simplification, that could as well be applied to the various Mahayana schools as well. For instance, just because the Rime movement appeared in the 19th century, and Humanistic Buddhism in the 20th, it does not render the whole of Mahayana a new thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 2nd, 2019 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

Theravada is not a Yana, it is a sub-category of the Shravakayana.

Astus wrote:

Theravada is a school all right, but it's neither limited to the sravaka path, and more importantly, nor is it a unified tradition. Even in the same country there are different teachers with diverse methods. Theravada is a living tradition, and the fundamental teachings and practices go way back before the 19th century. E.g. Buddhaghosa, Theravada's probably most influential teacher, lived in the 5th century.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 2nd, 2019 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

plenty of in-fighting regarding the validity of Buddhaghosa and his Visudhimagga?

Astus wrote:

It doesn't change his importance. Furthermore, the modern changes in Theravada does not negate the tradition's roots and continuity. For instance, there were significant reforms in the Soto and Rinzai schools in the last couple of centuries, but those do not make them disconnected from their past history.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 3rd, 2019 at 2:34 AM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

But I do not believe that they are the same thing that existed in the Buddha's time...

Astus wrote:

Nothing remains the same, right? Nevertheless, the Buddhadharma is still present and alive today, so it's not yet lost either, consequently one can learn it now just as much as one could at the time of the Buddha. The main point is that current Theravada is not a product of a 19th century reform, nor was there any one reform in the 19th century that affected the entirety of Theravada. Also, reformations of Buddhist communities is not a new phenomenon, as it's occurred several times where people intended to return to or keep the correct teaching (e.g. in Sri Lankan Buddhism: the writing down of the Tipitaka, the revival and reform during the Polonnaruwa era (11-13th c.), the revival and reform of the monastic community by the rulers of Kandy during the 16th and 18th centuries).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 3rd, 2019 at 5:42 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Taking the topic back on Zen, here are some quotes:

'Because of their inferior capacity, the Tathagata preached to the Hinayanists only the doctrine of the nonexistence of atman and did not preach his doctrines in their entirety; as a result the Hinayanists have come to believe that the five components, the constituents of samsaric existence, are real; being terrified at the thought of being subject to birth and death, they erroneously attach themselves to nirvana.'

(Asvaghosa: The Awakening of Faith, BDK ed, p 57-58)

'To awaken to the incomplete truth of voidness of self and then practice is inferior-vehicle dhyana.'

(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 103)

'One just cultivates the discerning wisdom of non-self (the truth of the path) in order to cut off passion, etc., stop all karma, and realize the thusness of voidness of self. He obtains the fruit of stream enterer, [the fruit of once returner to this world, and the fruit of non-returner to this world,] up to and including extinguishing all evil bonds and obtaining the fruit of arhat (the truth of extinction). Having burned up body and extinguished knowledge, he is eternally free of all suffering.'

(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 126-127)

'If he activates the various ascriptive views for a single moment, he will fall into the way of heresy. If he perceives there to be generation [of the elements of reality] and moves toward [a state of] extinction, he will fall into the way of the sravakas. If he does not perceive there to be generation but only perceives extinction, he will fall into the way of the solitary enlightened ones (pratyekabuddhas).'

(Huangbo Xiyun: Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 24)

'The party of perverse teachers teaches members of the scholar- official class "to unify mind, to do stillness- sitting, to pay no attention to any matter [mundane or supramundane], and to go on stopping- to- rest." Isn't this nothing other than using [false] mind to put [false] mind to rest, using [false] mind to put a stop to [false] mind, using [false] mind to exert [false] mind? If you practice in this way, how could you not fall into an outside Way or into the extremist annihilationism of "Chan peace and quiet" found in the Hinayāna-hearer and private-buddha vehicles?'

(Dahui Zonggao, in The Letters of Chan Master Dahui Pujue, p 126)

(Moreover, as the Dharma Master Wonhyo said:)

'Furthermore, in Lesser [Vehicle] sages's assumptions about the mind, because initially the nature is produced, through progressively subtle mental states (viz., lesser sages gain access [to higher states of meditative absorption] through the three expedients of gradual subtlety, gradual refinement, and refined refinement), [those sages] attain mental extinction; [however, since this state] is devoid of wisdom or its radiance, it is no different from empty space. In Great Beings' [S. Mahāsattva] understanding of the mind,

because originally the nature is unproduced, [those bodhisattvas] do not aspire to extinction by leaving behind subtle thoughts; rather, through the presence of authentic, radiant wisdom, they realize the dharmadhātu.'

(Bojo Jinul: Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 131)

'Some people do not realize that the nature of merit and demerit is empty; they sit rigidly without moving and suppress both body and mind, like a rock crushing grass. To regard this as cultivation of the mind is a great delusion.

For this reason it is said, "Śrāvakas eradicate their delusions thought after thought, but the thought to perform this eradication is a brigand."

(Bojo Jinul: Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 228)

'In the zazen of patch-robed monks, first you should sit correctly with upright posture. Then regulate your breath and settle your mind. In the lesser vehicle originally there were two gateways, which were counting breaths and contemplating impurity. In the lesser vehicle, people used counting to regulate their breath. However, the buddha ancestors' engaging of the way always differed from the lesser vehicle.

A buddha ancestor said, "Even if you arouse the mind of a leprous wild fox, never practice the self-regulation of the two vehicles."

(Dogen: Eihei Koroku, p 348)

'Those of the two vehicles are distressed and fall into empty voidness; ordinary people are attached and tangled up in discriminations.'

(Dogen: Eihei Koroku, p 375)

'The ancestral teacher Nagarjuna said, "Zazen is exactly the Dharma of all buddhas, and yet, those outside the way also have zazen. However, those outside the way make the error of attaching to its taste and to the thorns of false views. Therefore it is not the same as the zazen of buddhas and bodhisattvas. The two vehicles of Śrāvakas [and pratyekabuddhas] also have zazen. However, those two vehicles [seek to] control their own minds, and have the tendency of seeking after nirvana. Therefore, this is different from the zazen of buddhas and bodhisattvas."

The teacher Dogen said: The ancestral teacher Nagarjuna spoke like this. We should know that although the name of zazen (sitting meditation) is used by those of the two vehicles and those outside the way, it is not the same as the sitting transmitted by buddha ancestors.'

(Dogen: Eihei Koroku, p 459)

'A questioner asked: "If one were truly able to attain an empty mind, would he return directly to the void, never to be born again?"

Bassui responded: "That is the view of nonexistence held by heretics and those of the two vehicles. Of what value could this be to one who has obtained the Way? Actually, holders of this view are inferior to dogs and wild foxes."

(Mud and Water: The Collected Teachings of Zen Master Bassui, p 176)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 4th, 2019 at 3:28 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Varis said:

Grigoris is correct, it's really not an oversimplification at all. There was a concerted effort to remove what was regarded by the Dhammayuttika Nikaya as superstitious and non-Buddhist practices from Theravada monasteries. In effect, it was a protestantization of Theravada Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

First of all, that is only Thailand, not the whole of Theravada. Secondly, even in Thailand the Dhammayuttika Nikaya is still a small minority (around 10% of all monks) after over a century of strong state support.

So stating that the current form of Theravada is the product of a 19th century reform still looks very much like an oversimplification. It is actually similar to how 20th century "reformed" Japanese Zen was projected on the whole of East Asian Buddhism, while it was just the idealised image of a few people (like DT Suzuki).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 4th, 2019 at 6:42 PM

Title: Re: Stumbled across Thich Thanh Tu's Truc Lam Thien materials in English...

Content:

Astus wrote:

See also previous topic: <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=11662>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 4th, 2019 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: Stumbled across Thich Thanh Tu's Truc Lam Thien materials in English...

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two other parts I'd highlight.

On meditation and study

(http://www.tvvu.thienvienvouu.com/media/NOI%20QUY%202018%20-%20Ban%20In%20Lan%20_VO%20UU.pdf, p 53-55):

Since Vietnamese Buddhism inherits the treasure of Meditation Tradition but fails to faithfully preserve it so this tradition has been deviated. Henceforth, meditation monasteries advocate Dual Practice of Meditation and Study, that is the practice of meditation and study of sutras and discourses on the Dharma. Moreover, at the present time, many Vietnamese monastics practice meditation but few truly practice Orthodox Meditation Tradition, they may be easily misled; consequently, they may become physically ill or mentally disturbed. So, if meditation monasteries do not

introduce the study of sutras and discourses taught by the Buddha and Patriarchs to provide strong support to Meditation Tradition, many monastics would not be able to avoid uncertainty and nervousness. That is the fundamental reason monastics in meditation monasteries must study sutras and discourses.

On sitting meditation

(http://www.tvvu.thienvienvouu.com/media/NGHI%20THUC%20THIEN%20MON%202018_Ban%20In%20Lan%20_VO%20UU.pdf, p 127-131):

There are three methods for beginning practitioners:

a. Counting The Breath Method: “Sổ” means to count, “tức” means breath, “counting the breath method” signifies observing the in-and-out breaths, counting silently from one to ten. There are two ways to count the breaths: fast and slow.

Fast counting: Inhale completely, count “one”, exhale totally, count “two”..., continue to “ten”. Then restart from “one”. [Keep counting in this manner during the entire sitting meditation session.]

Slow counting: Inhale completely and exhale totally, count “one”; inhale completely and exhale totally, count “two”, continue to “ten”. Then restart from “one”. Keep counting in this manner during the entire sitting meditation session. While counting from “one” to “ten”, halfway if forgetting or suspecting that the numbers are mixed up, restart the counting from “one”.

Having practiced for some time, practitioners count correctly without making mistakes, then they can proceed to the Observing The Breath Method.

b. Observing The Breath Method:

“Tùy” means observe, “tức” means breath. “Observing the breath method” signifies following and observing the breath. As we inhale, we know where the breath is, as we exhale we also follow and observe the breath, we are fully aware of it. While observing the breath, the practitioners also realize that life exists in the breathing. Exhaling without inhaling, life stops existing. The breath is impermanent, life is also unstable, unreal and temporary.

When the breath observation is skillfully practiced, the practitioners can proceed to the next stage:

Recognizing The True Mind.

c. Recognizing The True Mind:

This is the essential part of the Zen meditation practice in Zen meditation centers.

From the practice of observing the breath,

- The practitioners progress to the stage of stopping the observation, the mind is peaceful and concentrated.

- At this moment, the practitioners consistently remind themselves “Mind-consciousness fully aware of its mental objects is True Mind”.

- Reminding in this manner until the True Mind is recognized, then we only need to acknowledge that “True Mind is present”.

Pay attention to the practice at this stage, it should not be too tense, be awake and clear-minded, gently preserve the practice. Once fully adept with recognition of the presence of the True Mind’s awareness, then proceed on to the stage of living with the True Mind’s nature.

The practitioners recognize that True Mind signifies “know perpetually and clearly without thoughts”.

- Perform this practice until completely skillful, only keep in mind the two words “no thoughts”.
- Abandon the two words “no thoughts”, thus, the mind is limitless and everlasting. If feeling dreamy or drowsy, open eyes wide, reorganize the practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 4th, 2019 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

the Thai context

Astus wrote:

The vast majority of current Thai monks do not belong to the reform movement started in the 19th century. That does not mean nothing has changed, but at least there wasn't any controlled change either.

Grigoris said:

I find it very difficult to believe that Lankan Theravada would not have been influenced by this long-standing spiritual and academic tradition.

Astus wrote:

It was in the 12th century that Parākramabāhu I "purified" the monastic community, and practically abolished non-Theravada communities, that resulted in the gradual disappearance of other schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 5th, 2019 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Stumbled across Thich Thanh Tu's Truc Lam Thien materials in English...

Content:

Sentient Light said:

I think what he's doing is pointing out that the whole Vipassana-only kind of meditation isn't traditional, isn't founded in the scriptures we have from the Buddha (even the Nikayas/Agamas), and doesn't have an ancient lineage of meditation instruction connected to it.

Astus wrote:

Aren't there monasteries that maintain Mahayana and Thien practices? On the other hand, Thich Thanh Tu revived/reinvented the Truc Lam school that died out centuries ago, so wouldn't his criticism about the lack of 'Orthodox' tradition apply more generally than just those who took up Vipassana?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 5th, 2019 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Varis said:

Their ideas on meditation were modern, based on their westernized interpretations of the suttas and the vishuddhimagga.

Astus wrote:

What is a westernised interpretation?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 6th, 2019 at 2:54 AM

Title: Re: Zen Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Basically there are two types of Zen practices: kanhua/kanna 話頭 and mozhao/mokusho 默照. For a short summary see:

<http://chancenter.org/download/free-books/In-the-Spirit-of-Chan.pdf>. On kanhua practice see: http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020; and on the mozhao practice: https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf. Also, as a counter-

balance to oversimplification, you might want to read:

<http://chancenter.org/download/free-books/ChanPracticeandFaith.pdf>.

But there are many variations on them, so Zen practice can actually mean quite a few things.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 6th, 2019 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: Choosing between Chan, Zen, Jìngtǔzōng, and Jōdo Shinshū

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chan and Pure Land should not really be thought of as separate schools, they're rather Mahayana methods that can be used either together or apart.

For a clearer picture, see these for instance:

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf

<https://archive.org/details/PureLandPureMind/page/n3>

https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/yin_kuang.pdf

<https://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice>

<https://www.ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas>

<https://www.ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 7th, 2019 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Varis said:

A Buddhism devoid of so-called "superstition", divorced from popular Theravada at that time.

Astus wrote:

If I get you right, the westernised interpretation means relying on canonical scriptures and rejecting practices that cannot be derived from them. If so, that is not necessarily a western idea, as that view is found at other times and other places in Buddhism. On the other hand, even if it's considered an external influence, as it simply means emphasising canonical authority, it is not introducing something new or foreign. Also, have those popular practices disappeared, or is it more like being less accepted among certain monastics?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 7th, 2019 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: anti-"Hinayana" bias in Zen (and Mahayana in general)

Content:

Grigoris said:

Who gets to decide what is canonical?

Astus wrote:

E.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_Buddhist_council

Grigoris said:

Who gets to assess derivation?

Astus wrote:

That's probably up to each individual/organisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 9th, 2019 at 4:06 PM

Title: Re: Shouting, Hitting, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

First of all, gongans are literary works and not historical accounts. As religious anecdotes they have their place and function, but their use depends on the users, i.e. how one reads them. Although it was Dahui who spread the kanhua method that became the dominant technique in Chan, the use of stories as a way to establish a Chan identity can be traced back as far as the Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Jewel (Chuan Fabao Ji 傳法寶紀) and the Record of Teachers and Disciples of Lanka (Lengjia Shizi Ji 楞伽師資記), both being early 8th century texts found in the caves

of Dunhuang.

So, if you're looking for masters who teach like those in the stories, that is understandable, but not realistic. Although there are rituals that replicate gongan-like events (e.g. Dharma combat ceremony - called hossen shiki 法戰式 in Soto), and there can be individual situations where a shout or a hit is used, but unfortunately there is no simple and easy way to awakening. Hanshan

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c>: "If it was actually so easy to become awakened to the Way as [claimed by] people of the present, then considering the integrity of practice of ancients such as Chang Ching who wore out seven sitting cushions and Chao Jou who for thirty years permitted no unfocused use of mind, those ancients had to have been of the very dullest of faculties. They wouldn't even be fit to serve you moderns by holding your straw sandals!" And Xuyun said

([https://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Master_Hsu-](https://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Master_Hsu-Yun_Discourses_and_Dharma_Words.pdf)

[Yun_Discourses_and_Dharma_Words.pdf](https://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Master_Hsu-Yun_Discourses_and_Dharma_Words.pdf)): "When the ancient masters received their students, either they used their staffs (to beat them) or they shouted (to wake them up) and there were not so many complications. However, the present cannot be compared with the past, and it is, therefore, imperative to point a finger at the moon."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 9th, 2019 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

What does this mean? That people in, for example, the Tang dynasty, wouldn't even know what the Chan school was? Wouldn't know a single person denoted as a Chan Master? Are all Chan labels and persons only known as such in retrospection?

Astus wrote:

'the entire lineage prior to the Song is best understood as a mythical construct, a sacred history that served to legitimize the Song Chan school and its claim to possess a special transmission. Even in the Song, the Chan lineage was subject to constant manipulation and reinterpretation in order to legitimize the lineages of certain masters and their descendants or to bolster polemical and religious claims.

In any case, the only clearly defining characteristic of a Song Chan master was that he or she was recognized as holding a transmission in the Chan lineage. Only such a person was a member of the "Chan school." As T. Griffith Foulk has pointed out, there was no special category of "Chan monastics" in the Song, because there was no special Chan ordination. In China, unlike in Japan, all monastics were, and still are, ordained into the general Buddhist order and not into a particular sect. The vast majority of monks and nuns did not aspire to membership in the Chan transmission family or any of the other transmission families that appeared in the Song. Those who did, however, typically underwent decades-long training in special public monasteries, and only then would they receive the transmission and become members of their master's lineage. However, among the Song secular elite, just like in modern popular understanding, Chan was considered distinctive not so much for its lineage as for its unique literature and its depictions of iconoclastic Chan masters.'

(How Zen Became Zen by Morten Schlütter, p 15)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2019 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: Shouting, Hitting, etc.

Content:

Dgj said:

what of Shen Hui's Zen? ... Since all schools trace their roots to Shen Hui, shouldn't all, or at least a few teach this Zen?

Astus wrote:

The only notable person who claimed to be a descendant of the Heze School was Guifeng Zongmi, and he actually included seated meditation as an important practice, furthermore, he was the one advocating the format of "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" based on Shenhui's teachings. After Zongmi there is no outstanding teacher of the Heze line, although his ideas lived on in the teachings of Yongming Yanshou and Bojo Jinul. By the Song era all schools traced their lineage through Huineng's two putative disciples: Qingyuan Xingsi and Nanyue Huairang; while Shenhui was put aside as a second rate student who stuck to the concept of awareness/knowing (zhi 知).

If you're looking for teachers who did away with the various methods, Bankei Yotaku was one such individual, and more recently Daehaeng Kun Sunim.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2019 at 2:02 AM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

It sounds like this author fleshed out what Mcrae probably hoped to say by implication: Chan was never an institutionally separate school at any time in Chinese Buddhist history before the Song.

Astus wrote:

Chan was never an institutionally separate school, full stop. What developed during the Song was the system of Chan lineages to legitimise the superiority of a small group of elite monastics that made them seemingly more qualified to lead monasteries than other candidates. But just because the abbot belonged to a Chan lineage, that did not have to affect the lives of the monks themselves, and it did not change the ordination process, nor the financial matters of the monastery.

Dgj said:

Could the pre Song Chan masters just as easily be claimed by another school, or seen as independent, and unrelated to Chan?

Astus wrote:

There isn't that much information about most of the Tang era masters, apart from what was written centuries later about them or in their names. Guifeng Zongmi, for instance, is regarded not only as a Chan teacher but also as the fifth patriarch of Huayan.

Dgj said:

What about all the famous Tang masters? Were they all part of some type of group that worked and taught in the same system at least? Or were they totally unconnected, and were teachers of different schools, re labeled as teachers all in one lineage only post humously?

Astus wrote:

Chan was not and is still not a unified organisation.

Dgj said:

How and why did this happen? Someone out of nowhere, said: Let's make up a school, call it Chan, and say that all these Buddhist monks from history were members of this school? Surely it cannot be that simple and guileful?

Astus wrote:

You should definitely read Schlütter's book, plus others like:

The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism by John R. McRae

The Power of Patriarchs: Qisong and Lineage in Chinese Buddhism by Elizabeth A. Morrison

Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China by Jiang Wu

Readings of the Platform Sutra by Morten Schlütter, Stephen F. Teiser

Monks, Rulers, and Literati : The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism by Albert Welter

The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature by Albert Welter

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 10th, 2019 at 5:55 PM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

What about simply what these people were called? Were Linji and Chou Chou known as Chan teachers/practitioners in their time? Or were they probably known as members of some other school until the word "Chan" started to be applied to them after the fact?

Astus wrote:

'Chan does not define itself as being one among a number of Buddhist schools based on a particular scripture (such as the Tiantai [Tendai] school with its emphasis on the Lotus Sutra, for example). Instead, Chan texts present the school as Buddhism itself, or as the central teaching of Buddhism, which has been transmitted from the seven Buddhas of the past to the twenty-eight Indian patriarchs, the six Chinese patriarchs,

and all the generations of Chinese and Japanese Chan and Zen masters that follow. (Bodhidharma occupies a pivotal position as both the twenty-eighth Indian and first Chinese patriarch.) It took several centuries for this entire schema to be developed; the earliest building blocks appeared at the very end of the seventh century, and the complete system was published perhaps as early as 801 but certainly by the year 952.' (Seeing Through Zen by John McRae, p 4)

What a Chan teacher is is defined by what we mean by Chan, and Chan in general is defined by lineage. McRae's, like many of those of other scholars who studied Chan history, discusses the development of the idea of lineage, so for clearer details you might want to look into them.

As for what these people were called, as monks they were venerable teachers, respected abbots, and many of them quite influential. On the other hand, what appears in later works as radical Chan rhetoric and behaviour, that is mostly the work of Song era writers, while what they possibly said and did were fairly standard Mahayana.

Dgj said:

Perhaps a better question is: when did people start to be known as Chan masters and Chan students with the word Chan meaning a specific subset of Buddhism as opposed to simply it's literal meaning: meditation (Chan=Dhyana=meditation)?

Astus wrote:

'In a sense, a Chan sayings record created its Chan master, rather than the other way around.'

(J. L. Broughton, in Zongmi on Chan, p 40)

It's the 'sayings record' (yulu) genre of the Song era that created the image of the Chan master that we still have today.

Dgj said:

For example, as you said above, in the Song they did use Chan to delineate certain people in said lineage. One could become a Chan lineage holder and lead monasteries. What about pre Song: was there any such delineation?

Astus wrote:

The first lineages (descending from Bodhidharma) appeared in the early 8th century, but those were meant to emphasise the superiority of a single line of transmission rather than a whole school. In the 9th century works of Guifeng Zongmi there is the idea of a more complex Chan school with several lineages.

Dgj said:

If not, how were the pre Song Chan masters picked and labeled as such and when and why did this suddenly become a thing? Who first invented Chan and who decided to posthumously name unrelated teachers as Chan lineage holders?

Astus wrote:

It was an organic development over several centuries. But in terms of firsts, it's Faru's

epitaph that is the first record of a lineage from Bodhidharma to Faru himself as an heir of Hongren.

Dgj said:

Is it something like if someone today said:

Astus wrote:

Establishing a specific lineage can happen in several ways. What makes Chan a single school is how the various lineages agree on a single source, in this case the Indian patriarchs and the first six Chinese patriarchs. Such a single source itself took time to develop. And then it was also a process how the works delineating the various Chan lineages appeared (see e.g. Lineage and Context in the Patriarch's Hall Collection and the Transmission of the Lamp by Albert Welter in Zen Canon, p 137-179).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2019 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

Thanks. So, for example, Hongren in his time wouldn't have been known as a part of something called Chan as a unique meaning for the word signifying, at least, a lineage from Bodhidharma? He would have been called a member of the East Mountain teaching, or just a Buddhist master? He would have likely seen himself as an heir to Bodhidharma, but had no such label as Chan in mind? But then after Faru the label Chan was starting to be used as such?

Astus wrote:

Faru's epitaph is the first to connect Bodhidharma and Huike to Hongren, and it is Shenxiu who claimed to be a representative of the East Mountain teaching. So likely Hongren had no such idea of being a member of some exalted lineage, but his disciples elevated their stature through being heirs of something extraordinary (cf. Seeing Through Zen, p 48).

Dgj said:

So Shenxia, Huineng and Shenhui would have, in their day, been known as Chan masters and heirs to Bodhidharma?

Astus wrote:

The term "meditation teacher" (chanshi 禪師) was a general one for anyone with a focus on meditation. In the Gaoseng Zhuan (高僧傳) from around 520 there are 32 monks (6.4%) mentioned as meditation specialists out of 499, then the Xu Gaoseng Zhuan (續高僧傳), from 667, lists 134 (19%) of 705 monks, while the Song Gaoseng Zhuan (宋高僧傳), from 988, gives 132 (20%) meditation specialists out of 656 eminent monks (see: Monks, Rulers, and Literati, p 42-43), showing a clear trend of the rising position of the meditating monk (for more on these three collections see: The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography by John Kieschnick), and in the third collection

a large number of them are monks of the Chan school (from Hongren to Caoshan Benji, 103 Chan masters in all plus 29 appended). So, while the idea of a Chan school (禪宗) - and here the word 'zong' (that is usually translated as school here) should be recognised to carry the meaning of lineage - certainly existed in the 9th century, it was identified generally with the descendants of Bodhidharma in the Song era.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2019 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dan74 said:

I don't believe the Chan tradition is a fraud.

Astus wrote:

What do you understand the Chan tradition to be? Is it an unbroken lineage of mind-to-mind transmission directly from teacher to disciple? Or is it something else? If it is something else, something sublime beyond historical events, then it has little to do with historical scholarship.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2019 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: The Historicity of the Gong An Cases

Content:

Dgj said:

What is the scholarly consensus on the historicity of the gong an cases of the Blue Cliff Record, Gateless Gate, etc.?

Astus wrote:

First of all, consider Yuanwu's words found in the commentary to the first case in the Blue Cliff Record:

'According to tradition, Master Zhi died in the year 514, while Bodhidharma came to Liang in 520; since there is a discrepancy of several years, why is it said that the two met? This must be a mistake in the tradition. But I will not discuss the matter of what is recorded in tradition now; all that is important is to understand the gist of the matter.' (The Blue Cliff Record, BDK ed, p 15)

So, historicity is not really an issue, especially not in the case of a gongan collection. Apart from that, gongan collections took their stories from other works, primarily the transmission of lamp records. About them Heine notes:

'The anecdotes about momentous interactions in addition to sayings and doings of Tang Chan ancestors were collected and incorporated into a wide variety of voluminous Song writings in which the narratives were significantly enhanced or altered in order to serve as an adroit means for evoking an indirect pathway to the attainment of awakening.

Chan literary activity of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was marked by a veritable explosion of texts produced with strong government backing, as well as supervision and oversight with regard to the process of editing and publication. This sometimes greatly affected or skewed the results by leading to a distinctive sectarian outlook or stylistic emphasis based on divisions among the Five Houses of Chan according to their local variations.'

(Chan Rhetoric of Uncertainty in the Blue Cliff Record by Seven Heine, p 49)

Finally, in order to see the difficulty of tracing to such stories, read <https://terebess.hu/zen/Records-of-Yunmen.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2019 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

Faru is the first to be known as a "Chan master" where "Chan" denotes a certain subset of Buddhism that denotes a lineage to Bodhidharma.

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. It is Faru's epitaph that is the first known instance where the connection between Bodhidharma and Hongren is claimed to exist.

Dgj said:

If not, when did "Chan" stop meaning simply "Dhyana" and first take on the meaning: A subset of Buddhism that denotes a lineage to Bodhidharma?

Astus wrote:

Chan still means dhyana in Chinese, that's not changed. When and who was the first to use the term chanzong (禪宗) to indicate what we now understand as the Chan school, I don't have a clear answer for that, but Zongmi (780–841) did use the term as such.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 11th, 2019 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Shouting, Hitting, etc.

Content:

Dgj said:

Are there any other teachers who taught Zen with no practices and with instant enlightenment as Shen Hui spoke of?

Astus wrote:

First of all, Shenhui instructed people to abide by the precepts, to read and recite Mahayana sutras, and to recognise the nature of their mind in meditation. Secondly, the teaching of no-thought of Shenhui is well known and accepted all over the Chan school, since it is present in the Platform Sutra and the teachings of other masters. In a way,

Hongzhou teachers like Mazu and Huangbo were more radical than Shenhui, plus there were the teachings of Wuzhu. This direct path of no-thought, that is based on the prajnaparamita teachings, is fine with likely every Mahayana teacher, but the problem usually is that just learning about the fact that all appearances are empty and no thought has ever arisen not only does not trigger awakening in people, it hardly makes any sense at the beginning either.

'When people of highest intelligence and knowledge hear the preaching of prajnaparamita, they are able to understand (what they hear), take it to heart, preach it and put it into practice; those of average intelligence, though not capable to grasp (the meaning), might yet succeed when they take pains to find a teacher (who can help them); those of the lowest intelligence, let them only believe and not relapse, might in the future also be able to embrace the ten points of the Mahayana creed (and in consequence get understanding).'

(The Sermon of Shen-Hui, tr W. Liebenthal)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: The Historicity of the Gong An Cases

Content:

Dgj said:

whatever history may be in them is nearly impossible to discern because of the enhancing and alteration. Correct?

Astus wrote:

It depends on available sources to compare them with.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

Was chanzong used in the Song, once Chan started to become more known as such?

Astus wrote:

Very much.

Dgj said:

Also, if there was no specific delineation of a Chan school, what was Shen Hui preaching about when he spoke of Northern and Southern schools?

Astus wrote:

Shenhui made the claim that Huineng was the sixth patriarch and not Shenxiu.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: The Historicity of the Gong An Cases

Content:

Dgj said:

And what have scholars found when they make these comparisons? Do they find the Gong Ans accurate, or highly fabricated?

Astus wrote:

One can only compare one written source with another. There is fairly little from the Tang era to use, and much less of what can be compared with the stories used in Song era collections. In any case, it is hardly controversial to say that most of the accounts are fictional. Here are two opinions on Zen stories:

'It has been noted that Zen was essentially associated with the literati and the means of dissemination of Zen, such as Recorded Sayings, history of lamp transmission, collections of koan stories, and so on, was highly literary and textual. Zen is basically a literary tradition and a high level of literacy is necessary for understanding the meaning of Zen.'

(Leaving for the Rising Sun by Jiang Wu, p 34)

'Unfortunately, the majority of the exchanges or anecdotes composed in the encounter dialogue format are not very good stories, in any meaningful sense. In fact, a huge number of Chan stories or exchanges, included in texts such as Jingde chuan deng lu and Bi yan lu, can be viewed as little more than nonessential ramblings, a peculiar type of religious gibberish. Basically, we are confronted with countless examples of mass-produced textual materials that tend to be highly formulaic, numbingly repetitive, and ostensibly pointless. One of the things that keeps amazing me is how otherwise intelligent or sincere people can take this sort of stuff seriously, although the history of religion is filled with blind spots of that sort.'

(The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature by Mario Poceski, p 170-171)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 1:04 AM

Title: Re: "Never an Institutionally Separate Chan School..."

Content:

Dgj said:

The sixth patriarch of what, though? If there was no delineated Chan school, then what was he talking about?

Astus wrote:

Shenxiu posited himself as a transmitter of Hongren's teachings, and Shenxiu's disciples claimed that he was the true sixth patriarch counting from Bodhidharma. It was Shenxiu, and especially his disciples, who began the establishment of a special lineage. Shenhui simply took the idea of lineage from Bodhidharma and exchanged

Shenxiu for Huineng.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: The Historicity of the Gong An Cases

Content:

Dgj said:

Do you happen to know of a book where it is flatly stated that most of the accounts are fictional? Or something along those lines?

Astus wrote:

That is a bit simplistic approach. Consider family stories, how they can become quite colourful, expanded, reduced, changed, or even overwritten by time, and by intentional editing if they were to become novels or films. The stories of teachers can be similar, but it needs to be looked into one by one. I recommend you read some of the studies regarding the various recorded sayings.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 6:23 PM

Title: Re: True existence and substantial existence

Content:

Astus wrote:

Existence is insubstantial (nihsvabhava), as there is no substance (svabhava) to be found in anything. At the same time, whenever we say that something is/exists, that is conceiving a substance right there. And if we say something does not exist, that is still thinking of a substance. The reason being is that to be a thing, an object of conception, it has to be conceived on its own, as a stand alone, independent entity. The deciding factor is whether one recognises substantiality as a conceptual product, or as the attribute of the conceived object. Now here to wonder about the level of existence of made up objects is like debating the hidden motives of fictional characters in a novel.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: The Historicity of the Gong An Cases

Content:

Dgj said:

Do you know of a book where the author explains that most of the accounts are fictitious?

Astus wrote:

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=x2ZxQk2AfYsC>

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=nisoDQAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2019 at 12:09 AM

Title: Re: True existence and substantial existence

Content:

jnanavinaya said:

"Conceptual product" and "conceived object" occur at one time, and both as an illusion, so I didn't quite get your point why then it is a deciding factor.

Astus wrote:

If substantiality is understood to be a conceptual product then it is no longer a substance, an independent entity, but a mere name, while if substantiality is attributed to the object, that is, the object exists on its own, then it is mistaken to be something graspable.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2019 at 2:03 AM

Title: Re: True existence and substantial existence

Content:

jnanavinaya said:

Then, a thought, for instance is not a substance.

Astus wrote:

Nothing is a substance. Things seem substantial because of ignorance, substantiality is an incorrect assumption.

jnanavinaya said:

But it is still a dualistic phenomenon, isn't it?

Astus wrote:

The dualism of self and other is another way to say substantiality.

jnanavinaya said:

But the sentence is implying that "insubstantiality" and "emptiness" are synonyms.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is the absence of substance, i.e. insubstantiality.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 14th, 2019 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: The first five patriarchs on meditation

Content:

Dgj said:

Does anyone know the exact sources and quotes?

Astus wrote:

For what?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 14th, 2019 at 4:52 AM

Title: Re: The first five patriarchs on meditation

Content:

Dgj said:

The sources and quotes that say Bodhidharma taught meditation.

Astus wrote:

See McRae's *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*, p 16-19. He quotes there the Xu Gaoseng Zhuan:

'Feeling compassion [as a result of the decline of the True Teaching in this] obscure corner [of the world (i.e., China), Bodhidharma sought to] lead [the people here to enlightenment] by means of the Dharma. He first reached Nan-yueh within the boundaries of the Sung and later crossed north again to the Wei. Wherever he went he gave instruction in the teaching of meditation (ch'an-chiao). At the time the practice of lecturing [on the Buddhist scriptures] had spread across the entire country, so that [people] often slandered [Bodhidharma] upon hearing the Dharma of samadhi (ting-fa).'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 19th, 2019 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no single "awareness". When there is contact between a sense object and a sense faculty, sense consciousness arises, and through the contact between the three feeling arises, perception arises, formations arise. More detailed analysis can be found in Abhidharma works on citta and caitasika/cetasika.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 22nd, 2019 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler

Content:

Rick said:

So what would you call that 'state' of potential awareness? Background awareness, monitoring awareness, as-needed awareness? Or just: awareness.

Astus wrote:

They're the sense faculties (indriya) or sense bases (āyatana). See this

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayatana>, and this

<https://abhidharmakosa.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/chapter-1-dhatu.pdf>.

Rick said:

1. Awareness is required to perceive/experience any phenomenon. No awareness, no perception/experience.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness (vijñāna) is necessary for there to be perception (saṃjñā).

Rick said:

2. If there is no phenomenon being perceived/experienced, there is no awareness. In other words, awareness rises and falls on as 'as-needed' basis with perceived/experienced phenomena.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness depends on name and form (nāmarūpa), i.e. physical and mental appearances, and name and form depend on consciousness (e.g. <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.067.than.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 23rd, 2019 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler

Content:

Queequeg said:

That is one of the interesting formulations of the 12 Nidana.

Astus wrote:

The same connection is stated in the

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html>: 'From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-and-form.' ... 'From name-and-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.' Also in the <https://suttacentral.net/dn14/en/sujato>: 'Name and form are conditions for consciousness. Consciousness is a condition for name and form.'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 23rd, 2019 at 11:37 PM

Title: Re: Death and enlightenment/emptiness

Content:

Jon N said:

what is the difference between death and sunyata?

Astus wrote:

Death is the cessation of a life. Emptiness (sunyata) is the absence of an independent, permanent essence.

Jon N said:

or between being enlightened and being dead?

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is the complete abandonment of attachment. There is no such state as being dead, as Buddhism teaches rebirth.

Jon N said:

As far as I understand, being enlightened one is "flowing" with sunyata, or within sunyata, transcending both life and death.

Astus wrote:

Realising that things are empty results in the elimination of attachment, hence transcending the misconceptions of permanence (one is forever the same person) and annihilation (one's person ceases to exist at a point).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 24th, 2019 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Death and enlightenment/emptiness

Content:

Jon N said:

This makes me think, however: can one be a Buddhist without having a belief in rebirth?

Astus wrote:

Of course one can, it's just that denying the existence of afterlife constitutes wrong view.

Jon N said:

If we take rebirth off the equation, does still the Mahayana doctrine make sense?

Astus wrote:

It does not, since without rebirth there is not only no reason for liberation, there is also no possibility of the full bodhisattva path that takes innumerable lifetimes to complete.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 24th, 2019 at 10:00 PM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler

Content:

Queequeg said:

consciousness is posited as the more basic phenomenon.

Astus wrote:

What strain of Buddhism would that be?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 24th, 2019 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler

Content:
Queequeg said:
Yogacara... In contrast to Madhyamika...

Astus wrote:
As far as the teachings of Asanga and Vasubandhu are concerned, object and subject are mutually dependent, and realising objects to be fabrications also removes the subject perceiving that.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 25th, 2019 at 1:16 AM
Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler
Content:
LastLegend said:
Hmmm. Simple as that?

Astus wrote:
Maitreya/Asanga says in the Madhyantavibhaga (1.3):

'Appearing as objects, sentient beings, the self
And awareness, consciousness arises.
Its objects do not exist.
Therefore, it does not exist either.'

Mipham comments:

'Appearing as objects, such as form, as sentient beings, i.e., the five faculties in one's own and others' stream of being, as the self, the defiled mental cognition associated with the delusion of self and so on, and as awareness, the six consciousnesses, consciousness arises. Its objects, the appearances of objects and sentient beings, do not exist. Therefore, since the appearances of self and awareness are mistaken appearances, it, the apprehender, does not exist either.'
(stanza and commentary from Middle Beyond Extremes, p 28)

Rongtönpa comments:

'Because outer apprehended objects do not exist, the consciousness that apprehends them does not exist either. This is because the apprehender depends on the apprehended.'
(Adorning Maitreya's Intent: Arriving at the View of Nonduality, p 34)

Vasubandhu writes in stanza 28 of the Trimsatika:

'If, in perceiving the sphere of objects,
Wisdom (jnana) no longer conceives any idea of the object,
Then that wisdom is in the state of Vijnaptimatratā,

Because both the object to be apprehended and the act of apprehending by consciousness are absent.'

And commentary from Xuanzang:

'[In this stage of unimpeded penetrating understanding], the Bodhisattva attains, with reference to an object, the non-discriminating transcendental wisdom called Nirvikalpakajnana, which does not cling to the objective world, and accepts no kind of sophistry about its seeming appearance (prapancanimitta) . He is now said really to abide in the genuine and transcendent nature of Vijnaptimatratā, that is to say, he experiences the Bhutatathata (Absolute Reality). His wisdom and the Bhutatathata are on the same plane, both being .equally divorced from the aspects of subject and object (grahaka and grahya). Both aspects constitute discrimination, being the sophistic manifestations of that mind which clings to something as its object.'

(stanza and commentary from Wei Tat's translation of the Cheng Weishi Lun, p 687)

A summary by Brunnhölzl from his introduction to the Dharmadharmatavibhanga:

'The fourfold correct yogic practice to attain nonconceptual wisdom consists of the four prayogas of observing all phenomena as being nothing other than mere mind, thus not observing any phenomena as external objects, consequently not observing any observer of external objects either, and finally observing the suchness that is the unobservability of the duality of apprehender and apprehended. These four make up the levels of heat, peak, poised readiness, and the supreme dharma of the path of preparation. This is the progressive way in which nonconceptual wisdom is generated in the mind stream because it is easy to realize that external referents lack a nature of their own, while it is more difficult to realize that the apprehender is unobservable too.'

(Mining for Wisdom within Delusion, p 134)

And here's Mipham's explanation regarding the misconception of a real consciousness in Yogacara from his commentary to chapter 7 of the Mahayanasutralamkara:

'Now, the Cittamātra approach speaks of all phenomena being nothing other than simply the appearances of the mind, and it asserts that only the clear and aware consciousness of the dependent reality, the basis of perception, exists substantially. If the Cittamātrins' final standpoint is the assertion that this consciousness is only a substantially existent entity inasmuch as it is the cause for all conventional phenomena appearing, and that apart from this assertion they are not claiming that it exists substantially as a truly existing entity in ultimate truth, then they are not at all in contradiction with the Mādhyamika tradition. On the other hand, if they were to assert that it is truly existent in ultimate truth, they would be contradicting the Mādhyamika approach. It seems, therefore, that it is just this particular point that needs to be examined as a source of contention (or otherwise) for the Mādhyamikas.

In the cycle of teachings of Maitreya and the writings of the great charioteer Asaṅga, whose thinking is one and the same, it is taught that individuals on the level of earnest aspiration first understand that all phenomena are simply the mind. Subsequently they have the experience that there is no object to be apprehended in the mind. Then, at the

stage of the supreme mundane level on the path of joining, they realize that because there is no object, neither is there a subject, and immediately after that, they attain the first level with the direct realization of the truth of ultimate reality devoid of the duality of subject and object. As for things being only the mind, the source of the dualistic perception of things appearing as environment, sense objects, and a body is the consciousness of the ground of all, which is accepted as existing substantially on the conventional level but is taught as being like a magical illusion and so on since it appears in a variety of ways while not existing dualistically. For this reason, because this tradition realizes, perfectly correctly, that the nondual consciousness is devoid of any truly existing entities and of characteristics, the ultimate intentions of the charioteers of Madhyamaka and Cittamātra should be considered as being in agreement.

Why, then, do the Mādhyamika masters refute the Cittamātra tenet system? Because self-styled proponents of the Cittamātra tenets, when speaking of mind-only, say that there are no external objects but that the mind exists substantially—like a rope that is devoid of snakeness, but not devoid of ropeness. Having failed to understand that such statements are asserted from the conventional point of view, they believe the nondual consciousness to be truly existent on the ultimate level. It is this tenet that the Mādhyamikas repudiate. But, they say, we do not refute the thinking of Ārya Asaṅga, who correctly realized the mind-only path taught by the Buddha.'

(A Feast of the Nectar of the Supreme Vehicle: An Explanation of the Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras, p 235-236)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 25th, 2019 at 2:36 AM

Title: Re: Question about awareness as enabler; Moved from Open Dharma

Content:

Rick said:

Do you happen to remember where in the <long!> book these moments are described?

Astus wrote:

Go to IV.86 (p 153-159). There is also a nice summary on the

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/conditions/d/doc2918.html> by Nina van Gorkom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 28th, 2019 at 2:28 AM

Title: Re: Death and enlightenment/emptiness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Some insist Bodhi is beyond just release of attachments.

Astus wrote:

When the emotional and conceptual hindrances are released, the buddha-nature can manifest. What more one would need?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 28th, 2019 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Death and enlightenment/emptiness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Basically, its why in some Mahayana the sravaka and pratyekabuddha paths are considered incomplete.

Astus wrote:

There are two versions. The first one is where the main difference lies in the accumulation of merit from what the buddha qualities and the buddha land is generated. The second one explains the difference with the inability of the two vehicles to get rid of the attachment to concepts, as all the buddha qualities are inherent in buddha-nature. The first version necessitates the path to take incalculably long in order to gather merit, the second version allows the possibility of buddhahood in one lifetime. The schools where complete enlightenment can happen in this life (e.g. Tiantai, Chan, Mantra) accepts the second version.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 28th, 2019 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: Death and enlightenment/emptiness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Some accept three distinct fruits, with Buddhahood possible in this life. Some consider the fruits of the sravakayana and pratyekabuddhayana as upaya, and to the extent the bodhisattva thinks there are these distinctions, their path is upaya, also.

Astus wrote:

As far as I know, currently only Theravada and the followers of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asian_Yog%C4%81c%C4%81ra school maintain that there are three vehicles, the others uphold the one vehicle view where eventually everyone attains buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 3rd, 2019 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: The desire to stop suffering

Content:

Arjan Dirkse said:

Desire is the root of all suffering, but is it bad to have a desire to stop samsara?

Astus wrote:

Brahman Unnabha put the same issue to Ananda in the <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn51/sn51.015.than.html>: "it's impossible that

one could abandon desire (chanda) by means of desire (chanda)". But then, of course, Ananda explains why that is not so.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 5th, 2019 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: About the Lieu Quan School of Thien

Content:

jek37 said:

Can someone explain what this means in simpler terms ?

Astus wrote:

<https://tnhaudio.org/2009/12/22/the-lineage-of-thich-nhat-hanh/>

The great way of Reality,
Is our true nature's pure ocean.
The source of Mind penetrates everywhere.

The nature of mind is the nature of everything.

From the roots of virtue springs the practice of compassion.

The nature of mind manifests in compassionate action.

Precepts, concentration and insight –
The nature and function of all three are one.

In the nature of mind all three practices are realised.

The fruit of transcendent wisdom,
Can be realized by being wonderfully together.

The nature of mind is realised through learning.

Maintain and transmit the wonderful principle,
In order to reveal the true teaching!

Once realised, it has to be taught to others.

For the realization of True Emptiness to be possible,
Wisdom and Action must go together.

Learning and teaching keep the lineage alive.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 7th, 2019 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Is it bad if I, as a youngster Buddhist, go to parties and drink alcohol or smoke weed?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Intoxication itself is morally neutral. What can easily become unwholesome are actions performed while intoxicated.

'The fifth precept is abstaining from alcohol and other intoxicants. Again, alcohol itself is not to blame; but some people who drink alcohol become influenced by it in a way that is destructive both to themselves and others. We know how much of a problem our societies have with drunk drivers, and cases such as people killing their loved ones while in an alcoholic stupor. Alcohol can impair our judgment and cause us to lose consciousness, so that we cannot remember what we did while we were drunk. In the Vinaya—the text explaining the rules of life for monks and nuns—when the Buddha talked about abstaining from alcohol and other forms of intoxicants, he told a kind of parable. A monk was out begging for food one day when he came across a woman selling alcohol. She offered him three choices. The first one was to drink alcohol, the second to kill a goat, and the third to have sex with her. He said, “No, I can’t kill the goat; a Buddhist monk would never do such a thing. I can’t have sex—I’m a monk; I’m celibate. So I’ll take the alcohol.” He drank the beer, and once he got drunk, he killed the goat and had sex with the woman. The Buddha said that’s why alcohol is something we should abstain from, precisely because it can have strange effects on some people.'

(The Essence of Buddhism, ch 2, by Traleg Kyabgon)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2019 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism, and theistic religions.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some relevant materials available online:

<http://chancenter.org/download/free-books/ChanPracticeandFaith.pdf> by Chan Master Sheng Yen

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/ancientsgrfx.pdf by Kuan Ming

In book:

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=VPJUPwAACAAJ> by John Blofeld

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=7Dy1THXuOdkC> by Sandy Boucher

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 17th, 2019 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Tathagatagarbha and oppression/social action

Content:

Jon N said:

If everything is already enlightened, why there should be practice?

Astus wrote:

Because of adventitious defilements.

Jon N said:

For this reason, if I remember well, some traditions of Tibetan Buddhism regard the tathagatagarbha as the mind in its unenlightened state, so that practice is needed to reach a pure mind (I cannot find the quote in the text so i'm not being very technical here).

Astus wrote:

"But if the mind gives rise to irrelevant thoughts and further predicates the world of objects, it will continue to lack these qualities. All these numberless excellent qualities of the pure principle are none other than those of One Mind, and there is nothing to be sought after anew by thought. Thus, that which is fully endowed with them is called the Dharmakaya when manifested and the Tathagata-garbha when latent."

(http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html)

Jon N said:

how is it possible to combine the tatagatagarbha theory with social action? or at least how is it possible to argue that everything is enlightened without reinforcing the inequalities of the status quo?

Astus wrote:

It actually fits quite well with social action.

"There are five mistakes: faint-heartedness,
contempt for those of lesser ability,
to believe in the false,
to speak about the true nature badly
and to cherish oneself above all else.
So that those in whom these above were there
might rid themselves of them, therefore was it declared."
(Uttaratantra Shastra, v 157, in The Changeless Nature, p 70)

See also chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 18th, 2019 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Tathagatagarbha and oppresion/social action

Content:

Jon N said:

If reaching enlightenment the Bodhisattva discovers that all beings are enlightened, isn't suffering then enlightened too?

Astus wrote:

Although originally there has never been a self, beings have to realise that in order to be

free from attachment. Similarly, although the mind is originally pure, one has to realise it in order to be free from defilements. Afflictions themselves are empty, but unless emptiness is realised, there is suffering.

"And when these immeasurable, countless, infinite number of sentient beings have been liberated, in actuality, no sentient being has attained liberation. Why is this so? Subhūti, If a bodhisattva abides in the signs of self, person, sentient being, or life-span, she or he is not a bodhisattva."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 3)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 21st, 2019 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: The Atthakavagga...

Content:

Astus wrote:

The <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.024.than.html> is the source of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visuddhimagga#Seven_Stages_of_Purification used in Theravada, however, the discourse itself points to the conclusion that all "is simply for the sake of total Unbinding through lack of clinging. And it's for the sake of total Unbinding through lack of clinging that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 24th, 2019 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: Dream initiations, etc.

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

Does anyone think it is a valid form of transmission, etc. in the modern world?

Astus wrote:

The source is less important than the content. As Mipham wrote:

"No matter what kind of person a teacher is, he cannot purify or liberate you. If the teaching he gives is truly meaningful, it is proper to adhere to it. But if it is not meaningful, it is improper to adhere to it. Thus, one should not rely on the person but on the teaching."

(Gateway to Knowledge, vol 4, p 123)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 28th, 2019 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Eclectic Buddhism

Content:

Matt J said:

The problem is that many of these practices work against each other. The practices and traditions have their own logic and style, and this logic or style may not gel with other

systems.

Astus wrote:

Most of the traditions/schools are intended to encompass the whole of the Buddhadharma, and one works with methods that fit one's inclinations and situations. No matter where one goes, the enemies to be defeated are the same: greed, anger, and delusion.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 29th, 2019 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: Eclectic Buddhism

Content:

javier.espinoza.t said:

and there is at least one buddhist path where greed, anger, and delusion are not considered enemies and are not even transformed into something else.

My point here is that if one mixed the point of view of different buddhist paths one couldn't apply correctly. so eclectic things, new age thing, "i like my idea" things, are in general a waste of time.

Astus wrote:

Self-arising and self-liberation happens when there is no attachment/fixation/identification. All the other Buddhist traditions say the same, and you can trace it back to the second and third noble truths.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2019 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

IIRC, when Yogacarins refer to Sravakayana or Hinayana, they are referring to Sarvastivadins - one of the "Hinayana" schools that I don't think exist anymore and are mostly known because they were whipping boys for Yogacarins.

Astus wrote:

The doctrine of the storehouse-consciousness is a theory based on the Sautrantika interpretation of karma that is deposited as seeds, hence the idea of seeds stored in a unique aspect of consciousness. The Sarvastivadin explanation of karma is somewhat different, as they (or rather some of them) have the concept of non-informative forms (avijnapti rupa), what is rejected by Yogacarins by saying that everything is "informative" (vijñapti), but more importantly it is the idea of dharmas existing in the three times that ensures the emergence of later fruits of past deeds.

Queequeg said:

On one hand, its explained as a thing, where "seeds" are deposited and "perfumed." But that doesn't make sense because that would suggest it is something substantial.

Astus wrote:

Note that the whole teaching of the eight consciousnesses are within the scope of conventional reality that has only a conceptual basis. Furthermore, it's mainly a theoretical explanation of karmic consequences over various births.

Queequeg said:

devices by which mind continuity are explained.

Astus wrote:

Indeed.

Queequeg said:

this would seem to be directed at cultivating quietude necessary to reveal the underlying currents below the gross level of consciousness...

Astus wrote:

The storehouse-consciousness cannot be seen or sensed in any way, at least within the Yogacara teachings.

Queequeg said:

In the Cheng weishi lun, Xuanzang suggests that sravaka eliminate the alaya consciousness.

Astus wrote:

So do bodhisattvas eventually. After all, it is the basis of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2019 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Who proposes the dharmas existing in three times? Not the Yogacarins... please clarify - that last part is ambiguous.

Astus wrote:

The Sarvastivadins. That is where they got their name from: sarva (everything) asti (exists).

Queequeg said:

assert things that as an outsider looking in sounds rather arbitrary and dogmatic... like the reality of icchantikas and the different paths of sravaka and bodhisattvas.

Astus wrote:

You could say that about any Buddhist teaching, that they look arbitrary and dogmatic. Yogacara "developed" on the abhidharma teachings and formed a Mahayana version.

Queequeg said:

Its fascinating stuff and seems important to know because it informs so much Buddhist practice in Mahayana and Vajrayana... but seems to me a conceptual dead end...

Astus wrote:

Lots of generally accepted Mahayana doctrines were first explained by Yogacarins, including the bodhisattva stages and the three buddha bodies. Today the most known representatives of their teachings are called Shentongpas, the pre-eminent doctrine among Kagyupas, Nyingmapas, and Jonangpas, but it is also popular among current Chan teachers as well.

Queequeg said:

Well, isn't that the nature of all notions of consciousness?

Astus wrote:

The six consciousnesses are readily perceivable, aren't they?

Queequeg said:

The device for explaining continuity... In some ways, makes one wonder if needing to establish a particular conclusion... continuity, particularly between births... is a hobgoblin... That's a fraught line of questioning.

Astus wrote:

It is not just about explaining continuity in general, but more about special cases, where conscious activity ceases (i.e. nirodhasamapatti & the asamjnisattva).

Queequeg said:

samsara is nirvana... That kind of blows all that up.

Astus wrote:

Not really. There are ordinary beings, and there are buddhas. Why the difference? Because of the afflictions. And latent afflictions reside in the storehouse consciousness.

Queequeg said:

Tathagatagarbha teachings address some of the issues better, IMHO.

Astus wrote:

What part?

Queequeg said:

I'm probably basically Madhyamikan in view...

Astus wrote:

Yogacara emerged after Madhyamaka, and there isn't really a contradiction between them, although that depends on how one reads one or the other.

Queequeg said:

So much of this seems labored, to address problems that aren't really problems... But that might be my Madhyamikan bias... I'm trying to be open and really understand this stuff.

Astus wrote:

Yogacara actually simplified the Abhidharma teachings, and they even made Madhyamaka simpler. Why it can seem overly complicated is perhaps because of not comparing it with the entirety of preceding schools.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 30th, 2019 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Alaya is several orders of magnitude removed from basic observations. I'm pretty sure I can explain emptiness to someone and get them to buy in more readily than to alaya consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Aren't memories, and knowledge in general, believed to be stored in one's mind? There, it is readily explained and understood in conventional terms, and no need to say 'subconscious'. Also, it is a common view in Buddhism that there are latent tendencies (anusaya), but it's not that easy to place them anywhere when mind is singular and momentary.

Queequeg said:

the abhidhamma analysis, eye consciousness, for instance, doesn't actually register as anything in itself.

Astus wrote:

That is the Theravadin version of perception. There are others. But I intended only a very basic sense that one directly knows of the appearance of the six types of consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 31st, 2019 at 3:07 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Matt J said:

As for the alaya, you can experience that also.

Queequeg said:

Maybe in some non-yogacara teachings, but I don't think this is an option in pure yogacara.

Astus wrote:

That sort of experience is called the alayavijnana by some Tibetan teachers, usually to differentiate it from alaya, a term used in Dzogchen for the nature of mind.

From the Yogacara POV alayavijnana exists for those bound by karma, while for buddhas the 8 consciousnesses become the 4 wisdoms (jnana). The manas takes alayavijnana as its object, while the alayavijnana takes the bijas, and they serve as the basis of the 6 vijnanas that we can be actually aware of, hence nobody can actually perceive the 8th and 7th consciousnesses, because all perceived objects are their products.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 31st, 2019 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

And I'm basically arguing that the 6 consciousnesses can't directly be perceived either... just their effects.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is what can experience things, and it's split to six kinds based on the different categories of objects. So where it's about self-reflection, that's the sixth consciousness, while awareness of rupa is by the other five. To say that one is not aware of those six types of objects makes the whole setup meaningless. Also, to say that the six consciousnesses are not experienced, one needs to posit another consciousness apart from them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 31st, 2019 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

The Mind (sixth consciousness) is not just about self-reflection, though. It takes as its object the the other five sense consciousnesses, as well as mind consciousness.

Astus wrote:

No disagreement, that's what I meant by self-reflection, that the 6th has consciousness (all 6 kinds) as objects.

Queequeg said:

And if Mind consciousness subsides before becoming something one is aware of, it subsides without further effect

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is what is aware, so if there is no awareness, there is no consciousness

to speak of. The division of mind moments to javanas is a special Theravadin abhidhammic analysis.

Queequeg said:

There is always abstraction. Its built into the subject-object dynamic that is found in all states of consciousness. Objects are always abstractions.

Astus wrote:

Both objects and subjects are nominal entities in Yogacara, neither apparent things nor minds are real. But the important element is that it's all tainted by the assumption of independent, non-fabricated entities.

Queequeg said:

is any of those moments of consciousness what we think it is? Isn't that one of the main points of yogacara? Everything you think is true is delusion of one sort or another so long as one is not awakened... how can an unenlightened person perceive a visual consciousness that is not some delusion?

Astus wrote:

The central message of Yogacara is to recognise that the objects of attachment are mental fabrications. That's why the explanation of the 8 consciousnesses is relevant, in that it tells how delusion works. The question is not whether common people can make valid observations about the world, that is an epistemological concern without interest in liberation. The question is how one is stuck in samsara and how to become free.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 1st, 2019 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

This is a very different model, but doesn't affect my argument about all consciousnesses only being inferred.

Astus wrote:

Direct perception through all six gates is accepted by 'Northern' abhidharma schools, and so it is by Dignaga. What you find regarding perception in Theravada is their own unique interpretation. Yogacara actually had to argue that there is nothing perceived out there, to the extent that Ratnakirti disproved the direct perception of other minds. However, Theravada still assumes an external world that impacts the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 1st, 2019 at 4:58 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Can you explain what is meant by direct perception?

Astus wrote:

That it is experienced by one of the six senses. So, seeing smoke is direct perception, while knowing that there must be fire is inference. Here, if analysed a bit further, the seeing of colour and form is direct, while understanding it to be form is processing sensory input, but that does not change the source of knowledge of smoke is direct perception, while the knowledge of fire is inferred.

Queequeg said:

Yogacara doesn't actually deny an external world, does it?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you mean by that. An objectively existing world independent of one's mind is very much denied. But even in other schools it is accepted that the whole universe arises from karma, so there is never a world that exists on its own by any Buddhist view.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2019 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

The issue I'm seeing is Xuanzang's apparent suggestion that the pure Buddha lands are distinct from the world of form realm beings, while in the Lotus and Vimalakirti Sutras, the Buddha explains that this Sahalokha is pure, but this purity is not perceived because of the karmic limitations of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

Experiences of an external world are defined by one's karma. Saying that the world is ultimately pure, that ordinary beings are fundamentally buddhas, that samsara is nirvana, etc. makes no difference for what is actually experienced.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2019 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Except that Xuanzang is making an explicit claim about the relationship between the form world and the minds of beings.

Astus wrote:

The world is a product of karma according to Xuanzang and practically everyone else. I don't see the problem. Could you please elaborate?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2019 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

The Sutras are most definitely saying that Sahalokha is a pure realm except that it is not experienced as such by ordinary beings because of their own karma.

Astus wrote:

The sutras do not say that there is a world behind the world. The point is that the world is the product of the mind, hence the oft quoted passage from the Vimalakirti Sutra that the pure land is the pure mind. Purity means not afflicted, without attachment, free from the obscurations. Are ordinary beings pure? No, they are not, and that's what makes them ordinary. Can we say that ultimately all beings are pure? Yes, in the sense that defilements are not inherent, furthermore, that beings are actually empty and not beings at all. But it does not change that beings experience an afflicted world because of their afflicted mind. So, talking of ultimate purity is a fine encouragement, but does not address what actually happens.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2019 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Vimalakirti does not suggest that beings produce a material world apart from the pure land which XZ seems to be suggesting.

Astus wrote:

The Vimalakirti Sutra talks of how the purity and defilement of the world depends on the purity and defilement of the mind. There is no world apart from the mind.

Queequeg said:

In XZ's telling, beings each project a form world that is not participated in by Buddhas or even formless beings. It's not just that the samsara colored glasses prevent beings from seeing the world.

Astus wrote:

Just like the Vimalakirti Sutra, Xuanzang states that the seemingly external world is a mental product. Neither say that there is a world independent of beings.

Queequeg said:

XZ is saying that beings construct a material cell for themselves... That isn't even really shared... But overlap somehow. That can exist even without them in it. That's the part that blows it up and makes what you're saying inapplicable.

Astus wrote:

A world exist as a mental product. The part on the issue of a world without inhabitants is about the process of the collapse and emergence of the various realms, but even there it's all produced by karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2019 at 1:57 PM

Title: Re: Trekcho Dzogchen = Soto Zen?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Soto is a whole tradition, trekcho is a method. To compare things we should start with defining what are to be compared.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2019 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Trekcho Dzogchen = Soto Zen?

Content:

Viach said:

It would be more correct: Semde Dzogchen = Soto Zen.

Astus wrote:

Semde is a category of teachings, not a complete tradition. A valid comparison would be more like Nyingma and Soto. As traditions, they include lots of teachings, practices, methods, doctrines, rituals, and they are quite diverse within themselves where one can find various differences in terms of history, monastery, and individual teachers. So, what do you actually want to compare?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2019 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Trekcho Dzogchen = Soto Zen?

Content:

Viach said:

In this case, I compare doctrines and methods: in my opinion they are almost the same.

Astus wrote:

OK, but then it's still too much. Should pick a specific doctrine or a specific method from both sides and see how they compare. Or at least bring up a short text. For instance, the <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/pdf/03/c02.pdf> is meant to be a brief summary of Soto Zen teachings, while the <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/pdf/03/c01.pdf> is a summary for meditation. Do you have something to compare those with in Dzogchen?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 7th, 2019 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Trekcho Dzogchen = Soto Zen?

Content:

Viach said:

The method is the same - non-meditation.

Astus wrote:

How does one non-meditate in Dzogchen? How is it done in Soto?

Dogen writes in Fukanzazengi:

'Consider the Buddha: although he was wise at birth, the traces of his six years of upright sitting can yet be seen. As for Bodhidharma, although he had received the mind-seal, his nine years of facing a wall is celebrated still. If even the ancient sages were like this, how can we today dispense with wholehearted practice?'

Is that non-meditation? Or is it 'to take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward'? Or is thinking of not thinking it?

How about what Dogen writes in Gakudo-Yojinshu (https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf)?

'Although people vary in their abilities, some base their practice on faith and others base their practice on dharma. Some realize instantaneously and others practice gradually. All of them enter realization through practice.'

Viach said:

Doctrines: nature of mind (Semde) = Buddha consciousness (Soto).

Astus wrote:

Dogen writes in Bussho (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2):

'to look at mountains and rivers is to look at the buddha-nature. And to look at the buddha-nature is to look at a donkey's jaw or a horse's nose.' (p 8)

'In sum, "that without constancy" of grass, trees, and forests is just the buddha-nature. And "that without constancy" of the body-and-mind of a human being is the buddha-nature itself. National lands and mountains and rivers are "that without constancy" because they are the buddha-nature. The truth of anuttara samyaksambodhi, because it is the buddha-nature, is "that without constancy."' (p 14)

'Those without mind may also be "living beings," for "living beings" are just mind.⁹⁸ So minds all are "living beings," and "living beings" all "have the buddha-nature." Grass, trees, and national lands are mind itself; because they are mind, they are "living beings," and because they are "living beings" they "have the buddha-nature." The sun, the moon, and the stars are mind itself; because they are mind, they are "living beings," and

because they are “living beings” they “have the buddha-nature.”’ (p 21)

How do they compare to Dzogchen?

Viach said:

It is hard not to notice the similarity when reading teachers Soto and Semde.

Astus wrote:

Do you have anything more specific?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 7th, 2019 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A monk asked Yunmen, "When not producing a single thought, is there any fault or not?"

Yumen said, "Mount Sumeru."

(Book of Serenity, case 19)

So, what is Mount Meru?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 8th, 2019 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

I don't think this is so.

Astus wrote:

'From beginningless time, this consciousness has evolved like a stream. At what point is it utterly abandoned? IT IS ABANDONED IN THE STATE OF ARHATSHIP. Arhats are saints at the time when they terminate the obstacle of the passions (klesa-avarana) utterly.

They are said to ABANDON [alaya consciousness] because at that time, the coarse and heavy class of passions is forever removed. The ARHAT refers to those of all three vehicles who have progressed beyond the stage of learning (saiksa)'

(CWSL, BDK ed, p 78)

Queequeg said:

See BDK translation pp. 70-73.

Astus wrote:

In what I have there is a discussion of caitasikas on those pages.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 8th, 2019 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

Further on from where you quote:

Astus wrote:

That is an argument for the inclusion of avaivartikas, who are not yet asaiksa on the bodhisattva path. Furthermore, the avaivartika bodhisattva is included because he has abandoned klesavarana just like asaiksa sravakas. But before that it is stated explicitly that all three types of asaiksa aryas have fully abandoned the alayavijnana. However, alayavijnana is a function of the mind, so its abandonment does not mean total cessation even for arhats until nirupadhisenanirvana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2019 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Queequeg said:

the passage I quoted quite clearly says it's a matter of semantics.

Astus wrote:

Not just semantics but function. Alayavijnana is a function of the mind, and when that function has ceased, that is the cessation of the storehouse consciousness. That is why arhats, pratyekabuddhas, non-regressing bodhisattvas, and buddhas are said to be without alayavijnana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2019 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen priests considered Bhikkhu / Bhikṣu?

Content:

ryan_oliveira said:

Are non-celibate Zen priests considered Bhikkhu / Bhikṣu?

Astus wrote:

Within the Japanese context, yes. Beyond that, no.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2019 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Does zen have anything similar to dream yoga?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Seongcheol, a former head of the Jogye Order, had the view that hwadu practice should

continue during sleep. See this

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seongcheol#In_deep_sleep,_one_mind. You can also read about it in his talk <http://www.buddhism.org/?p=157>.

The same idea is found in Jogye's handbook for Ganhwaseon in the chapter:

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=12

However, it is not a practice like dream yoga, but rather a sign of progress. The point is still to focus totally on the hwadu, as <http://www.buddhism.org/?p=1194>:

'When practicing hwadu, do not waste even one second. Continuously, as a hen sits on her eggs, as water flows, without rest, focus on your hwadu without any interruption. Then, your effort will be fruitful, your mind and body will become light and contented. Take your hwadu even into your dreams, and you will attain wisdom, a mind clear and full of intelligence.'

On the topic of sleep, also check the <https://suttacentral.net/sn4.7/en/sujato>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2019 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Does zen have anything similar to dream yoga?

Content:

Grigoris said:

That is a truly horrible translation. It actually makes no sense.

Astus wrote:

How about <https://suttacentral.net/sn4.7/en/bodhi>?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What has not yet been discussed is: who says what Mount Meru is? The Pali Canon mentions it

<https://dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?p=408190&sid=9352bffc0e0877c1e1ed3a50c8d7edc5#p408190> (mainly: SN <https://suttacentral.net/sn13.11/en/sujato>;

<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.99/en/sujato>; <https://suttacentral.net/sn56.49/en/sujato>;

<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.50/en/sujato>; AN

<https://suttacentral.net/an3.80/en/sujato>; <https://suttacentral.net/an7.66/en/sujato>;

<https://suttacentral.net/an10.29/en/sujato>). Most of the cosmological explanations are

found in commentaries, and not even the Abhidhamma elaborates on it. However, the commentators, including here Vasubandhu's AKB, do not take these matters as

metaphors but rather as the accurate description of the world (see: https://what-buddha-said.net/library/pdfs/Buddhist_Cosmology_Punnadhammo.pdf by

Punnadhammo, section 4:7 on p 697-700).

Punnadhammo, section 4:7 on p 697-700).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpuruṣa said:

These are descriptions of the way how to visualize it for certain meditative practices.

Astus wrote:

That does not negate the cosmological view. Just because there is meditation on the six realms, it does not mean those realms do not actually exist. Quite the opposite, one meditates on them because they are real.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpuruṣa said:

I never said these realms do not exist; of course they do.

But those descriptions are schematic (not necessarily "real") representations full of symbolism meant as instructions for visualization, just like mandalas.

Astus wrote:

There is nothing symbolic in describing the so called receptacle world (bhājanaloka), since it is meant to be an object of perception common to all beings in that place, and it is generally made of insentient matter. Or would you say the descriptions found in various texts from Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (p 82) to Mipham's *Gateway to Knowledge* (vol 2, ch 8) are somehow meditation instructions?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpuruṣa said:

In order to connect to, visualize, imagine or understand other realms and other beings we need symbols.

Astus wrote:

There are four major and eight intermediate continents around Sumeru, all populated by humans, so easily perceptible to us. The southern one, where all of us is supposed to be, is described just as India is known with its rivers and mountains. What is symbolic about that? Also,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1710_First_Japanese_Buddhist_Map_of_the_World_Showing_Europe,_America,_and_Africa_-_Geographicus_-_NansenBushu-hotan-1710.jpg from 1710 does not look like an allegory to me, even though it contains locations like Lake Anavatapta whence the four great rivers flow.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpurusa said:

What is the point you are trying to make?

Astus wrote:

That the descriptions of the world written by various authors were intended as they were written, how they imagined the world to be.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpurusa said:

The clue is imagined. In order to imagine something unpercievable to us we need symbols.

Astus wrote:

Beyond the room I'm sitting in the rest of the world I can only imagine. And even where I now sit is processed by the mind. But it doesn't mean the idea of a street outside refers to something imperceptible. Similarly, they did know and could perceive those rivers and mountains, while the rest beyond the known lands was assumed to be similarly real and perceptible, if one can go there. Hence there are stories of people physically visiting various realms.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2019 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:

tatpurusa said:

You are just talking about distant things from our own realm.

Astus wrote:

Exactly. And Mount Meru is within our realm too according to the descriptions. That's where the four great rivers, like the Ganges, come from. One just needs to follow them back to their source.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2019 at 2:11 AM

Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?

Content:
tatpurusa said:
And that is the center of the universe?

Astus wrote:
According to some, yes. See: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anavatapta>.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2019 at 4:55 AM
Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?
Content:
tatpurusa said:
I mean according to you.

Astus wrote:
I am a kilometre from the Danube, the second largest river in Europe and has about the same length as the Ganges, however, it comes from the Black Forest and not the Himalayas. The <https://www.welt-atlas.de/datenbank/karten/karte-0-9000.gif> usually have some part of West Africa in the middle, however, since often here "the world" can easily mean simply Europe, it is apparently a https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographical_midpoint_of_Europe where its midpoint lies, therefore I might as well be biased and say it's either Munich or <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%A1llya#Trivia>.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2019 at 6:26 AM
Title: Re: What is Mount Meru?
Content:
tatpurusa said:
No, I mean the centre of the universe, with all realms, not just of the Earth. This is what it is supposed to be.

Astus wrote:
The Buddhist universe in the sense of lokadhatu? Because then it is taught to be the Sumeru. But if you mean how it should be in light of the current view of the world, then there is no centre.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2019 at 6:50 PM
Title: Re: Reality
Content:
Astus wrote:
As the Svatantrika-Prasangika distinction is a Tibetan idea, primarily of the Gelugpas, here are some recommended works on that:

Academic:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=tlw1BgAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=rHHlCmCr85EC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=u7ZtE1bhtRYC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=VS4tDQAAQBAJ>
https://books.google.hu/books?id=1KXrUeGsT_QC

Nyingmapa:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=SaHSVuMnxNIC>

Kagyupa:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=8zeh8VAFcVAC>

Sakyapa:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=Xzc6AwAAQBAJ>

Gelugpa:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=iRKQ2GbDcA8C>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=3KqnpqRajPEC>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=bzb-Gih7k1EC>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 12th, 2019 at 1:58 AM

Title: Re: Reality

Content:

Astus wrote:

Those four you listed are fine, if that's what you're after.

Instead of Garfield's MMK I might recommend Siderits' work:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=1Y8vdpqzOg8C>. Or if it's a matter of translation, try <https://books.google.hu/books?id=cmFADAAAQBAJ>, and if with commentary you can go with <https://books.google.hu/books?id=QpO5ykqRHJEC>.

If you want somewhat more accessible works:

On MMK:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=9DXqAwAAQBAJ>

Madhyamaka:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=dIMMmwEACAAJ>
https://books.google.hu/books?id=GqW7Lm0GT_gC
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=oMNymKu-5c8C>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=tVGBDwAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=QWg7BQAAQBAJ>

Meditation:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=y6HzxLUC7rQC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=qylyQHR3AacC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=MC4tDQAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=vJVDCUcwirgC>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 12th, 2019 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: Do Buddhas have any true multiplicity, or are they all emanations of the dharmakāya?

Content:

Lokottara said:

I don't understand what the "point" of separate Samyaksambuddhas is if, via the Śūraṅgama Samādhi, even one Buddha can manifest an infinite amount of emanations (among other things).

Astus wrote:

There are two perspectives. From the perspective of one's own cultivation, one aims to complete the bodhisattva path and attain buddhahood. From the perspective of one's perception of those who accomplished buddhahood, there are various examples. So, there are different buddhas for two reasons: the manifoldness of practitioners, and the plurality of personal traits that require connection to different buddhas. While actually these ideas about buddhas are 100% conceptual fabrications, they're still meaningful and beneficial.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2019 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Calming the mind

Content:

dolphin_color said:

In your experience, what actually helps calm the mind before a meditation session?

Astus wrote:

There are numerous practices, especially those performed regularly in ceremonies, that are meant to help taming the mind. In particular repentance is a powerful one, so are devotional practices. Depending on your preferred tradition, you can find those that fit your situation. Furthermore, what object you choose to tame the mind can also matter a lot.

“If beings of dull capacity in the final age desire in their hearts to pursue the Way but cannot succeed in realizing it due to karmic obstructions from the past, they should ardently repent and always keep up their hope. They must first cut off likes and dislikes, envy, and deceitfulness and pursue the superior mind. They may practice any one of these three kinds of pure contemplation. If that contemplation does not succeed, they should then practice another contemplation. They should not become disheartened but

should [continue to] pursue realization gradually.”
(Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 11, BDK ed, p 106)

"The fifth method is a practice [designed] to cure people equally [troubled with multiple problems]. [This method is also intended for] people who have committed grave transgressions and who seek for [help from] the Buddha.
[The master] should teach such people the single-minded concentration on calling the Buddha to mind. There are three types of people who practice the concentration on calling the Buddha to mind: elementary, intermediate, and advanced."
(The Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation, BDK ed, p 33)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 14th, 2019 at 10:18 PM

Title: Re: What is Dharma?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'And the Blessed One spoke, saying: "In whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, there is not found the Noble Eightfold Path, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness. But in whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline there is found the Noble Eightfold Path, there is found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness.'

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html>)

"Bhikkhus, only here is there a recluse, only here a second recluse, only here a third recluse, only here a fourth recluse. The doctrines of others are devoid of recluses: that is how you should rightly roar your lion's roar."

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.011.ntbb.html>)

"the Tathagata isn't concerned with whether all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it will be led to release by means of that [Dhamma]. But he does know this: 'All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led [to release] from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances — those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment — having well-established their minds in the four frames of reference, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for Awakening."

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.095.than.html>)

'this teaching is well explained and well propounded to us by the Blessed One, emancipating, leading to peace, proclaimed by someone who is a fully awakened Buddha. You should all recite this in concert, without disputing, so that this spiritual path may last for a long time.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn33/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2019 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Cheng weishi lun, Demonstration of Consciousness

Content:

Sentient Light said:

But the remainder of the outflows remain as a subtle mind-made body, which is subject to birth and death in a 'transformative' way, rather than a 'discontinuous' way.

Astus wrote:

The Faxiang school accepts that there is remainderless extinction for hearers of the fixed class (of the five gotras), hence no continuation. See: CWSL, ch 12, BDK ed, p 341-345.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 15th, 2019 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: The feeling of Me, or you.

Content:

Astus wrote:

That is the common mistake of taking consciousness/awareness to be stable and one's true self. But if properly investigated, it turns out that there is nothing constant about it.

"That which is wrongly believed to be the self, or the person, and the doer and so forth, which has been imputed as the performer of actions and the experiencer of joy and sorrow is nothing but the false belief in self based on the five aggregates.

When examined by means of discriminating knowledge the essence of a personal self is not perceived because it is not established as being identical with the aggregates, nor is it established as being different from them."

(Gateway to Knowledge, vol 4, p 35)

"It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of it, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. In the same way, what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another."
(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2019 at 3:24 AM

Title: Re: What is Dharma?

Content:

Aemilius said:

That is not as simple as it may seem. Words have no absolute existence, meaning of the Dharma is often very elusive. Thus it is impossible to say that "here is Dharma", and

"there is no Dharma" with absolute certainty.

Astus wrote:

If that were so, then the Buddha would not have taught the Dharma well, then he would have failed in his role as a teacher. Furthermore, right view is very basic for any endeavour in Buddhism, therefore, if one cannot ascertain the correct teaching, then one cannot go any further either.

"When a person has wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration, wrong knowledge, & wrong release, whatever bodily deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever verbal deeds... whatever mental deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever intentions, whatever determinations, whatever vows, whatever fabrications, all lead to what is disagreeable, unpleasing, unappealing, unprofitable, & stressful. Why is that? Because the view is evil."

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.104.than.html>)

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, right resolve comes into being. In one of right resolve, right speech comes into being. In one of right speech, right action... In one of right action, right livelihood... In one of right livelihood, right effort... In one of right effort, right mindfulness... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration... In one of right concentration, right knowledge... In one of right knowledge, right release comes into being. Thus the learner is endowed with eight factors, and the arahant with ten."

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.117.than.html>)

Aemilius said:

Dharma exists in communication, in experience. As is pointed to by the Gotami sutra.

Astus wrote:

The Gotami Sutta lists specific qualities that define right and wrong. If you want a more general statement, see the

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.078.than.html>, however, even then it is quite well defined in Buddhism what skilful (kusala) and unskilful (akusala) are, plus knowing the difference is part of right view (see:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.009.ntbb.html>).

Aemilius said:

In the Lotus of the True Law, Chapter on Avalokiteshvara, it is said that he (Avalokiteshvara) will appear in numerous different guises and forms to guide those who need guidance, like in the forms of a yaksha, a pratyeka-buddha, in the forms of various hindu deities, etc..

Astus wrote:

Being pointed toward the Dharma does not mean that it is Dharma. Impermanence is ubiquitous and contemplation on it is liberating, but that does not make it Dharma per se.

Aemilius said:

Whether a path or teaching is authentic can be discerned from the fruits it produces.

Astus wrote:

You still need to define authentic fruits. And then, as a simple matter of causality, there are a limited number of causes that can bring about the desired effect.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2019 at 3:22 PM

Title: Re: What is Dharma?

Content:

Aemilius said:

You also need to define all the words and concepts used in all the teachings, see...Like for example what is "view", what is "right view", ... what is "liberation", what is "right liberation", etc...

Astus wrote:

That's already been done by the Buddha and numerous disciples in the sutras, treatises, and the commentaries.

Aemilius said:

the responsibility rests also on the hearer or the one who understands.

Astus wrote:

The responsibility to actually study, contemplate, and cultivate, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 16th, 2019 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Why did the Buddha rarely get specific with meditation instructions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What level of specificity do you mean?

As for what can be gathered from the early texts:

http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/Articles/On%20the%20Practice%20of%20Buddhist%20Meditation%20According%20to%20the%20Pali%20Nikayas%20and%20Exegetical%20Sources_Gethin_Hamburg_2004.pdf by Rupert Gethin

https://www.academia.edu/21124676/Early_Buddhist_Meditation by Johannes Bronkhorst

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/ebms.pdf> by Analayo

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2019 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Why did the Buddha rarely get specific with meditation instructions?

Content:

Lokottara said:

The specificity that more modern meditation manuals have.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean like when the <https://suttacentral.net/mn118/en/bodhi> says "having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect" there should be a more extensive explanation, like the http://www.rinpoche.com/kml/study_materials/Meditation%20Posture%20.pdf? If so, then one possible reason for that is how the teachings may talk about things that were important to mention/emphasise/preserve, like the stages of absorption, but not the object of absorption. You can find this bias in later and even current teachings as well.

Lokottara said:

For example, even some of the terms are rather undefined. For example, the term "parimukham".

Astus wrote:

That is more of a linguistic matter that establishing mindfulness in front of oneself may not sound clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2019 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Why did the Buddha rarely get specific with meditation instructions?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Also, more on how much one can actually find in the suttas:

https://store.pariyatti.org/Buddhas-Path-to-Deliverance-The--PDF-eBook_p_2561.html
- Nyanatiloka Thera used mostly suttas to cover the topics of the Visuddhimagga.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150324233218/http://measurelessmind.ca/> - the full path described mainly with suttas

http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/Buddhist%20Meditation%20An%20anthology%20from%20the%20Pali%20canon_Sarah%20Shaw.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 17th, 2019 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Relationship between Huayan's fourfold dharmadhatu and Dongshen's/Zens Five Ranks.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ross Bolleter in https://books.google.hu/books?id=_XBNAgAAQBAJ makes several connections between the five ranks and the four dharmadhatu. The topic is also briefly touched upon in <https://books.google.hu/books?id=RLH9CAAAQBAJ>, and in the introduction to part 2 in <https://books.google.hu/books?id=TrYKAAAYAAJ>. In <https://books.google.hu/books?id=ikPxIBFOz-sC> there is an essay by Jana Benicka titled '(Huayan-like) Notions of Inseparability (or Unity) of Essence and Its Function (or Principle and Phenomena) in Some Commentaries on "Five Positions" of Chan Master Dongshan Liangjie'.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2019 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

Is the Third Truth of the Noble about the cessation of suffering or the cessation of suffering cause?

Astus wrote:

'Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2019 at 7:54 PM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

Isn't the point of 2TN to demonstrate the suffering cause ? (Which should be eliminated)

Astus wrote:

And that's what it is:

'Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2019 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

Is this the answer to my question?

Astus wrote:

The 2nd noble truth is about the cause of suffering, just as it is stated in the quote from the sutta. The 3rd noble truth is about the cessation of suffering that comes about due to the cessation of the cause of suffering, as stated in the quote from the sutta. If there is something else you're asking, please clarify.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 21st, 2019 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

Why is 3TN called a “cessation of suffering”, although it is explained as a cessation of, namely, the cause of suffering? And why is 4TN called the "path leading to the cessation of suffering" and not to the cessation of the cause of suffering (which would be more logical)?

Astus wrote:

My guess is simply because of convenience, just as all four are reduced to the words dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, magga.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 22nd, 2019 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Does meditating on emptiness directly lead to compassion?

Content:

Lokottara said:

Have any of you found that contemplating on the emptiness of sentient beings makes you more compassionate?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness of being means recognising how attachment is a mistake that generates immense suffering, and with the diminishing of self-centredness there is the arising of patience for and recognition of the emotions driving everyone to more and more pain. That's how compassion can emerge from contemplation of emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2019 at 4:09 PM

Title: Re: Saṃskārāḥ & Bijāni

Content:

Astus wrote:

Samskara at the second limb is about intentions based on ignorance. Seeds in the storehouse consciousness are hidden causes of future experiences. One can actually be aware of arising intentions, while seeds are per definition unknown. You could even

say that seeds cause samskaras.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2019 at 5:39 PM

Title: Re: Conceptual vs. Non Conceptual meditation discussion

Content:

Astus wrote:

The basic ignorance is conceptual, hence the remedy is conceptual. As Kamalashila put it (Stages of Meditation, p 134, 135):

'Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way. ... It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, Without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identity of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analyzed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical form and so forth.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 23rd, 2019 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Conceptual vs. Non Conceptual meditation discussion

Content:

Rick said:

It would follow that if the illness is the psyche, the remedy is psyche-logical. Treat like with like ... to transcend attachment to self, use self. Yes?

Astus wrote:

The error of taking things to be existent or non-existent is a conceptual one, and that error can be addressed on the conceptual level, removing the unfounded belief in substantial entities.

'Once a teacher from Kham asked Dromtönpa about the meaning of the two selflessnesses.

Dromtönpa replied, "If you were to probe with your mind and search from the top of your crown aperture to the bottom of the soles of your feet, not a single entity is to be found that is called the 'self.' That nonfinding is the selflessness of persons. Recognizing that the searching mind, too, is devoid of intrinsic existence is the selflessness of phenomena."

(The Book of Kadam, p 573)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 24th, 2019 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Conceptual vs. Non Conceptual meditation discussion

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

It is not necessary to cease conceptual thought, only to have an experience it's nature ' i.e. to "see the identity of things with wisdom".

Astus wrote:

Seeing with wisdom means seeing with discernment based on the teachings.

Johnny Dangerous said:

whether Vipasyana is more properly conceptual or non conceptual, I assume the real answer is both.

Astus wrote:

Both, in the way that there is a sequence, where one first has to analyse experiences, and that is conceptual, and with the conclusion of analysis there is no need to do anything further but remain in non-conceptual equipoise.

Johnny Dangerous said:

this is not the only response to the question and if we read Dzogchen and Mahamudra teachers of various lineages

Astus wrote:

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal on vipasyana in mahamudra:

'In this context, by relying on the major and minor texts, as well as shorter esoteric instructions, transmitted from the Great Brahman [Saraha], the glorious Śavaripa, and the lord of yogins Tilopa, we focus on just the mind to determine [the nature of] all percepts and perceivers—which is the instruction for taking direct perception as the path. This is the way to give rise to the view of the emptiness of nature. It has many distinctive profundities in that it involves little hardship and brings great benefit. It is, for the most part, identical with the key points of the Sūtra-oriented texts on the stages of meditation, the Instructions on Prajñāpāramitā, Kamalaśīla's three Stages of Meditation, and the Exalted [Lord Atīśa's] Instructions on Madhyamaka. It is most wonderful.' (Moonbeams of Mahamudra, 9.B.3)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 26th, 2019 at 12:34 AM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Astus wrote:

The 4NT are the basics of correct view for liberation without what there is no correct path. The 4NT were also taught to lay people in his

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anupubbikath%C4%81>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 27th, 2019 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

1. The Path we have already discussed here:

<https://dharma wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=41&t=31103#p491639>

Astus wrote:

That is a denial of the possibility of understanding the teachings and following the instructions, hence a rejection of the Three Jewels.

Viach said:

2. I had in mind the average man with average abilities.

Astus wrote:

What is the measurement of abilities?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 28th, 2019 at 2:43 AM

Title: Re: cessation of suffering or cessation of suffering cause

Content:

Viach said:

1. 4TN are not an instruction for practice, they are the answer at the end of the exercises book.

Astus wrote:

The four noble truths is one of the first things one learns about Buddhism, and it serves as the summary of the whole of Buddhadharma. It is also the basis of right view, what one has to come to understand, and eventually realise directly.

Viach said:

You can't practice the answer, you can only be guided by it.

Astus wrote:

Being a guide, it is what one follows through until complete attainment.

Viach said:

without a solution (practice of Buddhist yoga), the answer itself (4TN) has no practical value.

Astus wrote:

Contemplation of the four truths is one of the topics of dharmanupasyana, not to mention all the studies one has to do.

Viach said:

2. As a rule, the measure is a reconciliation of the yogic experience you have already achieved with a description of the reference experience (for example, 4TN, 10 bhumis, etc.).

Astus wrote:

The four noble truths are not the stages of attainment. Also, having attained any of the arya stages is a measure of attainment, not abilities.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 28th, 2019 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Mind versus Nature

Content:

Astus wrote:

The nature of a thing cannot be apart from the thing itself. The nature of water is wetness, but its wetness is not apart from it, but a defining description of the object. The nature of mind is a description of what the mind is like in general, therefore the mind's universal characteristic (samanya-laksana) is that it's empty, impermanent, etc., while its individual, unique characteristic (sva-laksana) is that it is aware, conscious.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 28th, 2019 at 6:49 PM

Title: Re: Cessation in the Shravakayana/Pali Canon

Content:

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is the cessation of greed, hatred, and ignorance (see the whole of <https://suttacentral.net/sn43>). The reason that the Buddha did not teach annihilation is that there is nobody to cease to exist (see e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.85/en/bodhi> & <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.86/en/bodhi>). Furthermore, inquiries into the existence and non-existence of nirvana is not understanding what nirvana is (see e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an4.173/en/sujato> & <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/horner>).

Ven. Ñāṇananda has a great series of talks on the subject of nibbana:

<https://seeingthroughthenet.net/books/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 28th, 2019 at 9:42 PM

Title: Re: Cessation in the Shravakayana/Pali Canon

Content:

smcj said:

And just to be clear, we are discussing the post mortem stays of an Arhat, not a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

In Abhidharma schools (not Mahayana) there is no difference.

smcj said:

Once I get home I'll look for Gompopa's Mahayana view of Arhats, which does see a post mortem continuation.

Astus wrote:

That's Gampopa's view, that agrees with the late Mahayana doctrine of Ekayana, not Abhidharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 29th, 2019 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Cessation in the Shravakayana/Pali Canon

Content:

smcj said:

So he includes his understanding of what the Hinayana teaches.

Astus wrote:

No Sravaka Sutra Pitaka nor Abhidharma Pitaka were translated to Tibetan, and Gampopa had only to very little, like the Abhidharmakosabhasyam. If you want to know what the Sarvastivadins taught, you can find that mostly in Chinese, some parts in Sanskrit, and what is available in English.

smcj said:

I use Hinayana here specifically to refer to the extinct Northern Indian school(s) that the Tibetans got the transmission from. Not necessarily the Theravadans.

Astus wrote:

I know of no Tibetan who were a representative of any Abhidharma school. Only the bhikshu ordination got transmitted to Tibet, but not much of the teachings.

Recommended for this topic:

http://theosnet.net/dzyan/stanzas/sarvastivada_conception_of_nirvana.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 29th, 2019 at 2:58 AM

Title: Re: Mind versus Nature

Content:

Simon E. said:

We are still no nearer a consensus on what 'mind' signifies.

Astus wrote:

Mind is not a specific technical word. As for some definitions:

"And why, bhikkhus, do you call it consciousness? 'It cognizes,' bhikkhus, therefore it is called consciousness. And what does it cognize? It cognizes sour, it cognizes bitter, it cognizes pungent, it cognizes sweet, it cognizes sharp, it cognizes mild, it cognizes salty, it cognizes bland. 'It cognizes,' bhikkhus, therefore it is called consciousness."
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.79/en/bodhi>)

'What is the aggregate of consciousness (vijñānaskandha)? Consciousness distinguishes (pratijānīte) the dharmas as blue (nīla), yellow (pīta), red (lohita), white (avadāta), etc.

This consciousness is sixfold: visual consciousness (cakṣurvijñāna), auditory consciousness (śrotravijñāna), olfactory (ghrāṇa-), gustatory (jihvā-), tactile (kāya-) and mental (manoivijñāna).

What is the visual consciousness? Being based on the visual sense-faculty (cakṣurindriya), it cognizes visibles – this is the visual consciousness. Similarly for the auditory olfactory, gustatory tactile mental (consciousnesses) – being based on the mental mental sense-faculty, it cognizes the dharmas – this is the mental consciousness.

Such is the aggregate of consciousness.'
(Amrtarasa, V.I.5, tr Chodron)

'Consciousness is the impression relative to each object.

It is the mental organ.

It is seven dhatus.

The six consciousnesses and the manas.'
(Abhidharmakosa I.16, tr Pruden)

'What is the characteristic of consciousness? Knowing is the characteristic of consciousness. It is consciousness by means of which one knows (visible) form, sound, odor, taste, the tangible, mental objects and various realms.'
(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 4, tr Boin-Webb)

'What is consciousness? It is awareness of an object. It is also [referred to as] thought and mind, because it is diverse and because mind serves as its support.'
(Pancaskandhaprakarana, in Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p 239)

'Consciousness means "perception." Here, in the Treatise, the word "consciousness" also includes mental activities, because they are without doubt associated with the former.'
(Cheng Weishi Lun, BDK ed, p 9-10)

'The aggregate of consciousness is that which individually cognizes the object-identity of all phenomena.'
(Gateway to Knowledge, 1.135, tr Kunsang)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 29th, 2019 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Cessation in the Shravakayana/Pali Canon

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

"without remainder" is anupādisesā from anupādisesā ca nibbānadhātu or "the Nibbāna-element with no residue left" in <https://suttacentral.net/iti44/en/ireland>.

Astus wrote:

Ven. Ñāṇananda comments on the Nibbānadhātu Sutta in

https://seeingthroughthenet.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Nibbana_Vol_4.pdf
(Sermon 18):

'At this point, we have to admit that the term diṭṭhadhammika is associated with sa-upādisesā Nibbānadhātu while the term samparāyika is taken over to refer to anupādisesā Nibbānadhātu. However, the fact that Nibbāna is explicitly defined elsewhere as the cessation of existence, bhavanirodho Nibbānaṃ, must not be forgotten. If Nibbāna is the cessation of existence, there is nothing left for the arahant to experience hereafter.

Nibbāna is solely the realization of the cessation of existence or the end of the process of becoming. So there is absolutely no question of a hereafter for the arahant.'

(p 398)

'The popular interpretation of the term anupādisesā Nibbānadhātu leaves room for some absolutist conceptions of an asaṅkhata dhātu, unprepared element, as the destiny of the arahant. After his parinibbāna, he is supposed to enter this particular Nibbānadhātu. But here, in this discourse, it is explained in just one sentence: Tassa idheva, bhikkhave, sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sītibhavissanti, "in the case of him" (that is the arahant) ", O! monks, all what is felt, not having been delighted in, will cool off here itself."

This cooling off happens just before death, without igniting another spark of life.'

(p 400-401)

And a summary from Sermon 19:

'Towards the end of our last sermon, we started commenting on the two terms sa-upādisesā Nibbānadhātu and anupādisesā Nibbānadhātu. Our discussion was based on a discourse, which we quoted from the Itivuttaka. We also drew attention to a certain analogy found in the discourses, which shows that the two Nibbāna elements actually represent two stages of the extinguishment implicit in the term Nibbāna.

When no more firewood is added to a blazing fire, flames would subside and the logs of wood already burning go on smouldering as embers. After some time, they too get extinguished and become ashes. With regard to the arahant, too, we have to think in terms of this analogy. It can be taken as an illustration of the two Nibbāna elements. To the extent the living arahant is free from fresh graspings, lust, hate and delusions do not flare up. But so long as he has to bear the burden of this organic combination, this physical frame, the arahant has to experience certain afflictions and be receptive to likes and dislikes, pleasures and pains.

In spite of all that, mentally he has access to the experience of the extinguishment he

has already won. It is in that sense that the arahant is said to be in the Nibbāna element with residual clinging in his everyday life, while taking in the objects of the five senses. At the last moment of the arahant's life, even this organic body that had been grasped as upādiṇṇa has to be abandoned. It is at that moment, when he is going to detach his mind from the body, that anupādisesā parinibbānadhātu comes in.'

(p 403)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 30th, 2019 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Thich Thien An on buddhanusmrti as zen meditation

Content:

Sentient Light said:

No longer is the Buddha the object and the meditator the subject, but the meditator becomes one with the Buddha. When this happens, this is the state of "One Mind Samadhi," and here there is no longer any distinction between Zen and Pure Land, self-power or other-power, wisdom or compassion, for all has become merged into the brightness of the Infinite Light.

[...] Like the Buddha, we should extend our love and compassion outward to all alike, to everyone everywhere, without making any distinctions. Again, if we choose to meditate on the Buddha's wisdom, we imagine the light of wisdom radiating from the figure of the Buddha and growing larger and larger and brighter and brighter until it merges with our own inner light. At this point we and the Buddha become one. When this stage is reached, then this world will become transformed into the Pure Land, this Samsara become Nirvana, and all the bliss and purity of the Western paradise become realized in the here and now of everyday life. Here the Zen and Pure Land schools meet in that common center from which they both emanate, the One Mind of Buddha, which is our own true and permanent Essence of Mind.

Astus wrote:

That is (mis)taking zen to be a mind absorbed in a single object, however, such concentration practices are found in many systems even outside Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 30th, 2019 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Thich Thien An on buddhanusmrti as zen meditation

Content:

Bodhisattva509 said:

Are you claiming that his teachings deviated from traditional Thien teachings?

Astus wrote:

I'm questioning if single-pointed concentration can be qualified as zen meditation.

'The master addressed the assembly, "In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind, nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness."

(Platform Sutra, ch 5, BDK ed, p 45)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 31st, 2019 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Thich Thien An on buddhanusmrti as zen meditation

Content:

Sentient Light said:

There is a uniqueness to the buddhanusmrti samadhi in that it is the Buddha that is the object.

Astus wrote:

What difference does the object of awareness makes, when the only goal is to achieve one-pointed concentration? While the object can initially help, when one-pointedness is achieved, the object becomes irrelevant.

Sentient Light said:

When samadhi is attained through Buddha-mindfulness, it is not simply quiescence that is achieved. When the adept is absorbed into the mind-made Buddha, this is precisely the direct recognition of one's own Buddhanature--it is kien tinh.

Astus wrote:

Why would that be? With concentration one can eventually attain various levels of dhyana. To turn concentration into wisdom, one must contemplate emptiness. To be absorbed in one's thought of a buddha, that in itself lacks insight and is not free from clinging.

'Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Tathāgata. The mind is my body, the mind sees the Buddha. The mind does not itself know the mind, the mind does not itself see the mind. A mind with conceptions is stupidity, a mind without conceptions is nirvana. There is nothing in these dharmas that can be enjoyed; they are all made by thinking. If thinking is nothing but empty, then anything that is thought is also utterly nonexistent.'

(Pratyutpannasamadhi Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 26)

'To be enlightened to this Dharma is to be without thought. To be without recollection, without attachment, to not activate the false and deceptive—this is to allow one's self[-suchness]-nature to function. To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

Sentient Light said:

Are you trying to suggest that samadhi is not a core component of zen praxis? Or just that samadhi does not necessarily mean seeing one's true nature?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you take samadhi to be. If it is a one-pointed mind, then it can help in achieving tranquillity, but is insufficient for wisdom. As for the core components of zen praxis, they are no-thought (vô niệm 無念), no-character (vô tướng 無相), and no-abiding (vô trú 無住).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 31st, 2019 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Thich Thien An on buddhanusmrti as zen meditation

Content:

Bodhisattva509 said:

What are your qualifications as a teacher, if you don't mind me asking?

Astus wrote:

I can quote some scriptures and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 2nd, 2019 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Cessation in the Shravakayana/Pali Canon

Content:

smcj said:

This conundrum is addressed in the Mahayana by positing additional consciousnesses that are absent in the Pali. Specifically the 8th consciousness which goes between lifetime to lifetime.

Astus wrote:

All 8 consciousnesses in Yogacara are included within the consciousness aggregate.

'What is the definition of the aggregate of consciousness (vijñānaskandhavyavasthāna)? It is the mind (citta), the mental organ (manas) and also consciousness (Vijñāna).' (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 21, tr Boin-Webb; see also Vasubandhu in Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p 239-240)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2019 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: Discrimination is self

Content:

LastLegend said:

Some quoted scriptures consciousness is aware, but this awareness still has a division/discrimination of subject and object hence self still operates; though clearly differentiating is practice.

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is not a basic quality of consciousness, or any other aggregates, but it is the clinging to the aggregates that makes one assume a self. Only fully liberated beings

have no more identification with the skandhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2019 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Discrimination is self

Content:

LastLegend said:

If a division arises or created, there is subject and object, that's self or discrimination of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

What sort of division, what sort of discrimination? A buddha should very well be able to tell the left from the right, but has no self-view nor self-clinging.

LastLegend said:

Someone can enter samadhi by severing suffering responses to sensations/feelings and severing linking perceptions, and this person has exited samsara.

Astus wrote:

The temporary absence of manifest afflictions does not mean liberation, otherwise babies should be considered buddhas.

LastLegend said:

But this person has not surpassed consciousness-still clinging to its division (subject and object).

Astus wrote:

Various meditative experiences are well within the realm of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2019 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Discrimination is self

Content:

LastLegend said:

So a division for us is not a simple division a table versus a chair, or you and me. For us means a link of chained responses of aggregates that involves suffering and delusion.

Astus wrote:

Therefore it is not simple discrimination that is the problem, but rather a specific form of mistake that assumes a permanent substance. So it can actually be said that suffering comes from lack of correct discrimination.

LastLegend said:

I was talking about Arahant's samadhi.

Astus wrote:

Those who posit a special realm for the arhats describe it practically as a comatose state with no mental activities, quite similar to the asamjnisattvas.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2019 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Cicada

Content:

LastLegend said:

When it's quiet, cicada can be heard.

Astus wrote:

It can't be heard even in a storm, how much less in silence!

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2019 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: The Boss! Zen!

Content:

Astus wrote:

"If you say the immediate mirror awareness is correct, or that there is something else beyond the mirror awareness, this is a delusion. If you keep dwelling in the immediate mirror awareness, this too is the same as delusion; it is called the mistake of naturalism. To say the present mirror awareness is one's own Buddha is words of measurement, words of calculation - it is like the crying of a jackal. This is still being stuck as in glue at the gate. Originally you did not acknowledge that innate knowing and awareness are your own Buddha, and went running elsewhere to seek Buddha. So you needed a teacher to tell you about innate knowing and awareness as a medicine to cure this disease of hastily seeking outside. Once you no longer seek outwardly, the disease is cured and it is necessary to remove the medicine. If you cling fixedly to innate knowing awareness, this is a disease of meditation. Such is a thoroughgoing disciple; like water turned to ice, all the ice is water, but it can hardly be expected to quench thirst."
(Extensive Record of Baizhang, tr Cleary, p 33-34)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2019 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: The Boss! Zen!

Content:

LastLegend said:

The question is what the boss looks like?

Astus wrote:

What boss?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 22nd, 2019 at 6:10 PM

Title: Re: Desire/Suffering Is a Water Faucet That Can't be Turned Off

Content:

hkvanx said:

We are programmed to constantly crave and seek food, sex, etc.

Buddha identified suffering is due to desire....which is ingrained in our very human nature.

Astus wrote:

Humans, under normal conditions, have the freedom to choose whether to act or not, whether to pursue an impulse or not, therefore it is not valid to say that they are forced by anything to submit to craving.

Buddhism is based on the understanding that both the Buddha and many of his disciples have successfully attained liberation from suffering, and the same attainment is available today as well to whoever is willing.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 22nd, 2019 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Death Is Nirvana?

Content:

hkvanx said:

Death should not be looked upon negatively as it is currently feared by many of us.

Astus wrote:

One can't help but fear death as long as it is understood as the annihilation of oneself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 26th, 2019 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Agamas and Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

ryan_oliveira said:

The āgamas are part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon?

Astus wrote:

You can find the "Śrāvakayāna works" in the <http://read.84000.co/section/O1JC114941JC14668.html> from Toh 287 to 359. But the agamas are generally what are found in the Chinese Canon, as there are whole collections (Dirgha-agama, Madhyama-agama, etc.).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2019 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Agamas and Tibetan Buddhism

Content:

Fortyeightvows said:

That link doesn't have agama sutra

Astus wrote:

Some examples:

Toh 287 - Mindfulness of the True Dharma (dam chos dran pa nyer bzhag / saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna)

Toh 316 - The Sūtra on the Four Truths (bden pa bzhi'i mdo / catuḥsatyasūtra)

Toh 326 - Chapters of Utterances on Specific Topics (ched du brjod pa'i tshoms / udānavarga)

Toh 331 - The Sūtra of the Moon (zla ba'i mdo / candrasūtra)

Toh 334 - The Sūtra of Nandika (dga' ba can gyi mdo / nandikasūtra)

Toh 337 - The Sūtra of the Wheel of Dharma (chos kyi 'khor lo'i mdo / Dharmacakrasūtra)

Toh 338 - Classification of Acts (las rnam 'byed / karmavibhaṅga)

Toh 339 - The Dharma Scripture on the Classification of Acts (las rnam par 'gyur ba chos kyi gzhung / karmavibhaṅgadharmagrantha)

Toh 352 - The Sūtra of Brahmā's Net (tshangs pa'i dra ba'i mdo / brahmajālasūtra)

See also:

<https://legacy.suttacentral.net/dq>

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=986>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2019 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Aemilius said:

This passage of the phenomena of origination and dissolution in the body is taken from the Satipatthana sutta, (translation of Thanissaro bhikkhu). What this passage really means is all the processes included in metabolism of the body, like the catabolic and anabolic processes, etc...

Astus wrote:

What passage? Both <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN10.html> and <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/DN/DN22.html> has simply:

"And further... just as a dexterous butcher or his apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk reflects on this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.'

In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to

the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself."

As e.g. <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN28.html> and <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN140.html> explain, those four elements are basic qualities as hardness, liquidity, heat, and movement. Where is the metabolism part?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2019 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Aemilius said:

Metabolism is implicit, is what I am saying. It hasn't been made clear and explicit in the passage above or in the passage about the four elements. How else could the body depend on the elements, be composed of the elements, or dissolve into the elements, than through metabolism?

Astus wrote:

It's an instruction on analysing the bodily elements, all the parts of the body conceived in terms of the four main qualities of solidity, liquidity, heat, and movement. Since it is a practice in observation, and metabolism happens on a cellular level, it could not be observed. Instead, those four elements mean readily perceptible qualities.

"Contemplation of the body's earthy and watery qualities can be undertaken by observing the physical sensations of the solid and liquid parts of the body. Awareness of its fiery quality can be developed through noting variations in bodily temperature, and to some extent also by turning awareness to the processes of digestion and ageing. Air, representing the quality of motion, can be covered by directing awareness to the different movements that take place within the organism, such as the circulation of the blood or the cycle of the breaths.¹⁴⁰The same elementary qualities can be combined in a single contemplation, by being aware of these four qualities as characteristics of each part or particle of the body."

(<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/direct-path.pdf> by Bhikkhu Analayo, p 164)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2019 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Aemilius said:

This is a clear case of esoteric teachings in the Tipitaka.

Astus wrote:

There are no esoteric teachings in the Tipitaka.

"I have set forth the Dhamma without making any distinction of esoteric and exoteric doctrine; there is nothing, Ananda, with regard to the teachings that the Tathagata holds to the last with the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back."

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html>)

"Three things shine in the open, not under cover. What three? The moon shines in the open, not under cover. The sun shines in the open, not under cover. The teaching and training proclaimed by a Realized One shine in the open, not under cover."

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.131/en/sujato>)

Aemilius said:

There is also the Anathapindika sutta, where it is said that the meditation of the elements is esoteric, i.e. secret. It was given to Anathapindika on his deathbed.

Astus wrote:

There is no meditation on the elements listed there, unless you count the instruction not to cling to them. There is no statement on some secret method either. What was said: "This sort of talk on the Dhamma, householder, is not given to lay people clad in white. This sort of talk on the Dhamma is given to those gone forth."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

Mmmeh...

Astus wrote:

It does not mean there were hidden teachings.

See note 1306 on page 1358 of The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha by Bhikkhu Bodhi: "This statement does not imply that there is any inherent exclusiveness or arbitrary discrimination in the Buddha's way of presenting his teaching. But as those who remain in lay life must look after their families, possessions, and occupations, such talk leading to complete detachment would not have been appropriate for them."

And Piya Tan also states (<http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/23.9-Anathapindikovada-S-m143-piya.pdf>): "This episode may sound as if there were a strict two-tiered teaching scheme, the higher level for the renunciants only and the simpler level for the laity. No such division ever existed in the Buddha's teaching"

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 1:00 AM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

I have not seen it in practice.

Astus wrote:

While teachings given to large crowds may not usually touch on more difficult issues, nor get into technical details, all levels of the teachings are openly (and generally freely) available in Theravada and East Asian Mahayana temples.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 2:04 AM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

Not everyone will respond well to the 4NT. Sometimes people just need to be consoled.

Astus wrote:

And that's all well and good. It does not turn the four noble truths into an esoteric teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

I never said it was an esoteric teaching in principle... in practice, there are teachings withheld from some. It was apparently true in the Buddha's time, and its true now.

Astus wrote:

OK, I just wanted to make sure we're on the same page here. If you don't mind the hairsplitting, I wouldn't say withheld, more like the appropriate teachings are given/applied at the appropriate times. It follows how the Buddha taught gradually and revealed the four noble truths to his listeners when he knew their "mind was ready, pliable, rid of hindrances, joyful, and confident" (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/dn3/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

They weren't just ordinary lay persons.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha also gave the gradual teaching to "a leper named Suppabuddha, a poor, miserable wretch of a person" (see <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.5.03.than.html>). And there were many lay disciples who achieved various levels of liberation. So, apart from being extraordinary for meeting and following the Buddha, there were all sorts of people in the householder community.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

What's your point?

Astus wrote:

That just because some disciples were brahmins, it doesn't mean they were more fit for higher teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: what is Original Mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What is called original mind is just the suchness of mind where there is no attachment, no self.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Queequeg said:

Anyway my point is, by default, in practice, not everyone is taught everything.

Astus wrote:

We are in agreement on that. What I intended to prove is that such a limit is not on the side of the teacher or the teaching, but the listener's temporary situation, hence no esoteric aspects to talk of.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 29th, 2019 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Origination and dissolution phenomena in the body

Content:

Aemilius said:

How about the "forest of simsapa leaves"?

Astus wrote:

There are lots of things one can know about from the intricacies of 6th century Sasanian politics to digital signal processing, it's just that they have nothing to do with nor do they lead to liberation.

"And why haven't I taught them? Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. That is why I have not taught them."

(<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 30th, 2019 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Letting go

Content:

Mirror said:

what does it mean to let go? How to let go?

Astus wrote:

To let go means to be without craving and attachment. Craving and attachment arises because of the misconception that the perceived object is desirable. You may also say that to take things personally is the root of clinging. Recognising that there is nothing desirable in an object, that there is nothing personal present, is when the cause of craving and attachment is removed. For example, to realise that what looks beautiful does so only because of the added conception that it is beautiful, then there is nothing in the object itself that is beautiful, while the thought of beauty is itself fictional, then there is nothing left to be attracted to. Practically speaking, one has to cultivate mindfulness of the six sense doors to see first hand how feelings can mislead the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2019 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijnanavada the same thing?

Content:

Stephen18 said:

Are Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijnanavada exactly the same thing?

Astus wrote:

It depends on who you read. These and other terms can refer to the same thing, but some (as far as I can tell, mostly modern Tibetan Buddhists) differentiate between Cittamatra (a supposed group of unspecified people who believe that there is an

ultimate mind, but practically it is mostly just the object of Madhyamaka criticism) and Yogacara (the teachings of Asanga (Maitreya) and Vasubandhu). So it's better to be specific regarding what treatise and what author one refers to then just use ambiguous terms.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2019 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Letting go

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

It's more a self-help slogan than a specifically Buddhist one

Astus wrote:

Check out this Pali term: <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/encyclopedia-entries/vossagga.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 2nd, 2019 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: Letting go

Content:

Simon E. said:

the idea of asking the guy at the top of a hundred foot pole sheds very little light on the issue.

Astus wrote:

An excerpt from Guo Gu's commentary on that koan:

'Practice is necessary and must be genuine. In this process, delusion must be relinquished. This means that when you get to the top of the pole, you have to jump off. When this is done, you become perfectly normal and ordinary. You realize that all along you've been a human. To be fully human is to be a buddha —someone who is selfless. Is this the end? No. It is the beginning of the fulfillment of wisdom and of compassion. Chan or Zen teachers are not advocating that people commit suicide by jumping off the top of the pole. It is only a metaphor, but it points to the mind-set of one who is able to do this. Without this mind-set, this commitment to the path, you will just be a pole dancer. You may be able to do all kinds of fancy moves on the pole, going up and down, down and up, but none of that is awakening. That is essentially what some practitioners are doing. You must have the courage to relinquish what you cherish the most: the "I."

...

"At the top of the hundred-foot pole you must step forward" means putting down all the games and tricks you can do on the pole. In terms of meditation practice, it means reaching a point where there is no longer past or future, only the present, only concentrating on the method, becoming one with the method. At this stage you have forgotten about yourself. Duality is transcended. Is that enough? No. Many practitioners, teachers included, make a big deal about nonduality. People in sports have this

experience where, say, they are one with the basketball or one with the act of running. Accomplishing that is not so hard. Don't stop there. You have to take one more step forward. Put down the oneness.

Don't be a pole dancer! Get up that pole and take one more step. Whatever you cannot let go of is your obstruction. Whenever you cannot let go of something, it means a self-attachment is there. Even if you let go of everything—let go of that, too! If you do this, you will be able to “expose the full body of reality throughout the worlds in the ten directions,” which means that just as you are—as a human, through and through—is reality! Selfless, free: this is to manifest wisdom and compassion fully. You've come full circle. You discover that you didn't die after taking that forward step. On the contrary, the whole world has come alive, and you have truly come alive, for the first time, as a human.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 2nd, 2019 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijnanavada the same thing?

Content:

Bristollad said:

In Chinese Buddhism, a distinction is made - read Chinese Buddhism sources to understand.

Astus wrote:

Fazang argued against Xuanzang where he claimed to represent weixin 唯心 and the other weishi 唯識 (see: Buddhist Phenomenology, p 386-387). See more on Fazang's case against Yogacara in http://imrehamar.elte.hu/downloads/ReflectingMirrors_11_207-232_Hamarl.pdf.

Bristollad said:

In Tibetan Buddhism, no real difference is seen.

Astus wrote:

Mostly, but not exactly. See e.g.: The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, p 230-232.

The critical difference (between Cittamatra and Yogacara, or Cittamatra and Shentong, etc., the terms can vary) to be considered according to Mipham is whether one takes the mind as ultimately real or not.

"If the Cittamātrins' final standpoint is the assertion that this consciousness is only a substantially existent entity inasmuch as it is the cause for all conventional phenomena appearing, and that apart from this assertion they are not claiming that it exists substantially as a truly existing entity in ultimate truth, then they are not at all in contradiction with the Mādhyamika tradition. On the other hand, if they were to assert that it is truly existent in ultimate truth, they would be contradicting the Mādhyamika approach. It seems, therefore, that it is just this particular point that needs to be examined as a source of contention (or otherwise) for the Mādhyamikas."

(A Feast of the Nectar of the Supreme Vehicle, ch 7)

It should also be noted that in China and Tibet there were different schools of thought debating each other: Huayan vs. Weishi, and Rime vs. Gelug.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 2nd, 2019 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Why did Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche have long hair?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche had a wife (<https://theyoginiproject.org/wisdom-dakinis/khandro-lhamo>) and several children.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 3rd, 2019 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijnanavada the same thing?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Instead of looking for ontology and epistemology - interpretations that I doubt any of the authors had in mind - all of them should rather be seen in terms of soteriology, i.e. how they guide one to liberation. As for the mind and its nature, McLeod makes this important point:

'Despite the prevalence of interpretations to the contrary, "appearances are mind" does not mean that everything that happens in the world somehow takes place in your mind, that everything that appears exists in your head or brain, or that what arises in your experience is "only" mental or psychological. All views that substantiate appearances even as mental objects are inaccurate. Equally, to say "appearances are mind" does not mean that what does arise in experience does not really exist, is not real, or is just a hallucination. Views that try to deny the validity of experience are also inaccurate. Perhaps the confusion begins with the word mind. In English, it usually denotes the intellect or related phenomena. In Buddhism, mind means "what experiences." Kalu Rinpoche used to say that mind means experiencing. When you are given the pointing-out instruction "What is mind?" you are actually being asked, "What is experience?"' (Wake Up to Your Life, p 370-371)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 3rd, 2019 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Why did Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche have long hair?

Content:

Queequeg said:

Have wife and children, therefore have long hair?

Astus wrote:

The question was, as I took it:

Nirveda said:

I'm just curious why he didn't shave it and why this wasn't a problem under monastic rules.

Astus wrote:

Since he wasn't a monk, there was no conflict with the monastic rules.

As for the long hair specifically, Lobsang Chojor answered that: he was a

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngagpa>. See also:

<https://journals.openedition.org/ateliers/10562>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 3rd, 2019 at 2:14 PM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijñānavāda the same thing?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

The correct translation of which is "being".

Astus wrote:

The correct translation of what? Also, what sense of being, as a noun or as a verb, as existence, essence, or entity?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 3rd, 2019 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijñānavāda the same thing?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Whatever is being translated as both or either 'mind' or 'experience' in the context of the passage I quoted.

Astus wrote:

It's not a translation.

Wayfarer said:

'Being' as in 'human being'. It is a declension of the verb 'to be', so, a verb, although also acts as a noun.

Astus wrote:

If so, should entity be fine as well? And why use it in exchange of mind or experience?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 4th, 2019 at 1:29 AM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijñānavāda the same thing?

Content:

Queequeg said:

From what I'm gathering, the Mind-Only as opposed to Consciousness-Only difference is not really addressed by this.

Astus wrote:

That approach should rather draw both positions on the same page of application on the path to liberation. One main difference in this context between Mind Only and Consciousness Only is whether there is one final liberation or two, as the former included terminology that apparently was more fitting to prevalent ideas in China about human nature, plus there were not any "sravakas" to deal with unlike in India where it has remained the mainstream form of Buddhism. So, as I take it, one can take a historical approach and try to understand what various doctrines existed and what they meant to people then, or one can take a practical approach of recognising the utility of each teaching with the assumption that each author had the right intention of eliminating defilements. If it's the historical one taken here, then it should be first of all recognised that Fazang's Mind Only is called so to oppose Xuanzang, but after the rapid decline of the popularity of the teachings transmitted from India by Xuanzang there was little sense of upholding a distinction apart from occasional biased arguments on paper only to highlight one's own teachings.

Queequeg said:

The above appears to still fall under what would be called Consciousness Only in the EA view, because its talking about experience, which suggests its localized. May not be. Maybe a little more discussion would draw this out.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by being localised? Experience, in the quote from McLeod, simply refers to what appears as the living actuality of everything sensed directly. Would you say that Mind Only, or perhaps it's better to call it inherent enlightenment, is about an abstract universal essence?

Queequeg said:

From what I gather, that body of Vairocana is what is emphasized as the Mind in Mind-Only, where Consciousness in Consciousness-Only is the particular experience of that body.

Astus wrote:

The final position of Huayan is the interpenetration of phenomena and phenomena, where there is no point in even mentioning emptiness at all, as whatever occurs is suchness as it is. The way I take it, this is simply another formulation of the middle way no different from what you find in the works of Asanga and Nagarjuna, and that is what makes it a genuine facet of the Dharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 4th, 2019 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Cittamatra, Yogacara and Vijnanavada the same thing?

Content:

Queequeg said:

That would be wrong view. I think some interpret it that way, though.

Astus wrote:

What else is there that is apart from the realm of experiences that would not be a mere abstract concept?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 4th, 2019 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: 他力/"Other-power" in 淨土十疑論/"Ten Doubts"

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

Does this text really say there are no women in the Western Paradise?

Queequeg said:

I believe the Pure Land Sutras say there are no women in Sukhavati. Women can't awaken... according to the Patriarchs...

Astus wrote:

The so called three PL sutras do not say such a thing. See this topic on the issue: <https://dharma wheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=4583>.

On the other hand, there are older versions of the Larger Sutra where the 2nd vow does exclude women, e.g. T12n362p301a27:

'The Second Vow: If, when I attain Buddhahood, may there be no women existing in my country. Women who desire to be born in my country will forthwith transform their bodies into those of men. All of the human beings and the species that flit and wriggle in the countless heavens who are reborn in my country will be transformed on a lotus flower in the pond of seven treasures, and they will become numberless bodhisattvas or arhats when they mature. Only if this vow is fulfilled, will I attain Buddhahood. If this vow is not fulfilled, may I never attain Buddhahood.'

(https://mu.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_action_common_download&item_id=347&item_no=1&attribute_id=22&file_no=1)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 4th, 2019 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: 他力/"Other-power" in 淨土十疑論/"Ten Doubts"

Content:

Queequeg said:

Its also standard Mahayana convention that women are not present in the pure lands.

Astus wrote:

Abhirati, the land of Akshobhya, has women and men.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2019 at 12:24 AM

Title: Re: Mind transcends death

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ultimately everything is by nature unborn, it does not mean that there is anything enduring from one moment to the next. The mind is quite obviously impermanent, thoughts and emotions changing all the time. The mind "transcends" death, the demise of the body, because it is not caused nor sustained by the body.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2019 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Mind transcends death

Content:

Rick said:

Conventionally, what does cause/sustain mind?

Astus wrote:

Greed, anger, and ignorance.

Rick said:

Ultimately?

Astus wrote:

There is nothing to sustain.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2019 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Mind transcends death

Content:

steveb1 said:

how does a Buddhist or anyone else who holds this view defend it against materialist-reductionist neuroscientists and philosophers?

Astus wrote:

"'The soul is the same as the body'—I have left undeclared. 'The soul is one thing and the body another'—I have left undeclared."

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn63/en/bodhi>, cf. <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato>)

The problem with materialism, called the Lokayata or Carvaka view in Indian texts, is that it is annihilationism, assuming a self that will be destroyed at the time of death. The other version, separate soul and body, means the various views of eternalism, hence

not acceptable either. The Buddha described life in terms of the five aggregates, eighteen elements, and dependent origination, and that's how one avoids both extreme views.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2019 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Mind transcends death

Content:

Rick said:

Do these play well together?

Astus wrote:

Because phenomena are dependently originated, there is no essence that is born, endures, or ceases. To say that mind, what is simply a category of numerous phenomena, endures because it is unborn, makes sense only when it refers to its apparent continuity, that is, mind functions because it has no fixed substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 10th, 2019 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Yet the knowing quality is present and infused with consciousness.

Astus wrote:

He did not add that. The term knowing/awareness (zhi 知) was what Heze Shenhui and Guifeng Zongmi propagated, while others ridiculed. So the Platform Sutra (ch 8, BDK ed, p 78) says this of Shenhui: "I told you it was without name or title, but you have called it the fundamental source, the buddha-nature. You've just covered your head with thatch. You've become a follower with only discriminative understanding."

Hyujeong wrote (Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 239-240):

'Knowing (知) and understanding (解) are the great faults of the Buddhadharma. Heze, who was an illegitimate heir of Caoqi, used them. The Vimalakīrti(nirdeśa) sūtra says, "Remove what it has." The Lotus Sutra says, "Remove the shit and take the wages." These are all states of knowing and understanding. For this reason knowing and understanding are obstacles to correct views, like rancid rice offered to starving ghosts, like bad water being used to pollute the field of the mind, which is not as good as looking at Zhaozhou's character mu.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 11th, 2019 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

anything arises in mind all we have to do is be clear!

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the method of nonthought (vô niệm 無念)?

'If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, p 33-34)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 11th, 2019 at 12:51 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you can translate Mr. Astus.

Astus wrote:

Sorry, I don't know Vietnamese. However, the concept of inconceivable as referenced in that article is not about anything absolute but literally what cannot be conceived, as stated in the <https://suttacentral.net/an4.77/en/sujato>.

As for the inconceivable as emptiness, calling the very absence of anything graspable an absolute is surely a convoluted way to speak, but not unheard of.

'[That which] has transcended the duality of being and non-being without, however, having transcended anything at all; that which is not knowledge or knowable^ not existent nor nonexistent, not one nor many, not both nor neither; [that which is] without foundation, unmanifest, inconceivable, incomparable; that which arises not, disappears not, is not to be annihilated and is not permanent, that is [Reality] which is like space [and] not within the range of words [or] knowledge. The fact of dependent co-origination is exactly what You maintain to be emptiness. Of that kind is the true principle and the Tathagata is like that.'

(<http://lirs.ru/do/sutra/Nagarjuna.Acintyastava.C.Lindtner.pdf>, 37-40, tr Lindtner)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 11th, 2019 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

it's not a thing yet it knows or any object concept imaginable. We are it! But we also always try get it with thinking concept or a location. No! We can't even see with eyes yet through eyes everything is super clear HD if you will. It's characteristicless but still knows the unborn knowing!. STILL KNOWS that's all. That's why it's not conceivable! We are it!

Astus wrote:

Consciousness, i.e. what knows, is conventionally not without characteristics, as it arises with its object, and performs several functions of perceiving, interpreting, relating, etc. quite quickly. Of course, it is good practice to take the position of the observer, to distance oneself mentally from both external and internal phenomena, however, it's still just a temporary technique that eventually has to be let go of. To do that, it should eventually become clear that even the most distilled, pure, peaceful, and seemingly independent watcher/awareness/knowing/witness/mind is an unsustainable and painful identity.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 11th, 2019 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

Denial itself is still a view because that's the work of skandhas. What we want to do is surpass skandhas.

Astus wrote:

So it is, taking negation as a position is no better than taking affirmation. The question is what can help us move on from any object of clinging.

'The buddhas said "I am."

They taught as well that self does not exist.

They also said that self

And no-self are completely nonexistent.'

(MMK 18.6, tr Padmakara)

In the end, to let go of the aggregates, to eliminate attachment, one has to recognise that they are empty. It is not really surpassing, but the end of clinging, as there is nowhere else to be beyond the aggregates.

'When you've left the three realms where would you go?'

(Record of Linji, p 23, tr Sasaki)

LastLegend said:

If thought is simply known as thought or view simply as view, then no issue but usually skandhas don't keep it that simple.

Astus wrote:

Well, better not make an issue of whatever comes up, then how could one be fooled?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 11th, 2019 at 3:25 PM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

It doesn't have to be followed by other skandhas if followed then that would be grasping.

Astus wrote:

There might be some terminological confusion here. The functioning of the aggregates is not a problem, furthermore, you don't (and generally can't) remove or stop the aggregates. Also, the universal mental factors (cetasika/caitasika) like feeling (vedana), perception (sanna/samjna), and volition (cetana) are always present, and they directly correspond to the first three mental aggregates.

LastLegend said:

When consciousness isn't followed by intention and other skandhas, it's in the state of clarity or pure consciousness state. That's where we want to be because it's closest to "seeing" nature there. We can start training there at consciousness simply recognizes and let it not lead by other skandhas. If consciousness could clearly discern other skandhas that would be good.

Astus wrote:

The usual way to contemplate the aggregates is to recognise their individual and general characteristics, where the individual refers to the functions of the aggregate (e.g. good/bad/neutral feeling), and the general that it's impermanent, suffering, and not self. This can be done by all five of the aggregates, and that means that consciousness has no special position but it has to be recognised as just as empty and dependent as the others. Or to point to the traditional method, the cultivation of the four bases of mindfulness (satipatthana/smrtyupasthana) is the way.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 12th, 2019 at 12:21 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

recognize in us the part that knows that's not relying on aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Recognising what knows is fine, but it's not something outside the aggregates, but rather the aggregate called consciousness, and as such it is impermanent and dependently originated. To assume cognisance beyond the aggregates is another form of assuming a self. Rather, to recognise what knows must include recognising it as fabricated and unreliable.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 12th, 2019 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Anyone Come Close to Enlightenment Yet?

Content:

hkvanx said:

I am just curious if anyone has come close or reached enlightenment yet.

Astus wrote:

There are several stages of enlightenment. First, for people who begin to learn about the Dharma, an important step - that divides ordinary beings from noble ones - is the experiential confirmation of the validity of the teachings.

'the initial realization of the nature of the mind is the first breakthrough. It's a very important point in all Buddhist schools. At that moment, you cease to be an ordinary person. You become in Buddhist parlance an arya, a noble one. It doesn't mean you are finished. It doesn't mean you are a high level bodhisattva. We can fall back from this. But still, this is a big breakthrough. We now understand what is true and what is not true. We don't have to take it all on faith any more. It is a direct nondual experience. The point is that it is very easy. It's not difficult, and it's not something that can only be attained after years and years of practice.'

(Reflections on a Mountain Lake by Tenzin Palmo, p 191)

The one who attained the initial breakthrough is also called a stream-enterer (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sot%C4%81panna>).

“Subhūti, what do you think? Does a practitioner who has attained the level of srota-āpanna think: ‘I have attained the realization of the srota-āpanna?’”

Subhūti said, “No, World-honored One. And why not? Because the name srota-āpanna means ‘stream-enterer,’ and there is in fact no stream to be entered. One does not enter form, sound, odor, taste, touch, or concepts. Therefore one is called a srota-āpanna.”
(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html, ch 9)

hkvanx said:

How long did it take to do so?

What is your meditation/study routine?

What does it feel like?

How do you know when you get there?

Did you have to live a certain lifestyle (monastery, vegetarian, etc)?

Astus wrote:

For all those topics and more you should look into teachings on the path. How the path is delineated, however, varies between traditions, because it is often modified according to the techniques used. Nevertheless, the basics are the same, as it's always about the elimination of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleshas_%28Buddhism%29. So instead of focusing on mystical and supernatural experiences, look at how greed, anger,

and delusion diminish and disappear, while generosity, compassion, and wisdom grow and blossom.

"When — by following a life of precept & practice, a life, a holy life that is followed as of essential worth — one's unskillful mental qualities increase while one's skillful mental qualities decline: that sort of precept & practice, life, holy life that is followed as of essential worth is fruitless. But when — by following a life of precept & practice, a life, a holy life that is followed as of essential worth — one's unskillful mental qualities decline while one's skillful mental qualities increase: that sort of precept & practice, life, holy life that is followed as of essential worth is fruitful."

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.078.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 12th, 2019 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Anyone Come Close to Enlightenment Yet?

Content:

Mantrik said:

Do you have a source?

Astus wrote:

In the Buddha's very first discourse:

“So long, bhikkhus, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed existence.’”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/bodhi>; see also the <https://suttacentral.net/sn56.12/en/bodhi>)

Another good example: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.012.ntbb.html>.

See also: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.027.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 18th, 2019 at 4:52 AM

Title: Re: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

ItsRaining said:

Later Chan teachers seemed to have a mistaken idea of what 知 meant, they took it to

mean 知解 or conceptual understanding whereas Zongmi and Shenhui both made it clear that this 知 had a closer meaning to 智 or wisdom.

Astus wrote:

Do you have an example for that? To me it rather seems that conceiving such an ultimate awareness/knowing is itself a conceptual understanding, and it's not that people mistook what Shenhui and Zongmi meant.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 21st, 2019 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Hell seems a bit much

Content:

truthb said:

Looking at the Hell realms, and it seems incomprehensible to me that someone could do enough bad things in one lifetime to warrant 1 billion years of torture.... and that is the shortest term in a hell realm, some are MUCH longer.

Astus wrote:

'There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment. Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in [contemplating] the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.'

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.099.than.html>)

'This fifth category means the maturation of a big result from a small karma For example, regarding nonvirtuous deeds, it is said that one will experience a kalpa in the hell realm for each instant of negative thought Engaging in the Conduct of Bodhisattvas says:

"The Buddha has said that whoever bears an evil thought

Against a benefactor such as that bodhisattva

Will remain in hell for as many aeons

As there were evil thoughts"

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 120)

'Therefore, solidify the certainty that even the subtlest of virtuous and nonvirtuous actions follow you like shadows and produce both great happiness and great suffering. Then, strive to cultivate even the subtlest of virtues and to eliminate even the subtlest of sins and infractions.'

(The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, vol 1, p 212)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 1st, 2019 at 2:58 AM

Title: Re: How to Read Sutras? Split from "is the tathagatagarbha true?"

Content:

Matt J said:

Many sutras, with a few exceptions, seem to me to very long, dense, and theoretical

Astus wrote:

When a Dharma teaching, in a sutra or anywhere else, seems theoretical, then there is a meaning and purpose to discover. Especially those texts already translated to English somehow remained particularly important for the tradition, so they are meaningful to some groups. To learn why specific texts are more important than others one just has to look at the school transmitting it. For instance, the Samadhiraja Sutra is important for the Kagyupas because Gampopa used it as a reference work, and while the sutra has some nicely worded stanzas, it does not reveal any novel teaching one wouldn't find elsewhere. Otherwise, as with mostly all Buddhist teachings, one has to familiarise oneself with the technical terminology in order to recognise the message a particular text carries.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2019 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Buddhahood in a lifetime ---how?

Content:

Supramundane said:

Do you believe this is possible?

Astus wrote:

Very much. Those schools who talk of buddhahood in this life base this on the understanding that 'this mind is buddha', so practically buddhahood means the ending of all attachments, the goal of all Buddhists. If the elimination of clinging were not possible in this life, then it would never be possible.

Supramundane said:

if you put all that you know about the Dharma into practice, can you achieve it?

Astus wrote:

With right view comes right cultivation, and with right cultivation comes right enlightenment.

Supramundane said:

A side question --- can you achieve Buddhahood even though your Master has not?

Astus wrote:

The teacher must be able to impart the right view. Cultivation is up to each individual.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2019 at 4:46 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts versus Nature.

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no nature apart from thoughts, it's the nature of thoughts - i.e. their impermanent, impersonal, empty nature - that one has to recognise in order to relinquish clinging to concepts.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2019 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: in practice chan do I need teacher !

Content:

Taikor.Taikun said:

Is that correct?

Astus wrote:

Doesn't sound like that. The various beliefs about spirits are usually local folklore and not strictly Buddhist ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2019 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Thoughts versus Nature.

Content:

LastLegend said:

You see nature in thoughts or of thoughts?

Astus wrote:

Nature means what things are like, so it is not some separate thing, but a description/quality of things.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 15th, 2019 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: Topic: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

White Lotus said:

when there is an absence of personal self seen within-without who or what possesses consciousness? how can we say there is anything to be impermanent or dependent upon anything?

Astus wrote:

There is no owner, never has been, as it is merely a false concept, therefore consciousness does not require the idea of an owner to function.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 15th, 2019 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Topic: Zen 6th Patriarch Statement regarding nature

Content:

LastLegend said:

What is enough learning without being too much or too little? Too much then we will keep remembering what memorized. Too little not enough understanding for the job.

Astus wrote:

There cannot be too much learning, only the obstacle of staying with mere conceptual knowledge without in depth understanding and meticulous application in practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 20th, 2019 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Introductory books on basic or general Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna (Tibetan Buddhism)

Content:

Stephen18 said:

I know Theravāda very, very well, but need to know far more Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna than I do now.

Astus wrote:

Since you know Theravada, I recommend you start with the Vimalakirti Sutra (https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/sutra-queen-%C5%9Br%C4%ABm%C4%81l%C4%81-lions-roar-and-vimalak%C4%ABrti-sutra;http://84000.co/doc/vimalakirti/Vimalakirti%20Book_E_screen-170724.pdf).

Other notable introductory works:

The Lotus Sutra (<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/lotus-sutra-revised-second-edition>)

The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana

(<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/awakening-faith>)

The Summary of the Great Vehicle (<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/summary-great-vehicle-revised-second-edition>)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhisattvacary%C4%81vat%C4%81ra>

The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch(<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/platform-sutra-sixth-patriarch>)

Buddhism of Wisdom & Faith: Pure Land Principles and Practice

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2019 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Express your Zen in 10 words.

Content:

Astus wrote:

The cat cut in two plays with an ox tail.

Also:

"One, two, three, four, five,
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten."
(Zen Sand, 10.30, p 373)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2019 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: liberating "emotion" vs. "thought"

Content:

Astus wrote:

'This task is to see through a particular train of thought and its related associations in order to discern the underlying mental current. For mindful recognition of our present mental state, the requirement is above all a clear recognition without getting involved in the details of whatever train of thought and related associations are taking place. Since it is often precisely these details that get us hooked and caught up in a particular chain of thoughts, achieving such recognition is more easily said than done. Recognizing the feeling tone of our current experience offers help for this task. It grounds awareness in the affective reality of the present moment and thereby draws attention to our subjective involvement in whatever is happening. In this way we learn to attend to the baseline condition of the mind rather than to the details of particular thoughts. This is of considerable importance, since human beings are quite able to remain immersed in their thoughts while at the same time completely ignoring the baseline emotional condition of the corresponding state of mind. History abounds with examples of incredibly cruel actions that have had their basis in the fascination exerted by a particular political or religious ideal, leading to a thorough dissociation from basic qualities like kindness and compassion (at times in combination with relegating to some higher authority the responsibility for the harm inflicted on others). Other examples of no less atrocious events show the opposite side of the same coin, when wallowing in emotions takes place in complete dissociation from the rational capacities of the mind. The present practice works against the grain of the tendency of dissociation, based on the groundwork preparation of embodied awareness and clear recognition of the feeling tone of experience.

This in turn brings out the significance of the three satipaṭṭhānas explored so far and the importance of practising them in conjunction rather than in isolation from each other. It is precisely through the preparatory work done so far in the somatic and affective domain that the present satipaṭṭhāna acquires its full potential. Mindfulness cultivated in this way can be visualized as opening up the communication channels between these different domains. It offers a point of integration of the rational and emotional dimensions of ourselves. This takes place by giving each an equal hearing in such a way that both can make their contribution to a complete assessment of a particular situation and to finding the appropriate response to it. In this way, intuition and

reasoning come to a point of balance, based on the support provided by mindfulness. This results from the dynamics of practice underlying the first three satipaṭṭhānas.' (Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation: A Practice Guide by Bhikkhu Anālayo, ch 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2019 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: Looking for a good book that goes through the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Snowbeast said:

Mahayana especially focusing on East Asian Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

<https://hsingyun.org/books/core-teachings/>

'Conceived as a starting point for those coming to Buddhism for the first time, The Core Teachings is a guided tour of the most essential aspects of Buddhist wisdom and how they can be applied in our own lives and practice. Honed by Venerable Master Hsing Yun's decades of teaching and commitment to sharing Buddhism in a straightforward, accessible way, The Core Teachings gives new life to Buddhist basics like the Four Noble Truths, karma, and the five precepts.'

http://www.108wisdom.org/html/OTH_03.pdf

'As a long-time monk, scholar, and founder of monasteries in Asia and North America, Master Sheng Yen is uniquely qualified to explain the correct — therefore “orthodox” — beliefs that have guided Chinese Buddhism for over 1,500 years. Written while the author was on solitary retreat, OCB was Master Sheng Yen's response to many questions he received about Chinese Buddhism. Using a question-and-answer format, the book explores a wide range of subjects, from what it means to be a Buddhist to sudden enlightenment. This English translation is therefore a welcome addition to the Western literature of Buddhism, and includes new annotations, appendixes, and a glossary designed for the Western reader.'

<https://archive.org/details/BuddhismInEveryStepBooklets/page/n3>

(<https://www.fgsitc.org/booklets/>)

'The following is a large collection of booklets (all in PDF format) on Buddhism and various topics from a Buddhist perspective written by Master Hsing Yun, the founder of the Fo Guang Shan (Buddha's Light Mountain) Buddhist order and the Buddha's Light International Association.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 27th, 2019 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: English translation of 般若摄颂

Content:

Empty Cloud said:

Is there an English translation of this condensed prajnaparamita text used by Serte

Larung Khenpos like Khenpo Sardarge in his teachings?

Astus wrote:

<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%88%AC%E8%8B%A5%E6%91%84%E9%A2%82> =
<http://ntireader.org/taisho/t0229.html> = <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/book/72> = <http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/ratnagunasamcayagatha.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 28th, 2019 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Astus wrote:

“Bhikkhus, this is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, that is, the dawn. So too, bhikkhus, for a bhikkhu this is the forerunner and precursor of the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths as they really are, that is, right view. It is to be expected that a bhikkhu with right view will understand as it really is: ‘This is suffering.’... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’

“Therefore, bhikkhus, an exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is suffering.’... An exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.37/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 29th, 2019 at 1:42 AM

Title: Re: Are there any schools of Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism that do not ascribe to the view that all is one mind?

Content:

Dgj said:

As far as I know, they all do, but I am largely uneducated in this area.

Astus wrote:

It really depends on whether Huangbo is understood correctly or incorrectly. If one reads that sentence as a statement about a single universal consciousness, that is not accepted by any Buddhist school, nor was that meant by Huangbo. If one understands it as that all appearances are suchness, then nobody has a problem with it in Mahayana or Vajrayana.

Also, just to make it clearer, besides the quoted translation by Blofeld, here are others:

"All the buddhas and sentient beings are only the one mind; there is no other dharma."
(Buswell)

"All Buddhas and all sentient beings are no different from the One Mind." (Lok To)

"The Buddhas and all the sentient beings are only the One Mind—there are no other dharmas." (McRae)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 29th, 2019 at 2:06 AM

Title: Re: Are there any schools of Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism that do not ascribe to the view that all is one mind?

Content:

Simon E. said:

Dzogchen would and does demur.

Astus wrote:

So according to dzogchen there are dharmas that are not such? Do you have some examples for those things?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 29th, 2019 at 3:11 AM

Title: Re: Are there any schools of Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism that do not ascribe to the view that all is one mind?

Content:

Dgj said:

Is it really possible that all these teachers stated "All is the One Mind..." Or similar, but none of them meant what the sentence literally means at face value?

Astus wrote:

Huangbo was not a Yogacara teacher, and what he calls One Mind is a term not for the eight consciousnesses but for buddha-mind, for suchness, for emptiness. See what he said:

"The Buddhas and all the sentient beings are only the One Mind—there are no other dharmas. Since beginningless time, this mind has never been generated and has never been extinguished, is neither blue nor yellow, is without shape and without characteristic, does not belong to being and nonbeing, does not consider new or old, is neither long nor short, and is neither large nor small. It transcends all limitations, names, traces, and correlations. It in itself—that's it! To activate thoughts is to go against it! It is like space, which is boundless and immeasurable."

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 13)

Also note that in the very next chapter Huangbo calls it not One Mind but No Mind, and they mean the same thing actually, the ultimate realisation, that is, no conceptualisation, no attachment.

Dgj said:

That said, there are scholarly views that at least mention early Madhyamika thinkers countering this Yogacara view, which seems to imply they didn't immediately see it as meaning other than it sounds at face value.

Astus wrote:

If you ask whether there are schools that do not follow the doctrine of consciousness only, that needs further clarification, because there are various interpretations of that term, so what is seemingly refuted by one is not actually the view of the other.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 29th, 2019 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Are there any schools of Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism that do not ascribe to the view that all is one mind?

Content:

Dgj said:

these statements are nearly identical to Hindu statements. For example: "All is consciousness" is a really common Hindu teaching. "All is Mind" lacks any discernable difference without a great deal of explanation and redefining of terms or using them in unusual ways.

Astus wrote:

It is not possible to read practically anything without necessary contextual knowledge. Words gain more and more precise meaning through context. It should also be clear that reading things in translation require even more awareness of the complexity of transferring the intended meaning. So, just because there is the word 'mind' in a text, it doesn't really limit the possibilities of meanings of the word, unless one actually studies the whole text. So, if one reads Huangbo, there should be some awareness that it is a Chan text, not a systematic explanation of the Dharma, but a more practical oriented set of instructions.

Dgj said:

"All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the One Mind, beside which nothing exists."

So, from this, at face value, mind is something that exists, nothing else does, and this mind is singular. To make it mean that "One Mind" isn't denoting some self existing, all encompassing entity requires jumping through some hoops.

Astus wrote:

Not at all. Even at face value, if one cares to read on from the first sentence, it becomes clear that no such doctrine of a singular mind was intended. It is not a matter of code or secret messages.

Dgj said:

there must be schools of Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism or at least individuals within said groups that found this wording and teaching problematic.

Astus wrote:

Not really. I don't think there is any Tibetan translation of Huangbo, while in East Asian Buddhism the two texts on Huangbo's teachings are canonical works of the Chan school. It should also be noted that the term "one mind" did not really gain currency in

Chan, it is not an expression regularly used, in fact, the term "no mind" is far more ubiquitous.

Dgj said:

Someone must have noticed it being dangerously close to, or rather completely identical to (at face value), Hindu teachings, which could confuse or mislead people, and refuted it, or at least explained it carefully as correct but suggested using different wording?

Astus wrote:

Chan is not an Indian school, so there were not many Hindus to worry about. Also, the meaning you read from that one sentence is not really its meaning, hence the confusion is in modern English, not in ancient Chinese.

Dgj said:

could you be more specific as to how I could do so?

Astus wrote:

First of all, what do you mean by "consciousness only" or "mind only" or "one mind only"? If it refers to the view of an ultimately existing entity, that is readily refuted even by Yogacara. If it refers to how our experiences are defined by conceptuality, that is easily accepted by any Mahayanika. If it refers to something else, then please specify.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 1st, 2019 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: There is no Vajrayana without renunciation

Content:

Astus wrote:

When attractive objects are seen as empty, there is no cause for the emergence of sensual craving. Renunciation may be forced or natural, and the natural form of it is when there is no more craving and clinging, when the wisdom of emptiness is present, there is no effort in renouncing. However, the result of forcing oneself not to be indulgent and being already without craving is the same in not engaging with sensuality. Similarly, no matter how defilements are conquered, the point is to become free from them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 2nd, 2019 at 12:36 AM

Title: Re: There is no Vajrayana without renunciation

Content:

futerko said:

Ah, so if one distinguishes between a preference for a pleasant experience and an attachment to it, then one must also distinguish between a goal of having no sensation or experience whatsoever and a state where sensation is merely seen for what it is.

Astus wrote:

If there is preference for pleasant experience, there is already craving and attachment. The non-existence of an experience, however, is not the same as seeing an experience for what it is.

futerko said:

The dependent nature in this case is sensation and emptiness non-dual. It is pointless to first designate "attractive objects" (or any putative objects), and then designate them as empty - that is merely an indication of the push and pull of striving against experience itself.

Astus wrote:

The presence or absence of craving for a pleasant feeling is where attachment and suffering may or may not arise. When there is no craving, no attachment, there is no need to do anything about experiences, and that is where self-liberation can happen. But when there is craving and attachment, using the concept of emptiness as a patch can be of some help, even if it is only a temporary measure.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 2nd, 2019 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: There is no Vajrayana without renunciation

Content:

SonamTashi said:

The renunciation I was referring to was the Shravakayana practices of viewing the body as impure and things like that specifically--this is where the Vajrayana transforms instead.

Astus wrote:

But regardless of the method, the goal and the result is the same: elimination of the defilements. Since in all cases one should arrive at the point that is free from sensual craving, it still leaves the issue of family life vis-a-vis enlightenment unanswered.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 2nd, 2019 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: How do the different national traditions of Zen (Chan, Seon and Thien) differ? What about Zen in the West?

Content:

KiwiNFLFan said:

what are the main differences between the different national traditions of Zen?

Astus wrote:

Zen is not a centralised set of beliefs, individuals have free hand in selecting what methods and doctrines they follow, therefore trying to define Zen as if there were something generally valid all over hundreds of communities is meaningless, as the characteristics that one can find in an entire country are usually those that are there not

only in Zen groups but the entirety of "national" Buddhism. For instance, one could say that the Surangama Sutra is a somewhat unique element of Chinese Chan, however, it is also used by Chinese Pure Land teachers as well, furthermore, putting groups and teachers into seemingly distinct categories like Chan, Pure Land, Tiantai, etc. in Chinese Buddhism is often the wrong approach.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 7th, 2019 at 5:20 PM

Title: Re: What's 'dependent' in dependent arising?

Content:

Rick said:

Given this, what does the 'dependent' in dependent arising refer to?

Astus wrote:

'The answer is that we speak in a way that does not destroy the world's conventions that are accepted on the level of no analysis. As we have previously explained, things do not arise causelessly, from their own entities. Nor do things arise, in either of the two truths, from Īshvara, time, particles, inherent natures, persons, Narayana, or other such causes. Rather, results such as sprouts excellently arise in dependence upon all the causes and conditions, such as seeds, that are necessary for the result to appear.' (Wangchuk Dorje, in The Feast for the Fortunate, p 323-324)

Being dependent refers to the common understanding that appearances depend on causes and conditions in order to appear, in other words, that things arise and cease based on specific causes and conditions. But when that causality is analysed, there is nothing that can be found to substantiate its reality. That is the very first topic of the Mulamadhyamakakarika. Also, exactly because all things necessarily arise dependently, there are neither things nor dependence that could be established. Hence everything is unborn because born.

'In order to avoid eliminating worldly conventions concerning what is unanalyzed and commonly renowned, one should rely on the understanding that results arise perfectly in dependence upon causes and conditions that are mere appearances, as is the case with sprouts arising from seeds and so forth.'

(Mikyo Dorje, in The Moon of Wisdom, p 327)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 8th, 2019 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: What's 'dependent' in dependent arising?

Content:

Rick said:

Still perplexed by the term 'dependent' in Chandrakirti's: "Dependent arising is the complete antithesis and negation of production by any of the four ways."

Astus wrote:

What you quote is from Mipham's commentary for the stanza by Candrakirti:

'Since things do not arise causelessly,
Nor through the causes of Īshvara and so on,
Nor from self, other, or both,
Therefore they excellently arise in dependence.'
(Madhyamakavatara 6.114, in Feast for the Fortunate, p 323)

Rick said:
Let's say that the four ways *could* produce.

Astus wrote:
Impossible. See the reasons summarised in <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>.

Rick said:
My confusion might be just a matter of semantics. It might be that 'dependent' DOES apply to the situation I described ... but the doctrine of 'dependent arising' does not. I.e. it might make no sense to equate 'dependent arising' with the lay definition of 'dependent.'
?

Astus wrote:
It is actually not complicated at all. Dependency, dependent origination, it all means what normally one assumes: things arise and cease because of causes and conditions. That is a conventionally valid truth, that is how things work in life. That it is not possible to ultimately establish (find a logical, reasonable basis for) conventional truth, that is why it is merely conventional.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 11th, 2019 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Agamas/Nikayas and Mahayana

Content:

ryan_oliveira said:

Are Agamas and Nikayas studied in Mahayana Buddhism today? What is the Mahayana view of these texts?

Astus wrote:
20th century scholarship brought back their study.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_Shun made extensive research, and there is even a new Japanese school called the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agon_Shu.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 12th, 2019 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Viach said:

the correct yogic (non-intellectual) view immediately precedes the emergence of the yogic understanding of 4TN and becoming the Ariya.

Astus wrote:

What is that statement based on? Where do you find in the sutras or the abhidharma such explanation?

Vasubandhu in AKB (vol 3, p 897, tr Pruden):

'Because, in the period preparatory to the Path proper, that is, the period of examination, the ascetic first creates an idea of that to which he is attached, of that by which he is tormented, of that from which he seeks to be delivered, namely, suffering. Then he asks what is its cause, and he creates an idea of its origin. Then he asks what does extinction consist of, and he creates an idea of extinction. Then he asks what is the Path to extinction, and he creates an idea of the path. ...

What is the meaning of the word abhisamaya (comprehension)? This word signifies abhisambodha, "understanding, comprehension." The root i signifies "to understand"

Also, even when one actually attains one of the fruits, there are several stages preceding it, and "non-conceptual" does not really feature among them. But if you have some sources, please present them.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 12th, 2019 at 9:48 PM

Title: Re: Looking for some Zen (Chan) lectures

Content:

TheWhiteLotus said:

I am interested studying Zen. I am looking for some lectures. I prefer a course structure or a text (sutra) that is being explained. Any recommendations?

Astus wrote:

Please be aware that Chan/Zen is not a specific set of doctrines, nor a unified school, therefore methods and styles can vary from teacher to teacher, and from community to community. Below is a list of possible introductory materials from different sources and with a varying degree of expansiveness.

http://www.shengyen.org/freebook/pdf/In_the_Spirit_of_Chan.pdf

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c>

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/prerequisites-of-the-chan-training/>

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/the-chan-training/>

<https://tienvnguyen.net/images/file/G5gYJdC51AgQAHUb/keystobuddhism.pdf>

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/index.html>

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/zen-texts>
<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/platform-sutra-sixth-patriarch>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 13th, 2019 at 5:31 PM

Title: Re: Early Madhyamaka

Content:

Dgj said:

Despite lacking any essence, he argues, phenomena nonetheless exist conventionally... Where is this type of thing ever stated or explained by the early Madhyamaka thinkers like Nagarjuna, Bhāviveka, Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti?

Astus wrote:

The doctrine of two truths is accepted by the abhidharmika and madhyamika equally, the difference is in how it is divided. In terms of the conventional, the line drawn by abhidharmikas is between worldly parlance and dharmas, where dharmas are ultimate truths, while madhyamikas say that not only worldly ideas are conceptual but so are the dharmas, and ultimate truth is purely emptiness. So, to say that phenomena exist conventionally is fine for madhyamikas, but on the one hand every constructed is included in conventionality (note: in the various abhidharma systems most of the dharmas are constructed and impermanent, while at the same time put in the category of ultimate truth), and on the other hand conventionality means a mere conceptual existence without real referents. So the key element in Madhyamaka that divides ordinary and noble beings is in recognising the fictional nature of phenomena.

'Those who assert the conditioned things
As being established in terms of ultimate reality,
Why wouldn't the faults of permanence and so on
Not arise within their minds?

Those who accept the conditioned things
As being neither true nor false,
Just like the moon in the water,
They are not carried away by dogmatic views.'
(Yuktisastika-karika, v 44-45, tr Thupten Jinpa)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 13th, 2019 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment and compassion

Content:

Evdot said:

If enlightenment is void of feeling, then how can enlightened people feel compassion?

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is about the freedom from the delusion of self and thus the end of all

attachment. Feeling is not the problem, it is the clinging to and identification with a feeling that causes suffering. Compassion is very much present all along the path and at the culmination as well.

'Mahamudra is nondual awareness that transcends intellect; it is nonconceptual, lucid, like all-pervading space. Though manifesting boundless compassion, it is devoid of self-nature. It is like the reflection of the moon on the lake's surface.'
(Maitripa, quoted in Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 94)

'The spirit of enlightenment [bodhichitta] is defined as the union of compassion and emptiness, which is the quintessence of the path, the luster of unceasing compassion that cannot bear the suffering of sentient beings, and the nondual awareness that cognizes compassion as being empty of any essence or self-nature. This is the essence of Mahayana Buddhism. The Hevajra tantra comments:

The union of emptiness and compassion
Is described as the spirit of enlightenment.
The Vajrapanara explains:
The meditation on the union
Of emptiness and compassion
Is indeed the teaching
Of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

The Samputa says:
The nondiscriminatory simplicity [of mind]
Is described as wisdom;
That which fulfills the wishes of sentient beings [without exception],
The way a wish-granting gem does, [is described] as compassion.

Saraha states:
He who seeks emptiness without compassion
Will not realize the supreme path;
Yet he who meditates mainly on compassion
Will not realize liberation.
He who unifies the two
Will neither remain in samsara nor in nirvana,

Savari declares:
He who has attained nonevaluating awareness,
Who is unable to bear the misery of confused sentient beings,
And who sheds tears of compassion
While working for their benefit,
Turns concern for himself
Into concern for others.'
(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 350)

'Je Gomchung comments:

Postabsorption at the one-pointed stage is solid;
Postabsorption at the nondiscriminatory stage is a perceived illusion;
Postabsorption at the one-flavor stage is the awareness of emptiness;
Postabsorption at the nonmeditation stage is dynamic compassion.

...

Line four shows that because absorption and postabsorption are blended, no distinct postabsorption as such exists. Yet, nondiscriminatory compassion emerges representing a dynamic attainment. Hence the term “dynamic compassion” for the postabsorptive perception.'

(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 369)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2019 at 9:20 PM

Title: Re: Infinities

Content:

dolphin_color said:

1. Is the cosmos (our observable universe plus whatever could be beyond it) infinitely large?
2. Are there phenomena (dharmas) that have the quality of being infinite (in size, or in some other property)?

Astus wrote:

“If there is the view ‘the world is finite,’...‘the world is infinite,’... the holy life cannot be lived.”

(Culamalunkya Sutta, MN 63.6)

“How is it, Master Gotama, does Master Gotama hold the view: ‘The world is finite: only this is true, anything else is wrong’?”

“Vaccha, I do not hold the view: ‘The world is finite: only this is true, anything else is wrong.’”

“How then, does Master Gotama hold the view: ‘The world is infinite: only this is true, anything else is wrong’?”

“Vaccha, I do not hold the view: ‘The world is infinite: only this is true, anything else is wrong.’”

(Aggivacchagotta Sutta, MN 72.5-6)

“Vaccha, wanderers of other sects regard the eye ... the mind thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ Therefore, when the wanderers of other sects are asked such questions, they give such answers as: ‘The world is eternal’ ... or ‘The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’ But, Vaccha, the Tathagata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, regards the eye ... the mind thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ Therefore, when the Tathagata is asked such questions, he does not give such answers.”

(Moggallana Sutta, SN 44.7)

<https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/abhidharma-tenet-systems/time->

the-universe/the-fourteen-questions-to-which-buddha-remained-silent

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 15th, 2019 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Viach said:

This means that 4TN is the answer at the end of the problem book. ... For others, knowing the answer in no way will not help.

Astus wrote:

There are stages before gaining the insight into the four noble truths, and there are also three stages of wisdom one must go through, the first of which is learning the Dharma, including the learning of the four noble truths. So it is actually very meaningful and necessary to learn and understand the four truths before one engages in cultivation and eventually gains insight.

'Whoever desires to see the Truths should first of all keep the Precepts. Then he reads the teaching upon which his Seeing of the Truths depends, or he hears their meaning. Having heard, he correctly reflects. Having reflected, he gives himself up to the cultivation of meditation. With the wisdom (prajna) arisen from the teaching (srutamayi) for its support, there arises the wisdom arisen from reflection (cintamayi) with this for its support, there arises the wisdom arisen from meditation (bhavanamayi).'

(AKB, vol 3, p 911-912, tr Pruden)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 15th, 2019 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Looking for some Zen (Chan) lectures

Content:

TheWhiteLotus said:

My main reason for wanting to study Zen, is that I wanted learn directly from sutra of the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

If you want to study Mahayana sutras:

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/catalog-tripitaka>

<http://sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180704171259/http://www.fodian.net:80/world/>

<https://ymba.org/free-books>

<http://www.cttbusa.org/sutratexts.asp>

<https://lapislazulitexts.com/tripitaka>

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2>

<http://www.huzheng.org/en/mtlee/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 15th, 2019 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: The Four Noble Truths are

Content:

Viach said:

You can practice Satipatthana without even knowing about the existence of 4TN.

Astus wrote:

How does that even address the generally accepted order of the three stages of wisdom that begins with learning? Also, skipping between Sarvastivada and Theravada can cause some mistakes, as they are somewhat different systems.

Viach said:

Thus, 4TN are not for everyone, but only for those who have already solved the problem or are one or two steps before solving it.

Astus wrote:

Not in Theravada, nor in Sarvastivada.

'This superior right view leading to liberation is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. It is this right view that figures as the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path in the proper sense: as the noble right view. Thus the Buddha defines the path factor of right view expressly in terms of the four truths: "What now is right view? It is understanding of suffering (dukkha), understanding of the origin of suffering, understanding of the cessation of suffering, understanding of the way leading to the cessation to suffering." The Eightfold Path starts with a conceptual understanding of the Four Noble Truths apprehended only obscurely through the media of thought and reflection. It reaches its climax in a direct intuition of those same truths, penetrated with a clarity tantamount to enlightenment. Thus it can be said that the right view of the Four Noble Truths forms both the beginning and the culmination of the way to the end of suffering.'
(http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/noble8path6.pdf by Bhikkhu Bodhi, p 22)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2019 at 5:08 PM

Title: Re: Express your Zen in 10 words.

Content:

Astus wrote:

no truth to find
stop seeking mind
that's all

'No need to seek the real;
Just extinguish your views.'
(Sengcan)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 16th, 2019 at 8:27 PM

Title: Re: Express your Zen in 10 words.

Content:

Astus wrote:

veracity and falsity

measurements in conditionality

thoughts come, thoughts go

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2019 at 4:53 AM

Title: Re: How did Nagarjuna not teach extreme nihilism?

Content:

Dgj said:

However he also proved that nothing whatsoever exists: extreme nihilism.

Astus wrote:

You are not wrong there. Nagarjuna did prove in various ways that conventionally everything is dependently originated, therefore ultimately nothing exists. When there is talk of denying the extremes of existence and non-existence, that means that there is nothing that continues (permanence), nor anything that discontinues (annihilation).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2019 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Is there a rational, simple, logical way to explain Nagarjuna's seemingly paradoxical teachings?

Content:

Dgj said:

So simply stating that nothing exists is a wrong view doesn't fix the issue that he made it abundantly clear that nothing exists.

Astus wrote:

Where is the paradox in that?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2019 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Could someone provide confirmation of Brunholzl?

Content:

Dgj said:

Conventionally, Madhyamaka holds that beings do perceive concrete objects which they are aware of empirically.

-Brunholzl, Karl, Center of the Sunlit Sky

So if someone could provide texts that confirm the Brunholzl quote above I'll study those instead of bothering the fine people on here further. The quote is completely counter to my incorrect understanding and therefore, once I can read texts confirming this quote as accurate it will both disprove my incorrect understanding and explain why it is incorrect.

Astus wrote:

You might start with Brunnhölzl's wonderful book where the quote is from. Other than that, Nagarjuna simply states what you find in the sutras, that dependent origination has ignorance at its root, so all things arise from that, while emptiness remedies that ignorance.

'The childish are attached to forms;
The moderate attains detachment;
By knowing the nature of forms,
Those of supreme intellect are free.'

(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 55)

Apart from practically any work of Nagarjuna, you can look into his short treatise called <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/indian-masters/nagarjuna/heart-dependent-origination>, with commentary in part two of http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 19th, 2019 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Schrodinger's Tathagatagarbha?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It is asserted in the Mahayana schools, one way or another, that all beings possess Buddha Nature.

Astus wrote:

That is meant to encourage beings. It is not a claim of some magical essence hidden inside.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Regardless of how it is expressed, there is a general understanding that all beings have the potential to realize full awakening.

Astus wrote:

If one has legs, there is the potential to walk all over the Earth. If one has hands, there is the potential to sculpt something amazing. A potential is simply fabricating predictions, not some entity.

PadmaVonSamba said:

At the same time, it can be argued that a Buddha, by definition, is regarded as unimpeded, meaning that all obscurations have been overcome.

If this is the case, then no shell can restrain the chick, no cloud can obscure the Sun. In other words, one can argue that Buddha nature (Tathagatagarbha) cannot exist in an unrealized state just as a flame cannot exist in an unburning state.

Astus wrote:

Since the teaching on the covered buddha statue is merely a metaphor, it is the wrong path to assume a little buddha hidden inside one's mind.

PadmaVonSamba said:

we can assert that there is no fixed point separating unrealized-state from realized-state.

Astus wrote:

There really is no self, but beings falsely imagine a self. If investigated, even ignorance is empty, but before correctly analysing it, there is ignorance.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If a Buddha is a fully awakened being, and sentient beings possess Buddha nature but are unawakened, then isn't this a bit like Schrodinger's Cat, simultaneously alive and dead?

Astus wrote:

Rather it's like assuming one has money in one's pocket, but only when actually reaching into it to pay one realises to be penniless. Or the other way around, that one is in fact rich. In any case, there are simply ignorance and wisdom.

PadmaVonSamba said:

"full realization" by definition, cannot be confined within the limits of "potential".

Astus wrote:

And nobody said it was.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 19th, 2019 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: Could someone provide confirmation of Brunholzl?

Content:

Dgj said:

I looked at both of those works. I couldn't find anything where it is stated directly anything that confirms the Brunholzl quote.

Astus wrote:

Actually, it is not a quote from Brunnhölzl, but rather the interpretation of the author of the Wikipedia article. On the referred to page 73 Brunnhölzl quotes Candrakirti (Madhyamakavatara 6.23), so I give the latter's summary of conventional truth:

'Since all things can be seen genuinely or falsely,
Every thing bears two natures.

The Buddha taught that the object of genuine seeing is suchness
And that false seeing is the relative truth.
False seeing is also said to have two aspects:
That with clear faculties and that with faulty faculties.
In dependence upon consciousnesses endowed with good faculties,
Consciousnesses endowed with faulty faculties are asserted to be wrong.
What is apprehended by the undamaged six faculties
Is known by the world
And is true for the world.
Everything else is held by the world to be false.'
(Madhyamakavatara 6.23-25, Feast for the Fortunate, p 204-208)

Here's also Aryadeva:

'Since those things that appear in an erroneous cognition are not real, they are not as they appear in that cognition. That cognition is of the same nature as those things — i.e., an appearance without reality.
Whosoever with a subtle mind conceives all things as merely dependent, that intelligent one easily abandons desires and other attachments, just as the one who knows that there is no snake but only a rope abandons the fear of the snake.
In pondering worldly things, one should act as worldly people do. One who desires to abandon the mental afflictions (hatred, greed, and desire) must investigate things from the ultimate point of view.'
(The Hand Treatise, v 4-6, in Indian Madhyamaka Buddhism after Nagarjuna, vol 1, p 4-5)

Bhavaviveka:

"‘Conventional truth,’ as it is called, is also known to be of two types: ‘authentic conventional truths’ and ‘inauthentic conventional truths.’ Something that has the capacity to produce results is called an ‘authentic conventional truth,’ and what appears conventionally but is without such a power is called an ‘inauthentic conventional truth.’"
(Summary on the Meaning of the Middle Way, v 9-10, in Indian Madhyamaka Buddhism after Nagarjuna, vol 1, p 145)

Dgj said:

Anything that states that conventional reality is not denied would do. However, quotes that state that conventional reality is imaginary, or nonexistent would not help dispel my wrong understanding of Nagarjuna, as these could easily be misunderstood as nihilistic, and are the exact opposite of the Brunholz quote above.

Astus wrote:

Conventional truths are not denied but seen as conventional and as the product of ignorance. It could be said that dependent origination is the conventional and emptiness is the ultimate truth, and these two form the basic teaching of Madhyamaka. Furthermore, dependent origination is possible only when things are empty, and emptiness is not something apart from dependent origination. So, yes, all conventional

phenomena are imaginary and false, there is no ultimate substance provided for them, however, it is not the case either that there is a mere denial of dependently originated false concepts that ordinary beings mistake for reality. It should not be forgotten either that the very purpose of the teaching is the elimination of attachment through the removal of the misconception of established, substantial things; and such things are already assumed, we are already ignorantly stuck in samsara deluded by our truths that are merely conventional, conceptual, nominal, and dependent but mistaken as ultimate, factual, real, and independent. So it is actually a given that there is the conventional truth, and through understanding the nature of conventionality one can realise the ultimate, and by that realisation attain liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 20th, 2019 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Schrodinger's Tathagatagharbha?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The argument I'm raising is simply that a buddha is free of hinderances,
All beings are, ultimately, Buddhas Yet all beings experience hinderances.

Astus wrote:

From a false premise no good result can come. Buddha-nature is not some sort of shiny soul hidden inside a dirty soul, hence the misapplied objections proposed:

Thus, one's buddha-nature can't go unrecognized, or else it isn't really buddha-nature.

You can't be a buddha and not know it,

Because a buddha knows everything. It's like the hypothetical "universal solvent" that no container can hold, because it would dissolve that container.

If there's nothing a buddha can't see through, Nothing can hinder realization of one's buddha nature, Yet hinderances obscure that realization all the time for beings.

Those are invalid arguments, because the assumption that there is a little buddha in everyone is not true.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 21st, 2019 at 1:17 AM

Title: Re: Schrodinger's Tathagatagharbha?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Would you say then, that Buddha-nature is actually a term describing Buddha-potential, rather than Buddha-realization?

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature means the qualities of a buddha are already present and not developed, therefore one only needs to remove the two types of obscuration. As qualities, they are like one's eyes: one has to open them in order to see. So, as long as one is deluded about the self, buddha-nature is merely a potential in the way that one has the possibility to discover it, to see with the buddha-eye. Once there is no more ignorance

the eye is opened, and the qualities of a buddha become active. Now, as for what those qualities, they are the three bodies, and they are present as the emptiness (dharmakaya), awareness (sambhogakaya), and appearances (nirmanakaya) of the mind. Regardless if one is deluded or awakened, the mind is empty, aware, and functional. The difference lies in taking the mind to be a self or not, in the presence or absence of grasping.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 21st, 2019 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: Schrodinger's Tathagatagharbha?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

My question is whether the concept of what basically amounts to “unrealized perfect realization” is by definition an untenable contradiction.

Astus wrote:

It is not “unrealized perfect realization”. Buddha-nature refers to qualities, not the realisation of qualities. Realisation is enlightenment to those qualities.

PadmaVonSamba said:

So...undeveloped dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya?

Astus wrote:

There is nothing to develop on the three bodies.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 2nd, 2020 at 5:03 PM

Title: Re: Learning more about the tenet systems

Content:

Stephen18 said:

Where can I learn more about the Mahāyāna tenet systems?

Astus wrote:

It is important to keep in mind that it does matter who presents the various systems, because there is naturally and intentionally a bias against all tenets that are not upheld as the best/highest.

Academic:

https://books.google.hu/books/about/Buddhist_Teaching_in_India.html?id=fjU6AwAAQBAJ by Johannes Bronkhorst

https://books.google.hu/books/about/Buddhist_Thought.html?id=v0Rpyvcf1t0C by Paul Williams, Alexander Wynne, Anthony Tribe

https://books.google.hu/books/about/Madhyamika_and_Yogacara.html?id=1-cHxL1ews0C by Gadjin M. Nagao

General East Asian:

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/index.htm>

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/essentials-eight-traditions-and-candle-latter-dharma>

Chan:

Treatise on the Origin of Humanity in <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/three-short-treatises-vasubandhu-sengzhao-and-zongmi>

Tiantai:

A Guide to the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings in <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/tiantai-lotus-texts>

Kagyüpa (Rime):

<https://www.shambhala.com/treasury-of-knowledge-book-6-part-3.html>

Gelugpa:

<https://www.shambhala.com/buddhist-philosophy-2187.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 4th, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

dolphin_color said:

When was Tantra introduced into Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

"It is only in the second half of the seventh century that the definitive esoteric system emerges, and we have several verifications of this dating."

(Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement by Ronald M Davidson, p 117)

dolphin_color said:

What were the social or historical factors that encouraged its introduction?

Astus wrote:

See Davidson's book.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 6th, 2020 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: Paramartha and Xuanzang translations

Content:

Jion said:

I am trying to track down a document which has Vasubandhu's romanized Sanskrit of the Abhidharmakosabhasya alongside the Paramartha and Hsuan Tsang translations.

Astus wrote:

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=511>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 6th, 2020 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Japanese priesthood and Japanese monkhood

Content:

khemindas said:

Who are priests (don't have Pabbajja(Parivrajya) or Upasampada), who are monks(Have Pabbajja or Upasampada)? May be you can recommend any book on this topic?

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saich%C5%8D> in the early 9th century successfully established an ordination platform based solely on his interpretation of the bodhisattva precepts. In a century or so all other schools in Japan dropped the pratimoksha, and ever since (except for the occasional revival movements) there has been no higher ordination in Japan. The Meiji Restoration in the 19th century merely decriminalised for the clergy the breaking of the precepts regarding celibacy, vegetarianism, etc., but did not ban them.

See also this older topic: <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=15462>

As for a book, <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/product/going-forth-visions-of-buddhist-vinaya/>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 6th, 2020 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Aemilius said:

Buddhism continued as an oral tradition for half a millennium.

Astus wrote:

And if you look at the various sutras, there is a notable difference between those that are apparently from an oral tradition and those that have been written down from the beginning. For instance, the often seen recommendation to copy and revere a Mahayana sutra is in reference to its physical nature as a scripture.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 6th, 2020 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Japanese priesthood and Japanese monkhood

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

Actually, I think you might be mistaken on this on by characterizing it as a mere decriminalization, but I have to reread some materials.
In the meantime, the name of that historical movement,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haibutsu_kishaku, lit. "abolish Buddha(dharma), destroy Śākyamuni."

Astus wrote:

'One crucial law, promulgated in 1872, decriminalized a variety of clerical practices that had been illegal according to Bakufu regulations for much of the Edo period. The regulation, commonly referred to during the Meiji period as the nikujiki saitai 肉食妻帯 law, ended all penalties for clerics who violated state and clerical standards of deportment by eating meat, marrying, letting their hair grow, or abandoning clerical dress.'

(<https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2645> by Richard Jaffe)

See also the topic: <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=6774>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 7th, 2020 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Aemilius said:

That is true of course, and for example in the White Lotus sutra, in the Devadatta chapter, there is the story of Shakyamuni in one of his previous births when he is serving an ascetic for many years who possesses the teaching of the Lotus sutra. Here you definitely get the impression that the Sutra that the ascetic possesses is not a material book, but is something that he holds in his mind.

Astus wrote:

Since the Lotus Sutra itself talks of the importance of reading and copying the Lotus Sutra, it is hard to see how that can refer to an oral tradition, unless such statements are later modifications of the text. But in that case it means that the Lotus Sutra is not the Lotus Sutra talked about in the Lotus Sutra.

Also, the Innumerable Meanings Sutra has a list of ten types of merit obtainable from it, and half of those talk of reading and copying the sutra, so again, it refers to its scriptural nature. In the very first chapter of the Lotus Sutra it is said that the Buddha was teaching the Innumerable Meanings Sutra. So, either the Innumerable Meanings Sutra is not the Innumerable Meanings Sutra, or it is one scripture writing of another scripture.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 8th, 2020 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

There are many divergent recensions of the Lotus Sūtra. I wonder if the Gilgit Lotus

mentions the Anantanirdeśasūtra. I suspect it doesn't, to be quite honest, since I suspect that it is Chinese apocrypha myself (no hard proof), but I am open to being quite wrong.

Astus wrote:

That the Buddha taught the "Mahānirdeśa" sutra, what Kumarajiva translates as "無量義"; is translated as "大頌" by Dharmarakṣa who renders the samadhi "anantanirdeśa" as "無量頌". Both Dharmarakṣa and Kumarajiva precede the Gilgit manuscript. It is also mentioned in the reviewed version of the Lotus Sutra (T264) as "無量義教菩薩法佛所護念" and also in the Tibetan as "nges par bstan pa chen po". Still, the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innumerable_Meanings_Sutra is assumed to be a Chinese apocrypha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 8th, 2020 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Sentient Light said:

David Drewes has a very compelling argument

Astus wrote:

I have not found such an argument in that text. Could you please provide a quote or page number?

In the mean time, here is James B. Apple's essay

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+phrase+dharmaparyayo+hastagato+in+mahayana+buddhist+literature%3A...-a0371001219>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 8th, 2020 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Sentient Light said:

Here's the correct one.

https://www.academia.edu/11322753/Oral_Texts_in_Indian_Mahayana_IJJ_2015_

Astus wrote:

That paper discusses different verbs, not those about reading and copying. Also, his main argument is that Mahayana sutras were memorised and written at the same time. At the end he also states: 'Generally speaking, as several scholars have already argued, the categories of "written" and "oral" traditions have little or no utility when applied to India.' He does not deny that the sutras existed as books, but rather attempts to highlight the presence of an oral tradition in parallel with the written works. To that it could be mentioned that for a while in China novices were required to memorise sutras before they could be ordained, even though the scriptures were preserved and

transmitted in written form.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 9th, 2020 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: History of tantra

Content:

Aemilius said:

I don't remember that Lotus sutra says "copying" anywhere? Where does it talk about copying in your opinion ?

Astus wrote:

It is already mentioned in chapter 3 ("the people who recite, copy, and preserve it." BDK ed p 73; T262p15b26-27), but it's repeated several times in chapter 10, e.g. "If there is anyone who preserves, recites, explains, or copies even a single verse of the Lotus Sutra" (BDK ed p 157; T262p30c17-19), and "Among the many people, either among the laity or the ordained, who practice the bodhisattva path, if they are unable to see, hear, recite, copy, preserve, and pay homage to this Lotus Sutra, know that they are people who are not yet properly practicing the bodhisattva path." (BDK ed p 161; T262p31c3-5). In chapter 11: "But it will certainly be difficult to copy / And preserve this sutra / And cause others to copy it / After my nirvana." (BDK ed p 175; T262p34a24-25), and in chapter 13: "we will produce the power of great patience and recite, preserve, teach, and copy this sutra" (BDK ed p 187; T262p36a4-5), and in chapter 14: "teach it after reciting it, copy it after teaching it, and enable others to copy, respect, honor, praise, and pay homage to the [Lotus] Sutra." (BDK ed p 200; T262p38b18-20). And so on.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 18th, 2020 at 4:08 PM

Title: Re: Non-Attachment vs. Dettachment

Content:

hkvanx said:

Buddhism is telling the Olympic athlete to be non-attached to the outcome (gold medal).

Astus wrote:

Buddhism teaches the ending of craving and clinging as the goal, and to that end there is the path of moral discipline, mental cultivation, and wisdom. The initial steps are not about suddenly letting go of all one's goals and motivations, but rather directing all that into an ethical track that is conducive to pacifying one's mind.

hkvanx said:

How does one continue to be engaged in a long strenuous training regime but try to be non-attached to the desired outcome?

Astus wrote:

That doesn't really work. One ordinarily does things either because of the pleasure

gained from the act or because of a desirable outcome. In order to be free from the suffering one needs to eliminate the root cause of ignorance, however, until that happens there are still many steps one can take to ameliorate the pain of samsara. For instance, if one is disturbed by worries about achieving whatever goals, one can learn ways to calm down the mind to be less agitated, and then learn to recognise the pattern how worrisome thoughts bring about anxiety.

hkvanx said:

When I try to practice non-attachment in my daily life, it feels like I am becoming an emotional zombie or emotionally numb.

Astus wrote:

Non-attachment is not a special state of mind, so one cannot just switch to it. Although through wilful grasping at a blank state may look like freedom from clinging, it is rather another form of attachment that can work only as a temporary solution. It is advisable to learn to be mindful of the basic qualities of the various states of mind (vedanupassana) in terms of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 22nd, 2020 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka < quantum mechanics?

Content:

smcj said:

It occurs to me that one major premise of buddhist dialectics is that an absurd conclusion is unacceptable. If an idea results in an absurd conclusion it is dismissed as wrong.

Astus wrote:

Madhyamaka accepts whatever is upheld by intelligent ordinary beings as valid relative truth. It is for the ultimate truth that correct analysis is applied to. So unless you propose that physics is ultimate truth, there is no contradiction between it and Madhyamaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 22nd, 2020 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka < quantum mechanics?

Content:

smcj said:

So if the system of logic used to establish "correct analysis" is itself shown to be flawed, then the conclusions that come from it are incorrect. Right?

Astus wrote:

What is called correct analysis is what is defined as such in Madhyamaka. How are you going to prove that wrong? Also, even analysis is merely relative truth, so of course ultimately it does not hold up to scrutiny. But neither does any other theory.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 23rd, 2020 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka < quantum mechanics?

Content:

smcj said:

If the axioms are false then the logic is flawed. If the logic is flawed there is no correct analysis.

The axiom that absurd conclusions can be deemed incorrect is false. Hence all the arguments are nonsense.

Astus wrote:

Is that an argument? If so, it is nonsense by its own definition, hence cannot be an argument.

Also, to prove that absurd conclusions can be correct, you need to do that in a logical way, not by quoting stories.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2020 at 3:40 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Is it asserted that, using the same analytical approach, likewise, consciousness ('mind') cannot be found to exist inside or outside the body?

Astus wrote:

Right, through both reasoning and direct insight one can search for the mind's location, or abiding, and eventually conclude that it cannot be found anywhere. It might also be of interest regarding this topic the analysis of the relationship between body and mind as presented for instance in chapter 9 of Pointing Out the Dharmakaya by Thrangu Rinpoche.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Does consciousness ('Mind') arise only as sensation?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness arises as awareness, as being aware of things, a.k.a. clarity.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2020 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

So in the case of 'the mind' - the mind is not an object at all. This is an empirical

statement, a statement of fact. Search high and low using all the powers of the six sense gates (including their modern scientific enhancements like electron microscopes or brain scanners), you will never find an object that corresponds to the term 'mind'. How baffling!

Astus wrote:

'A hidden thing is something that you cannot know directly, like a fire that you cannot physically see, so you must determine its existence by the presence of smoke, which can be seen. In the case of something that is hidden, you need inferential valid cognition to determine its existence or absence. But in the case of the opposite type of thing, called an evident thing, you have no need to apply inference, since you can use direct valid cognition or direct experience. For example, I do not need to infer the presence of a bell on the table in front of me, since I can see it. I do not need to speculate about what possible evidence the bell might have left of its presence since it is right in front of me. I do not need to use reasoning at all. Now, with regard to meditation on the mind's nature, the mind is not a hidden thing; it is an evident thing. It is your mind. Therefore, you can know it directly and experience its nature directly, and for that reason it is not necessary to use inferential valid cognition in determining the mind's nature.'

(Pointing Out the Dharmakaya by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 64; highlight added)

'Not finding anything, you initially think that you have somehow failed. Either you misunderstood how to look, or you just haven't looked enough. But in fact this is not true. The reason you didn't find anything is that the nature of your mind is utter insubstantiality, which is why, according to the Buddha, it is empty. To thoroughly comprehend this emptiness, we need to experience this directly in meditation.'

(An Introduction to Mahamudra Meditation by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 33)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2020 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

smcj said:

Is it just me, or are those two Thrangu R. quotes incompatible?

Astus wrote:

How so? Both state that knowing the mind directly is very much possible.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2020 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

It's still not an object of cognition, but 'that which cognises'. We know the mind because it is that which knows, not because it appears to us as an object of knowledge.

Astus wrote:

Mind is not a single object, nor a single subject, but the conditional instances of consciousness. Imagining static subjects and objects is the standard convention that is steeped in substantialism, and it is in that context where self-awareness is refuted.

Regarding what self-awareness is in Mahamudra:

'In the mahamudra context, when we say that the mind can be aware of its own nature, we mean that the mind is aware of its own nature, which is emptiness. Of course, all things are empty, but among all things, mind is manifestly empty. When you look at your mind in the mahamudra practice you observe that there is no shape, no color, no substantial characteristic of any kind, that the mind has no true origination, abiding, or cessation. If the mind had substantial existence, it would possess these characteristics, it would come into being, it would abide, and it would cease. What the mind sees when the mind looks at its own nature is its own absence of true existence. What is refuted in the Middle Way school is the mind seeing its own presence of true existence, since it does not have any. Therefore, in the mahamudra context, the use of self-awareness is quite different from the way it is used in the Madhyamaka context.'

(Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p 103-104)

'The term "seeing the mind" is a simple designation for understanding the mind's unreality, which is detached from the beginning from all modes of existence or nonexistence. The nature of mind is such that there is nothing – not even the infinitesimal end of a hair – that is a conceivable or perceptible object or observer.'

(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 195)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 6th, 2020 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Likewise, Mind is basically just an experience, Isn't it?

Astus wrote:

Rather, it's just a concept. There is no experience one could identify as "the mind".

PadmaVonSamba said:

specifically arises with a physical body (which is in itself merely a collection of emptinesses) is difficult to comprehend.

Astus wrote:

Distinguishing physical and mental phenomena is a conventional set of categories, splitting up the entirety of experience to two parts. As long as there is this idea that on the one hand there is the body (sarira) and on the other the mind (jiva) one will have serious difficulties with consolidating them. Instead of such a substantialist dichotomy the Buddha taught about the five aggregates and the six sensory areas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Can there be a concept without a mind?

Astus wrote:

Do thoughts need a thinker? On the one hand they do, as that is how it is conceived conventionally that actions need agents. On the other hand there is no thinker, there are merely instances of experiences of various types, and even talking of instances is quite fabricated.

Malcolm said:

Typically, mind (citta) is one thing, mental factors (caitta), another. They arise together, but they are not the same. The latter coordinate the experience of the six senses for the former.

Astus wrote:

And that can be a useful distinction to some extent. However, as there is no such thing as a stand alone mind, nor can there be unconscious experiences, it is for conventions sake to posit a mind with the sole function of awareness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 6:21 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

a concept (thought) without a thinker is not imaginable, conventionally speaking.

Astus wrote:

It is actually imaginable in terms of phenomena being experiences in themselves, of empirical nature without the need to separate it to observed-observer, contained-container, and other such dichotomies. The basis of conventional reality can be reduced to a stream of experiences that naturally has the quality of being experienced without the need for something external to experience it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Help with Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness"

Content:

Astus wrote:

1. dngos dang dngos med cig car min

2. dngos med med na dngos po med
3. rtag to dngos po ang dngos med gyur
4. dngos med med par dngos mi srid

Tola-Dragonetti:

1. A thing existing and not existing at the same time is not (possible)
2. without the not existing thing, the existing thing is not (possible);
3. the existing thing and the not existing thing would be eternal;
4. without the existing thing, the not existing thing does not arise.

Lindtner:

1. Being and non-being are not simultaneous.
2. Without non-being, no being.
3. Being and non-being would always be.
4. There is no being independent of nonbeing.

Some relevant stanzas from MMK (tr Siderits):

5.6

When the existent is not real, with respect to what will there come to be nonexistence?
And existent and nonexistent are contradictory properties; who cognizes something,
whether existent or nonexistent?

7.30-31

On the one hand it does not hold that an entity that exists is undergoing cessation,
for one thing cannot be both existent and nonexistent.

On the other hand it does not hold that an entity that does not exist is undergoing
cessation,
just as there is no cutting off of a second head.

15.5

If the existent is unestablished, then the nonexistent too is not established.
For people proclaim the nonexistent to be the alteration of the existent.

15.11

For whatever exists by its intrinsic nature does not become nonexistent; eternalism then
follows.

“It does not exist now [but] it existed previously”—from this, annihilation follows.

21.14

For one who acknowledges the existent, there would follow either eternalism or
annihilationism, for an existent would be either permanent or impermanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Where is ‘Mind’?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So experiences experience themselves, huh?

Astus wrote:

When an experience occurs, it is already as a conscious event. To say that the experience is a product of a contact between faculty, object, and consciousness, is an interpretation after the event. As there is no case where one experiences just one of the three constituents, their existence is an assumption based on ordinary/naive concepts of perception that is object oriented (operating with the idea of independent external entities) instead of experiential/phenomenological (taking appearances as they occur). So it is not the case that experiences experience themselves, as that already is an objectification and separation of what does not actually show those properties.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Help with Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness"

Content:

Manjushri said:

existent objects and non-existent objects, in what he calls the "conventional world", totally depend on each other for their own definition as such, since an existent object can be called so, only by comparing it with another object devoid of an existential status.

Astus wrote:

We don't call a bottle a bottle because of knowing about a situation where there is no bottle, so it's not a matter of comparing existent and non-existent entities. Without non-existence there is no existence, because everything is born and dies, hence the third line about permanence. It is important to note that being is very much connected to becoming, just as non-being to ceasing. So with the refutation of existence and non-existence, there is also the refutation of birth and death, and the other way around.

Manjushri said:

Hence why he mentions "permanence", since without the non-existing status as counterpoint, a functional object would lack this potential status and be perpetual. At the same time, for a non-existent object to arise, there must exist this possibility, for otherwise there would be no arising nor enduring nor ceasing, as Buddha taught.

Astus wrote:

There is no such thing as an object that could have sometimes the attribute of existence and sometimes the attribute of non-existence, even though that is how normally we speak. This very concept of there being an object, a substance, an entity that appears and disappears is what is refuted as the misconception of self, or "inherent existence".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Conscious in what sense? Is it a conscious event inherently? Is it a conscious event in absence of contact? In absence of an object? In absence of a mind? How can one even speak of appearances at all in the absence of subject/object bifurcation?

Astus wrote:

What I say is simply the reverse of the usual presentation, taking the result of the contact - that is, the actual experience - as the source instead as the product. There, in the experience, or instance of consciousness, there is no dividing line between perceiver and perceived, between where mind ends and where mental factors begin, etc.

Malcolm said:

It is elementary to understand there are a subject, object, and contact, given, as you admit above, there can be no experience in absence of that triad.

Astus wrote:

Operating with that model can be convenient in general, but problematic when one attempts to take it as more than a simple tool, ending up with looking for an actual subject and/or object and how the two can make contact. But if it's all put within the framework of phenomenological experience, then the divisions are no longer problematic.

Malcolm said:

Further, in the case of a dream, it is clear there is an absence of this triad. Therefore, with respect to dreams you have to account for the experience of them based on some other theory of cognition.

Astus wrote:

Dreams still have the triad of mind faculty, mental object, and mental consciousness.

Malcolm said:

Also, given that direct perceptions are nonconceptual by nature, even your invocation of "experience" is merely an inference, and thus it is in no better place than the inference of subject/object bifurcation, which is standard in Buddhist models of cognition, and in many ways, inferior to it.

Astus wrote:

It sure is an inference and does not intend to be other than that. Establishing first a unit of experience before the division into elements simply seems more practical to me to avoid the difficulties presented by taking subject and object as separate entities.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Help with Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness"

Content:

Manjushri said:

isn't Nagarjuna is also expounding an idea, while using conventional language, as the Buddha has done too, in order to portray an idea that in fact is inadequately expressed through words given its intrinsic limitations?

Astus wrote:

There isn't any secret or hidden message behind all the words that Nagarjuna was somehow unable to express. The difficulty with reading in topics one is not yet familiar with is a common one in any area of study, hence the use of introductory works and asking teachers is the easy way in. It should also be noted that Nagarjuna often argues against the teachings of other Buddhists, as for instance in verse six against the famous doctrine of the Sarvastivadins that dharmas exist in the three times. But unless one is a Sarvastivadin already, it is unlikely that one has ever seriously thought of the possibility that dharmas also exist in the past and the future.

Manjushri said:

If so, would it be fair to consider this as an example of the "subtle means" mentioned in the Lotus Sutra to transmit a more truthful and comprehensive understanding of reality, by establishing a bridge (or a phantom city, for that matter) to reach enlightenment?

Astus wrote:

The goal is liberation through the realisation of appearances being empty of anything that can be grasped or identified with. That's why Nagarjuna means to prove that all concepts are unreal.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 8th, 2020 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But, inferentially speaking, subject and object makes infinitely more sense: contact --> sensation --> etc. Cannot have contact without a pair.

Astus wrote:

It makes more sense as long as the world is conceived from an etic perspective, but if we move to the subjective side of how phenomena appear as the basis, then there is no need for the abstraction of unseen elements as producers of appearances. Even if the standard description is followed, the moment of awareness is after contact happened, so it could also be said that talking of experience as the basis is simply moving the focus, if one wants to maintain the established explanation. Also, taking the instance of consciousness as the basis of epistemological theory is the common approach already, furthermore, it can be said to be simply an argument for the topic of appearances are mind. To quote Thrangu Rinpoche again:

"Normally when we think about things we regard that which appears to us externally as composed of particles, and therefore as made up of matter, and we regard our cognition or our mind as a mere cognitive clarity or awareness and therefore as fundamentally different in nature from what we experience or what appears to us. But if we analyze carefully how we experience, we will see that what appears to us are actually fixated images created by our minds through taking many things together and designating them as units with certain designated characteristics. If you analyze the objective bases in physical reality for these designated images — and it is the designated images which we experience, not the objective bases — then you determine that the objective bases themselves, while apparently composed of particles, are actually composed of particles that when analyzed [in greater and greater detail] to the end, eventually disappear under analysis, and end up being composed of nothing. Nevertheless, appearances do appear to us. This of course is about reasoning and not about meditation; this is not an exercise for meditation."
(Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p 114)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 8th, 2020 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

This is what is called 'panpsychism'.

Astus wrote:

Not so. What I mean by no need for a mind as phenomena themselves can be understood as experiences is not about attributing independent objects with a mind of their own, nor saying that there are entities saturated by a single mind.

Wayfarer said:

'the eye can't see itself, hand can't grasp itself' etc.

Astus wrote:

One classic source of argument against self-perception:

'The Guardian of the World himself has said

That mind cannot be seen by mind.

In just the same way, he has said,

The sword's edge cannot cut the sword.'

(Bodhicaryavatara 9.17-18, tr Padmakara)

Mipham's commentary (tr Padmakara):

'But if the mind itself is the perceived illusory object, what object is seen by what subject? Since the two are identical, there can be no seeing. How so? As Lord Buddha, the guardian of the three worlds, has said, the mind cannot see the mind. A sword's edge cannot cut itself; a fingertip cannot touch itself; an acrobat cannot climb onto his

own shoulders. In just the same way, the mind cannot see the mind. It is also written in the Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchā-sūtra: "So it is. The sword's edge cannot cut the sword's edge and the fingertip cannot touch the fingertip. Likewise, the mind cannot see itself." The crucial point of this passage is that, as long as the mind is established as truly existent, it is partless and one; and this undermines the notion that it can be established as twofold: a seen object and a seeing subject. Accordingly, if it appears as an object, it cannot be a subject. And if it does not appear as an object, it cannot be apprehended. Therefore to claim, in ultimate terms, that the mind is selfknowing is mere verbiage; it has no truth value.'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 9th, 2020 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The point being, without contact there is no sensation. There is no way one can get around this.

Astus wrote:

Contact requires the preceding existence of entities, but neither the preceding entities, nor the contact itself is ever experienced. The assumption of both the preceding entities and their contact is based on how interaction between physical objects is commonly imagined, hence calling it the etic or observational perspective. But if we begin from the subjective point of view as experience occurs, then both preceding entities and their contact is derived or abstracted from experience, and not that experience is produced by contact.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 9th, 2020 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Virgo said:

did you learn this from a Buddhist teacher? If so, which one?

Astus wrote:

Not specifically.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 9th, 2020 at 6:00 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Relatively speaking, your assertion is fallacious because it proposes that events arise from themselves. For example, if you take a stick and jab it into your eye, no inference or

abstraction at all is required to understand that the stick making contact with your eye caused your experience of pain.

Astus wrote:

Seeing the relationship between events is inference, so to learn the connection between them requires abstraction, and it is not visible directly in the events themselves. The causes and conditions for events are known by inference, not by experience, that's why taking experience as the basis is preferable. Furthermore, the veracity of inference is validated by experience, plus inference itself is a form of experience. So, unless there is a way to know things before they are known (apart from extrapolation), there are only experienced events and whatever sense we try to make of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 9th, 2020 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The main point for us is to learn from all this, and the best presentation that is given is by Milarepa. Milarepa defines the cognition of a Buddha in a very simple way. He says that the pure jnana, the cognition of a Buddha is not something very far off or foreign, but it is the mind in its immediacy. It is the mind before it has been altered in any way, before it has been manipulated or changed. As said previously, when the mind is in its own nature it is not agitated by thoughts, our own fabricated thoughts do not modify the mind. Once the mind is agitated and modified, it loses control over itself and becomes over-powered and determined by negative factors. Normally and presently, we do not see the true form and state of our mind and that is why we cannot let it be as it is; we cannot allow it to be in control of itself and to be its own master. However, there is no need to improve the mind or to make it better and there is no need to remove anything from it; we just need to let it be what it is, this original form of mind, cognition or awareness. In fact, there is little need to say anything about it because whatever description we give is irrelevant because mind is nothing that can be labeled. Whatever we say will be a misassumption of the mind, it will be going into extremes either in terms of existence or in terms of non-existence. Really, the true state of the mind is beyond the sphere of thoughts and the intellect. But we use language to communicate and designate it, calling it "mind" or "jnana." In fact, this mind can only be understood through directly seeing its own nature, what it is in itself.'

(Je Gampopa's The Jewel Ornament of Liberation: The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings - Commentary by The Venerable Khabje Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, p 312-313)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2020 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

according your reasoning, experiences are also merely inferred, since they are not directly perceived.

Astus wrote:

Experience is what appears presently, while interpreting, categorising, processing, and other cognitive workings have as their object various levels of abstractions (starting with direct connection), but even those fabrications are experiences themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2020 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Madhyamaka view distillation

Content:

Rick said:

All phenomena are empty.

Astus wrote:

The first difficulty comes from understanding "all", what that all actually signifies. Then one can attempt to define what is a phenomenon. Or the other way around, first clarify what a phenomenon is, then what all of them are. Next there should be a definition of being empty, and finally what is the relationship between a phenomenon and it being empty.

Basing oneself on those four words there are so many ways to go astray.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2020 at 6:18 PM

Title: Re: Huayen practice

Content:

dolphin_color said:

Are there examples of specific meditation or recitation instructions in the tradition?

Astus wrote:

Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism by Thomas Cleary contains a couple of meditation manuals.

The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism by Garma C C Chang also has a translation of Dushun's manual.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2020 at 11:13 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You seem to be using "experience" in place of "direct perception".

Astus wrote:

The point of using the word

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=518930#p518930> was to signify the fundamental frame where everything appears without separation to subject and object, thus putting away the concept of a knower mind and known entity and replacing them with a single unit that already has awareness and appearance inseparably. If the term direct perception sounds to me too specific, but that's a terminological matter.

Malcolm said:

For example, a taste of sweet is not an experience of sweet until it is categorized as such. Example, if you first place a bit of an herb called gymnema on your tongue, it blocks the sense receptors for tasting sweet, so even you place sugar on the tongue, you will not experience a sweet taste.

Astus wrote:

Before one recognises a taste as sweet, what do you call that? Not being able to categorise a taste (e.g. a new spice) and not tasting anything at all seem two different cases.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 10th, 2020 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What is the difference between this and yogacāra?

Astus wrote:

Not much really, I just didn't want to complicate things with that, instead keeping it to the "appearances are mind" theme from Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Of course appearances are mind, but not apparent objects.

Astus wrote:

If by apparent objects you mean when one conceives things in terms of perceiver and perceived, then there is no disagreement.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, apparent objects do not exist merely because we conceive them; for example, your car does not disappear when you walk into your house. It is still there in the morning when you want to drive to work.

Astus wrote:

What matters is the subjective experience, as that is where all the defilements and sufferings occur.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, that is false, since external phenomena are also afflicted or conducive to generating affliction, and they also are suffering, for example, the third kind of suffering, the suffering of the compounded, which has nothing to do with sensation or experience.

Astus wrote:

How can a car that nobody even thinks of, much less sees or touches, be afflicted or generating affliction?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: On being fearful of Shikantaza

Content:

Zafutales said:

Hongzhi and Dogen =just sit no analysis required, anything other than this is chasing your own shadow

Tsongkhapa and Nargajuna =a stone can just sit and not think....we must use our conceptual minds to great use

Astus wrote:

Just sitting is a matter of not grasping at thoughts, and that itself is based on the understanding that clinging to concepts is the basis of samsara.

Analysis is used to assist one letting go of thoughts and thus free one from clinging to concepts.

They are not so different, merely various approaches to match the needs of various beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

heart said:

There are no proof that Mahayana is an "historical development" any longer since the discovery of the Gandhara texts. Prajnaparamita and Mahaparanirvana sutras are among the oldest Buddhist text we have.

Astus wrote:

'The fact that Mahāyāna texts taught the emptiness of dharmas may not therefore signify that this is a typically or exclusively Mahāyāna position, but it does emphasise the dependence of much of Mahāyāna literature on developments that had begun in a small corner of north-western India.'

...

'The special point to be emphasised is that the 'Perfection of Wisdom', which is the subject matter of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā in its surviving Sanskrit version, only makes sense against the background of the overhaul of Buddhist scholasticism that had taken place in Greater Gandhāra during the last centuries preceding the Common Era. It was in Greater Gandhāra, during this period, that Buddhist scholasticism developed an ontology centred on the lists of dharmas that had been preserved.'

(https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_ADB8A4E3744C.P001/REF.pdf by J. Bronkhorst)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 11th, 2020 at 11:27 PM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

Gampopa said:

Geshe believes that the nature of the body of the actual perfect, complete Buddha is Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is the exhaustion of all mistakes, or just a return to the inherent nature. But these are just labels. In reality, Dharmakaya is unborn, free from elaboration. The Ornament of Mahayana Sutra says:

Liberation is just the exhaustion of confusion.

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 285)

Traleq Kyabgon said:

Dharmakaya as a state is not an entity; it is not a thing. It is unconditional, and it is permanent. This is why it is said that dharmakaya is not a product of causes and conditions. Nevertheless, when the dharmakaya is described as permanent, this does not mean that there is an entity that endures forever. The dharmakaya is not an entity; it is nothing and cannot be said to be permanent in this way. It is permanent in the same sense as the sky can be said to be permanent. The sky is permanent because it is unconditional; it has never arisen and therefore cannot cease to exist.

(The Essence of Buddhism, p 125-126)

Nagarjuna said:

But one who has taken up a mass of beliefs, such as that the Tathāgata exists,

so conceptualizing, that person will also imagine that [the Tathāgata] does not exist when extinguished.

And the thought does not hold, with reference to this (Tathāgata) who is intrinsically empty,

that the Buddha either exists or does not exist after cessation.

Those who hypostatize the Buddha, who is beyond hypostatization and unwavering, they all, deceived by hypostatization, fail to see the Tathāgata.

(Mulamadhyamakakarika 22.13-15, tr Siderits)

Mahāsi Sayādaw said:

In nibbāna there are no such things as mind or mental concomitants, which can be met with in the sense-sphere or form-sphere. It naturally follows that mind and matter that belong to the thirty-one planes of existence are totally absent in nibbāna. However, some would like to propose that after the parinibbāna of the Buddha and the Arahants, they acquire a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna. Such an extraordinary way of thinking may appeal to those who cannot do away with self or ego.

With regard to this proposition a learned Sayādaw reasoned that if there is a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna, there must also be a special kind of rebirth which gives rise to a special kind of old age, disease, and death, which in turn bring about a special kind of sorrow, lamentation, suffering, distress, and despair. When the teachings explicitly say cessation, it will be improper to go beyond it and formulate an idea of a special kind of existence. Extinction points to nothing other than Nothingness. Nibbāna, which is not involved in mind and matter, cannot be made to get involved either in this world or in other worlds.

(<http://www.aimwell.org/On%20the%20Nature%20of%20Nibbana.pdf>)

Ajahn Payutto said:

An inevitable question that arises in the discussion of Nibbāna is: ‘What happens to an arahant after death?’ or: ‘Does a person who has realized Nibbāna exist after death or not?’ In truth, this question is centred around self-view: the devotion to self is acting as a catalyst in posing the question. This attachment to self or to the label of self (attavādupādāna) is firmly embedded in the hearts of unenlightened people, supported by the thirst for being (bhava-taṇhā) and based on ignorance (avijjā). The Buddha did not encourage debating this question if one has not eliminated ignorance and craving. He encouraged knowledge through application rather than conjecture.

No matter how one responds to these inquiries, the latent root attachment to self inevitably leads to a biased understanding. The questioner will incline towards a wrong view of Nibbāna as either an enduring self or an eradication of self. It is easy for annihilationists to view Nibbāna as extinction, because Buddhism emphasizes disentangling from the widespread belief in eternalism. As for eternalists, when their idea of self is invalidated, they search for a substitute to compensate for the sense of void or to restore the idea of a stable self. When they encounter a teaching that advocates uprooting the fixed belief in self, it can seem to them that the self vanishes. They may then seize Nibbāna as a haven for the self or equate Nibbāna as eternal life or the Promised Land. Many esteemed and wise individuals who are free from almost all forms of attachment get caught in these views. The escape from this net leads to

complete liberation. The Buddhist teachings admit that such freedom is extremely difficult to achieve and refer to this subtle attachment to views as 'the Brahma-ensnaring web' (brahma-jāla): an entanglement for the virtuous and wise.

Nibbāna and the practice for Nibbāna have nothing to do with destroying the self because there is no self to destroy. It is the attachment to the concepts of self that must be destroyed. One must remove the attachment to self-assertions, self-views and self-perceptions. Nibbāna is the end of these misunderstandings and the end of the suffering caused by attachment. When the yearning for self ceases, all theories of self automatically lose their significance. When the attachment to self is uprooted, things will be seen as they truly are; there is no need for further speculation about self. When the desire which gives rise to self ceases, the matter of self vanishes of its own accord. Nibbāna is the cessation of suffering, not the cessation of self, since there is no self that will cease. Reflect on the Buddha's words: 'I teach only suffering and the end of suffering.' In order to shift the emphasis from the preoccupation with Nibbāna and philosophical debate, the Buddha usually referred to Nibbāna in the context of practical application or the related benefits for everyday life, as demonstrated in passages of the Tipiṭaka.

(<https://www.buddhistteachings.org/nibbana-points-of-controversy>)

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda said:

Because Nibbāna is said to be something realizable, some are of the opinion that nothing should be predicated about it. What is the reason for this special emphasis on its realizability? It is to bring into sharp relief the point of divergence, since the Buddha taught a way of realizing here and now something that in other religions was considered impossible.

What was it that they regarded impossible to be realized? The cessation of existence, or bhavanirodha. How can one be certain here and now that this existence has ceased? This might sometimes appear as a big puzzle. But all the same, the arahant experiences the cessation of existence as a realization. That is why he even gives expression to it as: Bhavanirodho Nibbānaṃ, (AN 10.7) "cessation of existence is Nibbāna".

It comes about by this extinction of influxes. The very existence of 'existence' is especially due to the flowing in of influxes of existence. What is called 'existence' is not the apparent process of existing visible to others. It is something that pertains to one's own mental continuum.

(https://seeingthroughthenet.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Mind-Stilled_HTML.htm#Mindstilled05)

Nibbāna has been defined as the cessation of existence. (e.g. SN 12.68) The Buddha says that when he is preaching about the cessation of existence, some people, particularly the brahmins who cling to a soul theory, bring up the charge of nihilism against him. (MN 22) Not only those brahmins and heretics believing in a soul theory, but even some Buddhist scholars are scared of the term bhavanirodha, fearing that it leads to a nihilistic interpretation of Nibbāna. That is why they try to mystify Nibbāna in various ways. What is the secret behind this attitude? It is simply the lack of a clear understanding of the unique philosophy made known by the Buddha.

(<https://seeingthroughthenet.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Mind->

Stilled_HTML.htm#Mindstilled08)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 12th, 2020 at 5:58 AM

Title: Re: Where is 'Mind'?

Content:

smcj said:

The Mahayana references the Shravakayana as foundational.

Astus wrote:

Because shravakas learn from buddhas, the mahayana is actually called foundational, as that's how buddhas arise.

smcj said:

The Shravakayana references the Mahayana as heretical.

Astus wrote:

Does it? There probably are some, but not counting some modern Theravadins, where are those references?

smcj said:

This is NOT a chicken and egg question.

Astus wrote:

Of course, <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=519618#p519618>, those early Gandhara texts themselves show how the Prajnaparamita sutras required a unique development in (likely) Sarvastivadin abhidharma in order to formulate their own doctrine of emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 15th, 2020 at 4:54 PM

Title: Re: Pure Land mysticism

Content:

Hammerheart said:

Perhaps my Zen background also plays some role in all of that, but I am most certain that what I am looking for is some sort of mystical union with Infinite Light and I don't really feel that there is much emphasis on that aspect in Jodo Shu and Shinshu.

Astus wrote:

You might consider schools beyond Jodoshu and Shinshu. It is the exclusive other-power aspect of those schools that makes them stand out, while practically everyone else has practices of the path of sages where realisation in this life is aimed at.

Some materials you might want to check out:

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf
<https://archive.org/details/PureLandPureMind/page/n3/mode/2up>
<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN101.pdf>
http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/monkeym.pdf
<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN084.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 17th, 2020 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: newcomer question

Content:

laymedowntosleep17 said:

Does that sound like Zen practice might be a good fit for me?

Astus wrote:

Zen is not a single method or doctrine, although all that can be called Zen operates within the framework of Mahayana Buddhism.

You might like the teachings of Daehaeng who emphasised entrusting everything to one's foundation she called Juigong.

Here's a short talk: <https://tricycle.org/magazine/thinking-big/>.

More: <http://www.hanmaum.org/eng/>

And especially: <https://wakeupandlaugh.com/>

"The essence of practicing kwan is to entrust everything to Juigong with the firm belief that only Juigong can solve one's problems, including those that one faces in everyday life, and can awaken one from the delusions that originate within. Also, practicing kwan means taming one's mind, which is being dragged outwardly, by directing it inwardly. Directing one's mind inwardly means being one with Juigong and, at the same time, killing one's sense of ego. The most important matter is that one's mind should not be dragged outwardly. No matter what kind of problem one faces, only when one brings the problem into one's mind and looks at it through the foundation of Mind, can one perceive the problem clearly without any bias. To drag one's mind outwardly separates one from others; to direct one's mind inwardly is the way to become one with everything. Even while worshipping Buddha, one has to venerate Buddha within one's mind, and one has to bow to that place where Buddha and I are not separate."
(from <https://www.scribd.com/document/142055126/Teachings-of-Daehaeng-Sunim>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 21st, 2020 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: The Platform Sutra on Pure Land practices.

Content:

mairuwen said:

1. The relation between Pure Land and Chan.

Astus wrote:

Very harmonious, to the extent that it seems pointless to call them separate schools. It depends very much on the individual, how much one works on results in this life, but in the end everyone aims to be born in Sukhavati. One exception here might be those following the teachings of Yinshun and Shengyan, as they emphasise the traditional bodhisattva path and say that the Pure Land puts a delay on one's path. But there seems to be no teacher for the last couple of centuries who actually believed buddhahood in this life was a possibility, hence the only sensible choice is Amitabha.

mairuwen said:

2. The extent to which supernatural elements can be seen as a kind of skillful means.

Astus wrote:

Or it is a skillful means to talk of buddhas and bodhisattvas as representations of ideas. What to watch out for is conceit about one's view and thinking that those who think differently are not so smart.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 22nd, 2020 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: Progress of Insight in Zen Traditions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huineng distinguished only between enlightened and unenlightened:

'With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30)

Baizhang Huaihai spoke of three stages:

'If one no longer loves or grasps, and yet abides in not loving or grasping and considers it correct, this is the elementary good; this is abiding in the subdued mind. This is a disciple; he is one who is fond of the raft and will not give it up. This is the way of the two vehicles. This is a result of meditation.

Once you do not grasp any more, and yet do not dwell in nonattachment either, this is the intermediate good. This is the half-word teaching. This is still the formless realm; though you avoid falling into the way of the two vehicles, and avoid falling into the ways of demons, this is still a meditation sickness. This is the bondage of bodhisattvas.

Once you no longer dwell in nonattachment, and do not even make an understanding of not dwelling either, this is the final good; this is the full-word teaching. You avoid falling into the formless realm, avoid falling into meditation sickness, avoid falling into the way of bodhisattvas, and avoid falling into the state of the king of demons.'

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 30-31)

Dogen did not differentiate stages:

'The view that practice and realization are not one is skewed outside of the Way. In the Buddha Dharma practice and realization are one and the same. This is the practise of realization, and so from the beginning practice is the whole body of original Awakening.'
(<https://wwwzc.org/sites/default/files/Bendowa-book.pdf>, p 13)

Shengyan taught about three stages:

Stage 1:

To balance the development of body and mind in order to attain mental and physical health. Various methods of physical exercise for walking, standing, sitting, and reclining are used.

Stage 2:

From the sense of the small "I" to the large "I." When you practice the method of cultivation taught by your teacher, for example, huatou or silent illumination, you will enlarge the sphere of the outlook of the small "I" until it coincides with time and space. The small "I" merges into the entire universe, forming a unity.

Stage 3:

From the large "I" to no "I." Chan is inconceivable. It is neither a concept nor a feeling. Because Chan is a world where there is no self, if there is still any attachment at all in your mind, there is no way you can harmonize with Chan.
(https://www.dharmadrum.org/content/chan_garden/chan_garden3.aspx?sn=48; see more <https://www.westernchanfellowship.org/dharma/dharma-library/dharma-article/1977/what-is-chan/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 23rd, 2020 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Progress of Insight in Zen Traditions

Content:

Könchok Thrinley said:

However, aren't in zen koans used to "check" progress during talks with the teacher?

Astus wrote:

The Japanese Rinzai school has various levels in koan training, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 24th, 2020 at 1:20 AM

Title: Re: Progress of Insight in Zen Traditions

Content:

SteRo said:

there arises the necessity that those teacher say something to students

Astus wrote:

'The roots of delusion are deep. They're difficult to cut off and uproot. So [the Buddha] established expedient means to grab your attention. These are like showing yellow leaves to a crying child, who imagines they're gold and thus stops crying. You act as though you're in a shop where someone sells a hundred goods made from gold and jade, but you're trying to weigh each item. So you say that Shitou has a real gold shop? Well in my shop there's a wide range of goods! If someone comes looking for mouse turds then I give him some. If someone comes looking for real gold then I give it to him.'
(Yangshan Huiji, in Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 187)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2020 at 4:19 PM

Title: Re: Which Nalanda pandit?

Content:

dolphin_color said:

I'm looking for a starting point that is relatively accessible.

Astus wrote:

Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛllekha* (Letter to/from a Friend) is a good start, and translations are available from both Chinese and Tibetan. Next you may look into his longer work *Ratnāvalī* (Precious Garland / Strand of Dharma Jewels). Aryadeva's 400 verses, Chandrakirti's commentary on it (Four Illusions), and Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* are also quite readable and nice introductory materials.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 26th, 2020 at 1:41 AM

Title: Re: Which Nalanda pandit?

Content:

Manjushri said:

If I may ask, is this work comprised of advice and counseling to a King? Or is it an altogether different work?

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is addressed to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautamiputra_Satakarni.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 27th, 2020 at 11:56 PM

Title: Re: Nalanda

Content:

Astus wrote:

Xuanzang's records, translated by Li Rongxi in 1996, are available at BDK:
<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/great-tang-dynasty-record-western-regions>

Yijing (635–713) visited Nalanda, and his records are also available:
<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/buddhist-monastic-traditions-southern-asia>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 1st, 2020 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Turning the Light Around?

Content:

Injrabodi said:

concentrating the mind leads to liberation are Theravada Buddhism

Astus wrote:

Not so. Vipassana is necessary for liberation.

Injrabodi said:

So how exactly does one turn the light around?

Astus wrote:

It (回光返照) is simply an expression for self-reflection, or introspection. It means not chasing a sensory object but reflecting on what is happening in one's mind, with the main focus on the universal characteristics of e.g. impermanence, and emptiness. As for any detailed method, look at the various techniques of insight meditation.

Injrabodi said:

Is the key here to sit in nonmeditation, keeping the mind free of all external entangling objects, until a moment of satori strikes?

Astus wrote:

Insight is not a miracle that happens out of nowhere but something one has to work on. To sit mindlessly results in simply a mindless state, not liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: Turning the Light Around?

Content:

Injrabodi said:

Samatha and Vipassana are two wings of the meditative bird and both are required in order to obtain high states of absorption, correct?

Astus wrote:

The various levels of absorption (jhana) are attained through samatha. Vipassana is the insight that no matter what is attained, it's always unstable and temporary.

Injrabodi said:

How could the presence or absence of thoughts ever obscure the essential nature?

Astus wrote:

There is no essential nature to be obscured or remain unobscured.

Injabodi said:

I wasn't talking about sitting mindlessly, I was talking about sitting filled with awareness yet not focusing it on any one point. Like the shikantaza of Zen.

Astus wrote:

Of one is aware of things, there is attention focused on things, even if for only a short while. Shikantaza is not about maintaining any specific state, but about freedom from identification with any state.

Injabodi said:

one still does have to climb the ladder through the other realms by means of vipassana and shamatha to discover it if I recall correctly.

Astus wrote:

The levels of absorption and the realms of samsara are not ladders. Some level of tranquillity (samatha) is required, but otherwise it is through insight (vipassana) that one eventually relinquishes clinging through realising that there is no reliable thing anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 5:18 PM

Title: Re: Buddha teaches Shentong view in a Sravakayana sutra

Content:

Aemilius said:

....highest surpassing purity of emptiness and make it a habitat,

smcj said:

The idea that emptiness is not just how phenomena abide, but that there's something beyond appearances is suggestive of Shentong.

Astus wrote:

That is a nice mistranslation of 'parisuddham paramānuttaram suññatam upasampajja viharanti'.

Nanamoli & Bodhi:

'enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness'

Sujato:

'enter and remain in the pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness'

Emptiness is practically a synonym for no-self, so that abiding in emptiness means not conceiving anything as 'I am that' or 'that is mine'.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharma

Content:

dolphin_color said:

Is Abhidharma in conflict with Madhyamaka? Does it assume that phenomena exist inherently?

Astus wrote:

Abhidharma is not a single doctrine. What needs to be looked at is whether what you call "Abhidharma" upholds the same definition of inherent existence that is refuted by Nagarjuna.

For the Sarvastivadin version, see Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma by Venerable Professor K.L. Dhammajoti, chapter 3.5.

For the Theravadin version, see

https://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh412_Karunadasa_Dhamma-Theory--Philosophical-Cornerstone-of-Abhidhamma.pdf by Y. Karunadasa

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: Buddha teaches Shentong view in a Sravakayana sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

How do you reconcile addressing yourself 'I' to other people?

Astus wrote:

Please elaborate. What is there to reconcile?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Buddha teaches Shentong view in a Sravakayana sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

Like how do you call 'I' to others without attachment?

Astus wrote:

It's merely a word. When one believes that the word signifies a real entity, that is the mistaken belief in a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 2nd, 2020 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharma

Content:

dolphin_color said:

Is it doctrine-less, or a bundle of doctrines?

Astus wrote:

There are several texts within the Abhidharma-pitaka, and there are more than one such collections.

dolphin_color said:

Can this be answered with respect to the Abhidharmakośakārikā, and commentaries on it?

Astus wrote:

That depends on how one interprets the Kosha about svabhava (I.18) and paramartha (VI.4), and of course what one understands by Nagarjuna's refutation of svabhava and that only emptiness is paramartha. For instance, apart from the three unconditioned ones, all dharmas are understood to be impermanent, therefore they cannot be qualified by saying that svabhava is necessarily permanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 8th, 2020 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: On the role of "Buddhist philosophy" in Buddhism. Packaging and product.

Content:

Viach said:

Buddhism is a purely practical teaching.

Astus wrote:

That itself is already a philosophical stance, a basis you attempt to argue for, again, a very philosophical approach. You might want a short review of https://www.philosophybasics.com/general_what_is.html

Viach said:

Philosophy cannot be practical (as an instrument for achieving enlightenment), only yoga (a set of specific practices) can be practical.

Astus wrote:

Practice has to be based on right view, and practice itself brings one to confirming in experience the validity of right view, hence one begins from wisdom to end at wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 12th, 2020 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: How many hours of meditation do Monks do per day?

Content:

2ndchance said:

How many hours of meditation do Monks do per day?

Which hours during the day and night do they usually meditate?

Astus wrote:

Daily pattern of monastic activities:

(A Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 170)

The Time of Lighting at twilight, when monks gather at the Buddha hall to offer incense and worship;

The Time of Being in Calmness [9:00–11:00 P.M.], for dhyana practice;

The Third Watch [11:00 P.M.–1:00 A.M.], for sleep;

The Fourth Watch [1:00–3:00 A.M.], for sleep;

The Fifth Watch [3:00–5:00 A.M.], for dhyana practice;

The Time of the Hare [5:00–7:00 A.M.], same as twilight;

Daybreak, for taking gruel;

The Time of the Dragon [7:00–9:00 A.M.], for reading scriptures, studying, and listening to lectures by elder monks;

The Time of Yu (Gu) [9:00–11:00 A.M.], for dhyana practice;

The Time of the Horse [12:00 P.M.], for taking a meal;

The Time of the Sheep [1:00–3:00 P.M.], for bathing and [attending to other personal matters];

The Time of the Monkey [3:00–5:00 P.M.], for dhyana practice;

The Time of the Rooster [5:00–7:00 P.M.], for relaxation, released from work.

Thiền Viện Diệu Nhân daily schedule

(<https://dieunhan.weebly.com/english.html>)

3:45 AM Wake Up

4:00-6:00 Sitting Meditation

6:30 Exercise

7:15 Breakfast

8:30-10:30 Chores

11:30 Lunch

1:00 PM Afternoon Rest

2:00 Wake Up

2:30-3:40 Dharma Study

4:30 Refreshment

5:45 Chanting

6:30-8:00 Sitting Meditation

9:30 Lights Out

Here is what a typical day in Plum Village might look like

(<https://plumvillage.org/retreats/visiting-us/sample-schedule/>)

5:00am: Wake Up Bell

6:00am: Sitting Meditation

(followed by Sutra Reading / Touching the Earth / Slow Walking Meditation)

7:30am: Breakfast

9am: Dharma Talk / Class / Presentation / Working Meditation

11:30am: Walking meditation (outdoors)
12:30pm: Lunch
1:30pm: Rest / Optional Guided Relaxation
3pm: Service Meditation
6pm: Light dinner
8pm: Dharma Discussion, Personal study time, Sitting Meditation or other collective practice
9.30pm: Noble Silence begins
10pm: Lights out

Regular Working Days in Antaiji
(<https://antaiji.org/en/schedule/>)

4am to 6:10am Zazen
6:10am Breakfast
6:40am Cleaning
After cleaning Help in the kitchen
7:30am to noon Samu (work)
12:00 noon Lunch
after lunch Samu (work), shower, help in the kitchen
5:00pm Dinner
5:20pm Dish washing
5:30pm Tea meeting
6pm to 8pm Zazen
After 8pm Free time (be quiet after 9pm)

Zen River Temple - Regular Daily Schedule
(<https://www.zenrivertemple.org/programme/>)

Saturday–Wednesday:

04:55 Wake up
05:30 Zazen
07:30 Morning Service
08:00 Breakfast (oryoki)
09:30 Samu
12:50 Noon service
13:00 Lunch
14:00 Rest
16:30-17:30 Sat, Sutra Reading Class; Sun, Zazen; Mon, Study period; Tue, Right Speech Class; Wed: Zazen
18:00 Supper
19:30 Zazen
21:15 Four Vows
21:45 Lights out

Sunday: 11:30 Study class / 19:00 Public Service

Monday: 19:30 River of Zen continuation class
Tuesday: 16:30 Right Speech class / 19:30 Introductory class
Wednesday: 19:30 Zazen; Teisho

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 30th, 2020 at 2:36 PM

Title: Re: Alan Watts

Content:

JoaoRodrigues said:

I'd like, if you'd like to spend that time, to have more examples. I didn't come here for an Alan's public judgment, even so, I accept it, I came here for an insight on what he believes / wrote about compared with the traditional or new views of zen-buddhism.

Astus wrote:

I agree, character judgement is not the way to go.

'The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters.

Of course, this presupposes that the person making the judgment has some understanding of correct Dharma. Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.'

(Ven. Sheng-yen, in Zen Wisdom, ch 1. q 3)

You should probably try to cite or present Watts' own views on specific topics, and then have a discussion on that.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2020 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: Mind and its objects

Content:

Grigoris said:

"A person born in the realm of desire can with the mental organ of that realm also know undefiled things (anasravadbarmas) and those pertaining to each of the three realms (trairatnika)."

Asanga, Abhidarmasamuccaya, p26

Is this saying that this very defiled mind can know liberation?

Astus wrote:

It is saying that one can gain the divine eye and attain all the levels of absorption while at the same time being a human. The undefiled things are those that belong to the path

of liberation, and they are also accessible as humans.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2020 at 2:38 PM

Title: Re: Mind and it's objects

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I'm always baffled by the use of 'things' or 'objects' in this context. I wouldn't have thought that 'purity' or 'pure awareness' was 'an object' except for in the metaphorical sense. I mean, I can understand an object as an object - tools, utensils, foodstuffs, furniture, even mountains and planets. But I can't understand 'the objects of higher knowledge' as objects. Perhaps someone can help me understand if I have misunderstood something.

Astus wrote:

Mind (knower) always must have an object (known), and there is no knower without a known, nor known without a knower, as they mutually depend on each other.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2020 at 2:49 PM

Title: Re: Mind and it's objects

Content:

SteRo said:

The 'undefiled' is also called 'pure'. What is purity?

The_Large_Sutra_On_Perfect_Wisdom said:

The Lord: And the Unproduced, the Unmanifested, the Uneffected—that is purity.

Astus wrote:

That would be what Yogacara calls the pure element (anasravadhātu). The distinction between defiled (sāsva) and undefiled (anāsava) dharmas is a bit different.

4. The dharmas are impure, "in a relationship with the defilements," or pure, "with no relationship to the defilements." Conditioned dharmas, with the exception of the Path, are impure. They are impure because the defilements adhere to them.

5a-b. The undefiled truth of the Path and the three unconditioned things are pure.
(AKB I.4-5a-b, tr Pruden, vol 1, p 58-59)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 1st, 2020 at 9:35 PM

Title: Re: Mind and it's objects

Content:

SteRo said:

In Prajnaparamita 'pure' is applied for the aggregates, sense fields, constituents, dependently originated phenomena, emptinesses, paths of seeing, paths of meditation,

paths of no-more-learning.

Astus wrote:

When you say "In Prajnaparamita", what exactly do you mean, what sutra or shastra? Also, if all of those are pure, that would mean all dharmas are pure, and there is nothing to call impure, so that way the whole distinction loses its meaning.

SteRo said:

Why are these objects called 'pure'? Because these are antidotes which upon application can remove ignorance, at least partially, and thus entail 'purification' of the subject, i.e. the subject being purified of defilements which then entails seeing the purity of the objects.

Astus wrote:

There is no subject, or anything, to be named apart from all the dharmas (skandhas, ayatanas, dhatus, asamskrtas), so your explanation above and what follows it makes no sense to me.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 7th, 2020 at 4:33 PM

Title: Re: Zazen for a few

Content:

mansurhirbi87 said:

What would you answer to the opinion that zazen is not to everyone, just for a few ? With it could be said that it is almost elitist

Astus wrote:

'If you can comfortably sit upright and remain insouciant, without being bound by anything — only that is called liberation. Make every effort! Make every effort! Of the thousands or tens of thousands of people in this school, only three or five of them have gotten it.'

(Huangbo Xiyun in The Wanling Record, in A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 2.44)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 8th, 2020 at 2:16 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

DharmaSean said:

Can you prove any link to the Arthaviniscaya sutra?

Astus wrote:

<https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Arthaviniscaya/index.htm>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 8th, 2020 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

DharmaSean said:

I am trying to understand why the Mahayana says that arhatship is not the end of the path.

Astus wrote:

Mahayana schools practically reinterpreted the meaning of what it is to be an arhat, reduced it to being stuck in a samadhi of nothingness, and that's why they are not finished yet, but will continue on the path to buddhahood once somehow they're awakened from their dreamless slumber by the buddhas. That's also how the sravaka path turned into basically a misroute on the path to enlightenment, that it is seen as an attachment to a mistaken view of emptiness, an extreme view of annihilation. So actually the arhatship in the Ekayana view (i.e. that there is only one final liberation of buddhahood) is not the same as in the Triyana view what the Yogacara system of Xuanzang and Theravada believes in.

There is another element as well, that with buddha-nature one needs merely to remove obscurations and it's not necessary to accumulate merit to develop the buddha qualities, so in order to avoid the charge that it is no different from the sravakayana, arhats are redefined as annihilationists.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 9th, 2020 at 1:35 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

DharmaSean said:

So Master Xuanzang believed in a view of arhats akin to the Theravada?

Astus wrote:

In the sense that arhats reach nirvana, finish rebirth and the path permanently, yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 9th, 2020 at 2:41 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

DharmaSean said:

Are there any mind only works discussing this in depth?

Astus wrote:

I don't know what counts as "in depth" for you, but you can look into the Cheng Weishi Lun, either the translation by Wei Tat or Francis Cook (see References on the <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/three-texts-consciousness-only> page, and also on <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/three-texts-consciousness-only>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 10th, 2020 at 2:41 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

Aemilius said:

The question is "why don't you stay in it?"

Astus wrote:

If there is a state one stays in, that is a temporary thing. Nirvana is not a state, nor a temporary thing.

Aemilius said:

There is a teaching that we have all attained enlightenment millions of years ago.

Astus wrote:

Where is there such a teaching?

Aemilius said:

This esoteric aspect is rarely revealed, the theme is mentioned in the Sarvastivada Abhidharma.

Astus wrote:

The Sarvastivadins, and only them, distinguished arhats circumstantially liberated (samaya-vimukta) who started as faith-followers (śraddhānusārin) and those non-circumstantially liberated (asamaya-vimukta) who began as Dharma-followers (dharmānusārin). Of the two only the former may retrogress. See: Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma by Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti, 4th ed, p 463-464.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 10th, 2020 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: What does Madhyamaka say about birth and death?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

How does it explain the apparent appearance and disappearance of each human life?

Astus wrote:

As noted by Malcolm at the beginning, all appearances (and disappearances) are understood as dependently arisen (and ceased). Dependent origination includes both the general causal nature of phenomena and the individual karmic nature of existence.

nichiren-123 said:

Now, how does one understand each human lifespan, or each wave's lifespan as empty? How do you understand the true nature of a human life or the life of a wave?

Astus wrote:

That there is a wave that is a conceptual label, a mental fabrication that when viewed as a real presentation, or a representative of something real, serves as an apparently substantial object of grasping. When the thought of a wave is clung to, from that comes all sorts of other concepts, like birth and death. When the thought is recognised as a mere concept without anything in it or beyond it, there is no longer any thing that can be said to be born or can die.

'Those who imputes arising and disintegration
With relation to conditioned things,
They do not understand well the movement
Of the wheel of dependent origination.

That which has originated due to “this” and “that,”
That has not done so as its own being;
And that which has not arisen as its own being,
How can it be called “arisen”?

The tranquility derived from extinction of cause,
This is understood to be a cessation;
That which is not extinguished through its intrinsic nature,
How can that be called an “extinguishment”?

Since there is nothing that arises,
There is nothing that disintegrates;
Yet the paths of arising and disintegration
Were taught [by the Buddha] for a purpose.

By understanding arising, disintegration is understood;
By understanding disintegration, impermanence is understood;
By understanding how to engage with impermanence,
The sublime dharma is understood as well.

Those who understand the dependent origination
To be utterly devoid of arising and disintegration,
Those who have such knowledge will cross
The ocean of samsara of dogmatic views.'
(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, 18-23)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 10th, 2020 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

LastLegend said:

But when hanging on to the distinction of Nirvana versus samsara, and abide in Nirvana.
The issue here is Buddha nature I don't think Sravakayana believe in Buddha nature

that's empty.

Astus wrote:

The doctrine of buddha-nature is about the view that when all attachments are gone the buddha qualities manifest on their own instead of developing those qualities through accumulating merit. That way it becomes possible to attain buddhahood without going through the bodhisattva path over immeasurable aeons, hence the sudden enlightenment teaching in East Asian Mahayana and buddhahood in this body teaching in Vajrayana. At the same time, being an arhat means complete freedom from attachments, therefore with buddha-nature arhats are necessarily buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 10th, 2020 at 10:12 PM

Title: Re: What does Madhyamaka say about birth and death?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

Yes, but in order to understand the Dharma we must employ conceptual labels and mental fabrications.

Astus wrote:

It's not about not having concepts, but about seeing them for what they are.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 11th, 2020 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

Aemilius said:

It was mentioned in a public teaching in Copenhagen in 1990's.

Astus wrote:

So it is not a teaching of the Buddha, nor a teaching in a canonical scripture, nor a teaching in a commentary or a treatise, at least as far as you are aware of its source. At the same time, it contradicts the very meaning of awakening if it's merely a temporary thing.

Aemilius said:

If there is nothing attained, no attainment nor non-attainment etc... what is there to speak about?

Astus wrote:

Craving, the very root of suffering, is based on the assumption that there is something to gain or lose. Through the study, understanding, and application of the Dharma one eventually arrives at the realisation that there is truly nothing to attain, thus severing craving. Until then, there is a lot to speak about.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 11th, 2020 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you are hungry and want to eat oatmeal instead of a banana, is that craving?

Astus wrote:

It is a form of sensual craving.

Here is some help to decide for yourself:

"Craving (taṇhā) is focused on feeling (vedanā) and desires objects in order to experience feeling, or desires objects for personal gratification. Craving is generated and sustained by ignorance; it is linked to personal issues - it centres around a sense of 'self'. It leads to seeking

Wholesome desire (chanda) is focused on wellbeing, on what is truly beneficial and on the quality of life; it desires truth, goodness, and virtue; it desires fulfilment and wholeness. Chanda is generated from wise reflection; it is objective - it is not bound up with a sense of 'self'; and it leads to energy, effort, and action."

(Buddhadhamma: The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life by Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, p 773-774)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2020 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutra references to 4 stages of Hinayana

Content:

LastLegend said:

Hmm then we have to question every choice we make? Ever gone grocery shopping?

Astus wrote:

Zhiyi writes (The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation, p 117-119):

'At times when one is involved in walking, one should bring forth this thought: "For what purpose do I now wish to walk?" If it is on account of being directed by afflictions or by unwholesome or neutral matters, then one should not proceed with walking. If it is not an instance of being directed by the afflictions and if it is for the sake of a matter which produces wholesome benefits and which is in accord with the Dharma, then one should go ahead and proceed with walking.'

He repeats similar instructions for standing, sitting, lying down, engaging in actions, and speaking.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2020 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Order of teachings, five periods and the superiority of the Lotus - discussion

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

So, in order to grasp the value of the Lotus I'd like to discuss how the earlier teachings prepare us for the Lotus.

Astus wrote:

What is its value outside Tiantai and Nichiren schools? It is used as a common reference for the concepts of skilful means and the one vehicle, but even those ideas are not limited to the Lotus Sutra. I guess the Lotus Sutra's most widespread element is its presentation of Avalokitesvara.

nichiren-123 said:

a better way of classing the sutra's then let's consider that

Astus wrote:

If it's a question of historical order, then one has to consider the generally accepted modern scholarly view that whatever was actually taught by Gautama is found in the Nikayas and Agamas, and everything else is later, especially the Mahayana sutras that already presuppose a more complex state of Buddhism.

Apart from history, various schools have their own version of doctrinal classification (kyouhan/jiaopan 教判), like the Huayan, Shingon, Pure Land, and Chan schools, that naturally do not agree with the Tiantai version, a sort of rival school. For instance, Kukai put the Mahayana teachings in the following order: Yogacara, Madhyamaka, Tiantai, Huayan, and then Mantra, i.e. Shingon.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2020 at 7:19 PM

Title: Re: The Eye Does Not See Itself - Source?

Content:

Manjushri said:

Are you aware of other modern editions of this particular sutra?

Astus wrote:

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf

http://www.buddhisttexts.org/uploads/6/3/3/1/6331706/surangama_new_translation.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2020 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: What does Madhyamaka say about birth and death?

Content:

Astus wrote:

On the subject of dharmas, a highly recommended article:
http://www.abhidhamma.com/Dhamma_Theory_clear.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2020 at 12:37 AM

Title: Re: What does Madhyamaka say about birth and death?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This article is kind of irrelevant to Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is grounded in the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma.

Astus wrote:

It touches on some differences between Sarvastivada and Theravada (mostly pages 8 & 15).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 13th, 2020 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: What does Madhyamaka say about birth and death?

Content:

Queequeg said:

Its probably too big a question for this thread, but what would be the consequence of developing an understanding derived by haphazardly mixing Theravada and Mahayana? Are there any significant areas where confusion might arise and lead to wrong view?

Astus wrote:

Mahayana is very broad, as you are well aware, like the differences between Tibetan and East Asian schools. Theravada is theoretically more unified, but in terms of practices it is quite diverse. So, the subjects mixed matters. For instance, as Malcolm pointed out, Madhyamaka does not work so well against Theravada Abhidhamma. On the other hand, if it's about reading suttas, then probably everything you find there generally fits well with Mahayana ideas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 14th, 2020 at 2:51 PM

Title: Re: Zazen and Creativity(question)

Content:

Joanna54544 said:

If the goal of Zazen is to remove attachments in order to free yourself, and the goal of Zen is to practice Zazen throughout the day throughout daily activities, how do we progress with the creative process.

Astus wrote:

It depends on what you mean by zazen. The ideal practice is just sitting where body and mind are dropped, that is, there is no fixation on physical sensations, feelings, or ideas,

because they are realised as ungraspable. But because that is not so easy to comprehend right at the beginning, people may initially focus on the posture and/or the breathing. So, when one watches the body/breath, everything else is irrelevant. No matter what important looking thoughts occur, the job is to return to the object of meditation, because it is through putting the attention on a single object that the mind is anchored and not moved by the bodily and mental impressions. Then this same skill of being calm and undistracted can be used at other times as well, outside of the meditation session. That's how gradually one can train and tame the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 20th, 2020 at 8:26 PM

Title: Tenth Vow of Amitabha

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the tenth vow of Amitabha it is stated that beings in Sukhavati will not arouse any clinging/desire (parigraha/貪), not even to their own bodies. It is generally believed that even ordinary beings (prthagjana) may be born there. However, how could an unenlightened one be free from clinging suddenly?

The Tenth Vow of Amitabha

sacenme bhagavaṃstasmin buddhakṣetre ye sattvāḥ pratyājāyeran, teṣāṃ
kācitparigrahasaṃjñotpadyeta, antaśaḥ svaśarīre'pi, mā tāvadahamanuttarāṃ
samyaksaṃbodhimabhisambudhyeyam
(<http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/59/528>)

"O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should form any idea of property, even with regard to their own body, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge."

(Müller, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe49/sbe4924.htm>)

設我得佛。國中入天。若起想念貪計身者。不取正覺。

(Saṅghavarman, T360p268a9-10; http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T0360_12.0268a09:0268a10.cit)

"If, when I attain buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should give rise to thoughts of self-attachment, may I not attain perfect enlightenment."

(Inagaki, BDK ed, p 13; http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_immeasurable_life.html)

"After I become a Buddha, if gods in my land should imagine that they have embodied selves, I would not attain the perfect enlightenment."

(Rulu, <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra25.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 20th, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Tenth Vow of Amitabha

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

How does a sleeping person suddenly awaken from a dream?

Astus wrote:

Unless you're suggesting that Sukhavati is Nirvana, the simile does not apply. But if Sukhavati were Nirvana, then it raises even bigger issues, since it'd mean a buddha can turn beings into liberated ones without having them cultivate the path.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 20th, 2020 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Tenth Vow of Amitabha

Content:

Könchok Thrinley said:

I think it would probably depend on "what sort of body" beings in sukhavati have.

Astus wrote:

They have bodies, however, the vow is not limited to clinging to one's body, but it's used as an example to the extent of clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 21st, 2020 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Tenth Vow of Amitabha

Content:

Wayfarer said:

As I understand it, in Japanese Pure Land, there is no thought of 'cultivation' whatever. Any attempt to 'cultivate' is a self-power idea. You are reborn in Sukhavati solely by faith in other-power, that being the power of Amida's vow.

Astus wrote:

Still, even if in this life there is no progress, the Pure Land itself is where one completes the bodhisattva path.

From the <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>:

"The fourth and the last stage is perhaps best thought of as the stage after death, when one has succeeded in being born in the Pure Land in the West. At this fourth stage, all of the practices of the Holy Path aimed towards gaining final enlightenment that were rejected as being too difficult for people living in the age of the final Dharma are readmitted on their own terms. Since they now dwell amid the wonders of the Pure Land, people are continuously in the presence of the Buddha and hear his teachings without the distortions caused by the many disturbing passions of the present world. Now they

can indeed obtain the bodhicitta, reach the stage of non-retrogression, and be assured of eventual enlightenment. Therefore, the practices of the Holy Path which were rejected as too difficult are now all reinstated and practiced in their full essence."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 24th, 2020 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Can Shikantaza be done "wrong", or is an attempt at it automatically successful?

Content:

Dgj said:

To dial it back seems to create some problems and once we're there we may as well go back to the Theravada understanding where enlightenment must be reached through practice precisely because it is not innate.

Astus wrote:

The idea of buddha-nature doesn't necessarily change anything in terms of practice, and one can still see the twofold accumulation through immeasurable aeons as the way to perfect enlightenment.

Dgj said:

In Zen, enlightenment is instantaneous and innate.

Astus wrote:

When there is talk of enlightenment it is important to look at the word used. For instance wu 悟 can simply mean understanding and puti 菩提 the initial awakening. They are the first steps on the bodhisattva path, and not buddhahood. So when there is a peculiar line from the teacher and the student suddenly understands, that is basically when something clicks and becomes clear. It's not that they're buddhas right there, or even arya bodhisattvas.

Dgj said:

Per Shen Hui practice doesn't even make any sense

Astus wrote:

Not really. Guifeng Zongmi claimed to be an heir of Heze and he clearly taught the path of sudden enlightenment, gradual practice. Later Yongming Yanshou and Bojo Jinul followed the same interpretation. You may want to look into Buswell's introduction in <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/numinous-awareness-is-never-dark-the-korean-buddhist-master-chinuls-excerpts-on-zen-practice/> where he summarises the matter nicely. Also, if you want to find a more detailed explanation of Zen in more standard writing - and not just short koan-style anecdotes and phrases - you should look into this part of Zen that took a different route than the Hongzhou school what became popular in the Song era and was followed by the majority of Linji and Caodong teachers.

Dgj said:

It seemed to me that Dogen had answered this paradox of practicing to reach

something you already have by delineating a Zazen that is not a practice at all. And if it's not a practice, but rather is simply our innate enlightenment, how can it be done wrong?

Astus wrote:

As I take it, Dogen was more a subitist than those who advocated kanhua practice, as he followed more closely the view what one finds in the Platform Sutra where a moment of no-thought is a moment of buddhahood (see also: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/view/8591/2498>). Or we could say he was more optimist, believing that people can simply enter no-thought (or non-thinking). Then it is only a matter of familiarisation with dropping body and mind, or as <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>: "The essential thing in doing zazen is to awaken (https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms24.pdf) from distraction and dullness, and return to the right posture moment by moment."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 25th, 2020 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Are there Chan (Zen) texts that were actually composed during the Tang dynasty?

Content:

Dgj said:

Are there any Tang Chan (Zen) texts that were written during that dynasty?

Astus wrote:

Some, but with varying degrees of editing. The Platform Sutra has already been mentioned, there are also works attributed to Bodhidharma that are early (but not as early as Bodhidharma), and there are the works of the so called Northern School, about them you can read in McRae's classic *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*. Some other notable texts:

Works from Dunhuang:

Chuan Fabao ji (傳法寶紀, c. 713)

Lengqie shizi ji (楞伽師資記, c. 712-716)

Shenhui Tanyu (神會壇語, c. 720)

Lidai Fabao Ji (歷代法寶記, c. 774-780)

Guishan Jingce (潯山警策, before 936)

Texts representative of Tang era Chan:

works of Guifeng Zongmi (780-841)

Baizhang Guanglu (百丈廣錄, early Song recompilation but assumed faithful to earlier version)

Chuanxin Fayao & Wanling Lu (傳心法要 & 宛陵錄, dated by Peixiu to 857, editing in Song but assumed faithful)

Dunwu Yaomen (頓悟要門, published in 1374 but assumed faithful to 8th c.)

For a reconstruction of the Mazu Yulu (馬祖語錄) see: The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism by Jinhua Jia.

In general about Tang works see:

Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism by Alan Cole

The Zen Canon: Understanding the Classic Texts ed. by Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright

Focused on specific works:

The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts by Wendi Leigh Adamek

Readings of the Platform Sutra by Morten Schlütter & Stephen F. Teiser

The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature by Mario Poceski

The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature by Albert Welter

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 2nd, 2020 at 1:27 AM

Title: Re: Zen is zazen Is this true?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Good friends, the deluded speak with their mouths, but the wise practice with their minds. Furthermore, there are deluded people who empty their minds and sit in quietude without thinking of anything whatsoever, claiming that this is great. You can't even speak to these people, because of their false views!

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 29)

The master addressed the assembly, "Good friends, what is seated meditation (zuochan)? In this teaching, there is no impediment and no hindrance. Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called 'seated' (zuo). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called 'meditation' (chan)."

(ch 4, p 45)

You can sit [in meditation] without lying down from the day you're born,

But when you die you will lie down and not sit up.

One always has this putrid skeleton,

Why should one set such a task?

(ch 8, p 73)

Xie Jian said, "The virtuous Chan monks of the capital all say, 'If you wish to understand the Way, you must sit in meditation and cultivate samādhi. It has never happened that anyone attained emancipation without relying on meditation.' I wonder, what is the Dharma that you teach?"

The master said, "One is enlightened to the Way through the mind. How could it depend on sitting? A sutra says, 'To say that the Tathāgata sits or lies down is to practice a false path. Why? Because he is without coming and without going.' To be without birth and

without extinction is the pure meditation of the Tathāgata. For the dharmas to be quiescent is the Tathāgata's pure sitting. Ultimately there is no realization, so how could it possibly [depend on] sitting?"
(ch 9, p 79)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 7th, 2020 at 2:38 PM

Title: Re: What possible reason could there be to study or practice Buddhism if arising and ceasing do not occur?

Content:

Dgj said:

If no arising nor ceasing occur then the twelve links are meaningless, reduced to nonsense.

Astus wrote:

It should always be kept in mind that many of the Mahayana ideas developed from or against Sarvastivada doctrine. In this case, the Sarvastivada abhidharma teachings say that production/birth (jati), duration/staying (sthitī), deterioration/death (jara), and impermanence (anityata) are characteristics (lakṣaṇa) that are dharmas themselves, and dharmas are what have self-existence (svabhava), and it is the Sarvastivadin interpretation - or what its opponents, the Mahayanikas understood the Sarvastivadin teaching to be - that for instance Nagarjuna argues against when saying that arising, duration, etc., do not exist, i.e. not really, not on their own as unique entities.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 7th, 2020 at 9:13 PM

Title: Re: Jhanas and Vipassana...its all in the eyes?

Content:

Justmeagain said:

Is this still the process in Soto Zen Zazen? If so how do things like Nimitta occur if the eyes are open....or maybe it does?

Astus wrote:

Zen in general is a "unified" or rather simultaneous practice of samatha/samadhi and vipasyana/prajna, so it's not one after another. Practising with nimitta, that's a uniquely theravadin method.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 8th, 2020 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Essential & Useful Reading on Abhidharma and Prajnaparamita/Madhyamaka

Content:

Astus wrote:

Abhidharma handbooks:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=jhJANfwlr3oC>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=KEQ5PwAACAAJ>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=AXQS3UsZVmQC>

Abhidharma background:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=eK4PSQAACAAJ>

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/dawn-abhidharma.pdf>

Abhidharma & Madhyamaka:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 8th, 2020 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: What possible reason could there be to study or practice Buddhism if arising and ceasing do not occur?

Content:

Dgj said:

Arising, duration and cessation of ultimate entities as incorrectly posited by the Sarvastivadins does not occur.

Astus wrote:

"Just as cessation is imputed

On the disintegration of an arisen entity;

So too the sublime ones accept

Cessation that is illusion-like."

(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 11th, 2020 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: What possible reason could there be to study or practice Buddhism if arising and ceasing do not occur?

Content:

Dgj said:

Typically things are either illusions, or not. Illusion-like would usually be applied to something that seems like an illusion, but isn't. If it were an illusion, it would just be called an illusion.

Astus wrote:

"All phenomena arise in dependence. There is no phenomenon that can remain constantly. All phenomena arise from circumstances. There is no phenomenon that arises without circumstances. Any phenomenon that arises in dependence is unborn. Therefore all phenomena are unborn. To realize that all phenomena are unborn is to know how to practice the bodhisattva's path. In this way, one attains the basis for benefiting all beings and can proceed with a compassionate outlook. With such conviction, one comes to understand that all phenomena are illusory. All phenomena

are magically manifest because they are imputed. Those imputations are also utterly empty. The realization that all phenomena are empty is the attainment of the illusory absorption."

(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh130.html#UT22084-055-004-25>)

The eight similes of illusion:

"As in a dream, all the external objects perceived with the five senses are not there, but appear through delusion.

As in a magic show, things are made to appear by a temporary conjunction of causes, circumstances and connections.

As in a visual aberration, things appear to be there, yet there is nothing.

As in a mirage, things appear but are not real.

As in an echo, things can be perceived but there is nothing there, either outside or inside.

As in a city of gandharvas, there is neither a dwelling nor anyone to dwell.

As in a reflection, things appear but have no reality of their own.

As in a city created by magic, there are all sorts of appearances but they are not really there."

(The Words of My Perfect Teacher, 2.6.3, p 252)

Dgj said:

So the sublime ones accept cessation that actually is, but is like an illusion?

Astus wrote:

Not actually, but apparently. It seems that things come and go, rise and fall. But if one looks into it, one investigates it, there are no things, nor change.

Dgj said:

Further, the very phrase is stating that entities do disintegrate. So it seems fair to say that Nagarjuna held that entities disintegrate, at the very least? From there, that he held that this disintegration can be called "illusion-like" cessation?

Astus wrote:

"Those who impute arising and disintegration

With relation to conditioned things,

They do not understand well the movement

Of the wheel of dependent origination."

(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 18)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 11th, 2020 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: What possible reason could there be to study or practice Buddhism if arising and ceasing do not occur?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

This 'looking into' is not a simple nor a casual matter.

Astus wrote:

That is what wisdom is for that is developed through learning, reflection, and cultivation.

"Having ascertained through scripture
And through reasoning that phenomena
Are not produced nor inherently existent,
Meditate without conceptuality."
(Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment, v 58, p 158)

Wayfarer said:

I think it means, 'seeing beyond the apparent flux and change', but that 'seeing beyond' is itself the fulfillment of the path, isn't it?

Astus wrote:

It is not a matter of seeing beyond, but rather seeing things as they are.

"The absence of an [inherently-existent] nature owing to [being reducible to mere] causes and conditions is itself their true character."
(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/EBM_excerpts/EBM_X-16_X-06.pdf, ch 6)

Also, it's not the end of the path, but rather the beginning of cultivation with an ascertained correct view.

"Having thus meditated on suchness,
Eventually, after reaching "heat" and so forth,
The "very joyful" and the others are attained
And, before long, the enlightened state of buddhahood."
(Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment, v 59, p 158)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 15th, 2020 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Best books on general Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

joshua said:

I am interested in some books about the history of Mahayana Buddhism and a general overview of it's schools, lineages, and practices. I realize much of this information is available via the web, however I would ask for book recommendations as I quite prefer a physical book.

Astus wrote:

<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=fv5cDwAAQBAJ>
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=fjU6AwAAQBAJ>
https://books.google.co.in/books?id=oyJjCx_tEiMC
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=cy980CH84mEC>
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=8PI-WPJd4aIC>
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=9ygVT2FA0h4C>

https://books.google.co.in/books?id=s9KGFP_rzQC
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=DTWZLMGFFgkC>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 17th, 2020 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Susho Itto

Content:

Astus wrote:

As you might already know of it, zazen is what they call the *suññatā-samādhī* and *animitta-samādhī* in Theravada (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/mn121/en/sujato>), and also where the Buddha taught "In what is seen there must be only what is seen", etc. (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/ud1.10/en/anandajoti>). It is without proliferation (*nippapañca*), without conceptualisation (*nibbikappa/nirvikalpa*), therefore without attachment and without a concept of self.

You might also want to look into what Keizan in the <http://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/> and Menzan in the https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf taught to further clarify things.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2020 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

White Sakura said:

Which masters taught at what time in history of Buddhism about the nihilistic point of view?

Astus wrote:

First of all, it should be clarified what is meant by "nihilism". It is normally understood as a denial of moral values, something that is clearly a wrong view according to any Buddhist. If we understand it as a denial of taking ordinary perception as ultimately real, that is a given in Buddhism, but so it is many philosophies and religions, so it is usually not something nihilism means. What is often mistranslated as nihilism is actually annihilationism (*ucchedavada*), the belief that beings completely perish at death, and that is again clearly a wrong view according to any Buddhist.

White Sakura said:

In a way that the explanations of other masters were called nihilistic?

Astus wrote:

Non-Buddhists, primarily materialists, are those who believe in the ultimate annihilation of beings at the demise of their body.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 20th, 2020 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

White Sakura said:

Then the person who asked says: "but who feels: Now I am free..I have freed myself by means of the path. Who feels that"

Astus wrote:

'Who feels?' is the wrong question. Dependent origination is the middle view because it shows cause and effect without an agent or subject. Please consider the following teachings:

Who acts? <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.17/en/bodhi>;

<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.18/en/bodhi>

Who gets old? <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.35/en/bodhi>

Who experiences? <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.46/en/bodhi>

All exists or nothing exists? <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.47/en/sujato>

Dependent origination is correct investigation:

<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.51/en/bodhi>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 21st, 2020 at 10:52 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

White Sakura said:

The opposite of eternalism is here annihilationism.

Astus wrote:

That specific discourse is about the origin of suffering, whether the agent (who creates the cause of suffering) is identical to the subject (who experiences the effect: suffering) or different from it. You can take it either as referring to different births, or different moments. Saying that they are identical is eternalism, as it assumes an enduring self. Saying that they are different is annihilationism, because it assumes that the previous self has disappeared and now there is a new self. What cuts through these extremes is dependent origination, that there is no self of any sort, but rather a chain of causes and effects.

White Sakura said:

how do you define the difference between the terms "nihilism" and "annihilationism"?

Astus wrote:

It depends on one's definition of nihilism. If one equates nihilism with "nothing exists", that is likely a view not accepted by anyone, so there's usually a qualification, for instance "nothing really/ultimately exists" at least, but then it still accepts some sort of existence, and that is either a meaningful or a meaningless distinction. The Buddha was

clear about what is called a self (identification with the five aggregates), and that such a self is not just delusional but also painful.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

White Sakura said:

So one can apply that for the self as well. To say: "There is no self" is nihilistic view. "There is no ultimately existing self" is what Buddha taught.

Astus wrote:

The assumption of any form of self is a mistake. If there were some sort of reality to it, it wouldn't be wrong to believe in it.

"Monks, you would do well to cling to that clinging to a doctrine of self, clinging to which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. But do you see a clinging to a doctrine of self, clinging to which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair?"

"No, lord."

"Very good, monks. I, too, do not envision a clinging to a doctrine of self, clinging to which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair."

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.022.than.html>)

White Sakura said:

But what is if I turn it other way round and say: "There is a self depending on body and mind."

Astus wrote:

"Monks, whatever contemplatives or brahmans who assume in various ways when assuming a self, all assume the five clinging-aggregates, or a certain one of them."

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.047.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 4:08 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Wayfarer said:

What's your interpretation of

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.038.niza.html#fn-5> where the Buddha asks: How, indeed, could one — moving forward by himself, moving back by himself — say 'There is no self-doer, there is no other-doer'?

Astus wrote:

Right view has two parts: the right view of karma, and the right view of the noble truths.

When it comes to karma, one has to recognise that actions have consequences, and in ordinary terms those actions and consequences apply to the individual. In that context one talks of one's responsibility and such, so there is an agent who acts of his own volition, and then suffers the outcome of those acts.

Wayfarer said:

In the very short text

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.010.than.html>, the Buddha is asked straight out by Vachagotta the Wanderer, whether the self exists or does not exist. Both questions are met with silence.

Astus wrote:

It is explained by the Buddha why he did not answer in either way, as the questioner would have taken both versions incorrectly. These two types of mistakes of eternalism and annihilationism are mentioned regularly in the following format:

"To an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person, touched by experience born of the contact of ignorance, there occur (the thoughts): 'I am,' 'I am thus,' 'I shall be,' 'I shall not be,' 'I shall be possessed of form,' 'I shall be formless,' 'I shall be percipient (conscious),' 'I shall be non-percipient,' or 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient.'"

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.047.than.html>)

But it doesn't mean there is any ambiguity or mystery regarding the Buddha's position about the concept of self.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Wayfarer said:

'That context' is existence, life and the living of it.

Astus wrote:

That "existence, life and the living of it" is a conceptual construct of how things are.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Grigoris said:

Hold on to your horses partner:

Astus wrote:

"You may well accept, monks, the assumption of a self-theory from the acceptance of which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. (But) do

you see, monks, any such assumption of a self-theory?" — "No, Lord." — "Well, monks, I, too, do not see any such assumption of a self-theory from the acceptance of which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair."
(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.022.nypo.html>)

Grigoris said:

1. Reality. What does this term even mean?

Astus wrote:

Something that is verifiable experientially or inferentially. We might also go with whether something has causal efficacy. Or both.

Grigoris said:

2. If there is an idea of a self, wouldn't that make it a type of reality?

Astus wrote:

If an idea does not refer to anything, then that idea is just an idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Grigoris said:

A mental action is still an action and thus has a "causal efficacy", even if it is just mental. Don't forget that there are entire realms that are merely mental. Are they not "real"?

Astus wrote:

As a thought, yes. But when one talks of a self, it is generally not understood to be merely a thought, but that it has a real referent. So when it is said that there is no self, it does not mean there is no idea of a self, but that what is assumed to be the referent of the idea of a self does not exist. And that is why assuming a self is delusional. The delusion is certainly there, but it is a delusion exactly because the belief in a self is misguided.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: What are the most minimalist or simplest forms or schools of Buddhism?

Content:

Dgj said:

What are the most minimalist or simplest forms or schools of Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

The four noble truths are said to be both the summary
(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.031.than.html>) and the all encompassing (<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.028.than.html>) teaching of

the Buddha.

What is highlighted in Mahayana as the essential teaching is prajnaparamita (e.g. Heart Sutra), and then that is transformed into teachings like Zen (e.g. Platform Sutra, ch 2) and Mahamudra (e.g. Jewel Ornament of Liberation, ch 17).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Grigoris said:

So you believe that in the immaterial realms there is no sense of self?

Astus wrote:

I did not specify the nature of a possible referent for the idea of a self. Furthermore, four of the five aggregates are not material, so it is quite normal if one identifies with something other than the body.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Bundokji said:

By reducing what is real to the presence of an unchanging essence would be missing the point of what is it that makes things "real" in the first place except an underlying value.

Astus wrote:

Please note <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=532751#p532751>. There is no need for an unchanging essence to define reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2020 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Bundokji said:

How can you define reality without reference to unchanging essence? what makes things identical (or recognizable) through time except reference to an unchanging essence that endures change?

Astus wrote:

This was the intended section of

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=532751#p532751> vis-a-vis defining reality without positing an unchanging essence:

"Something that is verifiable experientially or inferentially. We might also go with

whether something has causal efficacy."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 23rd, 2020 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Nihilistic view

Content:

Bundokji said:

Don't you think the process of verification necessitates an unchanging essence?

Astus wrote:

Both sensory perception and reasoning require causal interaction, so no. Anything unchanging is a conceptual generalisation, not an experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 23rd, 2020 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: What are the most minimalist or simplest forms or schools of Buddhism?

Content:

Dgj said:

The fourth noble truth includes the eightfold path, technically, no?

Astus wrote:

The fourth is the path, so yes, of course.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 24th, 2020 at 6:22 PM

Title: Re: Momentariness

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

Does momentariness imply things coming out of nothing?if the cause ceases completely before the effect even begins to arise,how do effects arise?
there must be things beginning the arise as soon as its cause begins to dissapear,but then why call it momentary?

Astus wrote:

Let's say one kicks a ball. The cause is the kick, the effect is the ball moving. The moment the kick happens is distinct from the ball moving, as at the moment of kicking the ball is stationary. When the ball begins to move the kick has already happened. Without the kick the ball does not move. Before the kick the ball does not move. When the ball is kicked, it still does not move. Only following the kick does the ball move. The moment the foot contacts the ball, the ball is motionless. When the next moment the ball moves there is no longer the kick. So there is no problem with effect following the cause in distinct moments, nor is there an assumption of things coming out of nothing.

If the ball had already moved when the kick happened, one's foot would not even touch

the ball as it would be already moving away, therefore cause and effect would be impossible.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 26th, 2020 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

npr said:

If you can see the original Chinese text of Huang Po, and see what the original term that was translated to Absolute, was, that can be nice

Astus wrote:

What translation? Could you please give some refernces?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2020 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

npr said:

Here <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.105228/>

<https://terebess.hu/zen/Huangpo.pdf>

Astus wrote:

Absolute = tathatā 如如

'The substance of the Absolute is inwardly like wood or stone, in that it is motionless, and outwardly like the void, in that it is without bounds or obstructions.'

(Blofeld, p 31-32)

「如如之體。內如木石不動不搖。外如虛空不塞不礙。」

(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2012A, p. 380a17-19)

'The essence of suchness is unmoving like wood or stone within and unhindered like space without.'

(McRae, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 15)

'The essence of suchness is internally like wood or stone, which does not move or sway; externally, it is like empty space, which has no boundaries or obstructions.'

(Buswell, in A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, PDF p 37)

Absolute = dharmadhātu 法界

'He would just be himself oblivious of conceptual thought and one with the Absolute.'

(Blofeld, p 46)

「但自忘心。同於法界。便得自在。」
(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2012A, p. 381c11-12)

'Simply forget your mind and identify yourself with the dharmadhatu, and you will attain autonomy.'
(McRae, p 25)

'If you just forget the mind and become the same as the dharma body, you will gain complete autonomy.'
(Buswell, p 69)

Absolute = tathatā 真如

'In the Absolute, there is nothing at all of this kind.'
(Blofeld, p 56)

「真如之中都無此事。」
(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2012A, p. 382c21)

'There is no such [mode of attainment] within true suchness.'
(McRae, p 33)

'In true suchness, none of this is relevant.'
(Buswell, p 89)

Absolute = tathatā 真如

'Even Enlightenment, the Absolute, Reality, Sudden Attainment, the Dharmakaya and all the others down to the Ten Stages of Progress, the Four Rewards of virtuous and wise living and the State of Holiness and Wisdom are - every one of them - mere concepts for helping us through samsara; they have nothing to do with the real Buddha-Mind.'
(Blofeld, p 69)

「設使菩提真如實際解脫法身。直至十地四果聖位。盡是度門。非關佛心。」
(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2012B, p. 384b17-18)

'Even though [you may attain] bodhi, suchness, the characteristic of reality, liberation, or the dharma body and directly reach the sanctified ranks of the ten stages or the four fruitions, all these involve the [expedient] gate of salvation. They have nothing to do with the buddha mind.'
(Buswell, p 124)

'[One can] suppose bodhi, thusness, ultimate reality, liberation, and the Dharmakaya, up to and including the ten stages [of the bodhisttva], the four fruits, and the rank of sagehood. All of these are [but] gates to crossing over [to Nirvana]. They do not concern the Buddha-mind.'
(The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Duanji: A History and Translation of a

Tang Dynasty Text (university thesis) by Jeffrey M. Leahy, p 20)

Absolute = anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti 無生法忍

'It is all-pervading, spotless beauty; it is the self-existent and uncreated Absolute.'
(Blofeld, p 93)

「一道清流是自性。無生法忍」
(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2012B, p. 387a7-8)

'A clear stream flowing in one direction is the selfnature's acquiescence to the nonproduction of dharmas.'
(Buswell, p 194)

'The monk of the One Path is by his own nature accepting of this non-arising of dharmas.'
(Leahy, p 52)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2020 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Queequeg said:

Zen and Zen-speak, or what I take to be Zen-speak from what I see in forums like this.

Astus wrote:

There are many things at play here that produces "Zen-speak". On the one hand, Zen is straightforward and to the point. On the other, it's a highly evolved and sophisticated literary genre. Then you mix the two sides and put in front of people who are not familiar with any of that, so it becomes gibberish when they start talking about it.

See how Guifeng Zongmi understood "Zen-speak" as actually the simple and easy one:

'The teachings are the sutras and treatises left behind by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Chan is the lines of verse related by the various good friends [on the path]. The buddha sutras open outward, catching the thousands of the beings of the eight classes, while Chan verses scoop up an abridgment, being oriented to one type of disposition found in this land [of China].¹ [The teachings,] which catch [the thousands of] beings [of the eight classes], are broad and vast, and hence it is difficult to rely upon them. [Chan,] which is oriented to dispositions, points to the bull's-eye and hence is easy to use.'
(Zongmi on Chan, p 105)

And then consider this:

'There is a profound difference ... between the rhetoric of Zen that plays with language in a clever and calculated way to induce insight, and language that is merely confused and

nonsensical. Unfortunately, because readers of Chan and Zen texts are accustomed to sage remarks that appear to be non sequiturs, when they are confronted by the garden variety of nonsense — e.g. the gibberish that results when mechanical translation is employed or quotation marks go missing — they are all too likely to chalk that up as normal for the language of Zen, which (they imagine) is not supposed to be comprehensible in the first place. Such a mode of reading ... is a serious mistake.'

(T. Griffith Foulk: https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/ABOUT_THE_TRANSLATION,_CONVENTIONS,_ABBREVIATIONS.pdf, in "Record of the Transmission of Illumination by the Great Ancestor, Zen Master Keizan", p xi-xii)

But at the same time:

'Unfortunately, the majority of the exchanges or anecdotes composed in the encounter dialogue format are not very good stories, in any meaningful sense. In fact, a huge number of Chan stories or exchanges, included in texts such as Jingde chuan deng lu and Bi yan lu, can be viewed as little more than nonessential ramblings, a peculiar type of religious gibberish. Basically, we are confronted with countless examples of mass-produced textual materials that tend to be highly formulaic, numbingly repetitive, and ostensibly pointless. One of the things that keeps amazing me is how otherwise intelligent or sincere people can take this sort of stuff seriously, although the history of religion is filled with blind spots of that sort.'

(Mario Pocesi: The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature, p 170-171)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 27th, 2020 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Wayfarer said:

Those few who took the trouble to visit Japan and begin the practice of Zen under a recognized Zen master or who joined the monastic Order soon discovered that it was a very different matter from what the popularizing literature had led them to believe. ... Altogether Zen demands an ability to participate in a communal life as regimented and lacking in privacy as the army.

I lack the self-discipline to practice this kind of discipline with any degree of rigour.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism there are monastics and there are "householders". The quote restricts Zen to monastic practice. So, we can ask for instance: was Peixiu - an educated nobleman working in several high government positions - a genuine Chan practitioner, or not really? Guifeng Zongmi http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/Bcitta_excerpts/Bcitta_X-01_X-05.pdf this about him: 'I had become aware that he had entered the Buddha's gateway and arrived at the mind state of the Buddha. ... he is an emissary of the Buddha engaged in carrying on the Buddha's work.' Was he an exception?

I'm not saying you shouldn't go for Shinshu, don't get me wrong please. It's just that I

don't see Zen as an exclusively monastic teaching (and then there are also differences between what monastic life is like, but that's another topic).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 28th, 2020 at 11:25 PM

Title: Re: Four Great Vows

Content:

jake said:

Any suggestions?

Astus wrote:

As for the kanji part, although it's Chinese, the four great vows can be found in for instance the "Guide to the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings" (Tiantai Sijiao Yi 天台四教儀) by Ch'egwan (諦觀):

眾生無邊誓願度
煩惱無盡誓願斷
法門無量誓願學
佛道無上誓願成

(CBETA 2020.Q1, T46, no. 1931, p. 777b2-7)

Beings are numberless; I vow to save them all.

Defilements are inexhaustible; I vow to end them all.

The teachings are innumerable; I vow to master them all.

The path to buddhahood is unsurpassed; I vow to attain it.

(<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/tiantai-lotus-texts>, p 183)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 29th, 2020 at 3:15 AM

Title: Re: Four Great Vows

Content:

jake said:

I see the four vows are linked to the four noble truths in Tiantai. I assume this also the case in the Tendai and Zen traditions?

Astus wrote:

Linking the four vows and the four truths is also found in Zhanran's (湛然) Great Meaning of the Cessation and Contemplation (Zhiguan Dayi 止觀大意; T46n1914p459b23-26), so I assume that it's accepted in Tendai as well. As for Zen, I don't know if there is such a connection emphasised. Anyhow, here's a Zen take on the four vows from Huineng:

「自心眾生無邊誓願度，自心煩惱無邊誓願斷，自性法門無盡誓願學，自性無上佛道誓願成。」

(CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2008, p. 354a11-13)

'the sentient beings of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to save them all. The afflictions of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to eradicate them all. The teachings of our own minds are inexhaustible, and we vow to learn them all. The enlightenment of buddhahood of our own minds is unsurpassable, and we vow to achieve it.'

(<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/platform-sutra-sixth-patriarch>, ch 6, p 48)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 3:21 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Astus wrote:

Wondering about a concept that exists only in an English translation is unlikely to be fruitful. It was <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=533367#p533367> to render terms like tathata and dharmadhatu as absolute. Here's his explanation from the introduction (p 16-17):

"Zen followers (who have much in common with mystics of other faiths) do not use the term 'God', being wary of its dualistic and anthropomorphic implications. They prefer to talk of 'the Absolute' or 'the One Mind', for which they employ many synonyms according to the aspect to be emphasized in relation to something finite. Thus, the word 'Buddha' is used as a synonym for the Absolute as well as in the sense of Gautama, the Enlightened One, for it is held that the two are identical. A Buddha's Enlightenment denotes an intuitive realization of his unity with the Absolute from which, after the death of his-body, nothing remains to divide him even in appearance. Of the Absolute nothing whatever can be postulated; to say that it exists excludes non-existence; to say that it does not exist excludes existence. Furthermore, Zen followers hold that the Absolute, or union with the Absolute, is not something to be attained; one does not enter Nirvana, for entrance to a place one has never left is impossible. The experience commonly called 'entering Nirvana' is, in fact, an intuitive realization of that Self-nature which is the true Nature of all things. The Absolute, or Reality, is regarded as having for sentient beings two aspects. The only aspect perceptible to the unenlightened is the one in which individual phenomena have a separate though purely transitory existence within the limits of space-time. The other aspect is spaceless and timeless; moreover all opposites, all distinctions and 'entities' of every kind, are here seen to be One. Yet neither is this second aspect, alone, the highest fruit of Enlightenment, as many contemplatives suppose; it is only when both aspects are perceived and reconciled that the beholder may be regarded as truly Enlightened. Yet, from that moment, he ceases to be the beholder, for he is conscious of no division between beholding and beheld. This leads to further paradoxes, unless the use of words is abandoned altogether. It is incorrect to employ such mystical terminology as 'I well in the Absolute', 'The Absolute dwells in me', or 'I am penetrated by the Absolute', etc.; for, when space is transcended, the concepts of whole and part are no longer valid; the part is the whole - I AM the Absolute, except that I am no longer 'I'. What I behold then is my real Self, which is the true nature of all things; see-er and seen are one and the same, yet there is no seeing,

just as the eye cannot behold itself."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Wayfarer said:

the word 'absolute' is just a placeholder.

Astus wrote:

A placeholder for what? It seems that it requires specification, otherwise one habitually understands it according to whatever vague concept one associates with it, thus going to derail oneself right at the beginning and misinterpret the whole Dharma. Like for instance looking for some ultimate state to become, or trying to obtain some special insight from encounters.

But Huangbo taught quite directly what one can learn from almost any introductory book:

"Students of the Way should be sure that the four elements composing the body do not constitute the 'self, that the 'self' is not an entity; and that it can be deduced from this that the body is neither 'self' nor entity. Moreover, the five aggregates composing the mind (in the common sense) do not constitute either a 'self or an entity ; hence, it can be deduced that the (so-called individual) mind is neither 'self nor entity. The six sense organs (including the brain) which, together with their six types of perception and the six kinds of objects of perception, constitute the sensory world, must be understood in the same way. Those eighteen aspects of sense are separately and together void. There is only Mind-Source, limitless in extent and of absolute purity.

Thus, there is sensual eating and wise eating. When the body composed of the four elements suffers the pangs of hunger and accordingly you provide it with food, but without greed, that is called wise eating. On the other hand, if you gluttonously delight in purity and flavour, you are permitting the distinctions which arise from wrong thinking. Merely seeking to gratify the organ of taste without realizing when you have taken enough is called sensual eating."

(Blofeld, p 38-39)

In Buswell's translation (PDF p 53-55):

"Practitioners of the Way, have no doubt that the four great elements constitute the body, that these four great elements have no self, and that the self has no master. Know that this body has no self and no master. The five aggregates are mind, but the five aggregates have no self and no master. Know therefore that this mind has no self and no master. The six sense bases, six sense objects, and six sense consciousnesses come into contact with each other and become subject to production and cessation, so this is also the case with them as well. Since these eighteen elements of cognition are empty, everything is empty. There is only the original mind, which is serene and pure.

There is the nutriment of consciousness and the nutriment of wisdom. The body

consisting of the four great elements is tormented by hunger and disease. Nurturing this body with only what it needs, without generating greed and craving, is called the nutriment of wisdom. Self-indulgently clinging to what is tasty, mistakenly giving rise to discrimination, seeking out only what pleases your taste buds, and without generating any sense of loathing — this is called the nutriment of consciousness."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 6:13 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

npr said:

What do you think about that? Regardless if the correct translation is companionship (what's to companionship and to Brahma anyway??) or uonion with

Astus wrote:

Brahma is a type of gods in Buddhism, and through the practice of the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmavihara> one can gain

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sagga/loka.html>. It is not the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Wayfarer said:

within the domain of discourse of comparative religion, 'the absolute' has a meaning, but that doesn't make it easy to define.

Astus wrote:

The question at hand is about "Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'", and as the term itself was taken from Blofeld's translation, it turned out that Huangbo's records did not actually name anything "The Absolute", but it's rather the translator's choice to render various common Buddhist terms as such. So it's not just that there is no absolute, nobody has even mentioned it before Blofeld.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

Wayfarer said:

I think 'the absolute' is not a bad candidate for translation of 'the unconditioned' (as used in, for instance, the translations in Sutta Central.) After all, nothing can be 'partially unconditioned'.

Astus wrote:

Where exactly is asaṅkhata translated as the absolute there? Also, translating it as unconditioned (as done by <https://suttacentral.net/an3.47/en/bodhi> and <https://suttacentral.net/an3.47/en/sujato>) seems quite reasonable, as it's the opposite of conditioned.

Blofeld does not translate it (無為) as the absolute.

"From thought-instant to thought-instant, no form; from thought-instant to thought-instant, no activity (無為) - that is to be a Buddha!"

(p 40)

"Its strength once spent, the arrow falls to earth.

You build up lives which won't fulfil your hopes.

How far below the Transcendental (無為) Gate

From which one leap will gain the Buddha's realm!"

(p 62)

"it is without any such distinctions as long and short, it is beyond attachment and activity (無為), ignorance and Enlightenment."

(p 63-64)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at 11:12 PM

Title: Re: Zen's stand regarding 'The Absolute'

Content:

npr said:

That's not quite what what Gotama Buddha says in DN13. He refers to The Path

Astus wrote:

The attainment of the practice with the brahmaviharas is given in that sutta: "It's possible that that mendicant will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā." That is not liberation. You can see in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn97/en/sujato> how the Buddha reprimanded Sariputta for only leading someone to birth in the "inferior Brahmā realm".

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 2nd, 2020 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Astus wrote:

What made the Soto church change its approach? Was it to purge it from "foreign elements" and return to Dogen's ideals? Apparently Dogen was

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=107&t=20655>.

Also, what could be lacking from the simple form of just sitting to require all the other

elements added?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020 at 1:31 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Astus wrote:

If just sitting is dropping body and mind, and dropping body and mind is great realisation, what need for anything else? Or is that not so?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020 at 2:19 AM

Title: Re: The attainment in chan according to ten bhumis standard

Content:

Astus wrote:

Different people have different views on what level matches seeing the nature of mind, i.e. sudden realisation. It can be anything from the level of faith, through 1st and 8th stage, to buddhahood. But there's not much to any of that unless one can recognise for oneself that there is nothing to attain.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Well, do people really think that they are Dogen's? It was his experience not others..

Astus wrote:

It's what Dogen taught, not just experienced. But if Dogen's teachings cannot be followed, then there can be no heirs to talk of, so what is Soto then?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020 at 3:23 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Soto has nothing special or different to offer, than any other zen school - it is satori, daigo and liberation. For this one has to work hard.

Astus wrote:

If practice is not realisation, but rather practice brings about realisation, then it is really nothing different. But then, why not just follow the established teachings of the Mahayana as taught in the sutras and shastras? That is a fairly well defined gradual path

with identifiable goals and stages.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 4th, 2020 at 2:21 AM

Title: Re: What is the application of practicing nagarjuna middle way in real life?

Content:

confusedlayman said:

If someone reads and want to apply nagarjuna middle way discourse in real life, how would he do?

Astus wrote:

Apart from the mentioned

https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_Hundred_Verses (see also

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=9pyqUV89ZQcC>) and the

<https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Bodhicharyavatara>, there are the

https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Precious_Garland and the

https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Letter_to_a_Friend by Nagarjuna, and the

<https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Shikshasamucchaya> by Santideva.

confusedlayman said:

will he know that all things have no position and simple dont have clinging or no intentional action? what is the real application in terms of experience ?

Astus wrote:

It's cultivating the six paramitas. See this great summary:

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 5th, 2020 at 2:18 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

why would one choose Mahayana (The much slower school) versus Vajrayana (The much quicker school?)

Astus wrote:

That's a somewhat false dichotomy. Mahayana is the largest group of teachings after Buddhism. There are Chinese Mahayana (the primary canonical language being Chinese) and Tibetan Mahayana (the primary canon being in Tibetan), and they have different histories. Both forms have various teachings and traditions, including the concept of buddhahood in this life/body.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 5th, 2020 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Who actually practices Sutrayana, as understood by the Tibetan Buddhists?

Könchok Thrinley said:

Those who do not follow tantric teachings and methods. Zennies, theravadins, purelanders, etc.

Astus wrote:

Sutrayana, as understood in Tibetan Buddhism, exists only in Tibetan Buddhism, and as such, only Tibetan Buddhists could be sutrayana followers, as it is their view of Mahayana. Those who do not subscribe to the Tibetan interpretation of sutrayana naturally cannot follow it either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 5th, 2020 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Könchok Thrinley said:

These systematic things are actually quite frustrating to apply, but nice for overview of what dharma has to offer.

Astus wrote:

Every school/tradition sets up its own system, their interpretation and organisation of the various teachings they recognise as valid. Therefore such systems are meant to highlight what that specific school believes to be the final view, and not to give a general ("objective") overview of Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 8th, 2020 at 3:33 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

That definition is an Indian Buddhist definition, not Tibetan.

Astus wrote:

Originally might be so, but even there postulated only by Tantrikas, however, currently it exists only in Tibetan Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 9th, 2020 at 7:07 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

jmlee369 said:

Hasn't the exoteric/esoteric (顯/密) division been used in East Asia since the Tang dynasty?

Astus wrote:

On what was called secret/esoteric, see:

https://www.academia.edu/25175930/Is_there_really_Esoteric_Buddhism

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 10th, 2020 at 4:33 AM

Title: Re: Host & Guest - Explanation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Host is emptiness, the essence, the nature of mind, while guest means phenomena. It's from the http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf (p 49-50, 51):

'(foreign dust) is like a guest who stops at an inn where he passes the night or eats something and then packs and continues his journey because he cannot stay longer. As to the host of the inn, he has nowhere to go. My deduction is that one who does not stay is a guest and one who stays is a host. Consequently, a thing is "foreign" when it does not stay. Again, when the sun rises in a clear sky and its light enters (the house) through an opening, the dust is seen to dance in the ray of light whereas the empty space does not move. I deduce that that which is still is the void and that which moves is the dust. Consequently, a thing is "dust" when it moves.

...

The Buddha then declared to the assembly: "So every worldly man knows that what moves is dust. and that he who does not stay is a guest. You have seen Ananda whose head moved of itself whereas his seeing was unmoved. You have also seen my fist which opened and closed of itself whereas his seeing neither expanded nor contracted. Why do you still regard the moving as your body and surroundings, and so, from beginning to end, allow your thoughts to rise and fall without interruption, thereby losing (sight of) your true nature and indulging in backward actions? By missing the (True) Mind of your nature and by mistaking (illusory) objects for your Selves, you allow yourselves to be caught in the wheel (of samsara) thereby forcing yourselves to pass through transmigrations."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 10th, 2020 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment and compassion

Content:

White Sakura said:

just a question to this quote, since I do not know that text you quoted, but I am so fascinated to this analogy with the moon. I suppose, the title of that script refers to the analogy? And is it in Mahamudra understood in the same way as it is explained in the Prajnaparamita Sutras, and later the Mahayana texts?

Astus wrote:

Here "moonlight" refers to mahamudra itself.

"I will present an eloquent explanation of this moonlight [Mahamudra].

In its full phase it will contain the meanings of the sūtras and tantras

And reveal the true nature of reality

As clearly as the outline of "the rabbit" [in the moon].

Let there be peace in those who wander in the darkness of delusion!"

(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 5)

White Sakura said:

So are there different ways the moon-reflection-in-water-analogy is used to explain different teachings?

Astus wrote:

The analogy of "water moon" is a different one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 10th, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment and compassion

Content:

White Sakura said:

can you quote it and explain? The text seems to be not secret, since you quote it often?

Astus wrote:

I don't know what you want quoted, it is a common analogy for the illusory nature of phenomena. It is not elaborated upon by Tashi Namgyal.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 10th, 2020 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment and compassion

Content:

White Sakura said:

I understood you wanted to say that in Mahamudra the moonlight the moonlight is used for another analogy? If not, I am just happy because I like the analogy very much in the common way explaining it. So that would mean the title of the book refers to that traditional analogy.

Astus wrote:

The word moonlight in the title refers to the enlightened state of mahamudra, to the clarity of the mind. The analogy of the water moon is not related to it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 11th, 2020 at 2:50 PM

Title: Re: Host & Guest - Explanation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Xuyun provided a bit of an explanation on host and guest (from

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/the-chan-training/?cn-reloaded=1>):

"How should one start the (Ch'an) training? In the Surangama assembly, Arya Ajnatakaundinya talked about the two words 'Foreign Dust' and this is just where we should begin our training. He said: 'For instance, a traveler stops at an inn where he passes the night or takes his meal, and as soon as he has done so, he packs and continues his journey, because he has no time to stay longer. As for the host (of the inn), he has nowhere to go. My deduction is that the one who does not stay is the guest and the one who does stay is the host. Therefore, a thing is foreign when it does not stay. Again in a clear sky, when the sun rises and sunlight enters (the house) through an opening, the dust is seen moving in the ray of light whereas the empty space is unmoving. Therefore, that which is still is voidness and that which moves is dust.'

Foreign dust illustrates false thinking, and voidness illustrates self-nature, that is the permanent host who does not follow the guest in the latter's coming and going. This serves to illustrate the eternal (unmoving) self-nature which does not follow false thinking in its sudden rise and fall. Therefore, it is said: 'if one is unmindful of all things, one will meet with no inconvenience when surrounded by all things.' By dust which moves of itself and does not inconvenience voidness which is clearly still, one means that false thinking rises and falls by itself and does not hinder the self-nature which is immutable in its Bhutatathata (suchness, thatness) condition. This is the meaning of the saying: 'If the mind does not arise, all things are blameless.'

(The meaning of) the above word 'foreign' is coarse and (that of) 'dust' is fine. Beginners should clearly understand (the difference between) 'host' and 'guest' and will thus not be 'drifted about' by false thinking. By advancing further, they will be clear about 'voidness' and 'dust' and thus will experience no inconvenience from false thinking. It is said: 'when (false thinking) is known, there will be no harm.' If you inquire carefully into and understand all this, over half of what the training means will become quite clear to you."

There is also a somewhat unrelated use of the terms that's called Linji's four guests and hosts (see Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 23-24). Here's Hyujeong's summary (from Seongagwigam in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 178):

"The guest in the guest (means) the student (who is) without a clue but who has (meaningless) questions and answers. The host in the guest is the student with a clue, who has a host and a dharma. The guest in the host is the master without a clue, who has only the questions (of the student but no answers). The host in the host is the master with a clue, which is very special."

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 18th, 2020 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Zen/Attain True Self

Content:

shanyin said:

Can someone explain what one's true self is?

Astus wrote:

"Mahayana Buddhism is based on the philosophy of emptiness (ku in Japanese, shunyata in Sanskrit) of both subject and object. In order to explain emptiness which cannot be grasped by concepts, Buddhist philosophers use various terms such as tathata, 'true-self', 'one-mind', 'original-face', 'Dharma-body of the Buddha', 'buddhamind', etc. We must be careful not to grasp these terms as a kind of substantial existence."

(<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/index.html>, p89n122)

shanyin said:

To attain your true self what do you need to do besides being awake here and now?

Astus wrote:

'Kensho: (J., "seeing nature") A Zen term referring to an enlightenment experience in which one perceives one's own true self-nature as "empty," devoid of fixed reality. Kensho is synonymous with the Japanese Zen term satori, but the latter is considered to be a deeper and more significant experience of emptiness than kensho. See also Shunyata.'

(The Method of No-method, p 142)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 22nd, 2020 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: I am struggling. Was consciousness the most important aggregate according to the Buddha?

Content:

Tom2892 said:

Is consciousness the same as awareness? Is the consciousness that is described as an aggregate the same as Rigpa? If this consciousness really was unconditioned, why don't the Pali Suttas mention to focus on "the one who knows" at all? (at least in my poor knowledge).

Astus wrote:

Consciousness (vijnana), the aggregate, is not apart from the other mental aggregates (<https://accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.054.than.html>), nor does it exist apart from something to be conscious of

(<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.067.than.html>), and there is no sense in talking of "one who knows" (<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.12/en/bodhi>)

when consciousness is understood to be a dependent phenomenon not apart from other appearances. Knowing, cognizance, the function/ability to be aware of or conscious of things is the role and distinct quality of the consciousness aggregate, but it's not the sole mental function there is. Also, it is usually the formations (samskara) aggregate that people identify with mainly, although among those who practice some form of meditation the position of being the "knower", "bare awareness", "watcher", etc. is a popular concept of self.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 23rd, 2020 at 3:40 PM

Title: Re: Im getting close to understanding anatman but still have some objections

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

prakasha gives rise to vimarsha.what if prakasha is inactive but vimarsha is what changes?

Astus wrote:

If something can be a cause, then it changes (active), and what changes is impermanent.

Artziebetter1 said:

Objection:what if the Tirthika states that only Brahman exists ,and that other objects are merely brahman aswell? the one inherently existant entity is merely interacting with itself.

Astus wrote:

Atman is necessarily singular. Many objects mean multiplicity. So atman/brahman interacting with itself is not possible.

Artziebetter1 said:

the one brahman Hypostasis multiplies itself into many hypostasises thru concealment (thru its omnipotent power to do the impossible it conceals and cloaks the one Consciousness into many conscious entities)

Astus wrote:

If brahman can do all that, then it is not only active (so impermanent), but also self-deluding and falling apart.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 23rd, 2020 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

The key distinction is many methods involving the body to generate bliss and make clear the wisdom. Sutras have only samatha-vipassanma. That's just the way it is.

Astus wrote:

Bliss (sukha) is present in the first three dhyanas, but eventually the yogi lets go of that too in the fourth. As for the "many methods", could you specifically name some others not related to the one method of candali? Also, generation and completion stage practices fit under the categories of samatha and vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 12:40 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus: this is grouping of creation and completion stages under the rubric of śamatha and vipaśyanā is a kind of Lam rim politics.

Astus wrote:

Might be so, but such a summary of the so called sutrayana could be called a rough generalisation as well, and quite often the two are practised as one.

Malcolm said:

There are many methods related to mantra recitation, maṇḍala offerings, guru yoga, samaya, mudras, homavidhi and so on, nāḍis, vāyus, bindus, cakras, postural yogas, prāṇāyāma, abhiṣeka as introduction to the path, rather than sign of attaining the result, and so on. You will find none of these methods mentioned in sūtra, apart from the term "mantra," maṇḍala, and abhiṣeka in very limited contexts.

Astus wrote:

Are they all methods to generate bliss? As for the presence of manifold methods in vajrayana, no doubt about that. At the same time, even to prepare for samatha there are various methods in sutrayana too, not to mention all the others. For instance, in <https://ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice> there are 48 methods just for buddha-recollection.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 1:30 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

In other words, common Mahāyāna has many methods. However, in addition to those methods are many unshared or uncommon methods which are not found in sūtra. So by definition, Secret Mantra has more methods.

Astus wrote:

Of course.

Malcolm said:

And no, they are not just methods for generating bliss.

Astus wrote:

A that's why I asked if there are many methods to generate bliss, or simply many methods among which some may use bliss.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Varis said:

It often feels like these arguments about Ch'an v. Vajrayana originate in the fact that Ch'an offers many of the same benefits Vajrayana claims to offer exclusively. Namely, Buddhahood in a single lifetime, the integration of daily life and the sense pleasures, etc. Although I'll admit that Vajrayana has many more methods, particularly when it comes to the intermediate state.

Malcolm said:

Where does Chan promise Buddhahood in one lifetime?

Astus wrote:

The most famous is the Platform Sutra that advocates for "sudden enlightenment" that is a hallmark of Chan teachings. Just look at how Huineng begins:

'The Great Master told the assembly, "Good friends, bodhi is fundamentally pure in its self-nature. You must simply use this mind [that you already have], and you will achieve buddhahood directly and completely. Good friends, listen well! This is the story of how I practiced and attained the Dharma."

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 17)

Then throughout the scripture he explains the sudden teaching.

'To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.'

(ch 2, p 31)

'Transcending delusion and transcending enlightenment, one should always generate prajñā. Eradicating the true and eradicating the false, one sees the buddha-nature. This is to accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood upon hearing these words.'

(ch 6, p 49)

The central method of Chan, translated here as nonthought, is itself equated with buddhahood:

'Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas

to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood.'

(ch 2, p 34)

And to be clear, it talks not only of sudden enlightenment, but also sudden cultivation:

'The self-nature is without error, without stupidity, and without disruption. In moment after moment of thought, prajñā illuminates, constantly transcending the characteristics of dharmas. Independent and autonomous, he apprehends everything—how could there be any positing? The self-nature becomes enlightened itself, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the dharmas. The dharmas are quiescent—how could there be a progression?'

(ch 8, p 75)

On that point, here's Buswell's summary from the introduction of Bird in Flight Leaves no Trace:

'The answer of both Subul Sunim and Huangbo is deceptively simple: just stop thinking there is something we need to practice. Then the enlightenment inherent to the mind manifests itself naturally, and we spontaneously receive the transmission of the mind-dharma. In this way, religious practice is perfected through, and simultaneously with, enlightenment itself. This is the quintessential “sudden awakening accompanied by sudden cultivation” (Chinese *dunwu dunxiu*, Korean *dono donsū* 頓悟頓修) approach that has inspired Seon practice throughout much of its history.'

A bit more from Buswell (and Lopez) on the topic of sudden enlightenment:

<https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/slow-motion-satori/>.

In Huangbo's words:

'Trainees who wish to achieve Buddhahood [should understand that] it is completely useless to study any of the Buddhist teachings — just study nonseeking and nonattachment. Nonseeking is for the mind (i.e., moments of thought) not to be generated, and nonattachment is for the mind not to be extinguished. Neither generating nor extinguishing—this is Buddhahood. The eighty-four thousand teachings are directed at the eighty-four thousand afflictions and are only ways to convert and entice [sentient beings into true religious practice]. Fundamentally all the teachings are nonexistent; transcendence is the Dharma, and those who understand transcendence are Buddhas. By simply transcending all the afflictions, there is no dharma that can be attained.'

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, ch 4, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 20)

Further on the path of sudden enlightenment, this one from Huangbo's teacher Baizhang Huaihai:

'Question: What is the essential method for sudden enlightenment in the great vehicle?

The master said,

You all should first put an end to all involvements and lay to rest all concerns; do not remember or recollect anything at all, whether good or bad, mundane or transcendental - do not engage in thoughts. Let go of body and mind, set them free.

With mind like wood or stone, not explaining anything with the mouth, mind not going anywhere, then the mind ground becomes like space, wherein the sun of wisdom naturally appears. It is as though the clouds had opened and the sun emerged.

Just put an end to all fettering connections, and feelings of greed, hatred, craving, defilement and purity all come to an end. Unmoved in the face of the five desires and eight influences, not choked up by seeing, hearing, discerning or knowing, not confused by anything, naturally endowed with all virtues and the inconceivable use of all paranormal powers, this is someone who is free.

In the presence of all things in the environment, to have a mind neither still nor disturbed, neither concentrated nor distracted, passing through all sound and form without lingering or obstruction, is called being a wayfarer.

Not setting in motion good, evil, right or wrong, not clinging to a single thing, not rejecting a single thing, is called being a member of the great vehicle.

Not bound by any good or evil, emptiness or existence, defilement or purity, doing or nondoing, mundane or transcendental, virtue or knowledge, is called enlightened wisdom. Once affirmation and negation, like and dislike, approval and disapproval, all various opinions and feelings come to an end and cannot bind you, then you are free wherever you may be; this is called a bodhisattva at the moment of inspiration immediately ascending to the stage of Buddhahood.'

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 78)

And from Baizhang's Dharma-brother Dazhu Huihai:

'Sudden Enlightenment means liberation during this lifetime. Just as a lion-cub, from the moment it is born, is a real lion, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method has, from the moment he begins his practice, already entered the Buddha-Stage. Just as the bamboo-shoots growing in springtime are not different from the parent bamboo-shoots, because they are also empty inside, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method to rid himself suddenly of false thought abandons, like the Buddhas, the sense of an ego and a personality forever. Being absolutely deep, still and void, he is, then, without an iota of difference, equal to the Buddhas.'

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

See more from two modern Chan teachers:

<https://chancenter.org/chanctr/ddp/channews/02-1996.html> by Sheng-yen

<http://middleland.org/teachings/gradual-cultivation-and-sudden-enlightenment/> by Wei Chueh

Malcolm said:

Zen exhibits rhetorical borrowing from Shingon and Tendai Esoteric Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

Tendai got mixed with mantra in Japan, it's a work of Saicho.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 6:03 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

These are not sutras from Buddha. They are pith instructions from lineage masters. We can talk about where Bodhidharma got those.

Astus wrote:

The question was "Where does Chan promise Buddhahood in one lifetime?", and the quotes are from generally accepted Chan classics.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

These quotes are not promises.

Astus wrote:

They described the method of sudden enlightenment that is equal to buddhahood. But if you want something in the format of a promise:

'Those who cultivate in this fashion will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood, transforming the three poisons into morality, meditation, and wisdom.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30)

'If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.'
(ch 2, p 32)

'If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood.'
(ch 2, p 33)

'Good friends, those who attain my Dharma in later generations will see and practice according to this sudden teaching exactly as I have explained. Because they will generate the vow [to attain buddhahood] and maintain it just as if they are serving the Buddha, they will not regress during their entire lives and will definitely enter the stage of sagehood.'
(ch 2, p 34)

'If people of later times understand the point of this verse, they will see their own fundamental minds and achieve the enlightenment of buddhahood.'
(ch 10. p 90)

Malcolm said:

Yes, they all speak of the possibility of buddhahood in a single life, but have no method of ensuring the same.

Astus wrote:

The method to see the nature of mind is explained again and again, and when the nature is seen, that is attaining enlightenment.

'To practice in every moment of thought is called the true nature. To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of prajñā, to cultivate this practice is the practice of prajñā. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one's own body.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

I still do not see a method. Cultivate what? Prajna? So how is that done?

Malcolm said:

Again, what is the practice method?

Astus wrote:

'What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 33-34)

'Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.'
(ch 4, p 43)

Some contemporary explanations:

<https://www.lionsroar.com/does-no-thought-mean-no-thought/>

<https://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln360/Shengyan-zuochan.htm>

<https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/silent-illumination/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What distinguishes this from prajñāpāramitā?

Astus wrote:

It is prajnaparamita.

'Good friends, 'mahāprajñāpāramitā' is the most honored, the supreme, the primary. It is without abiding [in the present], without going [into the past], and without coming [from the future]. It is from this that all the buddhas of the three periods of time emerge. One should use this great wisdom to destroy the enervating defilements of the afflictions of the five skandhas. Those who cultivate in this fashion will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood, transforming the three poisons into morality, meditation, and wisdom.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30)

Malcolm said:

Again, the point is that Chan is a sūtric tradition. It proposes no methods not found in a hundred Mahāyāna sūtras.

Astus wrote:

I did not debate that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 1:11 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So, your method is simply to rest in the direct perception of the six senses? How is this different than the direct perception of a harrier or a rabbit?

Astus wrote:

'yet it is not attached to all the locations', 'without defilement or heterogeneity', 'penetrating function without stagnation' is/are the difference.

Or in <https://ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering->

tao-sudden-enlightenment:

'Q: What does "not dwelling anywhere or on anything" mean?

A: Not to dwell anywhere or on anything means not to dwell on good or evil, existence or non-existence, within or without or on the middle, nor on concentration nor dispersion, and neither to dwell on the void nor on the non-void. This is the meaning of "not dwelling anywhere or on anything". Just this alone is real abiding. This stage of achievement is also the non-abiding Mind, and the non-abiding Mind is the Buddha Mind.'

...

'In summary, if no thought about these three time periods arises, then the three time periods do not exist. If a thought of moving arises, do not follow it; and the thought of moving will vanish. If a thought of dwelling arises, do not follow it; and the thought of dwelling will vanish. However, grasping at the thought of non-dwelling is abiding in non-dwelling. On the other hand, if you understand clearly that your mind does not abide anywhere whatsoever that is abiding, then you are neither abiding nor not abiding anywhere. If you understand clearly that your mind does not abide anywhere at all, then you are clearly seeing your Original Mind, which is also referred to as "clearly seeing the nature of seeing." Just this Mind, that abides nowhere at all, is the Mind of Buddha and the Mind of liberation, the Mind of Bodhi and the Mind of the Uncreate.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

So we are agreed then. Chan is a sutric tradition.

Astus wrote:

As Hyujeong summarised:

'The transmission of the mind by the World Honored One at three sites is the gist of Seon; what was spoken by him over his lifetime is the gate of Doctrine. Therefore it is said, "Seon is the Buddha mind; Doctrine is the Buddha word."'

(Seonga gwigam, §5, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 58)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 2:01 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Still a sutric tradition.

Astus wrote:

Indeed. The Buddha's mind and the Buddha's words cannot be in disharmony.

Malcolm said:
Still just prajñāpāramitā.

Astus wrote:
Sure it is. There is no claim to the contrary.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 2:05 AM
Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?
Content:

White Sakura said:
Do you see an essential difference here to what is taught in Vajrayana? I mean, not in the Tantric teachings with visualization of course...

Astus wrote:
It's all Buddhadharma, there can be no essential difference, but there can be practical differences.

'When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path'
(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 252)

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 2:16 AM
Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?
Content:

Malcolm said:
Then, people should just give it a rest when Tibetan Buddhists assign Chan to sūtra.

Astus wrote:
I think it's less about whether it is sutra based or not, and more about how tantra is posited as superior.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 5:38 AM
Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?
Content:

Malcolm said:
Chan, like all other sūtra traditions, lacks direct introduction.

Astus wrote:
Do you mean that there are no empowerments in sutra? Still, since the nature of mind is directly perceived in the sutrayana, the goal of the empowerments is achieved there too, so, as you noted before, it is the method that is different. But if we talk of Chan, the very

meaning of sudden awakening is not going through stages using various skilful means to eventually attain realisation, but obtaining it directly. Then what methods can be talked about? Of course, in Chan there were various methods used and devised, 'Still, to even speak about practice is really like the last alternative. For example, in the use of weapons, they are really not auspicious objects! But they are used as the last alternative [in battles].', as noted by

<http://www.chancenter.org/chancctr/ddp/talks/beginners-m.html>. Among such methods, when needed, mantra is very much accepted as an option, as Hanshan also stated: 'If your practice of huatou is not taking effect, or that you're unable to contemplate and illuminate your mind, or you're simply incapable of applying yourself to the practice, then you should practice prostrations, read the sutras, and engage yourself in repentance. You may also recite mantras to receive the secret seal of the Buddhas; it will alleviate your hindrances.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 25th, 2020 at 5:36 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What I am claiming is that there is no direct introduction in sūtra. In sūtra, the nature of the mind, to use your term, is the result of the path, whether gradual or not, not the basis. In sūtra, one does not start at the nature of the mind because it is never directly introduced and no methods are provided for such an introduction. ... The principle difference is that in the case of the former, the interested student is first introduced to their own state by the teacher; in the case of the latter, the teacher confirms for the student they indeed have had a proper intuition of the nature of the mind.

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific about what you mean here by direct introduction? If it's <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=306715#p306715>, then that is not a method, and according to the story, did not happen at the beginning. If you mean here something more systematic, like as it is in mahamudra where one first has to actually ascertain for oneself the real state of one's nature, and then it is also pointed out by the master, then the order of things is rather "sutra style", but to that you might say is because it's sutra mahamudra. And that's why I asked if what you meant were the empowerments, as that is actually a requirement to engage in the various vajrayana methods.

I assume you don't mean that non-vajrayana teachers cannot tell how to do insight meditation in order to see directly the nature of mind and all phenomena. And since that is already covered in the sutras themselves, direct introduction must be something else, where a disciple does not have to follow specific instructions to attain realisation, but will have realisation without actually looking into their mind. So for instance a case like this cannot be called direct introduction:

"Huiming bowed to me and said, 'I wish that you would preach the Dharma for me.' I said, 'You say you've come for the Dharma. [If so], you must eliminate the various

conditions and not generate a single thought. [If you do], I will preach the Dharma for you.' Huiming was quiet for a time. I said, 'Do not think of good, and do not think of evil. At just such a time, what is Elder Huiming's original face?' At these words, Huiming [experienced] a great enlightenment."
(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 25)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 26th, 2020 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Astus wrote:

On Zen and Esoteric connections, from Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia:

Evidence of some Zhenyan influence, mostly of some Northern Chan teachers, more so of Baotang Chan followers, but only tentatively any Hongzhou Chan masters.
(Sorensen, p 298–302)

Esoteric elements in Seon since 15th century. Heoung Pou (-1566), a prominent Seon master (was royal advisor), was also an Esoteric teacher, in his works mainly dharanis and mantras show up, wrote some ritual texts, and there is a work where he merges Seon doctrine with Esoteric practices. Cheongheo Hyujeong (1520-1604) was another outstanding Seon master adept in Esoteric Buddhism as well.
(Sorensen, p 634–42)

Keizan introduced esoteric practices to Soto, but at the same time criticised Eisai's Rinzai Zen for being polluted by it. Esoteric methods' presence in Zen is primarily in the form dharanis and rituals. Menzan Zuiho (1683-1769) received Shingon initiations (plus studied Sanskrit and mudras) in order to reform the ambrosia gate ritual performed during the Ghost Festival to relieve the suffering of the dead. As a result of Menzan's overall reforms old initiation documents from Soto are now public and they show a presence of tantric and explicit Shingon elements.
(Bodiford, 925-935)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 26th, 2020 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Meido said:

A lot was lost in China. That is why someone like Xuyun had to "revive" some Chan lineages that went extinct, and his descendant Sheng-yen needed to reformulate and revive practices like silent illumination.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean lost? Buddhism (both monastic and lay communities) has been continuous in China for about two thousand years. The "revival" of the three

discontinued lineages is rather nominal, just as the lineages of Linji and Caodong are mostly nominal without any practical relevance.

Meido said:

Whatever one thinks about Japanese Buddhism, they at least were able to preserve Tang and Song lineages for us.

Astus wrote:

Soto lineage transmission (among other elements) was reformed in the 18th century, and similarly all Rinzai lineages go back to the 18th century reforms of Hakuin.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 26th, 2020 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Non-conceptual

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

What does it mean to have a "direct, non-conceptual view of emptiness"? How can this non-conceptual characteristic be described? And which classical sources describe this view as the goal?

Astus wrote:

One first learns about insubstantiality, then understands the concept, and then confirms its validity in experience through cultivation, that indeed there is no substance, no independent experience, state, or being to rely on. What divides the conceptual comprehension from ascertainment in experience is whether one has actually investigated in one's present experience or merely thought about it. Calling it a "non-conceptual view" might be a misleading term, as the whole point is to realise that all views are fabricated, conceptual, and such concepts are actually baseless and insignificant. The point is not to gain a special perception or state of mind, but by seeing all of them as inessential not holding on to them, not identifying with them, and thus attaining freedom.

Ultimate truth is free of all conceptual projection. It is of two types: the ultimate truth that can be expressed, and the ultimate truth that cannot be expressed. ... What is empty of all conceptual projection, clear and subtle, is known as the "ultimate truth that cannot be expressed in words." The ultimate truth is approximately this: totally empty of the two extremes of "being" and "nonbeing" (i.e., neither eternal nor totally nonexistent).

(Summary on the Meaning of the Middle Way by Bhavaviveka, v 4, 7-8, in Indian Madhyamaka Buddhist Philosophy after Nagarjuna by Richard H. Jones, vol 1)

What is the absence of discrimination (nirvikalpata)? In brief, it is threefold: [1] non-discrimination in contentment (samtustinirvikalpata), [2] non-discrimination in the absence of perverse views (aviparyasanirvikalpata), and [3] nondiscrimination in the absence of idle speculations (nisprapancanirvikalpata). One should consider these three kinds as pertaining respectively to the ordinary man (prthagjana), the disciple

(sravaka) and the bodhisattva. Non-discrimination in the absence of idle speculation should not be understood as nonthought (amanasikara), or as going beyond thought (manasikarasamatikrama) or as appeasement (vyupasama), or as [*own-*]nature (svabhava), or as a mental construction concerning an object (alambane abhisamskara), but as a mental non-construction concerning an object (alambane anabhisamskara).

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, tr Boin-Webb, p 240)

The ultimate is one only. Others maintain that it is twofold. How can the nature of reality (chos nyid), which cannot be established as anything, be two, three, and so on? [The ultimate] is defined as nonarising, noncessation, and so forth according to the formula [given] by treatises. Because of the way in which different ultimates do not exist, there is neither a subject (chos can) nor its property (chos nyid) [for inferential reasoning]. There is not any differentiation in emptiness. When cognized in a nonconceptual manner, it is conventionally designated that “emptiness is seen.” It is said in the very profound sūtras that the state of nonseeing is seeing [ultimate reality]. In that (ultimate reality), there is neither seeing nor seer, but peace without beginning or end. [Reality is] devoid of entity and nonentity, free from conceptions, free from objects, without support, without basis, without coming or going, unexemplified, ineffable, invisible, unchanging, and unconditioned. If a yogi realizes that, the afflictive and cognitive obstructions are eliminated.

(Entry to the Two Realities by Atisa, v 4-9, in Jewels of the Middle Way by James B. Apple)

In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing; having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

(Kamalashila, in Stages of Meditation by The Dalai Lama, p 133)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 26th, 2020 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Back to the reason to choose Vajrayana: done well there is not much to study. You just do yoga.

Astus wrote:

If the absence of studying is a reason, I don't know anything less intellectually challenging and at the same time 100% liberating path than buddha-recollection:

"Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning. There is no other reason or cause by which we can utterly believe in attaining birth in the Pure Land than the nembutsu itself. ... Even if those who believe in the nembutsu study the teaching which Shakyamuni taught his whole life, they should not put on any airs and should sincerely practice the nembutsu, just as an illiterate fool, a nun or one who

is ignorant of Buddhism."

(<http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 27th, 2020 at 5:23 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Buddha recollection will not result in Buddhahood in one life. Yoga does.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean anybody who did yoga - whatever that means - once for ten minutes attains buddhahood in this life? Or if one does yoga very well for thirty years, buddhahood is guaranteed to happen then? Because those who faithfully recite the name of Amitabha even just ten times are guaranteed to be born in Sukhavati, and once there, buddhahood is guaranteed as well, no fall back possible. So although one may practise yoga throughout one's life, unless buddhahood was actually attained, one should still aim to be born in Sukhavati.

As Thrangu Rinpoche says in chapter 12 of Luminous Clarity:

'To be reborn in most of the great pure realms, one needs an immeasurable store of merit. There is an exception to this, however, which is the pure realm of Sukhavati. Although it is hard to get in to an authentic pure realm, it is easy to be born into the realm of Sukhavati because of the aspiration of the Buddha Amitabha. So Karma Chagme advises us to make the intense aspiration to achieve rebirth in Sukhavati because if we are not born in a pure realm, then we might be reborn in one of the higher realms within samsara, which is still samsara. So we wish to achieve awakening through the practice of the generation and completion stages and the practice of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. But if this does not happen, we can ensure that we are reborn in a pure realm. We are therefore advised to aspire for a rebirth in Sukhavati.'

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 27th, 2020 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The easiest way to get into the pure lands is to receive complete Dzogchen teachings, understand them, and then fail to practice them. No prayers necessary.

Astus wrote:

Why would it be easier to learn and understand complete (what counts as complete?) Dzogchen teachings, instead of reciting Amitabha's name right now? Also, how can Dzogchen studies result in birth in Sukhavati, what is the cause for that?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 27th, 2020 at 8:24 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

All of our beginningless past-life samsaric experience is actually stored in our present physical form, which is the expression of traces of karma and affliction.

Astus wrote:

Actually stored as physical elements, or some version of avijnapti-rupa, or is it more like there is a correlation between the alayavijnana and the body?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 27th, 2020 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Dan74 said:

everyone who deserved the name 'Zen teacher'

Astus wrote:

Zen teacher, as in anyone who somebody called a Zen teacher, or anyone who received such a title from an organisation, or what version do you mean?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 27th, 2020 at 11:52 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Pure lands are said to be 500 super long times or so. I mean the yoga of two stages, yoga of rushen, etc. It is done as a teacher explains.

Malcolm said:

Yes, when taking birth in the pure lands, there is no guarantee one will take rebirth in an open lotus. And even then, it takes thousands upon thousands of human years (I figured it out once and reported the length of time somewhere in this board) to attain awakening. By contrast, Dzogchen teachings promise that if one takes birth in the pure lands as a result of having encountered and understood Dzogchen teachings, full awakening, buddhahood, will happen there in as little as 500 human years.

Astus wrote:

There are some calculations and explanations given on how and why birth in Sukhavati is the fastest way <https://purelanders.com/2011/12/10/the-fastest-way-to-buddhahood-is-via-birth-in-pure-land/>. To that it might be added that all teachings are

available there, and the realm is ideal to perfect them.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

clayde said:

they have had some direct realization.

Astus wrote:

Direct realisation of what? BTW, I think most people who stick with the Dharma do so because they find it beneficial. Whether that benefit is of mundane or transcendent nature is another issue.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Who wants to sit on a Lotus for 500 years? Lets just get the job done.

Astus wrote:

Those who are "stuck" in a lotus for a longer period are the ones born of the two lowest grades according to the Contemplation Sutra. Such people would have otherwise fallen to the hells. As for getting the job done, that's the main problem that birth in Sukhavati resolves, that most people cannot get it done in one life, they do not reach any of the noble stages but remain ordinary beings, and as such are easily driven to lower births, and are certainly not free from the vicissitudes of samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yeah, it is really is not a quick path to full buddhahood unless you are born as someone of grade 1, according to the scheme you present. And this 500 human year period applies even to those who have committed the five misdeeds of immediate retribution, etc. By contrast, according to your scheme as presented, buddhahood in Sukhavati for such people takes 12 mahākālpas (720 minor kalpas), or twelve billion ninety-six million human years. So yeah, Sukhavati is a slow path according to Sūtrayāna norms and a human perspective.

Astus wrote:

From an ordinary human perspective it might seem slow, but from the individual's

perspective even those of the worst character spend only 12 days enclosed in a lotus (and even there there is no suffering). Furthermore, if we accept that there are teachings that can liberate in this human life, it is so much easier to accomplish the same in Sukhavati.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Shinran was wrong. His assertion cannot be defended either thorough citation or through reasoning.

Astus wrote:

Not wrong, if it is understood that the various grades of the practitioners is valid from the human perspective but not in Sukhavati.

'In the Pure Recompensed Land produced by the great vow, there is no distinction of grades and stages. In an instantaneous thought-moment one quickly realizes highest, perfect, true enlightenment. Hence, we say "crosswise transcendence.'
(<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/horai/kgss-c.htm>, BDK ed: p 123)

'Those who wish to be born in the Pure Land are originally divided into nine classes, but [after they have been born there] there are no differences, just as the waters of the Tzu River and the Sheng River become of one taste [upon entering the sea]. How can we conceive of this?'
(<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/horai/kgss-e.htm>, BDK ed: p 172)

'If the single thought of joy and gratitude is awakened in us,
We shall realize nirvana without severing our blind passions.
When ordinary people and sages as well as those who commit the [five] grave offenses and abusers of the [Right] Dharma are taken into the Vow,
They become one in spiritual attainment, just as many rivers become of one taste upon entering the sea.'
(<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/horai/kgss-b.htm>, BDK ed: p 76)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

clyde said:

"seeing one's true nature"

Astus wrote:

The problem starts at the very definition of such a term. Most seem to skip that problem

by delegating the definition to the realm of the mystical and relying on a mythical lineage of transmission of the ineffable, thus all authority on deciding whether one has "seen the nature" lies with whoever is nominated as a representative of that lineage. This is actually what seem to be the common solution to avoid doctrinal debates and instead get bogged down in arguments over lineage. So even in this thread what one can see are laments over the sorry state of the transmission (although that sentiment itself is over a thousand years old - see e.g. Fayan's Ten Guidelines for Zen Schools). But it is not true that Zen (Chan, Seon, Thien) has no clear position on what the true nature is, it's just that dramatic stories and hidden transmissions are easier to comprehend. And since as long as one does not know what the Buddha taught, it is not possible to decide whether what a teacher says is true or not.

'Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.'

(Sheng-yen, in <http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0027>)

So, do all Zen teachers have realised the nature of mind? There is no guarantee for that. The only thing one can do is to see if what they teach matches the Buddha's words or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a definition from the Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism by Youru Wang (p 138):

JIANXING. A Chan term and an important notion in Chan teachings. Literally, it means "seeing (one's authentic) nature." This teaching was a Chinese appropriation of Indian Mahayana tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature) thought. The tathagatagarbha tradition teaches that every human being has Buddha-nature within. This Buddha-nature is the inner cause and condition of enlightenment. Some texts of this tradition also teach that this Buddha-nature is the foundation of the world.

In Chinese Chan tradition, for example, in the Platform Sutra Buddha-nature is equivalent to the self-nature (zixing) in the sense that Buddha-nature cannot be objectified and realized outside each person. Seeing or realizing the Buddha-nature is the existential transformation of personhood, being able to understand and appreciate what constitutes a person - elements of impermanence and non-abiding - and then acting accordingly. Jianxing is therefore another term for enlightenment. The English translation of xing here as "nature" is somewhat misleading. The Buddha-nature or self-nature in the above-mentioned Chan soteriological context is not a changeless essence deeply rooted in the human mind for one to discover; rather, it refers to the changeability, transformation, and growth of personhood. Jianxing thus requires the accomplishment of action, the practical-behavioral carrying out of non-attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 28th, 2020 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Matt J said:

I am not sure that is the whole of it.

Astus wrote:

The body is made of the four elements, the mind of the six consciousness and the four mental aggregates. Seeing the nature of the mind (and body) is to recognise that it is empty, without a self. When body and mind are recognised as insubstantial, there is no grasping, and that is freedom.

'You trainees should have no doubts. It is the four elements that make up your bodies, but the four elements are without a self and the self is without a master. Therefore you should understand that this [human] body is without self and without master. It is the five skandhas that make up the mind, but the five skandhas are without a self and without a master. Therefore you should understand that the mind is without self and without master.'

(Huangbo Xiyun in Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 19)

'If the mind grasps at dharmas, then it gets involved in external causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth and death. If the mind does not grasp at dharmas, that is suchness.'

(Mazu Daoyi, in Sun-Face Buddha, p 67)

Zhihuang said, "What does the Sixth Patriarch take as meditation?"

Xuance said, "What our master preaches is the wondrously peaceful and perfectly quiescent: the essence and functions are suchlike, suchlike. The five skandhas are fundamentally empty, the six [types of] sensory data are nonexistent. One does not enter and come out of [samādhi], one is neither concentrated nor disturbed. Meditation is in its nature nonabiding, and the serenity of meditation transcends abiding.

Meditation in its nature is birthless, and the thoughts of meditation transcend birth. The mind is like space, but it is without any thinking of space."

(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK ed, p 69)

And from a modern teacher:

'True practice means "staying with forms without attachment." It is not to avoid or deny the existence of forms, but to reduce attachment by understanding the Buddha's teaching that everything comes and goes with certain causes and conditions. In other words, with the insight that "penetrates the emptiness of the five aggregates in the profound practice of perfect wisdom," we put aside attachment and see our existence as empty, the objects of our sense organs as empty, and whatever happens as empty. That is "staying with forms without attachment." What a free and happy life it is!'

(<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN375.pdf> by Guo Ru, p 65-66)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 2:32 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

clyde said:

How synchronistic that “definitions” should arise here as I recently began reading The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, translated by Red Pine and read this last night: Hence buddhas of the past and future teach mind to mind without bothering about definitions.

Astus wrote:

Actually, that passage reads: 'Future buddhas and past buddhas transmit the mind by mind not relying on written words.' (「前佛後佛以心傳心。不立文字。」 (CBETA 2020.Q1, T48, no. 2009, p. 373b13-14)). And then of course the text (written word) goes on to talk of (define) what mind is.

clyde said:

If I understand Sheng-yen correctly, one doesn't need to awakened nor be an expert in the teachings to know who is or isn't a genuine teacher, but have “some understanding”.

Astus wrote:

The point is that the teaching must conform to what the Buddha taught, that is what makes it valid.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 5:18 AM

Title: Words, characters, syllables & liberation

Content:

Astus wrote:

[mod note: topic split from here

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=541014#p541014>]

Vimalakirtinirdesa (Kumarajiva's translation) said:

"Letters all have the mark of liberation. Why is that? Liberation is not inside, not outside, nor in between the two. Letters are also not inside, not outside, nor in between the two. For that reason, Sariputra, liberation is taught without leaving behind letters. Why is that? Because all dharmas have the mark of liberation." (trans. Takagi + Dreitlein, 2011 pp81)

Astus wrote:

Tricky translation. From the context it is clear that the goddess refers to Sariputra's silence, not writing. Kumarajiva translates as 言說文字 what is akṣaram udāharati (Tib.: yi ger brjod pa), that is "spoken characters".

McRae (BDK ed, p 128):

'Speech and words are entirely the characteristics of emancipation. Why? Emancipation is neither internal, nor external, nor intermediate. Words are also neither internal, nor external, nor intermediate. Therefore, Śāriputra, the explanation of emancipation does not transcend words. Why? All dharmas have the characteristic of emancipation.'

Watson (Motilal Banarsidass ed., p 88):

'Words, writing, all are marks of emancipation. Why? Because emancipation is not internal, not external, and not in between. And words likewise are not internal, not external, and not in between. Therefore, Shariputra, you can speak of emancipation without putting words aside. Why? Because all things that exist are marks of emancipation.'

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-16>:

'All the syllables pronounced by the elder have the nature of liberation. Why? Liberation is neither internal nor external, nor can it be apprehended apart from them. Likewise, syllables are neither internal nor external, nor can they be apprehended anywhere else. Therefore, reverend Śāriputra, do not point to liberation by abandoning speech! Why? The holy liberation is the equality of all things!'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Wayfarer said:

attainment/realisation is not something objectively verifiable. Insight is something that has to be attained or realised by the aspirant. There's no really objective measure, like the replication of an experimental setup that produces a result that anyone can then see. That's why the authentication has to be carried out intuitively by a designated lineage holder.

Astus wrote:

If there is no measure of attainment, how could it still be measured (intuitively or otherwise) by anyone? That is a contradiction.

Wayfarer said:

All such hierarchies (and their associated hierophanies) are vigorously rejected by liberal capitalism.

Astus wrote:

Monastic hierarchies (according to the Vinaya) do not depend on any realisation, but rather on ordination age and vote by the community. In practice, heads of monasteries have often been appointed (or influenced to be appointed) by various political entities, and for instance in the PRC (likely) that is still the norm.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: How awakened are bodhisattva stream-entrants?

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

How does the śrāvaka stream-entrant differ in his realization from the bodhisattva stream-entrant other than the former theoretically missing the foundations of bodhicitta?

Astus wrote:

It depends on whom you ask, as there are various views about sravakas (and bodhisattvas) in different Mahayana works. What separates the four noble persons on the sravaka path is not in their attainment of insight into the four noble truths, but how much of the fetters they have removed permanently.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 7:55 PM

Title: Re: How awakened are bodhisattva stream-entrants?

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

This brings up another issue: why are only bodhisattvas of a certain bhūmi or higher mahāsattvas (and this bhūmi is not usually given as the first)?

Astus wrote:

'A Bodhisattva is called 'a great being' in the sense that he will cause a great mass and collection of beings to achieve the highest.' (PP8K, I.4, tr Conze) Mahasattva can simply refer to their great (maha) intention (sattva) to liberate all beings. See e.g.

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc82328.html>. Also, according to the Yogacarabhūmi-shāstra's (Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment) commentary (quoted in note 1218) it's because bodhisattvas possess seven forms of greatness listed at I.18.24. An explanation from Haribhadra (quoted in Heart Sutra Explained, p 44):

'Bodhisattvas are those whose sattva. or intentions, are directed toward the fulfillment of their own welfare, namely, the enlightenment which is non-attachment to all phenomena. It may be argued that even Sravakas can be so. Thus, the word mahasattva is added. Those whose minds are directed towards the fulfillment of the great welfare of others are called Mahasattvas. An objection might be raised that such a Maha sattva can be found elsewhere, as in the case of a good non-Buddhist. Thus, the word bodhisattva is added.'

Caoimhghín said:

Similarly, take the Heart Sutra for example, which depicts Avalokiteśvara gaining insight into emptiness.

Astus wrote:

The sutra says Avalokitesvara was practising/contemplating prajnaparamita, not that it

was his/her first insight.

Caoimhghín said:

And there is no furthering of wisdom or insight accompanied by the loosening of these fetters?

Astus wrote:

See this nice sutta about how contemplation of the impermanence of the five aggregates is practised from the beginning to even beyond liberation:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.122.than.html>. And here is another to explain how one can have full knowledge without being liberated:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.089.than.html>. Here's a simile from the <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.068.than.html>: 'It's as if there were a well along a road in a desert, with neither rope nor water bucket. A man would come along overcome by heat, oppressed by the heat, exhausted, dehydrated, & thirsty. He would look into the well and would have knowledge of 'water,' but he would not dwell touching it with his body.'

Caoimhghín said:

the bodhisattva path is described as the bodhisattva progresses.

Astus wrote:

The bodhisattva too gains full comprehension of emptiness on the path of seeing, the first bhumi, and then cultivates it to perfection until buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

But arguing that sūtrayāna practices such as Pure Land practice, etc., are quick paths to buddhahood is erroneous and cannot be supported on the basis of their own fundamental texts.

Astus wrote:

One could rather argue that for the practice of buddha-recollection in order to overwrite one's habitual inclinations has to be strongly imprinted on the mind, therefore the requirement is actually not that low. But once one is there, one can personally meet buddhas and bodhisattvas, so one can learn and master whatever Dharma teaching there is without difficulty. Therefore necessarily one can attain buddhahood as quickly as possible anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Minobu said:

ok so the emptiness is not about sunyata , it's a Dzogchen realization

Astus wrote:

Read again (highlight added):

Malcolm said:

Realizing emptiness in Dzogchen means realizing the original purity of all phenomena, in common with the perfection of wisdom sūtras, etc.

Astus wrote:

There is really just one emptiness, even if it is explained in many ways.

Malcolm said:

Dzogchen seems to be a completely different approach to Buddhahood...

Astus wrote:

Malcolm may step in of course, but let me add this as a quick reply here. While dzogchen (any others) has a unique presentation and methods, it does not essentially diverge in its understanding from what is there to be done, that is, the elimination of defilements and obscurations, the realisation of the twofold emptiness, and so on.

Malcolm said:

What I don't get is you don't really explain how karma seems to be overridden...or discharged ...

Astus wrote:

Again, while dzogchen has its own take on common Buddhist doctrines, it matches the basic teachings regarding dependent origination, how from ignorance comes suffering, and when ignorance is eliminated, there is no more samsara.

Malcolm said:

Lord Sakyamuni endured samsaric existence for like an eternity to rid His Karma...

Astus wrote:

That version describes how merit needs to be accumulated over a long period of time. Such a view is "obsolete" in light of the view of buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 29th, 2020 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Not really-- hence the various metaphors about paupers using rocks that hide wishfulfilling jewels as pillows, who die without recognizing they have been in

possession of such a jewel the entire time.

Astus wrote:

'In the expository, causal vehicle of the paramitas, the sugatagarbha or buddha-nature is considered to be present in the minds of beings only as a seed. When this is fully developed through circumstantial conditions— in other words, the two accumulations (of merit and wisdom) — buddhahood is attained. And since the cause comes first and its result after, one speaks in this case of a causal vehicle. By contrast, the Mantrayana, the vehicle of mantra, proclaims that all beings are by nature endowed with the sugatagarbha, wherein all enlightened qualities are spontaneously present.'
(Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 86)

Unlike the above description of sutrayana, in Chan, Tiantai, and Huayan buddha-nature is understood to be already complete with the buddha qualities, as already noted in http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Translations/Awakening_of_faith.html:

'Next, Suchness has two aspects if predicated in words. One is that it is truly empty (sunya), for this aspect can, in the final sense, reveal what is real. The other is that it is truly nonempty (a-sunya), for its essence itself is endowed with undefiled and excellent qualities.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 30th, 2020 at 1:21 AM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Likewise, unless those buddha qualities are discovered by you in a direct perception, or pointed out to you, even if you have them, they are of no use to you.

Astus wrote:

<https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/D/92> is one of the main Zen slogans. It can result in buddhahood exactly because there is no need to gather anything more.

'You should simply eliminate the ratiocination of the ordinary [mind] and the [enlightened] realm of the sage—there is not any separate Buddha outside of the mind. The patriarch [Bodhidharma] came from the west to point out directly that all persons are in their entireties the Buddha. You fail to recognize this now but grasp onto the ordinary and the sagely, racing after the external and in turn being deluded as to your own mind. Therefore, I say to you: this mind is the Buddha.

To generate a single moment of ratiocination is to fall into a different realm. Since beginningless time, [this truth] has been no different from how it is today; there is no other Dharma. Therefore this is called the attainment of [the stages of] equivalent and correct enlightenment.'

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 34-35)

And a contemporary teacher:

'if we look directly at the false thoughts, they will disperse like clouds or smoke. This is "directly pointing at the mind," not relying on any means. If we all practiced in this manner, no one would be unwise enough to run after their thoughts, trying to destroy illusions. We only need to know that thoughts are false and not follow them. This is the essence of Bodhidharma's pacification of mind.'

(<https://tienvnguyen.net/images/file/G5gYJdC51AgQAHUb/keystobuddhism.pdf> by Thich Thanh Tu, p 52)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 30th, 2020 at 3:45 PM

Title: Re: Why choose Mahayana over Vajrayana?

Content:

Malcolm said:

It could, but it usually doesn't, 99.999 percent of the time.

Astus wrote:

That's a slightly more pessimistic than usual.

'Of the thousands or tens of thousands of people in this school, only three or five of them have gotten it.'

(Huangbo, in Birds in Flight Leaves No Trace, ch 44)

有禪無淨土。十人九錯路。無禪有淨土。萬修萬人去。有禪有淨土。猶如戴角虎也。

'With Chan but without Pure Land nine out of ten miss the road. Without Chan but with Pure Land ten thousand practitioners out of ten thousand pass. With Chan and with Pure Land it is like a horned tiger.'

(Yongming Yanshou quoted in Wuliangshoujing huiyi 無量壽經會譯, X1n5p70b14-16)

Malcolm said:

In any case, buddhahood cannot be realized with slogans.

Astus wrote:

But I quite like Chekawa's collection...

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 1st, 2020 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: Words, characters, syllables & liberation

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just to add a note, a syllable is different than a "character."

Astus wrote:

It was meant as an approximation of the Chinese translation.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 1st, 2020 at 4:54 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You gave the Sanskrit and the Tibetan. There are no "characters" in either language.

Astus wrote:

It was intended as further reference to clarify what was translated as "letters" in <https://dharmaheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=541014#p541014>. The Vimalakirti Sutra has 言說文字 that consists of "spoken" (yanshou 言說) and "character" (wenzi 文字), and the latter is "literature/writing" (wen 文) plus "letter/character/word" (zi 字). This was simply translated as "letter" in the quote. Furthermore, in the quote from Kukai's work "letter" is a translation for zi 字, what Giebel renders as "sign" (in <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/shingon-texts>, p 85). But clearly there is a difference here, as the Vimalakirti Sutra actually talks of speech, while Kukai really means writing.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 1st, 2020 at 9:05 PM

Title: Re: Why is Siddhi only possible after 4th Jhana?

Content:

NateLeo said:

what is it about the subtleties of the mind in 4th Jhana that allow siddhis to manifest?

Astus wrote:

Siddhis don't merely manifest, one has to make it happen, and in order to do so, the mind must have sufficient "power", i.e. undistracted and focused. It is the fourth absorption where the mind has reached the optimum level of concentration no longer moved by effort (1st dhyana) or by feelings (2nd and 3rd dhyana). As it is said (e.g. <https://accessinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html>), 'With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to the modes of supranormal powers.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 1st, 2020 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Why is Siddhi only possible after 4th Jhana?

Content:

LastLegend said:

Are those liberation?

Astus wrote:

Absorptions may be called liberation, but only in a temporary and relative sense, that

the five hindrances are not present in them. Of the higher knowledges, the sixth is actual liberation, the first five are mundane powers.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Why is Siddhi only possible after 4th Jhana?

Content:

LastLegend said:

I think the 6th is knowing before a thought forms? Anyway personally I don't think siddhi are Wisdom. Little emphasis should be put on it in my opinion.

Astus wrote:

The sixth higher knowledge (abhiññā/abhijñā) is the destruction of influxes/effluents (āsavakkhaya/āsravakṣaya), i.e. when defilements are completely eliminated.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 1:49 AM

Title: Re: Why is Siddhi only possible after 4th Jhana?

Content:

NateLeo said:

Ah, so basically they dont manifest "automatically", you first clear the mind and "intend" for them to manifest through mind-power?

Astus wrote:

Yes, there needs to be intention and effort to develop them. Note that one also needs the four <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iddhipada> (iddhipāda/ṛddhipāda).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

The same style was taught to me instead one would note this experience as saying "feeling" "feeling" or "thinking" "thinking". Do I understand this correctly or am I far off?

Astus wrote:

Labelling experiences is the first stage, using simple words to help one recognise what actually happens. Eventually such labels are let go of in vipassana, and dhammas are perceived without them. That stage, where there is no longer any labelling, conceptualisation (paññatti), is where one can see things as they are, and that is where the vipassana knowledges can happen.

You can see in Mahayana that one has to get to the same non-conceptualising mindfulness where impressions are not clung to, nor suppressed, and that is the ideal attitude.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Buddhism Supernatural feats and abilities

Content:

nothingkungfu said:

Does it happen to someone just a 5-6 years Buddhism or junior practitioner ? Why such a things happening according to Buddhism? I just want to be a normal people and i dont require such abilities at the moment because my "good deed" is not good enough, perhaps i will use this for gambling or stock market or into devil's direction.

Astus wrote:

Do you have control over your abilities, or do they just appear without you knowing about how it works? If the former, then you should keep in mind the ten good and the ten bad forms of action, and work only with good intentions. If it's the latter, then you're going to have to learn to regulate your mental activities, otherwise they remain disturbing factors.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Why is Siddhi only possible after 4th Jhana?

Content:

NateLeo said:

Now considering jhana is a temporary state, that tells me obscurations can temporarily be overcome?

Astus wrote:

There is a difference between latent habits or inclinations (anusaya) that are a condition for the emergence of hindrances (nivarana). So, as shown in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn64/en/bodhi>, even though a baby doesn't have the fetters like doubt and identity-view, the tendency is there. Also, one is not always overcome by craving or aversion, but when the conditions are present, one can be swept away by strong emotions.

NateLeo said:

I thought obscurations were something that had to be permanently overcome, THEN you'd see certain fruits of practice. I thought obscurations were things that were "stuck" to you until real awakening, but im guessing now thats wrong?

Astus wrote:

If by obscurations you mean the obscuration of defilements (klesavarana) and the obscuration to knowledge (jneyavarana), those are like latent tendencies (anusaya) and dispositions (vasana).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at 10:21 PM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

LastLegend said:

I am confused I don't know which is which anymore. It seems like it's all the same?

Astus wrote:

One evening, after a Dharma talk at the Boston Dharmadhatu, a student said to Seung Sahn Soen-sa, "At a recent seminar on Zen and Tantra, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche compared Zen to black and white and tantra to color. What do you think of this?"

...

Soen-sa said, ... "When you are thinking, your mind and my mind are different. When you are not thinking, your mind and my mind are the same. Now tell me - when you are not thinking, is there color? Is there black and white? Not thinking, your mind is empty mind. Empty minds means cutting off all speech and words. Is there color then?"

(Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p 79)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is not a very good answer. This kind of idea, the cessation of thinking, just results in more samsara.

Astus wrote:

That is right, aiming for and grasping at a thoughtless state at best takes one to a heavenly birth. But that was not the intended message, at least from my side. Rather that while there are methodical differences, when it comes to not conceptualising what is experienced, there are no distinctions that can be made.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 5:23 AM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Malcolm said:

That is not what the citation says.

Astus wrote:

Right, it's not a full story, I just thought it fitting on the issue of comparison. Here's an extension on empty mind.

'True emptiness is before thinking. Before thinking is just like this. So life is only life; death is only death. You must not be attached to names and forms. It is like a clear

mirror. In a clear mirror, all is nothing; there is only the clear mirror. Red comes, the mirror is red. Yellow comes, there is yellow. A woman comes, there is a woman. A man comes, there is a man. Death comes, there is death. Life comes, there is life. But all of these do not exist. The mirror does not hold on to anything. There is only the coming and the going. This is before thinking: all things are just as they are. The name for this mind is original pure mind.'

(Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p 90)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 2:47 PM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is still just referring to a mind devoid of concepts. So, it still does not escape the criticism.

Astus wrote:

Not really the same. There are things, but there is no attachment to them. It's possible to match it with there being no longer the concept of self that puts concepts into a samsaric frame. A little more on "just as they are":

"At 360° all things are just as they are; the truth is just like this. 'Like this' means that there is no attachment to anything. This point is exactly the same as the zero point: we arrive where we began, where we have always been. The difference is that 0° is attachment thinking, while 360° is no-attachment thinking."

(Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, p 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

the practices is to let go of concepts so that makes sense to me, although the practice of how to get there is what I am confused about.

Astus wrote:

The practice is to let go of concepts, full stop. Well, actually, that is taken in Zen as the essential practice, but not the only one. However, the very understanding of 'concepts' here can cause some serious confusions. Practically the key element is to recognise how one attaches to an idea and perpetuates it, turning a single thought into a chain of thoughts. But even that can sound (rightly) ambiguous, so think of right effort (samma vayama), how skilful and unskilful needs to be differentiated (note: this is part of the samadhi section), and think of dependent origination, how from contact/impression arises feeling, and from feeling craving, then grasping, etc. Although with this added explanation it doesn't look very Zennish, but then you can see how they point to the

same mental function.

As for the various techniques used to help people to see into their own mental operations, the method of kanhua (看話 - "phrase contemplation") is the most popular everywhere, with the sole exception of Soto Zen. There are also two versions of kanhua practice, one following the older type of contemplating the huatou (話頭 - "phrase head"), and there is the practice with a koan curriculum in Rinzai Zen. So basically the Japanese Zen schools are a bit different from the others (China, Korea, Vietnam).

Nicholas2727 said:

I understand that when we see red, just see it, although can this be done simply by just following the breath?

Astus wrote:

If you watch the breath, then it's the breath that comes and goes. The attitude should be the same, not grasping, not rejecting, not identifying, not disidentifying, but being simply aware without assuming oneself to be the doer (breather), the observer (I feel breath), the owner (it is my breath), or any other version of positioning oneself somewhere (or in a "nowhere").

Nicholas2727 said:

How do either of these differ from some of the meditation styles in Theravada (Specifically following the breath, Metta, and Mahasi Sayadaw style of vipassana)?

Astus wrote:

To see that better, one always needs to be familiar with the specific methods. Even just for "following the breath" there are many versions in Theravada and Mahayana. To compare them, one needs to know them. What you can do for a start is to read a bit about the actual methods themselves first. Then you might like one or another, and try it, then you may have questions and doubts, so you will find someone (a good friend, a teacher, an experienced person) to help further. One big difficulty of comparing these methods in such broad strokes here is that there are just too many details to cover in a post. So you can also try more specific questions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 5:17 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

You need to be trained

Astus wrote:

In order to be a Zen teacher there are no fixed training requirements, only that someone already possessing the title assigns to you the same rank. That is the basic idea of the whole lineage and Dharma transmission system.

PeterC said:

So either a lot of Western students are, absent a training of a duration or intensity that would be normal in Japan, achieving much better results and being recognized as such by qualified teachers; or the bar has gone down. I think it's for all of us to draw our own conclusions on which.

Astus wrote:

How could the bar go up or down? The very nature of the lineage transmission must guarantee that any appointed successor is of the same quality as the one who transmits it. Otherwise, what is being transmitted? And if nothing is transmitted, what makes a Zen teacher, since the only criteria is exactly transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 6:26 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

Receipt of transmission doesn't mean you should be teaching.

Astus wrote:

As for what happens after, that is another matter.

PeterC said:

For example - the Taiwanese monk, Sheng Yan, didn't teach for many years after receiving transmission and authorization to do so, because he didn't feel ready.

Astus wrote:

If you mean <http://www.shengyen.org/eng/>, founder of the Dharma Drum Lineage, it was actually the other way around. He did a retreat, he started to teach, and then received Dharma transmission.

'However when my head-shaving preceptor, Master Dongchu came to visit me in the United States in 1976 and saw me teaching Chan meditation in the Temple of Great Enlightenment in New York, he said to me, "You still have not received transmission!" He had received transmission through the Jiaoshan sect of the Caodong School. On that day he gave me transmission and ordered me to continue his Dharma lineage, but there was no ceremony.'

(<https://chancenter.org/cmc/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Summer-2017.pdf>)

PeterC said:

Do you feel that the people teaching Zen in Western countries have the same capacity/capability to teach as the Japanese teachers who first gave Dharma transmission in the West?

Astus wrote:

I sure couldn't tell, as you say, one would need an extensive sample to decide that, and even then the measurements used is hard to define. In theory, however, if we accept the

doctrine of the lineage, there can be no difference, as those Japanese teachers appointed their own successors of their own volition and choice, like Shunryu Suzuki appointed Richard Baker.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 7:26 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

That is exactly the matter we're discussing here, though

Astus wrote:

I do not see a fixed rule regarding what to happen after. It also questions the meaning of transmission. From the editor's note in *Getting the Buddha Mind* (p 30):

"'Generation' refers to the transmission of the Dharma within a lineage from a master to a disciple. This transmission thereby ensures the continuity not only of the Dharma itself, but also the teaching and the practice of the lineage. Furthermore, it confers upon the recipient a recognition by the master that the disciple is now qualified to transmit the Dharma, i.e., has become a master."

PeterC said:

He had more than one teacher. I heard this comment about waiting from him directly.

Astus wrote:

Dongchu was the first to give him transmission, then two years later, in 1978, was also given by Lingyuan. Or do you know of someone else?

PeterC said:

if we accept the doctrine of the lineage, there can be no difference.

Astus wrote:

What other options are there apart from accepting and not accepting?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 9:30 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

You don't consider centuries of precedent to be dispositive?

Astus wrote:

I don't see where such precedents exist in the first place. Here are some interesting examples from the first half of the 20th century, as it is described in *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900–1950* by Holmes Welch:

'Transmission of the dharma as a seal of office was the practice at most Chinese monasteries, unless the dharma and the abbotship were connected in other ways'
(p 158)

Of the Kiangsu System

'Whereas elsewhere one master transmitted to one disciple at a time, in Kiangsu several masters transmitted collectively to several disciples. All the masters served successively as abbot at a certain monastery and then all the disciples would serve as abbot there too. What had been transmitted was thought of as the dharma of that monastery. Receiving it gave a right and also an obligation to serve as abbot.'
(p 158)

'In actuality this kind of "dharma transmission" has become a formality in the Ch'an sect. It is a million miles away from the dharma transmission by the direct imprint of mind on mind. This kind of dharma transmission is simply a traditional formality of genealogical succession.'
(p 165)

Of the System in Kuei-yuan Ssu

'The Kuei-yuan Ssu in Hanyang, Hupeh, was rare among Chinese monasteries in that it dispensed altogether with consultation and left the choice of abbot directly and entirely to the bodhisattva Wei-t'o. It was unique (so far as I know) in that every monk ordained there was offered its dharma. An ordination was held each winter and immediately afterwards many of the hundreds of ordainees became dharma disciples, each receiving a dharma scroll and having his name entered in a dharma register (chieh-fa pu). When an abbot's three year term was up, all the names in this register would be copied onto slips and placed in a tube before Wei-t'o's image. The abbot himself did the drawing. The first name to be drawn three times in a row became his successor. If this individual had gone elsewhere (as he usually had), he would be traced and brought back. Even if he were young or incompetent, he still served.'
(p 169)

We might note that at the end of the same chapter there is mention of reformers who rejected such practices, and a longer quote of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanxu> 's criticism of the practice of transmitting the Dharma with the abbotship.

But if it is assumed or hoped for that such are the corruptions of late Chinese Buddhism, here are T. Griffith Foulk's words:

'The controversies that simmered in the Sung over the status of the Ch'an lineage as a "separate transmission,"...were more about securing prestige, patronage, and special privileges within the Buddhist order than about practical matters of monkish training or spiritual cultivation. The "separate transmission" slogan was used successfully by proponents of Ch'an to argue that members of their lineage, having inherited the

enlightenment of the Buddha in a direct line of “mind-to-mind transmission,” were the monks most qualified for positions of leadership within the existing Buddhist monastic institution.'

("Sung Controversies Concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an" in Buddhism in the Sung, p 221)

PeterC said:

So you chose the example of Suzuki and Baker to show that you fully accept?

Astus wrote:

'Statements of lineage identity and “history” were polemical tools of self-assertion, not critical evaluations of chronological fact according to some modern concept of historical accuracy. To the extent that any lineage assertion is significant, it is also a misrepresentation; lineage assertions that can be shown to be historically accurate are also inevitably inconsequential as statements of religious identity.'

(McRae's Second Rule of Zen Studies, in Seeing Through Zen by John R. McRae, p xix)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

If you want to look for precedent in China, you should read the 高僧傳 and 續高僧傳, which collectively have biographies of hundreds of monks from the early Liang to The Zhen Guan emperor in the Tang. They're very important works for giving us an idea of monastic practices in the early Tang golden age of Chan/Zen. In those days Dharma transmission was definitely not a formality, and the training that monks went through was not lightweight.

Astus wrote:

Except that those are not Chan works, nor do they talk of any lineage, unlike for instance the Chuan fabao ji 傳法寶紀, the Lengqia shizi ji 楞伽師資記. and the Lidai fabao ji 歷代法寶記. Furthermore, the question was regarding practice post-transmission, something that wouldn't fit the role of Dharma-transmission that is meant to enable one to serve as an abbot, and (theoretically) signified awakening. But if you say that there is evidence for such practice, then please present it.

PeterC said:

the quotation you cite is about the relationship between that school and other schools.

Astus wrote:

The quotation serves to show that the very meaning of Dharma transmission has not really changed in China since Song times down to the 20th century. In other words, there has never been such a thing as a golden age, nor has things somehow deteriorated later in this regard.

PeterC said:

I don't think that's quite sufficient to dodge my question.

Astus wrote:

It wasn't meant to dodge it, but rather show that I see no basis to accept such a transmission throughout the centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 10:51 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

if you reject the lineage view of a continuous transmission, you've also discarded the premise that transmission implies qualification as a teacher, surely?

Astus wrote:

Don't miss the problem <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=541665#p541665>: if nothing is transmitted, what makes a Zen teacher, since the only criteria is exactly transmission?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, Astus rejects utterly the notion of transmission, he always has. He thinks Dharma can be learned from books.

Astus wrote:

Dharma transmission in Zen is not about one person teaching another, but one person authorising another after that other has already mastered everything that had to be mastered.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 11:09 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Matylda said:

it is the case all over East Asia. over 90% of Chinese monks received dharma transmission. It became a custom, without real meaning. The same is in soto zen in Japan, it is still different in rinzai, but situation is not good, since it is possible to receive dharma transmission without genuine insight in rinzai...

Astus wrote:

And that is how it is slightly different in the West, because most have the view that such a transmission should be meaningful, that it should be for at least some level of insight, or at least proficiency.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 3rd, 2020 at 11:11 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

PeterC said:

Do you think that 印可 is a recognition that something has been transmitted; or it is simply a recognition of achievement, so in theory the student could have realized it unaided and the teacher just confirms that the student has recognized it?

Astus wrote:

Only the one who drinks it can tell whether it's cold or warm, isn't that so? That doesn't mean it was unaided or it was aided, as circumstances and events vary, as it can be seen from the many accounts of awakening throughout the history of Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 4th, 2020 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

Is this a practice that is used alongside other meditation techniques or do most chan/zen centers focus entirely on a huatuo practice?

Astus wrote:

It can be with or without other practices. It depends on the individual needs and the community.

Here are some introductory materials:

<http://www.chancenter.org/chancetr/ddp/talks/beginners-m.html> by Hanshan Deqing

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/prerequisites-of-the-cha-training/> by Xuyun

More extensive works:

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN375.pdf> by Guo Ru

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

Nicholas2727 said:

Not saying one is right or one is wrong, but would chan/zen schools not recommend this style of practice since it notes the experiences or does noting fit into the practice since it does not mean one is considering them the observer?

Astus wrote:

If by noting you mean verbal labelling, then not really. However, Chan is not a very fixed method or doctrine, and a lot depends on the individual and the teacher.

Nicholas2727 said:

Do you have any suggestions for readings that go over the different versions of meditation?

Astus wrote:

I have not yet seen such a comprehensive work, especially not focused on meditation only. At the same time, you should be aware that there are teachings in Mahayana as well about samatha and vipasyana. Here are some sources you might enjoy:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225580.html> by Nagarjuna

<https://ia800808.us.archive.org/15/items/FourApplMindfulnessMahayana/SgiksnasamuccayaOn4ApplicationsUpdatedJuly2017.pdf> by Śāntideva

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm by Shramana Zhiyi

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm by Shramana Zhiyi

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/sutra-concentration-sitting-meditation>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 4th, 2020 at 3:26 AM

Title: Re: Meditation techniques in each tradition

Content:

Malcolm said:

So according to the definition above, this zero attachment thinking is not true emptiness, since it is thinking.

Astus wrote:

I think Seung Sahn followed a different type of terminology, where emptiness has a more limited or extreme meaning, like what you can find in Tiantai.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 5th, 2020 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Chakrasamvara Sadhana - Utter Illumination of the Innermost Essence

Content:

BobbyBe said:

Hi everyone, this is my first post. I'm looking for a Chakrasamvara Sadhana called "Utter Illumination of the Innermost Essence"

Astus wrote:

It is available online: <https://garchen.net/library-sadhanas-and-sacred-texts/>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 5th, 2020 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Are all phenomena equally empty in Madhyamaka?

Content:

akuppa said:

My problem is that it seems from a Madhyamaka point of view belief that a Self exists is equally wrong as belief that the consciousness aggregate arises and ceases based on causes and conditions (the dhamma theory).

Astus wrote:

There is a difference made between correct and incorrect conventional truth, so an impermanent consciousness is correct convention, while a permanent self is an incorrect convention.

akuppa said:

So the early Buddhist schools are just as misguided as non-Buddhists?

Astus wrote:

Not all abhidharma systems are the same. What you find criticised by Madhyamaka are mainly Sarvastivadin interpretations, or at least what they viewed as the Sarvastivadin doctrine.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 5th, 2020 at 10:46 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Aryjna said:

As has been discussed several times, the Pali sources and the schools associated with them, have not been established to be earlier than Mahayana schools and non-Pali sources. If anything, the oldest existing texts apparently are Gandharan Mahayana texts.

Astus wrote:

Mahayana relies on for instance ideas present in abhidharmika texts, and the abhidharmas necessarily succeed the agamas/nikayas. That is regardless of what specific text has the oldest manuscript.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 5th, 2020 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

"everything that had to be mastered" in order to do what though? Teach beings how to practice appropriately? Point them in the right direction, etc, etc? Which is what a teacher's job is. Does one really need to have attained anuttara samyak sambodhi in order to do that teacher job properly?

Astus wrote:

In theory Zen transmits the buddha-mind, so any member of the transmission lineage must have the mind of a buddha, in other words, be a buddha. In practice, it is whatever a lineage member seems fit. So either the very meaning of the lineage is incorrect, or the practice, or both, or one might believe that both are actually correct and valid. In order to accept both as valid the common choice has been to say that one specific line is true (or truer), but the others are corrupt, considering the regular criticism of everyone else (e.g. northerners vs southerners, heze chan vs hongzhou chan, kanhua chan vs mozhao chan).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 6th, 2020 at 12:38 AM

Title: Re: Are all phenomena equally empty in Madhyamaka?

Content:

akuppa said:

Thanks, where can I read about this in Madhyamaka sources?

Astus wrote:

In the various discussions of the two truths.

'The conventional has two aspects: one that is mistaken and one that is correct. The former is twofold: the moon [reflected on] water and the conceptions of bad doctrines. Something that is pleasing only as long as it is not examined, which arises and ceases to exist'

(Entry into the Two Realities by Atisa, in Jewels of the Middle Way, p 119)

There's also a nice collection of essays: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=4-MdDAAAQBAJ>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 6th, 2020 at 12:43 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Aryjna said:

Is there concrete evidence that conclusively proves this succession?

Astus wrote:

The agamas/nikayas do not contain the various abhidharma ideas. In the abhidharmas there is a distinction between sutra and abhidharma teachings. Mahayana sutras talk of dharmas as the ultimate constituents of reality (and how they are empty), and that is a theory not explicit even in the Abhidhamma Pitaka itself but only in the commentaries. Here is an essay on the matter:

https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_ADB8A4E3744C.P001/REF.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 6th, 2020 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

It could be that the initial theory proposed above is just a wrong idea to begin with and zen transmission does not actually mean "this person is now a fully completed Buddha"

Astus wrote:

What do you propose instead?

If there is no transmission, no lineage, then there is no Zen school to talk of, as it is one of, if not the only core element of it.

'The first ancestor, Bodhidharma, came from the west, and did not engage in various activities or give lectures on sutras or commentaries, but simply faced the wall in zazen for nine years at Shaolin. Sitting is exactly the true Dharma eye treasury of the wondrous mind of nirvana. Generation after generation give face-to-face transmission, intimately receiving the secret seal, actually transmitting the bones and marrow between teachers and disciples. Just this is the single genuine matter; other things are not like this.'
(Eihei Koroku, IV.304, p 283; cf https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms17.pdf)

'From Śākyamuni Buddha to Sōkei there are thirty-four patriarchs. Each of the transmissions between these Buddhist patriarchs is like Kāśyapa³ meeting the Tathāgata and like the Tathāgata getting Kāśyapa. Just as Śākyamuni Buddha learns in practice under Kāśyapa Buddha, each teacher and disciple exists in the present. Therefore, the right Dharma-eye treasury has been personally transmitted from rightful successor to rightful successor, and the true life of the Buddha-Dharma is nothing other than this authentic transmission.'
(Butsудо, in Shobogenzo, BDK ed, vol 3, p 88)

'When viewed in terms of the clerical elite, in other words, Zen clearly constitutes the most successful form of Buddhism in East Asia. Why has it been so successful? In 1987, John Jorgensen suggested one answer. It is basically the same explanation that Dogen gave. To wit: "The authentic life of the Buddha dharma exists only in this authentic transmission." In other words, Zen is the predominant form of Buddhism because of dharma transmission.'
(Dharma Transmission in Theory and Practice by William M. Bodiford, in Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice, p 264)

'Where the doctrinal schools (jiao) locate authoritative tradition in the transmission of the Buddhist scriptures, the Chan school looks to a "mind-to-mind" transmission of the living vision of enlightenment itself. Known variously as the "transmission of the lamp or flame" or the "transmission of the treasury of the true eye of the Dharma," Chan claims to be heir to a generation-to-generation transmission of the Buddha's enlightened mind

that runs parallel to his spoken word-Dharma.

...

Institutionally speaking, a Chan master is someone who has awakened to the Buddha Mind through Chan training and whose enlightenment has been tested and sanctioned (C. yinke; J. inka) by an existing Chan master. Using the flame and lamp analogy, one could say that transmission of Chan Dharma requires that three things be simultaneously present: the enlightened insight of a previously sanctioned Chan master, the enlightened insight of the disciple, and the living reality of the Buddhadharma or Buddha Mind in which both are grounded. If any one of these is missing, enlightenment and transmission cannot be considered genuine, at least by Chan standards. By the same token, the formal granting of sanction is especially key to this, since the very basis of Chan practice and the integrity of Chan as an institution hinges on the idea that the historical transmission preserves intact the "Mind Dharma" of Buddha Sakyamuni. It is this certified wisdom that Chan practitioners seek to "ignite" and verify in their own minds; and, as the embodiment of that light, it is to the Chan master that he or she looks for guidance.'

(Hoofprint of the Ox by Sheng-yen, p 112, 113)

Some more on the nature of dharma transmission according to various sources:

'Dharma Transmission is what happens when your sight clears enough that you can see what your teacher and the Buddha have already seen: things as they are.'

(Hardcore Zen, p 73)

'Back when Gautama Buddha was alive there was an incident in which he stepped up to give a talk. As was customary in India, flowers had been strewn at his feet before he began to teach. Instead of speaking, Gautama just picked up one of those flowers and held it silently aloft - and a guy named Mahakashyapa, one of his longtime students, smiled. Then the Buddha winked at him, called it a day's teaching, and walked away. This little scene is viewed by Zen Buddhists as the moment when the Buddha recognized that one of his followers had attained the same level of understanding as he had himself. The Buddha's silent wink was taken to be the start of the formal acknowledgement known today as Dharma Transmission.'

(Hardcore Zen, p 137)

'Dharma transmission is actually the acknowledgement by a master that a disciple has attained an experience of enlightenment equal to his or her own.'

(The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism, p 71)

yinke. (J. inka; K. in'ga 印可). In Chinese, lit. "seal of/in approval," "certification" and often seen in Western sources in its Japanese pronunciation inka; a seal of approval, certification, or transmission, which is given by masters in the various CHAN traditions across East Asia to practitioners who, in their estimation, have attained a satisfactory level of awakening or maturity of understanding to serve as public exponents of their lineage. Because these lineages are presumed to trace back to BODHIDHARMA, the founder of the Chan school, and ultimately to the person of the Buddha himself, the person who receives such certification is considered to be qualified to speak for the

current generation of Chan adepts on behalf of the Chan patriarchs, masters, and even the Buddha, to accept and train students, and to give them certification in turn once their training is complete.

(The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, p 1029)

'In an attempt to distinguish itself from the other Buddhist traditions that sought the teachings of the Buddha in sūtras and commentaries, the burgeoning Chan tradition of the eighth and ninth centuries emphasized the nonverbal transmission of the Buddha's teachings. The notion of mind-to-mind transmission has thus served as an important trope in the self-fashioning of the Chan tradition.'

(on 'yixin chuanxin' in The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, p 1032)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 6th, 2020 at 9:01 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

A satisfactory level awakening.

Astus wrote:

What is that level?

seeker242 said:

I don't see anything in any of the above that dictates that only 100% full, complete, perfection is the only thing that is satisfactory.

Astus wrote:

Then let me highlight some passages and words from the above quotes.

'the Buddha recognized that one of his followers had attained the same level of understanding as he had himself'

'acknowledgement by a master that a disciple has attained an experience of enlightenment equal to his or her own '

'Because these lineages are presumed to trace back to BODHIDHARMA, the founder of the Chan school, and ultimately to the person of the Buddha himself, the person who receives such certification is considered to be qualified to speak for the current generation of Chan adepts on behalf of the Chan patriarchs, masters, and even the Buddha '

""mind-to-mind" transmission of the living vision of enlightenment itself '

'a generation-to-generation transmission of the Buddha's enlightened mind '

'a Chan master is someone who has awakened to the Buddha Mind '

'the historical transmission preserves intact the "Mind Dharma" of Buddha Sakyamuni' Dogen identifies what is transmitted as "the true Dharma eye treasury of the wondrous mind of nirvana", just as it is in the so called Flower Sermon, and that expression itself is meant as not just the essence of the Dharma, but also what encompasses all the teachings. Being enlightened to that means knowing and embodying the entirety of the Dharma, exactly like the Buddha. As the transmission itself means a confirmation that

the successor is on equal stance with the transmitter, since it is the Buddha himself who initiated it, all successors are on the same level as the Buddha. How could it be anything less than that? Do you assume that being enlightened to, or possessing/being the mind of the Buddha, is something less than buddhahood, that there is something more to attain?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

to claim that a person who has reached the 8th or 9th Bhumi, or the equivalent or whatever other scale that is used, to claim that that person would not be worthy of being called a zen master, or to claim that this would still somehow still be unsatisfactory, I just don't see how that is reasonable.

Astus wrote:

There is no such claim. The claim is that Zen transmits the very mind of the Buddha, that members of the lineage are on the same level of awakening as the Buddha himself. If the claim was something other, that for instance they transmitted the realisation of a bodhisattva, or an arhat, or something else, then it wouldn't be the transmission of the buddha-mind. This is practically in order to be able to say that it can stand apart from the very teachings of the Buddha that one can find in the sutras, that a member of the lineage can be on an equal level as a source of truth as the sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 4:18 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

Yes there is such a claim. If the original claim is "that members of the lineage are on the same level of awakening as the Buddha himself" that is no different than saying "9th bhumi still just isn't good enough" since 9th bhumi, is by definition, not the same as Buddha himself.

Astus wrote:

If the transmission were of something less than the buddha-mind, then it'd be a gradual path, something that Zen teachers distanced themselves from right at the start, and only kept strengthening that position over the centuries.

Baizhang Huaihai explained it this way:

'Once you do not grasp any more, and yet do not dwell in nonattachment either, this is the intermediate good. This is the half-word teaching. This is still the formless realm; though you avoid falling into the way of the two vehicles, and avoid falling into the ways

of demons, this is still a meditation sickness. This is the bondage of bodhisattvas.'
(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 31)

'Only a Buddha alone is a great teacher, because there is no second person; the rest are all called outsiders, also called demons talking.'
(p 37)

'From the first to the tenth stage of bodhisattvahood they are still disciples - right now as long as they have any seeking mind at all, they're all called immoral monks, nominal saints; they're all called jackals. Clearly they can't digest the offerings of others.'
(p 57)

'Even people in the tenth stage of bodhisattvahood cannot get rid of this completely, and flow into the river of birth and death.'
(p 58)

'The first, second, third, and fourth stages have the affliction of clear understanding; the fifth, sixth, and seventh stages have the affliction of various kinds of knowledge, the eighth, ninth, and tenth stages have the afflictions of bodhisattvas simultaneously illuminating both realities, on up to the affliction of cultivating the fruit of Buddhahood and its innumerable practices - you only care for knowledge and understanding of meanings and expressions, and don't realize that instead these are binding afflictions.'
(p 68)

And Huangbo:

'Even if you attain the three [stages of] sagehood and the four fruits [of the Hinayana] and complete the ten stages [of the bodhisattva], you will still remain within [the domain of] ordinary and sagely.'
(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 38)

Linji went even further:

'Followers of the Way, if you take my viewpoint you'll cut off the heads of the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya buddhas; a bodhisattva who has attained the completed mind of the tenth stage will be like a mere hireling; a bodhisattva of equivalent enlightenment or a bodhisattva of marvelous enlightenment will be like pilloried prisoners; an arhat and a pratyekabuddha will be like privy fi lth; bodhi and nirvana will be like hitching posts for asses. Why is this so? Followers of the Way, it is only because you haven't yet realized the emptiness of the three asaṃkhyeya kalpas that you have such obstacles.'
(Record of Linji, p 10, tr Sasaki)

'Followers of the Way, don't take the Buddha to be the ultimate. As I see it, he is just like a privy hole. Both bodhisattvahood and arhatship are cangues and chains that bind one. Th is is why Mañjuśrī tried to kill Gautama with his sword, and why Aṅgulimāla attempted to slay Śākyamuni with his dagger.'

(p 31)

But that's all Hongzhou school interpretation. For something closer to the gradual perspective there are the teachings of Zongmi, Yanshou, and Jinul, although they still insist on first gaining sudden awakening to buddha-mind.

seeker242 said:

There is nothing there that dictates that 8th/9th bhumi, etc, etc. would not have that necessary knowledge to do all of the above.

Astus wrote:

As you can see above, there actually is a view that even a bodhisattva on the highest stage is not good enough.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 5:33 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Dan74 said:

I think there are texts and there is reality on the ground.

Astus wrote:

Texts are not apart from the reality on the ground, but one aspect of it. Such texts, teachings, views, etc. influence and define what and how people think of Zen and Zen teachers, and that in turn conditions expectations and behaviours. For instance, right when looking up from whom to learn Zen, one of the first things one is advised to check are lineage credentials, so on almost every website and every book of a Zen teacher/community has a section dedicated to lineage as proof of authenticity. There is no special consideration given to the specific views of the teacher, nor to what ordination was received, or any other aspects.

Dan74 said:

The reality on the ground is that one has to look long and hard to find a fully-awakened master in any school. And whether Zen, Vajrayana or any other lineage, there are many sincere and dedicated teachers who are able to assist the students with their practice to some extent.

Astus wrote:

However, unlike in Zen, teachers elsewhere are not required or presumed to be awakened (except tulkus). For a Zen teacher to say that s/he is an ordinary being who simply passes on whatever s/he learnt from others, that goes against the very definition of transmitting the mind and not the scriptures.

Dan74 said:

One thing is clear to me though, we can wring our hands about the absence of enlightened teachers, degeneration of the Dharma, etc, or we can practice and realise

that that is indeed the best and only way to address these concerns.

Astus wrote:

Does that practice require an enlightened teacher or not? If it does, then it is a problem not to find such a teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Dan74 said:

Texts also bemoan the scarcity of realised teachers, at times. And lineage is surely an indication at least, if not a guarantee. Do you have a better system in mind?

Astus wrote:

The lineage system is not a commonly used way in education, not even in Buddhism. Just consider how both mundane (engineers, scientists, scholars, craftsmen, etc.) and religious (theologians, priests, monks, cantors, etc.) experts are trained within institutional environments, and what quality assurance (supervision) means in various professions.

Dan74 said:

I have not yet met a Zen teacher who claimed to be fully enlightened, free of all obscurations. I think the claim that a teacher needs to be fully enlightened in order to transmit is false.

Astus wrote:

Do you have a specific view regarding the traditional lineage history that goes back to Shakyamuni? Is it not a transmission where the mind of the student and the mind of the teacher agree (see a definition here: https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=seal_of_the_buddha_mind)?

Dan74 said:

Enlightened or not enlightened? Is that the only dichotomy in your mind?

Astus wrote:

The question of the topic is about whether Zen teachers are awakened. According to the usual definition of what makes a Zen teacher (https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_transmission), and what transmission refers to (https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=dharma_lamp), they necessarily are. Do you know of a different criteria?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mahayana arose at the same time as Hinayana.

Astus wrote:

That is a bit ambiguous. For instance, the term hinayana is used by mahayana in order to distinguish itself, and since these terms depend on each other, like low and high, they cannot exist separately.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Dan74 said:

If one completes a doctorate, then the supervisor is a significant factor. In maths when one talks about young researchers, one hears a lot of things like 'he was a student of....'. So there is a lineage

Astus wrote:

There are a number of crucial differences between saying that one has studied under this and that teacher, and that there is a unique lineage of special transmission independent of scriptures. Naturally, every Buddhist is a descendent of the Buddha in a way. It is still the norm that monastics in China and Vietnam receive Shi/Thích 釋 (i.e. Shakyas) as their family name. But in Zen only select people are called descendants, and it was meant to distinguish that person from all the other Buddhists (until practically everyone got to be a Chan descendant, like in China).

So it's rather like as if among all the maths PhD's some started to claim a unique expertise in mathematics because they studied under someone who studied from a disciple of an allegedly super talented, but generally unknown and already deceased professor, and because of that they now teach maths independent of numbers and logic, therefore it is not something one could learn anywhere else. And if you think this is an exaggeration, look at what Sheng-yen had to say about the matter (Hoofprint of the Ox by Sheng-yen, p 112):

"Where the doctrinal schools (jiao) locate authoritative tradition in the transmission of the Buddhist scriptures, the Chan school looks to a "mind-to-mind" transmission of the living vision of enlightenment itself. Known variously as the "transmission of the lamp or flame" or the "transmission of the treasury of the true eye of the Dharma," Chan claims to be heir to a generation-to-generation transmission of the Buddha's enlightened mind that runs parallel to his spoken word-Dharma."

Dan74 said:

The point is that Zen training is predicated on a personal relationship.

Astus wrote:

As you noted, even mathematics and arts are so, therefore it is nothing new or unique

about Zen, especially if you keep in mind that Zen existed primarily within a monastic environment. However, whether one actually receives a doctorate is not the decision of one person, and it is not actually received from a single individual but an institution. Furthermore, the validity of one's calculations does not depend on whether one is a student of a specific teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

And sudden awakening to buddha-mind is something different from actually becoming a 100% perfect Buddha.

Astus wrote:

There is such an interpretation by those who talk of "sudden awakening, gradual practice".

seeker242 said:

None of the quotes you quoted above actually say that a very learned person cannot relay the Buddha's teaching in a satisfactory manner.

Astus wrote:

That would be a teaching according to the usual manner, relying on the scriptures, following a gradual path. That is what Zen teachers wanted to distinguish themselves from.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Dan74 said:

In Zen it's whether one truly received the transmission.

Astus wrote:

But what is the nature of transmission? Usually it is understood as a certification of the attainment of a disciple. It does not mean the whole process of receiving teachings.

Dan74 said:

It sounds to me that you are putting in doubt the entire teacher-to-disciple transmission.

Astus wrote:

What is called Dharma transmission is not teaching someone how to meditation or how to follow the precepts, but the acknowledgement that one has attained the same level of awakening as the one who gives the transmission (see definitions give

<https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542121#p542121>).

Dan74 said:

Can it happen outside the teacher to disciple relationship?

Astus wrote:

In various ways. If we take the aspect of historical lineage, then the answer is remote succession (yaosi 遙嗣), where one person claims inheritance from someone who is already dead. A modern example for that is how Xuyun transmitted the lineages of the three lost schools of Chan and thus Xuanhua became the ninth ancestor of the Guiyang line. If we take the awakening aspect, then anyone ever awakened could be said to have received the mind seal of the buddhas.

Dan74 said:

wasn't Chinul like that? And Huineng as well, the first breakthrough?

Astus wrote:

If what you refer to is whether someone can awaken without extended training under a single teacher, then yes, there are many examples from that starting with the agamas/nikayas where a monk asked for a brief instruction from the Buddha, then went away, meditated, and attained liberation. Jinul is an example of a super influential teacher within Zen who is not a lineage member. Hanshan Deqing is another such person. Two recent reformers, Hakuin in Japan and Gyeongheo in Korea, are also like that, as they have never received certification by anyone, but they are currently the sole sources of all Rinzai and Imje lineages in their respective countries. However, those latter two were quickly put in a lineage by their disciples.

Dan74 said:

If you are out to say that the entire teacher-student relationship is hyped up, well, come out and say so.

Astus wrote:

Dharma transmission generally means certification. It does not mean the whole process of learning. I do not say that studying under a teacher is unimportant, nor is that the topic.

Dan74 said:

Perhaps Secular Buddhism is more your thing.

Astus wrote:

Unlikely.

Dan74 said:

For my part I've really appreciated teachers' inputs and will continue to seek it when appropriate.

Astus wrote:

And so have I.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 7th, 2020 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

I don't agree. If one understands what "Buddha mind" is well enough, one would not need to rely on scriptures, as not needing to rely on scriptures is what "well enough" would mean to begin with.

Astus wrote:

The sutras cover the whole path up to buddhahood. A bodhisattva is someone who is dedicated to master all teachings, and attain omniscience, but has not yet done so. Without omniscience why wouldn't one need to rely on the buddhas' teachings?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

Because they understand it well enough without having to continue reading books about it

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that everything there is to know to attain buddhahood is found in buddha-mind, and a Zen teacher knows buddha-mind "well enough" to no longer need to study the Buddha's teachings?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

seeker242 said:

What I mean is that a person can know Buddha mind well that they don't need to utilize books in order to guide people to it.

Astus wrote:

That is not what relying on the scriptures means. It means that the source of one's knowledge originates from them. If Dharma transmission in Zen does not mean that the mind of Kashyapa matched the mind of the Buddha, i.e. that Kashyapa was of equal awakening to Shakyamuni, then it is a partial realisation that is passed on, it is incomplete, therefore not enough to attain buddhahood. And then in order to fulfil the goal of Mahayana, one necessarily needs to learn the rest of the teachings from the only

other source available: the scriptures. Those Zen teachers who favoured the teaching of "sudden enlightenment, gradual practice" taught the harmony of Zen and doctrine, mainly Huayan. Here's what Yanshou wrote:

'QUESTION If you want to clarify the implicit truth of Buddhism [zong], you need only promote the message of the patriarchs. What use is there in combining it with citations from the oral teachings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, taking these as a guide? The reason why members of Chan lineages [zongmen] claim "By availing oneself of the eyes of a snake, one will not distinguish things for oneself" is that one only becomes a sage of words and letters [by following the scriptures], but does not enter the ranks of the patriarchs.

ANSWER The above claim is not intended to prohibit reading the scriptures. I worry that people will not know well the words of the Buddha. People develop understanding through texts. When people forget about the Buddha's message, one safeguards the minds of beginners on the basis of [texts]. Whoever understands the teaching through the corpus of Buddhist writings will not create a mind and realm of objects in opposition to each other, but will realize the mind of the Buddha directly. What error is there in this?'

(Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing lu: a special transmission within the scriptures by Albert Welter, p 248-249)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 4:23 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

This assumes that (all) the nikayas/agamas are the earliest Dharma texts.

Is there any historical evidence for this?

Astus wrote:

There is a summary regarding the Early Buddhist Texts on

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Buddhist_texts. For a more extensive summary with references you can read <https://ocbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/authenticity.pdf>.

And if you have some extra time, you can look at this essay, to give some thought to style:

http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/Articles/The%20Oral%20Composition%20and%20Transmission%20of%20Early%20Buddhist%20Texts_Allon_Spalding%20Symposium_1989-94.pdf.

Once what EBT are like is settled, then we can see how even works like the Jatakas are considered later. Then one can take a look at how various concepts changed and developed, as it's done for instance by Guang Xing in <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=DTWZLMGFFgkC>. But there are several other possible ideas that are taken for granted in Mahayana but appeared first in abhidharma or commentarial works, for instance the concept of two truths, or that there is an assurance of attainment of buddhahood at some point during a bodhisattva's career.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 6:25 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Bristollad said:

how do you choose the features that identify an "early" text. Material arranged in such a way as to be easy to recite and memorise does not make it an early text, it only makes it material arranged to be easy to recite and memorise.

Astus wrote:

That is not the only criteria, however, it is accepted by all that the teachings were recorded in writing only later, so it is one of the signals, but, again, not the only one.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

It really doesn't prove anything.

Astus wrote:

When sravakas are depicted as people holding views that are found in texts clearly later than the agamas, then on what basis is it reasonable to assume that such a work is earlier than those that contain the views mentioned?

Would you take, for instance, that such stanzas like these were uttered as true prophecies?

'From the Mahāsāṃghika school
Will seven schools separate,
And from the Sthaviravāda eleven.
These are the twenty schools.
These eighteen and the original two
All derive from the Mahayana.
Neither correct nor incorrect,
I say that these will arise in the future'
(The Sutra of Mañjuśrī's Questions, BDK ed, p 99)

Or that there was talk of Vaibhasikas before the existence of the Mahavibhasa?

'Then instruct upon the Vaibhasya doctrine and after that the Sutranta doctrine. Then instruct upon the Yogacara doctrine followed by the Madhyamaka doctrine. After teaching all the practices of mantra, then commence with the instruction on the Hevajra practice.'

(The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra, p 273)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 11:10 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

How is this exercise in conjecture about the date of these texts useful to a mahayani or a Vajrayani? This is only of interest to non-practitioners.

Astus wrote:

Aren't practitioners invested in the matter of studying authentic Dharma? The authenticity of a teaching is commonly decided based on its provenance, and only secondarily by its content. In fact, it cannot be measured by content unless one has already identified some teachings as valid, and that could have happened only by its origin. Still, this is not saying that origin is the ultimate measure, only that it is a regularly used one, because it is often the easiest to go by, at least superficially. So, although ideally historical matters are irrelevant, but just as gossiping and similar human/person/self-centred thinking is normal behaviour, approaching the question of validity happens within a historical framework, otherwise there would be no need to mention whether something was or wasn't taught by the Buddha (or some other accepted source).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 12:47 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

The authenticity of a teaching is decided on the basis of its content, not its supposed provenance, determined by some historiographical criteria, which is at best arbitrary and a product of the perceptions of common people.

Astus wrote:

How do you tell if the content is the Buddha's teaching or not? You compare it with other teachings that are accepted as his. So what defines the basic teaching that the others are compared to?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 12:55 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

And who gets to decide what is authentic Dharma? Historians?

Astus wrote:

"Without approval and without scorn, but carefully studying the sentences word by word, one should trace them in the Discourses and verify them by the Discipline. If they are neither traceable in the Discourses nor verifiable by the Discipline, one must conclude thus: 'Certainly, this is not the Blessed One's utterance; this has been misunderstood by that bhikkhu — or by that community, or by those elders, or by that elder.' In that way, bhikkhus, you should reject it. But if the sentences concerned are traceable in the Discourses and verifiable by the Discipline, then one must conclude thus: 'Certainly, this is the Blessed One's utterance; this has been well understood by that bhikkhu — or by that community, or by those elders, or by that elder.'"

(<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

Anybody can make up "an utterance" and credit it to the/a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

So how can you tell if it's valid or not? Whether it is in harmony with the accepted teachings, as noted above, but also see:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.053.than.html>,

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.079.than.html>.

PS. <https://fakebuddhaquotes.com/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

Accepted by who, or more to the point: by which authority/orthodoxy?

Astus wrote:

By both parties questioning the authenticity of a teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

Accepted by who? That is the problem.

Tantra (for example) are accepted as Buddhavacana by Vajrayani, but rejected by

Sravakayani as "not in harmony" with THEIR accepted teachings.

Astus wrote:

There is already a basic set of teachings accepted by both sides. Furthermore, all Buddhists aim for the same in taming and overcoming habituated emotional reactions and cultivating skilful qualities like mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom.

Grigoris said:

And that is where the problems begin: Sectarian notions of orthodoxy.

Astus wrote:

There can be such an attitude if one fails to keep in check one of the basic defilements: conceit. Otherwise, if one cares to look deeper into the various methods and teachings of Buddhism, there is a big overlap among them.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is valid only if one supposes that the shravaka canons are the standard by one judges what constitutes buddhavacana.

Astus wrote:

Not necessarily. For instance, if one accepts a Vaipulya Pitaka and a Dharani Pitaka as parts of the Buddha's words, then they serve as a basis of measuring anything questionable.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 5:51 PM

Title: Re: Are Zen teachers awakened?

Content:

Matylda said:

Generally zen teachers, whether in the East or the West carry extremely heavy burden of responsibility, and if they take things lightly or without self criticism then only they will be responsible for this that something was missing in their teachings and training.

Astus wrote:

'If sentient beings encounter someone with errant views in their quest for a good friend, they will never attain true enlightenment — that is a case of what is referred to as heterodox nature. The errors of the false teacher are not the fault of sentient beings.'
(The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, ch 5, BDK ed, p 77)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Are all phenomena equally empty in Madhyamaka?

Content:

akuppa said:

Yes, I guess my question is how a Madhyamaka would decide which descriptions of relative truth are better (more useful?), and whether this is touched on in Madhyamaka reasoning.

Astus wrote:

Conventional phenomena, the relative truth, is what is dependently originated. So what can be considered conventionally valid are what has function in terms of causal relations. For instance, one cannot drink from a mirage, but can drink from a lake. Similarly, a permanent consciousness cannot function as consciousness, only one that is dependently originated.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 6:27 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

Some of the skillful qualities cultivated in tantric system are directly at odds with basic tenets in the Sravakayana.

Astus wrote:

Skillful qualities (kusala dharma) are those that are free from craving, anger, and delusion (see: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.009.ntbb.html#kusala>). What is it that Vajrayana considers skillful that is rooted in the three poisons?

'To realize the perfect view is to be totally free from the five poisons, the emotions which keep us enslaved in samsara. As the five poisons disappear, the five corresponding wisdoms are revealed.'

(The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones, p 125)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

the vaipulyapiṭaka and dhāraṇīpiṭaka of the Mahāsāṅghikas are not extant baskets of scripture.

Astus wrote:

It was merely an example. The point is that if one takes the whole Taisho Tripitaka as a basis, then the given method of comparing teachings to the scriptures found in the

Taisho is still operational.

Caoimhghín said:

(I actually know the language of bodhisattvapiṭaka, where did you vaipulyapiṭaka from?)

Astus wrote:

I've seen somewhere before. But bodhisattvapitaka works as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

And if one accepts the Vidyādhara piṭaka???

Astus wrote:

Nope, there must be limits.

Malcolm said:

the Buddha's higher teachings regularly conflict with the Buddha's lower teachings, and this is determined by content alone, and not provenance.

Astus wrote:

I don't really see those conflicts, but I guess that is already another conflict.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 9th, 2020 at 10:01 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

The distinction generally drawn is between renunciation (three lower vehicles) and transformation (kriya tantra to anuyoga). In Vajrayāna, through skillful means:

"That by which fools are bound,
by that same thing the wise are liberated."

--Saraha.

Astus wrote:

Even if such distinctions were accepted, the end result would still be the same liberation. Appearances are selfless, empty, buddhas, or self-liberated - it's either one is lost in clinging or not.

'It is said that all the learned and accomplished masters of India and Tibet had the same realization and there is not a single master who claims that the realization of the main

part of practice is anything other than nonfixation.'

(Naturally Liberating Whatever You Meet: Instructions to Guide You on the Profound Path by Khenpo Gangshar, in Vivid Awareness, p 227)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

For example, Śrāvaka bhikṣus cannot handle gold, but may eat meat. Mahāyāna bhikṣus may handle gold, but may not eat meat. Vajrayāna bhikṣu may both handle gold and eat meat.

Astus wrote:

The state of being a bhikṣu is a matter of ordination, and it is regulated by the pratimokṣa. Being a sravaka/mahayanika/vajrayanika is a matter of view and practice. How does one influence the other?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

There are two ways be free of grasping: regarding all things as impure and rejecting them as such (Hinayāna and common Mahāyāna), and regarding all things as pure and accepting them as such. The latter method more rapid, but requires special methods, so that it is not merely an intellectual posture.

Astus wrote:

I don't think any path promotes accepting or rejecting as the way to go. Rather, to be free of grasping, one needs to see things as they actually are.

'It's when a mendicant meditates by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn22/en/sujato>)

'The perfect Way is not difficult;

It only avoids discrimination.

If only there is no love or hate,

Completely clean and clear is it.'

(The Faith-Mind Maxim, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 123)

At the same time:

'On the basis of strong renunciation, any kind of Dharma practice, even a very simple

one, can be a cause to attain enlightenment. On the other hand, without such renunciation, even very high tantra or any other profound Dharma practice will not lead us to freedom from samsara.'

(A Complete Guide to the Buddhist Path by Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen, p 141)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

One fire burns and destroys, the other fire warms and nurtures. What is the essential difference between the two types of flames?

Astus wrote:

The essential difference is in how they are qualified/described.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

But in Vajrayāna, we do not give up the basis, that is, the five objects of desire.

Astus wrote:

They are objects of desire because one desires them, not because sights, sounds, etc. are desirable in and of themselves. This is understood even in the agamas/nikayas.

'The eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire & passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.'

(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.191.than.html>)

Similarly, it is one's view of things that is changed, not the things themselves.

'One is not freed by existence;

One does not transcend samsara through non-existence;

It's through understanding existence and non-existence

That the great beings are liberated.

Those who do not see ultimate reality

Grasp at samsara and nirvana;

But those who see ultimate reality possess

No pretensions of world and its' transcendence.'

(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 4-5)

So, as in your quotes from Loppön Sonam Tsemo, the solution lies in 'having given up the intrinsic cause of bondage [i.e. deceived concepts,] the objects which [earlier]

became the condition of that [bondage] [now] become the condition of liberation'; 'the ordinary ceases, everything will be given up'; 'non-conceptual samadhi removes conceptuality, all bonds will be respectively released'; and as a summary of the same: 'if the intrinsic nature of that cause is dispelled by the two methods [above], since the aspect of the objects has changed, again one can depend on objects since they have been transformed into assisting antidotes'. And you as well kindly summarised the main point:

The problem of liberation is not to be quickly resolved by renunciation of the five objects of desire, rather, it is to be quickly resolved by relinquishing the ordinary conceptuality about the five objects of desire that is the root of all attachment and aversion.

The same is taught under the topic of transformation of emotions in The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones, for example regarding anger (p 126):

'If you recognize the nature of anger as void, it loses all its power to harm and becomes mirrorlike wisdom; but if you fail to recognize its nature and give it free rein, it will be no less than the very source of the scorching and freezing torments of hell.'

And by others as well, like Thrangu Rinpoche's summary about <http://www.purifymind.com/ObstaclesPath.htm>.

The reason I repeated and expanded on what I think you said about Vajrayana's unique approach is to try to ensure we are on the same page here. But then, I don't see the sutras teaching anything else. Seeing things as they are is to see that appearances are insubstantial, that they are actually ungraspable and inconceivable. When that is clear, there is no basis for clinging. How are then the sutras saying anything different?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

This is not essential, it is relative. Ask a pyromaniac, for example, then ask somebody that is cold.

Astus wrote:

You asked about the "essential difference" between them. Difference is relative. But then, why not you tell it?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

The question that must be posed then is: how does sutra transform ordinary conceptuality? Seeing appearances as insubstantial does not transform them into pure

phenomena that maybe be readily enjoyed by the practitioner.

Astus wrote:

If by seeing them as insubstantial you mean a conceptual label, sure, that doesn't help that much. But that is a known mistake. However, if it is actually seeing their emptiness, in other words, not falling into extreme concepts about them, then that is no different from what is taught in Vajrayana about how to take appearances as/on the path. On the fourth Dharma of Gampopa, where both the Sutrayana and Vajrayana approaches are mentioned, Ringu Tulku comments:

'When you compare the Vajrayana approach with the Sutrayana approach, you see there is no real difference between them. The Sutrayana way is to look at the deluded mind and see it as relative rather than real; the mind is like a dream or an illusion. Then, this understanding is applied to all phenomena so that everything is recognized as illusory. The Vajrayana approach is to see that the deluded mind has the nature of wisdom.'

(Confusion Arises as Wisdom, p 48)

There are some differences mentioned between Sutrayana (analytic, indirect, slow) and Vajrayana (non-analytic, direct, quick) (also by Thrangu Rinpoche, as in <http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/3vehicles.pdf>, p 90, 92 & Creation and Completion, p 121-122), however, such characterisation of sutric methods is a limited interpretation, as directly looking at the nature of experience (instead of making theoretical deductions about it) is very much the way insight meditation is practised from Tiantai to Theravada.

'One turns back the attention and contemplates the mind which engages in actions. One then fails to perceive any characteristic appearance. One should then realize that the agent of actions as well as all of the dharmas involved in engaging in actions are ultimately empty and still. It is this which constitutes the cultivation of [insight] contemplation.'

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/EBM_excerpts/EBM_X-16_X-06.pdf, p 14)

'Mindfulness is nonconceptual awareness. Another English term for Sati is 'bare attention'. It is not thinking. It does not get involved with thought or concepts. It does not get hung up on ideas or opinions or memories. It just looks. Mindfulness registers experiences, but it does not compare them. It does not label them or categorize them. It just observes everything as if it was occurring for the first time. It is not analysis which is based on reflection and memory. It is, rather, the direct and immediate experiencing of whatever is happening, without the medium of thought. It comes before thought in the perceptual process.'

(https://www.vipassana.com/meditation/mindfulness_in_plain_english_15.php)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 10th, 2020 at 10:43 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

How can one distinguish a conceptual emptiness from the actual luminosity with these sentences?

Astus wrote:

That was not the subject of the post, so it shouldn't be something to look for there.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 11th, 2020 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

The difference is not view nor the goal, Buddhahood, the difference is in method, the intelligence of the trainee, and so on.

Astus wrote:

And that difference in method is the question. You have kindly provided <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542802#p542802> of Vajrayana methods, where it was made clear that the difference proposed was how it's not the five objects of desires that are given up but 'the ordinary conceptuality about the five objects of desire that is the root of all attachment and aversion'. To that I <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542869#p542869> that it is no different from what is done in Sutrayana. Then the efficacy of seeing the emptiness of appearances was <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542875#p542875>, and <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542901#p542901> by showing that there is no difference in freedom from proliferation. So, how is there a difference in method, when the method of Vajrayana is to eliminate ordinary concepts instead of objects, and so it is with Sutrayana too? But if the absence of proliferation is not a method, then Vajrayana doesn't have it either. Or it could be said that the difference lies in the method of attaining nonconceptual wisdom, but then the problem is in proposing wisdom that can be used in Vajrayana as a method where the five objects of desire are not eliminated.

Malcolm said:

Secret Mantra is superior because the wisdom which arises in the mind at the time of the descent of gnosis, or third empowerment and so forth, is freedom from proliferation realized directly.

Astus wrote:

That is an answer then to have wisdom available from the start, although the third empowerment is said to be only an example, and the fourth is the actual realisation that is the level of Dzogchen (Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 130-132) and Mahamudra (e.g. The Treasury of Knowledge, vol 6, p 231-233; further elaborated in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 485-490). The verbal instruction to directly see the nature of mind is found in both the Vajrayana and the Sutrayana (Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 181), so if there is a methodical difference, it is related to the example

wisdom, but not the real one.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 11th, 2020 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

The wisdom is the same in sutra and tantra. But the methods are quite different.

Astus wrote:

It is through removing the two obscurations with wisdom that one arrives at buddhahood (Uttaratantra Shastra, 7.390-391), as buddha-nature itself is already complete with perfect qualities.

As Gampopa stated:

'When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 252)

One can also obtain wisdom through a

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225467.html>, by a <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225468.html>, or <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225469.html>.

Again, from Gampopa:

'In that case, if all these are included in meditating on only the essence or the mind-as-such, why do there appear teachings on so many graduated methods? It is for the purpose of leading all those sentient beings of little fortune, who are ignorant in the ultimate nature.'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 254-255)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2020 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

Then you've misunderstood what "ordinary conceptuality" means. What does it mean? It means to conceive the five buddhas, the five mothers, the male and female bodhisattvas as skandhas, elements, sense organs and sense objects.

Astus wrote:

Then instead of me <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542869#p542869> it, let's be more specific. For instance, what is perceiving Vairocana in/as the sound of a

doorbell? How is it something other than the standard 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form'?

Malcolm said:

The sūtras do not teach that the five skandhas, five elements, sense organs, sense objects and so on, are, their real nature, the mandala of the five buddhas, five mothers, etc.

Astus wrote:

The sutras teach the indivisibility of the two truths, and its realisation. Vajrayana may put that into a practice of visualising buddhas, but the point is still to get rid of grasping at phenomena.

Malcolm said:

Incorrect. The methodical difference is related to both kinds of gnosis, not merely the first, since in ordinary persons, the second arises from the first.

Astus wrote:

Real wisdom is the defining attainment of noble beings, and it is realised through vipasyana, wouldn't you agree?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2020 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Wrong. It is completion stage where subtle obscuration is removed. The Dalai Lama is good at explaining it. Visualization of buddhas is not going to do that.

Astus wrote:

And in completion stage what does it mean to see the five skandhas as the five buddhas?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Well Gampopa taught fivefold path mahamudra to practitioners and sutra mahamudra to laypersons.

Astus wrote:

The Fivefold Mahamudra is a teaching of the Drikungpas coming from Jigten Sumgon. Gampopa taught to a few close disciples candali, to everyone else (monastic or not) he taught what is now called Sutra Mahamudra, and regarding the reason behind that distinction between the two approaches:

'The Mahāmudrā of bliss and emptiness on the path of means
Is the actual practice of secret mantra,
But those who practise it are few and far between.
The Mahāmudrā of the innate on the path of liberation
Is an easier practice offering great reward at little risk,
And is of benefit to all, regardless of capacity.'
(<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jamgon-kongtrul/mahamudra-swift-lord-of-realization>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2020 at 9:41 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

also found extensively taught and practiced in Drukpa Kagyu as well.

Astus wrote:

Thanks, that's good to know.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 12th, 2020 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

In sūtra there is no antidotal method of conceiving the appearance of things as pure which are typically conceived by ordinary sentient being as impure. Emptiness, in sutra, is provided as cure for this, in terms of nature, but not in terms of appearance. Vajrayāna address both nature and appearance; sūtra only addresses nature, not appearance.

Astus wrote:

One sees a tasty looking apple pie. How not to fall into craving? For instance, the Vitakkasanthana Sutta gives five (progressive) methods: pay attention to something else (that is conducive to good thoughts), consider the drawbacks of craving, forget and pay no attention to it, relax the mental fabrications/concoctions about it, subdue the thoughts by force. Or one can think of it as something disgusting, something undesirable; or as something insubstantial, meaningless, and worthless. How would Vajrayana address this situation? If one thinks one is a buddha one can just give in to any impulse?

Malcolm said:

The distinction between the the common and uncommon Mahāyāna is principally the difference between method, the latter being more efficacious and more rapid. One does not merely regard oneself as buddhanatured, causally, one regards oneself as a buddha from the outset of entering the path. One does not regard one's teacher as being "like a

buddha," one regards one's master as an actual buddha right from the outset and so on, based on the special methods of abhiṣeka, sadhana, and so forth.

Astus wrote:

How does it make it more efficacious to think of oneself being a buddha, instead of not to think of oneself as anything at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 13th, 2020 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

Based in a to achieve buddhahood to benefit all beings eat the apple pie and enjoy it. You are a bodhisattva now. No need to rush.

Astus wrote:

That does not seem to agree with the teachings.

'Take food as medicine, in the right amount,
Without attachment, without hatefulness:
Don't eat for vanity, for pride or ego's sake,
Eat only for your body's sustenance.'
(Letter to a Friend by Nagarjuna, v 38, tr Padmakara Translation Group)

'Buddhas told those with desire
That food, clothes and dwellings are all
To be avoided and to remain
Close to their spiritual guides.'
(Four Hundred Stanzas by Aryadeva, v 138, tr Ruth Sonam)

'Most sentient beings are greedy for tastes; for the sake of food, they commit vile actions and are born in the hells. But those who {know the Dharma} are contented, not greedy, free from longing; they do not bow down to the sense of taste, but are contented and can be nourished even with very low-quality food.'
(Multitude of Jewels Sutra (Ratnarāśisūtra) quoted in The Training Anthology of Santideva, p 127, tr Charles Goodman)

See also: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225714.html>

Crazywisdom said:

Vajrayana is based on this attitude. There is the deity yoga you mentioned. At this stage one conceptually views the pie as the consort.

Astus wrote:

How does that help in not feeding one of the root causes of samsara?

Crazywisdom said:

At the completion stage one has directed one's essential elements into the central channel so one is fully dedicated to bliss. Seeing the empty nature of bliss becomes very clear and unborn enlightenment itself, one eats the pie or does whatever is being offered or presented as a spontaneous benefit.

Astus wrote:

If one knows that the object of desire is unreal, there is no more basis for desire to arise, just as one may crave, vie, and even kill for money, but not for fake bills. If the method given is to see that whatever enjoyment may come is empty, how is that any different from what is taught in the sutras?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 13th, 2020 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

jake said:

Please return to the topic. Thanks!

Astus wrote:

It might be split from around

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542722#p542722> or

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542738#p542738>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

Is it correct to say to my son: "There are three vehicles, Sutra, Tantra and Mahamudra"- without mentioning Dzogchen?

Astus wrote:

There are Sutrayana and Vajrayana, and within Vajrayana there are the Path of Means (thabs lam) and the Path of Liberation (grol lam). It is the path of liberation where you find sutra and essence Mahamudra, while the path of means includes tantra

Mahamudra. At the same time, Hinayana includes the Sravakayana and

Pratyekabuddhayana, while Mahayana has the common and uncommon paths; of

those Hinayana and common Mahayana is Sutrayana, and the uncommon Mahayana is Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

So now you accept Drikung Kagyu? Essence Mahamudra is not a yana, it is based on Mahamudra Tilaka Tantra and others. It is tantric.

Astus wrote:

If we take Gampopa's word on it, Mahamudra per se is neither sutra nor tantra, but beyond them.

'In his texts, Gampopa distinguishes three main paths. (1) The paramitayana is called "the path of renunciation" and "the path of accumulation," which relies on inferential analysis and is for those who have faith and are of dull faculties. (2) The path of mantra is labeled "the path of transformation" and "the path of means," which relies on direct perception and is for those who are afflicted and of medium faculties. (3) The path of Mahamudra is "the path of prajna" and "the path of suchness," which relies on blessing and is for those who are intelligent and of sharp faculties. He also describes these three paths as follows:

(1) As for taking inference as the path, after having scrutinized all phenomena through arguments [such as] being beyond singularity and multiplicity, one says that there is no [other] possibility [for phenomena to be] than these [possibilities that one has examined] and then posits that everything is empty. [This is the path of] inference.

(2) [The practice of] nadls, vayus, and tilakas, 782 the repeated recitation of mantras, and so on, which are based on the generation stage of the deity's body, make up the path of blessing.

(3) As for taking direct perceptions as the path, a genuine guru says that connate mind as such is the luminous dharmakaya. Through having been taught an unmistakable instruction of definitive meaning like that, one then takes native mind as the path, without separating the triad of view, conduct, and meditation in terms of this connate mind about which one has gained certainty within oneself.

Elsewhere, Gampopa explicitly states that Mahamudra is the highest path that actually transcends both sutra and tantra. All of this clearly suggests that Gampopa considered Mahamudra per se as a path that does not belong to either sutra or tantra but lies beyond both. In practice, most of Gampopa's preserved teachings consist primarily of sutra-based instructions and then conclude with Mahâmudrâ, either not teaching the path of mantra at all or mentioning it only in passing.'

(When the Clouds Part, p 192-193)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

It still requires an empowerment. The so-called "descent of the gnosis vajra

empowerment" discussed by Indrabhūti in the Jñānasiddhi.

Astus wrote:

That is like Sakya Pandita's criticism of the Kagyupas, something that they rejected/refuted.

'Now the Venerable Mid-la did not teach the upaya-marga and the Mahamudra separately, but sGam-po-pa used to preach the hidden precepts of the upaya-marga to those only whom he considered fit to receive Tantric initiations. (On the other hand) he used to bestow the hidden precepts of the Mahamudra on those who were fit to receive the paramitas, though they did not get any (Tantric) initiation.'
(The Blue Annals, p 459)

'Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of Mahamudra], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the Mahamudra teachings. He spoke about the method of directly guiding the disciple toward the intrinsic reality of the mind.'
(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 123)

'Now, in the cultivation of the path of method, three things are necessary: the empowerments which ripen, the reading transmissions which provide support, and the instructions which bring liberation. For the practice of the path of liberation, however, there is no particular empowerment that is required, because the practice itself consists of the two practices of tranquility and insight alone.'
(The Ninth Karmapa's Ocean of Definitive Meaning by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 57)

Malcolm said:

The main practice of course here is guru yoga, this is the "blessings" part.

Astus wrote:

If by this you mean that guru yoga is sufficient, then that agrees with Situ Tenpai (Oral Transmission of the Supreme Siddhas in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 204-205).

Malcolm said:

In this respect, Gampopa is cribbing his early training as a practitioner of Nyingma tantras, and the Mind Series (sems sde) in particular.

Astus wrote:

Based on Gampopa's teachings it's more likely from the Kadampas, if anyone.

'In line with the texts by Monlarn Tsiiltrim, these instructions are further evidence that Mahamudra style teachings existed in the Kadampa School, that this was the case even before Gampopa, and that Gampopa received such instructions.'
(When the Clouds Part, p 198)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

What you cannot seem to accept is this is taught through the Dohas which are the pith instruction lineage. And you cannot practice this without a guru. There is no chance to do this by reading a book.

Astus wrote:

What do you base that assumption on? The requirement of receiving the teachings of Mahamudra/Vajrayana from a guru, and being devoted to him/her is repeated practically everywhere. What would be the point of me denying that?

'Devotion is the head of meditation, it is taught.

The lama opens the door to the profound oral teachings

To the meditator who always turns to him,

Grant your blessing that uncontrived devotion be born within.'

(<http://www.rinpoche.com/dchng.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 4:50 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

What you are missing is this avoidance attitude is for monks. Further, it is for monks who are not working on completion stage.

Astus wrote:

Not just for monks.

'When thoughts of sensual desire arise in him towards his own wife, and he comes under the influence of reactive emotions, then, seeing the foulness of his wife and with a frightened mind, he should not be bound by attachment to engaging in sensual pleasures, and should always reflect on impermanence, nonself, and impurity.'

(Inquiry of Ugra Sutra (Ugradattaparipṛcchāsūtra) quoted in The Training Anthology of Santideva, p 81, tr Charles Goodman)

Crazywisdom said:

One is not at all greedy at the point of completion stage.

Astus wrote:

How has greed disappeared by then? Also, if it's gone, there is no intention at all to simply enjoy sense pleasures.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Malcolm said:

to transform ordinary daily conduct and bring it into the path by replacing impure conceptuality with pure conceptuality.

Astus wrote:

Why would it produce a different mental habit regarding clinging to sense pleasures if one eats the pie as a dessert or as an offering, since actually one eats it because of its taste? Of course, it adds something good to it, but it how would it change the basic intention?

Malcolm said:

When one is on an island composed entirely of gold, one will have attachment to no specific part of it, one will have no discrimination towards anything on it, and thereby, one is freed of clinging.

Astus wrote:

On an island of gold one does not hoard gold, one does not want gold at all. So seeing an apple pie then is no different from seeing an empty plate, and one normally does not think much about empty plates. But still, it does not answer what makes the Vajrayana method more efficient.

Malcolm said:

We already think of ourselves, this is a given. In other words, in just the same way as fire is used to put out fire, or water is used to draw water out of the ear, the creation stage uses conceptuality to overcome conceptuality. Hence it is more profound than methods which try to suppress or eliminate conceptuality, such as those you mention above.

Astus wrote:

I can see how changing one's view about oneself can be helpful, if one has sufficient faith of course, and then it still takes practice, like for instance to remind oneself of being a buddha and not a glutton. At the same time, one could also remind oneself of all sorts of other teachings to help alleviating harmful impulses. So while for some it might be easier to believe in one's own buddha state, for others to contemplate the drawbacks of indulgence, for others to simply recognise the intention as baseless, and so on.

Malcolm said:

These above teachings are consistent with the path of renunciation. However, they are contradicted by the higher teachings of Vajrayāna, the path of transformation, and the citations illustrating this point have already been provided above, so there is no need to repeat them here.

Astus wrote:

It's been stated that Vajrayana takes appearances on the path, but as for how that is different from not grasping them through recognition of their emptiness (as taught for instance in <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542869#p542869>), has so far not been demonstrated. Yes, skandhas are buddhas, and buddhas are pure beings, and thinking of oneself as a pure being is a unique method of Vajrayana. But even if one can reimagine oneself, that in itself does not liberate one from the three poisons, does it?

Malcolm said:

As also mentioned above, the Buddha's teachings of sūtra are for those with a) less affliction, and b) less capability. But contrast, Vajrayāna teachings are designed for those with a) greater affliction, and b) greater capabilities.

Therefore, can either accept the Buddha's teachings in the tantras, in which case, one has no choice but to become a Vajrayāna practitioner; but failing that, if one cannot generate faith in these teachings, then leave them aside, but do not criticize them, because there in lies the fault of criticizing the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

I said nothing against Vajrayana, not that it is not efficient, not that it is less efficient, not that it is for less capable or dull people. On the other hand, claims like that have been said against every non-Vajrayana teaching. So I'm asking about some clear reasons for such an opinion.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

None. But Vajrayana also does not believe in the efficacy of renunciation (or more to the point: it does not consider it the most efficient manner to achieve liberation). That puts it directly at odds with the Sravakayana.

Astus wrote:

If it does not renounce the three poisons, does it simply deny their existence? Because if it accepts that beings are driven by them, then either one can go by obeying the impulses, or not. Not obeying is renunciation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

I base this assumption on the fact you obviously do not know how gurus transmit this, Kagyu gurus. I spent years w one and he introduced me to many other kagyus, Karma Kagyu, Taklung Kagyu *(a holiness), MANY.... no one ever said mahamudra without guru yoga. No guru yoga in kagyu ever was without deity yoga. So i am calling you out as a

liar buddy

Astus wrote:

You attribute to me things I did not even write. Furthermore, I have clearly given the sources of specific statements. If you say the sources are wrong, that might be so. If you have better ones, why not present them?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

Go Lotsawa was writing about four hundred years after Gampopa, if I remember the dates correctly. In Gampopa's own writings he repeatedly states the importance of empowerment. See the two texts Tony Duff translated of his.

Astus wrote:

Is Jamgon Kongtrul wrong then?

'Dakpo Rinpoché induced the realization of mahamudra even in beginners who had not received empowerment. Therefore this is the tradition of the perfections. These are instructions arising primarily from the Kadampa tradition.'

(Treasury of Knowledge, vol 9, p 212)

And Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche?

'The Sutrayana approach to Mahamudra is seen as a very profound method because it does not require any of the sophisticated and complex tantric rituals, deity yoga visualization practices, or samayas. It is a simple sutra approach, yet it conveys the direct transmission of the tantric essence of awakening. This particular approach is also known as a secret passage.

...

The Sutra Mahamudra approach is seen as a specialty of the Kagyu tradition and was the central emphasis of Gampopa's teachings. Therefore, although it originated in India and was also taught by Marpa and Milarepa, Gampopa is regarded as the main figure responsible for bringing this teaching to its full development and manifestation.'

(Wild Awakening, p 32, 33)

PeterC said:

There are Kagyupas who say things like that, and there are Kagyupas who would not. Of those who would say that, some would qualify it by saying that the pointing out instruction, which is central to the practice of Kagyu Mahamudra, could also be interpreted as a form of the fourth empowerment. Those who would not say that typically give an empowerment whenever they do a teaching on Mahamudra.

Astus wrote:

Jamgon Kongtrul also notes (ToK, v9, p 213): 'It has been the practice of most of Dakpo's heart disciples to present the mahamudra instructions after having first bestowed the empowerment.'

The same practice of mixing is also noted by Tashi Namgyal:

'In the present age, Mahamudra and Mantrayana [tantric mysticism] are being blended and meditated upon in order to enhance realization. Many tantric elements are also incorporated into the preparatory practices. For those who wish to practice these, the empowerment for actualizing the inner potentiality is certainly essential.'
(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 125)

PeterC said:

So it's a distinction without a difference.

Astus wrote:

It's a distinction made by Thrangu Rinpoche.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 7:28 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

I already answered that, using the fire metaphor.

Astus wrote:

Is <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=542794#p542774> the metaphor you refer to? That was more like a riddle, furthermore, if it's a metaphor, please provide what it was a metaphor of. Also, how can you crave without craving?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 8:17 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Doesn't it occur to you that this is Kongtrul basically acceding to Sapan's objections?

Astus wrote:

From a few sentences before, on the same page:

'Concerning this, the dharma lord Sakya Panchen asserted:

"Mahamudra is not designated in the tradition of the perfections. The pristine awareness of mahamudra only arises from empowerment."

Adhering to this position, the bigshots broadcast much meaningless chatter, but as the master Jnanakirti stated in Entry into Suchness:

"The other term for the Mother Perfection of Wisdom is mahamudra, because it is the

very essence of nondual pristine awareness."

What is emphasised as a difference between standard paramitayana and mahamudra is the special instructions, i.e. pointing out the nature of mind, that is, instead of starting with the emptiness of objects, it points to the emptiness of the subject.

'In the sutra systems it is taught that without first resolving the object grasped upon, the subject—the fixated mind—cannot be resolved. ... In our case, we believe that proceeding in that way leads to a lot of difficulty in resolving the fixating mind. Therefore we first resolve the fixating mind, whereby the object of grasping becomes resolved by being self-liberated.'

(The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, vol 1, p 266, 267)

Also, a remark from Situ Tenpai Nyinje:

'These principal instructions for gaining certainty, such as looking for the mind, have been made the subject of ridicule by some Tibetans, but that's the same as all the superficial things I've ever heard. ... [Nagarjuna's] Commentary on Bodhicitta and other texts give this same teaching in a brief form. It seems therefore that those [Tibetans who mock the instructions] haven't read these texts. Kamalasila explains in detail how to search for the mind in his Stages of Meditation, where he provides quotations from the Heap of jewels (Ratnakuta) Sutra.'

(Oral Transmission of the Supreme Siddhas by Situ Tenpai Nyinje, in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 248-249)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

I don't think he would mean that you could practice this without receiving some instruction equivalent to the fourth empowerment.

Astus wrote:

If pointing out instructions are equivalent to the fourth empowerment, then no. Otherwise, yes, he does say that no empowerment is needed.

PeterC said:

Is he saying that recognition of nature of mind does not require any form of empowerment? That the pointing out is just words?

Astus wrote:

Here's more from Thrangu Rinpoche, on pointing out instructions:

'There is also the tradition of pointing out the nature of mind, in which there's some sort of vigorous manner of causing the students to recognize it on the spot without their

going through this kind of gradual investigation. This is very impressive, and often people have an experience of recognition, but soon thereafter it vanishes. The superiority of the gradual approach is that, while less dramatic initially, when you develop on your own a recognition through experience and through hard work, then you don't lose it, you know; it's because you developed it, and you get to work with it. Initially, the recognition starts to occur and is not that stable, then it's stabilized, then you gradually develop confidence in the recognition, and on the basis of confidence, you learn, through practice, through time and effort, how to rest in it.'

(Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, p 136-137)

'In short, I think it is of far more importance that people receive this kind of complete and systematic instruction so that they can gradually develop experience on their own, than that some kind of dramatic pointing-out procedure be done. Of course, it is possible to give dramatic pointing-out instruction, and when you do so, some people do recognize their mind's nature. But, if I may say so, I question the stability and, therefore, ultimately the value of that. It certainly is a dramatic experience for those people who achieve it, but I see no evidence of their kleshas diminishing as a result. And furthermore, they then carry away with them the arrogance of the thought, "I have seen my mind's nature." I think it is of far greater importance actually to practice meditation slowly and surely and make all possible use of the resources which this book in particular gives you. It is after all a big book and contains within it much instruction, much guidance, and a lot of questions that can help you to question and therefore refine your own experience.'

(Ocean of Definitive Meaning, p 127-128)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: Age of Mahayana Schools

Content:

Grigoris said:

What if I crave for liberation?

What if I desire realisation?

Astus wrote:

Craving liberation is not the same as reaching it. But when reached, there's no more craving. See: <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn51/sn51.015.than.html>.

Grigoris said:

If I hate the afflictions?

Astus wrote:

"Having slain anger, one sleeps soundly;

Having slain anger, one does not sorrow;

The killing of anger, O devatā,

With its poisoned root and honeyed tip:

This is the killing the noble ones praise,

For having slain that, one does not sorrow.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn1.71/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Too bad you did not read Jñānakīrti's whole text. You are merely dancing on books you cannot even read in the original. Just cherry picking citations because they suit your biases. Sorry, but this is the case.

Astus wrote:

It was Jamgon Kongtrul who quoted that passage from Jnanakirti in order to prove his point. Others have also referred to him to show the same.

'Jamyang Sakya Pandita says in Distinguishing the Three Vows:

Our Mahāmudrā

Is the gnosis arising from initiation.

Relying on that passage, some say there is no term for Mahāmudrā in the sutra system. I think it is unacceptable to say this, for it has been explained by many pandits, adepts, and scholars that superior, middling, and lesser perfection-vehicle students, abiding with a stable mind in tranquil abiding and superior insight, meditate on the nonduality of method and wisdom, which is Mahāmudrā. Jñānakīrti's Distinguishing Clearly the Entire Sum of the Buddha's Words says:

Those with superior faculties who are especially diligent in the perfection vehicle, meditate on tranquil abiding and superior insight, and right from the time they are ordinary individuals, they have a perfect realization arising from Mahāmudrā; because of that, they obtain the signs of irreversibility.

Jñānakīrti also states in the same text:

These superior students also meditate first on tranquil abiding and superior insight in order to enter the meditation preparatory to the nondual Mahāmudrā.

Not only that; the term Mahāmudrā is used for emptiness. The King of Concentration Sutra says, "The intrinsic nature of all dharmas is Mahāmudrā." This point is taught in this and other passages.'

(The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems, p 149-150)

'The finger of mahamudra points to the momentary awareness, which does not come down on either of the [two] sides, appearance or emptiness. Thus say those versed in the pith instructions. Even though this tradition belongs to the Paramitayana, it is labeled mahamudra. Thus it is explained in the Tattvadasakatika by Sahajavajra. It is also explained in the Tattvavatara by Jnanakirti in the root text and its commentary.'
(A Direct Path to the Buddha Within, p 188-189)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2020 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Therefore, we can understand the term "mahāmudra" exists exclusively the tantras.

Astus wrote:

Even if that were so, apparently Kagyupas, starting with Gampopa, taught what is now called sutra Mahamudra, and it is a unique teaching of this tradition, and there's an offshoot Mahamudra among the Gelugpas, where they also teach it as a separate one from tantra Mahamudra.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2020 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Likewise, you can call Prajñāpāramitā "mahāmudra" if your goal is to inspire unfortunate yogis, as Jñānakīrti maintains, but it is still just calling something a name for which it lacks proper attributes; for example, calling a dog "Lion," or a small hill a "mountain," or a tiny pond a "lake" or a huge man "little."

Astus wrote:

So would you say then that Kagyupas are quite mistaken, that what has been called one of the main http://namobuddhapub.org/files/teachings/ThranguR-Mahamudra_and_the_Kagyu_Lineage.pdf over the centuries is fictitious?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2020 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

I was refuting your citations, showing how they do not match the claims put forward for them. If others make errors, why should the one who points them out be held at fault?

Astus wrote:

What do you then make of Maitripa's teachings, who is often named as the Indian source of equating Mahamudra with Madhyamaka?

'This teaching tradition of Maitripa's Middle Way lineage was given the name "Mahāmudrā," the same name that is renowned in the anuttara class of secret mantra as the wisdom of bliss and emptiness. Various terms have been created to give a name to the state in which the view of this form of the Middle Way has taken birth in one's mindstream. They include "making manifest the ordinary mind" and "making manifest

the dharmakāya.” Also, when apparent phenomena (chöchen/chos can)—sprouts, thoughts, and so on—are realized not to exist apart from their own true nature (chönyi/chos nyid), this realization has been called “thoughts dawning as the dharmakāya.”

The lineage for this teaching system is the same as the lineage described above from Gampopa onward, starting with lord Düsüm Khyenpa.'

(The Karmapa's Middle Way: Feast for the Fortunate, p 85-86)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2020 at 3:37 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

The point against is it is misleading.

Astus wrote:

Why not then correct it?

Crazywisdom said:

Some want to validate nonlineage book based enlightenment to prop themselves up as a web guru with cut and paste instructions.

Astus wrote:

That would be counterproductive. If books were enough, there would be no point to prop oneself up as a guru of any sort. One should rather emphasise one's own credentials as a reliable source in order to highlight a personal authority.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2020 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

You won't find any statement of gampopa himself saying you don't need any sort of empowerment, whether elaborate or unelaborate. You present a few quotations that might suggest this, but they run counter to the experience of the vast majority of living and dead kagyü masters.

Astus wrote:

Why not look for where Gampopa states one needs any sort of empowerment for Mahamudra? The quotations so far clearly differentiated the "tantra" from the "sutra" version, and for the tantric it's unambiguous about the need for empowerment. At the same time, Kagyüpas have been under attack since the time of Sakya Pandita that they teach Mahamudra outside the standard HYT system, and various teachers defended their position regarding the validity of Gampopa's Mahamudra. Were they all arguing about nothing? If "unelaborate empowerment" is the pointing out instruction, that is,

the very method that Mahamudra is taught, then likely those who debate the absence of empowerment mean the complete four empowerments and they do not accept the possibility that direct introduction equals the fourth empowerment and is sufficient on its own.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 16th, 2020 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Perhaps he did equate Madyamaka with Mahāmudra (textual citation please), but how is this different than equating the gnosis of Prajñāpāramitā with Mahāmudra?

Astus wrote:

Maitripa's teachings on amanasikara is mentioned as such, because of Madhyamaka and Vajrayana bringing one equally to it, so that is no different from equating the gnosis of both.

Malcolm said:

But in this text, Maitripa is clearly claiming that Mantrayāna is superior in method. I mean, what else is there to say?

Astus wrote:

Gampopa and others have said the same of course. Still one question is left. Even after empowerments and generation stage practices what is used to introduce Mahamudra, the nature of mind, is not necessarily candali but often samatha and vipasyana, where vipasyana means same or similar pointers as what is in the sutras and treatises. So when it comes to meeting face to face with reality, not only the reality seen, but also the immediately preceding directions to it can be the same. Therefore the methodical difference between Paramitayana and Vajrayana primarily in how one arrives at the point to be capable of genuine vipasyana, where the former has studies and samatha, the latter has abhiseka, deity yoga, candali, etc., but most importantly guru yoga for the same purposes. Is that an acceptable distinction according to you?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 16th, 2020 at 8:56 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Without empowerment, a guru is just a common Mahāyāna guru, there is no guru yoga in common Mahāyāna.. Guru Yoga is method which strictly belongs to Highest Yoga Tantra. So no, it is not an acceptable distinction. Guru Yoga is also connected with the so-called subtle body, and is not merely a practice of devotion, as is commonly misunderstood.

Astus wrote:

I did not mean the guru yoga as part of sutra but as part of Vajrayana. The distinction I asked about was regarding the difference of methods getting to the point of being capable of performing vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 16th, 2020 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Crazywisdom said:

You have somehow totally missed the point of energy, the heart chakra, the bindus, and rainbow light.

Astus wrote:

I studied and heard mainly some sutra-style Mahamudra teachings, so I'm not particularly familiar with other parts of Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 16th, 2020 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

These two methods, the two stages and guru yoga, are more effective for giving rise to vipaśyanā because there is no intellectual analysis involved. It is based on a direct perception, no matter how fleeting, not inferred through reasoning and analysis.

Astus wrote:

What do you call then instructions like these?

'Establishing the appearance of the mind
is like a thief in an empty house.

It is beyond color, form, shape, and characteristics.

There is no searcher and no object of a search.

This is my heart's advice.

Mind and conceptual thought are like water and ice.

They have always been inseparable,
yet cannot be said to be one thing or two.

This is my heart's advice.

The inseparability of appearance and mind
is like last night's dream.

It possesses the four characteristics
and is the union of appearance and emptiness.

It cannot be said to be one thing or two.

This is my heart's advice.'

(The Jewel Treasury of Advice, p 35)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

Definition of that term again please.

Astus wrote:

You can see a summary definition by Dzogchen Ponlop

<https://www.lionsroar.com/pointing-out-ordinary-mind/>. It is where the practice is with calm abiding and special insight, as for instance what you find taught in Daring Steps Toward Fearlessness in the last section where the Short Vajradhara Lineage Prayer is commented upon.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Words and concepts.

Astus wrote:

That's very Zen of you to say so.

But, I still feel that the question is not yet clarified. You wrote:

Vipaśyanā, in Vajrayāna is not a result of intellectual analysis, it is rather a product of integrating the experience of the example gnosis or the genuine gnosis induced during empowerment, depending on the practitioner.

But you also said that pointing out instructions are equal to the fourth empowerment. What was quoted were examples of such pointers, and they are used in vipasyana, but there are others as well, like <https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/tantra-texts/mahamudra-eliminating-the-darkness-of-ignorance/mahamudra-vipashyana-meditation>. As for no intellectual analysis, well, right, but that doesn't make it different from how insight is taught in the sutras, in fact, sutras are also used next to dohas and tantras to explain Mahamudra vipasyana, hence my question, whether the dividing line is in how one eventually gets to be able to do vipasyana in order to gain gnosis.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 4:02 PM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

In Zen time and existence are not two different things; time is always existence-and-

time, existence is always existence-and-time.

Astus wrote:

Taking a common phrase and turning it into a "Zen expression" is Dogen's usual play, but those expressions were rarely if ever used in such a fashion before, and only used so after because of Dogen. Nevertheless, when one conceives such an expression, all such terms in the three times are seen from this point, changing/gaining/revealing/losing meaning. This itself shows how existence-time operates. Otherwise, there is nothing new here, conditioned things have always been understood as impermanent, and whatever is impermanent is empty, and emptiness is liberation, hence buddha-nature is walls, tiles, pebbles.

Ted Biringer said:

In short, each and every particular thing, being, and event (i.e. dharma) is an intrinsic and essential element of total time, and each and every moment or duration of time is an intrinsic and essential element of total existence – hence each and every particular dharma is a manifestation of the whole universe, and the whole universe is manifest in and as each and every particular dharma.

Astus wrote:

"Everything is connected", and other such nice sounding but fairly useless ideas only make things unnecessarily complicated. To see existence-time for oneself, all it takes is to reflect on one's being as change without assumptions of an entity that is inside or outside change.

'If we leave it utterly up to existence, even though [the moments] before and after manifest heedless blundering, they abide in their place as existence-time. Abiding in our place in the Dharma in the state of vigorous activity is just existence-time. We should not disturb it [by interpreting it] as "being without," and we should not enforceably call it "existence."'

(Uji, in SBGZ, vol 1, BDK ed, p 146)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

if you want to understand what the meaning is of Mahamudra and how it is accomplished, you have to receive and practice it from a teacher and understand it in those terms. You cannot understand it based on books.

Astus wrote:

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=543776#p543776> put forth is fairly abstract and theoretical. It is stated by various authors that the vipasyana used in Mahamudra matches with what is taught in Sutrayana works (e.g. Situ Tenpai Nyinje in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 249; Dakpo Tashi Namgyal in Mahamudra the Moonlight, p

181; Ngawang Kunga Tenzin in The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, p 264-267). Since that is so, the question is if the difference in method between Paramitayana and Vajrayana can be identified in how one gets to the point of being able to engage in vipasyana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 5:27 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

The fact that people write books about it doesn't mean they think that you can understand it by only reading books.

Astus wrote:

Sure. But that was neither stated nor even implied.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

You would need to identify exactly which instructions you're talking about to compare the instructions found in sutra on vipasyana and those found in Kagyu mahamudra.

Astus wrote:

Here are examples from Mahamudra the Moonlight. If required I can copy here the various quotes.

'Which of the scriptures deal with this subject? One may wonder which of the scriptures deal with meditation on the vision of reality, which arises from insight and which is capable of resolving doubts and assumptions. Such a vision is attained after having determined that all things are only mind created, and that even the mind's intrinsic nature is devoid of true essence.'

(p 185)

Then quotes from Sutralamkara, Bodhicittavivarana, Bhavanakrama.

'The actual stages of this meditation. During the earlier meditation on tranquil absorption, the settling of mind in a nondiscriminating absorption was predominant. Here, in this meditation on insight, the analyses of mind through discerning wisdom should be the predominant factor. By settling the mind in undistracted tranquility, one enhances the quality of the mind's lucidity and then examines this state. Here the method of determining the mind's innate essence is similar to those of the sutra tradition for determining selflessness of personality.'

(p 186)

Quote from Bhavanakrama.

'How this meditation compares with the original exposition. The followers of this meditation order describe the aforesaid meditation as discovering the mind.'
(p 188)

Quotes from Ratnakuta, Ratnakutapariṣccha-sūtra, Trayastriṃsat-parivarta, Bhavanakrama.

'The sūtras and the tantras are replete with many such words of wisdom. In summary, it has been stated that examination of the mind has to be so exhaustive as to embrace all the external and internal phenomena with special reference to color, shape, dwelling place, support, identity, and mode of mind. Only after a thorough examination will one understand that the nature of mind is formless, undemonstrable, without basis externally or internally, and is detached from discriminating thoughts. Thus, the intrinsic nature of mind is identical with space.'
(p 191)

Quotes from Bodhicittavivaraṇa, Śikṣasamuccaya.

'How to determine the nature of the mind. One now endeavors systematically to determine the mind through meditative methods such as those already described.'
(p 192)

Quotes from Mahākāraṇanīrdeśa-sūtra, Maitreya-pariṣccha-sūtra, Kāśyapa-pariṣccha-sūtra, Saṃdhinirmocana, Saṃdhivya-karaṇa-sūtra.

'The term "seeing the mind" is a simple designation for understanding the mind's unreality, which is detached from the beginning from all modes of existence or nonexistence.'
(p 195)

Quote from Prajñāpāramitā-saṃcayagāthā.

'The showing of all appearances to be the products of mind.'
(p 196)

Quotes from Lankavatāra-sūtra, Bodhicittavivaraṇa.

'The realization of mind, which will bring about an insight into all appearances.'
(p 198)

Quotes from Śatasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Aryadeva' (actually found in works by Bodhibhadra and Haribhadra), Catuḥśataka, Śatyadvaya of Atiśa, Saṃadhirāja-sūtra, Bodhicittavivaraṇa,

'The actual stage of this meditation. At this stage, the determination of thoughts and

appearances is similar to the determination of the selflessness of things according to the sutra system.'

(p 200)

No quotes from any source.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Queequeg said:

Actually, its useful to develop as a foundation for an ethical life.

Astus wrote:

That might be so, although for the same purpose there are teachings on karma and rebirth.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 11:20 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

yes that would be the point. I think what you're quoting here is the text, not the quotations in the text?

Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 185-186 said:

One may wonder which of the scriptures deal with meditation on the vision of reality, which arises from insight and which is capable of resolving doubts and assumptions. Such a vision is attained after having determined that all things are only mind-created, and that even the mind's intrinsic nature is devoid of true essence. The Sutralamkara illustrates this:

Understand that nothing exists apart from the mind.

Know that the mind itself is unreal.

An intelligent person, comprehending the unreality of the two,

Settles in the expanse of the nondual reality.

The Bodhichittavivarana expounds:

Having once established pure idealism,

Blessed seekers reject the reality of mind itself.

For the exponents of the Consciousness Only school

All the diverse appearances are the manifestation of mind.

What then is the self-nature of consciousness?

This is to be elucidated here.
“All things are but a product of the mind,”
The Supreme Sage expounded
To protect seekers with childish minds who might otherwise be terrified,
Even though this statement was not truly so.
All the conceptually designated, dependent conditionality
And established reality are but empty.¹⁰²
This is the singular essence of the abiding reality,
And should be determined in terms of one’s own mind.
For those who delight in the Great Vehicle,
Reality is perfectly even, without a self-essence,
Because the mind is nonarising right from the beginning.
Thus it was summarized by Buddha.

The first Bhavanakrama elaborates:

Thus, one contemplates that the three planes of phenomenal existence are the product of the mind only, and then one realizes that everything conceptually designated is simply of mental origin. If one examines every aspect of the mind, one is analyzing the intrinsic nature of all phenomena. In so examining one may further examine in the following manner. The mind as such cannot be real from the stand point of ultimate truth. How can the mind be real when it clings to images of what are essentially false sensory forms, etc., manifesting themselves externally in diverse appearances? Just as sensory forms, etc. are false, so the mind is also false since it is not any different from the former. The senses – emerging in diverse forms – are devoid of either one or many essences. The reality of the mind is not different from the senses; it is also devoid of either one or many essences. For these reasons the mind by nature is indeed like a magical scene. Like the mind, all phenomena in their intrinsic nature are also like a magical scene.

Similar elucidations are found in other treatises on the stages of meditation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 11:26 PM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Queequeg said:

One advantage of interdependence is that it doesn’t require confidence in rebirth so may be better suited to those who may either not believe or have an agnostic perspective.

Astus wrote:

The benefit of the doctrine of karma, even for those who are agnostics or materialists, is to recognise that actions originate in the mind and has impacts on the mind. So from the interpersonal aspect of ethics it points towards looking at the inner workings of the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

the intellectual view of sūtra and tantra is the same.

Astus wrote:

Does that include the part where for instance one needs to establish for oneself, not just through reasoning but also directly, that the mind is not established in the three times?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 17th, 2020 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Queequeg said:

Like I said, complimentary.

Astus wrote:

I did not question that part.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

Apologies for the pedantry, but you're making my point for me here.

Astus wrote:

They're sutrayana teachings. And directly from sutras:

Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 189-190 said:

Many similar passages are found in the scriptures. Searching for the mind through a contemplative analysis – even though [the mind] is not composed of any substance – serves the purpose of realizing that the mind is empty of an innate essence. The Bhavanakrama quotes the Phakpa Könchoktrin (Aryaratnamegha):

If those who meditate on the void analyze every discursive thought and every joyous contemplative state, they will realize that everything is void [free from an essence]. If they examine what the mind is, they will realize that it is void. If they search for the essence of the investigating mind, they will realize that it is also void. By realizing this, they will elevate themselves to inmost purity, detached from the mark [of duality].

Concerning the search for or examination of the mind, the Dharmadhatuprakrtyasambhedanirdeśa of the Ratnakuta states:

[The incarnate monk said:] O venerable ones, examine your mind in order to determine if it is identical with what has been designated as blue, yellow, red, white, maroon, or a crystal shade, or if it is pure, impure, eternal, impermanent, material, or immaterial.

They [the multitude of monks] replied: O venerable one, the mind is formless, undemonstrable, without appearance, intangible, groundless, and invisible.

Thereupon the incarnate monk spoke: O venerable ones, concerning the mind which is formless, undemonstrable, without appearance, intangible, groundless, and invisible, can it be conceived as dwelling inside, outside, or in between?

The monks replied: No sir, this is not so.

The incarnate monk asked: Venerable ones, if the mind is formless, undemonstrable, without appearance, intangible, groundless, and in - visible, then there is nothing to observe inside, outside, or in-between. Do you suppose that it has not evolved as a perfect reality?

They replied: No sir, this is not so.

The Ratnakuta says:

The search for the mind should be conducted thus: What is a lustful mind, a hateful mind, or an ignorant mind? Has the mind emerged in the past, does it do so in the present, or will it do so in the future? Very well, you should contemplate the fact that the past mind has ceased to exist, that the future mind has yet to arise, and that the present mind does not endure. O, Osung (Kasyapa), the mind cannot be perceived as dwelling inside, outside, or even in-between. O, Osung, concerning the nature of mind, there is nothing to investigate, nothing to demonstrate, nothing to support, nothing to make it appear, and nothing of visible form.

Again, the Buddha explains in the Ratnakuta:

O, Osung, one does not find the mind through a complete search. Whatever is undiscoverable cannot be conceived. Whatever is inconceivable did not arise in the past, nor will it in the future, nor does it arise at the present time. That which is neither past, nor future, nor present indeed transcends the three periods of time. That which so transcends the three periods of time cannot be construed as either existing or nonexistent.

The Ratnakuta-sutra states:

He who searches for the mind cannot find it inside or outside of himself, or collectively both outside and inside. He can neither find it in his psycho physical aggregates, in the elemental realms, nor in the sense faculties. Then, because he cannot find the mind, he explores inwardly the stream of his mind with the assumption that a thought arises from a perceptive image. He contemplates whether a perceptive image and mind exist distinctly from one another or whether they are identical. If the image is separate from

the mind, then there are two kinds of mind. If the image is the mind itself, then how can the mind "see" the mind, because the mind cannot "see" the mind itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 1:56 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

What do you mean by "the mind is not established in the three times?"

Astus wrote:

'In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical. If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable; and non-physical?" the Heap of jewels states: "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found Cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present." Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen.'

(Stages of Meditation, p 131-132)

'If you wish to recognize clearly the non-dwelling mind, then during your meditation just be aware that your mind does not think about any object or hold on to any dualities, such as good and evil, etc. Since past things are already past, you should not think about them anymore; and, thus, any thought about the past vanishes. This is known as being without the past. Furthermore, since future things have not yet arrived, you should neither seek nor wish for them; and, thus, any thought of the future vanishes. This is known as being without the future. Finally, since present things are already present, you should not grasp them nor allow a thought of love or hate to arise; and, thus, any thought about the present vanishes. This is known as being without the present. In summary, if no thought about these three time periods arises, then the three time periods do not exist. If a thought of moving arises, do not follow it; and the thought of moving will vanish. If a thought of dwelling arises, do not follow it; and the thought of dwelling will vanish.'

(<https://ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

'Rest in a state of clarity and naturalness. Rest relaxed, without tightness. Do not examine or analyze good and bad. Do not have doubts about what is or isn't. When thoughts appear, do not follow after their numerous appearances. Rest completely, like a sheaf of hay that has had its string cut. Rest. relaxed, in natural consciousness. Past thoughts have ceased, the future ones have not arisen. In this relaxed in-between state of the present, it's taught:

That mind is no mind ; the mind's nature is luminosity.
Just this mind alone, which is completely empty, clear, aware, and lucid, is what is called the perfection of wisdom, luminosity, mahamudra, dzokchen, and dharmakaya.' (Thr Unrivalled Instructions of Shang Rinpoche, in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 77)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Malcolm said:

To really understand what Dogen meant, I would want to see some native Japanese commentary on the issue.

Astus wrote:

https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms14.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

The introduction is not in the analysis.

...

The introduction is not in the verbal instruction.

Astus wrote:

Right, but the question is if the analysis/instruction used to get to the introduction/insight can also match between Sutrayana and Vajrayana, not just the wisdom/gnosis arrived at? For that I gave the example of looking at the mind/thoughts in terms of the three times, as that is a frame of reference used in both systems.

'The past mind has ceased, is destroyed ; the future mind is not born, has not arisen; the present mind cannot be identified. When you analyze in that way, you will see that all phenomena are like that. Nothing has reality; everything is just a creation of the mind. Therefore, you will understand that arising. remaining. and ceasing have no reality at all.' (A Record of Mahamudra Instructions by Pema Karpo, in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 146-147)

'The past is already past—

Don't try to regain it.

The present does not stay—

Don't try to touch it from moment to moment.

The future is not come—

Don't think about it beforehand.

With the three times non-existent,
Mind is the same as Buddha-mind.'
(Layman Pang, in "A Man of Zen", p 85)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

I understand the point you are trying to make, which is the same point you have been trying to make for years: one can learn Dharma from books without a master.

Astus wrote:

It isn't, as <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=543943#p543943>, and <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=543371#p543371>. It is something others keep bringing up.

Malcolm said:

The difference here between sūtra and tantra is again, in the former case it is purely an intellectual analysis, in the later case, based on empowerment.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the latter is intellectual analysis based on empowerment?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 18th, 2020 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

Astus, they think you have no contact to a master, because you do not come up with names.

Astus wrote:

You're very right that most Karma Kagyü groups are affiliated with Trinley Thaye Dorje in Europe. Actually, of the three groups (one being Diamond Way, obviously) in Hungary, all are. But that's not the reason I don't really visit them (like for instance last September Nydahl gave Mahamudra teachings in Budapest, and while I was a little tempted to go, eventually didn't, because, well, it's him). Although I am quite fond of Thrangu Rinpoche, it was only once, and even that just online, that I heard him teach. The Kagyupa teachers I had met and received teachings from were from the Taklung (Phakchok Rinpoche), the Drikung (Chetsang Rinpoche, Garchen Rinpoche, Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, Drupon Konchok Jigmet), and from the Drukpa (a disciple of Adeu Rinpoche) lineages. But all this, in my opinion, is totally irrelevant for the topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astute freely admitted above he has not received any Vajrayana teaching, nor direct introduction.

Astus wrote:

I <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=50&t=34185&p=543801#p543801> that I mainly studied and heard sutra-style Mahamudra teachings, as that is what I like the most in Vajrayana. But since I was fortunate enough to receive the Fivefold Mahamudra teaching, I cannot say other parts are totally unknown to me.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

Malcolm said:

Did you practice this?

Astus wrote:

As much as I could.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

LastLegend said:

Are you still Chan or no ?

Astus wrote:

If you mean whether I accept and apply the teachings of Bodhidharma and his heirs, then yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: Soto Zen

Content:

shanyin said:

Is a difference between Soto and Rinzai that one teaches gradual and the other sudden enlightenment?

Astus wrote:

No. All Zen schools teach sudden enlightenment.

shanyin said:

Sitting makes me think that all this Dharma and Buddhism is all supposed to be subjective so I am attracted to the idea that there is nothing one can do to attain enlightenment. Is that what Soto teaches?

Astus wrote:

Soto teaches the https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms07.pdf, so actually you can only do everything to attain enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 3:59 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

But surely the implication does follow, unless one believes that “sutra mahamudra” is an exceedingly slow path

Astus wrote:

It does not follow, because it's all a matter of skilful means, people using whatever is fitting for them.

'The Dharma is vast and it has many forms,
But the teachings that bring Buddhahood in a single lifetime
Are the two ultimate systems of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen.
The Mahāmudrā of bliss and emptiness on the path of means
Is the actual practice of secret mantra,
But those who practise it are few and far between.
The Mahāmudrā of the innate on the path of liberation
Is an easier practice offering great reward at little risk,
And is of benefit to all, regardless of capacity.'
(<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jamgon-kongtrul/mahamudra-swift-lord-of-realization>)

Gampopa Teaches Essence Mahamudra, p 194-195 said:

Well then, he asked, "In terms of practising to gain experience, which is the most profound oral Instruction?" The reply came, "The tradition of Jowo Je's lineage says:

For the thinking mind to become certain of
Death and impermanence then karmic cause and effect and
Loving kindness and compassion is profound.

I have heard one group say, 'If the view, emptiness, is not realized, there is no benefit.' I have heard some say, 'Meditation on the yidam deity is the profound practice.' I heard

guru Mila say, 'The meditation on the pranayama of Fierce Heat is the profound meditation.'

The dharma for which any given person develops certainty is the profound one for that person. Still, to take this further, if you devote yourself to the guru, meditate by pairing Fierce Heat With Mahamudra, and train your mind in enlightenment mind, because both your own and others' aims will be fulfilled at the same time this is the profound one."

"Well then", Phagmo Drupa asked, "Do you prefer to lead people through Fierce Heat to start with or through Mahamudra?" The reply came, "Which one will depend on the person's type. Younger people with good physical elements and channels who are instructed in and meditate on Fierce Heat itself will quickly produce the signs of progress. If I then give them Mahamudra, experience and realization will quickly dawn. For older people who are in the category of not being able to adjust the winds, I prefer to give Mahamudra or Co-emergent Unification, though there is the possibility that, if Mahamudra is given to them first but then not aroused within their mindstreams, they might fall into bad activities and develop a very jaded and problematic character."

Thrangu Rinpoche, in Luminous Clarity, ch 5 said:

Mahamudra is also necessary practice even if you do other practices as well. For example, there are profound methods of practice such as the Six Dharmas of Naropa or the Six Dharmas of Niguma or the Leapover (Tib. *tögal*) practice of Dzogchen. If you do these practices without Mahamudra practice, they are not so effective. For example, you can practice Inner Heat (Tib. *tummo*) or Dream Yoga, but if you do these practices conjoined with Mahamudra practice, they are much more powerful and effective. If you don't combine them with Mahamudra, they are not really that useful. They are not useless, because no Dharma practice is useless, but these advanced practices don't fulfill their proper function unless Mahamudra practice is integrated with them. The same thing is true of the *Tögal* practice of Dzogchen. It includes powerful methods, such as the white instruction, the red instruction, the yellow instruction, darkness teaching, and so on, but if these techniques are practiced in the absence of Mahamudra experience, not that much benefit will accrue from them. However, if these Dzogchen practices are practiced with *Trekchö*, a practice similar to Mahamudra experience, they are tremendously powerful. On the other hand, you can practice just Mahamudra or *Trekchö* without these other methods, and it will still be tremendously beneficial even by itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 4:19 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

PeterC said:

I have always struggled to see the connection between mahamudra as taught by the Kagyus and the samadhirajasutra. Beyond the identification of Gampopa as Youthful Moonlight, the practical connection seems highly attenuated. But I'd defer to someone who has studied the sutra more than I have.

Astus wrote:

"The king of all samadhis, or meditations, is the meditation of Mahamudra. So the meditation that Gampopa spread throughout Tibet was the Mahamudra that the Buddha taught in the Samadhiraja Sutra."

(http://namobuddhapub.org/files/teachings/ThranguR-Mahamudra_and_the_Kagyu_Lineage.pdf)

"The King of Samadhi Sutra is a teaching that forms the background for Mahamudra practice. If we only examine the superficial meaning it does not seem to be about Mahamudra at all. In a tremendously detailed way, it describes the Buddha's actions in his former lives and it extols the qualities of enlightenment and the virtues of practicing the general state of samadhi. We will not find the word 'Mahamudra' anywhere. Nowhere does it say we should make mandala offerings or engage in guru yoga. We might conclude that this text is not really about Mahamudra because even the teachings on shamatha and vipashyana are not as dearly defined here as they are in other Mahamudra texts. Yet, apart from this, if we examine the depth of its meaning, we will find that the sutra clearly emphasizes devotion to the buddhas or to the teacher who gives the teachings, as well as trust in the teachings themselves; and the importance of gathering an immense amount of merit. Therefore, we can easily apply the real intention of the sutra to our practice of, for example, cultivating devotion through guru yoga. From this standpoint, it is more beneficial to explain the actual intent of the sutra rather than just to interpret its literal meaning."

(King of Samadhi by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 19)

"The basic intent in the King of Samadhi Sutra and the Mahamudra pointing-out instruction is to point out the real condition so that we can recognize it. In neither case is intent to give instructions in some type of mind-made meditation state. This type of conceptual meditation is a very tangible experience that can appear to be 'profound' in the sense that we think what we are keeping in mind is the emptiness of all things. For example, when looking at this table, we think, "What is this table actually? It doesn't possess any self-nature. That is emptiness and I can understand that. This is how it really is! It is emptiness!" Then we keep this conceptual idea in mind. That type of concentration is, when compared to the state of mind of ordinary beings, quite profound and important. But regarding the state of samadhi explained in the King of Samadhi Sutra, as well as with what is pointed out in the oral instructions of Mahamudra, such conceptual concentration is a hindrance. In both Mahamudra and the King of Samadhi Sutra, what is to be trained in as the samadhi of the view is not a conceptual construct that we have concocted and kept in mind. It is more a matter of looking into the nature of mind and seeing it as it is, then simply letting it naturally be. We rest naturally in that instead of making up some artificial stare through our thinking and keeping that in mind. Viewed in this way, any intellectual construct is an obstacle for the wisdom of omniscience."

(p 32-33)

"According to this sutra, the meaning of samadhi and the meditation state which we train in through the instructions of Mahamudra are exactly the same, but there is a

semantic difference. ... The difference lies in how the instructions are imparted, but the identity of samadhi is exactly the same."

(p 37)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 4:30 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

What does he mean by "Mahamudra" here? If Mantra-Mahamudra is THE one and only higher mahamudra, it is given by tummo. What is then to practise in addition??

Astus wrote:

'The actual path can be followed in two ways: through the path of method and through the path of liberation. In the Kagyü tradition, the path of liberation is mahamudra practice, and the path of method is the six yogas of Naropa. To pursue the path of method, we begin by accumulating merit and wisdom and then purifying our obscurations. This is done through the preliminary practices, which consist of going for refuge and generating bodhicitta while doing prostrations, then meditating on Vajrasattva, making mandala offerings, and practicing guru yoga. After completing guru yoga and receiving the blessing of our teacher and lineage, we engage in the practice of a meditational deity (Tib. yidam). Through the generation and completion stages of this practice, we achieve realization. That is the path of means or method.

The path of liberation is the practice of mahamudra. It begins with the stabilization of our wavering mind through the practice of tranquility meditation. Then through insight meditation, which looks into the nature of mind, mahamudra is accomplished. To facilitate and enhance the practices of tranquility and insight, we must still engage in gathering the two accumulations even while pursuing the path of liberation. The accumulations serve to greatly enhance the practices of tranquility and insight. When our practice of tranquility is unstable, it can be grounded through these practices. When we lack insight, it can be generated by these practices. Therefore, the path in either format conforms to what was said by the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, in his Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra: "The supreme path is that of the two accumulations, beyond the extremes of exaggeration and denial." The principal path is facilitated through gathering the accumulation of merit. Though the path of means and the path of liberation may appear distinct, the nature of the paths and what is to be realized by them is the same.'

(Song for the King : Saraha on Mahamudra Meditation by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 36-38)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

Two accumulations, I understand that as practicing emptiness and compassion. It is

important not to think: "Everything is empty, everything is illusion so there is no karma and I do not need to pay attention to good actions, ethical conduct."

Astus wrote:

It's all the six paramitas, the relative and ultimate bodhicitta.

White Sakura said:

Second: If somebody practices "only" sutra mahamudra, what exactly is the minimum of other practises to practice from the Varjayana teachings? I cannot imagine it can be practised without at least a short formal guru yoga.

Astus wrote:

'This Dharma teaching can be given to anyone.

To have genuine Dharma practice, first meditate on impermanence. Otherwise, your Dharma practice might become merely an aid to your ambitions for this life.

Why should we meditate on impermanence? To turn our minds away from this life.

Meditating on impermanence makes us realize that all the phenomena of appearance and existence, of samsara and nirvana, are impermanent. As a result, the mind does not get caught up in this life. This is the purpose of meditation on impermanence. If your mind hasn't turned away from this life, then your meditation on impermanence has been without purpose.

First, turn your mind away from this life by meditating on impermanence. Then meditate on the faults of samsara. The purpose of meditation on the faults of samsara is to turn the mind away from the entirety of samsara.

When your mind has turned away from samsara, meditate on bodhicitta. First there is meditation on relative bodhicitta - wishing, from the depths of your heart, that all beings will have happiness, freedom from suffering, and complete buddhahood. Then view everything you do as being for the welfare of all beings. Have no concern for your own desires but develop an aspiration with the Mahayana perspective of benefiting others as your goal. That is how you meditate on relative bodhicitta.

Meditation on ultimate bodhicitta is simply remaining in the mind as it naturally is, a state in which all thoughts of perceiver and perceived, self and other, are intrinsically devoid of reality. Practicing in that way during each of the two kinds of behavior"" is what is called meditation on ultimate bodhicitta. Practicing in that way brings the realization and attainment of ultimate: bodhicitta.

There is no Dharma other than this.'

(Gampopa, in Mahamudra and Related Instructions, p 31-32)

'Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of Mahamudra], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the Mahamudra teachings. He spoke about the method of directly guiding the disciple toward the intrinsic reality of the mind. This [simple] method consists of seeking refuge in the guru and the Three Jewels, offering to them the symbolic cosmos [mandala], accounting for all one's harmful deeds, and invoking them with intense faith and veneration. This practice includes meditation on love, compassion, and an enlightened attitude [bodhicitta]. In this respect, the prodigious intellects inclined toward the instantaneous path should be

engaged at the outset in the process of discovering the vision of inherent reality, and then in settling the mind in tranquil absorption, similar to the contemporary training of the Mahamudra of Four Syllables. The inferior intellect, inclined toward the gradual path, should be put through the practice of tranquility leading to the meditation of insight. This is similar to the contemporary training through what is known as “harmonizing with the coemergent awareness.” 50 One understands that the reason for these [two ways] is to be found in his [the venerable Gampopa’s] written commentaries, the oral testament, the answers, and his oral testament recorded by Pal Phagmo Drubpa and Je Düsum Khyenpa in their respective collected works.’
(Mahamudra the Moonlight, p 123-124)

‘Revulsion is the foot of meditation, as is taught.
To this meditator who is not attached to food and wealth,
Who cuts the ties to this life,
Grant your blessings so that I have no desire for honour and gain.

Awareness is the body of meditation, as is taught.
Whatever arises is fresh – the essence of realization.
To this meditator who rests simply without altering it
Grant your blessings so that my meditation is free from conception.

Devotion is the head of meditation, as is taught.
The Guru opens the gate to the treasury of oral instructions.
To this meditator who continually supplicates him
Grant your blessings so that genuine devotion is born in me.’
(http://www.dharmadownload.net/pages/english/Natsok/0010_Teaching_English/Teaching_English_0036.htm)

‘Although plenty of Dharma preliminaries are taught,
They are all summed up in revulsion and renunciation.
Devotion to the guru too is particularly important
For traversing the paths and stages in months or years.
Much is said about what's key to the main practice,
But there's no teaching more profound
Than emptiness with compassion at its very core.
In your own mind—empty, clear, unceasing—
The three kāyas are, by nature, complete.
Recognise them, and then be watchfully aware.
There's no need to look for śūnyatā elsewhere!
Cultivate compassion for all your old mothers,
Who, not realising the natural state, are now deluded.
A great deal could be said about concluding practices,
But confess any misdeeds right away,
And dedicate whatever virtues you have performed
Towards the enlightenment of all sentient beings.
And be sure to recite Mahāyāna prayers of aspiration.’
(<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jamgon-kongtrul/mahamudra->

preliminaries-main-part-conclusion)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 19th, 2020 at 6:15 PM

Title: Re: Sutra, Tantra, Mahamudra

Content:

White Sakura said:

the visualizations are for some practitioners in fact futile.

Astus wrote:

Different people, different methods. That's why there are so many of them. It is also why having a teacher capable of evaluating and guiding a student is of immense benefit. At the same time, one needs to be persistent and see what works and what does not for oneself. As <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=544274#p544274>: 'After all, oneself is the ultimate authority in all matters of religion, and no one else.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 20th, 2020 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness and the Diamond Sutra

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

Numerous subsequent Zen records make frequent use of the Diamond Sutra's methodology to present the wisdom of emptiness, that is, insight into the nondual nature of reality. The gist of the Diamond Sutra's methodology can be expressed by the formula A is not-A, therefore A is A; not-A is A, therefore not-A is not-A. In other words, form is emptiness (i.e. not-form), therefore form is form; emptiness is form (i.e. not-emptiness), therefore emptiness is emptiness.

Astus wrote:

In what Zen record can one find such an explanation about A's and not-A's?

Ted Biringer said:

The basic reasoning of this can be understood by envisioning 'A' as a particular dharma, and 'not-A' as everything else in the universe.

Astus wrote:

That would be a reification of A, thus a denial of emptiness. A is itself not-A, because there is never A in itself. If it meant simply that A is not anything else, that's just A=A, very much the common view of ordinary beings.

Ted Biringer said:

In sum, the Diamond Sutra presents (makes present) the dynamic interdependence of form and emptiness by demonstrating that 'form' is essential to, therefore inclusive of 'emptiness' (and vice versa).

Astus wrote:

There can be no interdependence of emptiness and form, unless one mistakenly reifies those concepts. Form is empty, because no form exists on its own, and that absence of an identifiable essence is what is called emptiness.

As for interpenetration, better check Huayan teachings on the four dharmadhatu. However, that has little to do with Huineng, the Diamond Sutra, or Zen.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 20th, 2020 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

NateLeo said:

I believe understanding the more technical aspects could help me do this better so i can help more beings in places that i cant easily reach physically.

Astus wrote:

Merit is the positive imprint of a beneficial action in one's mental continuum. Sharing the merit of a good deed means that another being rejoices in the same action, thus it leaves a positive imprint there as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 20th, 2020 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Emptiness and the Diamond Sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

That's good, but the question in Chan is what knows that?

Astus wrote:

'None of what the Tathāgata calls 'thoughts' are actually thoughts. Therefore they are called thoughts. Why? Because the past thought is unobtainable, the present thought is unobtainable, and the future thought is unobtainable.'

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-19)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 1:18 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and the Diamond Sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

If thought alone is the problem? I don't find knowledge can penetrate the great emptiness. It only serves its purpose to get closer to it.

Astus wrote:

'Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought,

one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 1:34 AM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

Matt J said:

The question is: how can you NOT share merit? Everyone is connected interdependently. If we take emptiness seriously, there are no lines or boundaries that separate anything from everything.

Astus wrote:

Karma is always individual.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 3:17 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and the Diamond Sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

Mahaprajna itself is not in the ken of conceptual practice. Not in the ken of second vehicle.

Astus wrote:

What is conceptual in nonabiding?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

LastLegend said:

Why?

Astus wrote:

Because that is what it means, how one's intentional action leaves an imprint in one's mind, and as a consequence how that imprint influences one's experiences. As intention is the key factor, those who did not intend something, could not have committed a karma, and without a cause there can be no effect.

'This third category, ascription of karma, means that you experience the results of the karma you create. Results will ripen in the skandhas related to the actor, and not to others. The Collection of the Abhidharma says:

What does the ascription of karma mean? One experiences the maturation of the karma one has created. It is uncommon to others and, so, is called ascription.

If that were not the case, the karma that was created could be wasted or there could be the danger of facing a result that one had not created.

Therefore, in the sutra it says:

That karma that is created by Devadatta will not mature in the earth, water, and so forth

But that karma will ripen in the skandhas and ayatana of that particular individual

To whom else would this karma result?'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 119-120)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 3:47 AM

Title: Re: Emptiness and the Diamond Sutra

Content:

LastLegend said:

Mahaprajna by default itself already non-abiding.

Astus wrote:

Is what you call Mahaprajna conceptual or not? If not, then nonabiding cannot be conceptual either.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 3:07 PM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

Matt J said:

I think this misses the forest for the trees. To say that karma is truly individual is to say that it is independent. That is not the case. No matter how you parse it, you can say that karma affects the individual (whatever that means), but of course, this maturation will inevitably affect others.

Astus wrote:

Karma is about how mental habits are formed, how they distort one's experience, and how they generate (re)actions. It does not mean all sorts of causes and conditions, but a fairly specific type of it.

Matt J said:

For example, if you insult me, and due to past intentions and actions I have a seed of anger that is set off, let's imagine I am overcome with anger and I hit you in the face, this certainly impacts you. If you go home and your family sees your black eye, this affects them also. If it puts you in a foul mood due to your karmic seeds, then you may go around town spreading that bad mood everywhere.

Contrarily, if, due to past actions I have a seed of a good mood, and you come over, and we have a nice cup of coffee and a great chat, this certainly affects you as well, and you affect others, etc.

Astus wrote:

You hitting me is your action coming based on your habits. My reaction to being hit is my action/perception based on my habits. My family's reaction to seeing my black eye comes their habits. And so on. Karma being individual does not deny the wider causal interactions, just as one feels the effects of the weather, etc. The reason karma is highlighted as one's habit forming intentional action is because that is what one should work on, where skilful/wholesome/beneficial and unskilful/unwholesome/harmful thoughts, words, and deeds emerge and impact one's reality.

Bringing this back to the original question, merit is the positive imprint of a good deed. Since one cannot just distribute one's habits, it is not the case that sharing merit occurs like sharing food. Also, one has no power over whether another being may or may not rejoice in a good (or a bad) deed, regardless of one's intentions of sharing or keeping the merit generated by it. However, sharing merit is bringing others' attention to the opportunity of rejoicing in something good, so it is a beneficial action.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent? (2)

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

How can Buddhas even act or interact without any type of awareness at all?

Astus wrote:

The problem begins at one's ideas about what buddhahood and what awareness means. Those are already complicated topics. One option is to go by the Yogacara explanation of the eight consciousnesses transformed to the four wisdoms. Another option is to take buddhahood as the nature of the mind. Further options are also available, depending on one's need for more conceptualisation or its minimisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

LastLegend said:

The reason why your view should not be accepted is because it's not a Mahayana view.

Astus wrote:

What do you call a Mahayana view?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 9:40 PM

Title: Re: Why is consciousness seen as something impermanent? (2)

Content:

LastLegend said:

Let's flesh out today what is nature of mind? Using one's own experience to describe it.

Astus wrote:

But first: what do you call mind?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

LastLegend said:

What do you call emptiness?

Astus wrote:

That appearances are empty of (i.e. without) any independent essence or characteristic.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 21st, 2020 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: What are the (spiritual) physics behind dedicating merit?

Content:

LastLegend said:

Let's take some example: in quietness state, without interpretations you hear a bird chirping what is nature of mind?

Astus wrote:

What species of bird is chirping?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 26th, 2020 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: How does Buddhism explain individual experience?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

Why do individuals experience different things when everything is interconnected?

What is it that makes us have a unique experience?

Astus wrote:

What makes you assume that 'everything is interconnected'? Unique experience is a given already. Why posit a theory that does not reflect actuality and then turn it into a problem?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 26th, 2020 at 2:33 PM

Title: Re: How does Buddhism explain individual experience?

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

Isn't that what dependent origination tells us?

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination in general stands for the universal law of causality and conditionality, and in particular - as the twelve nidanas - applies to individual beings on both a larger (over many lives) and smaller (over mental moments) scale.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 26th, 2020 at 8:50 PM

Title: Re: Questions on consistency and validity of mahayana sutra's

Content:

nichiren-123 said:

Historically, we know that the Mahayana sutra's are later creations attributed to the Buddha. I'd assume that even Buddhists in ancient times knew this since the Mahayana sutra's are full of fantastical tales - They must have known they were allegorical.

Astus wrote:

'Fantastical tales' are not Mahayana novelties, some you can find already in the Nikayas/Agamas (e.g. <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/buddhafireshmiracle.pdf>, <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/levitation.pdf>, <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/miraculenuns.pdf>), and then a great number in later texts (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jataka_tales, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avad%C4%81na>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhava%E1%B9%83sa>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cariy%C4%81pi%E1%B9%ADaka>).

nichiren-123 said:

What I'm interested in though is whether the Mahayana Sutras develop on the earlier sutra's; Whether they are consistent with the early sutra's and if not, in which ways do they differ.

Astus wrote:

Such a comparison would require first identifying specific texts that are compared. See e.g. <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/mahayana.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 29th, 2020 at 3:02 PM

Title: Re: Existence-Time

Content:

Lillian said:

time flows in all directions and pours into each moment.

Astus wrote:

Is time conceived as a separate thing to have its own movements? If so, what is it? If not, then it is simply a concept used to refer to change. Change/time is observed as a mental construct, naming some thoughts as past, some as present, and some as future. How one conceives and interprets events is itself changing, thus in the present one finds all three times manipulated every time one thinks about it. This is a readily observable mechanism of existence one can easily confirm for oneself, and see that being/existence is pure change/time that is interpreted and reinterpreted in the process of changing existence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2020 at 1:15 AM

Title: Re: Is the argument out of date?

Content:

Viach said:

Theravada concept of the atom

Astus wrote:

It's the Sarvastivadins that Yogacarins argued against.

<http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/26.2-Buddhist-atomism-piya.pdf> is a much later development, and it's somewhat different.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 30th, 2020 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: I don't want parinirvana,should I follow a different path?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

I do want sentience for ever,and I rather be alive and suffering somewhat in the 3 realms then to be nonsentient and not suffering.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism teaches freedom from suffering as a living person, not "some time in the future", and not "only when sentience ceases".

Artziebetter1 said:

a Buddha has no vijñāna and no awareness,and some argue that a buddha still has some awareness as a living buddha,but a buddha that goes into parinirvana

Astus wrote:

Parinirvana is not a place to go, nor a state to become, but it's been (mis)interpreted as some sort of euphemism for death and annihilation.

Artziebetter1 said:

I do not want nirvana, so what is the point of following buddhism?

Astus wrote:

True. But nirvana is the end of suffering, it is freedom from fear and anxiety, it is peace, and not the end of everything.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 31st, 2020 at 6:06 PM

Title: Re: Is Vajracchedika Prajna Paramita authentic

Content:

Norden said:

As the title says, does it come directly from the Buddha himself or from Tripitaka?

Astus wrote:

The Diamond Sutra is a conversation between Shakyamuni and Subhuti, and it is very much in the Tripitaka, for instance Kumarajiva's translation is number 235 in volume 8 of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka.

Norden said:

AFAIK, it is composed later on by Buddhist monk, maybe influenced by other teaching / faith or religion. Does anyone have any thought?

Astus wrote:

Quite the other way around. It is from the Diamond Sutra that all buddhas come, as it says so in http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-9:

'Subhūti, all of the buddhas and all of their teachings of peerless perfect enlightenment spring forth from this sūtra.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 5th, 2020 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: Can a lazy person awaken?

Content:

clayde said:

can a lazy person (like me), one who doesn't read sutras, doesn't invoke buddhas, doesn't study long and hard, doesn't practice morning and night, lies down, and doesn't acquire knowledge, awaken to "see their nature"?

Astus wrote:

There are stupid lazy and smart lazy. Stupid lazy is not actually lazy, it's simply following the ingrained habitual inclinations without giving it a single thought, being lost in samsara and suffering. Smart lazy is what Zen is, being free from hope and worry.

'as to buddhadharma, no effort is necessary. You have only to be ordinary, with nothing

to do—defecating, urinating, wearing clothes, eating food, and lying down when tired.'
(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 11-12)

'I neither desire heavenly realms,
Nor want blessings in this world.
When hungry, eat;
Tired, sleep.
Fools laugh at me,
But the wise know its wisdom.
It's not being stupid –
It's what we originally are.'

(<https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/enjoyingtheway.pdf> by Nanyue Mingzan, aka Lazy Zan)

'You get up in the morning, dress, wash your face, and so on; you call these miscellaneous thoughts, but all that is necessary is that there be no perceiver or perceived when you perceive—no hearer or heard when you hear, no thinker or thought when you think. Buddhism is very easy and very economical; it spares effort, but you yourself waste energy and make your own hardships.'
(Foyan Qingyuan, in Instant Zen, p 70)

'An ancient sage said, "Every phenomenon is the original reality." Fine. Yunmen held up his cane and said, "This is not the original reality." After a pause, he said, "If so, then the three poisons, four perversions, five clusters, six senses, twelve media, eighteen elements, and twenty-five realms of being are not the original reality." Why not understand in this way—you'd save quite a bit of effort.

Buddhism is a most economical affair, conserving the most energy—it has always been present, but you do not understand.

I tell you, moreover, that there is nothing that is true and nothing that is not true. How can there be truth and untruth in one thing? Just because of seeking unceasingly, everywhere is seeking; pondering principles is seeking, contemplating the model cases of the ancients is also seeking, reading Zen books is also seeking; even if you sit quietly, continuously from moment to moment, this too is seeking.

Do you want to understand? Then that seeking of yours is actually not seeking. This is extremely difficult to believe and to penetrate, hard to work on. Those of you who are not comfortable are that way, generally speaking, because you are either oblivious or excited. That is why you say you do not understand.

Right now, how can you avoid being oblivious or excited? When that very thought of yours arises, it is the flowing whirl of birth and death: do you consider it habit-activated consciousness, or do you consider it immutable? Contemplate in this way over and over again, and you will have a bit of guiding principle.'

(Foyan Qingyuan, in Instant Zen, p 80-81)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 8th, 2020 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Can a lazy person awaken?

Content:

SilenceMonkey said:

You know, I don't think "idle" means lazy... There is a phrase that has been sitting in my thoughts for years. Master Sheng Yen used to say that to practice zen is to be like a 無事 賢道人 wushi xian daoren. Wu shi means having nothing to do... much like the tibetan refrain of "let go of your worldly activities."

The Record of Linji by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, p 159 said:

One who has nothing to do 無事人 is a term used to describe the fully enlightened person. Linji says, "Buddhas and patriarchs are people with nothing to do". The expression may have originated with Baizhang Huaihai, who states:

Just he for whom at present, as regards each and every external circumstance, there is no delusion, no disturbance, no anger, and no joy; and, as regards the gates of his own six sense organs, has wiped and settled them so that they are clean, this is the one who is without anything to do. (X 68: 12c)

This expression was used by both Guishan Lingyou and Huangbo Xiyun, the two great disciples of Baizhang. Guishan says:

One who is like the clear stillness of autumn water, pure, motionless, tranquil, and unobstructed—such a one is called a person of the Way, also a person who has nothing to do. (T 47: 577b–c)

Huangbo writes:

One whose outer and inner feelings are completely extinguished and who clings to nothing, such is the one who has nothing to do. (T 48: 382c)

[Huangbo] said, 'The hundred-odd kinds of knowledge do not compare with nonseeking. This is the ultimate. The person of the Way is the one who has nothing to do, who has no mind at all and no doctrine to preach. Having nothing to do, such a person lives at ease. (T 48: 383b)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 9th, 2020 at 5:01 AM

Title: Re: infinite Regress and the Yogacara container model

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

The Yogacara container universe model posits that shared reality is due to similar karmic traces or samskaras of sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

It is the common Buddhist model that the realms appear as a result of beings' karma. Yogacara posits that what ordinary beings assume themselves and the world to be is merely a conceptual fabrication based on attributing independent reality to those ideas. As for 'container universe' and 'shared reality', where do you get those concepts from?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 9th, 2020 at 5:07 AM

Title: Re: Satipathana in Mahayana

Content:
Viach said:
After the split on Mahayana and Theravada

Astus wrote:
There has been no such split.

Viach said:
has the practice of satipatthana (supplemented by the practice of bodhichitta origination) remained unchanged and basic yogic practice in Mahayana?

Astus wrote:
You might want to take a look at this: http://santifm.org/santipada/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/A_History_of_Mindfulness_Bhikkhu_Sujato.pdf.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, August 9th, 2020 at 3:23 PM
Title: Re: Satipathana in Mahayana
Content:
avatamsaka3 said:
?

Astus wrote:
Mahayana developed in Northern India, and it had little contact with Theravada (for a quick overview see the map in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Buddhist_schools).

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, August 9th, 2020 at 3:34 PM
Title: Re: infinite Regress and the Yogacara container model
Content:

Artziebetter1 said:
I have heard from andrei on buddhism stack exchange that this is the case, that in yogacara samskaras create appearances and vice versa and he basically admitted this was an infinite regress to me. I have also heard from krodha on buddhism subreddit that Dzogchen posits a yogachara container universe model to explain why individual beings' mindstreams perceive a shared reality(my addition: despite not being part of one mind).

Astus wrote:
So it is not from any Yogacara work that you based the assumed problem on, and likely that's why it had become an issue. Naturally, if the premises are wrong, then the conclusion will be wrong as well.

Artziebetter1 said:
even if we could infinitely regress literally this causal chain, this wouldn't answer how

interaction is functionally possible even with similar samskaras.

Astus wrote:

Except that there is no such thing as "interacting samskaras". Samskaras are mental fabrications like faith, attachment, pride, harmfulness, etc. Saying that one's envy interacts with another's shamelessness is very much a poetic/figurative speech.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 9th, 2020 at 11:21 PM

Title: Re: Sources substantiating claims about "Hindus" not achieving liberation

Content:

fckw said:

Does anyone know of any authoritative, that is: commonly accepted among their own scholars, be it "Hindu" or Buddhist scriptures that substantiate these claims?

Astus wrote:

The teaching unique to the Buddha is anatma, as you can find this stated in the Culasihanada Sutta. Without realising the absence of a self there are craving, grasping, becoming, birth, and suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 10th, 2020 at 1:47 AM

Title: Re: Sources substantiating claims about "Hindus" not achieving liberation

Content:

fckw said:

That is not the same claim as saying that "absorption states don't lead to liberation". The two are different.

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism no state of absorption is sufficient for liberation, wisdom is a requirement. See the Brahmajala Sutta how meditative experiences and wrong views are related.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 11th, 2020 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Sources substantiating claims about "Hindus" not achieving liberation

Content:

fckw said:

the difference in view must therefore be on other aspects of Hindu teachings, but not in a subject-object-dualism.

Astus wrote:

The view of absolute monism (there is only self/god) is not the same as the non-existence of self and other.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 12th, 2020 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: Sources substantiating claims about "Hindus" not achieving liberation

Content:

fckw said:

Did I forget any further arguments?

Astus wrote:

While position 4 can cover "everything else", it is worth mentioning that the very concept of liberation is different, as in Buddhism there is no final form of existence to reach/become.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 14th, 2020 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Good beginner's overview

Content:

Astus wrote:

'This book offers a selection from a broad range of Buddhist texts. You will find here passages that may inspire, guide and challenge you. Overall, they give a picture of this great tradition as it has been lived down the centuries.'

'This book is divided into three main parts: i) the life and nature of the Buddha ii) the Dhamma/Dharma, or Buddhist teachings, and iii) the Sangha or spiritual community. Each chapter except the first is divided into three sections, containing selected passages from the texts of the three main Buddhist traditions: Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna.'

'Through this, its objectives are to increase awareness among Buddhists of their own rich heritage of religious and ethical thinking as well as to increase understanding among non-Buddhists of the fundamental values and principles of Buddhism. It seeks to strike a balance between what is common to the Buddhist traditions and the diversity of perspectives among them. The book consists of selected translations from Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan, using a common terminology in English of key Buddhist terms, and maintaining strict scholarly standards.'

http://www.icdv.net/pdf/cbt_final_dec29%202015.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 14th, 2020 at 2:33 PM

Title: Re: Good beginner's overview

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

This looks very good but it's not the one I was talking about before.

This one is a lot longer, more detailed, broader in its approach to the different traditions.

Astus wrote:

I guess above you meant <https://bdkamerica.org/find-your-edition/> that is the short version of <https://bdkamerica.org/product/buddha-dharma-the-way-to-enlightenment-2e-hardcover/> - both available for free as PDF - that itself was written as a summary of the Tripitaka.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 20th, 2020 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

Brahma said:

Do you believe that the physical manifestation of pain and distress within the body will dissipear in all cases if one practices vipassana meditation perfectly? If so, how? If not, how is the pain of suffering removed fully through vipassana, if someone can still physically feel the pain?

Astus wrote:

'There are two kinds of suffering: i) bodily suffering (kāyika duḥkha), ii) mental suffering (caitasika duḥkha). By the power of their wisdom (prajñābala), the holy individuals (āryapudgala) have no further mental suffering like sadness (daurmanasya), jealousy (īrṣyā), malice (vyāpāda), etc. On the other hand, because they have received a body composed of the four great elements (mahābhūtamaya) as a result of actions in their previous existences (pūrvajanmakarman), they still have bodily sufferings such as old age (jarā) and sickness (vyādhi), hunger and thirst (kṣutpipāsa), cold and heat (śītoṣṇa), etc., but these bodily sufferings are slight and quite rare.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225706.html>; see also

<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.than.html>,

<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn52/sn52.010.than.html>,

<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn01/sn01.038.than.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 20th, 2020 at 4:46 PM

Title: Re: Non-attachment in Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The happiness aspired to by most people is future happiness; it is a state of happiness wished for in the future. Moreover, it is dependent on other things. Yet when people develop a wise discernment into the truth, an innate and constant form of happiness arises—a happiness existing at all times, which is accessible in every moment. It lies at the heart of our being, pervading our entire life.

Here, one need not pursue any other kind of happiness. If other forms of happiness or pleasure present themselves, they are seen as a bonus, and one has the option to

partake of them or not, without anxiety, in whatever way one pleases. There are no complications. And when these supplementary forms of happiness are absent, it has no effect on one's wellbeing. One already abides in a state of constant happiness.' (<https://www.watnyanaves.net/uploads/File/books/pdf/675-Perfect-Happiness-English.pdf> by Phrayudh Payutto, p 23)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 21st, 2020 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

Brahma said:

If I want to practice Vipassana, can I still call my individuality a soul?

Astus wrote:

Words matter less than what one means by them.

Brahma said:

If there is an understanding that we are emptiness, void, why cannot that a Loving Eternal voidness be our soul?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means the absence of an enduring, independent substance. Emptiness is a negation, not an assertion of any essence/entity.

Brahma said:

That is, since we are beginningless, there is some constant Eternal principle there.

Astus wrote:

No constant principle, that's what impermanence means. Every experience changes. Thinking that there is something constant, that itself is a mere thought that passes quickly.

Brahma said:

Yes, consciousness keeps going, life after life, but there is still an individuality, something we carry with us, we are not simply a product of our aggregates.

Astus wrote:

The five aggregates are the entirety of what a being is, it covers the complete spectrum of experiences, that is, the whole of existence and life. Whatever one assumes to be one's possession or one's self is always in relation to the aggregates. As long as one takes the aggregates to be constant, reliable, enjoyable, controllable, independent, for that long there is disappointment and dissatisfaction, as they always keep changing and falling apart.

Brahma said:

What I am trying to say is that with holding no-self as being the basis of meditation, can

one call their consciousness soul?

Astus wrote:

This should answer it:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 22nd, 2020 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

If there is no "constant principle", how do you explain rebirth?

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 22nd, 2020 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

Meaning what exactly? What is reborn?

Astus wrote:

"What is rebirth, sir, and who does it belong to?"

"That's not a fitting question," said the Buddha. "You might say, 'What is rebirth, and who does it belong to?' Or you might say, 'Rebirth is one thing, who it belongs to is another.' But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are the same thing, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul and the body are different things, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: 'Continued existence is a condition for rebirth.'"

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.35/en/sujato>)

There are several teachings available on dependent origination. Some examples:

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html>

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#sn12>

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html>

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh211.html>

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh212.html>

<https://fpmt.org/mandala/online-features/personalizing-the-twelve-links-of-dependent-origination/>

<https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/lam-rim/samsara-nirvana/the->

twelve-links-an-in-depth-analysis

https://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh015_Piyadassi_Dependent-Origination.html

<http://www.aimwell.org/dependentorigination.html>

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/nyanatiloka/wheel394.html>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2020 at 4:18 AM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

Continued existence is "a constant principle".

Astus wrote:

Not at all, it is one of the twelve links (Pali/Sanskrit: bhava) that can also be translated as <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.35/en/bodhi> and

<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.035.than.html>, and it depends on grasping.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 23rd, 2020 at 3:57 PM

Title: Re: Question about Vipassana

Content:

Brahma said:

This article claims that Buddha didn't teach "no-self" but taught "non-self"

Astus wrote:

Whatever can be called a self or belonging to a self are the five aggregates

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.047.than.html>) that are all 'empty, void, without substance'

(<https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.095.than.html>), in other words, not self (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.11/en/sujato>). The teaching on the aggregates is well summarised in the <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.109.than.html> where it is asked, 'Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?', and the Buddha's answer is a step by step instruction on seeing that there is nothing that could be called a self or belonging to a self.

Brahma said:

avoided questions on whether there was a self or not, brushing them aside (possibly to point to a higher level of Awakening).

Astus wrote:

Not so. There is nothing to take as self or belonging to a self apart from the five aggregates, as noted above.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 3rd, 2020 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: How do those in a state of Mahaparinirvana interact with the Saha world?

Content:

Brahma said:

Also, while the Saha world is characterized by impermanence, would Nirvana and Mahaparinirvana be characterized as a state of permanence? If so, how? If not--also, how so?

Astus wrote:

There is nobody in nirvana, as it is not a place or state of a being to exist in, therefore interaction from it makes no sense. If you want a Mahayana explanation of buddha activities, see for instance the seventh vajra point of the Uttaratantra, and chapter 21 of the Jewel Ornament of Liberation.

'An All-Embracing One always has spontaneous access to the disciples' temperaments, the means of training, the [various] trainings that suit their temperaments, and to seeking them wherever they are, at the right time.

Having multitudes of supremely precious qualities and the waters of the ocean of primordial wisdom, possessing the sunlight of merit and wisdom, it is the definitive accomplishment of all vehicles without exception. [Enlightenment] is vast, without middle or end, and thus all-pervasive like space.

Fully seeing that buddhahood, the treasure of the unpolluted qualities, is [present] within all sentient beings without the slightest distinction, the wind of the Buddhas' sublime compassion totally dispels the clouds of afflictions and hindrances to knowledge, which have spun their net about it.'

(Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra, p 239-240)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 8th, 2020 at 3:20 PM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clyde said:

When he sat down under the tree, he did something very new, not based on a method or manual – something more spontaneous, more natural. By trial and error, he gradually learned how to sit in a stable way by paying attention to how he felt in the sitting posture. He learned how to be with the body and mind, without doing anything artificial or intentional. He gave up and surrendered, and that's the origin of our zazen. The Buddha was the first to practice zazen.

Astus wrote:

And how does zazen relate to awakening when seeing the morning star? According to the https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/Lead_Chapter.pdf, Sakyamuni sat for six years not moving, to the extent that 'spiderwebs formed between his eyebrows, a magpie's nest rested atop his head, and reeds sprouted up through his

seat' before one day attaining enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 8th, 2020 at 10:24 PM

Title: Re: This simply doesn't make any sense.....

Content:

Justmeagain said:

"Because it is the practice of enlightenment" Or just pretending to be?

Astus wrote:

It is 'enlightenment' that one has to practise, that is, not grasping at body and mind.
How so?

'Our zazen is letting go of thought. As Dogen said in Fukanzazengi it is the negation of everything arising from human mind. And zazen is also embracing everything, including delusions and distorted thoughts. But because we let go of delusion, it cannot harm us. When we see delusion as delusion, we are not deceived by delusion.'
(https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/sotozen/pdf/soto_zen.pdf, p 22-23)

'Just leave thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely.'
(<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>)

The various afflictions (klesa/bonno), like anxieties and concerns, originate from clinging to ideas, in particular clinging to ideas involving one's self, taking them as 'this is me' or 'this is mine'. But if one does not pursue the first thought, then there will be no continuation into a second, and a third, and so on, to develop into something overwhelming and unmanageable.

"If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharma, this is to be 'unfettered.'"
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

'Mumyo (fundamental delusion) is called illusory mind. It is the source of the rounds of delusory life and death from the immeasurable past. It is our discriminating mind which obstinately clings to body, mind, the world, and all things, as being the way we have perceived and recognized them until now. For example, although something good is not always good, we hold stubbornly to what we think is good. Something evil is not always evil, yet we become attached to our own judgment and make it a preconception. Even if you think something is good, others may think it is evil. Even if you think something is evil, others may think it good. And, even if both you and others think something may be good or evil today, fundamentally such judgments merely accord with illusory mind which manifests itself in the form of one's own knowledge, views, and experiences. This is true not only of our judgments about good and evil, but also our views about being and non-being, hatred and love, etc. All these differentiations in regarding all existence arise from illusory mind.'

(https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf, p 45-46)

So, practising enlightenment is seeing through our very thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc., not by disregarding, suppressing, or analysing them, but simply with being aware of how they arise and pass. When there is awareness without complications, that is the enlightened outlook free from the entanglements of the fabrications of ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 9th, 2020 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clayde said:

Whatever the precipitating cause

Astus wrote:

If there was a cause, then how can it be maintained that zazen itself is enlightenment?

clayde said:

Śākyamuni Buddha himself formed no thought of attaining the way.
which is a description of zazen.

Astus wrote:

Only after six years of sitting was he able to awaken when seeing the morning star.
Whether he then formed a thought about it or not is irrelevant.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 9th, 2020 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clayde said:

Words! Perhaps "cause" was too much. Seeing the Morning Star didn't cause the Buddha's awakening, but, as Zen Masters have often described, an external occurrence (e.g. - the sound of a stone hitting bamboo) is sometimes a "simultaneous event".
Better?

Astus wrote:

Not better at all, because then seeing the star is simply an irrelevant event that's not even worth mentioning, just as numerous other circumstances are not mentioned, like seeing trees and grass, hearing birds and bugs, smelling earth and flowers, etc. And, more importantly, it still leaves the question unanswered why he awakened only after six years of motionless sitting.

clayde said:

And Keizan doesn't say the Buddha "formed no thought of attaining the way" after his

awakening.

Astus wrote:

What would have been the point of forming such a thought before, or even at the same time? It should also be noted that the knowledge of the destructions of defilements and the knowledge of no longer having any births left is part of the standard definition of liberation (see e.g. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225076.html>), and a similar <https://dhammawiki.com/index.php/Paccavekkhana-nana> is taught in Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 10th, 2020 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clyde said:

Are you suggesting that seeing the Morning Star caused the Buddha's awakening?

Astus wrote:

The only other role the star can have in the story is to mark the time of awakening as around dawn, but then, seeing or not seeing it has no relevance. It also fits the usual Zen stories of suddenly seeing or hearing something that triggers awakening, and that is important, as this version of the Buddha's awakening is a Zen narrative, not something from the sutras.

clyde said:

The Buddha was clear, "Unprovoked is my release."

Astus wrote:

That is a translation that can be misinterpreted as 'uncaused', while the word in SN 56.11 is 'unshakeable' (akuppa; see also the translations by Bodhi and Sujato). At the same time, if the account of the Buddha's awakening in the Nikayas is relevant, then it is quite different from Keizan's presentation, and on that note Dr. Bhikkhu Analayo's work is highly recommended: 'A Meditator's Life of the Buddha, Based on the Early Discourses'.

clyde said:

Before, at the same time, or after - what is your point? Keizan said, Śākyamuni Buddha himself formed no thought of attaining the way.

How do you understand this? I understood Keizan as referencing zazen.

Astus wrote:

Not forming a thought of it would have had no meaning before he had attained, as it would have been a simple delusion. As for not forming a thought after, see http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-10 of the Diamond Sutra. Regarding referencing zazen, Keizan is quite clear on Shakyamuni sitting still for six years. This you can also tell that in the <https://global.sotozen->

net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/Lead_Chapter.pdf he writes 六年端坐 ('for six [more] years he sat erect') and in the <https://antaiji.org/ja/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/> 如来の端坐、少林の面壁 (<http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/zzyk.shtml>: 'The Buddha sat straight, Bodhidharma faced the wall'), both using the same term *tanza* 端坐 for sitting erect/straight.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 13th, 2020 at 4:06 AM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clyde said:

it was “suddenly seeing or hearing something that triggers awakening”.

Astus wrote:

And the problem the story indicates is that it contradicts the idea that zazen is practice-enlightenment, therefore no awakening should be needed beyond that.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 13th, 2020 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Buddha, the Original Zen Master

Content:

clyde said:

You're making a problem where there is none and I believe you know it.

Astus wrote:

It doesn't have to be a problem, but it's still a contradiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2020 at 2:19 PM

Title: Re: Subtle body

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

1. Does the subtle body exist conventionally?

Astus wrote:

Does it exist at all? In Buddhism it is a theory found only in Vajrayana, while outside it, within other Indian systems, it has been present in various forms even before the Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2020 at 5:10 PM

Title: Re: Subtle body

Content:

Aemilius said:

It is implied in many ways in the Sutras

Astus wrote:

However, there would have been no reason to merely imply anything, since the idea of a subtle body was not unknown in India, so both the Buddha and then later masters could have discussed it, if they wanted to, like in the context of topics you listed as possible implications. Do you perhaps know of Vajrayana teachings where such connections are made between the Abhidharma system and Tantra?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 17th, 2020 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Avatamsaka Translation Question

Content:

Seeker12 said:

In Thomas Cleary's translation on page 526 in chapter 24, it says,

“Carrying out pure ways,
Fulfilling virtues,
One can concentrate unremittingly
On omniscience.”

Can anyone tell me exactly what word was translated as ‘omniscience’ here by any chance? Thank you for any feedback.

Astus wrote:

omniscience: 一切智

'Accomplishing pristine, pure Dharmas,
Perfecting all merit and virtue,
One has total concentration
And never lets one's mind forsake All-Wisdom.'
(http://www.cttbusa.org/avatamsaka/avatamsaka24_1.asp)

T10, no. 279, p. 123b24-25:

成就白淨法，
具足諸功德，
彼於一切智，
專念心不捨。

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 18th, 2020 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Avatamsaka Translation Question

Content:

Seeker12 said:

Do you know what that would be in Sanskrit?

Astus wrote:

Definition: sarva-jñā, sarva-jñātā, sarvajñā-jñāna; sarvajñā-tattva, sarva-jñatva, sarvajñā-dharmatā, sarvajñā-bala, sarva-jñāna, sarvatra-jñāna, sarva-buddhi, sarva-vid.

Source: 佛教漢梵大辭典, 平川彰 Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary, Akira Hirakawa

See more

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/dictionary/details/%E4%B8%80%E5%88%87%E6%99%BA>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 27th, 2020 at 5:04 AM

Title: Readable Library of Tibetan Classics

Content:

Astus wrote:

How can one make the files readable on the <http://tibetanclassics.org/en/media-resources/text/lotc-tibetan-texts?>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 28th, 2020 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Readable Library of Tibetan Classics

Content:

ratna said:

You'll need to install the <http://www.aerifal.cx/~dalias/bodyig/fonts/> fonts and restart your PDF viewer.

Astus wrote:

Thank you!

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 30th, 2020 at 8:44 PM

Title: Re: Subtle body

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

What we think of as our physical body is actually just a creation of our mind based on sense experiences. So looking for some tangible "subtle body" is perhaps missing the point.

Astus wrote:

So from a practical perspective working with the channels et al. would be about manipulating the felt body to influence one's state of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 1st, 2020 at 2:59 PM

Title: Re: chan/seon/rinzai/soto differences

Content:

Julio Robles said:

Astus, you said "Like other Japanese schools, they lack full monastic ordination", that is not accurate, the Japanese Obaku Zen School (3rd largest Japanese Zen School, for the readers that doesn't know, I'm sure you do) follows the Vinaya of the Dharmagupta.

Astus wrote:

That is a very interesting news. Any sources on the matter you could point to?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2020 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Hypothetical debate team! Arguing against the self!

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are already many arguments readily available. Here's an example (Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, ch 10, v 229-237):

From one rebirth to another
The person changes like the body.
It is illogical for yours to be
Separate from the body and permanent.

Intangible things do not
Produce so-called motility.
Thus the life force is not
Agent of the body's movements.

Why [teach] non-violence and wonder about
Conditions for a permanent self?
A diamond never has to be
Protected against woodworm.

If your self is permanent
Because of remembering other lives,
How can your body be impermanent
When you see a scar previously formed?

If the self when possessing that
Which has mind is a knower,
By that [same argument] that which has mind would be
Mindless and the person permanent.

A life force which has pleasure and so forth
Appears as various as pleasure and so forth.
Thus like pleasure it is not
Suitable as something permanent.

If consciousness is permanent
An agent is superfluous.
if fire is permanent
Fuel is unnecessary.

A substantial entity, unlike an action,
Does not alter until it disintegrates.
Thus it is improper to claim
The person exists but consciousness does not.

At times one sees potential consciousness,
At others consciousness itself.
Because of being like molten iron
The person undergoes change.

Author: Astus
Date: Friday, October 2nd, 2020 at 9:02 PM
Title: Re: Subtle body
Content:
Malcolm said:
No, it's a purely physical action. See the Kosha.

Astus wrote:
Sarvastivadins take speech as a dharma not associated with mind, Sautrantikas as rupa because it's sound (AKB II.47, vol 1, p 250-253), and Yogacarins as the Sarvastivadins (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 20, cf.
<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/outlines/100dharma.html> /
<http://www.cttbusa.org/100shastra/100dharma8.asp>).

Also note:

'First you place the mind and keep it connected, then you break into speech. That's why placing the mind and keeping it connected are verbal processes.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn44/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, October 6th, 2020 at 3:23 PM
Title: Re: Monism? A [possibly not so brief] question and discussion on Buddhist metaphysics

Content:

Mr. Cole said:

I was wondering if anyone could elucidate what Buddhist metaphysics and spirituality has to say on this topic.

Astus wrote:

Buddhist metaphysics might be called conditional pluralism, as it posits multiple factors (dharma) that exist dependent on other factors. For a summary of some of the main forms of Buddhist philosophy:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abhidharma/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/madhyamaka/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vasubandhu/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddhism-tiantai/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddhism-huayan/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 7th, 2020 at 11:15 PM

Title: Re: What is meant by "there are no strivings, no comings, and no goings" in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra?

Content:

Brahma said:

So again, what does the Buddha mean when He says that the notions of "birth, abiding, and disappearance must be discarded" and that "there are no strivings, no comings, and no goings" in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra?

Astus wrote:

Since things are mere concepts without any existence of their own, there is nothing born, enduring, or dying (the three characteristics of impermanent phenomena). There are no strivings, etc., as there is nobody to strive (or rather move - nirīha, Red Pine translates it as 'motionless'), in other words, nobody to be born and die, no real birth and death, i.e. samsara.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2020 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: What is meant by "there are no strivings, no comings, and no goings" in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra?

Content:

Brahma said:

Can you explain how there is "nobody to strive or move"?

Astus wrote:

It is so because of what the sutra itself states: 'it is devoid of selfness and its belongings' (ātmātmīyarahita), that there is no entity transmigrating, because what are assumed as

a being/self is merely a concept, an imagined thing, and does not really exist. This is actually the basic Buddhist doctrine of no-self.

Brahma said:

And is this motionlessness unsuspended? Because this concept keeps me thinking of the souls of all things, not unchanging but also with qualities that are indestructible, with a sameness to them despite constant impermanence in the Saha world. Is this a deeper Buddhist philosophical way of describing anatta in a correct way?

Astus wrote:

Not at all. It is like a play of shadows where one may believe that a shadow is a being moving around out of its own volition, while actually it's just a natural phenomenon produced by various causes and conditions. Buddhism teaches one to learn to recognise this mistaken superimposition on appearances, and not to add another layer of a 'deeper philosophy', as that would be merely making further mistakes out of the already incorrect concept of a real being.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2020 at 2:52 PM

Title: Re: What is meant by "there are no strivings, no comings, and no goings" in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra?

Content:

Brahma said:

But the substance in life is Metta, no?

Astus wrote:

Metta is a specific attitude that one can cultivate. There are three other attitudes normally grouped together with it: karuna, mudita, upekkha; they together form the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmavihara>. Those four do not serve as substance or universal basis in Buddhism, but rather they are to be practised.

Brahma said:

Love being the soul Buddhism asks us to cultivate by discarding the false views of self, and even of soul, until one extinguishes their material desires, attains Nirvana, and becomes a Buddha and feels only the Highest Metta and finds the Truth there.

Astus wrote:

Love (metta) is insufficient in itself to reach liberation, it is not an ultimate truth (paramartha-sacca), and it is compounded (sankhata).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2020 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Hypothetical debate team number 2! Arguing against "All is consciousness!"

Content:

Astus wrote:

All is consciousness is an exaggerated mistake, as even ordinary people recognise various objects. Here's a bit of analysis by Shantarakshita (Madhyamakalamkara, v 46-54, tr Padmakara):

If consciousness is ultimately real,
It must be manifold, or else its aspects are all one.
Failing this, the mind and object are at variance
And there's no doubt that they diverge.

If the aspects are not different,
Moving and unmoving parts and so forth—all are one.
All must be in motion or at rest!
It's hard to give an answer to this consequence.

And even in the case of outer things,
Since these are not devoid of aspects,
All such features are contained in one:
A consequence that no one can gainsay.

If you say cognitions are as many
As the mental aspects,
They can be examined like the partless particle,
And it is hard to circumvent such scrutiny.

If various aspects form a single entity,
Is not this the teaching of the sky-clad yogis?
Variety is not a truly single entity
But is like various gems and other things.

If various items form one thing inherently existent,
How do they appear to us as various?
For some are hidden, some are not.
Now how can they be so distinct?

Since, they say, in consciousness itself
There are no mental aspects,
The mind, which in reality is aspectless,
Appears with aspects only through delusion.

But if these aspects are without existence,
How do we experience them so clearly?
Indeed there is no consciousness
That from the aspects stands apart.

Therefore, where there's nothing present,
Absent also is cognizing consciousness.
Likewise misery cannot be known as bliss,

Nor white cognized as something that's not white.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2020 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Looking for Buddhist logical statements that disprove the idea that "All is one"

Content:

Faith in Mind: A Guide to Ch'an Practice by Master Sheng-Yen said:

One is everything, Everything is one.

True suchness is identical to all phenomena and all phenomena are never separated from true suchness. It must be understood in this sense, and not in the sense that all phenomena reduce to one. There is no distinction between unification and non-unification in true suchness. Otherwise, taking these two lines literally would imply that if one person becomes a Buddha, everyone else has to become a Buddha. Or, all sentient beings must attain Buddhahood before there can be even one Buddha, since all sentient beings are one. This would not hold on a common sense level, yet it can be understood on the deeper level just explained.

(<http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-MISC/misc38333.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 9th, 2020 at 4:03 PM

Title: Re: Poll: Is consciousness/mind/related terms (vinnana/citta/manas/nama/etc.)...

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yogacāra asserts the mind is impermanent, momentary, and dependent.

Dgj said:

Depends on who you ask:

Astus wrote:

Not really. Asanga and Vasubandhu are very clear on the nature of the eight consciousnesses. If you propose that somebody else taught of an independent, eternal consciousness within Buddhism, you need to give the exact source.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 12th, 2020 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: Is there a possibility in the near future for creating a subforum for the Huayan/Kegon school?

Content:

nomono said:

I am very interested in the Huayan/Kegon school and its interpretations, doctrines, commentaries, beliefs, patriarchs, liturgy, canon of scriptures and so on, but there is not very much in the internet about it.

Astus wrote:

There's not much about it in English in general. At least in Korean Buddhism Hwaeom is upheld as the main form of the doctrinal teachings, so volumes 4 and 5 in http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/collected_works.html contain some original translations. However, note that there is no separate Hwaeom school.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 12th, 2020 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: With regards to impermanence - what is permanent? Is Buddha or Buddhahood permanent?

Content:

Astus wrote:

All conditioned things are impermanent, only what is unconditioned is permanent.

And for the Mahayana point of view, the Samdhinirmocana Sutra puts it nicely (ch 2, BDK ed, p 12):

"Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also a word provisionally invented by the First Teacher. Now, if the First Teacher provisionally invented this word, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And, if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the unconditioned does not exist. Good son, the term 'conditioned' is also invented from language [and it validates nothing real]."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 14th, 2020 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: What is zen to you?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A monk asked Mazu, "Please indicate the meaning of Chan directly, apart from all permutations of assertion and denial."

Mazu said, "I'm tired today and can't explain for you. Go ask Zhizang."

When the monk asked Zhizang, Zhizang said, "Why not ask the teacher?"

The monk said, "He told me to ask you."

Zhizang said, "I have a headache today and can't explain for you. Go ask Baizhang."

When the monk asked Baizhang, Baizhang said, "At this point, after all, I don't understand."

When the monk related this to Mazu, Mazu said, "Zhizang's head is white; Baizhang's head is black."

(Blue Cliff Record, case 73, BDK ed, p 324-325)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 14th, 2020 at 10:33 PM

Title: Re: What is zen to you?

Content:

FlareStar said:
What does that mean?

Astus wrote:
It is 'apart from all permutations of assertion and denial'.

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “The supreme Way has no difficulties— just avoid discrimination.’ As soon as there are words spoken, this is discrimination. So how do you help people?”

Zhaozhou said, “Why don’t you quote this saying in full?”

The monk said, “I only remember up to here.”

Zhaozhou said, “It’s just this: ‘The supreme Way has no difficulties—just avoid discrimination.’”

(Blue Cliff Record, case 59, BDK ed, p 277)

Also:

'Actually, it is not hard to reach enlightenment if you do not grasp or reject. The poem encourages us to practice without attachment. As soon as you become attached to something, you lose the direction of the method.'

(Faith in Mind: A Guide to Ch'an Practice by Sheng Yen, p 99)

Furthermore:

'Negations of being and nonbeing are not expressions of a belief in a substantial, eternal being and in an annihilationist, nihilistic nonbeing. To take being as being leads one to take nonbeing as nonbeing. But to perceive dharmas without attachment to nonbeing is to discern the reality-mark of dharmas: in this manner, though one perceives being, one does so without grasping to marks. Since the dharma-marks thus perceived are markless marks, the mind of the sage is established in that which has no location.'

(Essays of Sengzhao, ch 1, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 63)

And:

'The faults of mental afflictions that torment
Due to false knowledge do not arise
To those who understand the meaning
Of conceptualizations of real and unreal entities.
If one possesses a locus,
One becomes attached or detached;
But the great beings who're devoid of locus,
They have neither attachment nor detachment.'

(<https://www.tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/SixtyStanzas.pdf>, v 57-58)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 15th, 2020 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: What is zen to you?

Content:

FlareStar said:

How does that relate to black and white? Where is the connection? I see a headache and a lack of understanding being asserted in the case. How would you reconcile that with "apart from assertion and denial"?

Astus wrote:

Where is assertion and denial in black and white? Is black a yes and white a no, or the other way around? No matter what, things are as they are, so no need to complicate them. To put it in simpler terms,

'Where your mind stops for a moment, this is called the bodhi tree, [the site of enlightenment]. Your mind being unable to stop is called the tree of ignorance. There is nowhere that ignorance abides; it has no beginning and no end. If from moment to moment your mind cannot stop [its deluded stream of consciousness], then you climb the tree of ignorance. Then you enter among the various kinds of beings in the six planes of existence to wear fur on your body and horns on your head. If you can manage to stop, this is the body and realm of purity. If you are unborn for a moment, then you climb the tree of enlightenment.'

(The Recorded Sayings of Linji, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 34-35)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 19th, 2020 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: Recommended commentary on the Shurangama Sutra that's not by Ven.

Hsuan Hua?

Content:

nomono said:

Are there not other Masters/teachers that have written about this sutra?

Astus wrote:

The only other translation with some commentary in English that I know of is by Charles Luk http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2020 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Recommended commentary on the Shurangama Sutra that's not by Ven.

Hsuan Hua?

Content:

nomono said:

Do you know if there are similar sutras like the Shurangama sutra that teach about the same concepts like True vs. False Mind etc.?

Astus wrote:

You might like the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutra_of_Perfect_Enlightenment that is

available in several translations (http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html, <https://bdkamerica.org/product/apocryphal-scriptures/>, <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra49.html>, <http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/sutraofcompleteenlightenment.pdf>) and there are two commentaries as well (<https://books.google.com/books?id=GVeLJ16emHUC>, <https://books.google.com/books?id=qYHFAQAAQBAJ>). There's also the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrasamadhi-sutra> available online (by <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra53a.html>), and there's a commentary too (by <https://books.google.com/books?id=LY4BEAAAQBAJ>). While not a sutra, you should take a look at the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awakening_of_Faith_in_the_Mahayana#:~:text=Awakening%20of%20Faith%20in%20the%20Mah%C4%81y%C4%81na%20%28reconstructed%20Sanskrit%20title%3A%20Mah%C4%81y%C4%81na,a%20text%20of%20Mahayana%20Buddhism., also available online (<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/>, http://www.acmuller.net/download/LaiWhalen_Awakening-of-Faith.pdf, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/taf/index.htm>, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/aof/index.htm>), plus a very new translation (<https://books.google.hu/books?id=EjGoDwAAQBAJ>) and there are some commentaries (<https://books.google.hu/books?id=h6RNAQAAMAAJ>, <https://books.google.hu/books?id=JvYKAAAAYAAJ>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2020 at 3:14 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

What I find somewhat challenging is the question of "apocryphal" texts and certain texts that could pose challenges to other texts. There is also the postmodern scholar's tendency to view doctrine as the child of economics or power politics. Too much Foucault gets tossed around.

Astus wrote:

Although there has been a significant growth of studies during the last few decades that showed how most of the important elements of Chan/Zen self-presentation as a "special transmission" is fabricated (and worse, fabricated with ill intentions), I have not seen anyone trying to answer that challenge, but rather things seem to continue as if such academic works did not exist at all. Although it might be that some in Japanese/Korean/Chinese academics try to work out a response. Not that it's anything new, after all, attacking the validity of the lineage was the tactics of both Tiantai and the various Chan factions.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2020 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

All Buddhist sūtras and tantras are apocryphal, all of them, including the Pali Canon, etc., from a western scholastic point of view.

Astus wrote:

If the scriptures are viewed in a historical perspective, then there is still the matter of earlier and later materials. Furthermore, what are often called the Early Buddhist Texts necessarily form the fundamental doctrines, therefore anything of a later date is measured against those to see where they accord or diverge from them. It should also be recognised that the early texts do show a mostly coherent set of views and practices, so it's not like that just because there is no direct record of the Buddha talking then anything goes. While valid reasoning and direct perception should be the first points of reference, it is the harmony with the early texts that any later work can be called buddhavacana, as advised by <https://suttacentral.net/dn16/en/sujato#dn16:4.4.7>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2020 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Western, settler-colonialist, historical perspective... I prefer the indigenous perspectives, which are many, varied, and don't necessarily accept this idea of "earlier" and "later" texts.

Astus wrote:

Wouldn't that result in an unnecessary isolation from the reasoning and arguments of modern scholarship in favour of other arguments that also claim to be based on reason? Just as it's been the practice of past teachers to address and respond to the views and doctrines of their own times, shouldn't that be followed today as well, especially in the field of Buddhist studies? Of course, this is not to say that everyone should occupy themselves with such matters, but at least some level of recognition of the need to be able to communicate Buddhism on the highest levels of human intellectual culture of our times would be beneficial.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 20th, 2020 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

What do the reasoning and arguments of buddhologists have to with buddhahood or the accounts of our own tradition? Why is it necessary to adopt a settler-colonialist perspective, which is foreign to Buddhadharma as a whole, as the measure by which we take stock of our own schools?

Astus wrote:

There is a shared field in the accounts of past events, where the traditional story says one thing, and historical documents say another, like in the case of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moheyan>. Furthermore, the very concept that one relies on a tradition - i.e. something transmitted to the present through past generations - invokes the assumption of validation through history. Only when authenticity is independent of the reliability of one's perception of history could it be said that verification of past events is irrelevant. Such freedom from historical constraints is said to be the quality of the Dharma, that it is readily visible (saṃdṛṣṭika) and timeless (akālika). The words of the Buddha are necessarily from the past transmitted to the present, therefore not free from historical circumstances, but the meaning delivered through them is immaterial, so while it is the meaning that matters more, it cannot be wholly removed from the words themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 3:16 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

What would an "answer to that challenge" look like, for you?

Astus wrote:

Looking at the history of Chan, there were times of growth and times of decline. For instance, the current state of Soto Zen is a result of reforms that happened in the 18th (as a summary: <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2548>) and 19th (Meiji reforms) centuries. What might be a way to avoid the issue of lineage histories being fictional is a return to a more open view of Zen that is not apart from the sutras and other texts but rather co-existent with them.

Genjo Conan said:

I have a graduate degree in history, so it's not like I'm against the practice, but I don't believe that scholarship ought to dictate faith. They're separate spheres.

Astus wrote:

You might like this one: http://www.acmuller.net/articles/zen_and_scholarship-bulgyohak.html

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 3:20 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

You can just look at the world of textual criticism of this sort ("Early Buddhism" is one of the best examples) to see that it quickly becomes a treasure hunt of sorts, and rarely brings people to actually practicing. To me, that is evidence enough that this approach

is one that is only peripherally valuable to Dharma practice. Peripheral value like that has its place, but once it becomes central it ceases to be Dharma practice.

Astus wrote:

I find <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/en/personen/analayo.html> a great example of being both a scholar and practitioner, and actually using both areas to support the other.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 2:51 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who says they are fictional? On what basis are these claims for the fictionality of Chan lineages made? What assumptions drive such claims of inauthenticity?

Astus wrote:

It is based on documents available from various eras, many of them from the Dunhuang caves, that show how the list of Indian patriarchs developed to its current form through a century of changes, and there are also the developments of the first six patriarchs of China, and how eventually Huineng was accepted as the sixth. Just that is already enough to show how the very basis of an unbroken lineage from the Buddha is fictional. Is there some conspiracy or bad intention to discredit the lineage claims? I don't see where or how, since they are not made by competing communities, unlike what happened when the position of the sixth patriarch was still debated, or when Chan groups had to establish themselves as legitimate, or when one Chan lineage claim was put against the other.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 2:58 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

You don't need to be a complete literalist either, but believing that the spiritual significance of your scriptures is basically bunk can't be good for one's practice.

Astus wrote:

I don't think that the value of the scriptures depend on believing in their attribution to the historical person of Shakyamuni, therefore it cannot cause problems whether they were actually stated by him or not. At the same time, to see a historical evolution of the scriptures and Buddhism in general can serve as an organising principle that does not downgrade one group and elevate another, thus providing a more open view of the whole of the received traditions than any interpretation limited to one specific school.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 3:08 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

Dogen wrote favorably about the Lotus Sutra.

Astus wrote:

That Soto Zen takes Dogen as the standard source is itself a result of Menzan Zuiho's efforts, who based his reformation on the works of Dogen, that is, what is now understood as correct transmission is established on written sources, and not what was passed down as the "living tradition". Such a recognition of textual materials is what is missing.

Genjo Conan said:

Words and letters themselves can't ultimately convey the buddhadharma, but that doesn't mean that Zen denies the utility of words and letters; rather, they're necessary but not sufficient.

Astus wrote:

If by ultimate conveyance you mean the need of personal realisation, of course, that is how it's always been. However, if you mean that the sutras are not representative of the complete teachings of the Buddha, and there must be another source of the teachings - in other words, a special transmission of an unbroken lineage of ancestors - then there are problems.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who says they are fictional? On what basis are these claims for the fictionality of Chan lineages made? What assumptions drive such claims of inauthenticity?

Astus wrote:

From <https://beingwithoutself.org/jeff/>, a Rinzai Zen teacher and a professor at Hanazono University:

'Why, and from where, did the lineage-transmission legend arise? As Zen begins to take root in the West many Zennists naturally are attracted to this myth; some even naively believe it is literally true. They think that obtaining accouterment associated with lineage transmission somehow proves their Zen is authentic. Perhaps it just reflects a fundamental lack of awakening. A brief review of the historical development of the lineage-transmission legend will dispel some of the preposterous misconceptions surrounding it.

In the early Tang dynasty, a good 1,300 years ago, not just Zen, but other Buddhist

schools were under pressure to at least prove their legitimacy, at best gain position and prestige from the vying political powers. The Chinese T'ien-t'ai [Jp.: Tendai] school was active in this before the nascent "Ch'an" or Zen school was. In spite of the "Separate transmission apart from scripture, Not depending on words and letters" rhetoric, as already mentioned, the "Zen school" had relied on sutras — The Lankavatara Sutra in the transmission from Bodhidharma to the second patriarch, and later The Diamond Sutra. But by the eighth century attempts were made to trace back directly to Shakamuni through a spiritual lineage-transmission.

In short, various "Zen groups" then created a number of conflicting lineage transmission charts to try and gain legitimacy. These lineage charts were based on imperial cult lineage and modified Confucian ancestor worship. A "Buddha-family Line" was created to try and show that the present possessor was a direct spiritual descendent of Shakamuni. By tracing oneself back directly to Shakamuni rather than just to statements in a sutra, one could come out superior to the other Buddhist schools, and to other "illegitimate" lineages within the Zen school. Just as the emperor was the ruler over this world, the Zen patriarch was to be considered the ruler over the spiritual realm. What we now naively view as "genuine" transmission-lineages in Zen Buddhism are largely dependent on vagaries of history and social-political plays for power. The pivotal figure is Katakū Jinne [Ho-tsê Shên-hui 670-762]. In an attempt to make himself the seventh patriarch, Jinne mounted an attack on the so-called "northern school" of Zen and argued forcefully for the legitimacy of his "southern school." Using the obscurity of his teacher, now universally known as "the sixth patriarch," to advantage, he based his attack on a strict patriarchal succession that he created, based on imperial cult lineage. Although the actual teachings of the two schools were virtually the same, Jinne denounced the teachings of the northern school. One of the reasons for his success was that he raised a huge amount of money — for military purposes — by selling a great number of ordination certificates in state-sponsored ceremonies.'

(<https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/sourceofzenwhotransmitswhat.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 21st, 2020 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Zhen Li said:

When need to see, for instance, and come to terms with the fact that much of what is considered Theravāda is extremely late and is full of statements such as how the Buddha is non-human, and the earliest collections of manuscripts that we know of include Mahāyāna texts alongside Śrāvakayāna texts.

Astus wrote:

The various historical layers within the Pali Canon is readily recognised, not to mention post-canonical works. So there is a clear difference between current Theravada (Mahavihara) orthodoxy and what can be known of the so called pre-sectarian literature.

Zhen Li said:

History shouldn't guide our practice, not just because that's not how religiosity works for most people (as Johnny Dangerous put quite well), but because, as with all fields of science, it's always changing and is a matter of interpretation. The Dharma needs to be something we know to be true, whereas history is something we can suppose to be true.

Astus wrote:

Historical concerns are not foreign to the various traditions, as each have stated a version of its past. Simply dismissing research into Buddhist history is an option of course, but that seems to be driven by fear of losing something. Scriptures serve as a guide, but the Dharma is realised in one's own experience. Even if it is accepted that none of the Abhidharma works, and none of the Mahayana sutras can be attributed to Shakyamuni, it does not mean that they are wrong. As Vasubandhu noted (The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature, p 8), 'even if the universal vehicle was taught by some enlightened being other (than Sākyamuni Buddha), that also proves it to be buddha-word, since a buddha is anyone who becomes perfectly enlightened and then teaches such (a vehicle).'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 4:15 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

The notion of lineages was carried from India to Tibet, China, and Central Asia by subcontinental Buddhists, principally by Vajrayana practitioners such as Amoghavajra, but also monastic abbots.

Astus wrote:

Śubhakarasiṃha arrived in Chang'an in 716 (Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia, p 340), a couple of years after the first known record of a Chan lineage (epitaph of Faru 法如, 638-689, see Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism, p 43-44, 85-86). However, the 'first lineage claim in Chinese Buddhism, made at some point between 607 and 632, predates the emergence of the Chan school; it appears in an early seventh-century work by Guanding 灌頂 (561–632), a disciple of the great Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), revered by the Tiantai tradition as its founder.' (The Power of Patriarchs, p 33)

Malcolm said:

Holding up western historiography as the pinnacle of human intellectual culture is basically racist. Thus kind of historiography erases indigenous traditions and sensibilities because it is predicated on dominance, as I mentioned before. So it is to be resisted because it is harmful to our tradition, since this kind of historiography insists that only one set of facts can be accepted.

Astus wrote:

Japan has been the leader in (East Asian) Buddhist studies throughout the 20th century, so I don't know why call it 'Western', plus it was not called the pinnacle of human

intellectual culture. By the 'highest levels' in my <https://dharma.wheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=555923#p555923> I merely referred to what is currently accepted in general as the source of reliable knowledge, not only in Western countries, but globally. But if you consider academic research a threat, then it might be needed to come up with a viable defence.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Zhen Li said:

He too cannot really be hemmed in by history. If we think of everything in positivist terms, then religiosity has no meaning beyond surface levels and we turn our practice into a glorified Stephen Bachelor-esque secular Buddhism. The world that we are perceiving is a result of our karma, and it is illusion. If we take it's material too seriously then we certainly will interfere with our practice and faith.

Astus wrote:

That seems to imply to me that Buddhism can exist only apart from what is seen by most as the real world, that is, the realm of conventional truths. However, I think that it poses no problem if Shakyamuni is viewed as a historical person, and Buddhism as a tradition maintained by actual human beings over the centuries, because it does not diminish the validity of the transmitted and realised Dharma. On the other hand, setting it into an unreachable dimension may hurt the possibility of it being accepted as a truth for humans.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

Could you rephrase this, please? I can't tell if you're asserting that Soto Zen does or does not recognize textual materials.

Astus wrote:

What I mean is to see the scriptures and texts as valid and 'sufficient' sources, for instance because that is what actually happened within the Soto tradition that was itself defined based on centuries old written materials.

Genjo Conan said:

Maybe you could set forth what you think the transmission is and what it signifies in Zen, because I'm not sure we're on the same page.

Astus wrote:

Transmission in Zen can mean several things, from pure bureaucratic paperwork to pure

transcendental wisdom and anything in between. The main point is, however, that the teachings are transmitted in words, and the Buddha's words are what one can find in the sutras, just as what one can know about the teachings of Dogen are in his writings and the records of his speeches. Realisation, on the other hand, is not something handed over but individually attained.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Monastic lineage lists certainly predate even these, that as my point.

Astus wrote:

There are two early sources that served as the inspiration for the creation of special lineages: Huiyuan's (334–416) preface to the Dharmatrata-dhyana Sutra (Damoduoluo chan jing 達摩多羅禪經,

https://web.archive.org/web/20160304103638/http://ibc.ac.th/faqing/files/English_Translation_ofBuddhabhadra_Meditation_Sutra.pdf) and the Fu fazang yinyuan zhuan 付法藏因緣傳 ("History of the Transmission of the Dharma-Storehouse," a lineage history of the Indian Buddhist patriarchs, purportedly translated in 472 by Kiṅkara (d.u.) and Tanyao (fl. 450–490) of the Northern Wei dynasty, but now known to be an indigenous Chinese composition, in six rolls.' - The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, p 307), as summarised by Morrison in The Power of Patriarchs, p 23-27.

However, it should be clear that what was created in China as special lineages are qualitatively different from the common understanding that monastics are heirs of the Buddha, and it was meant to set apart a unique group of people who wield more authority than ordinary monks, eventually resulting in the system of public monasteries bound to lineage members and under the direct control of the imperial court (see: How Zen Became Zen, p 39).

Malcolm said:

The Japanese have annihilated their own indigenous Buddhist tradition by falling the notion that there can only be a single set of facts, and those are known through textual analysis.

Astus wrote:

Reforms in Zen based on textual sources happened in the 18th century in Japan, and in the 17th century in China, without any modern influence of historiography.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 5:47 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

You seem to miss the point of what such empiricism erases, how it salts the soil of tradition, out of which nothing will grow.

Astus wrote:

Please elaborate then.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020 at 11:23 PM

Title: Re: Saving all beings, ultimate or conventional goal?

Content:

seeker242 said:

If no one can purify another, then how can you even save anyone?

Astus wrote:

"Good friends, now that we have done the repentances, I will express for you the four great vows. You should all listen closely: the sentient beings of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to save them all. ...

Good friends, why don't we all say [simply] 'sentient beings are limitless, and we vow to save them all'? How should we say it? Certainly it's not me who's doing the saving!

Good friends, the 'sentient beings of our own minds' are the mental states of delusion, confusion, immorality, jealousy, and evil. All these are sentient beings, and we must all [undergo] automatic salvation of the self-nature. This is called true salvation.

What is 'automatic salvation of the self-nature'? It is to use correct views to save the sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of prajñā to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them. When the false occurs, it is saved by the correct. When delusion occurs, it is saved by enlightenment. When stupidity occurs, it is saved by wisdom. When evil occurs, it is saved by good.

Salvation such as this is called true salvation."

(Platform Sutra, ch 6, BDK ed, p 48-49)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2020 at 2:20 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

The notion of lineage is found in all Buddhist schools in India, and was carried to Tibet, China, etc., from there. Inconsistencies in the record do not indicate that such lineages are fictions, the central point of your contention.

Astus wrote:

If so, could you point to some sources specifying lineages of Dharma?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2020 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, If you read Tibetan, you could read Lama Dampa's Sonam Gyaltzen's record of lineages for Vinaya, Abhidharma, Pramana, Bodhisattva vows, etc., and so on, as well as lineages Vajrayāna lineages, you name it,

Astus wrote:

Anything about a thousand years before him, just to see how the concept of Dharma lineages already existed in various Indian schools?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2020 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

As you know, there has been massive destruction of texts in India and China. But the Theravada chronicle of ordinations is illustrative.

Astus wrote:

There are a few examples of a lineage, although in two different senses. The Theravada account is about how the Dharma was faithfully transmitted, while in North India there were the five (or more) Dharmacaryas (Mahākaśyapa, Ānanda, Maḍhyāntika, Śāṇakavāsin, Upagupta) as preserved for instance in the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashokavadana> (one of its Chinese translations: <https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-biographical-scripture-of-king-asoka/>), and that list is reflected (with some changes) in the final version of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_lineage_charts#The_Indian_Lineage_From_Shakyamuni_to_Bodhidharma, although, as noted before, it was copied from a different source.

The fictional nature of the lineage already shows in the above, since those teachers revered among Sarvastivadins and others had practically nothing to do with Mahayana, much less Zen. The Indian ancestors in Zen were gradually "zennified" and got transmission verses and Zen-style dialogues attributed to them (e.g. https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/CHAPTER_FOUR.pdf). Also, the significance of the lineage in Zen is quite specific. What is transmitted in Zen is not something in the scriptures, not anything verbal, but the very buddha-mind itself - in a figurative sense, as a reference to the recognition of enlightenment of the disciple - making every recipient an equal of Shakyamuni himself. In McRae's words (Seeing Through Zen, p 4):

'Chan does not define itself as being one among a number of Buddhist schools based on a particular scripture (such as the Tiantai [Tendai] school with its emphasis on the Lotus Sutra, for example). Instead, Chan texts present the school as Buddhism itself, or

as the central teaching of Buddhism, which has been transmitted from the seven Buddhas of the past to the twenty-eight Indian patriarchs, the six Chinese patriarchs, and all the generations of Chinese and Japanese Chan and Zen masters that follow. (Bodhidharma occupies a pivotal position as both the twenty-eighth Indian and first Chinese patriarch.) It took several centuries for this entire schema to be developed; the earliest building blocks appeared at the very end of the seventh century, and the complete system was published perhaps as early as 801 but certainly by the year 952.'

Beyond the Indian ancestors the events surrounding the identity of the sixth (and the seventh) patriarch is something about what there are multiple historical sources, showing the disagreement among factions wanting to claim the ultimate authority to themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2020 at 6:04 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Sure, let me find my Official Vajrayana Lineage chart (tm), authorized and signed by Vajradhara.

Astus wrote:

There are actually such official lineage certificates in Zen. Here's one place you can order the template for it: <https://www.tera-mura.co.jp/ketimyaku.htm>

You can also watch a grand Dharma transmission ceremony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpWjRRTwERk> where "Venerable Master Hsing Yun transmitted the symbols of Dharma lineage: chanting beads, a Dharma scroll, and a kasaya to 72 disciples of the 49th generation Linji School" (<http://fgsihb.org/dictionary-info.asp?id=7357>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 23rd, 2020 at 10:31 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

These three qualities are inherent in Vajrayana, for example, and also in Vinaya.

Astus wrote:

Since Vajrayana couldn't have been much of a source for Zen, it is the Vinaya part that should be looked into. The Vinaya prescribes novice training, but after the first five years a monk is independent. Dharma transmission is not like that, it is not a training, but a confirmation of enlightenment. The Zen lineage represents a series of awakened patriarchs who embody the totality of the Dharma. From this it should be clear that it is not like Vajrayana either.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2020 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

Your guru represents the totality of the Dharma, as it is said, "the guru is the Buddha...the Dharma...and the Sangha.

Astus wrote:

How does that relate to Dharma transmission in Zen? It's not taught that one should cultivate that sort of devotion as in Vajrayana.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2020 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

the need of a teacher to directly transmit a particular state to one "mind to mind" is.

Astus wrote:

There is nothing actually transmitted, it is rather the confirmation, the certification of what one has already attained. A classic example of this is the story of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongjia_Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 in chapter 7 of the Platform Sutra, where he is also named "one night Jue" (一宿覺), as he spent only one night at the Sixth Patriarch's place. He was already enlightened after reading the Vimalakirti Sutra, but when he met Xuance 玄策, he was told that he must visit the patriarch in order for his enlightenment to be verified (zheng 證, also the first word of his famous poem Zhengdaoge 證道歌), and so he did and spent there a single night.

Johnny Dangerous said:

It lines with Vajrayana in that (for instance) introduction to the state of Shikantaza isn't something you can just get through concepts and reading alone (much less the academic study of some version of history), but requires some form of direct transmission. Thus, lineage is still a living thing rather than a historical artifact.

Astus wrote:

If there were something passed down, Zen would be like any other school preserving the teachings of the Buddha.

Pei Xiu asked, "If they transmit the mind to each other, then why do you say that the mind is nonexistent?"

The master answered, "Not attaining a single dharma is what is called 'transmitting the mind.' If you understand this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma."

Pei Xiu asked, "If there is no mind and no dharma, then why do you call it

‘transmission’?”

The master replied, “The moment you hear me say, ‘transmit the mind,’ you presume there is something to be attained. This is why a patriarch said,

The moment you recognize the nature of the mind,
you can say only that it is inconceivable.

Perfectly clear, there is nothing to be attained.

Once you get it, you won’t say you have any such understanding.

If I tried to teach you this, how would you ever be able to handle it?”

(Essentials of Transmitting the Mind-Dharma, ch 11, tr Buswell & Kim, in A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace)

The Sixth Patriarch told the assembly, “I have a single thing that is nameless and unlettered. Do you know it?” Chan master Shenhui came forth and said, “It is the original source of the buddhas and is my Buddha-nature.”⁶⁰ This is the reason he was regarded as an illegitimate son of the Sixth Patriarch. Chan master Huairang came from Mt. Song, and the Sixth Patriarch asked him, “What thing came like this?” Huairang was at a loss. After eight years had passed he then approved himself, saying, “If I say a thing then I miss the mark.” This is why he is considered the legitimate son of the Sixth Patriarch.

(Seonga gwigam, ch 1, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 51-52)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2020 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

You asserted, “ The Zen lineage represents a series of awakened patriarchs who embody the totality of the Dharma.”

How is the above different from your assertion? The guru also embodies the lineage.

Astus wrote:

Right, in that sense, no difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2020 at 5:18 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Ok, that’s quite semantic in this context, you can call it a transmission or simply a revealing or pointing out...doesn’t much matter in the context in which we are discussing it - the method of said revealing is part of the living lineage.

Astus wrote:

But it's not a revelation, not a pointing out, but the certification of what is already realised. As you could see from Xuanjue's example, he was already awakened without

meeting a single Zen teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 24th, 2020 at 5:22 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

I don't know why we would assume this to be true: the Zhenyan school was extremely influential in China during the Tang dynasty, and was transmitted to Japan as the Shingon school in the early 9th Century, where it also became influential. Different Ch'an and Zen lineages adopted various esoteric practices as a result, some of which are still practiced. For example, the <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/scriptures.html> contains several dharani. Unless by Vajrayana you mean specifically Tibetan traditions.

Astus wrote:

See <https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=540377#p540377> based on the collection Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 25th, 2020 at 4:19 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Nonetheless, it still requires some sort of transport mechanism for the teachings, and it comes through people, not reading of texts, though of course those are utilized.

Astus wrote:

The transport mechanism of the teachings is what the Buddhist community is for in general, keeping alive by upholding and passing on the Dharma and the Vinaya. That's not what Zen is about, it is not the Zen lineage, hence it is called a 'special transmission outside the teachings' (jiao-wai bie-chuan 教外別傳; see Welter's analysis of this slogan <https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Koan-Welter.pdf>). It's mentioned in the 'https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower_Sermon', as it appears in Wumen's 無門 collection:

In ancient times, at an assembly on Spirit Mountain, the World Honored One [the Buddha] held up a flower and showed it to those gathered there.

Everyone in the assembly was silent at that moment. Only the Venerable Kasyapa cracked a slight smile.

The World Honored One said, "I have the treasury of the Eye of the Correct Dharma, the wondrous mind of nirvana, the real formless subtle gate to Reality, the special transmission outside the scriptural teachings that does not establish texts [as sacred], I entrust it to Mahakasyapa."

(Wumen's Gate, case 6, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 76;

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2005_p0293c12)

To illustrate further:

For a long time Yaoshan did not enter the hall to speak.

The temple director said to him, "The monks have been waiting for a long time for the master to give them some instruction."

Yaoshan said, "Ring the bell!"

The monks assembled in the hall.

Yaoshan then got down from the Dharma seat and went back to the abbot's quarters.

The temple director followed him and said, "Master, since you consented to speak to the monks, why didn't you say anything?"

Yaoshan said, "Sutras have sutra teachers. Shastras have shastra teachers. Why are you unhappy with me?"

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 124-125)

Because the Master was conducting a memorial feast for Yün-yen, a monk asked, "What teaching did you receive while you were at Yün-yen's place?"

The Master said, "Although I was there, I didn't receive any teaching."

"Since you didn't actually receive any teaching, why are you conducting this memorial?" asked the monk.

"Why should I turn my back on him?" replied the Master.

"If you began by meeting Nan-ch'üan, why do you now conduct a memorial feast for Yün-yen?" asked the monk.

"It is not my former master's virtue or Buddha Dharma that I esteem, only that he did not make exhaustive explanations for me," replied the Master.

(Record of Dongshan, p 28, tr Powell)

Johnny Dangerous said:

so far what you are presenting is not unique, and I don't understand what point you are trying to make.

Astus wrote:

The point is that where the Zen lineage is fictional is not related to the ordinary Sangha activities and the regulations of the Vinaya, but to a concept of transmission going back to Shakyamuni that is claimed to be historically valid by the tradition but shown on many levels by modern scholarship to be written and rewritten by various people in China over many centuries, thus it is one of the conflicts between the religious and the academic perspectives.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 25th, 2020 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

In any event, again, lineage is central to many if not all Buddhist schools, so I'm unclear as to why Zen's insistence on its importance would hang on what Vajrayana schools do

one way or the other.

Astus wrote:

The Zen lineages (i.e. the system of Dharma transmission) have apparently nothing to do with Vajrayana. See also the

<https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=556342#p556342> on how lineage in Zen is something other than what is understood by others.

This article by Bodiford is also recommended:

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Bodiford-transmission-ZenRitual.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2020 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

I understand you to be asserting that there is something unique about Zen's approach to lineage and transmission, but I'm not clear about where you think the uniqueness lies.

Astus wrote:

Do you know other schools where lineage means not the transmission of a method or doctrine, but those confirmed as awakened (it is the nature of this confirmation that can have a variety of meanings)?

'If we did not rely on a teacher's certification, there would be those who, not having experienced realization, would nevertheless claim they had, and those who, not having this certification, would claim they possessed it. If these people then delude others who seek the Dharma, they end up destroying the Right Law. With this certification former buddhas could foresee future buddhas, former teachers could recognize future enlightened students. People are not certified at random. People who come to inquire about the teaching are thoroughly scrutinized, and only people with understanding that is in agreement with the Right Law receive certification. This is what is called transmission.'

(Mud and Water: A Collection of Talks by the Zen Master Bassui, p 70)

'Only a real master—someone who has received confirmation from a qualified teacher—can determine whether someone has clarified the true Dharma. If we trace the line of qualified teachers back through each generation to the time of Shakyamuni himself, we see that this very continuity can rightly be called “the life of Zen Buddhism.”' (Zen: The Authentic Gate by Koun Yamada, ch 7)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 26th, 2020 at 5:40 PM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

The tulku tradition, and also the notion of "lineage holders" in Tibetan Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

Tulkus are nominated mostly when they're children, and then they receive their education. As for lineage holders, is there actually a process of making that a qualification? Isn't it rather an expression meaning someone who knows the teachings of a lineage? So, neither of them seem to be like what goes on in Zen. For instance, to make it like Zen, Milarepa should have at one point told Gampopa that their attainment were the same, and not advise him to keep practising.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 27th, 2020 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Academic critiques and slandering the dharma

Content:

Malcolm said:

In many instances, students are told by their Masters they have attained what their master attained. It is quite common, actually.

Astus wrote:

Does that result in a lineage traced back through many generations? Does it authorise the student to pass on the lineage?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 28th, 2020 at 3:56 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan and Mahayana and kshangabhanga of cittas and a self

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

As far as I know in madhyamika there is no arising or cessation besides nirvana so kshanabhavavada is rejected. however Cittas are moments of consciousness with no permanent atman behind it.

Astus wrote:

Arising and cessation are illusory, it does not matter whether we talk of mind or something else. Chapter 7 of the Mulamadhyamakakarika discusses the topic of arising, abiding, and ceasing, concluding it with:

'Arising and abiding and decay are not established.

Thus compounded things do not exist.

And since compounded things are not established,

How could the uncompounded be established?

Like a dream and like a mirage,

Like a city of gandharvas,

So arising and abiding

And cessation have been taught.'
(MMK 7.33-34, tr Padmakara)

And in the Yuktisastika (v 18-23, tr Thupten Jinpa):

'Those who imputes arising and disintegration
With relation to conditioned things,
They do not understand well the movement
Of the wheel of dependent origination.

That which has originated due to “this” and “that,”
That has not done so as its own being;
And that which has not arisen as its own being,
How can it be called “arisen”?

The tranquility derived from extinction of cause,
This is understood to be a cessation;
That which is not extinguished through its intrinsic nature,
How can that be called an “extinguishment”?

Since there is nothing that arises,
There is nothing that disintegrates;
Yet the paths of arising and disintegration
Were taught [by the Buddha] for a purpose.

By understanding arising, disintegration is understood;
By understanding disintegration, impermanence is understood;
By understanding how to engage with impermanence,
The sublime dharma is understood as well.

Those who understand the dependent origination
To be utterly devoid of arising and disintegration,
Those who have such knowledge will cross
The ocean of samsara of dogmatic views.'

As for momentariness specifically, the Bodhicaryavatara says (9.6-8, tr Padmakara):

'Forms and so forth, which we all perceive,
Exist by general acclaim but not by valid reasoning.
They're false just like, for instance, unclean things
Regarded in the common view as pure.

But that he might instruct the worldly,
Our Protector spoke of “things.”
But these in truth lack even momentariness.
Now if you say it's wrong to claim the momentary as relative,

There is no fault. For momentariness
Is relative for yogis, but for worldly beings, ultimate.
Were it otherwise, the common view
Could fault the yogic insight into corporal impurity.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 29th, 2020 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Tibetan and Mahayana and kshangabhanga of cittas and a self

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

This proves that-atleast if you reject theravadan kshanabhangavada

Astus wrote:

Let's not call it a Theravadin doctrine, as their version of momentariness (see e.g. Kathavatthu 22.8, Visuddhimagga XX.24; for more see chapter 17 of The Theravada Abhidharma by Y. Karunadasa, and section I.B of The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness by Alexander von Rospatt) is not exactly like those taught by other Abhidharmikas and in the various Mahayana schools.

Artziebetter1 said:

a permanent Citta exists though.a permanent atman is the logical conclusion of this.

Astus wrote:

A permanent consciousness is a rejected and refuted idea in Buddhism. Look at what the Buddha told Sāti when he presented his idea of an eternal mind:

“Silly man, who on earth have you ever known me to teach in that way? Haven’t I said in many ways that consciousness is dependently originated, since consciousness does not arise without a cause? But still you misrepresent me by your wrong grasp, harm yourself, and make much bad karma. This will be for your lasting harm and suffering.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

Artziebetter1 said:

If Kshanabhanga is not true ultimately,then Cittas do not cease or arise,and then there is one enduring Citta or atman.this is a logical conclusion to make.

Astus wrote:

Momentariness is an extension of the teaching of impermanence. What is refuted in Madhyamaka is that momentariness is more than a relative concept, not that it is completely invalid. Just the teaching of impermanence on its own removes any room for an eternal consciousness, then momentariness and emptiness only further clarifies how there is not even the smallest anything to hang on to as real. From this it is not a logical conclusion at all to posit any permanent mind.

Artziebetter1 said:

but we can say that we experience our minds and that it does exist in a concrete sence.

Astus wrote:

Mind is never experienced on its own, there are only instances of being conscious of something. In the above quoted sutta the Buddha states very clearly: 'Consciousness is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it arises.', so there are eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness. No experience stays permanently, this is personally verifiable, so it cannot be claimed that there is an eternal mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 29th, 2020 at 6:07 PM

Title: Re: Dogen refutes view that Zen stories are "beyond logic" or "irrational."

Content:

Astus wrote:

Perhaps using the dichotomy of "rational" and "irrational" (in English) is too much and it can lead to unwanted paths. Better go with in/comprehensible for mu/rie 無/理會 (as in https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/pdf/dharma-eye/hogen09/hogen09_07.htm), as the point is that merely not thinking is not a solution, and that mistake is what is being criticised. As for a modern example of treating Zen teachings, Okumura writes in his commentary to the Mountains and Waters Sutra:

'if we can follow the thread of the teachings from Buddha through Mahāyāna Buddhism and Zen until Dōgen, we can discover the meaning of this wondrous writing for ourselves. We will completely miss the point if we simply read Dōgen and create a fixed philosophy based on our understanding of his writings. If we do that, we create another system of views — another problem. Instead, when we read Dōgen we have to apply his words in our lives, studying the relationship between our self and the myriad things.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 30th, 2020 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: Tibetan and Mahayana and kshangabhangā of cittaś and a self

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

if the Cittaś are not permanent how can it accumulate karma, vasanas and samskaras etc The mental impressions cannot exist without a permanent receptacle or abode.

Astus wrote:

What is permanent cannot change, therefore it cannot serve as a support for any living being (as living necessarily means change), nor as a basis for accumulating karma, because that too involves change. For the Madhyamaka explanation of how karma is an effective force, Nagarjuna states (MMK 17.31-33, tr Padmakara):

'Just as an illusory form, which Our Teacher emanated
Through the perfection of miraculous power,
Gave rise to yet another magical appearance,

And this in turn produced another,

Likewise, agent and the deed performed
Resemble magical appearances.
They're like illusory forms produced
By what is also an illusion bodied forth.

Defilements, actions, and embodied beings;
Agents and the fruits of action
Are like cities of gandharvas.
They're like mirages and dreams.'

Mabja Jangchub comments in the Ornament of Reason:

'Indeed, we have refuted that any of this possesses a nature, but we have not proved that it is nonexistent in a conventional sense. Neither is it the case that if something lacks nature, it cannot reasonably function at the level of convention. Let us use an example that is accepted by the treatises. The Teacher, the Buddha, the Transcendent Conqueror, creates emanations. These emanations are created in a perfect miracle where one emanation gives rise to a second, the second creates a third, and so forth. Likewise, although the agent has no nature, it is still able to act in terms of convention. Thus, the agent resembles an emanation. Although the act has no nature, it can still be carried out conventionally, just as when one emanation gives rise to another. The same point can be made by means of an example that is in line with worldly consensus. Afflictions such as desire; the virtuous, nonvirtuous, or immovable actions that are motivated by affliction; their resulting physical support (that is, the body); the ineffable self that is the agent of the karmic act; and the ripened, ruled, and concordant effects that are the results of affliction and action—none of this has any nature, and yet conventionally it originates in dependence. It all appears in the same way as a city of scent-eaters, like an illusion and like a dream.'

To further clarify, Wangchuk Dorje wrote (The Karmapa's Middle Way, p 232):

'Followers of the Middle Way do not posit anything connected to the relative truth after analysis, because they do not accept that any phenomenon can withstand analysis. When one analyzes, there is no origination of results from either a cause that has disintegrated or a cause that has not disintegrated. If a result were to originate after its cause had disintegrated, any result could arise from any cause. If results were to originate from a cause that had not disintegrated, no results would depend on conditions.

If you assume that a result arises following the postdisintegration state of its cause, that view entails nihilism: the continuity of the subsequent phenomena would be severed. If you assume that a result arises following its cause which had not disintegrated, that view entails eternalism: all things would have to exist simultaneously. Thus postdisintegration is not a suitable cause for phenomena, nor is nondisintegration. When one analyzes, one cannot posit the connection between causes and results, their support, and so on in any way, including conventionally. Understanding this is the

supreme way of this teaching system.'

Artziebetter1 said:

the four great arguments of the middle way are madhyamika arguments and when applied to Citta, posit that a permanent atman exists.

Astus wrote:

If by the four great arguments you mean <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>, then you can see that especially the fourth, dependent origination, is what shows how no permanent consciousness is possible. As Aryadeva explained (Catuhsataka 9.202-203, tr Ruth Sonam)

'There is not anywhere anything
That ever exists without depending.
Thus never is there anywhere
Anything that is permanent.

There is no functional thing without a cause,
Nor anything permanent which has a cause.
Thus the one who knows suchness said what has
Come about causelessly does not exist.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 2nd, 2020 at 6:32 PM

Title: Re: Difficulty understanding Vijnana/Consciousness

Content:

SleepingTurtle said:

What exactly IS Vijnana/Consciousness?

Astus wrote:

In the Nikayas (Pali suttas) there is no strict terminology for consciousness, so it can mean various aspects, depending on the context. But it should be kept in mind that consciousness does not mean a singular experience, it always occurs with various https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_factors_%28Buddhism%29 (e.g. feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention).

SleepingTurtle said:

From what I understand, it is content associated with what is perceived (psychological trigger), which has has unfulfilled desire/complex in its background?

Astus wrote:

How perception happens is described with the 12 sense-bases and the 18 elements (see a nice summary <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80yatana>). So first there are for instance the eye organ and a visual object, from them emerge a visual consciousness, their contact results in a feeling, and this is where there are two options, either there is a dis/liking of the feeling, or not. So, in this model consciousness is not

something triggered by previous conditions, but by the meeting of the organ and the object. Although there is a different approach too, described in the twelve links, that shows how consciousness depends on

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%85kh%C4%81ra>, and therefore it defines how one eventually reacts to things. It's better not to confuse these two perspectives, even if they are related.

SleepingTurtle said:

If there was nothing in us to be associated with external object, eye-consciousness wouldn't arise and we would be unaffected by what we are seeing.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness does not necessarily involve complications, at least not at first contact, but through the sequential processing of sensory data. However, consciousness is required in order to be basically aware of something occurring, so all three, the object, the organ, and the consciousness are required for there to be any awareness of something.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 2nd, 2020 at 7:05 PM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synomous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

sapo7 said:

Do we know for sure which Bhumi corresponds to the Theravadin version of Arahantood?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bh%C5%ABmi_%28Buddhism%29

Astus wrote:

An arahant in Theravada is free from all attachments. In Mahayana only a buddha has that level of freedom.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 at 12:05 AM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synomous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

False. The obscuration of affliction is abandoned on the seventh bhumi. Bodhisattvas on the pure stages are also free of attachments.

In the shravaka schools, the difference between an arhat and is Buddha is that the former has nonafflictive ignorance and the latter does not.

Astus wrote:

That's a distinction coming from Sarvastivada that was then used by Mahayana. No such difference exists in Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 at 1:52 AM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synomous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, the Buddha clearly makes this distinction in various suttas found in the Pali canon. So while Theravadins argue there is no difference in bodhi, they do not claim that arhats are party to the same knowledge as a buddha: example, Mogallana had to ask the Buddha where his mother had taken rebirth. Hence, the distinction is recognized in Theravada as well.

Astus wrote:

There can be many differences even among the arahants, depending on what qualities they possess. In what there is no difference between an arahant and a buddha is complete freedom from all attachments. The various special qualities of a buddha are not the result of liberation, but the accumulated merits/paramis, at least in Theravada.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Difficulty understanding Vijnana/Consciousness

Content:

SleepingTurtle said:

When we cognize something, does that cognition/consciousness also serve as trigger for some craving/desire/thirst related to it to arise?

Astus wrote:

Once one is aware of something, one also has a basic feeling (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral) about it, and then how one acts on that cognition and feeling is where one can form an emotional response, what are categorised as formations in Buddhism, and in that way from consciousness one can arrive at craving towards pleasant things, anger towards unpleasant ones, and carelessness towards things that feel neutral. See this summarised in this speech: <https://suttacentral.net/sn36.3/en/sujato>; and some explanation in <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/the-underlying-tendencies/>.

SleepingTurtle said:

Its because I've read that Buddha taught how our thirst/needs/desires/what we crave actually keep us attached to specific things. Our attention is tied to those desires, be them placed in past or future. What Im saying is, if there is nothing to be associated with Vijnana/Consciousness, then there is no craving/desire to be recalled by it either.

Astus wrote:

So it is. When there are no conceptual and emotional complications of an impression/cognition, that is, when something is not turned into a personal issue, then there is nothing to be hung up on, one is free from pain, stress, and dissatisfaction.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 at 11:28 PM

Title: Re: Difficulty understanding Vijnana/Consciousness

Content:

SleepingTurtle said:

people form fetters by clinging/avoiding things, based on emotional response that arises from contact?

Astus wrote:

The emotional response is what comes from the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fetter_%28Buddhism%29, or they are the fetters themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 4th, 2020 at 6:24 AM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synonymous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

This was your assertion, "An arahant in Theravada is free from all attachments. In Mahayana only a buddha has that level of freedom."

This assertion is mistaken.

Astus wrote:

Only buddhas are free from the two obscurations, meaning that even on the 10th bhumi there is some clinging to concepts. Arahants, in Theravada at least, are free from attachment to both physical and mental phenomena, so there is no room for any obscuration.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 4th, 2020 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synonymous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, there is.

That is why Mogallana had to ask the Buddha where his mother was. That's an obscuration.

Astus wrote:

That is a story in the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yulanpen_Sutra, the closest event mentioned in the Pali Canon (<https://suttacentral.net/pv14/en/kiribathgoda>) is where Sariputta successfully helps his mother without the assistance of the Buddha. On the other hand, in the <https://suttacentral.net/sn54.9/en/sujato> the Buddha asked Ananda about why 'the mendicant Saṅgha seem so diminished'.

In any case, how do you define an obscuration that can be present without grasping at anything?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2020 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synomous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Non-afflictive ignorance satisfies that definition.

Astus wrote:

Since that means grasping at concepts like apprehender-apprehended, and agent-action-object, how would it be free from clinging?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 5th, 2020 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Which Bhumi is synomous with the Theravad Arahant?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Why would clinging be entailed?

Astus wrote:

Because the nonafflictive ignorance of cognitive obscuration is attachment to dharmas (dharmagraha) that is removed by realising their emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 8th, 2020 at 3:00 AM

Title: Re: "think" as buddha-nature

Content:

Viach said:

To recognize buddha-nature one has to "think" as buddha-nature.

Astus wrote:

How does one do that?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 10th, 2020 at 3:21 PM

Title: Re: alaya vs. alaya vijnana

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, you can read the bodhisattvabhumi for starters, where this distinction is made.

Astus wrote:

Do you have a more specific location of that distinction? A quick search in the translation brought no results to me. Abiding in suchness is what is usually taught in Yogacara.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 15th, 2020 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Is there a systematized course of study in Zen Buddhism (Soto)?

Content:

ElenaTheo said:

Is there a systematized course of study that one can follow in Zen Buddhism (Soto)?

Astus wrote:

Not to my knowledge, apart from what they teach at Komazawa University. What you might do is to learn about East Asian Buddhism in general, and then about Soto Zen Buddhism.

For a general introduction to East Asian Buddhism:

<https://hsingyun.org/books/core-teachings/> by Hsing Yun

<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-of-queen-srimala-of-the-lions-roar-and-the-vimalakirti-sutra/>

http://www.kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/n6p_book_page.htm

<https://bdkamerica.org/product/three-short-treatises-by-vasubandhu-sengzhao-and-zongmi/>

<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/> by Āśvaghoṣa

<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-platform-sutra-of-the-sixth-patriarch/>

For introduction to Soto Zen:

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/sotozen/index.html>

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/index.html>

<http://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/>

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/leaflet/Zuimonki/index.html>

<https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/index.html>

In book:

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=vNSRQkSACb4C> by Kosho Uchiyama

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=dQDm5oNbKdgC> by Shohaku Okumura

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=dyzRAgAAQBAJ>

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=tRfrlTX0ojoC> by Shohaku Okumura

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 22nd, 2020 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Samsarically Satisfied?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Is this just a case of, “Dharma ain’t for everybody” ?

Astus wrote:

I think it is rather a matter of presentation. Everyone loves to make a new friend, and nobody loves to lose one (see: <https://suttacentral.net/sn42.11/en/sujato>. Eradicating desires sounds like turning everything dull, making oneself insensate (cf. <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.232/en/sujato>). But if one's told that one can have friends without the pains of craving for them, of fearing for them, then it surely seems like the best possible outcome (see: <https://suttacentral.net/mn25/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 22nd, 2020 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: What is the source for the story of the sixth patriarch Huineng destroying sutras?

Content:

Dgj said:

What is the source for the story of the sixth patriarch Huineng destroying sutras?

Astus wrote:

It seems to be the artistic creativity of Liang Kai.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 23rd, 2020 at 6:40 AM

Title: Re: How is shentong different from tirthika doctrine

Content:

Astus wrote:

'There is no Shentong-Madhyamaka nor any need to make one up. The subdivision of Madhyamaka into “self-empty” and “other-empty” is obsolete. ... what is called Shentong is nothing other than the Yogacara (Yoga Practice) system of Maitreya, Asanga, and Vasubandhu, also called “the lineage of vast activity.”'
(Karl Brunnhölzl, in Center of the Sunlit Sky, p 445)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 23rd, 2020 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: How is shentong different from tirthika doctrine

Content:

Schrödinger’s Yidam said:

But it’s safe to say that what HHK meant—whatever that is—is more authoritative than Brunnhölzl.

Astus wrote:

The more pertinent question is if Shentongpas take the works of Maitreya, Asanga, and

Vasubandhu as their primary treatises or something else, because if yes, then they are rightly called Yogacarins.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 23rd, 2020 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: What is the source for the story of the sixth patriarch Huineng destroying sutras?

Content:

Dgj said:

So he just made it up for no reason?

Astus wrote:

Not no reason but a great expression of not relying on words. And it is a good choice exactly because there is no such story about Huineng.

Dgj said:

What are some other masters destroying sutras or other religious texts like Dahui Zonggao for example?

Astus wrote:

I can recall only incidents where non-canonical writings were destroyed, mostly one's own works. I guess it'd be too much even for Zen anecdotes to talk of such sacreligious acts as destroying scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 24th, 2020 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: What is the source for the story of the sixth patriarch Huineng destroying sutras?

Content:

Dgj said:

What are the incidents with non canonical writings you reference?

Astus wrote:

Deshan burned his sutra commentary (Wumenguan case 28), Danxia burned his notes (Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, p 220), Yangshan burned the secret notebook of symbols (Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 186), and as you mentioned, Dahui burned the Blue Cliff Record (Blue Cliff Record, BDK ed, p 6).

'the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth'

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 25th, 2020 at 6:20 AM

Title: Re: What is the source for the story of the sixth patriarch Huineng destroying sutras?

Content:

Tao said:

Who did burn a buddha statue? I vaguely recall something like this...

Astus wrote:

Danxia Tianran.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 27th, 2020 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: Study in Zen

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

Taking Dogen as just one example

Astus wrote:

At the end of each volume of the <https://bdkamerica.org/product/shobogenzo-the-true-dharma-eye-treasury-volume-iv/> there is a bibliography of the main Chinese sources quoted by Dogen.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 28th, 2020 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Vipassanā

Content:

yeshedronmay said:

Is there a difference between Theravada Vipassana meditation and Kagyu or Tibetan Vipassana meditation practice ?

Astus wrote:

Vipassana is not a single method but a term for any technique that has the aim of gaining insight. In order to be able make a comparison, one would need to be specific about what it is exactly one means. Generally speaking, Theravada and Vajrayana are very far from each other in terms of historical development, so relying simply on terminology used by them can be easily misleading. For instance, there was mention of how 'emptiness of dharmas' is a Mahayana teaching, which is true, but at the same time, it is meant as a rejection of the Vaibhashika interpretation of dharmas, not the Theravada one where dharmas are viewed differently.

Here are two examples you may look into:

<https://mahasivipassana.com/docs/practical-insight-meditation-basic-practice/> by Mahasi Sayadaw

<https://www.lionsroar.com/directly-experience-the-nature-of-mind/> by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 29th, 2020 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Zen on sleeping

Content:

Astus wrote:

'While sleeping, lie on your right side, not [on your back] facing straight upward, because this is called the dead man's sleep. Sleeping [with your face down] is called indulgent sleep because it creates bad dreams.'

(The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 280)

'When sleeping, the monk should lie on his right-hand side with his head on his right palm and with his left hand placed on his left hip as though carrying a knife.'

(Chanyuan qinggui, in The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China by Yifa, p 139)

'Definitely sleep lying on your right side and not on your left side. When you lie down your head should be towards buddha. Now [in the monks' hall] our heads are toward the joen, so our heads are toward Manjushri. Do not sleep lying on your front. Do not raise both knees and lie on your back. Do not sleep on your back with your legs crossed. Do not stretch out your legs together.'

(Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community, p 65)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 30th, 2020 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: The 37 Factors of Enlightenment and Asanga

Content:

Astus wrote:

If it's about a Yogacara explanation of smrtyupasthana, check Mahayanasutralamkara 18/19.43-45 and Madhyantavibhaga 4.1.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 1st, 2020 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: Vipassanā

Content:

SilenceMonkey said:

From the tibetan point of view, Theravada holds one of the two "lower" tenet systems which believe in material reality as an ultimate truth. ie. The material world can be broken down into atoms, but at some point these "atoms" can no longer be broken down. Therefore, these are seen to be what constitute reality.

Astus wrote:

The shravaka systems in Tibetan Buddhism are what they take to be the views of Vaibhashika and Sautrantika based mainly on the Abhidharmakosha-bhashyam.

Theravada is a separate school, not known/considered in Tibetan doxography, that also

disagreed with some doctrines of the Sarvastivadins. As for the Theravada view of material dhammas, the smallest unit according to post-canonical teachings are called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalapa_%28atomism%29, they are considered composite, and used in some vipassana meditations: 'To know that our very body is tiny kalapas all in a state of change is to know the true nature of change or decay.'
(<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/khin/wheel231.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020 at 6:21 PM

Title: Re: Vipassanā

Content:

Malcolm said:

Not that different than paramanus, actually.

Astus wrote:

The atomist ideas of Sarvastivada, Sautrantika, and Theravada are analysed by Karunadasa in chapter 15 of

https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/The_Theravada_Abhidhamma/a1GBDwAAQBAJ and chapter 8 of

https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/The_Buddhist_Analysis_of_Matter/eifADwAAQBAJ. From the former book:

'For the Sarvāstivāda, the atom is the smallest unit of a single unitary material dharma, so small that it has no spatial dimensions. For the Theravāda, the atom is an aggregate of a number of unitary material dhammas. This is why it is described not only as “atom” (paramāṇu) but also as “cluster of material dhammas” (rūpa-kalāpa). It thus corresponds not to the atom of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma but to what it calls the “octuple aggregate.” The Theravāda term that corresponds to the “atom” of the Sarvāstivāda is kalāpaṅga — that is, the constituent of a kalāpa.

...

The Pāli commentators observe that although it is possible, for the sake of defining the individuating characteristics (lakkhaṇa), to speak of color, taste, smell, and so on as separate dhammas, yet positionally they are not separable from one another. Color, taste, and so on, so runs the argument, cannot be dissected and separated like particles of sand. The color of the mango, for instance, cannot be separated from its hardness (earth element) or from its taste. This situation is equally true of the constituents of a rūpa-kalāpa as well. Hence there is no necessity, other than logical, to postulate the constituent (kalāpaṅga) as the smallest of all (sabba-pariyantima).'

But I think a more interesting part is that kalapas are meant to be experienced during vipassana practice.

'You observe this structure that initially appears to be so solid, the entire physical structure at the level of sensation. Observing, observing you will reach the stage when you experience that the entire physical structure is nothing but subatomic particles: throughout the body, nothing but kalapas (subatomic particles). And even these tiniest

subatomic particles are not solid. They are mere vibration, just wavelets.'
(<https://pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Articles-and-Excerpts/Buddhas-Path-is-to-Experience-Reality>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 4th, 2020 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: Zen Mantras

Content:

Astus wrote:

You can find several mantras and dharanis in liturgical texts, like the <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/sutra/scriptures.html>. A popular set in Chinese Buddhism is the ten small mantras (十小咒):

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=235>

<https://thebuddhistmantra.blogspot.com/2018/09/ten-small-mantras-se-siau-cou-or-dasa.html>

Another useful collection of <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/mantra0.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 7th, 2020 at 5:28 PM

Title: Re: Picking and choosing

Content:

CosmosFF said:

If picking and choosing leads to suffering, where is the limit to what is considered picking and choosing?

Astus wrote:

'The Supreme Way is difficult

Only for those who pick and choose.

Simply let go of love and hate;

The Way will fully reveal itself.'

(<http://sunnyvale.ctzen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/trust-in-mind-v1.7.12-20131216.pdf>)

Then the poem continues on explaining that pursuing the

<https://suttacentral.net/an8.6/en/sujato> is the wrong path to take, and in that sense one should be free from discrimination. Then it goes on, addressing the root of discrimination, not recognising suchness.

'Gain and loss, fame and disgrace,

praise and blame, and pleasure and pain.

These qualities among people are impermanent,
transient, and perishable.

A clever and mindful person knows these things,
seeing that they're perishable.
Desirable things don't disturb their mind,
nor are they repelled by the undesirable.

Both favoring and opposing
are cleared and ended, they are no more.
Knowing the stainless, sorrowless state,
they understand rightly, going beyond rebirth.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/an8.6/en/sujato>)

'The subject disappears with its object,
The object vanishes without its subject.
Objects are objects because of subjects,
Subjects are subjects because of objects.

Know that these two
Are essentially of one emptiness.
The one emptiness unites opposites,
Equally pervading all phenomena.

Not differentiating what is fine or coarse,
How can there be any preferences?'
(<http://sunnyvale.ctzen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/trust-in-mind-v1.7.12-20131216.pdf>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 8th, 2020 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: Picking and choosing

Content:

CosmosFF said:

Not neglecting or denying pain or pleasure, not denying that one's mind has thoughts and emotions, but feel no difference when faced with pain. The body can feel pain but with realization of the emptiness it is not seen as "I am hurt" but as "pain is funny". Is this the way? Or am i stupid?

Astus wrote:

'There are two kinds of suffering: i) bodily suffering (kāyika [230a] duḥkha), ii) mental suffering (caitasika duḥkha). By the power of their wisdom (prajñābala), the holy individuals (āryapudgala) have no further mental suffering like sadness (daurmanasya), jealousy (īrṣyā), malice (vyāpāda), etc. On the other hand, because they have received a body composed of the four great elements (mahābhūtamaya) as a result of actions in their previous existences (pūrvajanmakarman), they still have bodily sufferings such as old age (jarā) and sickness (vyādhi), hunger and thirst (kṣutpipāsa), cold and heat (śītoṣṇa), etc., but these bodily sufferings are slight and quite rare.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita->

sastra/d/doc225706.html)

'No mind means that the eight winds cannot move [mind]. Suppose habit energy is not yet exhausted and a thought of anger happens to arise; at that moment have no mind to strike or abuse the other. If a thought of greed happens to arise, at that moment have no mind that prays for acquiring [the coveted object]. Should one see another prosper and become famous, at that moment, have no mind that envies him or seeks to outdo him. At all times in oneself have no mind that is sorrowful or hungry or cold; have no mind that fears being despised by others, up to and including all these sorts of things. We can even call it "lacking all mind." This is called cultivating the path. If you have obtained [the state wherein] toward agreeable and disagreeable sense objects you have no passion or hatred or desire or dislike at all, this is called obtaining the path. Do a reverse illumination on each of these. If you have a disease, apply an antidote. If you have no disease, there is no [need for] a prescription.'

(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 174)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 12:02 AM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

If one chitta perishes and the next arises, from what does this next chitta arise? in a chain of chittas you would either have to have a chitta perishing and it's subsequent chitta arising from nothingness

Astus wrote:

Arising out of nothing could occur only if there were a gap between moments. Since no such gap is proposed, there is no place for any sort of nothingness to arise from.

You might also check out <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratnak%C4%ABrti> 's arguments, and https://ahandfulofleaves.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/the-buddhist-doctrine-of-momentariness_vonrospatt.pdf 's book.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 5:00 AM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

Okay, so do you believe that this new citta is not the same citta/vijnana/alaya as the former? because this type of arising is still arising from other which actually doesn't exist and is still ex nihilo creation?

Astus wrote:

Causality means that from a cause comes an effect. Madhyamaka, by saying that things do not arise from themselves, from others, from both, or from neither, means that

causality is merely a conceptual fabrication. So there are conventional truths (dependent origination) and the ultimate truth (no birth), and these two truths are not opposites but inseparable.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 4:25 PM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

How can there be dependent origination if origination is not at all established? what is dependent co-arising in your view ?

Astus wrote:

That is the only way there can be dependent origination. If there were anything established about it, it would be contrary to dependent origination itself.

'Those who understand the dependent origination
To be utterly devoid of arising and disintegration,
Those who have such knowledge will cross
The ocean of samsara of dogmatic views.'
(Yuktisastika, v 23, tr Thupten Jinpa)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Core of Mahayana

Content:

kirtu said:

we cannot attain true enlightenment or even just true personal peace of mind without any concern about others. So because all beings are intimately interdependent, we have to practice not just for our own enlightenment but for the complete enlightenment for all beings. We also have to concern ourselves not just with the alleviation of our own suffering but the alleviation of suffering of all beings.

Astus wrote:

It is not mandatory at all to have any concern about others, otherwise one denies the possibility of liberation, and affirms the true existence of others. Also, if great compassion were to arise out of the need to liberate oneself, it wouldn't be much of a compassion.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 9th, 2020 at 8:25 PM

Title: Re: Core of Mahayana

Content:

kirtu said:

Kapleau was explain the five types of Zen and was specifically explain the deficiencies of shōjo Zen.

Astus wrote:

Better read what Guifeng Zongmi (whom Kapleau calls by his Japanese name: Keiho) actually wrote, it's found in the Treatise on the Origin of Humanity, available in the BDK edition <https://bdkamerica.org/product/three-short-treatises-by-vasubandhu-sengzhao-and-zongmi/>, p 153-164.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 10th, 2020 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'What is mind? The mind is impermanent because it arises from causes and conditions, and because, arising and ceasing, it does not abide; [merely] similar [but discrete moments of mind are] arising [in succession]. Only due to perverted [views] does one think that the [mind] is a single [entity]. What did not exist before now exists, and having existed, it will not exist anymore. Therefore, [the mind] is impermanent. One observes the mind as empty. Why? From causes and conditions the eye and a visible object arise. Eye consciousness arises when [the eye and its object] are combined with mindfulness, the wish to see, and other [conditions]. It is just like a lens. When the sun and a lens exist, together with various conditions such as dry grass and cow dung, fire arises. When one examines each [of the relevant elements], fire is not perceivable. [It is just that] when [these] conditions meet, fire arises. Examining [these conditions] one by one, no fire is perceivable. Eye consciousness is also the same. It abides neither in the eye, nor in visible objects, nor somewhere between them. It has no abode, nor is it nonexistent. Therefore the Buddha says: "[Everything] is like an illusion or emanation." If [one] observes the present mind and the past mind, they are either painful, pleasant, or neutral. Manifold minds cease in their respective ways. One should observe the internal mind, the external mind, and both the internal and external minds in a similar way. Thus far is [the explanation of] the application of mindfulness to mind.'

(The Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation, BDK ed, p 50-51)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2020 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: If Nagarjuna had a mirror

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If Nagarjuna had a mirror, would he say the mirror is a different mirror each time something different is reflected in it, or is it the same mirror?

Astus wrote:

He knew of mirrors.

'Through the examples of: oral instruction, a lamp, a mirror, a seal, a sun-crystal, a seed, sourness and sound, the wise should understand the non-transmigration as well as the re-emergence of the aggregates.'

(The Heart of Interdependent Origination, v 5, in

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf, p 58)

'A woman sees her beautified face

On the surface of a mirror or a bowl of oil.

The fool feels passion for it

And runs in search for the desired.

The face was not transferred there.

The face will never be found in the reflection,

And yet fools have desire for it.

Know that all phenomena are like that.'

(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh127.html>, 9.17-18)

As for the nature of a mirror, from the perspective of the reflective quality, it can be analysed according to how there can be no reflector nor reflected according to for instance MMK ch 2, exchanging motion for reflection.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2020 at 8:03 PM

Title: Re: If Nagarjuna had a mirror

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What I mean is, strictly based on the idea that the reflection in the mirror is constantly changing, does that itself mean that the mirror is constantly changing?

Astus wrote:

A mirror is what reflects (mirrors) an image (mirrored). What does not reflect/mirror is not called a mirror, otherwise earth and stones would be mirrors too; so there is no mirror apart from mirroring. If the image could change without the mirroring changing, there should be reflections without anything to reflect them.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2020 at 9:59 PM

Title: Re: If Nagarjuna had a mirror

Content:

kirtu said:

The mirror doesn't change on the gross level at all but only on a subtle level, which is irrelevant to the phenomena of mirroring

Astus wrote:

The very idea that there is such a thing on its own as a mirror is imagining it to be apart from the function of mirroring/reflecting. But what is a mirror without the act of

reflecting, and if mirroring is not required for it, how can one tell what is or is not a mirror?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 11th, 2020 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: If Nagarjuna had a mirror

Content:

Malcolm said:

Apart from what has been mirrored and not been mirrored, there is no [present] mirroring. A mirroring mirror is redundant, just like moving movers.

Astus wrote:

Indeed, MMK ch 2.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 13th, 2020 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Malcolm said:

People inspired by Buddhism, who practice ethics and meditation for this life are not Dharma practitioners, no matter how nice, kind, or good they may be, whether they consider themselves Buddhists or not.

Astus wrote:

How about what is called "the least capacity" or "lesser scope"?

'Know that those who by whatever means

Seek for themselves no more

Than the pleasures of cyclic existence

Are persons of the least capacity.'

(Lamp for the Path, v 3, in Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment, p 69)

'Given the distinction between virtue and nonvirtue as laid down in the teachings, it is important to rely on virtue. The ten virtues tending to happiness will produce happy destinies, while negative action will precipitate a fall into the states of loss. To understand this distinction correctly, according to the karmic law of cause and effect, and to adopt positive rather than negative behavior is the so-called path of beings of lesser scope.'

(Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 1, p 151)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 14th, 2020 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: Abrahamic religions and Buddhism

Content:

coldbeer said:

Can one be a Christian, Muslim or Jew and still practice Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

It depends on what one's practice is.

coldbeer said:

I'm asking this as I'm currently in a relationship with a woman in one of these religions and the only way I can get married to her is to convert to her religion.

Astus wrote:

Starting a family based on lies can and likely will be a source of a series of major and minor problems.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 15th, 2020 at 4:00 AM

Title: Re: Teach me Madhyamaka

Content:

karmanyipgo said:

This is crystal clear to me and accords with what I understand hopefully others can confirm (or not!) this explanation thank you for posting

Astus wrote:

It is a fine summary. Thanks Anders!

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 21st, 2020 at 3:25 PM

Title: Re: Philosophical differences between Soto and Rinzai?

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

The more I have studied Vajrayana Buddhism, I have realized that there are a few philosophical differences between each school and I was wondering if this is the same for Japanese Zen schools?

Astus wrote:

There would have to be a philosophical view in the first place to then allow comparison. Although one can find some unique perspectives in the works of Dogen and Hakuin, but they did not propose anything systematic. It is rather the hallmark of Zen (Japanese or otherwise) that the main bonding factor is lineage, and not doctrine or method.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020 at 4:52 PM

Title: Re: Philosophical differences between Soto and Rinzai?

Content:

kirtu said:

They both assert that one's very own fathom-long body is the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

The idea of buddha-nature has been well regarded in China even before Bodhidharma, and it has been accepted by influential schools like the Sanlun, the Tiantai, and the Huayan. To say that Soto and Rinzai have their own philosophies about buddha-nature, they should present some definition and explanation, but if you look at for instance Dogen's Bussho, there isn't that much of a philosophical view to take away from it, although it can serve as a starting point to invent one.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Philosophical differences between Soto and Rinzai?

Content:

narhwal90 said:

There are many very specific instructions and views in Shobogenzo, but perhaps I am misunderstanding?

Astus wrote:

Are there? Any examples maybe?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: In Buddhism, what is "form", and how does it come about?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Matter or material form is (1-5) the five sense-faculties, (6-10) the five object-referents [or object-fields of the five sense-faculties], and (11) the non-informative.'
(AKB I.9ab, tr Sangpo, p 214)

'What is form?

It is all form whatsoever that is included in the four great elements and that is derived from the four great elements.

What are the four great elements?

The earth constituent, the water constituent, the fire constituent, and the air constituent.

...

What is derivative form?

The eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, the body faculty, [visible] form, sound, smell, taste, a portion of tangible objects, and noninformative [form].'

(Pancaskandhaprakarana, in Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p 229-230)

'What is the characteristic (laksana) of matter? Change is the characteristic of matter. It has two forms: change in contact and change in localization. What is change in contact?

It is the alteration caused by contact by a hand, a foot, a stone, a weapon, a stick, cold, heat, hunger, thirst, a mosquito, a gadfly, a snake, a scorpion, etc. What is change in localization? It is the imagination of form, through determined or undetermined mental conception, as such and such or some such other form.'

(Abhidharmasamuccaya, tr Boin-Webb, p 3)

'Formation (vivarta) occurs after the void state following destruction by fire, first from the commencement of the formation of the wind maṇḍaḷa as the lower basis of the first absorption, up to the existence of one sentient being in the hell of Avīci. Formation of the physical cosmos takes one eon, and the formation of sentient beings takes nineteen eons, making twenty eons.'

(Ornament of Abhidharma, 3.90 commentary)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020 at 10:57 PM

Title: Re: Philosophical differences between Soto and Rinzai?

Content:

narhwal90 said:

Instructions on how to lay out the facilities, instructions on bathroom conduct, instructions on how to make the robes and what materials that should be used and why.

Astus wrote:

Maybe it could be put under the category of ethics to argue against the use of toothbrush, as Dogen does in Senmen, but that's not much of a philosophical standpoint, nor an instruction one would follow outside of a very traditional style monastic setting.

narhwal90 said:

Extensive discussion on correct and incorrect views...

Astus wrote:

Could you give an example or two of Dogen's specific views on topics like the four wisdoms, five hindrances, six perfections, etc.? At the same time, even if Dogen did have some specific interpretations of the Dharma, it's another matter whether the past and present Soto school is defined by them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 23rd, 2020 at 12:06 AM

Title: Re: Philosophical differences between Soto and Rinzai?

Content:

narhwal90 said:

A cursory glance at the former shows detailed instruction on how to sit, how to compose the mind, and the latter shows instruction on view.

Astus wrote:

Let's consider Zazengi a bit then, because I would not call this one page writing a 'detailed instruction' on anything really. It has a shorter paragraph as a sort of preliminary considerations, and then a longer one on everything he has to mention on doing zazen. What are his instructions on what to be done with the mind once one has the posture? 'Sitting in balance in the mountain-still state, think the concrete state of not thinking. How can the state of not thinking be thought? It is non-thinking.' (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 3, p 226) As for what 'non-thinking' means, it is not clarified anywhere, and it is only through some further research (e.g. Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation by Carl Bielefeldt) that one can see how Dogen gradually rewrote Zhanglu Zongze's manual (The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 253-255) to be more fitting to his Zen literary style. But likely because Dogen's very short instruction is so cryptic, modern instructions of both <https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html> and <http://zen.rinnou.net/zazen/sitting.html> follow the slightly more explicit form of Zongze.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 28th, 2020 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: How exactly is there a momentariness of consciousness ?

Content:

Astus wrote:

A pertinent educational animation by Dharma Drum Mountain TV:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ_0NhJ6JYI

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 4th, 2021 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: Can someone explain Yogacara to me?

Content:

Dharmalight889 said:

explain Yogacara philosophy to me and how it compares with Madhyamaka philosophy?

Astus wrote:

There is no singular Yogacara philosophy but rather various texts considered by various people to be called Yogacara. Here are two introductory articles/essays:

<https://www.lionsroar.com/dharma-dictionary-yogacara/> by Charles Muller

<http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro.html> by Dan Lusthaus

Wikipedia also gives a general overview: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogachara>.

Dharmalight889 said:

From some of the information I have looked up, Yogacara seems to be a Buddhist psychology school studying consciousness.

Astus wrote:

Better view it as a Mahayana reformation of Abhidharma teachings.

Dharmalight889 said:

I have not found any information about the philosophical beliefs associated with Yogacara.

Astus wrote:

Their most famous ones are the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight_Consciousnesses and the https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Three_natures.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 5th, 2021 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Can someone explain Yogacara to me?

Content:

Dharmalight889 said:

Where do East Asian schools stand on this issue? Do some schools follow Yogacara philosophy, or are they like the Tibetans and consider themselves mostly to be Madhyamaka?

Astus wrote:

There are eight or ten schools distinguished traditionally in Chinese Buddhism (Satyasiddhi 成實宗; Abhidharmakosa 俱舍宗; Vinaya 律宗; Sanlun 三論宗; Faxiang 法相宗; Tiantai 天台宗; Huayan 華嚴宗; Zhenyan 真言宗; Chan 禪宗; Jingtu 淨土宗), and in Japanese Buddhism there are the so called six schools of Nara (Jojitsu 成實宗; Kusha 俱舍宗; Ritsu 律宗; Sanron 三論宗; Hossō 法相宗; Kegon 華嚴宗). Of those Sanlun/Sanron correspond to Madhyamaka and Faxiang/Hossō to Yogacara. In China both disappeared quite early, while in Japan the Hossō school still exists, and one of its priests actually has a book translated to English: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=1C4qAwAAQBAJ>. Apart from that, there are people who study Yogacara in East Asia, but no school dedicated to it.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 6th, 2021 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Definition: "Outflows" ?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

In various texts, the term "outflows" is used, such as the Buddha or his disciples being free from outflows.

Astus wrote:

Āsrava is a wonderful word, signifying how one mentally/emotionally is moved toward various objects, and how such things (in particular: sensuality/kāma, becoming/bhava, ignorance/avidyā, and views/dṛṣṭi) in-fluence one's mind (see e.g. AKB 5.35-36).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 7th, 2021 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Can someone explain Yogacara to me?

Content:

Manjushri said:

what would be the essential texts pertaining to Yogachara, available in English translation today?

Astus wrote:

Mahayanasamgraha, Mahayanasutralamkara, Madhyantavibhanga, Vimsatika, Trimsika, Trisvabhavanirdesa, Cheng Weishi Lun.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2021 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: Can someone explain Yogacara to me?

Content:

Manjushri said:

where would I find those translations of the works by Vasubandhu?

Astus wrote:

There are the translations by Kochumuttom in A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience and by Thomas E. Wood in Mind Only. Online the Vimsatika and Trimsika are included in the BDK volume <https://bdkamerica.org/product/three-texts-on-consciousness-only/>, and the Trisvabhavanirdesa translated by Garfield is available https://info-buddhism.com/Vasubandhu-Three_Natures-Garfield.html.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2021 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

ryunin said:

What was Kodo Sawaki's opinion of satori?

Astus wrote:

From Homeless Kodo:

'A Zen tenma, or heavenly demon, is an ordinary person practicing to gain satori, to become great.

Buddhadharma is not something for making an ordinary person great.'

(Halfway Zazen chapter)

'Zazen is the way we tune in to the whole universe. Samadhi is practicing each and every thing with the entire universe moment by moment.

Satori is not going to a special place that is difficult to reach, but simply being natural.'

(No Other chapter)

'Satori is like a burglar breaking into an empty house. Although he had difficulty getting in, there's nothing to steal. He doesn't need to run. Nobody's after him. The whole thing is a flop.'

Uchiyama commentary: 'Satori is simply settling down here and now, where things are unsatisfactory.'

(A Burglar Breaks into an Empty House chapter)

From <https://antaiji.org/archives/eng/kodo-sawaki-to-you.shtml>:

'You want to become a buddha? There's no need to become a buddha! Now is simply now. You are simply you. And tell me, since you want to leave the place where you are, where is it exactly you want to go?

Zazen means just sitting without even thinking of becoming buddha.

We don't achieve satori through practice: practice is satori. Each and every step is the goal.'

(To you who do everything you can to get satori)

'No illusion is as hard to cure as satori.

Don't take pride in your practice. It's clear that any satori you take pride in is a lie.

You've got it backwards if you talk about stages of practice. Practice is satori.

Satori is like a thief breaking into an empty house. He breaks in but there's nothing to steal. No reason to flee. No one who chases him. So there's nothing which could satisfy him either.'

(To you who is showing off your satori)

'You suffer because you don't want to accept what has to be accepted.

Quietly accepting what has to be is what's meant by satori. Great satori means seeing necessity as necessity, for necessity is an integral part of the universe.

You're worried about death? Don't worry – you'll die for sure.'

(To you who are tumbling down the career ladder)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 12th, 2021 at 11:36 PM

Title: Re: is Buddha "just a man" in any tradition?

Content:

megaman chiquito said:

is there any accepted tradition of buddha being just a normal human

Astus wrote:

'Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours.'

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

'The Buddha was a living human being. Just like the rest of us, he had parents, a family, and he lived a life. It was through this human life that he showed his great loving-kindness and compassion, his moral character, and his wisdom.'
(<https://www.fgsitc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/A1-The-Fundamentals-of-Humanistic-2019.pdf>?, p 2)

megaman chiquito said:
who achieved nirvana through his own diligent efforts?

Astus wrote:
There are several suttas where the Buddha talks of his own efforts, e.g.:
<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html>,
<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.019.than.html>,
<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.036.than.html>.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, January 13th, 2021 at 11:02 PM
Title: Re: History: Why does Southern Buddhism seem to disappear from history at certain periods?
Content:
Padmist said:
Do you know why the history of Buddhism in Southern Asia seem to be spotty at different periods? Active at times, disappearing or blank on others?
http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/thera_timeline.htm
or is it a failure of history records/lost records?

Astus wrote:
Isn't it like that everywhere else with destructive wars and invasions? E.g. the demise of
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anuradhapura_period#Demise and
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Polonnaruwa#Demise,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burmese%E2%80%93Siamese_War_%281765%E2%80%931767%29#Sack_of_the_city. But you can find similar blank spots, and ups and downs in the histories of China, Korea, and Japan.

Author: Astus
Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2021 at 6:39 AM
Title: Re: Is the Mahayana or vajrayana canon closed?
Content:
Dgj said:
For example the Chinese Tripitaka; is it a closed canon?

Astus wrote:
There are several <https://lic.dila.edu.tw/en/node/13121>, for example:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripitaka and the supplement Xuzangjing (Zokuzokyo) 卍續藏 that are modern, 20th century editions, and older ones,

like the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhaocheng_Jin_Tripitaka (12th century), https://culture.teldap.tw/culture/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1550:catalogue-of-the-qianlong-tripitaka-qianlong-zang-&catid=148:a-slice-of-wonder&Itemid=209 (18th century), https://culture.teldap.tw/culture/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1549:catalogue-of-the-yongle-north-tripitaka-yongle-bei-zang-&catid=148&Itemid=209 and Southern Yongle 永樂 (15th century), the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripitaka_Koreana, and so on.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2021 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: Is the Mahayana or vajrayana canon closed?

Content:

Varis said:

As for Mahayana sutras, we know there will be new ones because Maitreya Buddha will arrive in the future and teach the dharma and therefore we can assume there will be new sutras.

Astus wrote:

There are also old sutras and other texts discovered, as in the case of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunhuang_manuscripts, for which https://icabs.repo.nii.ac.jp/index.php?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_snippet&index_id=85&pn=1&count=20&order=17&lang=english&page_id=15&block_id=18 with the Taisho Canon.

Also about the Taisho Canon, one of its editors noted (The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy by https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takakusu_Junjiro, 1st Indian Edition, 1956, p 2):

'In Japan, the Tripitaka Literature has been published at least four times, each edition adding new volumes. Recently it became my responsibility to complete its latest publication, which contains the Chinese and Korean compilations as well as texts newly discovered in Central Asia and Japan—a work of thirteen years—comprising 13,520 chüans or parts in 100 bound volumes of about 1,000 pages each.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 15th, 2021 at 4:44 AM

Title: Re: Is the Mahayana or vajrayana canon closed?

Content:

Dgj said:

Are these individual canons closed?

Astus wrote:

Basically, yes. Their titles often designate the imperial era of publication (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongle_Emperor, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qianlong_Emperor,

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D>), so to modify them would mean a new version published at a different time.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 15th, 2021 at 9:09 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Sutras Lack Oral Transmission?

Content:

Bodhiquest said:

There's nothing much that would allow us to conclusively say that certain ideas and teachings were never given by the Buddha and were simply developed later by "philosophers" and the like.

Astus wrote:

That's not necessarily so. For instance, the concept of alayavijnana is a later development as we can see in the Mahayanasamgraha how Asanga has to explain himself for proposing its existence, and what scriptural sources he can present (abhidharma works and the Samdhinirmocana Sutra), while 5 centuries later Jinamitra quotes from several Mahayana sutras (see 'The Ālaya-Consciousness in Yogācāra Treatises' in the Introduction of 'A Compendium of the Mahayana' by Brunnholzl, vol 1). Similarly, where one finds the mention of ideas that are not found in the Agamas but only in abhidharma texts, unless we attribute such abhidharma treatises to the Buddha, the sutras using such concepts are necessarily later than the Agamas.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2021 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

The problem itself is not in shikan taza or koan practice. The problem is in complete denial of kensho/satori realization. The fact that one is practicing shikan taza does not mean by itself that kind of denial. In fact whether shikan taza or koan the experience should be exactly the same.

Astus wrote:

Practising with koans is in order to gain realisation, shikantaza is practice-realisation, so there is a difference. If there were stages to be reached in shikantaza, then realisation were apart from practice.

This is the difference between directly practising no-thought or using huatou to reach no-thought, as Hanshan Deqing wrote:

'If you can thus engage in contemplation, then whenever a thought arises, you should find its source. Never haphazardly allow it to pass you by [without seeing through it]. Do not be deceived by it! If this is how you work, then you will be doing some genuine practice. Do not try to gather up some abstract and intellectual view on it or try to fabricate some clever understanding about it. Still, to even speak about practice is

really like the last alternative. For example, in the use of weapons, they are really not auspicious objects! But they are used as the last alternative [in battles]. The ancient ones spoke about investigating Chan and bringing forth the huatou. These, too are last alternatives. Even though there are innumerable gong ans, only by using the huatou, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” can you derive power from it easily enough amidst vexing situations. Even though you can easily derive power from it, [this huatou] is merely a [broken] tile for knocking down doors. Eventually you will have to throw it away. Still, you must use it for now.'

(<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 22nd, 2021 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: What is cittavijanana?

Content:

bhadanta1 said:

can someone explain what cittavijnana in buddhist belief means? It is a concept specific to the yogacara school?

Astus wrote:

Where have you seen such a term? In Yogacara there is talk of citta, manas, and vijnana as three distinct aspects/functions:

'When the Buddha speaks of citta, manas and vijñāna (cf. Dīgha, I, p. 21; Saṃyutta, II, p. 95), it is not a question of three synonyms as the Visuddhimagga has it, p. 452 (viññāṇaṃ cittaṃ mano ti atthato ekaṃ) and the Kośa, II, p. 176 (cittaṃ mano 'tha vijñānaṃ ekārtham), but rather of three distinct things (cf. H: citta, manas and vijñāna are three). Citta is the store-consciousness; manas is the twofold manas; vijñāna is the six active consciousnesses (pravṛttivijñāna).'

(Mahayanasamgraha I.6 commentary by Lamotte, tr Migme Chodron)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 23rd, 2021 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

The whole topic which I picked up concerns exclusively Japanese zen.

Astus wrote:

The main point still stands: Practising with koans is in order to gain realisation, shikantaza is practice-realisation, so there is a difference. If there were stages to be reached in shikantaza, then realisation were apart from practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 24th, 2021 at 4:39 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Indeed, shikan taza has no stages, but the final result of koan practice or shikan taza is exactly or must be exactly the same - complete enlightenment and liberation.

Astus wrote:

How can there be a final result of shikantaza if it has no stages?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 24th, 2021 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

ask a teacher not me, you know some, isnt it? like sogenji roshi and others, they are right addressee to put this question.

Astus wrote:

Still, you propose such a set of contradicting views, hence asking you how can that be so.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 25th, 2021 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

The consequence of this is that one is only realized during shikantaza. How does this escape the equipoise/post-equipoise division? And if there is a division between equipoise/post-equipoise, this means that there are stages.

Astus wrote:

The main point is that if shikantaza is practice-realisation, then there is no point of working towards a realisation apart from it, there is no satori later. A comparison of the two approaches from Shohaku Okumura:

'Uchiyama Roshi emphasizes that the zazen practice transmitted from Dogen Zenji to Sawaki Roshi differs from D. T. Suzuki's Zen. For example, Dogen Zenji described the oneness of a practitioner and other people and objects, using the example of a cook and his work with colleagues, ingredients, firewood, and water, as well as those who eat the food. In "Tenzokyokun," or "Instructions for the Cook," in Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community, he wrote, "All day and all night, things come to mind and the mind attends to them; at one with them all, diligently carry on the Way." Here there's no mysterious satori, or becoming conscious of the Unconscious. There's only sincere, wholehearted practice in ordinary activities.'

(Zazen Is the Stability of One's Whole Life, in Homeless Kodo)

And from Kodo Sawaki:

'Nine hundred years ago there was a Zen system in which there were gradations of satori—three hundred and some tens of cases. Finally completing them all you would perfect a great satori. That system was contrasted with what was referred to as mokusho Zen [silent illumination]. It was also labeled eko and hensho. The other teaching [which uses koans] was called kanna Zen.

Dogen Zenji's is a religion of practice. Dogen goes so far as to say there is no benefit in recitation with the mouth. In the Bendowa, Dogen wrote: "Continuously uttering sounds is like a frog crying in the night in a spring rice paddy and is ultimately worthless."

In the Butsuyuikyogyo, too, [the Buddha] warns against useless talk... Satori is not something that is uncovered by the mind. Practice is enlightenment.

Again in the Bendowa, "A beginner's wholehearted practice of the Way is the totality of the original enlightenment." And in Zanmai O Zanmai [The King of Samadhi], "The posture for shikantaza is the most important meaning in Buddhist teaching."

(From a talk titled "Dogen's Zen," delivered in August 1952 in Kumamoto, in *Discovering the True Self*)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 26th, 2021 at 4:07 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

This all very much depends on what one means by "enlightenment."

Astus wrote:

'Students of the Way should desire to be obstructed by the Way. To be obstructed by the Way means to forget any trace of enlightenment. Practitioners of the Way must first of all have faith in the Way. Those who have faith in the buddha-way must believe that one (the self) is within the Way from the beginning; that you are free from delusive desires, upside-down ways of seeing things, excesses or deficiencies, and mistakes. Arousing this kind of faith, clarifying the Way and practicing the Way comprise the foundation of learning the Way. We do this by sitting and cutting off the root of the discriminating mind; by turning away from the path of intellectual understanding. This is a skillful way to lead beginners. Next, drop off body and mind, and throw away both delusion and enlightenment. This is the second stage. Truly it is most difficult to find a person who believes that his self is within the buddha-way. Only if you believe that you are really inside the Way, will you naturally clarify the scenery of the Great Way and understand the origin of delusion and enlightenment. Try to sit cutting off the root of discriminating mind. Eight or nine out of ten will be able to immediately see the Way.'

(Gakudo Yojinshu by Dogen, in

https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf, p 32-33)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 26th, 2021 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Whatever modern days soto zen claims about Dogen and satori he has never denied it.

Astus wrote:

It is not denying satori, but rather stating that it is not something that happens after practice. Here are some quotes from long deceased teachers:

Dogen:

'Just sit and get the state that is free of body and mind. If a human being, even for a single moment, manifests the Buddha's posture in the three forms of conduct, while [that person] sits up straight in samādhi, the entire world of Dharma assumes the Buddha's posture and the whole of space becomes the state of realization. [The practice] thus increases the Dharma joy that is the original state of the buddha-tathāgatas, and renews the splendor of their realization of the truth.'

...

'The practice is not confined to the sitting itself; it strikes space and resonates, [like] ringing that continues before and after a bell. How could [the practice] be limited to this place?'

...

'The thought that practice and experience are not one thing is just the idea of non-Buddhists. In the Buddha-Dharma practice and experience are completely the same. [Practice] now is also practice in the state of experience; therefore, a beginner's pursuit of the truth is just the whole body of the original state of experience. This is why [the Buddhist patriarchs] teach, in the practical cautions they have handed down to us, not to expect any experience outside of practice. And the reason may be that [practice itself] is the directly accessible original state of experience. Because practice is just experience, the experience is endless; and because experience is practice, the practice has no beginning.'

(Bendowa, in Shobogenzo, BDK ed, vol 1)

Keizan:

'Although we speak of realization, this realization does not hold to itself as being "realization". This is practice of the supreme samadhi which is the knowing of unborn, unobstructed, and spontaneously arising awareness. It is the door of luminosity which opens out onto the realization of the Buddha, born through the practice of the great ease. This goes beyond the patterns of holy and profane, goes beyond confusion and wisdom. This is the realization of unsurpassed enlightenment as our own nature.'

(<http://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/>)

Menzan:

'Those teachers in medieval times (Song dynasty China) thought that we are all deluded and that if we practice zazen, we could gain enlightenment as a result of the power accumulated by zazen practice. They also thought that, after gaining enlightenment, there would be no further need to practice zazen. They compared it to a boat which is no longer necessary once the other shore is reached.

People in the present day often practice zazen in this manner. This is the attitude of ordinary people, Hinayana practitioners, and bodhisattvas within the provisional Mahayana practice of zazen. They aspire to rid themselves of delusions and to gain enlightenment; to eliminate illusory thoughts and to obtain the truth. This is nothing but creating the karma of acceptance and rejection. Such an attitude is just another form of dualism, in that one escapes from one thing and chases after another. If we think this kind of practice is the same as that transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors, as the Tathagata's zanmai-o-zanmai, or as Bodhidharma's sitting facing the wall for nine years, these also become mere methods to rid oneself of delusions and to obtain enlightenment. What a pitiful view!

In the last several hundred years, a great many have adhered to this attitude, both in China and Japan. All mistake a broken piece of tile for gold, or a fish eye for a jewel, because they do not yet clearly understand the essence of the great Dharma.

The true zazen which has been transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors is the Tathagata's jijuyu-zanmai. It is the state in which the body and mind of perfect nirvana always abide peacefully. In the Lotus Sutra, the Tathagata's zazen is called muryo-gisho-zanmai ('the samadhi of infinite meaning'). In the Mahaprajnya-sutra it is called toji-o-zanmai ('the king of samadhis'). It is referred to as zanmai-o--zanmai in the Daihon-Hannya-kyo, and Zen master Tozan Ryokai named it hokyo-zanmai (the samadhi of the precious mirror). Obviously, zazen is not a practice for getting rid of delusions and gaining enlightenment.'

(Jijuyu Zanmai, in

https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/pdf/Heart_of_Zen.pdf, p 42-43)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 26th, 2021 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Well it is not only Gasans case but all generations of soto masters untill the begining of the 20th cxentury, when it was decided that satori is wrong. one should not strive and should not attain it, otherwise it is against Dogen. Such nonsense is easily repeated in the West and largely in Japan but in different context, it is why satori - indispensable characteristic of zen became a serious problem in soto.

Astus wrote:

There is no denial of the need for realisation, for awakening, but rather that it is not found outside the very practice of zazen (and even the meaning of zazen is not restricted to the seated posture).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

Of course that there is denial, very great denial when it comes to any serious talk about it. If there was no denial, then what happened to dokusan in soto? what happened to koans in soto?

Astus wrote:

It seems the concept of the unity of practice and realisation is what makes a difference here, as such elements of method are not required when zazen is both the means and the goal.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Looks like stages to me, in direct contradiction to your claim.

Astus wrote:

Yes, seems so, but not. The first stage mentioned is of faith, the second is acting upon that faith, and it's the second what comprises shikantaza.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 3:58 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

the real problem with unity of practice/enlightenment is that it is widely interpreted by people without realization, then many are simply misled by the wrong views.

Astus wrote:

What do you take to be the right view about

https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms07.pdf?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 4:09 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

So, shikantaza is kind of like nembutsu or nam myoho renge kyo.

Astus wrote:

There are similarities.

'Dogen taught his religion through the language and lore of Chinese Ch'an; yet in many ways the structure of his religion reflects familiar patterns in the soteriological strategies of Japanese writers like Shinran and Nichiren. This is hardly surprising, since many of the same issues that determined the rules of Ch'an discourse in China - the theory of the supreme, Buddha vehicle and the perfect, sudden practice appropriate to it - had long been at work in the dominant Tendai system in Japan, the system that initially educated Dogen, Shinran, Nichiren, and other leaders of the reformation. Despite their obvious differences, in very broad terms, the ideologies of all three of these famous religious thinkers can be seen as an attempt to define the true practice of the Tendai Buddha vehicle - a sudden practice to be based solely on the absolute truth of Buddhahood itself, not on the upaya of the relative teachings and gradual practices.' (Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation, p 165)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

this is only philosophical work for philosophers and academics, has nothing to do with actual zen practice.. just typical modern soto view, devoided of zazen and experience.

Astus wrote:

I put the link there as a reference for one possible interpretation as provided by the official Soto website. But the question is if you could give your view to show why you call the majority of Japanese and Western teachers wrong, and what you consider correct.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matylda said:

I see.. well official soto is the very problem.. those people deny everything when they hear satori etc. and start talking, that everything is satori etc. and that practice with aim of satori is almost a sin.. and of course they have myriad excuses and nice theories.

Astus wrote:

Why expect Soto to follow ideas that are prevalent in Rinzai (koan practice, dokusan, emphasis on kensho, etc.)? Even if once the two branches were quite similar, after the 18th century reforms in both, they have intentionally distanced themselves from each other, unlike in China where lineage association has practically no bearing on one's views and methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matyllda said:

Where is it said that koan dokusan satori etc. belongs only to rinzai??? it is not true.

Astus wrote:

I meant commonly found in and associated with Rinzai, not that it was their property or that others were excluded. If you say it's not the consequence of reformations that Sotoshu is what it is today, then what do you say is the reason behind it? Also, do you find current Rinzai more according to your standards of Zen, and would that be because they practise with koans?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 9:27 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

I think what she is saying is the picture of Soto zen you paint is abstracted from books by western scholars, rather than a deep knowledge of the tradition based on fluency in Japanese, etc.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me more like criticism of Soto both in Japan and in Western countries. Of course, if it turns out to be otherwise, and all she meant so far was a problem with the academic representation of Soto while at the same time what actually happens in temples and centres are fine with her, then I have misread things.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2021 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

clyde said:

I agree that "practice as enlightenment" is open to misunderstandings and it is the duty of teachers to help their students by pointing to a correct understanding. But it also incumbent on the student to do the work of seeing through their delusions to a realization.

jimmi said:

If, as per Matyllda's critique, Soto teachers are for the most part lacking in the correct understanding of "practice as enlightenment" well, it's clear where that will go. How can students be expected to do the work and arrive at authentic Shikantaza if those tasked

with transmitting the necessary understanding have themselves fallen short? It makes the adage that Zen cannot be practiced without a teacher somewhat problematic.

Malcolm said:
Cue Astus.

Astus wrote:
That's the difficult consequence of the dharma-transmission lineage concept: either every lineage member is a buddha, or the whole concept falls apart. But such an idealist view of the lineage can function only on paper.

'This [practice] relies on the mystical and authentic transmission of the subtle method from master to disciple, and the [disciple's] reception and maintenance of the true essence of the teachings.'
(Bendowa, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 5; T2582_.82.0015c24-26)

And that subtle method (妙術) transmitted correctly (正傳) is zazen (坐禪):

'Great Master Śākyamuni exactly transmitted, as the authentic tradition, this subtle method of grasping the state of truth, and the tathāgatas of the three times all attained the truth through zazen. Thus the fact that [zazen] is the authentic gate has been transmitted and received. Furthermore, the patriarchs of the Western Heavens and the Eastern Lands all attained the truth through zazen. Therefore I am now preaching [zazen] to human beings and gods as the authentic gate.'
(p 7-8; T2582_.82.0016c11-17)

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, February 1st, 2021 at 5:49 PM
Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori
Content:

clyde said:
So which Soto teachers say that satori isn't important? This shouldn't be a secret if these teachers have taught that to their students.

Astus wrote:
Where awakening is equated with practice (see <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=567151#p567151> and <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=566984#p566984> post), as in the teachings of Dogen, Keizan, Menzan, and Kodo Sawaki, Kosho Uchiyama, and Shohaku Okumura.

'The idea of transforming delusion to attain enlightenment is easy to understand in terms of our ordinary way of thinking, yet it is not in accord with the buddha-dharma. In Buddhism, the dichotomy of delusion and enlightenment is transcended from the very beginning. We have to practice and actualize right now, right here the buddha-dharma

(reality of life) that transcends both delusion and enlightenment. This is Great Enlightenment (daigo).

Therefore, from the first, we are neither deluded nor enlightened. Reality itself exists before we divide and name delusion and enlightenment. We are practicing this reality right here and right now. This is called attaining or actualizing enlightenment (kaigo). We practice with enlightenment as our base. Practice and enlightenment are simply one (shucho ichinyo).

Consequently, a confused attitude such as that I am deluded, or enlightened, or I was deluded and now I am enlightened, is not jijuyu zanmai. Since we are the self that is only the self, surpassing the dichotomy of delusion and enlightenment, we sit in the self that is only the self. This is jijuyu zanmai. This is the true meaning of "actualizing enlightenment."

(The Wholehearted Way by Kosho Uchiyama, p 81-82)

'A student preparing for an entrance examination wants to pass; no one wants to fail. Yet the world in which there is no success or failure is the best. We cannot expect such a world in Japan today. It is possible only in the world of zazen. However, there is a group of people who try to put pass and fail into the world of zazen through satori. If you attain satori you succeed, if not you fail. This attitude has nothing to do with the buddha-dharma; it is samsara.

We only have to sit with the self that is only the self, without comparing it to others. It is not necessary at all to visit a Zen master to ask if one is enlightened or not. That is really a stupid question. First of all, to practice the buddha-dharma is to live out the self that is only the self. The truth is that one always has to live out the self that is only the self in any situation, so it is impossible to bring up the question of whether one succeeds or fails.'

(p 118)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2021 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

This basically consists only of teaching the śamathayāna. So, we can understand that zazen is śamatha. In śamatha, insight can occur naturally.

Astus wrote:

'Good friends, our teaching takes meditation and wisdom as its fundamental. Everyone, do not say in your delusion that meditation and wisdom are different.

Meditation and wisdom are of one essence, not different. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. At times

of wisdom, meditation exists in that wisdom; at times of meditation, wisdom exists in that meditation. If you understand this doctrine, this is the equivalent study of meditation and wisdom. All you who study the Way, do not say that they are different, with meditation prior to and generating wisdom or with wisdom prior to and generating meditation. If your view of them is like this, then the Dharma would have two

characteristics. This would be to say something good with your mouth but to have that which is not good in your minds. It is to make meditation and wisdom falsely existent to consider them as not equivalent.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 41-42)

'Discipline is usually understood as ceasing wrong action and eliminating evil. In zazen the whole thing is known to be non-dual. Cast off the numberless concerns and rest free from entangling yourself in the "Buddhist way" or the "worldly way." Leave behind feelings about the path as well as your usual sentiments. When you leave behind all opposites, what can obstruct you? This is the formless discipline of the ground of mind. Practice usually means unbroken concentration. Zazen is dropping the bodymind, leaving behind confusion and understanding. Unshakeable, without activity, it is not deluded but still like an idiot, a fool. Like a mountain, like the ocean. Without any trace of motion or stillness. This practice is no-practice because it has no object to practice and so is called great practice.

Wisdom is usually understood to be clear discernment. In zazen, all knowledge vanishes of itself. Mind and discrimination are forgotten forever. The wisdom-eye of this body has no discrimination but is clear seeing of the essence of awakening. From the beginning it is free of confusion, cuts off concept, and open and clear luminosity pervades everywhere. This wisdom is no-wisdom; because it is traceless wisdom, it is called great wisdom.

The teaching that the buddhas have presented all throughout their lifetimes are just this discipline, practice, and wisdom. In zazen there is no discipline that is not maintained, no practice that is uncultivated, no wisdom that is unrealized. Conquering the demons of confusion, attaining the way, turning the wheel of the Dharma and returning to tracelessness all arise from the power of this. Supernormal powers and inconceivable activities, emanating light and expounding the teaching- all of these are present in this zazen. Penetrating Zen is zazen.'

(<http://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/>)

'It is said in the Mahaprajnyaparamita-sutra that even though you practice the five paramitas (i.e. generosity, observing the precepts, patience, diligence, and meditation), all your practices remain within the realm of the defiled causation of human or heavenly being unless you practice prajnya-paramita. Such a practice is not that of annuttara-sammyak-sambodhi (ultimate awakening).

To practice prajnya-paramita means that the light of the wisdom of jijuyu-zanmai illuminates and dispels the darkness of the ignorance of delusory thoughts. If the light of the Self is clear, even a small good deed is the practice of incomparable awakening, since the deed is performed prior to the arising of illusory mind. Therefore, you should not be concerned with anything but leaving behind illusory mind, cutting the root of delusions, emitting the light of jijuyu--zanmai, and opening the eye of prajnya. This is the Buddha's wisdom and also the true path of practicing the buddha-way.'

...

'The true taste properly transmitted through the buddhas and ancestors is Buddha's wisdom; this is also called shinjin-datsuraku (dropping off body and mind), that is, understanding thoroughly that body, mind, and world (time and space) cannot be grasped with the discriminating mind, that reality is outside of illusory mind, and then

releasing the light of the Self.'
(Jijuyu Zanmai, in Heart of Zen, p 47, 48)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 5:59 AM
Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori
Content:
Malcolm said:
Still śamathayāna.

Astus wrote:
Why do you call it such?

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 6:02 AM
Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori
Content:
Matt J said:
The question is, without kensho, if everyone is already a Buddha and all practice is an expression of Buddhanature, then what's the point?

Astus wrote:
Practice being awakening means that one practises awakening, and without practice there is no awakening to talk about.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 7:06 PM
Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori
Content:
Malcolm said:
You should read article by Lance cousins. But in a short, shamathayana is the quick path.

Astus wrote:
But where do you see samatha taught in Zen to be succeeded by insight? It's been quite a central point almost from the beginning that samadhi and prajna are not separated (hence the Platform Sutra quote), and then in the teachings of Dogen and his heirs the unity of practice and realisation is affirmed regularly. Also, as Dogen put it in his first work after returning from China: 'Zazen is not the practice of dhyana it is just the dharma gate of ease and joy. It is the practice and verification of ultimate bodhi.'
(https://web.stanford.edu/~funn/zazen_instructions/Fukanzazengi.pdf;
T2580_.82.0001b01-3)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

You didn't really read Cousins article, did you?

Astus wrote:

I actually did. That's why I asked where you found the samatha part to be followed by vipasyana, because that is the one version of the four that is named samathayana.

Malcolm said:

BTW "ease and joy" are two mental factors accompanying the first dhyana.

Astus wrote:

Translated as 'ease and joy' is the term anraku 安樂, a translation for sukha and often used as a short for Sukhavati, and here (see note 13 on page 116 of Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation) a reference to chapter 14 (Anrakugyo 安樂行) of the Lotus Sutra, where it is written (BDK ed, p 194; T0262_.09.0037b10) that ' He should always take pleasure in meditation [zazen 坐禪] and, in a quiet place, practice to control his mind. '.

Malcolm said:

Practice and verification implies having a view and applying it in equipoise.

Astus wrote:

Practice and verification is the translation here of shusho 修證, the first half of the term https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms07.pdf, the unity of practice and realisation/awakening.

Malcolm said:

Rhetoric is one thing, reality is another.

Astus wrote:

There are teachers who first instruct people to count breath, to focus on the posture, etc., so there it would be valid to say they begin with calming the mind. But when it comes to practising zazen according to the teachings of Dogen, it is to go directly to suchness.

Malcolm said:

As we know, shikantaza is just "samatha/vipashyana" in Japanese.

Astus wrote:

Shikan as samatha-vipasyana is 止觀, while shikan as 'just/simply/intently/etc.' is 只管, so shikantaza 只管打坐 is 'just sitting'.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Otherwise, are we expected to believe the magical theory that merely sitting in a Soto Zendo somehow is sitting in the state of Buddhahood? Or that merely sitting in a posture is Buddhahood? Clearly you can see the ridiculous consequences emerging from such a stance. Obviously Dogen didn't believe this.

Astus wrote:

I have not seen Dogen, or later teachers, turn away from the Zen rhetoric and follow gradual Mahayana teachings. On the other hand, sitting in any state is not the idea. Furthermore, Dogen has been quite adamant about never stopping to practise.

'There are also those who are not concerned with what their teacher thinks or whether the shuso or other fellow practitioners are watching or not. They always bear in mind that practicing the Buddha-Way is not for the sake of others but only for themselves; such people desire to become buddhas or patriarchs with both body and mind. So they truly practice diligently. They really seem to be people of the Way compared with the people mentioned above. However, since they still practice trying to improve themselves, they have not become free from their ego. They want to be admired by buddhas and bodhisattvas, and desire to attain buddhahood, and complete awareness. This is because they still cannot throw away their selfish desire for fame and profit.

...

Just cast body and mind into the buddha-dharma, and practice without desire either to realize the Way or to attain the dharma. Then you can be called an undefiled practitioner. This is what is meant by not staying where buddha exists; and running quickly from where no-buddha exists.'

(Shobogenzo Zuimonki, 5.20)

'The most vital concern in learning the Way is to practice zazen. In China, many people attained the Way entirely through the power of zazen. If one concentrates on practicing zazen continuously, even an ignorant person, who does not understand a single question, can be superior to an intelligent person who has been studying for a long time. Therefore, practitioners must practice shikantaza wholeheartedly without bothering to concern themselves with other things. The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is nothing but zazen. Do not pursue anything else.

At the time, Ejo asked, "In learning both sitting and reading, when I read the collections of the old masters' sayings or koans, I can understand one thing out of a hundred or a thousand words, though I have never had such an experience in zazen. Should we still prefer to practice zazen?"

Dogen replied, "Even if you may seem to have some understanding while reading koans, such studies will lead you astray from the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs. To spend your time sitting upright with nothing to be gained and nothing to be realized is the Way of the patriarchs. Although the ancient masters encouraged both reading and shikan zazen, they promoted sitting wholeheartedly. Although there are some who have gained

enlightenment hearing stories (of the masters), the attainment of enlightenment is due to the merit of sitting. True merit depends on sitting.”
(Shobogenzo Zuimonki, 5.23)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Even marmots know how to sit. I've got your marmot Buddha right here:

Astus wrote:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sengai> has this nice <http://idemitsu-museum.or.jp/collection/sengai/sengai/02.php>. The text reads: if by zazen one becomes a buddha...

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 6:14 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Clearly, Dogen perceives stages in zazen, for exmple, on page 859 of Tanahashi translation.

Astus wrote:

Could you specify the chapter title?

Malcolm said:

On 440 he talks of "The understanding at the moment of thorough realization should be authentic..." etc. He speaks of how this practice accumulates over months and years, and over lifetimes.

Astus wrote:

The topic of that chapter is 'expressing the truth'

(https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms15.pdf), and it does not really describe a gradual improvement, but rather continuously expressing the truth with one's practice.

'It is simply that where there is the Buddhist patriarchs' pursuit of the ultimate there is the Buddhist patriarchs' expression of the truth. In the past they have trained inside that very state of expressing the truth and have experienced it to the end, and now they are still making effort, and pursuing the truth, inside that state. When Buddhist patriarchs, through making effort to be Buddhist patriarchs, intuit and affirm a Buddhist patriarch's expression of the truth, this expression of the truth naturally becomes three years, eight years, thirty years, or forty years of effort, in which it expresses the truth with all its

energy.'

(Dotoku, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 333)

'Having accumulated long months and long years of holding onto this effort, we then get free of the past years and months of effort. While we are endeavoring to get free, the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow are all equally intuiting and affirming freedom. National lands, mountains, and rivers are all intuiting and affirming freedom together. At this time, while we continue aiming to arrive at freedom, as the ultimate treasure-object, this intention to arrive is itself real manifestation—and so, right in the moment of getting free there is expression of the truth, which is realized without expectation.'

(p 334)

'So when we are “ten years or five years in a monastery,” passing through the frosts and flowers again and again, and when we consider the effort in pursuit of the truth that is “a lifetime not leaving the monastery”; the “sitting in stillness,” which has cut [all interference] by sitting, has been innumerable instances of expressing the truth.'

(p 335)

'Sitting in stillness without speaking for ten years or for five years is expression of the truth for ten years or for five years; it is a lifetime without leaving nonexpression of the truth; and it is being unable to say anything for ten years or for five years. It is sitting away hundred thousands of buddhas, and it is hundred thousands of buddhas sitting away “you.” In summary, the Buddhist patriarchs’ state of expressing the truth is a lifetime without leaving the monastery.'

(p 335)

'When there is learning in practice of knowing the self, there is the reality of expressing the truth.'

(p 337)

Malcolm said:

Dogen clearly embraces gradualism too.

Astus wrote:

'In the Buddha-Dharma practice and experience are completely the same. [Practice] now is also practice in the state of experience; therefore, a beginner’s pursuit of the truth is just the whole body of the original state of experience. This is why [the Buddhist patriarchs] teach, in the practical cautions they have handed down to us, not to expect any experience outside of practice. And the reason may be that [practice itself] is the directly accessible original state of experience. Because practice is just experience, the experience is endless; and because experience is practice, the practice has no beginning.'

(Bendowa, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 12)

In Tanahashi's version:

'Because practice within realization occurs at the moment of practice, the practice of

beginner's mind is itself the entire original realization. When giving instruction for zazen practice, we say that you should not have any expectation for realization outside of practice, since this is the immediate original realization. Because this is the realization of practice, there is no boundary in realization. Because this is the practice of realization, there is no beginning in practice.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

I disagree.

Astus wrote:

As you like. Just some extra:

'Not accompanied by the ten thousand things, what stages could there be? What do you use this for?'

(Eihei Koroku 4.301, p 281)

'These [family instructions] are simply the sitting cushions and Zen boards of the seven buddhas, and the source of the life root of the ancestors. Therefore, this is not in the realm of the four dhyanas or eight samadhis. How could it be measured in terms of the three wise or ten sacred stages? Every day just sit, dropping off body and mind. Do not be worried with a scene of laughable confusion about [comparisons between] barbarians or the civilized. Do not vainly waste a moment, but always cherish time.'
(8.1.12, p 487)

'Such examples as [Jinhua] Juzhi's one finger, Huangbo's sixty hits, Baizhang's whisk, Linji's shout, Dongshan [Shouchu]'s three pounds of sesame, and Yunmen's dried shitstick are not caught up in the stages from living beings to Buddha, and they already transcend the boundaries of delusion and enlightenment.'
(8.2.11, p 519)

'This practice is the effort of zazen. It is customary that such practice is not abandoned, even after reaching buddhahood, so that it is [still] practiced by a buddha. Teaching and verification should be examined in the same way. This zazen was transmitted from Buddha to Buddha, directly pointed out by ancestors, and only [transmitted] by legitimate successors. Even when others hear of its name, it is not the same as the zazen of buddha ancestors. This is because the principle of zazen in other schools is to wait for enlightenment. For example, [their practice] is like having crossed over a great ocean on a raft, thinking that upon crossing the ocean one should discard the raft. The zazen of our buddha ancestors is not like this, but is simply Buddha's practice. We could say that the situation of Buddha's house is the oneness in which the essence, practice, and expounding are one and the same. The essence is verification of enlightenment; expounding is the teaching; and practice is cultivation. Even up to now,

these have been studied together.

We should know that practice is the practice of essence and expounding; expounding is to expound the essence and practice; and the essence is the verification of expounding and practice. If practice is not the practice of expounding and is not the practice of verification of enlightenment, how can we say it is the practice of Buddha Dharma? If expounding is not the expounding of practice and is not the expounding of verification, it is difficult to call it the expounding of Buddha Dharma. If verification is not the verification of practice and is not the verification of expounding, how can we name it the verification of the Buddha Dharma? Just know that Buddha Dharma is one in the beginning, middle, and end. It is good in the beginning, middle, and end; it is nothing in the beginning, middle, and end; and it is empty in the beginning, middle, and end. This single matter never comes from the forceful activity of people, but from the beginning is the expression and activity of Dharma.'

(p 521)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

You quote below is a recognition that the Buddha continued to practice shamatha, which is true.

Astus wrote:

If zazen meant only samatha, then why would it ever turn into insight? Then it should be rightfully called the 'teaching for humans and gods' (人天教) that can bring about birth in those realms but not any liberation, as Guifeng Zongmi wrote (Treatise on the Origin of Humanity, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 153; T45n1886p708c20-21) 'if a person practices the four kinds of meditation and the eight kinds of concentration, he or she will be reborn in the heavens of form and formlessness.'

Malcolm said:

Clearly, in the passage I provided before, Dogen acknowledged that there is a liminal point of understanding.

Astus wrote:

If there were such a point, then he would be contradicting himself not just vis-a-vis his other works, but even in the same chapter
(<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=568052#p568052>).

Malcolm said:

One certainly can't expect that a beginner is going to have this understanding immediately merely because they sit in a stiff posture.

Astus wrote:

It is not the posture that matters much, but the mind.

From <https://antaiji.org/en/dharma/okumura-mind-and-zazen/>:

'If you are able to sit in a cross-legged position during zazen that is fine, but if it that is too painful for you it is alright, too; sitting cross-legged is not strictly necessary for meditation.'

...

'Dogen Zenji said we should give up even the aspiration to become Buddha in our zazen. And this is the meaning of just sitting. When we practice in this way, just aiming at and letting go even of the aspiration to be enlightened, then Buddhahood is there. When we are actually doing that letting go, then Buddha nature is truly revealed. When we give up our gaining mind, then our true life force arises and is actualized.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 11:22 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Buddha has no further need of insight, since in a buddha *śamatha* and *vipaśyāna* are in union. This is not the case for others.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha has also regularly abided in emptiness (*suññatāvihāra*) and recommended others to do the same: "This field of perception is empty of the perception of the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely that associated with the six sense fields dependent on this body and conditioned by life." That's how emptiness is born in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure. Whatever ascetics and brahmins enter and remain in the pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness—whether in the past, future, or present—all of them enter and remain in this same pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn121/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2021 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

LastLegend said:

Flesh it out! How is emptiness abided? What you mean born!? Or how is born born ?

Astus wrote:

For an extensive treatment of the topic see chapters 4-7 of <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/compassionemptiness.pdf>, and for a shorter one chapter 21 of <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/meditatorslifebuddha.pdf> by Bhikkhu Analayo.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2021 at 5:32 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sure, but at this point, it is not really insight since there is nothing left for a buddha to do.

Astus wrote:

Just as there is nothing left to be done in zazen, or as it is sometimes put:

<http://www.sanshinji.org/sanshin-style-blog/why-zazen-is-good-for-nothing-1>

(mushotoku 無所得 - anupalabdha).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2021 at 9:47 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

And yet Dogen talks about gaining thorough understanding, what maddening inconsistencies.

Astus wrote:

The thorough understanding of what?

'What is sudden awakening (tongo 頓悟)? Answer: Sudden is to suddenly remove false thoughts (muunen 妄念). Awakening is to awaken to nothing to gain (mushotoku 無所得).'

(<https://ymba.org/books/entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment;X63n1223p18a10>)

'Additionally, if a person retaining the concept of there being anything to be gained (ushotoku 有所得) generates the bodhi resolve and then proceeds to cultivate kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, dhyāna absorption, and wisdom, doing so for an incalculable number of asaṃkhyeyas of kalpas, one should realize that, on account of retaining the concept of something to be gained, such a person will not succeed in leaving behind birth and death and will not succeed in progressing towards bodhi.'

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/V-Bcitta_excerpts/VBcitta_X-21_X-10.pdf;T32n1659p515c12-15)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 5th, 2021 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matt J said:

By working with Buddhist practices, we actually come to see that what we thought was solid is not solid, what we thought was graspable is not graspable, and what we thought was fulfilling is not fulfilling. In this way, a natural type of letting go occurs.

Astus wrote:

How about going directly to letting go of thoughts

(https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms08.pdf)?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 5th, 2021 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Looks like we didn't need any of this Zen stuff to begin with: Nagarjuna writes, "Nothing here to establish, nothing to remove, when reality is truly seen, liberation."

Astus wrote:

From Nagarjuna this fits nicely:

'Then again, if the bodhisattva refrains from taking up the practice of any particular dharma, because he does not apprehend (futoku 不得) any dharma whatsoever, he may thereby succeed in realizing prajñāpāramitā!... 'If one is able to practice the dharma of "no practice" in this manner, in every case, nothing whatsoever is gained (mushotoku 無所得). Inverted views, falseness, and afflictions are finally not produced at all. Because one remains as pure as empty space, one succeeds then in realizing the true character of dharmas. One takes having nothing whatsoever which is gained (mushotoku 無所得) as that which is gained.'

(http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf; T25n1509p197a12-13, 24-26)

Malcolm said:

"Let go of letting go." Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen

Astus wrote:

That's a proliferation of ideas about letting go, nevertheless, Baizhang Huaihai taught a version of it with three stages:

'If one no longer loves or grasps, and yet abides in not loving or grasping and considers it correct, this is the elementary good; this is abiding in the subdued mind. This is a disciple; he is one who is fond of the raft and will not give it up. This is the way of the two vehicles. This is a result of meditation. Once you do not grasp any more, and yet do not dwell in nonattachment either, this is the intermediate good. This is the half-word teaching. This is still the formless realm; though you avoid falling into the way of the two vehicles, and avoid falling into the ways of demons, this is still a meditation sickness. This is the bondage of bodhisattvas. Once you no longer dwell in nonattachment, and do

not even make an understanding of not dwelling either, this is the final good; this is the full-word teaching. You avoid falling into the formless realm, avoid falling into meditation sickness, avoid falling into the way of bodhisattvas, and avoid falling into the state of the king of demons.'

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 30-31)

But something more pertinent from him:

'Question: What is the essential method for sudden enlightenment in the great vehicle? The master said, You all should first put an end to all involvements and lay to rest all concerns; do not remember or recollect anything at all, whether good or bad, mundane or transcendental - do not engage in thoughts. Let go of body and mind, set them free. With mind like wood or stone, not explaining anything with the mouth, mind not going anywhere, then the mind ground becomes like space, wherein the sun of wisdom naturally appears. It is as though the clouds had opened and the sun emerged.'

(p 77-78)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 5th, 2021 at 10:10 PM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

More words = more proliferation.

Astus wrote:

Okumura roshi on Dogen:

'Although he advised his students not to waste time arguing or criticizing, and he himself tried not to argue, he was not able to follow his own advice. I rather like his inconsistency on this point. I feel like he was an actual human being.'

(The Mountains and Waters Sūtra: A Practitioner's Guide to Dōgen's "Sansuikyo", 2-2)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 6th, 2021 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Matt J said:

I don't think it is possible, unless one is of the highest capacity.

Astus wrote:

Apparently Dogen believed zazen to be applicable to everyone.

'Ejo asked, "If so, what thing or what practice should we choose to devote ourselves to among the various ways of practice of the buddha-dharma?"

Dogen replied, "It depends upon one's character or capability, however, up to now, it is

zazen which has been handed down and concentrated on in the communities of the patriarchs. This practice is suitable for all people and can be practiced by those of superior, mediocre, or inferior capabilities.'

(Shobogenzo Zuimonki 1.14)

'If one concentrates on practicing zazen continuously, even an ignorant person, who does not understand a single question, can be superior to an intelligent person who has been studying for a long time.'

(5.23)

'The sages in the past did not necessarily have golden bones. Ancient practitioners did not all have superior capabilities. Not such a long time has passed since the Buddha's death. Even in the age of the Buddha not everyone was sharp witted. Some were good and others were not. Among the monks, there were some who did incredibly evil things, and others who had a very low intellect. None of them, however, demeaned themselves or failed to arouse bodhi-mind; none failed to study the Way on the grounds of not being a vessel of the dharma.'

(6.2)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 6th, 2021 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Have you ever tried to hold onto a thought? I think you will find it slips right through your fingers.

Astus wrote:

Isn't it truly unattainable (mushotoku 無所得) then?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 6th, 2021 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: Soto zen and problem of satori

Content:

Malcolm said:

Just like the limpid quality of water when it is undisturbed, remain relaxed without mental contrivances.

Just as a bird in the sky leaves no tracks, consciousness remains without support.

Just like the sun not concealed by clouds, remain in one's own unobstructed state relaxing into the objects of the six sense organs.

Just like water always falling, remain undistracted at all times and in all activities.

Dombhi Heruka

Astus wrote:

The bird leaving no tracks is a good old metaphor for coursing in emptiness (Thag 1.92;

Dhp 7.92-93), and at least the bird and the fish come up in the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zazen_shin, where a poem of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hongzhi_Zhengjue is quoted, commented upon, and then replied to in verse by Dogen. Here are the last two stanzas from each:

Hongzhi (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 124; T2582_.82.0119c18-21):

'There has been no discriminating thought:
The sensing, without any duality, is singular.
There has been not the slightest dawning:
The illumination, without any grasping, is complete.
The water is clean right to the bottom,
Fishes are swimming, slowly, slowly.
The sky is wide beyond limit,
And birds are flying, far, far away.'

Dogen (p127-128; T2582_.82.0120c25-28):

'There has been no tainting of the immediacy:
That immediacy is without reliance yet it gets free.
There has been no rightness or divergence in the experience*:
That state of experience is without design yet it makes effort.
The water is clean, right down to the ground,
Fishes are swimming like fishes.
The sky is wide, clear through to the heavens,
And birds are flying like birds.'

*shou 證: realisation, verification

Malcolm said:

Other robes and bone ornaments, do you really see any difference between this and Dogen?

Astus wrote:

I'd say all three poems convey the same intention but with different emphasis. Dombipa gives awareness-emptiness, Hongzhi appearance-emptiness (or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huayan#Li_and_Shi 理事), and Dogen dependence-emptiness (or <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essence-Function> 體用).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 9th, 2021 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: What is and isn't Yogacara?

Content:

mabw said:

I suppose step 1 is to ask What exactly is "visaya"?

Astus wrote:

When one sees a bar of chocolate and intends to eat it commonly it is assumed that

there is real (not just imagined/conceived/thought) chocolate to eat, and that one wants to eat it because chocolate is tasty. Yogacara points out that the bar of chocolate exists only as a mental image (the object/visaya), in other words, it is because one has the idea of a tasty bar of chocolate that one can have any intentions (artha) towards it. Even in common parlance it is quite well known that what is tasty for one person is disgusting for another, in other words, the aesthetic quality of an object is subjective (that is: imagined/conceived/thought). Yogacara goes a little further by saying that what is assumed to be out there (outside mind, not as a mere concept) is actually nothing more than an idea, a conceptual image of a thing, and not a "real" thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 11th, 2021 at 6:12 PM

Title: Re: "there is nothing to teach here" said the master

Content:

master of puppets said:

What does it mean?

Astus wrote:

It is standard Mahayana that samsara comes from conceptual attachment, that the teachings are only of relative value, and that a bodhisattva should not conceive anything as existing or not existing, thus relinquishing all grasping at ideas.

The Buddha said to Subhūti, "What do you think? When the tathāgata studied under Dīpaṃkara Buddha, did he gain any attainment in the dharma?"

"World-honored One, when the Tathāgata studied under Dīpaṃkara Buddha, there was, in reality, nothing that he attained in the dharma."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-11, tr C. Muller)

'And, Mahamati, the Tathagatas do not teach the doctrine that is dependent upon letters. As to letters, their being or non-being is not attainable; it is otherwise with the thought that is never dependent on letters. Again, Mahamati, anyone that discourses on a truth that is dependent on letters is a mere prattler because truth is beyond letters. For this reason, Mahamati, it is declared in the canonical text by myself and other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that not a letter is uttered or answered by the Tathagatas. For what reason? Because truths are not dependent on letters. It is not that they never declare what is in conformity with meaning; when they declare anything, it is according to the discrimination [of all beings]. If, Mahamati, the truth is not declared¹ [in words] the scriptures containing all truths will disappear, and when the scriptures disappear there will be no Buddhas, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas; and when there is no one [to teach], what is to be taught and to whom? For this reason, then, Mahamati, the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva is not to become attached to the words of the canonical texts. Mahamati, owing to the functioning of the minds of sentient beings, the canonical texts sometimes deviate from their straightforward course; religious discourses are given by myself and other Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully-Enlightened Ones in response to varieties of faiths on the part of beings, in order to remove them from [the bondage of] the Citta, Manas and Manovijnana, and not for the attainment and establishment of

self-realisation which issues from noble wisdom. When there is the recognition of the fact that all things are characterised with imagelessness and that there is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind itself, there is the discarding of the dualistic discrimination.'

(Lankavatara Sutra, 3.76, tr D.T. Suzuki)

'This halting of cognizing everything, the halting of hypostatizing, is blissful.

No Dharma whatsoever was ever taught by the Buddha to anyone.'

(Mulamadhyamakakarika 25.24, tr M. Siderits & S. Katsura)

One day the Councilor Wang visited the master. When he met the master in front of the Monks' Hall, he asked,

"Do the monks of this monastery read the sutras?"

"No, they don't read sutras," said the master.

"Then do they learn meditation?" asked the councilor.

"No, they don't learn meditation," answered the master.

"If they neither read sutras nor learn meditation, what in the world are they doing?" asked the councilor.

"All I do is make them become buddhas and patriarchs," said the master.

The councilor said, "Though gold dust is valuable, in the eyes it causes cataracts."

"I always used to think you were just a common fellow," said the master.

(Record of Linji, p 38, tr R. F. Sasaki)

'I have no choice; if I tell you that right now nothing is the matter, I have already buried you. However much you want to make progress and seek intellectual understanding by looking for words and chasing after phrases and setting up questions and inquiries by means of a thousand differences and myriad distinctions: it just brings you a glib tongue and leads you further and further from the Way. Where is there an end to this?'

(Record of Yunmen, 1.22, tr U. App)

'There is not much to Buddhism; it only requires you to make a statement plainly and simply, that is all. But what is a plain and simple statement? If someone asked me, I'd say, "It's already become two statements." Understand?

An ancient said, "The Buddhas and Zen masters have given a clear and detailed explanation of what is beyond words, but most of those who get here are confused, muddled, and uncomprehending."

If you don't see this, you are asleep on your feet. You are always in the light, and yet do not know it, even with your eyes open. How do you expect me to do anything for you?'

(Foyan Qingyuan, in Instant Zen, p 28, tr T. Cleary)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 13th, 2021 at 3:40 AM

Title: Re: 4 principles

Content:

Astus wrote:

Looks like a weird rendition of the

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Dharmadh%C4%81tu.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 26th, 2021 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Are there any realist schools (mind independent reality exists conventionally) in Mahayana or Vajrayana?

Content:

Dgj said:

Defining "realist" at a minimum, as: There exists, at least conventionally, mind independent reality.

Astus wrote:

As far as I'm aware, all schools accept the basic doctrines of the five aggregates and six sensory areas, meaning that there is a rupaskandha apart from the mental aggregates, and there are the five physical senses and sense objects separately from the mental one. But that is already a Dharmic analysis (ultimate reality in abhidharma) of the conventional reality where it is clear to everyone that the body is not the mind, and that all outer objects are neither one's body nor one's mind. As Asanga put it: 'The imagined pattern is the appearance of nonexistent objects, which are only conscious constructs, as real.' (Mahayanasamgraha 2.1.3, BDK ed, p 38)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 27th, 2021 at 6:25 AM

Title: Re: Chant Namu Amida Butsu or Nam Myoho Renge Kyo?

Content:

coldbeer said:

Which of these two can bring a person faster towards buddhahood? I will like to hear arguments from both sides.

Astus wrote:

Buddhahood is attained through the practice of the six paramitas. Chanting can be used as part of one's practice, but it's insufficient on its own to bring about realisation, much less complete awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2021 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Are there any realist schools (mind independent reality exists conventionally) in Mahayana or Vajrayana?

Content:

Dgj said:

Could you please provide some quotes demonstrating conventional mind independent reality, or where rupa is explained as mind independent conventionally, or anything like this?

Astus wrote:

Any scientific periodical or book that discusses objective physical reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2021 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Are there any realist schools (mind independent reality exists conventionally) in Mahayana or Vajrayana?

Content:

Dgj said:

Sorry, I meant from Buddhists, my fault for not being clear. Like someone modern, or someone ancient like Chandrakirti or Tsongkhapa.

Astus wrote:

I reckon it is scientific knowledge currently that represents the commonly accepted truths of intelligent people, so it is what defines the content of valid worldly conventional truth.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 1st, 2021 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Are there any realist schools (mind independent reality exists conventionally) in Mahayana or Vajrayana?

Content:

Dgj said:

Like someone modern, or someone ancient like Chandrakirti or Tsongkhapa.

Astus wrote:

It could rather be turned around and considered if there is actually anyone who says that conventionally there are no external objects. It seems to be a common mistake to read 'mind only' as if it meant some sort of divine force where people can literally create objects by their magical mental power.

Anyway, it is emphasised by Gelugpas that (their version of) Prasangika asserts outer objects. See <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/abhidharma-tenet-systems/the-indian-tenet-systems/the-four-buddhist-tenet-systems-regarding-the-two-truths/svatantrika-and-prasangika-the-two-truths> and <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/abhidharma-tenet-systems/the-tibetan-traditions/special-features-of-the-gelug-tradition>.

Longchenpa is also known for a similar position, see e.g.

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/the-great-chariot/d/doc212949.html>: 'but those who grasp the exaggerated conception that objects that appear are mind are exponents of a truly serious illogic.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 17th, 2021 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Has anyone read On Realizing There is Only the Virtual Nature of Consciousness

Content:

Manjushri said:

By the way, are there other translations of this text from, say, Shambhala, Wisdom, or some other Buddhist publishers?

Astus wrote:

There's a good translation by Wei Tat, and one by Francis Cook published by BDK.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 20th, 2021 at 7:41 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen teach that true nature has an independent self-existence?

Content:

Russian said:

From the Zen point of view, does true nature have an independent existence, or is it still dependent, has causality?

Astus wrote:

There is no Zen point of view. There were/are teachers who emphasise(d) emptiness/nonbeing (wu 無), while others emphasise(d) existence/being (you 有). From this you get in Zen:

A monk asked Zhaozhou: 'Does a dog have (you 有) buddha-nature or not (wu 無)?'

Zhou said: 'No' (wu 無).

If you are interested in some Mahayana background on the matter, start with the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awakening_of_Faith_in_the_Mahayana:

'suchness has two aspects if predicated in words. One is that it is truly empty (sunya), for [this aspect] can, in the final sense, reveal what is real. The other is that it is truly nonempty (asunya), for its essence itself is endowed with undefiled and excellent qualities.'

(<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/>, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 20th, 2021 at 9:00 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen teach that true nature has an independent self-existence?

Content:

Russian said:

In general, the question is: this suchness, which on the one hand is empty, and on the other hand is not empty, because it has qualities, it is conditioned, does this suchness have a cause, or is it not conditioned, has no cause? Is it causal, or causeless?

Astus wrote:

You might want to look into the second chapter of the Samdhinirmocana Sutra:

"Good son, the term 'conditioned' is a provisional word invented by the First Teacher. Now, if it is a provisional word invented by the First Teacher, then it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination. And if it is a verbal expression apprehended by imagination, then, in the final analysis, such an imagined description does not validate a real thing. Therefore, the conditioned does not exist. Good son, the term 'unconditioned' is also invented from language [and it also validates nothing real]." (<https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-scripture-on-the-explication-of-underlying-meaning/>, p 11)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen teach that true nature has an independent self-existence?

Content:

Astus wrote:

From the Record of Mazu (Sun-Face Buddha, p 78):

A monk asked, "Why does the Venerable say that mind is Buddha?"

The Patriarch said, "To stop small children's crying."

The monk asked, "What do you say when they have stopped crying?"

The Patriarch said, "It is neither mind nor Buddha."

The monk asked, "And when you have someone who does not belong to either of these two, how do you instruct him?"

The Patriarch said, "I tell him that it is not a thing."

The monk asked, "And how about when you suddenly meet someone who is there?"

The Patriarch said, "I teach him to directly realize the Great Way."

From the Record of Yunmen (section 193):

Once the Master said, "As long as the light has not yet broken through, there are two kinds of disease: (1) The first consists in seeing oneself facing objects and being left in the dark about everything; (2) The second consists in having been able to pierce through to the emptiness of all separate entities (dharmas)—yet there still is something that in a hidden way is like an object.

"[Views about] the body of the teaching also exhibit two kinds of disease; (1) Having been able to reach the body of the Buddhist teaching, one still has subjective views and is at the margin of that teaching because one has not gotten rid of one's attachment to it; (2) Even though one has managed to penetrate through to the body of the Buddhist teaching, one is still unable to let go of it. But if one examines this [teaching] thoroughly, it's stone-dead. That's also a disease!"

Case 30 of the Book of Serenity:

A monk asked Dasui, "When the fire at the end of an aeon rages through and the whole universe is destroyed, is this destroyed or not?"

Dasui said, "Destroyed."

The monk said, "Then it goes along with that?"

Dasui said, "It goes along with that."

A monk asked Longji, "When the fire ending the aeon rages through and the whole universe is destroyed, is this destroyed or not?"

Longji said, "Not destroyed."

The monk said, "Why is it not destroyed?"

Longji said, "Because it is the same as the universe."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Does Zen teach that true nature has an independent self-existence?

Content:

karmanyipgo said:

doesn't Zen have more Cittamatra or Yogacara influence? So might this influence description of ultimate reality in a way that focuses more on is-ness?

Astus wrote:

If anything, it was influenced more by Madhyamaka

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asian_M%C4%81dhyamaka) in its early phase.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Astus wrote:

How does one actually awaken to buddha-nature according to Nichiren's teachings?

Does one realise the emptiness of self and dharmas? If so, how? If not, how are defilements eliminated?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Does Zen teach that true nature has an independent self-existence?

Content:

Russian said:

Question: According to Zen, the state of the Buddha is causal, or is it rather the image of the sun hiding behind the clouds?

Astus wrote:

Zen, like other East Asian schools (Tiantai, Huayan, Jingtu), accepts the tathagatagarbha doctrine. Where one gets easily mistaken is taking buddha-nature as a distinct object (or subject), some sort of soul or atman. The practical relevance of the

idea of tathagatagarbha is that once the defilements are gone the buddha qualities are present, therefore one does not develop them but rather lets them appear. That's how prajnaparamita can be sufficient on its own, and that's why sudden awakening to buddhahood becomes an option. But it does not mean buddha-nature should be conceived as a thing, or a special state of mind. Quite the opposite actually, with totally abandoning attachments there is nothing left to affirm or deny.

'Followers of the Way, make no mistake! All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks.'

(Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

Note that in the Treatise on Awakening of Faith itself it is explicitly stated so:

'All explanations by words are provisional and without validity, for they are merely used in accordance with illusions and are incapable [of denoting suchness]. The term suchness likewise has no attributes [which can be verbally specified]. The term suchness is, so to speak, the limit of verbalization wherein a word is used to put an end to words. But the essence of suchness itself cannot be put an end to, for all things [in their absolute aspect] are real; nor is there anything which needs to be pointed out as real, for all things are equally in the state of suchness. It should be understood that all things are incapable of being verbally explained or thought of; hence, the name suchness.'

'If they understand that, concerning all things, though they are spoken of, there is neither that which speaks, nor that which can be spoken of, and though they are thought of, there is neither that which thinks, nor that which can be thought of, then they are said to have conformed to it. And when they are freed from their thoughts, they are said to have entered into it.'

(BDK ed, p 13, 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

tkp67 said:

Chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo

Astus wrote:

How does that remove craving, hatred, and delusion?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 21st, 2021 at 8:36 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

narhwal90 said:

what the practice may do is remove fear and uncertainty, remove grasping, promote confidence, courage, empathy. Perhaps something akin to the Upaddha sutra's "holy life" - I'm not in a position to distinguish.

Astus wrote:

If practice means recitation, how does it do all those removals? Generally there are methods to alleviate defilements, like contemplation of the four immeasurables to counter things like anger and jealousy, and ultimately it is through insight that one can gain wisdom to remove ignorance. The Upaddha Sutta presents the good friend as the source of one's mastery of the eightfold path, but it is the practice of the eightfold path that eliminates the defilements. If one were to just recite the eightfold path, I don't see how that could be equal to actually putting it into practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2021 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

tkp67 said:

When one chants Nam(u) Myoho Renge Kyo one actually evokes Shakyamuni's supreme, complete and perfect enlightenment within their own life for that moment.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean like the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddh%C4%81nusm%E1%B9%9Bti>)?

tkp67 said:

The more one chants with deep faith in this teaching one can eradicate every illness the buddha was capable of healing.

Astus wrote:

How can mindfulness of the Buddha (or recitation of the title of the Lotus Sutra) generate insight into emptiness? It can serve as a method to calm the mind, but where is the wisdom coming from? Where does the contemplation on the three thousand realms in one thought come up?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2021 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Minobu said:

How does one incite Emptiness ? what does that even mean.

Astus wrote:

Methods to gain insight is given in the works of Zhiyi for instance.

Minobu said:

thats a TenDai thing i believe.

We don't actually contemplate the three thousand realms we are just made aware of them.

Astus wrote:

Yes, it is the first of the <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/T/59> in the Mohezhi Guan of Zhiyi. So, you say then that it is used as a purely theoretical background and not for actual meditation? If so, how is wisdom developed?

Minobu said:

you are now looking at the whole matter from a provisional methodology

Astus wrote:

According to Zhiyi (http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/EBM_excerpts/EBM_X-16_X-00.pdf): 'Insight (vipaśyanā) is the primary essential through which one is able to cut off the delusions.' If that is not how Nichiren understood it, then what can remove ignorance according to him?

Although <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=573819#p573819> quoted <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Content/1> that points to polishing the mirror of the mind with recitation, but then the text also mentions looking into the mind to see the meaning of myō, so that seems like an act of contemplation to gain insight. Or is that not how it is interpreted?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2021 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: What is self-nature (self-essence) in the Altar Sutra of the sixth Patriarch?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is a fine definition of self-nature (zixing 自性 - also used as a translation of svabhāva, but its Chan usage should not be confused with those found in other schools) in the

https://books.google.co.in/books/about/Historical_Dictionary_of_Chan_Buddhism.html?id=uicnDwAAQBAJ:

'A Chan soteriological term referring to a person's Buddha-nature. It does not denote any self-existence or any changeless essence existent in and by itself. No such metaphysical meaning is involved in the original use of this term. A notable case of the traditional Chan usage of this term is in the Platform Sūtra, where Buddha-nature is

equivalent to self-nature (zixing) in the sense that Buddha-nature cannot be objectified and realized outside each person. Seeing or realizing the Buddha-nature is the existential transformation of the human mind and entire personhood, being able to understand and appreciate what constitutes a person—elements of impermanence and non-abiding—and then accordingly. The realization of self-nature thus requires the accomplishment of action the practical-behavioral carrying out of non-attachment, rather than identifying a metaphysical object or discovering subjectivity through knowledge. The usage also indicates the Chan appropriation of positive or kataphatic language in its teachings without abandoning the use of negative or apophatic language: the Chan walk on two roads.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2021 at 9:55 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

tkp67 said:

The Teacher of the Law chapter of the Lotus Sutra explains the benefits of those who chant daimoku.

Astus wrote:

The quoted section talks of what a teacher should do or have as prerequisites (similarly to chapter 14), not what the benefits of expounding are (as given in chapter 19 for instance). So it seems like a valid question to me to ask how one can actually have the mentioned qualities of compassion, gentleness, forbearing, and the wisdom of emptiness in order to be able to then expound the sutra.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 22nd, 2021 at 10:11 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Minobu said:

We see the emptiness of anger and know it is just but one factor in the whole 3000 world thing..So we get to sit back and view it as such and don't act on it.

I actually meditate on higher worlds whilst chanting ODaimoku after one of these episodes of anger or hunger nature etc..and it allows me to move on..

So we use the knowledge to adjust our daily living. Also it shows me my life condition and we then must acknowledge our passing into the lower worlds and we must work on it.

Astus wrote:

Are there teachings and techniques taught for such alleviation of impulses by Nichiren, or is it something you learnt on your own or from somewhere else?

Minobu said:

in our school people develop better lives and learn to work on their lives which are

marred by negative Karma.

Astus wrote:

I think it's what everyone tries to do. The question is about how that is achieved and to what extent, like actually awakening to buddha-nature.

Minobu said:

when you say how is wisdom developed.

The approach is much different.

It's like thisyou chant to call forth the ultimate Reality inside you ..and you promise to keep this practice for your entire life and pray to meet up again in future rebirths... so your life becomes one of being,student , and a son or daughter, and a subject of Sovereign Lord Sakyamuni Buddha..

Astus wrote:

Would you say then that the goal is not much about accomplishing the bodhisattva path by becoming a buddha, but more earthly ones?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Minobu said:

Then if I say something about every day life it becomes "OH you want to answer your earthly desires and not consummate Buddhahood in your life."

how do you separate everyday life from Buddhahood...

Astus wrote:

There can be different goals and accordingly there are different means to reach them. Accumulating merit is an important and widespread practice in Buddhism, and it can give one all sorts of benefits in this life, in the next life, in the human and the heavenly realms, and can help not only oneself but others too. It is no small thing at all. It can also assist in attaining liberation, however, the one thing it cannot generate is liberation itself, because that requires wisdom. I have no doubts about reciting the title of the Lotus Sutra has immeasurable merits. What I fail to see is how one can also accumulate wisdom with it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

tkp67 said:

Thus for that brief period a person chants daimoku they actually hold the whole of this experience within their mind stream. There is no practice that takes all of the requirements to fulfill the lotus sutra so one might gain the benefits therein.

Astus wrote:

Just to see if I understand you correctly. Is it the case that chanting the daimoku means that purely because of those words the Buddha's complete awakening is present in one's mind, rendering the mind of the chanter equal to that of a buddha, therefore nothing else is needed since just by chanting one has perfected everything there is to attain? Or is it that the chanting connects somehow one to the Buddha's awakening and it gradually purifies the mind over time simply by the force of that connection?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 at 4:53 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Minobu said:

This quest for wisdom noble as it may feel to you , has nothing to do with the actual ability to awaken our innate Buddha nature, with this practice in Mappo.

Astus wrote:

The root cause of samsara is ignorance, to achieve permanent liberation one needs to eliminate ignorance, and wisdom is the antidote for that. If you say that wisdom is not needed for awakening, then do you also say ignorance is not the root cause? If ignorance is not the cause of samsara, what is? But if ignorance is the ultimate source, how could anything but wisdom overcome it?

Minobu said:

case in point no one you know or will ever know experiences the realizations you and Malcolm claim to be the gold standard in Buddhism

Astus wrote:

Does that mean that Nichiren did not aim for liberation and buddhahood, because those were impossible to achieve in his opinion?

Minobu said:

A mere uneducated illiterate peasant can awaken their innate Buddha Nature...Why... Because their teacher is The Eternal Buddha ...what you see as some calming effect in chanting is like one fleck of ice crystal on the iceberg...

Astus wrote:

If buddhahood is the goal and the result of practice, then all practitioners should show the qualities of a buddha (see e.g.:

<https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/E/22>), shouldn't they?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Is the concept of amalavijnana characteristic of Zen, or not?

Content:

Russian said:

Question: Does Zen Buddhism adhere to the concept of the ninth consciousness-amalavijnana, or does it not? Does Zen recognize the concept of amalavijnana?

Astus wrote:

It is not much of a Zen idea. A quick search for

<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/search/?q=%E9%98%BF%E6%91%A9%E7%BE%85%E8%AD%98&lang=en> showed that only 1 author

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongming_Yanshou) used it in two of his works

(Zongjinglu 宗鏡錄 and Wanshan tonggui ji 萬善同歸集) from all the Zen texts

(Chanzong bulei 禪宗部類), while there are 29 texts by 10 authors in the Yogacara

category (Yujia bulei 瑜伽部類) and 13 texts by 3 authors in the Huayan category

(Huayan bulei 華嚴部類).

The idea of amalavijnana has been raised before on DW

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=1367> and

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=7126>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 at 11:01 PM

Title: Re: Able to awaken to our innate Buddha-nature through our actual practice?

Content:

Minobu said:

And most important you are like receiving direct everything you need from Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Receiving what from Shakyamuni? If the Dharma, then what about what we have at hand from him, that is, the sutras themselves?

Minobu said:

It's spelled out clearly in The Lotus sutra and verified and put to the test by such

Masters as Zhiyi and Venerable Mai Lo and Venerable Dengyo the Great and Finally from the life of Bodhisattva Jogyo in the body of Nichiren DaiShonin.

Astus wrote:

As far as I know, the masters Zhiyi, Zhanran (Miaole), and Saicho (Dengyo) taught mainly the practices of calming and insight, like the contemplation on the three thousand worlds in a single thought. If theirs are valid teachings, how do those relate to chanting the title of the Lotus Sutra?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 24th, 2021 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Please give a comment on the Xūyún (虛雲) gath

Content:

Astus wrote:

The poem is actually by Guling Shenzan of Fuzhou

(<https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/search.php?aid=A019867>), an heir of Baizhang Huaihai (百丈懷海), and the verse itself, what was quoted by Xuyun, is found in fascicle 9 of the Jingde Chuandeng Lu (T51n2076_p0268a21-23):

靈光獨耀迥脫根塵。
體露真常不拘文字。
心性無染本自圓成。
但離妄緣即如如佛。

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/daily-lectures-at-two-cha-weeks-week-2/7/>:

Spiritual light shines on in solitude
Disentangling the sense organs from sense data.
Experience of true eternity
Depends not just on books.
Mind-nature being taintless
Fundamentally is perfect.
Freedom from falsehood-producing causes
Is the same as absolute Buddhahood.

Garma C. C. Chang translation (The Practice of Zen, p 20):

Singularly radiating is the wondrous Light;
Free is it from the bondage of matter and the senses.
Not binding by words and letters,
The Essence is nakedly exposed in its pure eternity.
Never defiled is the Mind-nature;
It exists in perfection from the very beginning.
By merely casting away your delusions
The Suchness of Buddhahood is realized.

Translation from <https://www.globaljiki.org/en/sub.do?menukey=4301&no=45>:

Spiritual light shines by itself and has transcended the world of consciousness.
Essence is exposed and not confined by words.
The mind is not tainted and is complete in itself.
Thus, if it can free itself from false conditions, it will be the true Buddha.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 24th, 2021 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Please give a comment on the Xūyún (虛雲) gath

Content:

Astus wrote:

The poem gives a standard Zen teaching that by not grasping at the six sensory inputs with mistaken concepts (being/nonbeing, self/other, etc.), there is complete awakening.

靈光獨耀 Divine light shines alone - this refers back to the discourse between Jiexian and Shenzan about the Dharma hall, and at the same time introduces the topic as the liberated mind of the buddhas

迥脫根塵 Free from all sensory dust - it is free from the appearances in the six senses; dust (塵) referring both to sensory objects and to defilements

體露真常 The essence shows true permanence - it is buddha-mind that shows the ultimate reality

不拘文字 Not bound to letters - the nature of mind is not discovered with concepts, not learnt from books, also a reference to Jiexian's reading habits

心性無染 Mind's nature is untainted - there are no defilements in the nature of mind

本自圓成 Originally perfect and complete - no qualities need to be developed or added to it

但離妄緣 Just leave false conditions - one only has to let go of fictional concepts that condition the mind

即如如佛 That is buddha as such - it is suchness and buddhahood

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 25th, 2021 at 8:59 PM

Title: Re: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is the practice of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satipatthana>. You can find plenty of materials on it from Theravada and Mahayana sources.

Some examples:

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

Satipatthana: The Heart of Buddhist Meditation by Nyanaponika Thera

The Progress of Insight: A Treatise on Satipatthana Meditation by Mahasi Sayadaw

Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh

Minding Closely: The Four Applications of Mindfulness by B. Alan Wallace

For a comparison of the Abhidharma and Mahayana approaches, see the Mahaprajnaparamita Shastra:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225570.html>

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225580.html>

And for an in depth study of the Satipatthana Sutta, there are three works of Bhikkhu

Analayo (all available <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/personen/analayo.html>):
Satipaṭṭhāna, the Direct Path to Realization
Perspectives on Satipaṭṭhāna
Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation: A Practice Guide

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, March 29th, 2021 at 9:34 PM
Title: Re: Does the Tathagata reside in Dhyana?
Content:
Owlsd said:
Does the Tathagata abide in Dhyana?

Astus wrote:
Dhyana usually signifies the eight levels of absorption, and in that sense it is not true that a buddha always abides in them. If by Dhyana you actually mean Chan/Zen as it is understood in the Chan school (and has practically nothing to do with dhyana as absorption/concentration/meditation), then it rather stands for buddha-nature, and of course a buddha is one who always abides in the buddha-nature.

Owlsd said:
My understanding stems from reading the bloodstream sermon:

Astus wrote:
Your quote is from the beginning of Red Pine's translation of the Wuxinglun 悟性論 he rendered as 'Wake-Up Sermon'.

Owlsd said:
Since the Tathagata essentially has no divisions and makes no distinctions, and since it essentially doesn't move or change when it goes from one state to another, doesn't that mean that anger/wisdom greed(desire)/morality and delusion/meditation(Dhyana) are essentially the same thing? If I see them as separate things isn't that delusion?

Astus wrote:
The three poisons (greed, anger, delusion) do not differ from the three trainings (morality, meditation, wisdom) in the sense that their nature are buddha-nature (佛性), that is: no-nature ('no nature of their own' 無實性); in other words, they are empty.

Owlsd said:
So Samsara is Nirvana, and the mind's Dhyana is the very delusions that constitute Samsara?

Astus wrote:
Nagarjuna wrote:

'Samsara does not differ

Even slightly from nirvana.
Nirvana does not differ
Even slightly from samsara.
The ultimate nature of nirvana
Is the ultimate nature of samsara;
And between these two, the slightest difference,
Even the most subtle, is not found.'
(MMK 25.19-20, tr Padmakara)

I do not know what you mean by the 'mind's Dhyana', but certainly it is delusion that is the source of samsara, and the nature of delusion is nirvana. Liberation is then to see the nature of one's delusion.

Again from Nagarjuna:

'One is not freed by existence;
One does not transcend samsara through non-existence;
It's through understanding existence and non-existence
That the great beings are liberated.'
(Yuktisastika, v 4, tr Thupten Jinpa)

And Bodhidharma:

'Whoever realizes that the six senses aren't real, that the five aggregates are fictions, that no such things can be located anywhere in the body, understands the language of Buddhas. The sutras say, "The cave of five aggregates is the hall of Zen. The opening of the inner eye is the door of the Great Vehicle." What could be clearer?
Not thinking about anything is Zen. Once you know this, walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, everything you do is Zen. To know that the mind is empty is to see the Buddha. The Buddhas of the ten directions have no mind. To see no mind is to see the buddha.'
(Wake-Up Sermon)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 29th, 2021 at 11:16 PM

Title: Re: Does the Tathagata reside in Dhyana?

Content:

Owlsd said:

Dhyana as I understand it, can be, (usually is) translated as meditation, but I think a more accurate term is probably clearly seeing, clear sight, something like that.

Astus wrote:

From the Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism:

dhyāna. (P. jhāna; T. bsam gtan; C. chan/chanding; J. zen/ zenjō; K. sŏn/sŏnjŏng 禪/禪定). In Sanskrit, “meditative absorption,” specific meditative practices during which the

mind temporarily withdraws from external sensory awareness and remains completely absorbed in an ideational object of meditation. The term can refer both to the practice that leads to full absorption and to the state of full absorption itself.

For more on the general concept of dhyana, you can look into the Mahaprajnaparamita Shastra's relevant chapter: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/mahaprajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc82350.html>

Owlsd said:

I also understand Dhyana to be the origin of the word Chan and therefore Zen. ...
Buddha nature is Dhyana, which is Chan, Zen, etc.

Astus wrote:

Better not project the idea of Chan/Zen back to what is taught as dhyana in Buddhism in general based simply on etymology.

Owlsd said:

Is it true that Zen Masters don't talk about relative affairs, or teach on the basis of relative affairs?

Astus wrote:

Not true at all. Chan/Zen monasteries even had/have a whole extra set of rules, see e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanyuan_Qinggui. Many of the famous Chan teachers were also abbots charged with leading and organising monasteries. It was their duty not only to regulate monastic affairs, but also to cooperate with the laity.

Owlsd said:

To my understanding Zen Masters taught on the basis of pointing to the mind, not positing right and wrong action and further deluding being in samsaric affairs.

Astus wrote:

That's a sort of idealised picture of a fictional 'Zen Master' based on a limited reading.

Owlsd said:

Truly the only desire I have is clarifying this issue. I want to understand the Buddhadharma to the best of my ability and to stop being misled by people clinging to beliefs.

Astus wrote:

Besides reading Zen works you should take a broader view of Buddhism, like reading about its history, and the teachings found in the sutras and treatises. Practically all Zen teachers were very knowledgeable about the whole of the Buddhist tradition. You can look at modern examples, like <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheng-yen> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sh%C5%8Dhaku_Okumura.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 30th, 2021 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Does the Tathagata reside in Dhyana?

Content:

Owlsd said:

Still I'm talking about how they taught when people made serious inquiry into the Buddhadharma. When Emperor Wu questioned Bodhidharma he was told "No Merit." This isn't a teaching on the basis of right and wrong.

Astus wrote:

Koan is a specific genre of literature. If you want to see what teachers taught it's better to look at their recorded teachings and writings. One example would be Yongming Yanshou's Wanshan tonggui ji, in English see The Meaning of Myriad Good Deeds by Albert Welter, that discusses the importance of meritorious action. There are also some chapter in Dogen's Shobogenzo on the topic of karma, like Shinjininga and Sanjinogo.

Owlsd said:

Does the Buddhadharma and discussion of it, include relative affairs?

If I speak of sex, right and wrong, money, karma, reincarnation, Buddha's and devils, anything at all in the realm of relative affairs, am I still expressing the true Buddhadharma?

Astus wrote:

The teachings of karma and rebirth are central in all Buddhist schools, while the training in moral discipline is essential for any progress on the path. So yes, those topics are expressing the true Buddhadharma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 30th, 2021 at 3:06 PM

Title: Re: Does the Tathagata reside in Dhyana?

Content:

Owlsd said:

Koans are castle studies of real interactions Zen Masters engaged in. Why would you dismiss what they say?

Astus wrote:

Koans are not records of historical events but religious literary products. They can be used in various ways and with various approaches. But they are definitely not the whole picture of what went on in various communities over the centuries.

Owlsd said:

I'm well aware they are part of Buddhist doctrine. I didn't ask about Buddhist doctrine, I asked about the Buddhadharma.

Let me rephrase as another question. Do you think the Buddhadharma is found in the teachings?

Astus wrote:

The Buddhadharma is what the Buddha taught, and what the Buddha taught are found in the sutras. Without the sutras even the word Buddhadharma is meaningless. That does not mean it is enough to just know the sutras, and that is something the sutras themselves agree on.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 30th, 2021 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: Do I understand correctly that Zen teaches not to check?

Content:

Russian said:

For Zen, to distinguish is the Hinayana method.

Astus wrote:

Wisdom is the goal of all Buddhists, because that is what brings liberation. It is of no use to merely suspend one's cognitive faculties, that would be just a temporary state that solves nothing, like shutting one's eyes but still being hit by the train. Not discriminating in Zen means freedom from grasping at the extremes of being and nonbeing, freedom from taking things personally as I and my. Actually it is very much in line with what you find in other schools, to eliminate ignorance and realise emptiness. The method and style is somewhat different, however.

Russian said:

according to Zen, karma does not accumulate, does not arise if there is no checking mind, that is, if the mind does not create anything?

Astus wrote:

It is when there is no attachment that the chain of dependent origination is severed, so it is in that way that there is no karma accumulated. But it's certainly not some sort of blank mind with no comprehension of what is going on, quite the opposite actually.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 31st, 2021 at 7:57 PM

Title: Re: We need sources that say that discriminating is the hinayana method

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Limiting Zen to a particular method or approach is IMO ... completely missing the point.

Astus wrote:

Zen is such a generic term that there are even those who limit it to a single method, like zazen or ganhwa.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 1st, 2021 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: What's the source of this lines?

Content:

JoaoRodrigues said:

I was wondering what's the source, the text, from which this was taken.

Astus wrote:

What the monk says at the beginning (<https://blog.daum.net/ibakdal/17372311>):

무시무종(無始無終)에
본래무일물(本來無一物)이라.
시작도 끝도 없잖아.
나지도 죽지도 않은 이 한 물건.

The first two lines are the original Chinese, presumably reading from that book. The second two lines are the same but in modern Korean.

無始無終 (무시무종 / mu sim mu jong) - no beginning, no end; very common expression, found in numerous sutras and treatises

本來無一物 (본래무일물 / bon rae mu il mul) - originally not a thing; most well known source is Huineng's poem in the Platform Sutra

The two phrases do not seem to occur together in the canonical texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2021 at 3:30 PM

Title: Re: An intersubjective experience in Yogacara

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

According to Yogacara, all the objects that I see exist only in my mind.

Astus wrote:

That objects exist in one's mind means that things are defined by concepts, particularly defined in terms of self/essence/substance. Just consider how people perceived as one's family are quite different from how the same people appear to those who perceive them as colleagues, friends, enemies, or strangers. Same applies to insentient things.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2021 at 4:11 PM

Title: Re: An intersubjective experience in Yogacara

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

that is, it's just a matter of perception? for example, everyone perceives the same person differently?

Astus wrote:

Indeed, a matter of perception, like one can be the daughter for her parents, the wife for her husband, and the mother for her children.

Arnold3000 said:

does this sound like epistemology idealism?

Astus wrote:

It is not about defining whether what one perceives is real or imagined, but about showing how one's own thoughts can generate attachment and suffering, and then how to be free from the defilements.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2021 at 9:53 PM

Title: Re: An intersubjective experience in Yogacara

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

but what about the fact that there are no external objects, karma is collective, and consciousness is intersubjective?

Astus wrote:

There is the habit of projecting one's concepts as if they were independent, real entities on their own. This is easily observable in how one assumes of another person various attributes as definitive of their being, like 'my brother is lazy', and 'the teacher is too strict'.

Karma is collective in the sense of a shared culture, language, and view, not in the sense of individual intentional actions.

Intersubjectivity is our social existence. Just consider the significant influence parents have on their children, or friends on each other.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 2nd, 2021 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: An intersubjective experience in Yogacara

Content:

Queequeg said:

Seems a bad idea to even entertain the concept of "collective karma."

Astus wrote:

Generally yes, I agree.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 5th, 2021 at 8:53 PM

Title: Buddhist Rock & Metal

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's share Buddhist metal, rock, and other modern music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi8HnW-SHf4> - A one of a kind song by the Chinese band Yaksa (夜叉), the lyrics is based on the dharani (Niepan xiangmo zhou 涅槃降魔咒) recited by Manjusri to save Ananda from 64000 billion maras in the last chapter of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra (T374p602/T375p850).

Dharma (達摩樂隊) - Buddhist death metal from Taiwan, they growl mantras

Videos available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi1eseuCuPlozZK6tTcqCzg>

Sample song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LC6Tc3y1icM>

Shamon (沙門) - Futuristic Buddhist Pop (進化系仏教ポップ), a band of Buddhist priests from Japan, they also have some songs in English

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCZm7X9tqCJCeoOIZN0psCQ>

Sample English song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZ-cAgsKQkl>

Nam Jazz Experiment (南無ジャズ・エクスペリメント) - Sutra chanting combined with Jazz from Japan

Videos available at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAGbl6vuWZg3_FbEMAc7DeA

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijiyBbi8jnQ&list=PLEl752UqQLKWLRpBCGwuL4T-ivPhzXrW>)

Sample song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijiyBbi8jnQ>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 6th, 2021 at 3:27 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Rock & Metal

Content:

Malcolm said:

Let's not and say we did.

Astus wrote:

You don't like the genre? Maybe some original Tibetan by Alan Dawa Dolma:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LStBLUEUOrM>? Or the

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=1062571790823049&ref=watch_permalink

(the [https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Safeguard/05-](https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Safeguard/05-Upagantho-12.htm)

[Upagantho-12.htm](https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Safeguard/05-Upagantho-12.htm)) as sung in the movie Yasodhara (බිම්බා දේවී නෙවන් යශෝධරා)?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 7th, 2021 at 2:55 PM

Title: Re: Are there any precedents that allow for 'developments' of Buddhism after the Buddha?

Content:

Padmist said:

Are there any precedents from the Buddha himself from canon (preferably the Pali Canon) that show the Buddha expected his later followers to 'develop' various teachings beyond the ones he explicitly taught as recorded in the canon?
I mean, are there statements or teachings of the Buddha that show he welcomes or expects later developments, discoveries, additions, reformulations, of his teachings?

Astus wrote:

Rather the opposite, expecting disciples to preserve it correctly. See e.g.
<https://suttacentral.net/sn20.7/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/dn33/en/sujato>.

'you should remember what I have not declared as undeclared, and what I have declared as declared.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn63/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 7th, 2021 at 10:03 PM

Title: Re: Are there any precedents that allow for 'developments' of Buddhism after the Buddha?

Content:

Queequeg said:

That's well and good, but if you take that too strictly, commentary is technically barred, and all you can have is the Pali texts. Not even sure you could have Abhidhamma. You might find yourself going down the originalist rabbit hole. The question is, what is elaboration and explanation and what is just fabricated. How much latitude is permitted in commentary?

Astus wrote:

It depends on the type of commentary, how far it diverges from what are found in the discourses. Presumably a commentator's intent is not to add something to the Buddha's teaching but rather to make it clearer to the readers. And that's what all Buddhist teachings are supposed to be, just relaying what the Buddha himself taught. It is another thing that during the process it can change in many ways, like in the Āṇisutta eventually nothing remains of the drum. Look at this passage from Dogen:

'In the lesser vehicle, people used counting to regulate their breath. However, the buddha ancestors' engaging of the way always differed from the lesser vehicle. A buddha ancestor said, "Even if you arouse the mind of a leprous wild fox, never practice the self-regulation of the two vehicles." The two vehicles refer to such as the school of the four-part vinaya, and the [Abhidharma] Kosa school, which have spread in the world these days. In the Mahayana there is also a method for regulating breath, which is knowing that one breath is long, another breath is short. The breath reaches the tanden and comes up from the tanden. Although exhale and inhale differ, both of them occur depending on the tanden. Impermanence is easy to clarify, and regulating the mind is easy to accomplish.'

(Eihei Koroku 5.390, p 348-349)

The interesting thing is of course that the method of counting (following, fixing, etc.) is not a method taught in the discourses, but what is taught as the 16 steps breath mindfulness in teachings like the Anapanasati Sutta is what Dogen suggests. It's also possible to find other cases where while Mahayana rejects teachings found in Abhidharma and commentarial works what is proposed instead is more in line with the early scriptures.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 2:29 AM

Title: Re: Are there any precedents that allow for 'developments' of Buddhism after the Buddha?

Content:

avatamsaka3 said:

That's interesting. Examples?

Astus wrote:

The general refutation of svabhava is one. Related to that, the practice of prajnaparamita as non-abiding is another.

'All conditioned phenomena

Are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow

Like the dew, or like lightning

You should discern them like this'

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-33)

'Form is like a lump of foam,

Feeling like a water bubble;

Perception is like a mirage,

Volitions like a plantain trunk,

And consciousness like an illusion,

So explained the Kinsman of the Sun.

However one may ponder it

And carefully investigate it,

It appears but hollow and void

When one views it carefully.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.95/en/bodhi>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 2:20 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Könchok Chödrak said:

Can anyone go into detail here how Buddha-Nature is not an Atman?

Astus wrote:

The Atman is a stand alone pure consciousness, never an agent. Buddha-nature is a reference to innumerable buddha-qualities that manifest when the obscurations are completely removed through the full realisation of twofold emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Are there any precedents that allow for 'developments' of Buddhism after the Buddha?

Content:

Queequeg said:

Isn't this tension interesting? In a sense, this uncertainty, and vacillation between source and commentary, meandering back, etc. could be seen, as a whole, as the process by which the tradition keeps to the Buddha's teaching - keeping the teaching vital as a living discourse. I'm wary when I see attempts to limit the teaching too strictly and literally. The discussion and argument itself is both a practice and a means of establishing authority.

Astus wrote:

A sutra can and should be read with the other sutras. Commentaries and treatises can help with understanding. However, what makes the teachings alive is going through all three stages of learning (sruti), understanding (cinta), and applying (bhavana), or sometimes they talk of it in Zen as using live words instead of (or after) dead ones. As Jinul wrote:

'In the Sōn school, all these true teachings deriving from the faith and understanding of the complete and sudden school, which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, are called dead words (sagu 死句) because they induce people to generate the obstacle of understanding. But they also may help neophytes who are not yet able to investigate the live word (hwalgu 活句) of the shortcut approach by instructing them in complete descriptions that accord with the nature in order to ensure that their faith and understanding will not retrogress.'

(Treatise on Resolving Doubts about Observing the Keyword, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 319)

Queequeg said:

That's probably not quite acceptable if one demands absolute certainty.

Astus wrote:

One arrives at certainty at the stage of insight, where there is direct seeing into the validity of the Dharma. Until then one can have faith and understanding, but that's still not an unshakeable ground.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 7:53 PM

Title: Re: Are there any precedents that allow for 'developments' of Buddhism after the

Buddha?

Content:

Queequeg said:

I wonder if the term translated here as "faith and understanding" is 信解.

Astus wrote:

Yes.

Queequeg said:

I'm not quite sure that passage lines up with the process I'm talking about. This passage seems to be comparing methods, not quite an active dialogue between sutras and commentary and the tension that results.

Astus wrote:

True, it's about living the Dharma, having direct insight of the meaning gained from learning. The way I take it is that commentaries and treatises are meant to express the understanding of the sutras in order to allow an easier comprehension of them. But in a few decades and centuries those explanations can sound as foreign as the sutras themselves, so there appear sub-commentaries. And the process goes on (e.g. for Theravada: sutta -> abhidhamma (dhammasanga -> vibhanga -> dhatukatha) -> atthakatha -> tika), then summaries are produced, then commentaries on the summaries. Or there is another route, at some point returning to the sutras, or some treatise, and writing new commentaries/treatises (or even new sutras), especially if one wants to diverge from the accepted interpretations.

Queequeg said:

Being honest, I have to admit I don't understand Zen discourse. Its tropes, ideas, and terminology just present a wall that resists my penetration.

Astus wrote:

This points quite well to the matter at hand. Zongmi wrote:

'The teachings are the sutras and treatises left behind by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Chan is the lines of verse related by the various good friends [on the path]. The buddha sutras open outward, catching the thousands of the beings of the eight classes, while Chan verses scoop up an abridgment, being oriented to one type of disposition found in this land [of China]. [The teachings,] which catch [the thousands of] beings [of the eight classes], are broad and vast, and hence it is difficult to rely upon them. [Chan,] which is oriented to dispositions, points to the bull's-eye and hence is easy to use.'
(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 105)

For Zongmi - who was a well respected "scholar-practitioner" monk in 9th century China - Chan teachings meant the simple, direct, easy to understand presentation of the Dharma. Naturally Chan over the centuries developed into something quite complex (e.g. Blue Cliff Record), and at the same time what was once ordinary talk for us now is an obscure ancient dialect filled with references that take dozens of footnotes to explain.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 8:04 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Könchok Chödrak said:

We say “we all have Buddha Nature”.

Astus wrote:

Such is the nature of skilful means, intended to make people maintain a hopeful outlook towards a great realisation, only to find out in the end that there has never been anything to realise.

Könchok Chödrak said:

What is this “we”? After we erase the “I” are we going to erase the “we”?

Astus wrote:

'These mere appearances are not a real unity, because they possess many parts. Each of these parts can in turn be broken down into many subparts. Since this process can be infinitely repeated, there is not a single smallest particle that is a really existent and indivisible unity. Without even one real building block, how could you put together many so as to create a really existent thing? Consequently, there can be nothing that is a real multiplicity, because there is no real unity to begin with that could build up such a multiplicity. To be sure, this reasoning does not negate the mere conventionality that one thing has many parts. The point here is that neither the thing in question nor its parts really exist by themselves. Thus, what is denied is not the mere appearance of unity and multiplicity on the level of seeming reality but the existence of any unity or multiplicity that is really established and findable as such.'

(Center of the Sunlit Sky, p 237)

Könchok Chödrak said:

Eventually it must be understood that there are Real Transcendental activities for the individual after liberation, and that there still is an individual, even after many lifetimes of self-negation.

Astus wrote:

“Are the dharmakāyas of the buddha bhagavāns said to be different or said not to be different?” They are said not to be different since their support, intention, and enlightened activity are not different. [However,] they are said to be different since innumerable bodies [of bodhisattvas] become fully and perfectly awakened. Just as the dharmakāya, the sambhogakāyas [of buddhas] are not different because their intention and enlightened activity are not different. However, since their supports are different, it is not that they are without difference because they arise with innumerable supports. The nirmāṇakāyas are to be regarded in the same way as the sambhogakāyas.'

(Mahayanasamgraha X.8, tr Brunnhölzl)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 3:18 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Könchok Chödrak said:

Can we respect constructs as form, then form as Emptiness, then Emptiness as the basis for who we are, without saying we don't exist just because we are infinite?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not a basis of anything, it rather means baselessness, that there is no ultimate substratum behind phenomena. We are certainly not infinite, but finite and dependent entities.

Könchok Chödrak said:

Isn't what really doesn't exist the material aspect of this world, the non-Nirvanic, non-Buddhic dream of craving, but all the while, all the while Love and Compassion are real—?

Astus wrote:

Neither the material, nor the mental appearances are real in the sense of existing in and of themselves, but real in the sense of conditioned conditions. Emotions like love and compassion are very much temporary composite phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 4:52 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, not even that.

Astus wrote:

No, because there are no appearances, or because they are not dependent, or maybe both?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 5:30 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, because conditions also cannot be found upon analysis, exactly like material and mental appearances, the former are no more real than the latter. They have the same amount of reality, they are unable to bear ultimate analysis.

Astus wrote:

Do say that conventionally things exist independently?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 1:47 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

That question is incoherent, it assumes that conditions can bear analysis. They can't. They are just relative appearances upon which designations are made.

Astus wrote:

If so, how can any valid statements be made? No difference between ordinary true and false?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 7:38 PM

Title: Re: Modern Chinese Chan Buddhism and Modern Psychology

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233645610_Psychological_attachment_no-self_and_Chan_Buddhist_mind_therapy

Astus wrote:

That's only an abstract, but the paper is from 2008. Any follow up studies?

Arnold3000 said:

Chan Buddhism is most popular school in Modern Chinese Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

How do we know that? Also, it's probably not true.

Arnold3000 said:

Modern psychology believes that the masters and monks of Chan Buddhism can better treat people from mental illness because they know better how other people's minds work?

Astus wrote:

Unlikely.

Arnold3000 said:

Are there monks with special psychic abilities who can read the minds of others?

Astus wrote:

It would be wonderful if they could read their own minds.

Arnold3000 said:

It would be useful for psychology to be able to read the minds of other people.

Astus wrote:

Parapsychology is supposed to deal with telepathy. Psychology not so much.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 7:40 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Conventional truths are derived from observing functional appearances. Falsehoods are derived from observing nonfunctional appearances. Example, lake vs. mirage.

Astus wrote:

And by functional do you mean causally effective? If so, what's wrong with saying that phenomena are conditional?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 8:55 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

You used the word "real".

Astus wrote:

Yes, but "real in the sense of " functional, conditioned, causally relevant, and not as "real in the sense of existing in and of themselves".

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 9:18 PM

Title: Re: Modern Chinese Chan Buddhism and Modern Psychology

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

"It would be wonderful if they could read their own minds."
what does it mean?

Astus wrote:

Chan Buddhism is about seeing into the mind we use all the time, that is the primary goal. Worrying about the minds of others can only come later.

Arnold3000 said:

Does Chan Buddhism have telepathy?

How is the psychology of Chan Buddhism different from modern psychology?

Astus wrote:

You can read these two booklets by Ven. Hsing Yun:

<https://www.fgsitc.org/the-buddhist-perspective-on-the-supernatural/>

<https://www.fgsitc.org/buddhism-and-psychology/>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 10:34 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

To say something is real, in English, means to have objective, independent existence. Thus, one cannot say conditions are real.

Astus wrote:

I see. I try to keep that in mind. Still, if I look at the definition from

<https://www.lexico.com/definition/real> as 'Actually existing as a thing or occurring in fact; not imagined or supposed.'; or from

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/real> as 'existing in fact and not imaginary', then it doesn't have to have such a connotation, but rather something's factual nature is what makes it real, that it can be perceived as occurring or happening, that it is a factor. Anyhow, do you have perhaps some better words to use then?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 9th, 2021 at 10:38 PM

Title: Re: Modern Chinese Chan Buddhism and Modern Psychology

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

Does this mean that the practitioner first brings his mind to enlightenment and then helps other minds to come to enlightenment?

Is it like when a psychologist first studies at the university and then helps patients deal with their stress and anxiety?

Astus wrote:

Sure. How else could it be?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 10th, 2021 at 2:56 AM

Title: Re: Modern Chinese Chan Buddhism and Modern Psychology

Content:

Arnold3000 said:

That is, monks and Chan Buddhism masters can help people cope with their mental disorders, anxiety and stresses?

Astus wrote:

Buddhism and psychology may be somewhat related, but as Chan is not a training to cure mental disorders it follows that those proficient in Chan may not be fit to be considered therapists, just as a psychologist is not automatically a Dharma teacher.

Arnold3000 said:

And the customary believers of Chan Buddhism who have enlightened their minds can help the minds of other people to come to enlightenment or is it only a master or a monk can?

Astus wrote:

One can receive beneficial teachings from anyone, but it's up to each person to put them into practice and thus gain the results.

As for the Chan way of fixing one's mind:

Bodhidharma sat facing a wall. Huike [who would be his successor] stood in the snow and cut off his arm, saying, "My mind is not at peace. Please, Teacher, pacify my mind." Bodhidharma said, "Bring out your mind and I will pacify it for you." Huike said, "When I search for my mind, ultimately it cannot be found. " Bodhidharma said, "I have already pacified your mind for you. " (Wumen's Gate, case 41, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 102)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 10th, 2021 at 3:14 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Matt J said:

It sounds to me like Astus is following the Gelug view of stating that things exist conventionally.

Astus wrote:

I'd rather put it as: whatever can be called existent is just a convention, a conceptual fabrication. Not because it is ontologically meaningful, but because taking one's ideas to be real is the root of suffering.

'Since external appearances are confusion, know them to be unreal.

Since the internal mind itself is without a self, know it to be empty.

Since the thoughts in between arise conditionally, know them to be adventitious.'

(Precious Garland by Gampopa, ch 6, p 167-168)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 10th, 2021 at 5:02 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:
Malcolm said:
So which comes first, appearance or convention?

Astus wrote:
First for what?

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, April 10th, 2021 at 6:16 PM
Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.
Content:
Malcolm said:
Do appearances arise from conventional designations, or are conventional designations made on the basis of appearances?

Astus wrote:
Without further specifications they are practically synonyms, so one preceding the other is not an option.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, April 10th, 2021 at 9:10 PM
Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.
Content:
Malcolm said:
Wrong answer.

Astus wrote:
Which appearance isn't a convention? Which convention isn't an appearance?

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, April 11th, 2021 at 3:51 AM
Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.
Content:
Malcolm said:
In brief, conventions do not generate appearances, for example, calling the appearance of sand “water” does not change that appearance into water. First there an appearance, then there is a conventional designation.

Astus wrote:
How is that not like the Abhidharma view that takes dharmas as paramartha, and how is it consolidated with statements like this one:

'Since the Buddhas have stated
That the world is conditioned by ignorance,

So why is it not reasonable [to assert]
That this world is [a result of] conceptualization?
(Yuktisastika 37, tr Geshe Thupten Jinpa; cf. Yuktisastika 33-34; Acintyastava 6, 35, 44;
Lokatitastava 19)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 11th, 2021 at 5:01 AM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Satyadvayavibhaṅgavṛtti states:

“Mundane conventional designations are engagements of the mundane, that is to say, having the characteristics of cognitions and objects of cognition, but do not have the characteristic of verbalizations because of being described subsequent to those [cognitions].”

Gorampa adds:

Therefore all those objects and everything defined on those from the perspective of appearing to a mundane mind is said to be the meaning of defining the relative through the perspective of convention.

Astus wrote:

How does that support the claim that first there are appearances and only then conventions? Appearances are conventional according to Jnanakirti, he simply makes a distinction there between cognition and verbalisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 11th, 2021 at 6:24 PM

Title: Re: Brunnhölzl on Buddha Nature as a radical teaching.

Content:

Malcolm said:

because of being described subsequent to those [cognitions]. The argument takes aim at the Geluk idea that appearances are derived from conventions themselves.

Astus wrote:

Both Jnanagarbha and Gorampa state that conventional truth include not just words or labels but the whole cognitive process of perception. I did not equate conventions with just words.

What the Satyadvayavibhaṅgavṛtti says:

'This is why the sutra says:

What is relative truth? All ordinary designations, syllables, utterances, and words.

Ultimate truth cannot even be known, let alone conveyed in syllables.

An ordinary designation (loka-prajñapti) is an ordinary activity that is cognitive in nature (jñāna-jñeya-lakṣaṇa) rather than verbal in nature (abhidhāna-lakṣaṇa), since [syllables] are mentioned later [in the quotation]. The word "all" is meant to be inclusive. This means that items cognized by perceptions (pratyakṣa) that are nonconceptual (nirvikalpa), such as perceptions of form (rūpa) or pleasure (sukha), are only relative truth. [The word "all"] is also to be taken with the subsequent [terms in the sentence]. Thus it applies to [the phrase "ordinary designations"], which has just been quoted from the sūtra, and to syllables, utterances, and words.'

(Jñānagarbha on the Two Truths, p 74)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 3:03 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

RonBucker said:

Are these two schools very similar? For example, Chan Buddhists can teach Zen Buddhists, and Zen Buddhists may teach the practice of Chan Buddhists.

Or do Chan Buddhists think Zen Buddhists have a slightly different mindset about practice?

Astus wrote:

The sole unique identifying element of all Chan/Zen groups is their ancestral https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineage_%28Buddhism%29#Chan_and_Zen_lineages where the last common ancestor is [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huineng_\(638-713\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huineng_(638-713)).

The two main groups in Japan are <https://www.sotozen.com/eng/>, that is quite centralised, and <http://zen.rinnou.net/index.html>, that is more of an association of several organisations.

I cannot speak for Mainland China, but as for the Republic three of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Great_Mountains_%28Taiwan%29 were founded by members of a Chan lineage: <https://www.fgs.org.tw/en/>, <https://www.dharmadrum.org/>, <https://www.ctworld.org.tw/english-96/html/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 6:46 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

RonBucker said:

What is the most popular school of Buddhism in China and Japan?

Astus wrote:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

RonBucker said:

So the most popular Buddhism in China, Japan and Korea is Pure Land Buddhism and Chan / Zen?

Astus wrote:

The most popular form of Buddhism in East Asia is Pure Land. It is only in Japan where distinct organisations exist for Pure Land practice, and there they (mainly

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C5%8Ddo-sh%C5%AB> and

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C5%8Ddo_Shinsh%C5%AB) are the biggest Buddhist churches. Similarly, it is in Japan where you find individual churches for Zen. There is no such organisational separation based on school affiliation in other countries. Also, when there is talk of 'Chan school', 'Pure Land school', or 'Tiantai school', that's not an either/or situation, but more of a set of ideas and methods that can be studied and applied easily by the same person.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 15th, 2021 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

RonBucker said:

This means that there will be no disagreement between Chinese, Japanese and Korean Buddhists if they all come to the same church.

Astus wrote:

It depends on what sort of disagreement you mean.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 15th, 2021 at 3:01 AM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

RonBucker said:

Can Chinese Buddhists teach Japanese Buddhists how to meditate or will Chinese people think that the Japanese will disagree with their teachings?

Astus wrote:

It depends on who teaches whom, not their nationality.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 15th, 2021 at 2:20 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

Astus wrote:

On the practice of huatou/hwadu, that has become the main form of Chan practice since the 12th century, there are some good introductory texts:

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#c> by Hanshan Deqing.

<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/the-cha-training/> by Xuyun.

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN375.pdf> by Guo Ru.

http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 15th, 2021 at 4:41 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

LastLegend said:

What if one doesn't have doubt?

Astus wrote:

It has to be generated.

https://books.google.com/books/about/Great_Doubt.html?id=172yDAAAQBAJ by Boshan Yuanlai

Talks by Jeff Shore on Boshan's text:

<https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/exhortations-for-those-who-do-part-1.pdf>, <https://beingwithoutself.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/exhortations-for-those-who-do-part-2and3.pdf>

<https://www.google.com/books/edition/%E7%A6%AA%E9%97%9C%E7%AD%96%E9%80%B2/y2LDBAAQBAJ> by Yunqi Zhuhong

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 19th, 2021 at 7:25 PM

Title: Re: An intersubjective experience in Yogacara

Content:

Astus wrote:

Any Buddhist teaching can be put in the frame of the four noble truths and see where it belongs to. So for instance the doctrine of consciousness only is a part of the fourth, the noble truth of the path, as it is meant to be a teaching (sruti/prajna) or view (drsti/darsana) to be applied (bhavana) in meditation (samadhi), and with that attain non-conceptual wisdom (nirvikalpajnana) and reach the first bhumi. This should help with not mistaking the Dharma as some sort of mundane philosophy/science.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2021 at 2:43 PM

Title: Re: Lack of Mahayana monasteries in the US?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Some that are listed under

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Buddhist_monasteries_in_the_United_States:](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Buddhist_monasteries_in_the_United_States)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuang_Yen_Monastery

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dai_Bosatsu_Zendo_Kongo-ji

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyobutsuji_Zen_Monastery

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Mahayana_Temple

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shasta_Abbey

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tassajara_Zen_Mountain_Center

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_Mountain_Monastery

Lists of monasteries/temples:

<http://www.sfzen.org/all-other-usa-american-chinese-buddhist-temples>

<http://middleland.org/chung-tai-branches/>

<http://truclamminhchanh.org/en/links.aspx>

<https://whiteplum.org/membership-list-public/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 6th, 2021 at 10:37 PM

Title: Re: How difference between Chan and Zen.

Content:

Malcolm said:

It emphasized the fact that in many respects, in Zen temples in Japan, there was a lot of less meditation than one might expect, and that a large portion of temple activities were oriented towards ministering to the needs of the lay population with various kinds of rituals.

Astus wrote:

'In Japan today, seated meditation is only practiced in a few large monasteries. In most Zen temples, as in the temples of other sects, priests spend most of their time carrying out funeral rituals for their parishioners. With the spread of Zen Buddhism throughout Europe and the United States, there has been a trend towards ignoring the more religious and ritualistic aspects of Zen and focusing instead on its technical aspects, thereby subjecting zazen to the same treatment as Indian yoga.'

(Unmasking Buddhism by B. Faure, p 78)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2021 at 2:26 AM

Title: Re: Indian Buddhist music

Content:

Astus wrote:

Should check Sinhalese music.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2021 at 2:19 PM

Title: Re: Indian Buddhist music

Content:

mabw said:

Hmm, I have on occasions tried looking for classical Sinhalese music on Youtube. Not very successful though, not at least when I type in English. A lot of material in Sri Lanka seems locked in Sinhalese.

Astus wrote:

You can try <https://www.shraddha.lk/english/> and its

<https://www.youtube.com/user/shraddhatv>, they have

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARd_hSTb5b0&list=PLalyA_suCnHxm6qpbU-N7zyiTtTpuoNQQt.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 9th, 2021 at 8:14 PM

Title: Re: Origin of the Four Seals?

Content:

manjusri said:

Does anyone know when these were first formulated and by whom? I am also curious if they can be found in the Theravada? I believe I was introduced to them through a teaching given by HHDL. Thanks, everybody.

Astus wrote:

They are mentioned in the Ekottaragama, scroll 18, chapter 26.1, in sutras numbered 8 and 9 (T125, p639a2-12, p640b5-18), as the four fundamental dharmas (四法本末: all compounded are (all) impermanent (一切諸行(皆悉)無常), all compounded are suffering (一切諸行苦), all compounded are without self (一切諸行無我), nirvana is rest/eternally tranquil (涅槃休息/為永寂)). Suttacentral gives AN 4.185 and SN 47.13 as parallels, but they do not contain those four.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 10th, 2021 at 3:03 PM

Title: Re: Origin of the Four Seals?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The formula, "all compounded phenomena...nirvana is peace" is found in Sthiramati's commentary on the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, which was translated in either the 11th century by an obscure translator named Che Tashi (Lce bkra shi) with an Indian.

Astus wrote:

The Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra was translated to Chinese in the early 7th century by

Prabhākaramitra, and it uses the term four Dharma seals (四法印; T31n1604_p0646a15). The same term is also found in the Vimalakirti sutra commentary (T38n1776_p0442a25) by Huiyuan 慧遠 (523~592, a disciple of Kumarajiva), and that seems to be the earliest occurrence of 四法印 based on a simple CBETA search, but probably there are texts preceding it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2021 at 6:38 PM

Title: Re: Zen beliefs.

Content:

Zenny said:

Why the need for non experiential beliefs in an otherwise perfect religion?

Astus wrote:

Buddhist teachings are experience based and to be experienced for oneself. It is a matter of one's level of progress how much one can learn, comprehend, and eventually verify personally.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 11th, 2021 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Zen beliefs.

Content:

Zenny said:

My problem with this is that this means that certain beliefs are upheld as something to "discover" rather than being innate and natural. And that is the way that many religions try to get people to accept beliefs that are not felt/natural. Thus one can never criticise a "belief" as the reply would be "you haven't progressed enough". Which smacks of complacency and authority.

Astus wrote:

In Zen what one has to believe in foremost is one's own ability to realise buddha-nature, simply because otherwise one would lack the motivation to continue with the practice. It does not matter if you believe that there is or isn't something or anything. The main point is to work towards awakening. Don't get bogged down by ideas of there is or there isn't. Those are just passing thoughts anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 12th, 2021 at 9:03 PM

Title: Re: So are Sutras really from the Buddha, or just fiction

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yixuan has a solution:

"Followers of the Way, make no mistake! All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds

beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks. But you, weren't you born of a mother? If you seek the Buddha, you'll be held in the grip of Buddha-Māra. If you seek the patriarchs, you'll be bound by the ropes of Patriarch-Māra. If you engage in any seeking, it will all be pain. Much better to do nothing. There are a bunch of shavepate monks who say to students, 'The Buddha is the Ultimate; he attained buddhahood only after he came to the fruition of practices carried on through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas.' Followers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, how is it that after eighty years of life the Buddha lay down on his side between the twin śāla trees at Kuśinagara and died? Where is the Buddha now? We clearly know that his birth and death were not different from ours." (Record of Linji, p 19, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 24th, 2021 at 5:21 PM

Title: Re: "Chain of Causation" Question

Content:

Subcontrary said:

Kamalasila can't possibly believe in "the permanence of the 'Chain'"; he describes it as liable to be snapped -- I am having trouble following this metaphor. Much of this chapter is devoted to the momentariness of reality, how a thing ceases to exist after a moment, and gives rise to another thing; and yet the 'chain' seems to persist from moment to moment -- indeed, it seems that it is merely what links each moment together. How is it 'liable to snap'? What is the most literal explanation of Kamalasila's reasoning here?

Astus wrote:

Here (Tattvasaṃgraha, vol 1, p 313) he means that cause and effect works with the mind-continuum that consists of momentary mind-moments. It is stated against Uddyotakara's claim that if mind is a "fleeting entity" there can be no karma ("affected (impressed) by Actions"). The chain (mind-continuum) is labelled permanent only because it is continuous.

Subcontrary said:

Is Kamalasila describing the same 'Chain' in this passage as above? It seems not, since in the first passage he says the 'Chain' isn't the substratum of the impression leading to the result of an action, and in the second passage he says that impressions resulting from acts (of charity etc) appear "in a mutually interinvolved 'Chain' or 'Series'." I imagine that even if Kamalasila is referring only to one sort of chain the passages are reconcilable, but I am having trouble reconciling them on my own. It is possible, for

example, though I don't know what it means exactly, for the impressions to 'appear' in the chain, without the chain being the substratum of the impressions.

Astus wrote:

He talks (p 314) of those who recognised no-self can and do act morally because they also see how causality/karma works. The 'Chain' refers to the mind-continuum as before. It is actually argued that the chain is not snapped, hence it is a valid "substratum of the 'impression' leading to such a result".

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 26th, 2021 at 12:48 AM

Title: Re: Hello From An Amateur Madhyamaka Scholar!

Content:

Astus wrote:

A course in Madhyamaka with Thomas Doctor has started this month:

<https://dharmafun.org/courses/middleway/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 27th, 2021 at 2:53 PM

Title: Re: "Chain of Causation" Question

Content:

Subcontrary said:

Is Kamalasila indicating then, in the paragraph on p313, that this is all Uddyotakara's incorrect interpretation of the Buddhist view? That is to say, is he paraphrasing Uddyotakara here: "that 'Chain' which is liable to be snapped cannot serve as the 'Cause,'"? That would make more sense.

Astus wrote:

It is meant to establish causality between momentary phenomena, and to prove that impermanence is not contrary to karma. See also text 530 on page 309 about causal chain.

Subcontrary said:

That the chain of cause and effect continues between moments is difficult to reconcile with momentariness; it would seem that by existing from moment to moment it does adopt some character of permanence, and if we relegate this permanence to being merely a "conventional" but not ultimate truth (it's not literally a chain at all), I have trouble determining how the ultimate truth of karma can be reliant on it: if the link between an action in one moment and a result in the next doesn't ultimately exist, that seems to imply that the result of an action is ultimately random, but I am quite sure this can't be the case...!

Astus wrote:

Causality, momentariness, karma - these are not ultimate realities in Madhyamaka. The argument that causality and momentariness work together is discussed in the same

chapter. There is no randomness in causality.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 28th, 2021 at 2:55 PM

Title: Re: How does mantra purify past negative karma?

Content:

Padmist said:

How does mantra purify past negative karma?

Astus wrote:

Since prayers and wishes are of no use (SN 42.6, AN 5.43), and one does not know what actually to purify (MN 101), nor can what has already happened be changed (SN 42.8), it is changing the present mind that really matters (AN 3.99). In other words, it is in changing the present course of thoughts where mantras can make a difference.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2021 at 3:21 AM

Title: Re: Reading suggestions to learn about Soto

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

Does anyone have any reading suggestions that go into detail about the Soto tradition, it's views, practices, etc?

Astus wrote:

You can start with the <https://www.sotozen.com/eng/>. It has a fair amount of introductory materials.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 30th, 2021 at 8:45 PM

Title: Re: "Which has primacy, Buddha or Dharma"?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Even the Buddha revered the Dharma as his teacher (SN 6.2). The Uttaratantra Shastra (3.21) calls the Buddha the ultimate refuge, it also practically combines all three into one, as Dzongsar JK Rinpoche commented: 'But ultimately, Buddha is not other than the Dharma and the Sangha, because the ultimate Dharma is the absence of attachment. And that's what Buddha has achieved. And since Buddha is the result of end point of all the bhūmis, the Buddha is also the essence, the quintessence of the Sangha.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 31st, 2021 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: "Which has primacy, Buddha or Dharma"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

One, your reference to SN 6.2 is far too narrow, since in the Pali canon the Buddha has also declared in various places he had no teacher at all, and that he had teachers in past lives.

Astus wrote:

Apart from the Jataka, Buddhavamsa, and Cariyapitaka, there aren't many discourses dealing with the idea of the past lives of the Buddha. On the other hand, the instruction to take the Dharma as one's refuge is repeated several times: DN 16, DN 26, SN 22.43, SN 47.9, SN 47.13-14.

Malcolm said:

Second, no, the UT really doesn't "practically combine all three refuges into one." It points out that the Dharma and the Sangha are compounded and impermanent. This is the context in which Maitreya declares the Buddha to be the true refuge, Dzongsar's apologetics notwithstanding.

Astus wrote:

The Buddha is called the ultimate refuge for its permanence, thus actually meaning the dharma kaya. In a similar fashion is Dharma itself described in the Pali Canon, that it is true and present regardless of a buddha arising or not arising (SN 12.20, AN 3.136; cf. MMK 18.12).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 31st, 2021 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: "Which has primacy, Buddha or Dharma"?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Thus, what we are going for refuge in is the actual realization of a buddha, who has benefited themselves and is capable of benefitting us, and not some abstract doctrine we ourselves have not realized.

Astus wrote:

Being uncompounded, it cannot even be comprehended, unlike an abstract doctrine. Being effortless ("naturally perfected"), nobody has anything to do with it, unlike with a teaching. Being personally realised, one has to realise it for oneself and others cannot help, unlike with a teaching. The path that is demonstrated, that is the teaching, and it is through the path that afflictions are abandoned. So, taking refuge in the true buddha, the dharmakaya, means taking the ultimate truth (wisdom, dharma as reality) as shown in the teaching demonstrating reality (compassion, dharma as doctrine) and applying it, since there is actually nothing else to take refuge in.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 31st, 2021 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Shinjin as the Third Noble Truth

Content:
Zhen Li said:
I came across this gem in the Nirvāṇa Sūtra today:

Astus wrote:
How does that relate to shinjin? Shinjin itself does not eliminate one's defilements. Also:
'Good man, it is like an intoxicated man trying to walk down a road that he can barely see in his blurred vision. Bodhisattvas at the ten stages who have discerned only a small part of the tathāgata-nature are in a state like this.' (Nirvana Sutra, BDK ed, vol 1, p 249)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2021 at 3:26 PM
Title: Re: Shinjin as the Third Noble Truth
Content:
Zhen Li said:
Tathāgatagarbha is Shinjin,

Astus wrote:
Metaphorically speaking. If literally 'who attains shinjin ... / Is ... equal to the Tathagatas.'
(<http://shinranworks.com/hymns-in-japanese/hymns-of-the-pure-land/hymns-to-amida-based-on-various-sutras/>, 94), then shinjin itself becomes meaningless, as a buddha doesn't need birth in anyone's land but rather establishes his own. Recognising that we are totally foolish beings is part of shinjin, as Shinran quotes (KGSS 3.15):
'Second [of the three minds] is deep mind, which is true and real shinjin. One truly knows oneself to be a foolish being full of blind passions, with scant roots of good, transmigrating in the three realms and unable to emerge from this burning house.'

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2021 at 4:46 PM
Title: Re: Shinjin as the Third Noble Truth
Content:
Zhen Li said:
I'm not claiming in anyway that buddhahood is attained in this life. Shinjin is attained without severing blind passions, but after we die we are born in the Pure Land which is nirvana. It's like fire and wood. Although the wood is on fire, it is not the same as the fire, and yet the fire turns the wood into fire.

Astus wrote:
And that's why shinjin rather belongs the fourth noble truth, not the third.

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2021 at 5:17 PM
Title: Re: Shinjin as the Third Noble Truth
Content:

Zhen Li said:

Shinjin is not a means to an end because it is the Buddha's mind.

Astus wrote:

Buddhahood is not attained in this life, but shinjin is attained. It is shinjin that leads one to be born in the Pure Land where awakening is attained. How is it not a means to an end then?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 1st, 2021 at 5:59 PM

Title: Re: Shinjin as the Third Noble Truth

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Because it's bestowed by the Buddha's power, it involves no effort, working, or calculation on our part. Shinjin doesn't so much lead as ensure with no turning back.

Astus wrote:

It is still not the goal, but what leads one to the goal. Like in the example of the boat, the boat is not the other shore, even if we're not the ones rowing.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 18th, 2021 at 3:16 PM

Title: Re: If its just a story...

Content:

Astus wrote:

One of the wonderful qualities of the Dharma is that it is readily visible (sāṃdr̥ṣṭiko/sandiṭṭhiko), just as one can discern the presence or absence of greed in oneself (SN 35.70, AN 6.47-48), and how from greed come evil actions (AN 3.53-54). Seeing it now is better than looking for pleasant results in the future, as it's been explained to both a deva (SN 1.20) and a mara (SN 4.21), and it's even better than ruling the four continents (SN 55.1). The Dharma can be readily perceived on various levels through absorption (AN 9.46), and it is best taught with the understanding that the Dharma itself is excellent and out of compassion (SN 16.3).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 19th, 2021 at 1:25 AM

Title: Re: If its just a story...

Content:

Astus wrote:

"the Tathāgata always teaches: 'Monks, understand my correct teachings to be like a raft.' If even my correct teachings are to be abandoned, how much more incorrect teachings?"

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-7

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 28th, 2021 at 10:44 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

Early Pali sutras in the Nikaya discourage speculation about Nirvana;

Astus wrote:

Not exactly. The Buddha pointed out that making fabricated ideas about nirvana is a misunderstanding of its meaning (AN 4.174), just making assumptions about the state of a liberated person is mistaken (MN 72; SN 22.85).

Supramundane said:

when asked directly about Nirvana, the Buddha simply smiles or says: 'go find it'.

Astus wrote:

Said where? Rather, the Buddha taught a single path (AN 10.095) consisting of the realisation of the four noble truths (SN 56.44). The Buddha described the path on many occasions from the beginning (SN 56.11) to the end (DN 16), providing various methods (MN 52; AN 7.46). He also explained nirvana as freedom from the three unskillful roots (SN 43) and as bliss (AN 9.34).

Supramundane said:

There could be a very simple explanation for this, namely, that Nirvana is posited as a logical consequence of samsara.

Astus wrote:

There is no such logical consequence. At the same time, both the Buddha and many of his disciples experienced liberation first hand.

Supramundane said:

Therefore, if we can break this dynamic, whereby this interplay does not occur, we will experience Nirvana. It follows that Nirvana does not appear or disappear, but it is right now all around us --- it is empty but not emptiness. It is a very specific element. When the aggregates do not appear, this 'something else' appears.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is the cessation of the cause of suffering, not the absence of appearances.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 28th, 2021 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

KathyLauren said:

When the aggregates do not appear, what is left is Nirvana. It doesn't have to appear, since it is the true nature of reality. Consciousness does not attach to Nirvana. Nirvana is non-attachment. So when consciousness does not attach to the three elements, what is left is Nirvana.

Astus wrote:

There is no consciousness apart from the aggregates (SN 22.53). It's not appearances but clinging that causes suffering (SN 35.191), and when there is no clinging, nirvana is attained in this life (SN 35.118).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: Tendai and Zen comparison

Content:

Astus wrote:

I presume this might be more on the Japanese schools, still, as a side note it is worth mentioning that the methods and teachings of both traditions can work well together, as exemplified by Ting Chen in <https://ymba.org/books/fundamentals-meditation-practice> and Thích Thanh Từ in <https://thientruclam.info/ht-thich-thanh-tu/keys-to-buddhism-%28chia-khoa-hoc-phat%29>. Ven. Sheng Yen also talks of Tiantai in http://www.108wisdom.org/html/OTH_03.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 3:11 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

We are referring in our discussion to Abhidharma where it is stipulated in this manner.

Astus wrote:

What abhidharma teaches such an idea that nirvana means the absence of the aggregates? Do you have a reference?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 3:59 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

I read MN52 to start, and i note that liberation, Nirvana, enlightenment and deliverance are all used interchangeably.

Do you equate them? Or are they different in meaning?

Astus wrote:

The terms used in MN 52 are equivalents: ending of defilements (āsavakkhaya; cf. SN

56.25; Iti 102), complete extinction (parinibbāyati; see https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/pali_query.py?qs=parinibb%C4%81yin&searchhws=yes 2.a), liberated mind (cittaṃ vimuccati; cf. vimoceti in AN 4.194), supreme security from bondage (anuttara yogakkhema; cf. SN 16.2), deathless (amata).

You can find a long list of synonyms collected by Phra Payutto

<https://buddhistteachings.org/the-state-of-nibbana/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 8:39 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

Yes, Abhidharma introduces the idea of the four dharmas. Nirvana is the fourth and is used interchangeably with the term nirodha, 'cessation'. The first three elements are the aggregates. When consciousness no longer clings to them, what remains is Nirvana.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is one of the five aggregates. If the aggregates would have to disappear for nirvana to appear, then there could be no consciousness of nirvana. Furthermore, it would have to mean that there could be no nirvana in this life, since a living being is the aggregates.

Supramundane said:

<http://www.en.dhammadana.org/dhamma/nibbana.htm>

Astus wrote:

That's not a quote from the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidhamma_Pi%E1%B9%ADaka, not even from a commentary, a treatise, or a well known teacher. If you didn't like the previous reference to Phra Payutto, try maybe this work by Mahasi Sayadaw:

<http://www.aimwell.org/natureofnibbana.html>, or this shorter one from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: <https://www.suanmokkh.org/books/84>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

The interesting thing about Abhidharma is that consciousness is placed on its own as opposed to the other three elements which constitute the aggregates and Nirvana, thus allowing for the theory of cessation.

Astus wrote:

Theravada abhidharma distinguishes 4 primary dharmas: citta, cetasika, rupa, nibbana.

Consciousness (vinnana) is citta, not a 5th "element".

A commonly used introductory handbook for abhidhamma studies in Theravada, with Bhikkhu Bodhi's commentaries is https://store.pariyatti.org/Comprehensive-Manual-of-Abhidhamma-A--eBook-Mobi-ePub-PDF_p_4628.html (https://download.pariyatti.org/_xUn1HgkZ/Comprehensive%20Manual%20of%20Abhidhamma.pdf). Nina van Gorkom's <https://www.budsas.org/ebud/nina-abhidhamma/nina-abhi-00.htm> (<http://www.abhidhamma.org/development/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/abhidhamma-in-daily-life.pdf>) is also recommended.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana: posited or indicated

Content:

Supramundane said:

Try here, Astus:

SN 12:64.

Astus wrote:

The suttas are quite clear on the matter that consciousness is one of the aggregates and it is very much impermanent. SN 12:64 itself states that "for the nutriment consciousness, if there is no delight, if there is no craving, consciousness does not become established there and come to growth." (Bhikkhu Bodhi translation), that is, there is no consciousness to talk about without nutriment. On the concept of unestablished consciousness mentioned there, see e.g. <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/BSR/article/view/7139/4835> by Bhikkhu Brahmāli, p 47ff.

Also, regarding consciousness, see chapter 4 of Theravada Abhidharma by Y. Karunadasa:

"Early Buddhism recognizes three basic psychological principles. The first is the dependent arising of consciousness, expressed in the well-known saying: "Apart from conditions, there is no arising of consciousness." (M. I, 256: *Aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo.*) Consciousness is not some kind of potentiality residing in the heart and becoming actualized on different occasions. Nor is it a static entity that runs along and wanders without undergoing any change, a kind of permanent soul entity that transmigrates from birth to birth. (M. I, 256)"

And chapter 5:

"In the Abhidhamma psychology, bare consciousness, that which constitutes the knowing or awareness of an object, is called citta. It can never arise in its true separate condition. It always arises in immediate conjunction with mental factors, the factors that perform more specialized tasks in the act of cognition. In the books of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the individual nature of consciousness is often sought to be

described by positioning it in relation to other basic factors (dhamma) into which individual existence is analyzed.

...

As a basic factor of actuality (dhamma), consciousness is the mere occurrence due to conditions. (VsmṬ. 462: Yathāpaccayaṃ hi pavattimattam etaṃ sabhāvadhammo. See also Abhv. 116; VsmS. V, 132.) It is not an entity but an activity, an activity without an actor behind it. The point being emphasized is that there is no conscious subject behind consciousness."

For Karunadasa on the subject of nirvana see chapter 10 of https://www.bps.lk/olib/bp/bp438s_Karunadasa_Early-Buddhist-Teachings.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 2nd, 2021 at 2:35 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Tripitaka

Content:

Astus wrote:

Apart from the wonderful 84000.co there are other great resources for Mahayana sutras:

<https://bdkamerica.org/tripitaka-list/>

<http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html>

<http://www.cttbusa.org/sutratexts.asp.html> or

<https://www.buddhisttexts.org/collections/free-english-ebooks>

<http://www.fodian.net/world/>

<http://www.huzheng.org/en/mtlee/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 3rd, 2021 at 6:58 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana Tripitaka

Content:

thebuddhajourney said:

What about Abhidharma resources? Of the Tripitaka, the Abhidharma section seems to be the only one that's mostly nonexistent in English. Even the individual analyses and commentaries are often hard to find, or at least a good translation.

Astus wrote:

All seven books of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidhamma_Pi%E1%B9%ADaka have been translated to English at least once, and even some commentaries. The main abhidharma texts used in Mahayana (Abhidharmakosabhasya & Abhidharmasamuccaya) are also available in translation. Beyond that, unless one counts Madhyamaka and Yogacara works as Abhidharma, there are a couple of handbooks in English, in particular: Abhidharmavatara (Entrance Into the Supreme Doctrine) by Skandhila, Abhidharmahrdaya (The Essence of Scholasticism) by Dharmasri, Amrtarasa (La saveur de l'immortel / The Taste of the Deathless) by Ghosaka. Also the book Sarvastivada Abhidharma by K.L. Dhammajoti is highly recommended.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 12th, 2021 at 2:22 PM

Title: Re: Daily Routine for the Laity in Sutras, Tantras or Texts

Content:

Astus wrote:

Chapter 11 (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T0279_014 / Cleary: Purifying Practice / <http://www.cttbusa.org/avatamsaka/avatamsaka11.asp.html>) of the 80 volume Avatamsaka Sutra (T279) has a collection of verses for various situations on daily bodhisattva practice. You can find something similar in the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, e.g. <https://mindfulnessacademy.org/en/mindfulness-essentials/79-teachings/52-verses-gathas-for-mindfulness-practices>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 23rd, 2021 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Tendai and Zen comparison

Content:

Seishin said:

The Six Gates are a theme that regularly appears in Mahayana texts, such as those by Vasubhandhu (Abhidharmakośakārikā) and Asaṅga, in Pali texts (Digha Nikaya ii.291 and Majjhima Nikaya i.425) as well as the Dhyāna Sutras (Agamas from the Sarvāstivāda school) the latter of which list counting (ganana), following (anugamah), stabilizing (sthapana), contemplation (upalaksana), turning away (vivarta), and purification (parisuddhi), which is the same list used in this text. Zhiyi states that the Six Gates as outlined in his text is the same practice the Buddha used to achieve nirvana under the Bodhi Tree.

Astus wrote:

Side note about the six gates occurring in the Nikayas and Agamas: they do not. It is found only in the later (commentarial) tradition.

See:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343212498_The_Doctrine_of_the_Six-stage_Mindfulness_of_Breathing

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/howmindfulnessbreathing.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 28th, 2021 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Vipassanā in Zen Buddhism

Content:

Ivan A said:

Is there a practice of analytical meditation in Zen Buddhism? Do they practice vipassanā?

Astus wrote:

The methods of calming (zhi 止) and insight (guan 觀) are not unknown, but mainly from sutras like <https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-meditation/>, treatises like <https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/>, and the manuals of the Tiantai and the Huayan schools. But as the Platform Sutra (ch 4, BDK ed, p 41-42) puts it:

'Good friends, our teaching takes meditation (ding 定 - concentration) and wisdom (hui 慧) as its fundamental. Everyone, do not say in your delusion that meditation and wisdom are different.

Meditation and wisdom are of one essence, not different. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. At times of wisdom, meditation exists in that wisdom; at times of meditation, wisdom exists in that meditation. If you understand this doctrine, this is the equivalent study of meditation and wisdom. All you who study the Way, do not say that they are different, with meditation prior to and generating wisdom or with wisdom prior to and generating meditation. If your view of them is like this, then the Dharma would have two characteristics. This would be to say something good with your mouth but to have that which is not good in your minds. It is to make meditation and wisdom falsely existent to consider them as not equivalent.'

As for Dogen, in Bendowa he is asked about Tendai practice (SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 16):

[Someone] asks, "Is there nothing to prevent a person who practices this zazen from also performing mantra (shingon 眞言) and quiet-reflection (shikan 止觀) practices?"

I say: When I was in China, I heard the true essence of the teachings from a true master; he said that he had never heard that any of the patriarchs who received the authentic transmission of the Buddha-seal ever performed such practices additionally, in the Western Heavens or in the Eastern Lands, in the past or in the present. Certainly, unless we devote ourselves to one thing, we will not attain complete wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 30th, 2021 at 2:05 PM

Title: Re: Help me understand Anatta

Content:

Seitaka said:

If the skandhas are the totality of a sentient being and no metaphysical entity or otherwise transcends them and nirvana is simply the elimination of future rebirth, how is this not nihilism or annihilationism? Since by definition there is nothing "outside" the skandhas and they are by nature suffering and impermanent, their final end cannot be anything but absolute negation correct?

Astus wrote:

The extreme view of non-existence or annihilationism means that there is somebody/something that ceases to exist, and that there are actions without consequences.

As Nagarjuna summarises (MMK 15.10-11; cf. SN 12.15):

'To say that things exist means grasping at their permanence;
To say they don't exist implies the notion of annihilation.
Thus the wise should not remain
In "this exists" or "this does not exist."
Something that exists by its intrinsic being,
Since it cannot not exist, is permanent.
To say that what once was is now no more
Entails annihilation.'

Annihilation does not apply to what happens to a liberated person after death, because there has never been any entity to cease in the first place.

Nagarjuna's summary (MMK 22.12-14; cf. MN 27, SN 22.85-86)

'Permanence, impermanence—all the four alternatives:
Where are they in the Peaceful One?
Finite, infinite—all the four alternatives:
Where are they in the Peaceful One?
Those who crudely think:
"The Tathagata does exist,"
Will think, regarding his nirvana,
"He does not exist."
Regarding Buddha, who is empty of intrinsic being,
It's untenable to think
That, having gained nirvana,
He exists or else does not exist.'

Here's also Gampopa's explanation for refuting grasping at non-existence (Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 242-243):

'Since the two selves do not exist in any form of existent things, it might be said that they are therefore nonexistent. However, they are not nonexistent either. How is this? Because the two selves or mind could only be said to be nonexistent if they had previously existed and then later ceased to exist. Yet, since phenomena, which are called the "two selves" or "mind," have from the very beginning had no inherent existence, they are beyond the extremes of existence and nonexistence.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 30th, 2021 at 9:57 PM

Title: Re: Help me understand Anatta

Content:

Seitaka said:

The result is still the same, with the annihilation I described in my initial post there is

absolute negation after extinguishing karmic conditions for future rebirth whereas in your scenario there is absolute negation simply from the start and we just don't know it.

Astus wrote:

Both the Buddha and his numerous completely liberated disciples continued to live as other human beings, except they were without the suffering part. The assumption that when skandhas no longer regenerate is annihilation is an incorrect one that identifies the skandhas as self. The skandhas are of course often mistaken for a self, but if looked at correctly, they are seen as very much impermanent even now. To point to a specific event (death) as the end is the idea that until death there is someone/something that suddenly ceases to exist.

Seitaka said:

That also makes one wonder, who or what realizes or knows there has never been a person? If there is no metaphysical entity that transcends the casually conditioned and impermanent person, how can this be known? Is this not a self-negation paradox?

Astus wrote:

Realisation and knowing can happen only within a consciousness that changes, not within a permanent entity that cannot change.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 31st, 2021 at 12:07 AM

Title: Re: Vipassanā in Zen Buddhism

Content:

Nicholas2727 said:

Don't want to take this too far from the original post but are Kumarajiva works studied and practiced still in East Asian Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

There sure are some who study them.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 31st, 2021 at 12:17 AM

Title: Re: Help me understand Anatta

Content:

Seitaka said:

Let's put it a different way, what is the ultimate difference between saying someone/something never existed to begin with and a someone/something is annihilated at death? The latter involves something that was and is lost and becomes nothing, the former simply states that there was nothing to begin with. In both cases the ultimate truth or end is nothing, namely nihilism.

Astus wrote:

There are the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness. That

covers the entire spectrum of human experience. The lack of self means that there is no experience anywhere that can rightly be called a self. But as long as one assumes any experience as one's own or as oneself, for that long there are craving and hatred, and from craving and hatred come the perpetuation of suffering. Recognising that there is no entity behind experience, no ultimate doer or experiencer, does not change reality, but changes how experience operates: not based on ignorance, craving, and hatred, but based on wisdom, generosity, and kindness. Seeing only the concept of self and claiming that it's nihilism is disregarding the entirety of reality and worrying about a fictional concept.

Seitaka said:

What exactly about that view corresponds to some of these words used in the Pali to describe Nirvana:

Astus wrote:

That when there is no longer all the worry and anxiety about oneself, there is peace.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 31st, 2021 at 12:18 AM

Title: Re: Help me understand Anatta

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddhism argues that awareness isn't a self, it is simply awareness, and that if you examine awareness, that ultimately you cannot find anything in that awareness that constitutes self, atman, some kind of specific entity that is even reborn.

Astus wrote:

Buddhism also shows that awareness is a conditioned, momentary phenomenon.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 3rd, 2021 at 9:54 PM

Title: Re: Highest form of meditation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The answer is simple, and not sectarian at all, since it is mentioned in every sūtra and tantra that discusses Buddha's awakening.

The highest meditation is Vajropama Samadhi, since only it has the ability to obliterate all traces of the two obscurations in their entirety.

Seitaka said:

But what is the specific methodology or meditative practice by which such a samadhi can be attained? Obviously following the Buddhist path as a whole, but any particular practice which was seen as especially effective in attaining such?

Astus wrote:

There is a very nice sutra on that topic: <http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra53a.html>, or in another translation: <http://www.buddhism.org/Sutras/2/Sutras9.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 4th, 2021 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Highest form of meditation?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Vajropama-samādhi is the nirvikalpa samādhi of an ārya, someone who has realized emptiness already. Ordinary nirvikalpa samādhi merely leads to birth in the realm of unconscious devas.

Astus wrote:

Would you perhaps have some sources in mind for the above connection between nirvikalpa and vajropama samadhi? I couldn't find much on nirvikalpa samādhi by a search of various possible translations (無分別三昧/三摩地/定), unless you meant nirvikalpa jñāna (無分別智). As for the samadhi leading to the heaven of unconsciousness (無想天), that's usually called asaṃjñi samāpatti (無想定).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 9th, 2021 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: An Interpretation of: 'To Turn Around'

Content:

Astus wrote:

Let's step back and turn one's attention around to the origins of the idea of turning around, which I take to be the method known as the mindfulness of breath in six aspects coming from the Sarvastivada tradition (more on that: https://ahandfulofleaves.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/mindfulness-of-breathing-in-the-dhayana-sutra_florin-deleanu_1992.pdf). An easy reference for it is the Abhidharmakosabhasyam VI.12, where the fifth aspect is given (Poussin-Sangpo tr, vol 3, p 1905 (Pruden, vol 3, p 923)):

'Modifying (vivartana). - The practitioners modify the cognition which had the wind for its cognitive object and apply the cognition onto more and more superior wholesome roots up to and including the supreme mundane factors.'

It means that the object changes from the breath to higher qualities/dharmas, taking one to the doorstep of attainment that is the sixth aspect. Here's its description in The Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation (BDK ed, p 29-30):

'One dispenses with abiding at the gates of wind (i.e., the nostrils) and gives up the method of coarse contemplation. When one gives up the method of coarse contemplation, one knows the impermanence of the breath. This is called the "shifting" contemplation. One contemplates the impermanence of the five aggregates and also

reflects on the impermanence of inhalation and exhalation. One sees that the initial breath does not come from anywhere and observes that the subsequent breath also leaves no trace. They come into being because [their] causes and conditions meet, and they cease to exist because [their] causes and conditions disperse. This is called the method of “shifting” contemplation, which removes the five obstacles [of meditation] and various defilements.'

Then we can come to Zhiyi's description that can be presumed to be the antecedent of its Chan version (The Six Dharma Gates to the Sublime, ch 2):

'As for the cultivation of turning, once one has realized that contemplation itself arises from the mind and once one has also understood that, if one continues to follow along with analysis of the objective sphere, this does not by itself directly bring about convergence with the original source, one should then turn back the direction of one's contemplation so that one now contemplates that very mind that is engaged in contemplation.

As for this mind which engages in contemplation, from what does it arise? Is it generated by contemplative thought or is it generated by something other than contemplative thought? If it is the case that it is generated by contemplative thought, then it should also be the case that there was a pre-existing contemplation process already underway. But in the present situation, this is certainly not the case. Why not? Because there was not yet anything in the midst of the three [immediately preceding] dharmas of “counting,” “following,” “stabilization,” and so forth that was identifiable with this [process of] “contemplation.”

If it is the case that [contemplative thought] arose from a mind not involved in contemplation, is it the case that the mind not involved in contemplation generated it when [that non-contemplating thought] had already ceased or instead produced it when [that non-contemplating thought] had not yet ceased? If it is the case that it produced it when [that non-contemplating thought] had not ceased, then this would be a case of two thoughts existing simultaneously.

If [one were to posit that] it was generated by a dharma which had already ceased to exist, [one should realize that], once an extinct dharma has already disappeared, it is no longer able to generate any contemplative [thought process].

If one were to claim that it was generated from that which had ceased and yet not ceased, or if one were to go so far as to claim that it was generated from that which had neither ceased nor not ceased, in all such cases, those [antecedent causes] cannot ultimately be apprehended. One should therefore realize that the contemplative mind itself was originally unproduced. Because it was unproduced, it does not exist. Because it does not exist, it is just “empty” [of any inherent existence]. Because it is empty [of any inherent existence], there is no mind engaged in the process of contemplation.

If there is no contemplative mind, how could there be an objective sphere which serves as the object of contemplation? This perishing of both the objective sphere and the faculty of knowing is the essential factor in turning back to the source. This is the characteristic feature of the cultivation of turning.

As for the characteristic feature of the realization of turning, the wisdom of the mind opens forth and develops in a way no longer requiring one to bring to bear additional

skillful effort. It carries on in a way allowing one to naturally be able to invoke analyses, turn back towards the origin, and return to the source. This is what is meant by the realization of turning.

The practitioner should realize that, if he desires to retreat into [a circumstance involving] an absence of both objective sphere and knowing faculty utterly apart from an objective sphere and a knowing faculty, he would thereby fail to leave behind being tethered to [the duality inherent in] an objective sphere and a knowing faculty. This is because, in such a case, one would still simply be coursing along in the sphere of duality-based extremes. At just such a time, one should then relinquish the gateway of turning and establish the mind in the path of purification.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: An Interpretation of: 'To Turn Around'

Content:

JimTempleman said:

The question (for me) then becomes: Does 'the shifting of awareness from the guests to the host' trigger the "perishing of both the objective sphere and the faculty of knowing"? Based on my own limited experience, I'd say that this happens when a samadhi opens to (help) 'clear things up.'

Astus wrote:

The position of the host is where there is no subject and object, where there is no abiding. The host does not mean the owner of the inn watching guests going around, rather it is the realm of the whole inn.

Also, on the matter of the meaning of turning the light and reflecting back (回光返照) or simply reverse-illumination/tracing back the radiance (返照), two important authors should be looked into: Dahui Zonggao and Bojo Jinul. They explain it quite well, plus check Prof. Buswell's explanations found in the introductions to his translations.

'You yourself say that your faculties are "dull"; so try this sort of reverse-illumination: the one who has the ability to know dullness — is he, after all, dull-witted? If you don't turn the light backwards and do a reverse-illumination, and you merely perpetuate the dull-wittedness, your production of more worry and distress is piling illusion on top of illusion, adding more [unreal] flowers in the sky on top of the [unreal] flowers in the sky. Just listen to me: the one who has the ability to know that his disposition is dull is most definitely not dull. Although you must not perpetuate this "dull-wittedness," you also must not discard this "dull-wittedness practice" [i.e., doing a reverse-illumination on dullness]. Seizing and discarding, sharpness and dullness, lie in people, not in [the true] mind. This [true] mind, and the buddhas of the three times, are of a single substance: they are non- dual. If they were to be dual, then dharma wouldn't be the same everywhere. Receiving the teaching and transmitting mind are both unreal [i.e., students can't receive this true mind from teachers, and teachers can't transmit it to students]. You are seeking the true and real, but going ever more amiss. If you merely come to know that the [true] mind of the single substance and of nonduality definitely does not lie in [discriminations such as] sharp and dull, seizing and discarding, then you will see

the moon and forget the finger [pointing at the moon], decisively severing [all discriminations] at the single stroke of the sword. If you further hesitate, thinking about “before” and calculating upon “after,” then it’s calculating that something “really” exists in the empty fist;³⁸⁵ vainly “adoring the odd and playing with strangeness” in the midst of the sense organs, sense objects, and dharmas; and falsely imprisoning oneself in the midst of the five aggregates and eighteen elements [which produce sensory experience]. You’ll never put an end to it!
(Letters of Dahui, 14.3, p 121-122)

The viability of all approaches to meditation, in Chinul’s view, ultimately derives from the process of tracing the radiance emanating from the mind back to its source (hoegwang panjo 迴光返照), or simply “tracing back the radiance” (panjo 返照). This concept is an essential element of the processes especially in the Hwaŏm-oriented approach of faith and understanding according to the complete and sudden teaching. Chinul employs a variety of complementary designations for this aspect of contemplation: “trace the radiance back to one’s own mind” (panjo chasim 返照自心); “trace the radiance back to one’s own nature” (panjo chasŏng 返照自性); “in one thought-moment, trace the light back and see one’s own original nature” (illyŏm hoegwang kyŏn chabonsŏng 一念迴光見自本性); “trace back and observe the qualities and functions of your own mind” (pan’gwan chasim chi tŏgyong 返觀自心之德用); “to observe and reflect on your own mind” (kwanjo chasim 觀照自心); “reflect on and view your own mind” (chogyŏn chasim 照見自心); “mirror your own mind” (kyŏng chasim 鏡自心); or simply “trace back the radiance” (panjo 返照), “contemplative reflection” (kwanjo 觀照), or even “introspection” (naejo 內照).⁹⁸ Although the term hoegwang panjo can be interpreted as “reflection,” “introspection,” “counterillumination,” or even “meditation,” the more dynamic renderings I adopt here better convey, I believe, a sense of the actual gnoseological process involved.

Chinul’s Chosŏn-dynasty commentator, Yŏndam Yuil 蓮潭有一 (1720-1799), gives a succinct and precise definition of the term: “ ‘To trace back the radiance’ means to trace the radiance back to the numinous awareness (yŏngji 靈智) of one’s own mind; for this reason, it is called ‘trace back the radiance.’ It is like seeing the radiance of the sun’s rays and following it back until you see the orb of the sun itself.”
(Introduction: Chinul’s Life, Thought, and Writings, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 62-64)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Lu Geng first asked Nanquan, "I've raised a goose in a bottle, and it gradually grew too big to get out; now, without damaging the bottle or injuring the goose, how would you get it out?"

Nanquan called to him, "Sir!"

Lu Geng responded, "Yes?"

Nanquan said, "It's out."
Lu Geng was awakened at this.'
(Book of Serenity, commentary to case 91)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 at 9:58 PM
Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan
Content:
Matylda said:
it is very very wrong to write about koan practice one is doing

Astus wrote:
What is wrong in it?

Maybe you already know this one, or its Japanese original:
https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Sound_of_the_One_Hand/2Yc-DwAAQBAJ

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 at 11:15 PM
Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan
Content:
KathyLauren said:
Writing about a koan, and especially asking for help with one, encourages the OP to try intellectual solutions, or else to repeat someone else's rehearsed non-intellectual solution. The whole point of a koan is to avoid doing either of those things.

Astus wrote:
One goes through all sorts of ways one can come up with before all efforts are exhausted and one gets stuck with pure doubt, if one is actually persistent enough. In the meantime, to learn a thing or two about Zen and the specific koan one works with is no obstacle, especially if the teacher does not approve whatever clever looking solution one comes up with. As long as one puts one's faith in a teacher's judgement, no solution can be found on one's own or from others.

Hyujeong warns:

'There are ten kinds of faults for the points of stories (hwadu): to ponder it with the faculty of intention (manas); to estimate (subtle movements of the mind such as) where you raise eyebrows and blink eyes; to seek your livelihood on the path of language; to draw evidence from writings; to try to be enlightened only where it is raised up; to toss it away into a casket of no concerns; to make understanding (of it in terms) of (it as) existence or non-existence; to make an understanding of (it as) the truly non-existent; to make an understanding of it as reason; and to hold onto delusion and wait to be enlightened. Those who are divorced from these ten kinds of faults, when they simply raise the story, they remove the spirit (of troubles) and just doubt, "What is this?"'

(Seonga gwigam, section 16, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 80)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 3:12 AM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

yinyangkoi said:

Is it a good idea to read this? Or will it hinder my practice? Will it just delude me more and move me further from the answer?

Astus wrote:

If you want to learn how some people a century ago approached koan practice, then it is a useful source. But it is probably not that relevant for anyone just starting to learn Buddhism. As for getting the answer to the original question, you already have it, as the point is to recognise how one's thoughts and feelings react. KeithA gave good advice.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 3:31 AM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

rejun said:

it happens in private, and is intended to be confidential.

Astus wrote:

Sure, it is private and confidential, and it's up to each person whether they want to discuss their private matters. For instance, the modern classic Three Pillars of Zen by Kapleau contains several private interviews and accounts of enlightenment.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 3:38 AM

Title: Re: An Interpretation of: 'To Turn Around'

Content:

JimTempleman said:

I think your referring to a book by Robert Buswell that gives these two translations, but I don't know the title of the book?

Astus wrote:

The second quote is from his introduction, you can download the whole book from http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=5040&wr_id=46&sca=Collected+Works+of+Korean+Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 9:43 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Matylda said:

The breach of this iron rule ends in extirpation of one who made this violation. One could get drunk or do some other stupid thing and it may be still forgiven, but never disclosing dokusan/private interview secret. and there are many many reasons for this.

Astus wrote:

Is there any particular source or basis of that rule, like in specific temple rules, or perhaps in Baizhang's or Dogen's pure rules?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 12th, 2021 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: Questions on Amitabha Buddha, and Faith/Other Power

Content:

carvahlo19 said:

1) On the Amitabha Buddha: could he be identified with Dharmakaya/Buddha-nature? Is he a literal material being or could he just be a thought-form that exists in way similar to the Platonic notion of ideas? I'm not asking or insinuating the Amitabha Buddha is NOT real, but rather if his reality is material or immaterial.

Astus wrote:

A buddha has <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trikaya>: Dharma-body, enjoyment-body, and manifestation-body. There are various doctrines assigning/emphasising one of those three as being Amitabha. From a Pure Land perspective it is more common to say Amitabha is an enjoyment or a manifestation body, because the Dharma-body often seems too abstract, and practically meaningful only when one engages in insight meditation.

carvahlo19 said:

2) On Faith/Other Power: Seeing that Buddhism adheres to the notion of no-self and is non-dualistic, could other power just be understood to be an expedient form of self power by "moving" it to an external agency. In other words, could other power be a mental power to reorient one's will in a way that self power might not be able to due to people living in mappo?

Astus wrote:

What makes it 'other' is that it is the vow of Dharmakara fulfilled in the buddhahood of Amitabha that allows even ordinary beings to be born in Sukhavati. It's not that Amitabha, or any buddha, can just pluck beings out of samsara, otherwise we'd all be liberated already. There are still the three minds one needs to attain birth, or to put it another way: faith, vows, and practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 12th, 2021 at 7:50 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

reiun said:

If these streams you refer to do not condemn discussing confidential student/teacher sanzen, and specifically koan work, and they are Zen/Chan/Seon, is it their position to encourage it?

Astus wrote:

Perhaps start with establishing what confidentiality means. There are a number of easily findable guides from various Zen centres (e.g. <https://mzg.org.au/group-meditation/dokusan/>, <https://austinzencenter.org/practice-discussion/>, <https://www.redcedarzen.org/resources/Documents/practice/PracticeDiscussion.pdf>, <https://www.mountaincloud.org/about/guidelines-for-members-and-students/>, <https://throssel.org.uk/obc-policy-on-confidentiality/>) that stipulate that dokusan is confidential within certain limits. The confidential nature of such private discussions are meant that a student can safely and openly discuss personal matters. There is no rule mentioned that a student cannot talk to others about what was talked about. At <https://zenways.org/attend-sanzen-in-person-or-remotely/>, however, there is such a rule.

Apart from contemporary examples, it would be good to find traditional rules concerning such restrictions, but so far none has been brought forth.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 12th, 2021 at 10:22 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Meido said:

This is something like saying, "It has been asserted that soup should be served in bowls, not on plates. But so far no such rules have been brought forth." If one understands the general mechanism of wato/koan practice - in Chan, Son, and Zen - one realizes why the private nature of teacher-student encounter is maintained. Looking for instances in which someone like Daito Kokushi needed to say "Hey, sanzen is private" is just not going to bear fruit. It was not something necessary to say. And the living traditions today that maintain these practices may be relied upon.

Astus wrote:

If keeping communication on one's koan practice is an important rule, and as once mentioned by Matylda its disregard could even result in expulsion from the temple, it seems logical to me that it is noted as such at least within the temple rules where all sorts of behavioural matters are regulated.

Meido said:

We might more fruitfully ask what compelling reason there could be to ignore such traditional prohibitions, that is, by what valid need those prohibitions are here outweighed.

Astus wrote:

I'm not saying it is not prohibited at some places, I just so far fail to see if there is actually a tradition of such a restriction or if it is more a modern phenomenon. As for whether one should keep to oneself one's experiences, that I see as a personal choice, although certainly there are many factors one may consider, especially the social context. For instance, a good number of koans are supposed to be conversations between teacher and student.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 13th, 2021 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Meido said:

at this point I've expressed as much as seems useful as well.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for doing so.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 13th, 2021 at 7:37 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Malcolm said:

Astus does not believe this, and thinks that reading things in books is sufficient.

Astus wrote:

Danyuan greatly esteemed Yangshan, and said to him, "Previously the National Teacher Huizhong received the transmission of a total of ninety-seven symbolic circles from the Sixth Ancestor. He in turn passed these to me, saying, 'Thirty years after I've died, a novice monk will come from the South who will greatly revive this teaching. When that time comes, pass the teaching on to him and don't let it end.' Today I transmit them to you. You must uphold and preserve them."

When he had finished speaking he passed the secret text to Yangshan. After receiving and examining the text, Yangshan burned it.

One day Danyuan said to Yangshan, "The symbols that I gave you are extremely rare, esoteric, and precious."

Yangshan said, "After I examined them I burned them."

Danyuan said, "This Dharma gate of ours can't be understood by most people. Only the Buddha, the ancestors, and all the holy ones can fully understand it. How could you burn it?"

Yangshan said, "After examining it, I fully comprehended its meaning. Then there was no use keeping the text."

Danyuan said, "Even so, when transmitting this to disciples, people of future times won't believe it."

Yangshan said, "If you would like another copy that won't be a problem. I'll make

another copy and give it to you. Then it won't be lost."

Danyuan said, "Please do."

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 186)

Many centuries later in Japan:

The Zen master Mu-nan had only one successor. His name was Shojū. After Shojū had completed his study of Zen, Mu-nan called him into his room.

"I am getting old," he said, "and as far as I know, Shojū, you are the only one who will carry on this teaching. Here is a book. It has been passed down from master to master for seven generations. I also have added many points according to my understanding. The book is very valuable, and I am giving it to you to represent your successorship."

"If the book is such an important thing, you had better keep it," Shojū replied. "I received your Zen without writing and am satisfied with it as it is."

"I know that," said Mu-nan.

"Even so, this work has been carried from master to master for seven generations, so you may keep it as a symbol of having received the teaching. Here."

The two happened to be talking before a brazier. The instant Shojū felt the book in his hands he thrust it into the flaming coals. He had no lust for possessions.

Mu-nan, who never had been angry before, yelled: "What are you doing!"

Shojū shouted back: "What are you saying!"

(Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, p 80-81)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 14th, 2021 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Malcolm said:

I don't see how these charming anecdotes relate to your previously stated position about the self sufficiency of autodidact Dharma.

Astus wrote:

Those stories illustrate the importance given to books, and to secret ones in particular (see Meido's explanation

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=593638#p593638> about shitsunai).

Both stories are about important ancestors: Yangshan was one of the founders of the Guiyang school known for its use of symbols; Shojū was the one whom Hakuin named as his primary teacher. Both stories allow the emergence of new traditions, where Yangshan and Hakuin are not required to possess old papers but are allowed (and even mandated for Yangshan) to present new ones.

As for an example of the sufficiency of autodidact Dharma that is relevant to this topic: Jinul introduced hwadu/koan practice to Korea based only on reading the works of Dahui.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 16th, 2021 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Matylda said:

Moreover talking about koans-dokusan, even talking about one's own practice is considered to be a serious breach of Jukai vows.

Astus wrote:

Which precept is it against?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 16th, 2021 at 11:18 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Malcolm said:

It's clearly just against the rules in Japanese Zen, according to Matylda and Meido, etc. It is probably considered idle speech.

Astus wrote:

In Japan they use the bodhisattva precepts of the Brahmajala Sutra. No idle speech included there.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 17th, 2021 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: How to figure out the solution to a koan

Content:

Matylda said:

第七不自讚毀他戒 no 7th

Astus wrote:

How praising oneself and disparaging others is sharing what happened during a sanzen/dokusan? Where is oneself praised in that? Where is someone else disparaged?

The Brahma's Net Sutra (BDK ed, p 46) teaches:

'My disciples, if with your own mouth you praise yourself and disparage others, or if you encourage people to praise themselves and disparage others, then you have the causes of disparagement of others, the conditions of disparagement of others, the method of disparagement of others, and the act of disparagement of others. On behalf of sentient beings, bodhisattvas should receive their blame and reflect on their own wrongdoings, and attribute good works to others. If you proclaim your own merits and cover up other people's good works, causing them to be disparaged, this constitutes a bodhisattva pārājika offense.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 26th, 2021 at 2:08 AM

Title: Re: What is not delusion

Content:

yinyangkoi said:

What is not delusion? Is there anything? Are the phenomena that happen every moment delusion? The sounds and smells and so on.

Astus wrote:

"The mind can be spoken of [in terms of its two aspects]: birth and death, and suchness. The mind as suchness is like a clear mirror which can reflect images. The mirror symbolizes the mind; the images symbolize the dharmas. If the mind grasps at dharmas, then it gets involved in external causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth and death. If the mind does not grasp at dharmas, that is suchness."

(The Record of Ma-tsu, in Sun-Face Buddha, p 67)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 28th, 2021 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: A Master in Zen

Content:

Ivan A said:

the practice of Buddhism as such is impossible without a teacher?

Astus wrote:

Not at all. If you have the intention to awakening (bodhicitta), that already puts you on the path to buddhahood, and the cultivation of the six paramitas is what any Mahayana follower does, no matter the tradition. Even if you eventually want to study under a Zen teacher, there is a lot you can do before, and it will also greatly benefit your Zen practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 29th, 2021 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: The attainment in chan according to ten bhumis standard

Content:

KeithA said:

There are no levels in Zen. Just delusion/enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

There are various levels used by various groups/teachers, including the standard 52 levels, and also levels used exclusively in Chan, like Dongshan's five ranks, or Seung Sahn's Zen circle.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 29th, 2021 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: The attainment in chan according to ten bhumis standard

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

The bhumis are not a framework that is recognized within Chan/Zen.

Astus wrote:

First of all, since it is taught in the sutras it is necessarily recognised and accepted. Furthermore, where gradual cultivation follows sudden awakening, the stages of cultivation are those of the 52 levels of bodhisattvas.

'Clearly remember: in the Buddhist patriarchs' learning of the truth, to awaken the bodhi-mind is inevitably seen as foremost. This is the eternal rule of the Buddhist patriarchs. "To awaken" means to be clear in; it does not refer to the great realization of the truth itself. Even those who have suddenly experienced the ten states are still bodhisattvas. The twenty-eight patriarchs of India, the six patriarchs of China, and all the other great ancestral masters are bodhisattvas: they are not buddhas; and they are not śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, or the like. Among practitioners of this age there is not one person who clearly knows that [these patriarchs] are bodhisattvas, not śrāvakas. [Practitioners of this age] just randomly call themselves patchrobed monks and patch-robed disciples without knowing the reality of the matter, and so they have created confusion. It is pitiful that in a decadent age the truth of the patriarchs has degenerated.' (Hotsu-bodaishin, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 3, p 354-355)

'As for "gradual cultivation," although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the buddhas, the beginningless proclivities of habit (vāsanā) are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Therefore he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening so that this efficacy of gradual suffusion is perfected; he constantly nurtures the embryo of sanctity, and after a long, long time he becomes a sage. Hence it is called gradual cultivation. It is like the maturation of an infant: from the day of its birth, [an infant] is endowed with all its faculties, just like any other [human being], but its physical capacities are not yet fully developed; it is only after the passage of many months and years that it will finally mature into an adult.' (Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 216-217)

'In Chinese Chan Buddhism, a sudden awakening means a sudden apprehension of a Buddha's perception of reality. ... Entering into a Buddha's perception of reality occurs when one reaches the level of a noble bodhisattva of the first ground or above, for only such a bodhisattva is able truly to eliminate ignorance bit by bit and attain enlightenment bit by bit. ...

We see that sudden awakening is just the beginning of the awareness regarding the underlying, essential principle of all dharmas, or buddhanature, and is not the same as becoming a Buddha. Gradual practice is the cultivation of merit through concrete actions. Only through accumulating merit through gradual practice can one actually become a Buddha: so "sudden awakening to principle but gradual practice with regard

to actions” is another way to clarify sudden and gradual. This explanation shows us what sudden awakening in Chan Buddhism means.

The interpretation above is based on interpretation of doctrine. Some Chan practitioners may disagree, and claim that the sudden awakening they speak of is simply sudden awakening, and is basically unrelated to any stages or gradual practice. In this conception, when a practitioner is suddenly awakened, she sees the fundamental, real nature of Suchness right then and there. To do this, however, is beyond the capability of most people.'
(Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p 126)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 29th, 2021 at 4:36 PM

Title: Re: The attainment in chan according to ten bhumis standard

Content:

Genjo Conan said:

Wonderful. What stage was Linji on? Or Huangbo? Could Dogen manifest simultaneously in one million Buddha realms, or just ten thousand? Do you have a citation for that?

Astus wrote:

For Linji such terms are empty names to use according to circumstances, for Huangbo gradual and sudden equally ends in buddhahood, and Dogen saw all realms in a blink of an eye.

'Followers of the Way, if you take my viewpoint you'll cut off the heads of the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya buddhas; a bodhisattva who has attained the completed mind of the tenth stage will be like a mere hireling; a bodhisattva of equivalent enlightenment or a bodhisattva of marvelous enlightenment will be like pilloried prisoners; an arhat and a pratyekabuddha will be like privy filth; bodhi and nirvana will be like hitching posts for asses. Why is this so? Followers of the Way, it is only because you haven't yet realized the emptiness of the three asaṃkhyeya kalpas that you have such obstacles.'

(Record of Linji, p 10, tr Sasaki)

'If someone comes and asks about seeking buddha, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of purity; if someone asks about bodhisattvahood, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of compassion; if someone asks me about bodhi, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of pure mystery; if someone asks me about nirvana, I immediately appear in conformity with the state of serene stillness. Though there be ten thousand different states, the person does not differ.'

(p 16)

'Followers of the Way, make no mistake! All the dharmas of this world and of the worlds beyond are without self-nature. Also, they are without produced nature. They are just empty names, and these names are also empty. All you are doing is taking these worthless names to be real. That's all wrong! Even if they do exist, they are nothing but

states of dependent transformation, such as the dependent transformations of bodhi, nirvana, emancipation, the threefold body, the [objective] surroundings and the [subjective] mind, bodhisattvahood, and buddhahood. What are you looking for in these lands of dependent transformations! All of these, up to and including the Three Vehicles' twelve divisions of teachings, are just so much waste paper to wipe off privy filth. The Buddha is just a phantom body, the patriarchs just old monks.'

(p 19)

'There are those who, on hearing the dharma, attain no-mind in a single moment of thought. But there are also those who attain no-mind after progressing through [the extended bodhisattva path, that is] the ten faiths, ten abodes, ten practices, and ten dedications; there are even those others who attain no-mind only after arriving at the ten stages (bhūmi) [the culmination of the bodhisattva path]. Whether long or short, if you achieve no-mind, then it will be right there; there is nothing more you need to practice or realize. In reality, there is nothing to attain — this is true, not false. Whether you attain it in a single moment of thought or only after mastering the ten stages, both approaches are equally effective. There is no distinction in their depth or shallowness; [prolonging practice] merely entails sequential kalpas of needless bitterness and hardship.'

(Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, ch 2)

"“Buddha lands” means the inside of the eyes. If, when we see and hear the words “illuminating the East,” we assume and learn that it is as if a line of white silk were extending to the East, that is not learning of the truth. The whole universe in ten directions is nothing other than “the East.” “The East” is called “the whole universe in ten directions.” On this basis the whole universe in ten directions exists. And the words by which it proclaims itself as the whole universe in ten directions, we hear as the sound of “the eighteen thousand buddha lands.”"

(Komyo, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 295)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 30th, 2021 at 8:20 PM

Title: Re: The attainment in chan according to ten bhumis standard

Content:

KeithA said:

Yes, expedient teachings and all.

Astus wrote:

All teachings are expedients with the primary goal of liberating beings.

Zen master Yangshan entered the hall and addressed the monks, saying: “Each and every one of you, turn the light inward! Don’t try to remember what I’m saying! For a beginningless eon you have faced away from the light and been shrouded in darkness. The roots of delusion are deep. They’re difficult to cut off and uproot. So [the Buddha] established expedient means to grab your attention. These are like showing yellow leaves to a crying child, who imagines they’re gold and thus stops crying. You act as

though you're in a shop where someone sells a hundred goods made from gold and jade, but you're trying to weigh each item. So you say that Shitou has a real gold shop? Well in my shop there's a wide range of goods! If someone comes looking for mouse turds then I give him some. If someone comes looking for real gold then I give it to him.”
(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 187)

KeithA said:

I don't feel it's an essential part of Zen practice, though.

Astus wrote:

It depends on the practitioner whether it's important or not. Eventually, even practice is non-essential.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 6th, 2021 at 2:52 PM

Title: Re: What are texts in the Agamas that are not in the Nikayas?

Content:

Padmist said:

And are there books in the Nikayas that are not in the Agamas?

Astus wrote:

You can look into the literature dealing with comparative studies, like Ven. Analayo's work on the <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/compstudyvol1.pdf>, or just browse <https://suttacentral.net/>.

Padmist said:

What do other Buddhists today (Tibetans/Theravadins) think of the books that are in the Agamas but aren't in their Canon?

Astus wrote:

Tibetans never had anything more than a dozen or so agama sutras available in their canon, and I guess they don't really miss the rest because of believing that the Abhidharmakosabhasya is representative of everything there is to know of Hinayana. Theravadins would generally say they have the complete and authentic canon, and those few people working with other sources, i.e. mainly Chinese, can have varying opinions. It is rather in East Asia (as the agamas are found in Chinese) that you can find people studying the agamas, like Ven. Yinshun.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 6th, 2021 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: The Noble Truths as Skillful Means

Content:

Astus wrote:

Trying to figure things out straight from old Chan texts is a particularly difficult task that requires a lot, simply because those works were mainly written in a milieu that was

already knowledgeable not just about Buddhist teachings but also Chinese literary culture. Learning from the writings of modern teachers like Ven. Shengyan is an easier approach, but then it should be noted that he relied not just on Chan texts but also the larger corpus of Buddhist scriptures, treatises, plus his own experience (important note: he was a monk who spent years in retreat and studied under various teachers).

Although there is said to be the direct way to realisation, but that simply does not work for most people, mainly because of all the attachment to ideas and emotions. So the initial steps are gradually building a correct understanding and a stable, calm mind. As long as one does not settle in some delusion about one's own correctness but continues to cultivate the factors of awakening there will be good results (diminishing of the unskilful qualities, growth of skilful qualities).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 17th, 2021 at 3:39 AM

Title: Re: words in Lotus sutra

Content:

Riju said:

There are a certain words in English translation of Lotus sutra by Burton Watson.

Discussion on them will help me a lot.

1. Tranquil extinction.
2. Voice hearers and Buddhas both end their journey at Nirvan.
- 3 One vehicle , not two nor three.

Astus wrote:

They look to me fine as translations. The second I could not find as a sentence.

tranquil extinction - 寂滅, another term for nirvana

Watson:

Or there are bodhisattvas
who expound the Law of tranquil extinction,
giving different types of instruction
to numberless living beings.

BTTS:

There are Bodhisattvas who
speak of still extinction's Dharma
with various instructions teaching
living beings without number.

Bunno Kato:

Moreover, there are bodhisattvas
Who preach the Law of tranquillity,

Teaching in various ways
The numberless living beings.

BDK:
There are also bodhisattvas
Who are teaching innumerable sentient beings
The Dharma of tranquility
In various ways.

或有菩薩，說寂滅法，種種教詔，無數眾生。

Watson:
All phenomena from the very first
have of themselves constantly borne the marks of tranquil extinction.

BDK:
Every existing thing from the very beginning
Has always had the mark of quiescence.

諸法從本來，常自寂滅相。

Law of the one vehicle, there are not two, there are not three - 一乘法，無二亦無三, a
basic theme of the Lotus Sutra

Watson:
In the Buddha lands of the ten directions
there is only the Law of the one vehicle,
there are not two, there are not three,
except when the Buddha preaches so as an expedient means,

BDK:
In the buddha worlds of the ten directions
There is only the Dharma of the single vehicle.
Apart from the skillful means of the buddhas,
There is neither a second nor a third [vehicle].

十方佛土中，唯有一乘法，無二亦無三。除佛方便說。

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 18th, 2021 at 2:13 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Rock & Metal

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifcFGuLek-M> - Japanese Buddhist rock song by The Namuzu / THE 南無ズ, a "Buddhist entertainment group" consisting of a monk, a funeral director, a Buddhist komuso, and a kimono girl. The theme is comedy, music, and

Buddhism.

The band's <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKgoRPEs0r01H3d7bwd19gg> and <https://namuzu.net/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 24th, 2021 at 2:02 PM

Title: Re: Reflections and conclusions

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen is not about reducing everything to silent sitting, that would be fairly meaningless, but rather all Zen schools and lineages are based on the whole of Buddhism and accept the Tripitaka as the true words of the perfectly awakened Buddha. From a Soto perspective look at this short text that is used as a summary of the teachings made up mainly of quotes from Dogen:

<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/sutra/pdf/03/c02.pdf>.

On the topic of taking refuge in the Three Jewels there is a complete chapter in the Shobogenzo titled Kie-sanbo in vol. 4 of BDK ed. p. 235ff.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 4th, 2021 at 6:09 PM

Title: Dependent Origination in One Sentence

Content:

Astus wrote:

When a mind (vijñāna) conditioned (saṃskāra) by ignorance (avidyā) conceives (nāmarūpa) an impression (sparśa) through the six senses (ṣaḍāyatana) that feels (vedanā) pleasant/unpleasant, then it craves (tṛṣṇā) for its continuation/discontinuation, attempts to keep (upādāna) and identify (bhava) with it, but with its birth (jāti) comes its decay and demise (jarāmaraṇa).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 7th, 2021 at 2:17 PM

Title: Re: Dependent Origination in One Sentence

Content:

Gregory Wonderwheel said:

I'd put it as "When consciousness (vijñana) is conditioned...." Mind (citta) is unconditioned, does not increase or decrease, is not born or annihilated, etc.

Astus wrote:

Changing the English word for vijñana is no problem as long as the meaning is clear. Just as the mind is unconditioned, so are everything else, as everything are ultimately unborn, i.e. insubstantial. But if you mean there is a special mind apart from other phenomena that is uniquely unconditioned, that would be a soul/self theory that contradicts the general doctrine of conditionality.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 7th, 2021 at 10:41 PM

Title: Re: Dependent Origination in One Sentence

Content:

Queequeg said:

I suspect you guys are comparing different descriptive formulations that use common vocabulary with different meanings.

Malcolm said:

We are talking about aggregates here. The Manovijnana includes all minds, citta, etc.

But at base I am right, as a quick perusal of the dhatu chapter of the Kosha will show.

Astus wrote:

Vasubandhu wrote:

'What is consciousness? It is awareness of an object. It is also [referred to as] thought and mind, because it is diverse and because mind serves as its support.' (Inner Science of Buddhist Practice, p 239)

vijñānaṃ katamat | ālambanaṃbijñaptiḥ | cittamanasī vijñānaparyāyau sanirvacano
taccitaṃ mano'pi citrikāratā manoniśrayatāṃ ca upādāya |

(<http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/334/1380>)

Xuanzang: 「云何識蘊？謂於所緣境了別為性。亦名心意，由採集故、意所攝故。」

(T31n1612p849c27-28)

Divākara: 「云何識蘊？謂於所緣了別為性。亦名心，能採集故。亦名意，意所攝故。」

(T31n1613p854b28-29)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 13th, 2021 at 2:57 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Hazel said:

I'm trying to make sense of how they fit into the Buddhist view of the mind.

Astus wrote:

I can't recall even meditation manuals discussing mental activities in such a format. I guess it could fall into general <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auddhatya>. When it comes to categorising mental factors the basic distinction that should be kept in mind are skilful (kuśala) and unskilful (akuśala), then the rest can be taken care of (e.g. MN 19, MN 117).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 13th, 2021 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Rick said:

Wouldn't a study of the skandhas, particularly sankhara and vijnana, address the mental objects Hazel is describing?

Astus wrote:

If by study you mean abhidharma literature, based on the dharmas enumerated in them I doubt it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 15th, 2021 at 3:29 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

Anguttara Nikaya, Ekaka-nipata, XVI Ekadhammapali, 3.Tatiyavagga:

320. Bhikkhus, just as a little bit of excreta smells and should be got rid of, I do not specify thinking even for the fraction of a second.

Astus wrote:

'I do not specify thinking' is at least a misleading translation of AN 1.328 by <http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/4Anguttara-Nikaya/Anguttara1/1-ekaniyata/016-Ekadhammapali-e.html>.

Bodhi (p 121): 'I do not praise even a trifling amount of existence'

<https://suttacentral.net/an1.316-332/en/sujato>: 'I don't approve of even a tiny bit of continued existence'

https://www.dhammadata.org/suttas/AN/AN1_329.html: 'I don't praise even a tiny amount of becoming'

[https://obo.genaud.net/dhamma-vinaya/bd/an/01_ones/an01.296-](https://obo.genaud.net/dhamma-vinaya/bd/an/01_ones/an01.296-393.olds.bd.htm#p328)

393.olds.bd.htm#p328: 'I do not recommend living, even if for only so short a time'

[https://obo.genaud.net/dhamma-vinaya/bd/an/01_ones/an01.296-](https://obo.genaud.net/dhamma-vinaya/bd/an/01_ones/an01.296-393.olds.bd.htm#p328)

393.olds.bd.htm#p328: 'so likewise do I not favour becoming even for a trifling time'

See also discussions on that passage <https://bswa.org/forum/forum/discussion/sutta-vinaya-and-pali/1352-translation-of-a-passage-in-an-1-18> and

<https://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?t=19997>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 15th, 2021 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

How can you get beyond becoming? Please tell me. What is left when you are beyond becoming, or beyond living? Death?

Astus wrote:

The ending of becoming (bhavanirodha) is exactly the goal of Buddhism.

'When a noble disciple has thus understood being, the origin of being, the cessation of being, and the way leading to the cessation of being...he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view...and has arrived at this true Dhamma.'

(MN 9.31 (p 137))

The cessation of becoming should not be confused with non-existence (vibhava), that is, the belief that an existing self becomes non-existent (see Iti 49), still, that is called the best outsider view (AN 10.29). What bhavanirodha means is nirvana in this life (AN 10.7), and even if one has doubts one should choose that as the right view:

'Now as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is no cessation of being," if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception. But as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is a cessation of being," if their word is true then it is possible that I might here and now attain final Nibbāna. The view of those good recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is no cessation of being" is close to lust, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging; but the view of those good recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is cessation of being" is close to non-lust, close to non-bondage, close to nondelighting, close to non-holding, close to non-clinging.' After reflecting thus, he practises the way to disenchantment with being, to the fading away and cessation of being.'

(MN 60.34 (p 517))

What should be recognised is that a being (satta) exists as craving and clinging (SN 23.2), and becoming is about deluded identification that is an outflow/defilement (āśava).

'How can one be certain here and now that this existence has ceased? This might sometimes appear as a big puzzle. But all the same, the arahant experiences the cessation of existence as a realization. That is why he even gives expression to it as: Bhavanirodho Nibbānaṃ, "cessation of existence is Nibbāna".

It comes about by this extinction of influxes. The very existence of 'existence' is especially due to the flowing in of influxes of existence. What is called 'existence' is not the apparent process of existing visible to others. It is something that pertains to one's own mental continuum.

For instance, when it is said that some person is in the world of sense desires, one might sometimes imagine it as living surrounded by objects of sense pleasure. But that is not always the case. It is the existence in a world of sense desires, built up by sensuous thoughts. It is the same with the realms of form and formless realms. Even those realms can be experienced and attained while living in this world itself.

Similarly, it is possible for one to realize the complete cessation of this existence while living in this very world. It is accomplished by winning to the realization that the influxes of sense desires, existence, and ignorance, no longer influence one's mind.'
(https://seeingthroughthenet.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Mind-Stilled_HTML.htm#Mindstilled05, by Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda)

Aemilius said:

Beyond thinking there are the higher dhyanas. And they are accessible for at least some people.

Astus wrote:

However, bhava does not mean thinking.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 17th, 2021 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: Theravadin Looking to Learn

Content:

friarzero said:

I just want a primer or intro to better understand these ideas and where they fit into Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

This series of articles is a great source:

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/index.htm>

Ven. Sheng-yen's http://www.108wisdom.org/html/OTH_03.pdf covers many topics by answering common questions. There are also <https://www.shengyen.org/eng/free-book-for-download.html> available online.

Ven. Hsing Yun's

<https://archive.org/details/TheCoreTeachingsBuddhismMasterHsingYun/page/n9/mode/2up> is another good summary. And there are <https://www.fgsitc.org/booklets/> covering a wide variety of topics.

Thich Nhat Hanh's <https://plumvillage.org/books/the-heart-of-the-buddhas-teaching/> is a wonderful introduction too.

The <https://www.namsebangdzo.com/Three-Vehicles-of-Buddhist-Practice-p/5920.htm> by Thrangu Rinpoche is a short and practical overview.

<https://www.shambhala.com/daring-steps-2199.html> by Ringu Tulku is also recommended.

<https://www.routledge.com/Buddhist-Thought-A-Complete-Introduction-to-the-Indian-Tradition/Williams-Tribe-Wynne/p/book/9780415571791> by Paul Williams, Anthony Tribe, and Alexander Wynne has some fine chapters on Mahayana.

And for a philosophical approach see

<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198732662.001.0001/oso-9780198732662> by Jan Westerhoff.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 19th, 2021 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: "Bodhisattva Gaia" and "Vairocana Sun"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Apparently "Bodhisattva Gaia" in Chinese is Qīngliángdì púsà 清涼地菩薩 (see

[https://plumvillage.org/zh-](https://plumvillage.org/zh-hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E4%B8%8A%E9%A6%99%E7%BC%8C%E7%A6%AE%E6%95%AC%E4%BD%9B%E8%8F%A9%E8%96%A9/)

[hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E8%AE%9A%E9%A0%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%9C%B0%E6%AF%8D%E8%A6%AA/](https://plumvillage.org/zh-hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E8%AE%9A%E9%A0%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%9C%B0%E6%AF%8D%E8%A6%AA/)). Qīngliángdì púsà 清涼地菩薩 (means something like

[https://plumvillage.org/zh-](https://plumvillage.org/zh-hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E8%AE%9A%E9%A0%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%9C%B0%E6%AF%8D%E8%A6%AA/)

[hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E8%AE%9A%E9%A0%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%9C%B0%E6%AF%8D%E8%A6%AA/](https://plumvillage.org/zh-hant/%E6%96%87%E7%AB%A0%E8%AE%9A%E9%A0%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%9C%B0%E6%AF%8D%E8%A6%AA/)). Qīngliángdì púsà 清涼地菩薩 (means something like

"Cool Earth Bodhisattva") occurs in some common ceremonial texts (e.g. "Pure and Cool Land Bodhisattva-Mahasattva" on p 67 [https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-](https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E7%B6%93%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E9%9D%88%E5%89%8D%E5%9B%9E%E5%90%91-%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87.pdf)

[https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-](https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E7%B6%93%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E9%9D%88%E5%89%8D%E5%9B%9E%E5%90%91-%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87.pdf)

[https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-](https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E7%B6%93%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E9%9D%88%E5%89%8D%E5%9B%9E%E5%90%91-%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87.pdf)

[https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-](https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E7%B6%93%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E9%9D%88%E5%89%8D%E5%9B%9E%E5%90%91-%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87.pdf)

[https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-](https://www.houstonbuddhism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200524-%E9%87%91%E5%89%9B%E7%B6%93%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E9%9D%88%E5%89%8D%E5%9B%9E%E5%90%91-%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 20th, 2021 at 3:49 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

"The ending of bhava or becoming" creates a misleading image.

Astus wrote:

What is that misleading image? The ending of the whole cycle of birth and death is liberation. With the cessation of becoming, or any other of the other eleven elements of the twelvefold chain, there is freedom (see e.g. MMK 26.12). When the five aggregates are realised to be empty, that is, without self and what belongs to a self, then there is no longer any becoming of a self. Then it can be rightly stated that "There is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death".

Aemilius said:

If you consider that all teachings (sutras etc) are precepts or practice instructions, then the instruction of "casting away bhava" must refer to something that one actually experiences. The only plausible explanation is the thoughts and volitions about the present and future. This kind of instruction is found in the Mahamudra, where it is said that one should cease thinking or even cut off thoughts of past, present and future.

Astus wrote:

There is no such instruction to "cast away bhava". Becoming comes to an end through proper cultivation, and correct practice depends on correct knowledge of the teachings. Thinking of the three times may be suspended for a short while, but only when their insubstantiality is seen can they cease to be an issue (see e.g. Mahamudra: the Moonlight, 2.5.3.1, p 244).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 20th, 2021 at 7:23 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

Nagarjuna (or some other liberated person) who says this perceivably exists. That is why it is misleading.

Nagarjuna, Shakyamuni, Bodhidharma and others became old, therefore the becoming de facto continued.

In a sutra Shakyamuni says, in the last part of his life, that his body is old and worn out like an old and many times repaired chariot. Did becoming really end?

Astus wrote:

To assume existence is the ignorance about the nature of things that perpetuates becoming. With awakening there is no one to label as existent or non-existent, and that is the end of life and death. See e.g.: MN 72, SN 22.85-86, MMK 22.

‘Reverend Ānanda, the tathāgatas have the body of the Dharma—not a body that is sustained by material food. The tathāgatas have a transcendental body that has transcended all mundane qualities. There is no injury to the body of a tathāgata, as it is rid of all defilements. The body of a tathāgata is uncompounded and free of all formative activity. Reverend Ānanda, to believe there can be illness in such a body is irrational and unseemly!’

(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-149>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 3:24 AM

Title: Re: Is there a bodhisattva that particularly helps animals?

Content:

Meido said:

Bato Kannon [馬頭觀音]

Astus wrote:

Side note, <https://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/kannon.shtml#batou> is identified with https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayagriva_%28Buddhism%29, and of the <https://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/kannon.shtml#sixkannon> originally in the Mohezhiguan it is a different incarnation.

'The Fearless Lion-like Avalokiteśvara 師子無畏觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of beasts. The king of beasts is majestic and fierce [and can thus face the untamed ferociousness of beasts] - therefore it is appropriate to apply fearlessness.' (Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight, vol 1, p 341; T46n1911p15b4-5)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 5:11 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

The world of becoming also exists from moment to moment. Shakyamuni and other enlightened persons were, and are, part of it.

Astus wrote:

The becoming of what/who? Do you take Shakyamuni to be the rupaskandha, or the owner of the rupaskandha? If so, isn't that exactly the assumption of a self? If not, then what is becoming?

Aemilius said:

Later in his life Shakyamuni walked from place to place, for example on his last teaching tour, consumed food and drink, used beds, and used medicine (at least a couple of times, if I right remember, and had for example indigestion).

Astus wrote:

"Subhūti, if someone says that the Tathāgata ('Thus-come One') comes, goes, sits, or lies down, this person does not understand the point of my teaching. Why? The Thus-come One has no place from whence he comes, and no place to go. Therefore he is called 'Thus-come.'"

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-30)

Aemilius said:

Shakyamuni and Devadatta could both be found and pointed out, like "this is Shakyamuni" and "that is Devadatta". This means they had distinct identities.

Astus wrote:

"Someone who has given up conceit has no ties, the ties of conceit are all cleared away. Though that clever person has transcended identity, they'd still say, 'I speak', and also 'they speak to me'. Skillful, understanding the world's conventions, they'd use these

terms as no more than expressions.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn1.25/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Then you have no thought? Because a thought is a becoming.

Astus wrote:

A thought is a becoming when it is taken as "my thought" or "I am thinking this thought".
The Buddha stated of himself:

'He thinks what is to be thought, but does not identify with what is thought, does not identify with what is not thought, does not identify with what is to be thought, and does not identify with a thinker. '

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.24/en/sujato>, cf. MN 1)

And as presented in Chan:

'What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharma's, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the "six dusts"), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 33)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 10:08 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

I don't see how having the view not identifying with thoughts take care of karma unless you are always meditating.

Astus wrote:

Liberation is not limited to meditation. Of course, if one is not liberated, then there is also becoming.

LastLegend said:

Also when not identifying, how do you know that's not becoming if you agree becoming is another the word for movement or arising?

Astus wrote:

Becoming is not the same as movement. See

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=603720#p603720>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

So then you say it's not cessation of the five aggregates rather not identifying with self?

Cessation or not identifying with thoughts. Which one? If whatever slightest arises is

still self because you know that...which means identifying then that's not true cessation.

Astus wrote:

It's not phenomena themselves that cause suffering, it's grasping at them and

identifying with them. Cessation of becoming means ending attachment, ending

concocting a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2021 at 2:49 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

How can we go beyond dual of grasping and identifying versus not grasping and identifying?

Astus wrote:

As long as there is the assumption of a being who can grasp or not grasp, there is duality of self and other. To recognise that all assumptions are conditioned thoughts is one way to go beyond.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2021 at 2:33 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

It's still going in circle...even when at calmest and empty, there is still a sense of being.

Even you sense there is no being, that's still being.

Astus wrote:

No matter what one senses or what it's perceived as, just as they arise according to conditions so do they pass quite rapidly. But unless one pays close attention, feelings can seem constant and personal.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2021 at 7:01 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

Why was Shakyamuni upset when some of his followers had flocked to the congregation of Devadatta, if "Devadatta" is a mere expression without basis?

Astus wrote:

Why do you say the Buddha was upset? Do you think he failed in patience, was driven by the eight worldly concerns, and has not removed completely the three poisons?

'Subhūti, in a former lifetime my body was cut into pieces by the Rājah Kalinga. At that time, I was not abiding in the notions of self, person, sentient being, or life span. And why not? If, at the time my body was cut into pieces, I had been holding to the notions of self, person, sentient being, or life span, I would have felt ill-will [toward Kalinga]. Subhūti, I also remember some five hundred lifetimes ago having practiced forbearance as a renunciant sage. At that time I was also free from the notions of self, person, sentient being, and life. Therefore, Subhūti, the bodhisattvas should free themselves from all notions and arouse the aspiration for peerless perfect enlightenment. They should not arouse this aspiration while abiding in form, and they should not arouse this aspiration while abiding in sound, odor, taste, touch, or conceptualization. They should give rise to the aspiration that has no abode. If the mind abides, then this is not abiding.' (http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-15)

Aemilius said:

It does not really change anything, banks are still banks and money is still money, even if they are mere words and worldly conventions. Economists know that "money" is a convention or a contract, and yet everything functions as if money was a real existent. That is the nature of things.

Astus wrote:

"Even if we know that all is like illusion,
How," you ask, "will this dispel afflictive passion?
Magicians may indeed themselves desire
The mirage-women they themselves create."
The reason is they have not rid themselves
Of habits of desiring objects of perception;
And when they gaze upon such things,
Their aptitude for emptiness is weak indeed.
By training in this aptitude for emptiness,
The habit to perceive real things will be relinquished.
By training in the thought "There isn't anything,"
This view itself will also be abandoned.'
(Bodhicaryavatara 9.30-32, tr Padmakara)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 22nd, 2021 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Lankavatara Sutra said non-arising means everything extinguished in Samadhi. Non-arising = Samadhi. Even the 'seeing' is extinguished. Then when not in Samadhi, everything functions just as it is. The reason why it needs to be extinguished is because karma will continue to cloud our mind.

Astus wrote:

Karma and suffering does not come from phenomena but from ignorant craving and clinging. If it were things themselves that caused suffering, then no liberation would be possible.

'Reverend Kōṭṭhita, the eye is not the fetter of sights, nor are sights the fetter of the eye. The fetter there is the desire and greed that arises from the pair of them. The ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is not the fetter of thoughts, nor are thoughts the fetter of the mind. The fetter there is the desire and greed that arises from the pair of them.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.232/en/sujato>)

'Q: What does "to perceive without perceiving any object whatsoever" mean?

A: Perceiving all sorts of things without grasping -- that is, not being clouded by the arising of any thought of love or hate, etc. -- is perceiving without any objects. If one can see without seeing any object whatsoever, that is using the Buddha-Eye, which is like no other eye. On the other hand, if one sees all sorts of things that cause thoughts of love and hate, etc., to arise, that is known as "perceiving objects" with ordinary eyes, and sentient beings have no other kind of eyes. This is true, likewise, with all of the other sense organs.'

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 23rd, 2021 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Non-arising is unborn mind. Non-arising of mental appearance, and mental appearance is what we can ('see', feel, sense, etc) specifically because appearance is what appears what comes to being, including the 'seeing' is appearance of being. That's what born. Mahaprajnaparamita Sutras say Buddha nature is non-appearance (which refers to the non-characteristics, specifically of mental appearance including all aggregates their functions).

Astus wrote:

Eliminating appearances is not the correct way.

“Master Gotama, it’s when the eye sees no sight and the ear hears no sound. That’s how Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the development of the faculties.”

“In that case, Uttara, a blind person and a deaf person will have developed faculties according to what Pārāsariya says. For a blind person sees no sight with the eye and a deaf person hears no sound with the ear.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn152/en/sujato>)

'there are deluded people who empty their minds and sit in quietude without thinking of anything whatsoever, claiming that this is great.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 29)

Rather, as Huineng taught:

'Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 23rd, 2021 at 3:43 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

...in direct traditions you recognize spontaneous nature and that’s the king.

Astus wrote:

All things are conditioned. What do you call spontaneous?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 3:03 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Aemilius said:

You are confusing real and basic needs with endless desires. Therefore banks are still banks and money is still money. On the gut level: do you use money, pay the rent and buy goods yourself? Or are they just "empty" for you?

Astus wrote:

Emptiness is not a negation or denial of conventional reality, rather the understanding that they are merely conventional designations.

'The Inquiry of Ugra also says, “By correctly giving wealth to sons, wives, male and female servants, employees, and hired laborers.” In this way, whether you have renounced possessions or not, they will not create obstacles to the study and other

practices that are conducive to the Awakening of yourself and others. And if renouncing, or not renouncing, would create obstacles to the achievement of an equal or greater good by a bodhisattva of greater power to help sentient beings, or equal power, you should not do it.'

(The Training Anthology of Santideva, ch 7, p 139)

'Renunciation is born when you know that there is ultimately no satisfaction in samsaric life. Since ordinary joys are short-lived dreams, there is no reason to long for success or to fear failure. If you happen to grow rich, there is no reason to feel attached or proud; simply use your wealth positively and meaningfully. Whatever power you gain, use it to serve the Three Jewels and the great teachers, and whatever land you own, make it available for the benefit of the sangha; in short, whatever you acquire, use it to preserve the Dharma and to benefit others. Used in this way, your dreamlike wealth and influence will bring you more and more dreamlike merit, which in turn will bring you closer and closer to the threshold of dreamlike enlightenment.'

(The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones, p 102)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 3:10 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

If you examine your mind, you would need to what are thoughts, and what arises before thoughts, and what spontaneous knows before all of that happen.

Astus wrote:

Mind is what is aware of something. If there is nothing to be aware of, there is no mind to talk of either.

'If the hearing consciousness is permanent,
It follows that it's hearing all the time.
And if there is no object, what does it cognize?
On what grounds do you call it consciousness?
If something that's unconscious knows,
It follows that a stick has knowledge also.
Therefore in the absence of a thing to know,
It's clear that consciousness will not arise.'
(Bodhicaryavatara 9.60-61, tr Padmakara)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 5:19 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Then when consciousness arises, does it have any appearance characteristics?

Astus wrote:

'Then the Buddha said to the mendicants, "Mendicants, do you understand my teachings as Sāti does, when he misrepresents me by his wrong grasp, harms himself, and makes much bad karma?"

"No, sir. For in many ways the Buddha has told us that consciousness is dependently originated, since without a cause, consciousness does not come to be."

"Good, good, mendicants! It's good that you understand my teaching like this. For in many ways I have told you that consciousness is dependently originated, since without a cause, consciousness does not come to be. But still this Sāti misrepresents me by his wrong grasp, harms himself, and makes much bad karma. This will be for his lasting harm and suffering.

Consciousness is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it arises. Consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and sights is reckoned as eye consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the ear and sounds is reckoned as ear consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the nose and smells is reckoned as nose consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the tongue and tastes is reckoned as tongue consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the body and touches is reckoned as body consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the mind and thoughts is reckoned as mind consciousness.

It's like fire, which is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it burns. A fire that burns dependent on logs is reckoned as a log fire. A fire that burns dependent on twigs is reckoned as a twig fire. A fire that burns dependent on grass is reckoned as a grass fire. A fire that burns dependent on cow-dung is reckoned as a cow-dung fire. A fire that burns dependent on husks is reckoned as a husk fire. A fire that burns dependent on rubbish is reckoned as a rubbish fire.

In the same way, consciousness is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it arises."

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

LastLegend said:

Before consciousness arise, what is there?

Astus wrote:

'consciousness exists dependent on a duality. And what is that duality? Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. ... Ear consciousness ... Nose consciousness ... Tongue consciousness ... Body consciousness ... Mind consciousness arises dependent on the mind and thoughts.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.93/en/sujato>)

See also from a commentary to MMK ch 9:

'The one who sees form cannot exist before - that is, independent of - the experience of seeing the form, for if she did, it would absurdly follow that she would always see that form. The reason for this is that if an individual is called a "seer of form," it is obviously because she actually sees some form, and thus if the seer of form existed independent

of the experience of seeing it, the self who was called the seer of form would always see the form in order to earn that name. The same would be true with the other objects of the senses and the ones who experience them-if the experiencer existed before the experience itself, it would follow that the experiencer would always have that experience.'

(The Sun of Wisdom, p 60)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 2:46 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Would you say Buddha nature is only the object of consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Buddha nature is a concept, and whatever is not an object of consciousness is unknown. Assuming something beyond awareness is itself a conjecture formed in the mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

What is grasping?

Astus wrote:

'There are these four kinds of grasping. Grasping at sensual pleasures, views, precepts and observances, and theories of a self. Grasping originates from craving. Grasping ceases when craving ceases. The practice that leads to the cessation of grasping is simply this noble eightfold path'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn9/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 24th, 2021 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddha nature itself is a quality that all beings have the potential to realize. It was there even before anyone had any concept of it.

Astus wrote:

What is that quality? Is it a quality of the aggregates or not? If it is of the aggregates, it is just as impermanent and empty as they are. If it is not a quality of the aggregates, what

would it have to do with beings?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 25th, 2021 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Since you said Buddha nature is a concept, so then what is grasping itself? Or how does it work in mind?

Astus wrote:

If you're looking for more in depth explanations, you can start with the Abhidharmakosabhasya for instance.

'Craving ("thirst") (tṛṣṇā) is the state [of the five aggregates] of those who desire enjoyments and sexual union. Grasping (upādāna) is to be distinguished [from craving]: it is the state [of the five aggregates] of those who run around in search of the enjoyments.'

(AKB 3.23, tr Gelong Lodrö Sangpo, for more see 5.38-40)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 25th, 2021 at 4:23 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's a potential.

The potential to become fully awakened.

A potential isn't made or not made of aggregates.

Astus wrote:

A potential is not a quality but a hypothesised event, and although beings have a higher likelihood of becoming hell-dwellers than buddhas, I don't see much talk of our hellish nature. Also, imagining a future possibility is very much conceptual.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 25th, 2021 at 2:15 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

When conditions are such that the allergic person eats strawberries, and has a reaction, yes, that is an event, as is one's moment of realization.

Astus wrote:

If so, then what has the potential to react in a certain way to specific conditions? If it's

not the aggregates nor something other, then what sort of conditions could exist in such an unspecified realm?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Tathagatagarba is always there, just as the Sun is always giving off heat and light.

Astus wrote:

Always where exactly? In the body, the mind, or both?

PadmaVonSamba said:

“Buddha” is already the mind’s original state, it’s original nature.

Astus wrote:

If by mind you mean its conventional version that is equivalent to the soul/self, then it being a mere concept without any actual referent, looking for the original nature of something fictional seems futile. Or if by mind you mean the six consciousnesses or the four mental aggregates, then they are quite temporary and it sounds difficult to put the idea of 'original nature' on them. The third version might be is how the two truths are used, in which case mind is the conventional idea of a continuous entity and its original nature is the ultimate reality of it being momentary and impersonal.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But it is our habitual grasping and other negative actions of body, speech, and mind which make us unable to realize the Buddha-mind.

Astus wrote:

Seems to fit the third version.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddha-mind isn’t conditional; our realization of it is conditional.

Astus wrote:

Although there can be various unconditioned dharmas depending on the system one prefers, they all agree in calling only 'non-things' as unconditioned, like various forms of cessation.

PadmaVonSamba said:

My understanding is that the way to resolve it is to examine the true nature of the obscurations. We have to determine if all those clouds have any substance to them or not. And that’s where understanding emptiness comes in.

So, we observe thoughts that arise during meditation, and we see they have no substance. We examine conflicting thoughts and emotions such as anger or impatience

when they arise during the day (“off the cushion”) and determine that they are in fact, nothing. They have no substance.

Gradually, we stop giving rise to the obscuring clouds altogether. Then the mind’s true nature and the potential for full realization become clear.

Astus wrote:

That is the standard method in Buddhism, with or without the concept of buddha-nature. One has to purify the mind, so to say. But whether one believes that it is already pure but still needs some cleaning, or that it simply needs some cleaning, if approached properly, makes no difference in the end. Still, believing that one is already a buddha can help sometimes.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

One’s mind would need to be very quiet to recognize Buddha nature...

Astus wrote:

What sort of buddha dislikes noise?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 at 6:52 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

All beings possess the potential to eventually realize the mind’s true nature.

Astus wrote:

All beings also have the potential for many other things.

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=604998#p604998> you stated that buddha nature was a quality that beings can realise. If it is not an already existent quality but rather just the possibility to become a buddha sometime in the future, then it is currently nothing more than a concept of future buddhahood, just as a burning paper remains an idea until it is actually set afire.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Mind isn’t a continuous entity.

It’s a continual process.

Astus wrote:

A continuity is a conventional view nevertheless.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

When someone refers to Buddha nature as a concept, there are two possible situations:

1) they don't believe in Buddha nature and haven't recognized it 2) If Buddha nature is a concept, what isn't a concept? Everything else is a concept. Are aggregates concepts too? Because they still have a name. Now if you want to blow everything out of the pool why leave anything in it? If everything isn't real so is grasping, then the question is if everything is blown out of the pool how is mind at this point? Is it not empty.

Astus wrote:

Can you specify what buddha nature is in beings (five aggregates)? If not, what else is it but a mere fabrication, a simple expression?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 3:35 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

You are regarding an inherent quality and something to be realized as two mutually exclusive things.

Astus wrote:

Not at all. Impermanence is a quality of the aggregates that is not realised by common beings. But when I asked you to tell what quality buddha nature was in beings, you <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=605059#p605059> it's a potential and as such it couldn't be defined in relation to the five aggregates.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The point is, all beings have the potential to realize the inherent quality (Buddha-mind) that they already possess, but don't yet realize. That's why realization is something you attain, and not obtain.

Astus wrote:

What is that inherent quality in beings that they can potentially attain? For instance, is it emptiness?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 3:41 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

When you finely see that which sees or knows, and realize it's not anything either. Yet it's

functions it knows, quite clearly it knows that means you are touching pure consciousness.

Astus wrote:

There is no knower/seer (i.e. self) to be found, but to say that what cannot be found (i.e. does not exist) can nevertheless function is like saying that the daughter of a barren woman is a good singer. Consciousness of any type is a conditioned phenomenon, as <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=604890#p604890>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 5:09 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Malcolm said:

Well, actually the I-making habit, the basic knowledge obscuration, has no real existence as a self, but it functions as an agent of karma and a recipient of karma, so there is that, even though the "I" it imputes does not exist at all.

Astus wrote:

While in some contexts calling self-view the subject of karma may go well, but it is not an imagined self that causes or experiences anything, rather the mistaken view is what defines intention and action and experiences are generated by them.

As this nice stanza from the Visuddhimagga (XIX.20) says it:

'There is no doer of a deed
Or one who reaps the deed's result;
Phenomena alone flow on—
No other view than this is right.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 6:57 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddha nature, the mind's original unborn state free of craving, is inherent in all beings. All beings possess the potential to eventually realize it. Another word for potential is possibility.

Astus wrote:

So, if I understand you correctly, it is 'the mind's original unborn state free of craving' that you call buddha nature, in other words that the mind is empty and pure.

PadmaVonSamba said:

What is that inherent quality?

If you ask a Theravadin, it's the possibility of attaining nibbana. If you ask a Mahayana Buddhist, it's the possibility of becoming a Bodhisattva and/or attaining the omniscient state of buddhahood. A Pure-Land Buddhist will tell you it's the possibility to be reborn in Sukhavati. It all basically boils down to one way or another becoming free from the cycle of samsara.

Astus wrote:

But here you say that the inherent quality that can be potentially realised is the possibility of realisation. That seems to disagree with the statement above on original purity, and at the same time makes the strange claim that one can realise that one can realise something, like saying that the qualities of a Dharma teacher is the possibility to know the possibility that one can become a Dharma teacher. That is not saying what a Dharma teacher is like.

Is buddha nature then original purity of the mind that can be realised, or is it a possibility that can be realised? Or do you mean perhaps that the mind is not originally pure, only potentially it can become pure?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

To say you don't function is to say you are not sentient basically like a rock.

Astus wrote:

However, it matters whether you attribute function to some sort of unconditioned self/mind, or conditional phenomena, because what is unconditioned cannot function.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, it is an imagined, nonexistent self that causes and experiences everything, for example, when a car is in accident, it is the imagined car for which one pays the damages, not the wrong view of the imagined car. But perhaps this is a special point of Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka, unlikely to be found the Visuddhimagga.

Astus wrote:

In one manner of speaking it can be said so that it's the self/car that acts or is damaged, but at the same time, any type of self-view is imputed in dependence on the aggregates (according to Candrakīrti too: MA 6.150 and 6.162-164), just as a car is imputed in dependence on its parts. And just as if the windshield is broken then saying 'the car is damaged' is talking in general terms, similarly, whatever actions and results occur are

the causal events of the aggregates, even if commonly it can be said to be that of a self or being.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 3:04 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddha-nature is what all beings possess.

They also possess the potential to realize that Buddha nature.

Astus wrote:

Labelling the emptiness of the aggregates buddha nature can be inspirational (as it's supposed to be according to

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1125&mid=1944007>), but other than that it literally does not stand for anything, so how could it be more than a concept?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I don't know who labels the emptiness of the aggregates Buddha-nature. Maybe you are mixing a bunch of different stuff together.

Astus wrote:

Didn't you agree <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=605487#p605487> that "it is 'the mind's original unborn state free of craving' that you call buddha nature, in other words that the mind is empty and pure"?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

The reason why Buddha nature is concealed it's because of aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Do you have any source for that? Also, if the aggregates conceal buddha nature, that means buddha nature is not just without a body, it is also without consciousness and all mental functions. What good is buddha nature for that is practically less useful than a piece of rock?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But what I'm saying is that Buddha-nature, or unborn mind, tathagatagarbha, Buddha mind, etc. Are all terms that refer to mind's original state. That original state itself isn't a concept. Yes, you can have concepts about it, labels for it, but the mind's original state is just that.

Astus wrote:

The mind is the four mental aggregates, so the mind's nature is the nature of the mental aggregates, in other words, what they are like in general, what their characteristics are. Unborn is a synonym for the characteristic of emptiness, therefore buddha nature refers to the aggregates being empty, i.e. insubstantial, not self. To name the absence of self-nature as buddha nature is a skilful means, but just as emptiness is not a thing, not even in conventional terms, buddha nature, being a sort of rebranding of emptiness, is merely a concept without any actual referent.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 8:45 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

Buddha nature is referred to as aware nature in Bodhidharma's blood stream sermon. Aware nature is not aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Looking for something outside this body and mind is a mistake.

'Our mortal nature is our buddhanature. Beyond this nature there's no buddha.'
(Bloodstream Sermon, p 17, tr Red Pine; X63n1218p2c20-21)

The only difference to consider is whether there is or is not any attachment.

'Your mind is basically empty. All appearances are illusions. Don't hold on to appearances. ... If you seek direct understanding, don't hold on to any appearance whatsoever, and you'll succeed. I have no other advice. The sutras say, "All appearances are illusions." They have no fixed existence, no constant form. They're impermanent. Don't cling to appearances and you'll be of one mind with the Buddha.'
(p 27; p3c10-14)

See also the final paragraphs from 'But this mind isn't somewhere outside the material body of four elements.' until 'But once you know that the nature of anger and joy is

empty and you let them go, you free yourself from karma.' (p 43-45; p5a8-a22)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 28th, 2021 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

That inherent ability is synonymous with original mind. Inherent means that beings don't have to acquire it from anywhere.

Astus wrote:

If you call buddha nature the ability to realise buddha nature that would mean the ability to realise the ability, which seems as senseless as saying that seeing means seeing the seeing, or that eating means eating the eating. If you were to say that buddha nature is both emptiness and the ability to realise emptiness, maybe better, but then there's still the question of what that ability consists of, and why it's a special point to consider.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Without tathagatagarba, if the mind's original nature wasn't already buddha-mind, there would be no way to return to that, no way to liberation. Beings would simply wallow in appearances (and most do) with no basis for doing otherwise.

Astus wrote:

The doctrine of buddha mind is not universal among all Buddhist schools, and its interpretation also varies, so it's hard to say why it's necessary to posit it when others can do just fine without it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 29th, 2021 at 3:37 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Our mortal nature is our buddhanature. Beyond this nature there's no buddha.'
(Bloodstream Sermon, p 17, tr Red Pine; X63n1218p2c20-21)

PadmaVonSamba said:

What Bodhidharma is saying (that's a really great book, btw!) is that realization can be had, here and now, in this body.

Astus wrote:

What do you base that interpretation on? It's a recurring topic in that text and in Chan in general that 'this mind is buddha' (即心是佛 / 心即是佛).

'The mind is the buddha, and the buddha is the mind. Beyond the mind there's no buddha, and beyond the buddha there's no mind.'
(Bloodstream Sermon, tr Red Pine, p 11; X63n1218p2b11-12)

Sikong Benjing:

"The master replied, 'If there is a wish to seek for Buddha, then "Heart is Buddha". If there is a wish to understand Dao, then the "Empty Heart is Dao".'
'What is meant by saying "Heart is Buddha",' asked the Envoy.
'Buddha awakens by means of the heart,' replied the master, 'and the heart manifests through Buddha. When the empty heart is awakened then even Buddha does not exist.'
Guangting asked further, 'What is meant by saying that the empty heart is Dao?'
'Dao is originally the empty heart and the name for empty heart is Dao,' replied the master. 'When the empty heart is understood then the empty heart is Dao.'
(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 2, 5.86; T51n2076p242b27-c2)

Mazu: 'All of you, each one should have the faith that your own heart is Buddha, that this heart is the Buddha-heart. ... Apart from heart there is no other Buddha and apart from Buddha there is no heart.'
(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 2, 6.91; T51n2076p246a4-5, a10)

Huangbo: 'This mind is the Buddha; the Buddha is the sentient being.'
(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 13; T48n2012Ap379c26)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 29th, 2021 at 3:43 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's the same that sunlight is what brightens the sky and thus enables us to see sunlight. Actually, when you are seeing, you do see that you are seeing.

Astus wrote:

Sunlight is not lit by sunlight, sunlight is already light.

'The Guardian of the World himself has said
That mind cannot be seen by mind.
In just the same way, he has said,
The sword's edge cannot cut the sword.
"But," you say, "it's like the flame
That perfectly illuminates itself."
The flame, in fact, can never light itself.
And why? Because the darkness never dims it!' (Bodhicaryavatara 9.17-19, tr Padmakara)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 29th, 2021 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

When Buddha nature is not recognized, and call it just a concept is really doing a disservice to Buddhas and Patriarchs.

Astus wrote:

As long as it's not recognised, how could it be anything else but a concept? And after it is recognised, do you assume it is it?

Since you brought up the patriarchs, do you think Linji was wrong?

'All phenomena worldly and world-transcending are without a real fixed identity of their own, they have no inherent nature. There are just empty names, and names are empty too.'

(The Recorded Sayings of Linji, in Three Chan Classics, BDk ed, p 29;
T47n1985p499c15-16)

And was Shenhui right after all?

'One day the master announced to the assembly, "I have a thing without head or tail, without name or title, without front or back. Do you know what it is?"

Shenhui came forth and said, "It is the fundamental source of the buddhas. It is my buddha-nature."

The master said, "I told you it was without name or title, but you have called it the fundamental source, the buddha-nature. You've just covered your head with thatch. You've become a follower with only discriminative understanding."

(Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK ed, p 78)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 30th, 2021 at 4:16 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Malcolm said:

The imputation itself is the agent and recipient of action, that's the point.

Astus wrote:

That is more likely the view of Gorampa.

'In the Madhyamaka system, it is not feasible for the skandhas to be the agent of actions and the experiencer of results, because neither the self nor the skandhas exist when analyzed, and the self appears as the agent and the experiencer at the conventional level, not the skandhas.'

(Distinguishing the Views, p 75)

As for Candrakīrti's own explanation of 6.162 and other commentators I checked (Mikyö Dorje (p 417), Wangchuk Dorje (p 393), Tsongkhapa (p 466), Mipham (p 303), Jamyang Khyentse (p 285)), they simply explain it in the context of the relationship between the self and the aggregates as appropriator and appropriated. This is in line with the teachings on the 20 types of identity view (e.g. SN 22.47, AKB 5.7), where the self is simply a wrong view that assumes identity with or ownership of an aggregate. That agrees with the conventional mind where self is always a shorthand for 'I am this' and 'this is mine'. In other words, just as a car is imaginable only with its parts present, a self is always conceived of as an aggregate, therefore saying that the appropriator self is the doer and enjoyer of actions, as if it could be something apart from the aggregates, sounds like assuming an appropriator without the appropriated.

By the way, if the self were to be used as the agent and experiencer by Candrakīrti (despite teachings like SN 12.12), then it would have been a simple way to explain karma, but he did not do so at for instance MA 6.39.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, October 30th, 2021 at 5:10 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, it is the view of Candrakīrti, but perhaps it's too subtle for some people to grasp.

Astus wrote:

Do you know perhaps others who picked up that interpretation? On the other hand, wouldn't it be quite close to what Gorampa criticised in Tsongkhapa interpreting conventional phenomena as purely designations?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 31st, 2021 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Why did Buddhism take a drastic focus into emptiness at the turn of the new era? (1st century CE)

Content:

Astus wrote:

'It is noteworthy that in the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijnanakaya>, the Sarvāstivādins never call themselves as such. When arguing against the Vibhāṣyavādins, they refer to themselves as the Yukta-vādins (應理論者); against the Pudgalavādins, as the Śūnyatā-vādins (性空論者). It was perhaps later, in the course of doctrinal confrontation with rival schools and being hard pressed to articulate their position, that the term "Sarvāstivāda" came distinctly to be insisted upon.'

(Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma by Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti, 4th edition, p 59)

Then later we have Prajnaparamita sutras and Madhyamaka arguing against the Sarvastivadin idea of svabhava.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 31st, 2021 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

How do you drop your own statement because a statement cannot be established to exist, yet you still have mind phenomena arise as pure and unpure?

Astus wrote:

Do you mean that if one believed there was a tiger in the room but when looking into it no tiger was found, how is it possible that one no longer believed in one's previous idea?

'Conceptions will occur if things are held to exist,
But how things do not exist has been thoroughly analyzed.
When things are seen not to exist, conceptions about their existence will not arise,
Just as fire will not burn without fuel.
Ordinary beings are bound by conception,
And yogins, free from conception, are liberated.
The wise ones teach that the reversal of conception
Is the result of analysis.'
(Madhyamakavatara 6.116-117, tr T. Dewar)

'Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.'
(Bhavanakrama in Stages of Meditation, p 134)

LastLegend said:

Do you want to say pure and unpure cannot be established either?

Astus wrote:

Established as ultimate entities? No. All phenomena are dependently arisen, don't you agree?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 31st, 2021 at 2:09 PM

Title: Re: Making sense of types of thought

Content:

LastLegend said:

I meant to say that you can't establish even a view or a statement to be true. Like the view, "everything lacks self-existence," do you hold this to be absolutely true? At which point this view is also dropped or you have to think about it constantly? You can't retain a view to be true to be grasped.

Astus wrote:

It depends on the criteria of truth. Also, what's the line between absolute and relative truths? These can be relevant questions, but usually one just works with one's already existing assumptions in order to eliminate all identifications and attachments. The point is not really to claim some idea as the best, but to be free from suffering.

LastLegend said:

Would you say that conception can be pure? Or conception is always with grasping?

Astus wrote:

Conceptions here is about sticking to assumptions and ideas as truth. There are good conceptions in the sense of leading to good births, but there's always grasping and identifying with it.

LastLegend said:

This depends on how one takes the analysis: or they observe it directly in their mind? Or they playing philosophy.

Astus wrote:

Analysis means applying the teachings to observe phenomena.

LastLegend said:

Has the view of dependently arisen taken care of grasping, since pure and unpure are still distinguished? When unpure arises, how is it dealt with?

Astus wrote:

Based on understanding one can observe dependent arising, and with that remove the root of attachment, the taints of taking things to be self or belonging to self. That's because one can then confirm that things are not reliable, pleasurable, or controllable to be taken as one's identity or possession.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 2nd, 2021 at 5:01 PM

Title: Re: I'm confused about Buddhist arguments against a creator God and what that entails for buddha activity?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

if the Dharmakaya is unconditioned and this is the ultimate mind of all buddhas (I understand its individual and somewhat unreal) then how can they project emanations, purelands, intentions and actions? if it is unconditioned wouldn't it be inert?

Astus wrote:

The dharmakaya is unconditioned because it's not a thing, rather it refers to the complete absence of obscurations, or from another perspective it's emptiness just like the emptiness of everything else (i.e. dharmadhatu). The form bodies have the dharmakaya as their essence, so to speak, but it's not like that the dharmakaya is some sort of creator. Not unlike all other phenomena, a buddha is without substance/self and appears because of various conditions. For a short summary you can look up the last two chapters of The Jewel Ornament of Liberation by Gampopa.

Artziebetter1 said:

if one can say that a being can be eternal but not permanent, then what is the objection to the theist that can claim his God is eternal but not unchanging

Astus wrote:

The problem starts with the idea of a 'being'. To say there is one and the same being who continues to exist from one moment to the next, that is basically the view of a permanent self/soul/being/entity/substance.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 2nd, 2021 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: I'm confused about Buddhist arguments against a creator God and what that entails for buddha activity?

Content:

yagmort said:

imho it is of direct import to the OP's question because i got the impression that the whole idea of creator God of Christianity has been misunderstood. when people say "god", "creator" we immediately drowning in the ocean of semantic problems. i got no idea why people assume every one got the same meaning about these 2 words. as i pointed out in the example above, christians do not think of God as some sort of highest, supreme, separate creator entity which governs this universe. just saying.

Kim O'Hara said:

"christians do not think of God as some sort of highest, supreme, separate creator entity which governs this universe" is way too broad - so broad it's far more wrong than right.

A few (very few) christians do not think of God as some sort of highest, supreme, separate creator entity which governs this universe.

Most (nearly all) christians do think of God as some sort of highest, supreme, separate creator entity which governs this universe.

Astus wrote:

It's probably easier to just look up commonly provided definitions:

'What idea of the essence and essential attributes of God may be derived from divine revelation?

That God is a Spirit, eternal, all-good, omniscient, all-just, almighty, omnipresent,

unchangeable, all-sufficing to himself, all-blessed.'

(http://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/eng/Orthodox_Catechism_of_Philaret.htm)

'What can we learn from Scriptures? We can learn some of the attributes of God. We will point out how Scripture tells us that God is Spirit, Eternal, Good, Omniscient, All-Righteous, Omnipresent, Unchangeable and Unity.'

(<https://www.stgeorgegreenville.org/our-faith/catechism/who-is-god/>)

'We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.'

(<http://ww1.antiochian.org/content/nicene-creed>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 2nd, 2021 at 5:24 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

What, to you, is the meaningful key distinction between dharmatā and nirguṇabrahman?

Astus wrote:

Dharmata refers to the general characteristics of all things that can be summed up as emptiness. Nirgunabrahman is the mistaken idea that there is one ultimately existing consciousness that is happy on its own.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 3rd, 2021 at 6:47 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Matt J said:

Sounds saguna to me.

Astus wrote:

It isn't. I was simply paraphrasing saccidananda that is considered the essence (svarupa), for instance in the first stanza of Nirguna Manasa Puja, or in stanzas 36, 56, and 64 in Atmabodha.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 5th, 2021 at 12:04 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Matt J said:

Sat chit ananda is literally saguna Brahman. This is basic Vedanta.

Astus wrote:

Do you know any texts that state so?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 5th, 2021 at 5:26 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Matt J said:

Will I spend an hour combing through sources to find such a citation to a statement universally accepted by Vedanta teachers (at least IME) and will not likely be accepted? Yes.

Check out Shankara's Bhyasa on Kena Upanishad, verse 9.

Astus wrote:

It begins at verse 3 that the known is rejected, then verse 4 discusses the problem with words, with verses 5-8 pointing to the knower as Brahman, then in verse 9 again the inadequacy of mere words is discussed (like in Brhadaranyaka 2.3.6 commentary (Madhavananda, 3rd ed, p 344-345)). Then for verses 11-12 it is explained that Brahman can be known as the ultimate consciousness. Also on consciousness and bliss being its nature and not characteristic see Brhadaranyaka 3.9.28.7 (p 566-567) where Shankara wrote: "Hence the text, 'Knowledge, Bliss,' etc., must be interpreted as setting forth the nature of Brahman, and not signifying that the bliss of the Self is cognised."

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 5th, 2021 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Matt J said:

Saguna means literally with gunas, or more generically with characteristics. Here, Shankara is saying that the descriptions of Brahman apply only the experience of limited human beings. In fact, some refer to the experience of Brahman as Brahman-vritti. Neither of these is actually Brahman, since Brahman is nirguna, literally without gunas or generically without characteristics. Shankara essentially is trying to reconcile the two descriptions of Brahman as given in the Upanishads.

Astus wrote:

That's not all there is to it. As he says in the same section:

'According to its essence it will be concluded in the subsequent portion of this Upanishad that it is unknown to those who know, and known to those who do not know.'

And then a little later:

'In the case of those who find the Atman in the conditioned organs of sense, mind and intelligence, the false notion 'I know Brahman' is quite possible, because they cannot

discriminate between Brahman and these conditions and because the conditions of intelligence, etc., are known to them. It is to show that such knowledge of the Brahman is fallacious that the latter half of the text is introduced. Or, the latter half 'Avijnatam, etc..' may be construed as furnishing a reason for the view propounded in the former.' (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/kena-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145050.html>)

Clarified in the next part:

'To say that It is unknown to those who know is also a contradiction, how then could that Brahman be well-known? This is explained in this text, 'Pratibodhaviditam' means 'known in respect of every state of consciousness.' By the word 'bodha' is meant 'mental perception.' That by which all states of consciousness are perceived like objects is the Atman. He knows and sees all states of consciousness, being by nature nothing but intelligence and is indicated by these states of consciousness, as blended with every one of them. There is no other way by which the inner Atman could be known. Therefore when the Brahman is known as the witness of all states of consciousness, then it is known well. Being the witness of all states of consciousness, it will be clear that it is intelligence in its essence, subject to neither birth nor death, eternal, pure, unconditioned, and one in all things, because there is no difference in its essence, just as in the essence of the Akasa, in a vessel or mountain cave, etc.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/kena-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145051.html>)

From this it can be seen that it's not the case that Brahman is not consciousness, but that as long as one interprets those words as referring to objects one remains mistaken.

For the Brhadaranyaka commentaries:

'How through these two terms 'Not this, not this' is it sought to describe the Truth of truth? By the elimination of all differences due to limiting adjuncts, the words refer to something that has no distinguishing mark such as name, or form, or action, or heterogeneity, or species, or qualities. Words denote things through one or other of these. But Brahman has none of these distinguishing marks. Hence It cannot be described as, 'It is such and such,' as we can describe a cow by saying, 'There moves a white cow with horns.' Brahman is described by means of name, form and action superimposed on It, in such terms as, 'Knowledge, Bliss, Brahman' (III. ix. 28), and 'Pure Intelligence' (II. iv. 12), 'Brahman,' and 'Atman.' When, however, we wish to describe Its true nature, free from all differences due to limiting adjuncts, then it is an utter impossibility. Then there is only one way left, viz. to describe It as 'Not this, not this,' by eliminating all possible specifications of It that one may know of.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-brihadaranyaka-upanishad/d/doc117948.html>)

'Moreover, if Brahman ever knows Its own bliss, it is superfluous to distinguish between awareness and unawareness. If It is constantly aware of this bliss, then that is Its nature; hence there is no sense in maintaining that It cognises Its own bliss. Such a view would

be tenable if ever there was the possibility of Its not knowing that bliss, as for instance a man knows himself and another (by an act of will). There is certainly no sense in distinguishing between a state of awareness and one of unawareness in the case of a man whose mind is uninterruptedly absorbed in an arrow, for instance. If, on the other hand, Brahman or the Self is supposed to be knowing Its bliss interruptedly, then in the intervals when It does not cognise Itself, It must know something else; and the Self would become changeful, which would make It non-permanent. Hence the text, 'Knowledge, Bliss,' etc., must be interpreted as setting forth the nature of Brahman, and not signifying that the bliss of the Self is cognised.'
(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-brihadaranyaka-upanishad/d/doc118360.html>)

This is from a couple of centuries after Shankara, but is from a generally well regarded text:

'Reality is Brahman which is without a second and is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Unreality is Nescience and all other material objects.'
(<https://www.swamij.com/Vedantasara-Sadananda.htm>; for some footnotes:
<https://estudentdavedanta.net/Vedantasara-Nikhilananda.pdf>, p 21)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 5th, 2021 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Matt J said:

The point isn't that Brahman is never described as having qualities. The point is that when Brahman is described with qualities, it is saguna Brahman. It is a tortured reading to read "nirguna" as meaning with characteristics and a basic error.

Astus wrote:

But existence, consciousness, and bliss are not characteristics but the substance of Brahman. Otherwise if even being were a characteristic there simply wouldn't be a Brahman at all, thus nirguna would mean sunya and would be quite preferable to us Buddhists.

'Who has ever denied that the Bliss (Ānanda) which in its nature admits of no difference whatever is the "same as Brahman? Bliss is verily the essential nature of the Supreme Self (Paramātmān). But that bliss which manifests itself as love and so on cannot be identical with the Supreme Brahman. We call that Bliss Brahman, in which such distinctions as love and so on have no place, and which is quite beyond the reach of manas.'

...

'As the object of genuine love, the Self is in his essential nature the true Bliss itself; and as dwelling in each body separately, the Bliss-Ātman becomes divided as it were. As the genuine Bliss, the Bliss-Ātman is the original, whose reflections enter into tranquil states of the mind when thinking of agreeable objects such as wealth, sons, etc. These

reflections are as false as the images reflected in water or in a mirror; and though the bliss which has become separated by the upādhis is real, still, it has the fault of limitation. Consequently, neither the reflected image of Bliss nor its detached bits can constitute the genuine Bliss. On the contrary, that Bliss is real which constitutes the essential nature of Brahman, and which is not subject to any kind of limitation.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-taittiriya-upanishad/d/doc79821.html>)

Later there's a section on the issue of defining Brahman that is concluded with the following:

'Though birth, &c., inhere elsewhere, Brahman may be defined indirectly as the cause of the birth, etc., this causality being falsely ascribed to Brahman. We say, for instance, "(what appeared to be) the serpent is this garland." So it is possible to define Brahman through what is ascribed to Him, thus: Brahman is that which is the cause of the universe. Just as it is not incompatible that one single person, Devadatta, should be spoken of as father, son, brother, son-in-law, etc., though these words have quite distinct meanings, so also the words "Real, Consciousness" etc., which, as understood in their ordinary sense, convey distinct meanings and refer to distinct things, may point to the indivisible non-dual Brahman and thus constitute the direct definition (svarūpa-lakṣaṇa as opposed to taṭastha-lakṣaṇa) of Brahman.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-taittiriya-upanishad/d/doc79852.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 5th, 2021 at 11:54 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Malcolm said:

And thus, Śantarakṣita mocks Advaitans who assert an ajativāda without also accepting the teaching of the Tathāgata, and likewise, the reason that Śankarācārya is mocked by later Vedantins for being a crypto-buddhist.

Astus wrote:

I think Shankara was aware of some Buddhist teachings, and has differentiated his view from them intentionally. Already Gaudapada did so in his closing words:

'The knowledge of the wise one, who is all-light, is ever untouched by objects. All the entities as well as knowledge (which are non-different) are also ever-untouched by any object. This is not the view of the Buddha.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mandukya-upanishad-karika-bhashya/d/doc143804.html>)

And to elaborate further the same point, what I think points to the basic difference:

'The Vedantins refute them by saying that there can be no illusion without a substratum which is not an illusion. The existence of the Atman must be admitted. Even the void has a witness; if not, it would be impossible to say, 'There is a void''

(https://www.shankaracharya.org/panchadasi_trans_6.php)

Also this:

'O you ignorant one ! Why do you assert the blissful, ever-existent Atman, which resides in your own body and is (evidently) different from it, which is known as Purusha and is established (by the Shruti as identical with Brahman), to be absolutely non-existent ? O you ignorant one ! Try to know, with the help of Shruti and reasoning, your own Self, Purusha, which is different from the body, (not a void but) the very form of existence, and very difficult for persons like you to realize.'

(<https://www.shankaracharya.org/aparokshanubhuti.php>)

And this:

'The disciple questioned: After these five sheaths have been eliminated as unreal, I find nothing, O Master, in this universe but a Void, the absence of everything. What entity is there left forsooth with which the wise knower of the Self should realise his identity. The Guru answered: Thou has rightly said, O learned man ! Thou art clever indeed in discrimination. That by which all those modifications such as egoism as well as their subsequent absence (during deep sleep) are perceived, but which Itself is not perceived, know thou that Atman - the Knower - through the sharpest intellect.

That which is perceived by something else has for its witness the latter. When there is no agent to perceive a thing, we cannot speak of it as having been perceived at all.

This Atman is a self-cognised entity because It is cognised by Itself. Hence the individual soul is itself and directly the Supreme Brahman, and nothing else.

That which clearly manifests Itself in the states of wakefulness, dream and profound sleep; which is inwardly perceived in the mind in various forms as an unbroken series of egoistic impressions; which witnesses the egoism, the Buddhi, etc., which are of diverse forms and modifications; and which makes Itself felt as the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; know thou this Atman, thy own Self, within thy heart.'

(<http://www.shankaracharya.org/vivekachudamani3.php>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

In fact, nothing can be said about nirguna brahman, even though Advaita teachers do, because how else are you going to clue your students in on the fact that there is something 'beyond' vyavahara?

Astus wrote:

First stating that nothing can be said about something, and then giving all sorts of definitions and explanations about it makes the first statement a pointless excuse for failing to put together a coherent argument. Or one can be like Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta and practise equivocation (amarāvikkhepavāda, cf. DN 1). Neither of them really work.

Also, I don't see this type of evasion in the works of Shankara and his followers trying to avoid being explicit that they believe in a self that is the sole existing consciousness.

Rick said:

“Only an entity which is an object of sense-knowledge can become an object of affirmative predication of the form ‘it is’ or an object of negative predication of the form ‘it is not’. Reason also proves that Brahman cannot be expressed by words denoting existence (sat) or non-existence (asat).” — Shankara

Astus wrote:

That quote well points to the usual negation of objects, but at the same time indicates the adherence to the idea of a really existing subject. If only they'd drop the whole absolute consciousness business, then they could be Buddhists.

Rick said:

something that is taught and then later un-taught.

Astus wrote:

And then what? If you think Vedanta teaches letting go of self, why do they argue for it to be the one true being and call Buddhists nihilist?

'Likewise, the Self and the non-Self would both be non-existent if they were similarly superimposed on each other through Ignorance. But that is not desirable as it is the position of the Nihilists.'

(https://shankaracharya.org/upadesa_sahasri.php; in Mayeda tr: II.2.55, p 236)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Malcolm said:

So what?

Astus wrote:

So he advocated a view that was not in harmony with the Dharma, and was quite open about it too.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

And the final straw for me was learning that the only definitive 'proof' of the reality of brahman is the word of Ishvara in the scriptures. It's tough for a recovering Catholic to feel comfortable with that!

Astus wrote:

Well, at least Catholics try to put in some logic as proof. If, as you say, there's only the scriptures as proof, then it's like in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn95/en/sujato>:

“Master Gotama, regarding that which by the lineage of testament and by canonical authority is the ancient hymnal of the brahmins, the brahmins come to the definite conclusion: ‘This is the only truth, other ideas are silly.’ What do you say about this?”

“Well, Bhāradvāja, is there even a single one of the brahmins who says this: ‘I know this, I see this: this is the only truth, other ideas are silly’?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Well, is there even a single teacher of the brahmins, or a teacher’s teacher, or anyone back to the seventh generation of teachers, who says this: ‘I know this, I see this: this is the only truth, other ideas are silly’?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Well, what of the ancient hermits of the brahmins, namely Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamadaggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāsetṭha, Kassapa, and Bhagu? They were the authors and propagators of the hymns. Their hymnal was sung and propagated and compiled in ancient times; and these days, brahmins continue to sing and chant it, chanting what was chanted and teaching what was taught. Did even they say: ‘We know this, we see this: this is the only truth, other ideas are silly’?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“So, Bhāradvāja, it seems that there is not a single one of the brahmins, not even anyone back to the seventh generation of teachers, nor even the ancient hermits of the brahmins who say: ‘We know this, we see this: this is the only truth, other ideas are silly.’ Suppose there was a queue of blind men, each holding the one in front: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. In the same way, it seems to me that the brahmins’ statement turns out to be like a queue of blind men: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. What do you think, Bhāradvāja? This being so, doesn’t the brahmins’ faith turn out to be baseless?”

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

As I said, the Vedantin 'answer' to this is that The Truth was communicated directly by Ishvara, who unlike humans is not blind.

Astus wrote:

If it's a truth only because the source that is unknown is believed to be correct, and nobody has actually seen that truth personally, it is still baseless. Also, what would be the value in communicating something that nobody can comprehend?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 8:28 PM

Title: Re: Were/are Zen monastery time schedules liberal with regard to meal and dharma talk timing?

Content:

czf said:

I have also heard from other sangha members that some Zen monasteries have a dinner in the early evening (16-17) which would contrast with the Theravada and Tibetan approaches of not having any meals after noon.

Astus wrote:

evening meal (yakuseki kittō 藥石喫湯, yakuseki 藥石)

Literally "medicine" (yakuseki 藥石) and "drinking decoctions" (kittō 喫湯). According to the Indian Vinaya, Buddhist monks were not permitted to take solid food after midday, but drinking liquids was allowed. For monks who were ill, however, solid food was permitted at any time of day for medicinal purposes. In the Chinese Buddhist monasteries of the Song and Yuan dynasties that served as the model for Japanese Zen monasteries, an evening meal was routinely served to all the monks in residence, but it was euphemistically called "medicine."

(https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=evening_meal)

'The Chinese maintained, however, that because the work of the monastery continued into the evening, monks could not do without an evening meal. Supper was eaten in most Chinese monasteries, although there were usually a few monks who preferred to follow the rule strictly and eat nothing solid later than 12:00. They were free to do so, but according to one informant they were still expected to come to the refectory along with everyone else unless their age or status excused them.'

(The Practice of Chinese Buddhism by Holmes Welch, p 111)

czf said:

Are those aspects of the time schedule considered traditional in Zen monastic life? Is there more material on the subject of the practical everyday aspects of Zen monastic conduct that I could read?

Astus wrote:

What I could quickly come up with:

The Practice of Chinese Buddhism by Holmes Welch

Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia ed. by James A. Benn, Lori Meeks, and James Robson

The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China by Yifa

Japanese Temple Buddhism by Stephen G. Covell

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 6th, 2021 at 8:34 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

The Vedas say something like: You cannot know brahman, but you can know that you are brahman. That's Advaitin enlightenment in a nutshell.

I know what you're thinking: "To know that you are <the unknowable> doesn't make sense!" When I asked my teacher how this knowing happens, he said it is an event in the mind that comes from the practice of shravana (listening), manana (clarifying doubts), and nididhyasana (contemplating, meditating, assimilating).

Astus wrote:

If it is accepted that atman is brahman, then knowing one's self is knowing brahman. Despite playing around the words that the self cannot know itself as an object, it is still the main soteriological theory of Vedanta that it's possible to arrive at consciousness that is the self.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 7th, 2021 at 6:18 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

Does the mysterious or unfathomable or unknowable play a role in Buddhist dharma? Because it sure does in the Vedas!

Astus wrote:

Being readily visible (sāṃdr̥ṣṭiko/sandiṭṭhiko) is one of the main qualities of the Dharma.

'Those who explained to me previously,
before I encountered Gotama's teaching,
said 'thus it was' or 'so it shall be'.
All that was just the testament of hearsay;
all that just fostered speculation.

Alone, the dispeler of darkness
is splendid, a beacon:
Gotama, vast in wisdom,
Gotama, vast in intelligence.

He is the one who taught me Dhamma,
visible in this very life, immediately effective,
the untroubled, the end of craving,
to which there is no compare.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/snp5.19/en/sujato>)

How so? See e.g.: <https://suttacentral.net/sn1.20/en/sujato>,
<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.70/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/an3.53/en/sujato>,

<https://suttacentral.net/an6.47/en/sujato>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 7th, 2021 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

LastLegend said:

Mañjuśrī replied, “The conceivable samādhi has an appearance that can be captured while the inconceivable samādhi has no appearance to be captured. All sentient beings have attained the inconceivable samādhi. Why? Because all mental appearances are not the [true] mind. Therefore, the [mental] appearances of all sentient beings and the appearance of the inconceivable samādhi are the same, not different.”

Rick said:

Could someone please use nice simple language to explain what this means. Thanks!

Astus wrote:

Conceivable (思議) means there is a characteristic, a quality, a mark (相) that can be identified. When there is nothing to grasp as a signifying quality of something, then there is no conception of that object, hence inconceivable (不可思議). What are imagined to be the characteristics of mind are not actually the mind, as the mind is assumed to be a continuous knower but there's no such thing, as Manjusri stated right before this ('Not seeing a mind that can conceive', cf. http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-19). This is a way to express emptiness, that characteristics - marks grasped as defining qualities, thus making the appearance of a real entity - are made up: 'All things that have characteristics are false and ephemeral. If you see all characteristics to be non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata.' (http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-6).

In the first fascicle of the sutra there is a section that might help understand it better:

'Śāriputra, the appearance of the dharma realm is bodhi. Why? Because in the dharma realm sentient beings have no appearances, as all dharmas are empty. The emptiness of all dharmas is bodhi, which is non-dual and free from differentiation. Śāriputra, without differentiation, there is no knower. Without a knower, there are no words. Without words, there is neither existence nor nonexistence, neither knowing nor not knowing. This is true for all dharmas. Why? Because dharmas cannot be identified by places, which imply a definite nature.'

Go backwards. Things cannot be found here or there, if one analyses them properly and tries to identify them directly in one's experience there is nothing to obtain. That means all things are mere words and ideas that are made up, they have no actual basis or object. As the object conceived does not exist, there is no basis for one who conceives them in any way. It's like the metaphor of the snake and the rope: when there is no snake there is no longer fear. Being free from both subject and object, that is liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 8th, 2021 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

Rick said:

If your goal was to communicate its essence in one sentence using common (non-jargon) and simple words, what would you say?

Astus wrote:

Whatever one conceives is a thought, and if instead of further thinking about it one looks directly to see what a thought is, there is nothing to hold on to.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 8th, 2021 at 6:24 AM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

LastLegend said:

There are five skandhas why only thought being mentioned here?

Astus wrote:

Thought was mentioned because of the section from the sutra that was asked about. Also, thought did not stand for a specific skandha.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 8th, 2021 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Nirguṇa Ultimates

Content:

LastLegend said:

In the mental process, do you agree that there is an imagined part (mental image), there is a part that actively causes that imagined to arise, and there is a part that knows those two parts. Do you agree? Just like a car operates because of parts and each part has its function.

Astus wrote:

Normally in an instance of thought all four aggregates are present: there is a basic feeling (vedana), there is a recognition (saṃjñā), there is an intention, a relating (saṃskāra), and there is an awareness or consciousness (vijñāna). As a fifth contact (sparsa), or in other words impression can be mentioned, that the four are caused by and relate to.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 9th, 2021 at 10:03 PM

Title: True Mind is No Mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

'What is called no-mind is nothing other than a mind free from deluded thought.'

(<https://terebess.hu/zen/bodhidharma-eng.html#app>, 17; T85, no. 2831, p. 1270a15)

'We have to come to a clear understanding as to the true nature and Absolute Existence of Dharma. This truth is that “as all phenomena are strictly dependent, conditioned, and relative, they are therefore impermanent.” This is the Absolute Existence of Dharma. If we have such a penetrative understanding of the nature of phenomena, of the notion of emptiness, we will enter the gateway of Chan, or align ourselves with the Tao. This is what Bodhidharma’s first formula, “facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind”, teaches us.'

(http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/gates_of_chen.pdf

(<http://fo.sina.com.cn/zt/jhrczm/index.shtml>), p 33)

Absolute Existence is the translation of 实相 (實相 tattvasya-lakṣaṇam), defined in MMK 18.9:

"To know for oneself, not following others,

Calm extinction, without sophistries,

No differences and no distinctions;

This is termed the 'true character'."

(T30, no. 1564, p. 24a7-8; tr Bocking)

The quote (“缘生无自性、无自性故空”) is from the commentary to MMK 7.17:

'dharma arising from causal conditions have no self-nature, and having no self-nature are empty'

(T30, no. 1564, p. 10c20-21, tr Bocking)

'But what is this “nature”? If we are to use words and concepts, we can call it the buddha-nature, which is our original nature. This is the nature of awakening, the nature of emptiness or selflessness. Emptiness means relationships, connectedness.

Because all things are connected, nothing is fixed, and everything is free.'

(The Essence of Chan by Guo Gu, 1.2)

"But how could one [even] gain the ability to know that it is no-mind [that sees, hears, feels, and knows]?"

"Just try to find out in every detail: What appearance does mind have? And if it can be apprehended: is [what is apprehended] mind or not? Is [mind] inside or outside, or somewhere in between? As long as one looks for mind in these three locations, one's search will end in failure. Indeed, searching it anywhere will end in failure. That's exactly why it is known as no-mind."

(Treatise on No-Mind, 6; T85, no. 2831, p. 1269b9-13)

'it is possible to directly comprehend a thing's nature and its Absolute Existence, that is, we can know this teacup as the combination of all its necessary conditions. After stripping all those conditions away one by one, we may ask: “Where then is the teacup?”

It has no self-identity; it is simply a combination of causative conditions. In this way we can see through to the absolute nature of the thing. Such insight is wisdom. What we observe when looking with such an insight is “suchness” itself, the true actuality, the ultimate truth and Absolute Existence.'

(Gates of Chan, p 146)

'Emptiness is relationships, which means that there is no separation between self and other. Instead of seeing ourselves in the center of everything, we see the connectedness of everything. Selflessness is one of the core teachings that free us from attachments and suffering. It is the realization that all things— including us—are related, that they have no permanent, separate, independent self. This does not mean that we have no personality; we always have one, even after enlightenment. It is not that we do not know our name, or do not recognize anyone, or that our mind is blank— enlightenment is not that at all. What is absent in the enlightenment of selflessness is the fundamental assumption of a permanent, separate, independent self within us and within all things. What we consider as separate, independent, permanent, and solid is actually the coming together of everything else.'

(The Essence of Chan by Guo Gu, 2.4)

'Question. – It is quite possible that the saṃskṛtadharma, coming from the complex of causes and conditions (hetupratyayasāmagrī), are without intrinsic nature (niḥsvabhāva) and therefore empty (śūnya). But the asaṃskṛtadharma, which are themselves not dharmas coming from causes and conditions, are indestructible (akṣaya), inalterable (abheda), eternal (nitya) and like space (ākāśasama). How would they be empty?

Answer. – As I have just said, outside of the saṃskṛtas, there are no asaṃskṛtas, and the true nature (bhūtalakṣaṇa) of the saṃskṛtas is exactly asaṃskṛta. The saṃskṛtas being empty, etc., the asaṃskṛtas themselves also are empty, for the two things are not different.

Besides, some people, hearing about the defects of the saṃskṛtadharma, become attached (abhiniveśante) to the asaṃskṛtadharma and, as a result of this attachment, develop fetters.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc226205.html>; T25, no. 1509, p. 289b5-11)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 9th, 2021 at 11:55 PM

Title: Re: True Mind is No Mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

Nagarjuna won't allow us to say conditioned because if it lacks self-existence it is not a thing in itself

Astus wrote:

What is conditioned is exactly not a thing in itself, because if a thing were in itself, it wouldn't be conditioned.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 10th, 2021 at 1:07 AM

Title: Re: I'm confused about Buddhist arguments against a creator God and what that entails for buddha activity?

Content:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

As presented by Khenpo Tsultrim, Shentong absolutely accepts Prasangika Madhyamaka as valid. However it does not apply to Wisdom Mind/Buddha Nature. From his "Progressive Stages" book:

Khenpo Tsultrim said:

This non-conceptual Wisdom Mind is not the object of the conceptualizing process and so is not negated by Madhyamaka reasoning. Therefore, it can be said to be the only thing that has absolute and true existence.

Astus wrote:

From Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje:

'Though there is no contradiction in applying terms such as "subtle" to buddha nature, it is not tenable to posit it in the context of analysis as the self or to say that it exists in a certain way even when analyzed. If it were tenable to do so, it would absurdly follow that the self can withstand analysis. What could be worse than pretending to first refute the selves of persons and phenomena and then positing them in the end? Furthermore, who would place any trust in the statement, "Under thorough analysis, there is no establishment of a true self: this is the system of the Middle Way as asserted by Chandrakirti"?

We do posit the causal, coemergent buddha nature as the person from the unanalyzed perspective. However, we also accept that buddha nature is not established as the person or the self in either of the two truths. You, on the other hand, say that buddha nature is established as the self in the relative truth. Therefore you hold a view of self. When the noble beings of the Vajrayāna engage in the unanalyzed, worldly, relative truth, they use the terms of "person" and "self" in reference to buddha nature. Using terms in this way can only be done by those who have realized the objects of knowledge of the Vajrayāna—the uncommon presentation of the worldly relative truth, which consists of cause, path, and result. Using terms in this way is not to be attempted by those who have not comprehended these points.'

(The Karmapa's Middle Way: Feast for the Fortunate, p 398)

'The Jonangpas say that the self of ultimate truth exists and is permanent, whereas the relative imputation of the self is, like the horns of a rabbit, utterly nonexistent. In this way they refute even on the conventional level the mere self of no analysis renowned in the relative truth. They also affirm through analysis something that is, actually, utterly nonexistent: a self of the ultimate truth. They commit superimpositions and denigrations in relation to both of the two truths.'

(p 400)

'If an ultimate self existed, sentient beings would either have no chance whatever of gaining liberation from saṃsāra or would gain liberation without any effort at all. One of those two situations would absurdly follow. For, firstly, due to the ultimate existence of the self, some beings would be bound in saṃsāra while others would be liberated in nirvāṇa—desire to change this would be impossible. And, secondly, the ultimate self is perceived, according to you, by the perception of a correct consciousness, unlike the self of the relative. Your assertion resembles that of Īshvara!'
(p 402)

And from Karmapa Dūdül Dorje:

'[To say on the one hand that] the qualities of a Buddha are inconceivable for minds on this shore
And that, without analysis, these qualities are described by following his words,
While saying [on the other hand] that wisdom exists and that it is the perfect [nature], is not contradictory.
However, I understand that if such is held at the end of analyzing
For the ultimate through reasonings, the ultimate has become an object for the mind,
Thus being [in itself nothing but] a portion of the cognitive obscurations.
Hence, the following words by the lord of dharma from Tagpo are the remedy for this.
He says: "Throw the views of [intellectual] understanding behind you
And destroy the foundation of meditative experiences!"

...

Secondly, [the system of] Asanga and his brother who follow the final wheel [of dharma]
Is known as "False Aspectarian Mere Mentalism" in the land of the noble ones
And as "Centrism of other-emptiness" in Tibet.
The meaning of these two names is the same.
This is the completely pure system that,
Through mainly teaching the luminous aspect of the mind,
Holds that the result—kayas and wisdoms—exist on their own accord.
As for its necessity, it is asserted that it is taught in order to
Relinquish any arising of fear of emptiness and to awaken those with indefinite disposition.

When commenting on its meaning, honorable Rangjung [Dorje] says
That it is one with the system of Candrakīrti.

Others assert that the ultimate is existent and really established
And that emptiness is really established.

As for the great vehicle's sutra portion, both the middle and the final wheel [of dharma]
Have the purport of the Sugata-Heart, the unity of emptiness and luminosity.

The middle [wheel] explains this by mainly teaching emptiness,
While the final [wheel] elucidates it by mainly teaching luminosity.
I understand that, in actuality, these are not contradictory.

...

Therefore, except for the difference in terms of which topic is mainly taught
And the superiority in means, the essence [of the mantra vehicle]
Is always in accord with the view of Centrism.

As it is said in [Nagarjuna's] Collection of Reasonings:

"For whom emptiness is possible,
Everything is possible.
For whom emptiness is not possible,
Nothing is possible."

(A Song on the View [Arising from] Understanding and Experience in Songs & Instructions of the Karmapas, p 34-35, p 36-37, p 38)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 11th, 2021 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Is impermanence the same or different than emptiness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Those who imputes arising and disintegration
With relation to conditioned things,
They do not understand well the movement
Of the wheel of dependent origination.
That which has originated due to "this" and "that,"
That has not done so as its own being;
And that which has not arisen as its own being,
How can it be called "arisen"?
The tranquility derived from extinction of cause,
This is understood to be a cessation;
That which is not extinguished through its intrinsic nature,
How can that be called an "extinguishment"?
Since there is nothing that arises,
There is nothing that disintegrates;
Yet the paths of arising and disintegration
Were taught [by the Buddha] for a purpose.
By understanding arising, disintegration is understood;
By understanding disintegration, impermanence is understood;
By understanding how to engage with impermanence,
The sublime dharma is understood as well.
Those who understand the dependent origination
To be utterly devoid of arising and disintegration,
Those who have such knowledge will cross
The ocean of samsara of dogmatic views.'
(Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning, v 18-23, tr Thupten Jinpa)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 11th, 2021 at 10:06 PM

Title: Re: Is impermanence the same or different than emptiness?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Space is something that has neither
existence or non-existence, because it isn't phenomenal.

It's simply the context in which everything else occurs.

Astus wrote:

There are two types of space (ākāśa) in Sarvastivada abhidharma: as one of the three unconditioned dharmas (AKB 1.5) and as a conditioned element (AKB 1.28).

It is as an unconditioned dharma that it has the function of not hindering (anāvṛti) all the other material dharmas. As a conditioned element it refers to gap or cavity (chidra) between matter and interpreted as a category of colour because it can be light or dark.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 12th, 2021 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: Question about awareness

Content:

Rick said:

Some schools of Buddhism teach that awareness is “what we truly are” and that being fully aware of the awareness ‘behind’ what we sense, feel, do is enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

What schools specifically? Any sources maybe?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 12th, 2021 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Is impermanence the same or different than emptiness?

Content:

Queequeg said:

How far can this inquiry go before the Dharma is exhausted? And isn't this line of inquiry actually a necessary part of the path at advancing levels?

Astus wrote:

“In the same way, reverend, purification of ethics is only for the sake of purification of mind. Purification of mind is only for the sake of purification of view. Purification of view is only for the sake of purification through overcoming doubt. Purification through overcoming doubt is only for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of the variety of paths. Purification of knowledge and vision of the variety of paths is only for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of the practice. Purification of knowledge and vision of the practice is only for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision. Purification of knowledge and vision is only for the sake of extinguishment by not grasping. The spiritual life is lived under the Buddha for the sake of extinguishment by not grasping.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn24/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 12th, 2021 at 5:39 AM

Title: Re: Question about awareness

Content:

Rick said:

I'm referring to the approach to meditation that Mingyur Rinpoche teaches and his father taught before him.

Astus wrote:

In that case awareness is not about being behind or front, but about the absence of fixation through the recognition of emptiness. That's where the difference between buddhas and sentient beings lie.

'This is what we actually are: empty in essence, cognizant by nature, able to perceive, with no barrier between these two aspects. This empty quality is called dharmakaya. But we are not only empty unlike space, we possess a knowing quality. This is what is described as cognizant nature, sambhogakaya. The capacity is the unity of these two, suffused with awareness. 'Capacity' here means being empty or being cognizant cannot be separated; they are an original unity. And 'suffused with awareness' refers to rigpa. The minds of all sentient beings are the unity of empty cognizance, but because they are not suffused with awareness, they don't know this. Although their minds are the unity of empty cognizance as a unity, they are suffused with unawareness, with unknowing. The very moment we recognize our nature as empty cognizance, it becomes empty cognizance suffused with awareness, with knowing.

The difference between buddhas and sentient beings is the difference between knowing and not knowing. 'Knowing' means knowing one's own nature, one's natural face. This present wakefulness that is uncorrected or uncontrived is the true Samantabhadra which has never been apart from you. While recognizing, rest naturally. When this present wakefulness recognizes itself, there is nothing whatsoever to see. That is the empty essence that is dharmakaya. However, along with the realization that there is nothing to see, is some knowing or seeing that this is so. That is the cognizant nature, sambhogakaya. This empty essence and cognizant nature are forever indivisible. That is the unity, nirmanakaya.'

(As It Is, vol 1, p 58-59)

'Dharmakaya is in ourselves, but since we have not stabilized the recognition of it, we get caught up in thoughts. Yet the essence of thoughts, when acknowledged, is dharmakaya. A thought is simply the extroverted expression of knowing, of awareness. In the moment of recognizing the nature of what thinks, there is no way for this expression, the thought, to remain. Your naked essence is then an actuality. In this experience, there is no way for a thought to remain, just as a drop of water cannot remain in mid-air. Once you are familiar with this way of dealing with a thought, you do not need to suppress thinking. You do not need to correct it. You do not need any hope of gaining or fear of losing the awakened state. That is why it is said that 'the confidence of the view is free of hope and fear'. You do not have to hope for freedom or fear having thoughts, because in the moment of seeing the essence, the thought has dissolved. Do you understand this? Is it clear?

Don't ever expect that anything spectacular will be experienced. Honestly, there is nothing more amazing than this recognition of rigpa in which no thought can remain.

The five poisons and habitual tendencies lose their power to rigpa. If we do not know this, we become caught up in thought. Most sentient beings do not know how to recognize; they are carried away by thoughts. In the moment you remind yourself to recognize mind nature, you have already seen the essence. "Seeing no thing is the sublime sight." This is so close that it is hard to believe. It is not an act of imagining. It's because it's so easy that it is hard to trust in! There is not even as much as a hair-tip to cultivate by meditating. But we need to grow used to it; we need to grow used to recognizing this nature of empty cognizance.'

(As It Is, vol 2, p 149-150)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 12th, 2021 at 3:32 PM

Title: Re: Maha Prajnaparamita Sastra

Content:

Leo Rivers said:

Just found this.... I think it's the whole thing.

Astus wrote:

It's the whole of what Lamotte translated, but as it says on the first page: 'This edition represents only the first part containing the translation of 34 of 100 fascicles of the original work.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 12th, 2021 at 6:01 PM

Title: Re: If there's no self, why does karma matter?

Content:

Nalanda said:

Without the self/person, why does karma matter? Upon rebirth, how does this karma connect or transfer to that new person? Isn't that unfair? How does it even connect the previous person's karma to the reborn person?

Astus wrote:

Karma is the person, i.e. we are what we do. If there was somebody else apart from what we did, an independent self, then actions wouldn't matter. But because there is no independent, separate self, it matters. Also, it makes little sense to talk of a yesterday's self as if it were disconnected from today's self. What we did yesterday defines what we have today. Same applies to larger periods of time.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 2021 at 4:34 AM

Title: Re: I'm confused about Buddhist arguments against a creator God and what that entails for buddha activity?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'In Chan, we practice sitting meditation so we can maintain a level of focus and centeredness associated with samadhi. But you have to practice in order to maintain this stability of mind. If you stop meditating, it disappears.

This is not the case with wisdom. When you have wisdom, it is always there. Once you see something, you see it. And wisdom constantly deepens and clarifies.

Before Buddha became awakened, he was able to reach the highest or eighth level of samadhi where there is neither perception nor nonperception. And yet the Buddha was not liberated. When he came out of this state of samadhi, he still felt vexed. Buddha did not become awakened or liberated because of samadhi but because of wisdom.

So why do we practice meditation if Chan is about wisdom? Because without a certain foundation—samadhi—the mind will be scattered. If we light a candle in a room where the doors and windows are open and the wind blows through, the candle will flicker. It will not shine. The room will be dark.

Samadhi is the stillness of a sealed room—a state of peace and calm without disturbances that allows the light of wisdom to glow. It doesn't flicker. Slowly and steadily it becomes shining bright.

Wisdom is experiential. In Chan, we say it comes from returning again and again to the present moment. It comes from the experience of always returning. It comes from living this, from experiencing it for yourself.

Wisdom in Chan, and in Buddhism generally, is often divided into four stages. The first stage is wisdom from acquisition. This occurs through listening or reading. Then there is the wisdom of knowledge—to reflect on and digest what has been acquired. Practicing or putting into action the wisdom you have acquired is the wisdom of practice or cultivation. When you are able to fully experience what was been taught, this is called the wisdom of attainment.'

(Essential Chan Buddhism by Guo Jun, ch 9)

'People on the mundane level meditate on tranquil absorption, such as the four kinds of concentration, but tranquility by itself cannot destroy clinging to a self, which is the root of cyclic existence. The power of self-delusion causes the root and attendant defilements to arise, which, in turn, lead one to commit harmful deeds and consequently to wander in the lower realms. The analogy for this is to be found in the meditation of such ascetics as Udraka, who believed in an external creator. On the other hand, the determination of nonselfhood [in one's psychophysical aggregates] through discerning intellect, followed by meditation, will result in attaining permanent peace. No other means can completely eliminate misery and defilement.'

(Mahamudra: the Moonlight, p 178)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 2021 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Is Sunyata beyond or the same as "neither positive nor negative"

Content:

Heimdall said:

In the Theravada system, there are three "realms" of existence - the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm.

Astus wrote:

The <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trailokya> are found in all Buddhist schools.

Heimdall said:

In the Theravada system, the last one - the "infinity of neither being nor non-being" - is the closest realm to Nirvana and the least connected to Samsara, and beings who incarnate in that realm have achieved some significant level of Enlightenment and are guaranteed Nirvana in the near future. Nirvana in the Theravada system is identical with Arhantship and being "blown out", ceasing to reincarnate.

Astus wrote:

There is no realm closest to nirvana, because nirvana is not a realm to be close to. Non-returners are born in the five heavens of the Pure Abodes (Suddhāvāsā) that are the highest heavens of the form realm, and that's where they attain complete liberation.

Heimdall said:

the Heart Sutra which seem to suggest that emptiness is the highest possible thing, and emptiness is identical with being "neither positive nor negative"

Astus wrote:

One way to understand emptiness is freedom from conceptual grasping. If one were to identify emptiness with "positive", "negative", "positive and negative", or "neither positive nor negative", then that would be conceptual grasping.

Heimdall said:

I also wonder how one reconciles this with Mahayana goal of Buddhahood or the Bodhisattva path and the differing schools of thought for the Mahayana pathway on this issue, including becoming a Buddha or even the perpetual Bodhisattva path altogether.

Astus wrote:

Reconcile what?

Heimdall said:

Is Buddha-nature beyond even the dichotomy of "neither positive nor negative"?

Astus wrote:

Buddha nature refers to the wisdom of the buddhas that is free from grasping and full of compassion. So it could be said that on the one hand it's like emptiness, beyond categories, and on the other hand it's 100% positive.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 16th, 2021 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Commentaries on the Canonical Sutras?

Content:

Nalanda said:

Is there something like that I could check whenever I read the agamas?

Astus wrote:

According to <https://sites.google.com/site/frankkpublic/agama-commentaries-parallel-to-pali-commentaries> there are fragments in Sanskrit and almost none in Chinese except a brief one (5 fascicles) on parts of the Ekottarikagama (51 fascicles) called <https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T25n1507> of what there's a study and synopsis in English by Antonello Palumbo (<http://www.indologica.de/drupal/?q=node/3032>). Otherwise you can search abhidharma works and treatises like the Dazhidulun and Yogacarabhumisastra for some references.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 16th, 2021 at 6:31 AM

Title: Re: Repentance practices

Content:

Astus wrote:

Repentance (chanhui <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/pcache/61id%28b61fa-6094%29.html>) is quite central all over in East Asian Buddhism, including Chan.

'What is it that is called 'repentance' (chan)? What is it that is called 'remorse' (hui)? Repentance is to repent past licentiousness. One should repent completely for all one's evil actions from the past, one's transgressions of stupidity, pride and deception, jealousy, and so on, so that they will never arise again. This is called 'repentance.' Remorse is to have remorse for future errors, those from now on. Since you have become enlightened [to them] now, all one's evil actions from the past, one's transgressions of stupidity, deceitfulness, jealousy, and so on, are eradicated forever, never to be committed again. This is called 'remorse.' Therefore, it is called 'repentance and remorse' (chanhui).

Ordinary people are stupid and only know they should repent for their past licentiousness—they do not know they should feel remorse for future errors. Because they do not have such remorse, their previous licentiousness is not extinguished and future errors continue to be generated. With previous licentiousness not extinguished and future errors continuing to be generated, how can this be called repentance?' (Platform Sutra, ch 6, BDK ed, p 48)

'If subsequent sentient beings of the degenerate age of dull faculties desire in their hearts to attain the Way, but somehow always fall short of their goal, it is because of karmic hindrances from the past. They must strive for penance and confession and continuously re-arise their hopes. They must first sever love and hatred, jealousy, envy, flattery and calumny and strive for the unsurpassed state of mind. Since the three types of meditation are all the investigation of the same single matter, if one meditation doesn't work, try again with one of the others. Don't let your mind dissipate, and gradually strive for actualization.'

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html#div-11)

'The function of repentance is to initiate a relentless process of self-reflection and self-discipline, to develop vigilance based on selfawareness, and to purify one's mind with

self-respect, so as to prevent the occurrence of the same mistake. As long as one has the determination to start afresh, and realizes that the past is gone and there is no point in dwelling on it, one's mind will be relieved from the feeling of guilt and will regain serenity. This is the function of repentance. The wrongdoing has to be honestly revealed (to the community, or to several persons, or to one person, or to one's own conscience, in accordance with the category and degree of wrongdoing, followed by genuine regret and a resolution not to repeat it).^{26*} Otherwise the shadow of the misdeed will be hidden permanently in the mind, and will develop into karmic seeds that invite retribution later. Repentance immediately dissolves from one's consciousness the seeds produced by the misdeed.

However, the purpose of repentance is to cleanse one's mind to prevent reoccurrence of wrongdoing. If one repeatedly misbehaves, repents, and then misbehaves again, then the efficacy of repentance will be lost. Moreover, the repentance of Buddhists is quite different from that of Christians, who pray to God for absolution. Buddhists do not believe any god has the power to absolve sin. To Buddhists, the real meaning of repentance is to cleanse the contaminated mind in order to restore its purity.'

(Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, p 46)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 20th, 2021 at 12:50 AM

Title: Re: An Important Reminder

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sharing secret teachings has been around for over a thousand years:

<https://earlytibet.com/2008/04/09/why-should-the-secret-mantra-be-secret/>

Calling something secret only makes it more interesting. It is a skilful means that worked well.

'Indeed, the overwhelming success of the Secret Path has propelled it into a position where it has become perhaps the least secret of all the Buddhist meditative systems.'
(Indian Esoteric Buddhism by Ronald M. Davidson, p 339)

Just as fake news and pseudo-science is not defeated by no news and no science, false Dharma should be answered by correct Dharma, not trying to hide it. After all, 'The teaching and training proclaimed by a Realized One shine in the open, not under cover.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.131/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 26th, 2021 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Question about dependent origination

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Since things devoid of intrinsic nature are not existent,
"This existing, that comes to be" can never hold.'

(MMK 1.10, tr Siderits)

Intrinsic nature (svabhāva) is the key term that should be further clarified first, and how central it is to Sarvastivādin Abhidharma.

'A dharma is defined as that which holds its intrinsic characteristic (svalakṣaṇa-dhāraṇād dharmah — § 1.2). The intrinsic characteristic of rūpa, for example, is the susceptibility of being molested (rūpyate), obstructability and visibility; that of vedanā is sensation, etc. And for a dharma to be a dharma, its characteristic must be sustainable throughout time: A rūpa remains as a rūpa irrespective of its various modalities. It can never be transformed into another different dharma (such as vedanā). Thus, a uniquely characterizable entity is a uniquely real (in the absolute sense) entity, having a unique intrinsic nature (svabhāva): "To be existent as an absolute entity is to be existent as an intrinsic characteristic (paramārthena sat svalakṣaṇena sad ityarthah)" (Sarvastivāda Abhidharma by Bhikkhu K.L. Dhammajoti, 2.3.1, 3rd ed, p 23)

'The most notable and representative view of the Sarvastivāda is that what is real is what abides uniquely in its intrinsic nature: What is real is what has a svabhāva. Among the various synonyms of svabhāva is the term avayava, 'part'. A 'part' here refers to the smallest possible unit which cannot be further analyzed; it is the ultimate real. Whatever can be further analyzed either physically or mentally — a composite (e.g., a person) — is 'having a part' (sāvayava); it is a relative real, superimposed on the ultimate reals (e.g., the five skandha-s). This also means that what is real or what exists truly is what exists from the highest or ultimate standpoint (paramārtha-sat), as opposed to what exists relatively/conventionally (saṃvṛti-sat).' (Sarvastivāda Abhidharma by Bhikkhu K.L. Dhammajoti, 3.5.1, 3rd ed, p 77)

So what is refuted is what is held to be verifiable in Abhidharma, the unique characteristics of those things that exist ultimately, i.e. the dharmas. Mundane things like tables and people are understood as purely conventional, nominal, conceptual even in Abhidharma teachings. Here's a commentary on Nagarjuna's argument presented above:

'As explained earlier, to an opponent for whom the absence of nature is not established, this absence will be proven by presenting dependent origination as evidence. Indeed, when nature as such has been invalidated by this evidence, the idea that being produced by ruling conditions is the nature of things will have been invalidated as well. However, just as one may negate the presence of an aśoka tree by referring to the absence of any tree, using the absence of nature as evidence to refute this convention does not pose a problem.

The unproblematic character of the argument is clarified further by considering how, in this particular context, this functions to disprove the argument advanced by the opposition. Our opponents may say that because the characteristics of ruling conditions do exist, things arise from something other than themselves. In reply, we may say that, for those of us who assert that things have no nature, such characteristics are not established.'

(Ornament of Reason by Mabja Jangchub Tsondru, comm. to MMK 1.10)

In other words, dependent origination refutes the possibility of an own nature because everything depends on others, i.e. cannot be established on their own, and because there is no own nature, there is nothing that can be called existent or even non-existent. So even dharmas are like everyday things, mere conceptual fabrications.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 28th, 2021 at 4:51 AM

Title: Re: Realization and realized masters

Content:

LucasGP said:

can one achieve realization in Zen even if one cannot find any realized teacher?

Astus wrote:

It's not the teacher who makes the disciple realised, but by practising the six paramitas with bodhicitta one attains liberation. So the question is if a teacher imparts correct knowledge and whether the disciple learns and applies the correct path.

'In all cases, whether alone or with a group, whether as a householder or home-leaver, it is better to practice under a qualified master. Practice without the guidance of a master will probably not be too fruitful. Practicing with a master can save you time. A master's understanding and experience can help you firmly grasp the essentials of practice and cultivate a correct view of Buddhadharma. This enables you to more quickly free yourself from the vexations of body and mind. With a master, time otherwise spent studying sutras and worrying about following the right path, can be devoted single-mindedly to practice.'

(<http://old.ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/09-06/18.php>)

'The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters.

Of course, this presupposes that the person making the judgment has some understanding of correct Dharma. Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.'

(<http://old.ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/09-06/27.php>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, November 29th, 2021 at 11:53 PM

Title: Re: Thrangu R. on prayer and deities, etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Blessings are the inspiration gained by devotion to progress on the path.

'Sometimes people think that blessings are something that will make them shake, tremble, and even levitate. But that is not what blessings are. Blessings are the power of the Dharma. When we encounter the power of the Dharma, we start to feel faith, and then we become diligent. We feel love and compassion, and we develop tranquility and insight. This is what blessings are. They are the absence of greed, aversion, and delusion. If we can entirely rid ourselves of those three things right away, that is wonderful, but even if not, we can decrease and suppress them. That is blessings.'
(Vivid Awareness by Thrangu Rinpoche, p 41)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 30th, 2021 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Realization and realized masters

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pratyekabuddhas don't matter much, as their realisation is a limited one.

From Huangbo:

'Those who for the most part attain awakening by hearing the teachings are called "śrāvakas." Those who attain awakening by contemplating causes and conditions are called "pratyekabuddhas." Even though you reach the attainment of buddhahood, if that does not derive from awakening to your own mind, you would also be called a "śrāvaka buddha." Many of you practitioners of the Way awaken to the doctrinal teachings but have not awakened to the mind dharma. Even if you practice in this way for successive kalpas, this will never be the original buddha.'

...

'Śrāvakas see the production of ignorance and the extinction of ignorance.

Pratyekabuddhas see only the extinction of ignorance but not the production of ignorance, so they realize tranquil extinction thought after thought. All the buddhas see sentient beings produced all day long without ever being produced and extinguished all day long without ever being extinguished. To be free from both production and extinction is the fruition of the Mahāyāna.'

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.7; 2.43)

Regarding Huineng's awakening, both before and after meeting Hongren it was the Diamond Sutra that brought him realisation. As the story is told in the first chapter of the Platform Sutra:

"At one time, a customer bought some firewood and had me deliver it to his shop, where he took it and paid me. On my way out of the gate I saw someone³⁸ reciting a sutra, and as soon as I heard the words of the sutra my mind opened forth in enlightenment. I then asked the person what sutra he was reciting, and he said, 'The Diamond Sutra.'"

...

"The patriarch kept his robe (kaṣāya) hidden and would not let anyone see it. He preached the Diamond Sutra for me. When he reached the words 'responding to the nonabiding, yet generating the mind'⁵⁶ I experienced a great enlightenment, [realizing

that] all the myriad dharmas do not transcend their self-natures."
(BDK ed, p 17 & 23)

The story of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yongjia_Xuanjue, who attained awakening by reading the Vimalakīrti Sutra, is a good example of the general view on the role of teacher in most Chan literature. It's not really about transmitting but rather verifying awakening.

Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue was from the Zai family of Wenzhou (Yongjia Xian, Zhejiang). When he was young, he studied the sutras and śāstras and trained in the teaching of cessation and contemplation (i.e., concentration and insight meditation) of Tiantai. Through reading the Vimalakīrti Sutra he illuminated his mind-ground. Coincidentally, he visited and discussed [the Dharma] with the master's student Xuance. Everything he said was in implicit accord with the [teachings of the] patriarchs. Xuance said, "From whom did you attain the Dharma?"

[Xuanjue] said, "I heard that there is a succession of teachers for the Mahayana sutras and śāstras. Later I became enlightened to the central doctrine of the mind of the Buddha [by reading] the Vimalakīrti Sutra. As yet, no one has verified [my realization]." Xuance said, "Attained prior to King Sounds of Dignity; becoming enlightened oneself without a teacher after King Sounds of Dignity.' In both cases, this was the heretical path of naturalism."

[Xuanjue] said, "May I request that you verify [my realization]?"

Xuance said, "My words carry no weight, but in Caoqi there is the Sixth Patriarch, Great Master [Huineng]. [Students] assemble there from the four directions like clouds. You would certainly receive his Dharma, and if you would go there I will accompany you."
(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed, p 67-68)

On the expression yixin yixin 以心印心 (lit. 'stamp (yin) mind with mind') the Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism has this:

'The crucial element in this expression is the word yin. As a verb, yin involves the meanings "to accord or to harmonize with each other," "to verify each other," and so forth. For Huangbo Xiyun, the transmission from mind to mind must be understood as the mutual realization or verification of enlightenment. The mind of the master and the mind of the disciple are brought into harmony or accord by each one's enlightenment. This is the true meaning of transmission. The verification (yin) of enlightenment cannot be understood as merely interior. It must be characterized as neither interior nor exterior, since it can never be cut off from, or confined to, one side or the other. It is the existential-practical transformation of the entire personhood through everyday activities.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 30th, 2021 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Realization and realized masters

Content:

clyde said:

According to Huangpo those who “attain awakening by hearing the teachings are called ‘śrāvakas.’”

Astus wrote:

That's more like a play with words: sound/voice of the teaching (sheng jiao 聲教) and sound/voice hearer (sheng wen 聲聞), the latter being a term for sravaka. It's also about emphasising awakening by insight into one's own mind. Huangbo also says, 'There are those who, on hearing the dharma, attain no-mind in a single moment of thought.' And more interestingly, 'The dharma he preaches is neither preached nor revealed, and those who hear that dharma neither hear nor attain anything. It is as if a magician preaches the dharma to people he has conjured. How can I say that I comprehended or awakened to this dharma upon hearing the words of a spiritual mentor (kalyāṇamitra)?'

clyde said:

Does this mean that Huineng was a śrāvaka?

Astus wrote:

No.

'Good friends, if you wish to enter into the profound dharmadhātu and the samādhi of prajñā, you must cultivate the practice of prajñā and recite the Diamond Sutra. Thus will you attain seeing the nature.'

...

'If a person of the Mahayana or a person of the Supreme Vehicle hears this explanation of the Diamond Sutra, his mind will open forth in enlightened understanding.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

The main point is that one should put the words of the teachings into action, i.e. actively look into one's own nature as the teachings instruct everyone.

'To recite it orally without practicing it in the mind is [as unreal] as a phantasm or hallucination, [and as evanescent] as dew or lightning. To recite it orally and practice it mentally is for mind and mouth to correspond. The fundamental nature is buddha.

There is no other buddha apart from this nature.'

(ch 2, p 28)

Also, Huineng said about one of his poems (but can be applied to the whole scripture):

'Good friends, you should all recite this. If you practice according to it, you will see the nature through hearing these words. Although you may be a thousand li away from me, it will be as if you are constantly by my side. If you do not become enlightened through these words, then why have you gone to the trouble of coming a thousand li to see me?'

(ch 6, p 53)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 3rd, 2021 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Looking for formal "How things exist" analyses

Content:

Astus wrote:

Thrangu Rinpoche: Opening the Door to Emptiness

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200219095155/http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor1.htm>,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200219095735/http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor2.htm>,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200219095317/http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor3.htm>,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200217212027/http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/Open%20Door%20to%20Emptiness/opendoor4.htm>

Some good and short ones on Lotsawa House in the categories of

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/topics/middle-way/> and

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/topics/buddhist-philosophy/>, like

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/four-great-logical-arguments>,

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/two-truths-view-mahayana>, and <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/wheel-of-analytical-meditation>

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 5th, 2021 at 5:04 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

rybackbob said:

1. Do all Mahayana schools / sects accept two truths?

Astus wrote:

In some form, yes.

rybackbob said:

2. Why is conventional / relative truth still called temporary?

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_truths_doctrine#:~:text=The%20Buddha%27s%20teaching%20of%20the,understand%20the%20Buddha%27s%20profound%20truth.&text=The%20world%20Densconced%20truth%20and,which%20is%20the%20highest%20sense.

Is the conventional truth being abolished over time?

Astus wrote:

I don't see 'temporary' stated there.

rybackbob said:

3. Does absolute truth deny and cancel conventional truth? As far as I know, two truths are true and valid at the same time?

Astus wrote:

If conventional truth is interpreted as the veiled, mistaken perception, it is abandoned.
If understood as conventional, then no.

rybackbob said:

4. On this website:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.lionsroar.com/what-are-the-two-truths/amp/>

It is pointed out that two truths is a temporary doctrine and in fact there is only one final truth. What happens to all conventional phenomena after two truths come together?

Astus wrote:

Would you specify what statement you refer to regarding the conventional being temporary?

rybackbob said:

5. Do Buddhas and enlightened Buddhists also believe in conventional truth?

Astus wrote:

What is conventional should be seen as just that, conventional. If mistaken as absolute, then there is a problem.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 5th, 2021 at 5:07 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

zerwe said:

When the Buddha taught the 4NT's, each of the Tenet schools developed as a result of a difference in interpretation of the meaning of the statement that "one should understand suffering even though 'there is no suffering'." This eventually would lead to differing presentations or concepts regarding the "Two Truths" as held by the Vaibhasika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra, and Madhyamaka schools, as well as, their respective sub-schools.

Astus wrote:

The two truths doctrine is a commentarial development, not found in the agamas or even in the abhidharma texts. The idea that "even though 'there is no suffering'" is from the Prajnaparamita sutras.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 5th, 2021 at 9:08 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

The basic terms of Madhyamaka exist already in the Sravakayana sutras

Astus wrote:

Except that neyārtha and nīrārtha are not equivalents of conventional and ultimate truths, only that the later tradition (i.e. Buddhaghosa) interpreted neyārtha teachings as those that talk about self and beings, while nīrārtha as those that talk of no self and emptiness. See also Ven. Analayo's entry on <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/encyclopedia-entries/vohara.pdf> (on p 723-724 / PDF p 1-2) that states how the two truths doctrine are projected on the sole sūtra containing those terms retroactively.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 6th, 2021 at 5:49 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

Nyanatiloka's Buddhist Dictionary has a longish entry about Paramārtha satya in the Pali texts. He says that conventional and ultimate truths are implied in many places by the Tathagata, when he says that he uses the ordinary language of common people, but he knows what the words really mean.

Astus wrote:

It can't be implied, only retrospectively interpreted so, since the very idea of two truths are not just later than the Buddha, but later than the Tipitaka, as https://www.budsas.org/ebud/bud-dict/dic3_p.htm in that very same entry: 'The two truths - ultimate and conventional - appear in that form only in the commentaries'.

Aemilius said:

Vasubandhu discusses the absolute truth (paramārtha-satya) and conventional truth (samvṛiti-satya) in AKB p. 910.. 911, and 1108. Vasubandhu mentions Paramārtha-shūnya sūtra that is included Samyukta Agama.

Astus wrote:

The AKB is a relatively late summary work. The 'Paramārtha-shūnya sūtra' says nothing about the two truths. See its English translation <https://suttacentral.net/sa335/en/choong>.

Aemilius said:

Two truths are mentioned in Saṃdhi-nirmocana sūtra, Lankavatara and other mahayana sūtras, which are regarded a teaching of Buddha by the Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

And the two truths doctrine is generally used in Mahayana, no doubt about it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 6th, 2021 at 3:05 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, it is certainly found in the Kośabhaṣya.

Astus wrote:

Right, I meant Abhidharma as the 7 canonical texts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 6th, 2021 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

You misrepresent grossly the intention and meaning of Nyanatiloka

Astus wrote:

How so? He presents the current Theravada view there, and that's not been questioned. He also agrees that the teaching of the two truths is factually post-canonical.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 7th, 2021 at 8:10 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

"The two truths—.... are implied in a sutta-distinction of 'explicit (or direct) meaning' (nītattha, q.v.) and 'implicit meaning (to be inferred)' (neyyattha)."

Astus wrote:

Not implied by the sutta (since to imply something one would need that thing to be known by the one who implies it) but interpreted as an implication by Buddhaghosa about a thousand years after the Buddha. It's like reading the <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.22/en/sujato> as if it were implying the existence of a pudgala.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 8th, 2021 at 4:12 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

In this way the idea of a conventional language/expression/truth is quite clearly expressed and implied by the Buddha himself.

Astus wrote:

The terms sammuti, vohāra, paramattha, and sacca do appear in the suttas, but not in

the combination to state a doctrine of two truths, nor one half of the two.

'Applied to the theme of vohāra, the early Buddhist attitude towards language need not be interpreted in the light of the theory of two truths. That is, truth would not depend on the type of language used to express it.'

(<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/encyclopedia-entries/vohara.pdf>)

'The conception of two truths, the conventional and the ultimate were appearing on the scene during the period represented by the Middle and Late Upaniṣads as well as in Jainism and Ājīvika doctrines some of which were contemporary with the Buddha. In spite of the total absence of such a dichotomy in the early discourses, the interpreters of the early doctrine who relied heavily on the commentaries of Buddhaghosa have continued to attribute two truths to the Buddha himself.'

(The Buddha's Philosophy of Language by David J. Kalupahana, p 81-82)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 8th, 2021 at 6:09 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

No, it is found in Mahāyāna Sūtras. After all, the thread is called "The Two Truths in Mahāyāna Buddhism."

Astus wrote:

It is found in Mahayana Sutras

(<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=610404#p610404>), and the statement regarding its presence in the commentaries was about what <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=610356#p610356> as a development from the Buddha's teachings in the four schools. In other words, the Sarvastivadins and the Sautrantikas (and Theravada) did not have the idea of two truths from their sutras, nor from their (7 canonised) abhidharma texts, but it is found in commentaries and later treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 8th, 2021 at 8:16 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

The principle of two truths is present in the early sutras

Astus wrote:

Where? There's only one short sutta talking of neyyattha and nitattha, and the way they're interpreted by later authors is a retrospective projection of the two truths idea found nowhere in the suttas themselves. The mere presence of reference to

conventional ways of talking is not equivalent of talking of two truths, nor is it called conventional truth.

'Considering what we have said so far regarding language and truth in early Buddhism, it would be possible to give a totally different explanation of the two terms nitattha and neyyattha without introducing two levels of truth. The past participle nita (from the root ni, nayati, 'to lead') means that to which one "has been led" and the term neyya (a potential participial form of the same verb) implies that to which one "ought to lead." When these two terms are prefixed to the term attha or meaning, we have a meaning that has been led to, that is, a meaning (temporarily) completed, and a meaning that ought to lead, that is, a meaning stretched into the future. This is not the least different from the distinction that we have noticed so far between 'the dependently arisen' and 'dependent arising' or 'the become' and 'becoming.' One is a conception of truth formulated on the basis of information available so far and the other is a conception of truth grounded on the information available and extended into the unknown future. As such, these two types of discourses have nothing to do with conventional and ultimate truths.'

(The Buddha's Philosophy of Language by David J. Kalupahana, p 82-83)

Aemilius said:

it acts as a basis for the development and arising of the Abhidharma

Astus wrote:

Not even the seven Abhidhamma texts talk of two truths. They also contain nothing on neyyattha and nitattha.

Aemilius said:

Abhidharma is regarded a higher Dharma or highest Dharma, because it is higher than the Dharma that uses only conventional expressions and conventional language.

Astus wrote:

Not in Theravada where the two truths are not seen as higher and lower, unlike in Sarvastivada.

Aemilius said:

Two truths appear in the sutta commentaries according to K. N. Jayatilleke, which makes it a lot earlier than the time of Buddhaghosa.

Astus wrote:

The basic commentary (atthakatha) to the Anguttara Nikaya is attributed to Buddhaghosa.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 8th, 2021 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

This is not true. For example. Śamathadeva's commentary on the Kośa preserves in its entirety an agamic text called the don dam stong pa nyid kyi mdo. There is another text which provides a canonical source for the term kun rdzob.

Astus wrote:

That sutra was mentioned by Aemilius, and so I linked its English translation. See <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=610404#p610404>. On terminology <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=610610#p610610>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 1:35 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Matt J said:

Do you mean to say that things appear consistent with the way things are in the Suttas, and/or that language is non-deceiving?

Astus wrote:

No, simply that the doctrine of the two truths is not found in the agamas/nikayas but in post-canonical works.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 1:40 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

They most certainly did derive or have their idea of the two truths from their sūtras. Those passages prove it.

Astus wrote:

How so? Neither the idea of there being two truths, nor the definition of those truths are found there.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 2:00 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

The two truths in Abhidharma is there, but different, and necessarily a Śrāvaka presentation of them.

Astus wrote:

If by Abhidharma you mean the various treatises like the Sangaha and the Kosa, then

yes. If you mean the basic canonical works like the Vibhanga and the Jnanaprasthana, then no.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 5:41 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Arguing that the Sarvastivadins did not have a concept of two truths derived from sūtras, is, frankly just dumb.

Astus wrote:

The reason it practically cannot be derived from the sutras is that the definition of the two truths requires the ideas that come from the Abhidharma, that is, the distinction between truly existing dharmas and nominally existing worldly conventions. Such linguistic separation is not found in the sutras, rather speech is measured by veracity (difference between noble (ariyavohāra) and ignoble expressions (anariyavohāra): DN 33, AN 4.250-253, AN 8.67-68), and a liberated one would not misapprehend it by clinging (MN 74, MN 112, SN 1.25, SN 5.10).

Malcolm said:

the fact is that it is discussed by Vasubandhu, and earlier, etc.

Astus wrote:

It is discussed in fascicle 77 of the Mahavibhasa (T27n1545, p399b-400b; see its summary in Sarvastivada Abhidharma, p 65-67), and that might be the earliest example.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 8:00 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

The Buddha is very clear in a passage that appears in Śamathadeva's commentary [mngon, ju 47a (Toh. 4094)] that one is not to have attachment to the etymologies (nirukti) of the people (jānapada), one is not to hasten to mundane names. It is because they are false.

Prior to this, [mngon, ju 40b (Toh. 4094)], the Buddha is quoted as "Bhikṣus, the supreme (mchog) falsity is the phenomena that are false and deceptive. Bhikṣus, the supreme truths are like this, this is how they are. Therefore, the bhikṣus who posses that possess, the supreme blessings of truth." Moreover, there is a whole section later, where he discusses that which is empty as being false, deceptive, etc.

Astus wrote:

Are there any specific sutras named/known as the sources for those quotes?

Malcolm said:

So you really just have not looked well enough, because of a literal mindedness you have been infected with through reading too much text critical literature. To insist that the two truths are not in the agamas because the term "satyadvaya" does not explicitly occur is very myopic. But the two truths are there, you just have to know to see them. Maybe you should get your eyes checked again.

Astus wrote:

To identify two truths there have to be two ways of perception and expression specified, for instance to say that 'self' is conventional (as in the Vajirāsutta) but then also to say that expressions like aggregates and no-self are ultimately real. The second part is absent from the sutras. Compare that to the pairing of conditioned-unconditioned, that's fairly straightforward.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Aemilius said:

The word "Abhidharma" means 'highest dharma'. Therefore the idea of a higher dharma, that is above the dharma of ordinary language, is present in the very conception of Abhidharma.

Astus wrote:

'we need to understand the significance of the commentarial statement that the Buddha sometimes teaches the Dhamma according to conventional truth, sometimes according to ultimate truth, and sometimes through a combination of both. As one Pāli commentary says, it is like a teacher choosing different dialects to teach his pupils who speak different dialects. There is absolutely no implication here that one dialect is either higher or lower than another.'

(Theravada Abhidhamma by Y. Karunadasa, introduction)

'This does not mean, as some are inclined to think, that the teachings in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka represent a higher set of doctrines. The distinction drawn should be understood in the same way as that between the two kinds of truth. Understood in that way, it does not in any way refer to two kinds of doctrines of which one kind is higher than the other. All that it does is to bring into focus two different ways of presenting the same set of doctrines. In the Sutta Piṭaka more use is made of conventional and transactional terms in ordinary parlance, whereas in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka more use is made of specific, technical terms that directly refer to the ultimate categories of empirical existence. It is a question pertaining to methodology and not a question pertaining to content.'

(Theravada Abhidhamma by Y. Karunadasa, ch 3)

Aemilius said:

There certainly were commentaries before Buddhaghosha, he didn't invent the genre.

Astus wrote:

It still leaves them to be post-canonical.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Two truths are specified, seeing correctly and seeing falsely. That's enough.

Astus wrote:

However, that's not how the two truths are understood in Theravada. At least we'd need some identifiable agamas to say that conventional language is false.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 9th, 2021 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Define canon, and for whom it was canonical.

Astus wrote:

As they're Theravadin commentaries, it's their canon, in particular a set of discourses they took as buddhavacana.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 12:19 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Matt J said:

It must be, otherwise you'd have absurd consequences, such as the Buddha teaching a self because he uses the word "atta."

Astus wrote:

If the mere fact of being a worldly expression rendered something false, then there could be no correct speech in the world and the Buddha would have been lying. But the Buddha did teach correct speech and also taught noble expressions (AN 8.68). Saying that the usage of personal pronouns is the way a sentence is normally formed is not saying it's false but rather not misapprehending, not grasping at it as if it signified something more than it does. How noble expressions are not misapprehended/grasped (aparāmasana/anupādā) is clarified in MN 74 and MN 112.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 12:22 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Who cares what what Theravada thinks? Their tradition has no observable influence on this topic.

Astus wrote:

Assuming that Sarvastivadins worked from generally the same sutras, since their version of the two truths is somewhat different, if the origin of the two truths doctrine is the sutras, there should be some sutras not found in the Theravada canon to explain the discrepancy.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

I understand that it might be Karunadasa's view, but can you cite anywhere that he demonstrates this instead of just asserting it?

Astus wrote:

From the chapter on two truths:

'As F. Edgerton observes, in Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit literature, "a nītārtha text ... is recommended as a guide in preference to one that is neyārtha." As he further observes, "In Pāli neither is ipso facto preferred to the other; one errs only in interpreting one as if it were the other.'"

source: Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, see nītārtha.

'Statements referring to convention-based things (saṅketa) are valid because they are based on common agreement; statements referring to ultimate categories (paramattha) are valid because they are based on the true nature of the real existents.'

source: AA. I, 54; KvuA. 34; DA. 251; SA. II, 77; SS. v. 3.

'As pointed out by K. N. Jayatilleke in his Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, one misconception about the Theravāda version of double truth is that paramattha-sacca is superior to sammuti-sacca and that "what is true in the one sense, is false in the other." This observation that the distinction in question is not based on a theory of degrees of truth will become clear from the following free translation of the relevant passages contained in three Pāli commentaries:

Herein references to living beings, gods, Brahma, and so on, are sammuti-kathā, whereas references to impermanence, suffering, egolessness, the aggregates of the empiric individuality, the bases and elements of sense perception and mind cognition, bases of mindfulness, right effort, and so on, are paramattha-kathā. One who is

capable of understanding and penetrating to the truth and hoisting the flag of arahantship when the teaching is set out in terms of generally accepted conventions, to him the Buddha preaches the doctrine based on sammuti-kathā. One who is capable of understanding and penetrating to the truth and hoisting the flag of arahantship when the teaching is set out in terms of ultimate categories, to him the Buddha preaches the doctrine based on paramattha-kathā. To one who is capable of awakening to the truth through sammuti-kathā, the teaching is not presented on the basis of paramattha-kathā, and, conversely, to one who is capable of awakening to the truth through paramattha-kathā, the teaching is not presented on the basis of sammuti-kathā.

There is this simile: Just as a teacher of the three Vedas who is capable of explaining their meaning in different dialects might teach his pupils by adopting the particular dialect which each pupil understands, even so the Buddha preaches the doctrine adopting, according to the suitability of the occasion, either the sammuti- or the paramattha-kathā. It is by taking into consideration the ability of each individual to understand the four noble truths that the Buddha presents his teaching either by way of sammuti or by way of paramattha or by way of both (vomissakavasena). Whatever the method adopted, the purpose is the same: to show the way to immortality through the analysis of mental and physical phenomena.'

source1: Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, 364.

source2: AA. I, 54–55; DA. I, 251–52; SA. II, 77.

'What is more, as the commentary to the Aṅguttaranikāya states specifically, whether the Buddhas preach the doctrine according to sammuti or paramattha, they teach only what is true, only what accords with actuality, without involving themselves in what is not true (amusā'va).'

source: DA. I, 251; see also SA. II, 72.

'Convention requires the use of such terms, but as long as one does not imagine substantial entities corresponding to them, such statements are valid. On the other hand, as the commentators observe, if for the sake of conforming to the ultimate truth one would say, "The five aggregates eat" (khandhā bhuñjanti), "The five aggregates walk" (khandhā gacchanti), instead of saying, "A person eats," "A person walks," such a situation would result in what is called vohārabheda — that is, a breach of convention resulting in a breakdown in meaningful communication.'

source: SA. I, 51.

'Hence in presenting the teaching, the Buddha does not exceed linguistic conventions (na hi Bhagavā samaññaṃ atidhāvati) 287 but uses such terms as "person" without being led astray by their superficial implications (aparāmasaṃ voharati).288 Because the Buddha is able to employ such linguistic designations as "person" and "individual" without assuming corresponding substantial entities, he is called "skilled in expression" (vohāra-kusala).289 The use of such terms does not in any way involve falsehood (musāvādo na jāyati).290 As one commentary says: "Whether the buddhas speak according to conventional truth or whether the buddhas speak according to absolute truth, they speak only what is true and only what is actual."291 Skillfulness in the use of words is the ability to conform to conventions (sammuti), usages (vohāra), designations (paññatti), and turns of speech (nirutti) in common use in the world without being led

astray by them.²⁹² Hence in understanding the teaching of the Buddha, one is advised not to adhere dogmatically to the mere superficial meanings of words (na vacanabhedamattam ālambitabbam).²⁹³

287 KvuA. 103.

288 VsmṬ. 346; KvuA. 103: Atthi puggalo ti vacana-mattato abhiniveso na kātabbo. Cf. AA. I, 54–55: Lokasammutiñ ca

Buddhā Bhagavanto nappajahanti, lokasamaññāya lokaniruttiyā lokābhilāpe ʔhitā yeva dhammaṃ desenti.

289 SA. I, 51.

290 Cf. MA. I, 125: Tasmā vohāra-kusalassa lokanāthassa satthuno, / sammutiṃ voharantassa musāvādo na jāyati.

291 DA. I, 251–52.

292 DA. I, 351.

293 Abhv. 88: Na ca daḥham mūlhagāhinā bhavitabbam.

In summary for the above references:

'The foregoing observations should show that according to the Theravāda version of double truth, one kind of truth is not held to be superior or inferior to the other. In this connection, one important question arises. If no preferential evaluation is made in respect to the two truths, what is the justification for calling one the absolute or ultimate truth and the other the conventional truth? Here what should not be overlooked is that if one truth is called absolute or ultimate it is because this particular kind of truth has for its vocabulary the technical terms used to express what is ultimate — that is, the dhammas into which the world of experience is ultimately resolved. Strictly speaking, the expression paramattha (absolute/ultimate) does not refer to the truth as such, but to the technical terms through which it is expressed. Thus paramattha-sacca really means the truth expressed by using the technical terms expressive of the ultimate factors of existence. In like manner, sammuti-sacca or conventional truth means the truth expressed by using conventional or transactional terms in common parlance.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

In the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, that all empty compounded phenomena are known by designatory labels is identified with "the middle way," not with "the conventional."

Arguably, as when Bhikṣuṇī Vajrā scolds Māra, "a sentient being" is not a merely designatory label in the way that he uses it. It's not necessarily a convention that designatory labels are used. Sometimes it's a misapprehension that designatory labels are used, like when the rūpa of a rope is mistaken for the rūpa of a snake. Māra is using the convention of "a being" as more than a designatory label. Do you agree?

Astus wrote:

Not sure what to agree with there. The Agama/Nikaya sutras talk of worldly conventions (and there aren't that many sutras like that anyway) as normal manner of speaking, not as some special truth to be analysed or considered. Beyond that, conventional truth is merely conceptual (prajñapti).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 4:54 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are speculating. It's very clear the two truths are the Buddha's teaching, as Nagarjuna proclaims. If there was any disagreement at all, it would be evident in polemics against his assertion, but none can be found anywhere. All there there is pushback against his, and one presumes, his teachers formulation of ultimate truth, and none against his formulation of mundane convention, which also is found in sutra.

Astus wrote:

Why would anyone disagree when the doctrine of two truths is accepted by practically everyone? But it doesn't mean it's accepted because of what's in the sutras. Nagarjuna argues against ideas that are rather Abhidharma based, like the whole dharma-theory.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

As something to NOT follow.

Astus wrote:

Not follow?

'Of that which the wise in the world agree upon as not existing, I too say that it does not exist. And of that which the wise in the world agree upon as existing, I too say that it exists.' (SN 22.94, tr Bodhi)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

What Astus is looking for is the term "satyavidhaṃdvaya" in a sūtra in the same way we find "catursatya" in order to confirm the Buddha taught two truths. What I am pointing out is that term needn't be there for the intention to be there. And the intention is clearly there.

Astus wrote:

If taken very liberally it's possible to come to find some basis for the eventual development of the two truths, just as there is basis for the development for the Abhidharma, and practically the whole of Buddhism. But that's not the same as saying that the Buddha of the Agamas/Nikayas can be shown to have two distinct levels of truths in mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 5:14 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

Is Māra just using a worldly convention, or is his usage of "sentient being" different from the Buddha's usage of "sentient being?" That was what I was getting at.

Astus wrote:

It's usage according to convention. As for the Buddha's usage, that's not necessarily a fixed thing, although it can very much mean a 'fixed thing'. See SN 35.65-66 where Mara and a being are defined the same way, and compare SN 23.2 and SN 22.63 for another connection between Mara and a being.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 6:26 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

So do you not think it reasonable that Māra, when he suggested that "There is a being" or "There are beings" (有衆生), that he was taking the sattva as the ātma? Ven Vajrā responds to this by deconstructing the being into the five aggregates, where there is no being.

Astus wrote:

Mara asked about the origin and end of her, to that was the answer that there is nobody actually coming and going in line with e.g. SN 12.20 (SA 296). But at the same time the term 'being' is not useless or false, but rather it refers not to a constant entity.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 10th, 2021 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

It must be accepted because of what's in the sūtras, hence the notion of "Sautrantikas," and so on. If the two truths had no basis in the agamic sūtras, for what reason then did

the Sautrantikas accept it without question?

Astus wrote:

Sautrantikas accepted momentariness and had their karmic seed theory, but neither of them are found in the sutras.

Malcolm said:

If as you imply, Nāgārjuna was a species of Sautrantika, why would he accept and promote the two truths? After all, the term "two truths" does not occur in the PP in 8000 lines either, assuming this is one of the earliest and it was before Nāgārjuna. But it discusses dharmas as being mere conventions and names. It also mentioned pāramārtha five times only.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna lived after the creation of the Mahavibhasa, so the two truths doctrine was already an established one among the Sarvastivadins. As for his sources for the two truths teaching, he does not actually specify, does he?

Malcolm said:

Are you suggesting that the idea of two truths in Mahāyāna also comes from Abhidharma commentaries, which we have no evidence of?

Astus wrote:

The svabhava of dharmas is an Abhidharma theory of the Sarvastivadins, not a sutra teaching. What's the problem with saying what's written, that is, that the two truths doctrine is found only in treatises like the Mahavibhasa?

Malcolm said:

Its unclear which sūtras Nāgārjuna has before him, other than a PP sūtra and probably the Kāśyapaparivarta, but given that he and Lokāṣema were contemporaries, it is reasonable to assume at least he had these sūtras in front him.

Astus wrote:

Nagarjuna was familiar with various abhidharma works, as discussed in chapter 7 of Nagarjuna in Context.

Malcolm said:

Now if your position is that the two truths are not found in either seven-text Abhidharma collections, and only appears in commentaries substantially dated after Nāgārjuna, then you have to accept, by your own reasoning, that the "two truths" as a term occurs only in Mahāyāna, and that its presence in śrāvaka sources after Nāgārjuna are polemical response against emptiness as ultimate truth.

Astus wrote:

The Mahavibhasa precedes Nagarjuna. Beyond that, it would take some further research to identify early occurrences of the two truths doctrine.

Malcolm said:

If on the other hand one accepts that the notion of two truths is discernible in agamic sūtras, no such admission is required, and the two truths doctrine can be seen to develop along different lines in Abhidharma and Mahāyāna, since it is certainly the case that Nāgārjuna cites it as a basic fact which no one would question at all. And there is the possibility, quite distinct and equally remote, that a text like the Pitāputrasamāgamana was "converted" into a Mahāyāna text.

Astus wrote:

The idea that there are just two truths is not that fixed, as the Pudgalavadins had a threefold division (Pudgalavada Buddhism, p 105), Yogacara also has a threefold version, and the Mahāvibhāṣa notes the existence of twofold, threefold, and fivefold divisions according to different interpreters (Sarvastivada Abhidharma, p 77-78). So, if the two truths doctrine were such a clear case in the sutras, there would be no reason for differences.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 11th, 2021 at 5:57 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

You are certain of this?

Astus wrote:

'There can be no doubt that the theory of momentariness cannot be traced back to the beginnings of Buddhism or even the Buddha himself. It does not fit the practically orientated teachings of early Buddhism and clearly bears the mark of later doctrinal elaboration. Thus in the Nikayas/Agamas there are many passages which attribute duration to material and even mental entities, whereas there is, at least to my knowledge, no passage which testifies to the stance that all conditioned entities are momentary.'

(The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness, p 15)

Malcolm said:

Again, this is uncertain. Walser claims that Ratnavali was written between 175-225. But it could easily have been written 50 years earlier. The Mahāvibhāṣa was supposedly compiled during the Reign of Kanishka (127-151 CE) in Bactria. This is 24 year period is a pretty narrow window to compose such a monumental text and then distribute it across India to Andhra Pradesh, to be received and studied by Nāgārjuna.

Astus wrote:

Can be uncertain, sure. However, the Mahāvibhāṣa is a compendium, and the information contained therein most likely predates it, so it still allows Sarvastivadin ideas of the two truths to be general knowledge in Nagarjuna's time. Also, it looks like when it comes to tracing the origins of the two truths so far, it's been the same Mahāvibhāṣa section brought up by Yinshun (An Investigation into Emptiness) and

Buescher (Echoes from an Empty Sky).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 11th, 2021 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Astus wrote:

On the issue of two truths and Nagarjuna: <https://fh.pku.edu.cn/docs/2018-11/20181119234424438102.pdf>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 11th, 2021 at 4:08 PM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Again, uncertain. Face it Astus, you just don't have very strong evidence to be making the confident statements you've been making on this subject.

Astus wrote:

Let's put it this way then: there is no evidence so far of the existence of the two truths doctrine in the sutras or the main 7 abhidharma texts, only in somewhat later works like the Mahavibhasa. To maintain that nevertheless there is would need finding such references.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 12th, 2021 at 4:56 AM

Title: Re: Any good Zen Mindfulness in everyday situations when you are not sitting meditating?

Content:

2ndchance said:

Any good Zen Mindfulness in everyday situations when you are not sitting meditating?

Astus wrote:

Zen mindfulness is principally no mindfulness (wunian 無念). If that is still too obscure then one can always watch a phrase (kanhua 看話), i.e. a word head (huatou 話頭). In case that proves to be difficult for the moment, it is best to be mindful of the Buddha (nianfo 念佛) as much as possible. That can lead to asking 'Who is mindful of the Buddha?' (nianfo shi shei 念佛是誰), and with that may come the realisation of no mind (wuxin 無心).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 12th, 2021 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: Two truths in Mahayana Buddhism

Content:

Malcolm said:

Often in Vasubandhu and earlier Abhidharma texts references are made to doctrines belonging to sutras not found in one or another canon, like the bardo, for example, or in sutras that did not survive at all. The best you can say is that YOU personally don't see such evidence; others, such as myself, disagree. The difference, I suspect, is how much credibility one wants to lend buddhologists as being the final arbiters of Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

I see it more like a matter of either being able to provide a clear source or not, like with quotes around the internet attributed to the Buddha.

'Pārśva, one of the authors of the Sarvāstivāda School's Mahāvibhāṣā, replied to a criticism made by the Sautrāntikas (whose name means "those who rely on sūtra as final"). They said that certain abhidharma doctrines had no justification in the sūtras. To meet this criticism, Pārśva made the extraordinary claim that the reason these matters could not be found in the sūtras must be because they had been in sūtras that the Buddha had preached, but that had been subsequently lost.'
(Echoes from an Empty Sky, p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 20th, 2021 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: Are there English translations of extant Sarvastivadin and Dharmaguptaka texts?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are some translated abhidharma texts: Abhidharmakosa by Vasubandhu, Abhidharmavatara (Entrance Into the Supreme Doctrine) by Skandhila, Abhidharmahrdaya (The Essence of Scholasticism) by Dharmasri, Amrtarasa (La saveur de l'immortel / The Taste of the Deathless) by Ghosaka. Also the book Sarvastivada Abhidharma by K.L. Dhammajoti is highly recommended.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 30th, 2021 at 6:14 AM

Title: Re: Posture

Content:

yinyangkoi said:

How important is posture?

Astus wrote:

It is important to the extent it allows you the desired state of mind.

yinyangkoi said:

However I read that for dōgen zazen was all about assuming the correct posture and keeping it.

Astus wrote:

Have you read it about Dogen or from Dogen? Quite a difference.

yinyangkoi said:

So should I focus more on posture?

Astus wrote:

Since you are already in a sangha, why not seek advice from more experienced members and/or the teacher? Anyhow, if you keep to your meditation and you pay attention to your body, your mind, and how they interact, you should eventually feel how to do it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 31st, 2021 at 4:35 AM

Title: Re: Where did the Buddha go after death? Where is the Buddha now? Where do Buddhas go after death?

Content:

Nalanda said:

How is it explained in our tradition?

Astus wrote:

'How can "It is eternal," "It is noneternal," and the rest of this tetralemma apply [to the Tathāgata], who is free of intrinsic nature?

And how can "It has an end," "It does not have an end," and the rest of this tetralemma apply [to the Tathāgata], who is free of intrinsic nature?

But one who has taken up a mass of beliefs, such as that the Tathāgata exists, so conceptualizing, that person will also imagine that [the Tathāgata] does not exist when extinguished.

And the thought does not hold, with reference to this (Tathāgata) who is intrinsically empty,

that the Buddha either exists or does not exist after cessation.

Those who hypostatize the Buddha, who is beyond hypostatization and unwavering, they all, deceived by hypostatization, fail to see the Tathāgata.'

(MMK 22.12-15, tr Siderits; cf. <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.85/en/sujato> &

<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.86/en/sujato>; <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 3rd, 2022 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: Lidai fabao ji by Wuzhu

Content:

fckw said:

Does anyone know the text "Lidai Fabao Ji" and can provide a summary of its philosophical view?

Astus wrote:

"All beings are fundamentally pure and fundamentally complete. From the Buddhas at the upper end down to sentient beings, all are of the same pure nature. However, with a single thought [produced by] the deluded mind of beings, the Three Worlds are dyed. It is because beings have thought that one provisionally teaches no-thought, but if there is no presence of thought, then no-thought itself is not. No-thought is thus no-birth, no-thought is thus no-extinction. No-thought is thus no-love, no-thought is thus no-hate. No-thought is thus no-grasping, no-thought is thus no-abandoning. No-thought is thus no-high, no-thought is thus no-low. No-thought is thus no-male, no-thought is thus no-female. No-thought is thus no-true, no-thought is thus no-false. At the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not. 'When the mind is produced then the various dharmas are produced, when the mind is extinguished then the various dharmas are extinguished.' 'As one's mind is, so also are the stains of wrongdoing, so also are all dharmas.' At the time of true no-thought, 'all dharmas are the Buddha-Dharma,' there is not a single dharma separate from bodhi."

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 21, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 364-365)

"If there is but one thing in your mind, you will not depart from the Three Worlds. 'The existence of dharmas is conventional truth, and no-nature is the cardinal meaning.' 'Transcending all characteristics is called the Buddhas.' No-thought is thus no-characteristics, presence of thought is thus empty delusion. No-thought departs the Three Worlds, thought remains in the Three Worlds. No-thought is thus no-true, no-thought is thus no-false. No-thought is thus no-self, no-thought is thus no-other. If you transcend both self and other you achieve Buddha-awakening.⁵⁴² At the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not."

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 25, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 374)

"'The Most Honored Greatly Enlightened One expounded the Dharma of producing no-thought. [Regarding] the mind of no-thought and non-production, the mind is constantly producing and never extinguished.' At all times self-present, do not retreat and do not turn. Not sinking and not floating, not flowing and not fixed, not moving and not shaking, not coming and not going, lively like a fish jumping! 'Walking and sitting, everything is meditation.'"

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 27, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 376)

"The [Vajracchedikā] sūtra says, 'Transcendence of all characteristics is precisely called the Buddha.' 'Someone who sees 'I' through form and seeks 'I' through sounds is taking a false path, and is unable to see the Tathāgata.' The words of this scripture are none other than this mind. Seeing the nature is the Way of becoming a Buddha. No-thought is thus seeing the nature, no-thought is no-defilements. Nothought is thus no-self, no-thought is thus no-other. No-thought is thus no-Buddha, no-thought is no-beings. At the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not."

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 41, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 400)

fckw said:

Did Wuzhu's thoughts and views ever have show any substantial influence over other forms of Chan and Buddhist practice?

Astus wrote:

'The Lidai fabao ji modified received genres or introduced new stylistic features in ways that would shape the standard genres of Song Chan literature—chuandeng lu, yulu, and zhenzan. Furthermore, the Lidai fabao ji version of the Indian line of patriarchs was the source for the version that became official. Many anecdotes that have their origins in the Lidai fabao ji found their way into the official annals of Chan, yet the Lidai fabao ji itself was repudiated and all but forgotten.'

(The Mytique of Transmission, p 293)

'Bao Tang antinomianism was lost in the mainstream of Chan. Repudiated, it nevertheless imparted a subtle pervasive flavor, and perhaps a warning about the necessary limits of the ultimate teaching. Wuzhu and his robe would seem to be not-recollected, only to reappear in surprising guises.'

(The Mytique of Transmission, p 296)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 4th, 2022 at 5:01 AM

Title: Re: Lidai fabao ji by Wuzhu

Content:

fckw said:

How does he mean "no-thought" in this context? I guess not simply absence of thoughts, right?

Astus wrote:

That might be up for debate. Zongmi criticised Wuzhu for teaching pure extinguishing of thought, but his opinion could have been a misrepresentation. Although no-thought was the central teaching of Wuzhu, it's other things (i.e. disregard of many common Buddhist customs) the Baotang school was viewed as controversial. Wuzhu might have also just meant no-thought in the same sense as Shenhui and thus no different from Zongmi. The below passages suggest to me that it's the latter case.

The Venerable replied, "This seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing [that you are getting at] is worldly seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing. The Vimalakīrti-sūtra says, 'If you go about seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing, then this is seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing. The Dharma transcends seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing.' No-thought is thus no-seeing, no-thought is thus no-knowing. It is because beings have thought that one provisionally teaches no-thought, but at the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not." He went on to quote the Vajrasamādhi-sūtra, " 'The Most Honored Greatly Enlightened One expounded the Dharma of producing no-thought. [Regarding] the mind of no-thought and non-production, the mind is constantly producing and never extinguished.' Further, the Vimalakīrti-sūtra says, 'Not-practicing is bodhi, because it is without recollection.' 'Always seek no-thought, the wisdom characterized by actuality.' The Lankā-sūtra says, 'The Holy One's inner reference point is to constantly abide in no-thought.' The Śūraṅgama-sūtra says, 'Ānanda, if you initiate the mind [even] for a short time, the

suffering due to defilements will have [already] arisen first.’ Further, it says, ‘So long as sight is separate from seeing, then seeing cannot be attained.’ The Viśeṣacinta-sūtra says, ‘How is it that all dharmas are true, and how is it that all dharmas are wrong? If one makes distinctions with the mind, then all dharmas are wrong. If one does not make distinctions with the mind, all dharmas are true. In the midst of no-mind dharmas, once one gives rise to distinctions of mind everything is wrong.’ The Lankā-sūtra says, ‘Seeing the Buddha and hearing the Dharma is your own mind making distinctions. One for whom ‘seeing’ does not arise—this is called seeing the Buddha.’ ”

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 20, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 361-362)

The Venerable said, “Tell me about your own stage of practice.” Master Zhiyi revealed the teachings of his original master and said, “Viewing purity.”

The Venerable then expounded the Dharma for him: “The Dharma has neither stain nor purity, how does one ‘view purity’? Right here purity was never established, why would there be stains? Viewing purity is in fact stains, viewing stains is in fact purity. Delusive thinking is stains, no-delusive thinking is purity. Grasping ‘I’ is stain, not grasping ‘I’ is purity. No-thought is thus no-stain, no-thought is thus no-purity. [No-thought is thus no-true,] no-thought is thus no-false. No-thought is thus no-self, no-thought is thus no-other. If you transcend both self and other you achieve Buddha-awakening. At the time of true self, self itself is not.”

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 26, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 374-375)

The Venerable said, “ ‘The existence of dharmas is conventional truth, and no-nature is the cardinal meaning.’ Verbal explication is thus attachment, and mental brilliance is a demonic device. No-thought is thus no-attachment, no-thought is thus no-bondage. No-thought is nirvāṇa, thinking is birth and death; no-thought is mental brilliance, thinking is dullness. No-thought is thus no ‘that,’ no-thought is thus no ‘this.’ No-thought is thus no Buddha, no-thought is no beings. In the great compassionate wisdom of prajñā, there are no Buddhas and no beings. ‘There is neither nirvāṇa-Buddha nor Buddha-nirvāṇa.’ Those who understand this explication are the true explicators. If you do not explicate like this, then you are just a common fellow attached to characteristics.”

(Lidai Fabao Ji, section 28, in *The Mystique of Transmission*, p 377)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2022 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Minobu said:

If one understand the Gohonzon one sees that every aspect of Buddhism is right there , in front of you and inside you. It's the make up of the Buddhist world in Samsara. Total and complete.

Astus wrote:

Are there some treatises explaining how specific practices (śamatha-vipaśyanā, ānāpānasmṛti, smṛtyupasthāna, dānapāramitā etc.) are incorporated in the Gohonzon and/or the Odaimoku?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 5th, 2022 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

illaraza said:

Singlemindedness, awareness of the breath, calmness and tranquility, insight, and danaparamita are incorporated into the Gohonzon because Gohonzon is the Eternal Buddha at the Ceremony in the Air. The Lotus Sutra Chapter 17, Distinction of Benefits, teaches that one moment of joyful faith signifies having performed all the meditations and other paramitas (save for the paramita of wisdom) for quintillions of lifetimes or one would be unable to encounter the Gohonzon and Namu Myoho renge kyo.

Astus wrote:

That section (BDK ed, p 237) talks of the mundane merit collected by various methods does not equal accepting the great length of the Buddha's lifespan, which seems logical to me, since without prajnaparamita all meritorious actions are worldly and limited. Later (p 241) the same chapter says that preserving the sutra and practising all six paramitas is the highest form of merit. I wonder if the presence/fulfilment of all six paramitas in the Odaimoku is addressed by Nichiren or later teachers?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2022 at 12:00 AM

Title: Re: True Mind is No Mind

Content:

LastLegend said:

You meant to use Nagarjuna to end grasping, why leaves one statement to grasp to? Lankavatara Sutra (affiliated with Bodhidharma too) says everything lacks self-existence is non-arising? So how do you understand that?

Astus wrote:

Your quote from the Lankavatara Sutra (2.27) answered the question: 'What lacks self-existence is momentary and in continuous flux and manifests different states of existence but without possessing any existence of its own.' Or in Suzuki's translation: 'That all things are devoid of self-nature means that there is a constant and uninterrupted becoming, a momentary change from one state of existence to another; seeing this, Mahamati, all things are destitute of self-nature.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2022 at 4:39 AM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Queequeg said:

He speaks of the benefits of all teachings and practices being included in the Lotus Sutra, and more specifically, in the title, which embodies the entire text.

...

The four "transcendent" powers of the tathagata in this passage is considered by Zhiyi to be the most important in the whole text. Nichiren bases his teachings on the benefits of the Daimoku on this passage.

Astus wrote:

By the four powers are you referring to this sentence?

'To sum up, in this sutra I have clearly revealed and taught all the teachings of the Tathāgata, all the transcendent powers of the Tathāgata, all the treasure houses of the hidden essence of the Tathāgata, and all the profound aspects of the Tathāgata.'

Does perhaps Zhiyi explain in detail how the specific teachings, powers, treasure houses, and aspects can be found in the Lotus Sutra?

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 6th, 2022 at 6:16 AM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Queequeg said:

I am sure that at least some comments on this can be found in Miao-fa Wenju, Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra, his commentary on the text. I've never tried to read the Chinese, only bits and pieces that were translated into English; I think someone is working on a translation of this text, as well as a complete translation of the Xuan-i.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for the information. Maybe something will turn up eventually.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 7th, 2022 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: True Mind is No Mind

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

Great collection of quotes, Astus - thanks - but I particularly liked the bit I have bolded, since it seems to make explicit a connection between Taoism and Chan/Zen which I have always felt must exist, but haven't seen in print anywhere.

Astus wrote:

The term used there is rudao 入道, literally 'enter the path', and usually it is an expression for becoming a monk, as a short version of chujia rudao 出家入道, i.e. 'to

leave home and enter the path'. But in the next paragraph it is explained what was actually meant.

In The Gates of Chan: "Facing a wall", means to connect with the Tao, it is only the starting point.

In 入禪之門: 那叫入道, 仅仅是个起点而已。 - It's called entering the path, it's just the beginning and nothing more.

In this context it should also be noted that the title of Bodhidharma's treatise contains the same term (rudao 入道) with the meaning of entering the path of Mahayana, and the text begins with (in Guo Gu's translation from The Essence of Chan) 'There are many ways to enter the Path. In summary, there are two'.

So, there's no reason to assume any connection here with Taoism.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 7th, 2022 at 7:20 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

illaraza said:

My question is why would you find it necessary for "Zhiyi (to) explain in detail how the specific teachings, powers, treasure houses, and aspects can be found in the Lotus Sutra?" when the Lotus Sutra itself has already delineated that it has?

Astus wrote:

Because while there is a statement that it contains all the teachings, since the sutra does not literally contain them - otherwise instead of 7 volumes it should be many hundreds of volumes bigger - it should be explained how and in what way could it still encompass all the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 8th, 2022 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Minobu said:

Obviously because The Sutra IN and of Itself is Buddha .

Astus wrote:

In what sense? The sutra, like other sutras, was taught by Shakyamuni Buddha, and before him by other buddhas, so in a way it's a representation of buddhas. But how is it itself a buddha?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 9th, 2022 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Minobu said:

So I believe if you view this Sutra which appeared in our history as being authentic and directly from the Buddha, then it is Buddha . Even though more than likely by proxy.

Astus wrote:

Almost all the sutras were taught by the Buddha, and for that all could be called a buddha, but only in the sense of representing his words. Otherwise, it'd be somewhat confusing to say that the Buddha taught the Buddha. And to return to the original question of how the Lotus Sutra contains all the teachings, if that's because it was taught by the Buddha, then all the others also contain all the teachings. But it still does not explain how would one video include many other videos simply because they were made by the same person.

Minobu said:

Hence a living Buddha , in the form of Sutra, emerged in this way . It's the nature of this Eternal Buddha.

Astus wrote:

That seems quite metaphorical.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 9th, 2022 at 8:12 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

illaraza said:

Examples are: Four Noble Truths and Twelve Linked Chain of Causation in Chapter 7, Parable of the Phantom City; non-substantiality or the Law of Emptiness found in the Specific Teachings, such as the Wisdom Sutras, is found in almost every chapter of the Lotus Sutra; likewise the Buddha's powers are illucidated in almost every chapter of the Lotus Sutra;

Astus wrote:

One common summary of the teachings is the 'thirty-seven helpful ways to attain the Dharma' (LS ch 27, BDK ed, p 307), but although it's mentioned once like that, its contents are not provided. There are also common Mahayana doctrines too, like the two truths, 10 bhumis, and alayavijnana that are not mentioned.

illaraza said:

by treasure houses and aspects, I assume you mean the Three Jewels which, of course, are also illucidated throughout the Lotus Sutra.

Astus wrote:

I was simply referring to the four things mentioned in ch 21 (BDK ed p 272): 'To sum up, in this sutra I have clearly revealed and taught all the teachings of the Tathāgata, all the

transcendent powers of the Tathāgata, all the treasure houses of the hidden essence of the Tathāgata, and all the profound aspects of the Tathāgata.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 4:07 AM

Title: Re: Books/papers on the spread of Vajrayana from India to Far East

Content:

Astus wrote:

Lehnert, Martin: Tantric Threads between India and China. In: Heirman, Ann; Bumbacher, Stephan Peter (eds.) : The Spread of Buddhism. Leiden: Brill. pp. 247-276

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Minobu said:

When one chants Om Mani Padme Hum they are generating certain qualities.

Same with Buddha Manjushri mantra , or Vajrayogini mantra.

We chant the title of the Lotus sutra in much the same way. It's a Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Different buddhas highlight different qualities of buddhahood. What are the emphasised qualities of the Lotus Sutra?

Minobu said:

Historically what other Sutra is ever presented and practiced in The Way The Lotus Sutra has.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean the same way it is used by the followers of Nichiren? Probably none, as it is only Nichiren's tradition where the focus is on a single scripture that has survived until now.

Minobu said:

It enabled the common folk to meld with Buddha. Fantastic !

Astus wrote:

I don't have exact numbers, but apparently the Pure Land teachings had and still have a much larger impact than Nichiren's teachings. But that doesn't mean it isn't fantastic.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 5:13 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Queequeg said:

Have you read the lotus? It's more or less the story explaining this.

Astus wrote:

I have, but I don't think I see your point here. How is it explaining it?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Title: Re: Is there a 'true self'?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Although there are teachings about 'true self' and other self-like expressions, if one knows that whatever quality or meaning one may come up for anything that can be called a self falls within the categories of the five aggregates that are impermanent and empty, then it can be understood in the right context.

'It's the self that is connected with the universe. It's "the four seasons come around" and "in spring, flowers. In summer, cuckoos. And in fall, maple leaves." This self is not the I that is jealous of others' happiness and glad at their sadness, thinking, "Thankfully that didn't happen to me." Rather, our true self rejoices over others' happiness from the bottom of our hearts and truly shares their sorrows.'

(Kosho Uchiyama, in Homeless Kodo, ch 65)

'Our zazen practice is essentially a matter of awakening to the true Self. This true Self cannot be perceived. It is vast and without limit. To awaken to this true Self is also expressed as awakening to "No-Self," or "No-Mind," or "Emptiness," or "to forget the ego-self."

All things, including people, are never fixed in the same condition from moment to moment. In the midst of this constant change, there is no central thing, nothing we can perceive as the ego-self. The teaching of Buddhism is the matter of awakening to the fact that originally there is no self. "No-Self" means to awaken to a self that is so vast and limitless that it cannot be seen. Something that can be seen has a limit - it is small.'

(Sekkei Harada, in The Essence of Zen, p 80)

'The essential teaching of Mahayana is, as the Heart Sutra says, "The five aggregates are empty." This means that I and its objects are productions of the five aggregates: form (in our case, body), sensation, perception, formation, and consciousness (that is, the functions of our mind). Therefore I does not exist independently. Not only I but also objects (things) are empty, meaning without fixed identity.

Because of negative-sounding expressions such as emptiness, Buddhism is sometimes considered a pessimistic or nihilistic religion. But this is only a partial understanding. Emptiness, or the lack of fixed entities existing independently of others, means we're connected with everything in the universe. This interconnectedness is called true self, so in fact no self and true self are the same.'

(Shohaku Okumura, in Homeless Kodo, ch 61)

'It's a mistake for a common person to try to become a buddha. If an ordinary person tries to become a buddha by means of practice, trying to awaken to the true self, then a great mistake arises. What I want to say is that an ordinary person should truly be an ordinary person, completely giving up seeking mind and practice, and then just to be truly ordinary. That is enough. That is why we say, 'Don't be fooled by others.' If you are too impressed and inspired by the great teachings of Buddha or in worshipping wonderful images of Buddha, you will lose your self. And that is no good. To be really ordinary is to be a buddha. That is 'the awakened self'. This is the teaching of Zen.' (Sekkei Harada, from <https://buddhismnow.com/2013/05/21/the-awakened-self-harada-sekkei-roshi/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 8:37 PM

Title: Re: Nichiren Shonin's teachings

Content:

Queequeg said:

The Lotus is an overview teaching, not minutiae.

Astus wrote:

That I can see. When it comes to the topics of upaya and ekayana the Lotus Sutra is a good source.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Is there a 'true self'?

Content:

KeithA said:

even injecting the word "self" into the mix is a hindrance.

Astus wrote:

Agreed, it makes things unnecessarily confusing. From The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism:

'According to the Buddhist understanding of Anatman, the true self can be understood as the ever-changing configuration of five elements, known as the five skandhas. Rather than possessing an eternal and unchanging soul, the individual is actually an on-going process of transformation.'

(p 7)

'The five skandhas are characterized by impermanence and suffering. Although there is no permanent self or soul that exists outside or beyond the ongoing physical and mental processes referred to as the five skandhas, human beings create the notion of such a self. The fundamental attachment to a false sense of self is the basic cause of suffering. The true self is nothing other than a convenient label for the process of changing configurations.'

(p 94)

Another problematic sounding one is self-nature (zixing/jisho 自性). From the Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism:

'A Chan soteriological term referring to a person's Buddha-nature. It does not denote any self-existence or any changeless essence existent in and by itself. No such metaphysical meaning is involved in the original use of this term. A notable case of the traditional Chan usage of this term is in the Platform Sutra, where Buddha-nature is equivalent to self-nature (zixing) in the sense that Buddha-nature cannot be objectified and realized outside each person. Seeing or realizing the Buddha-nature is the existential transformation of the human mind and entire personhood, being able to understand and appreciate what constitutes a person — elements of impermanence and non-abiding — and then accordingly. The realization of self-nature thus requires the accomplishment of action, the practical-behavioral carrying out of non-attachment, rather than identifying a metaphysical object or discovering subjectivity through knowledge. The usage also indicates the Chan appropriation of positive or kataphatic language in its teachings without abandoning the use of negative or apophatic language: the Chan walk on two roads.'

(p 201)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 10th, 2022 at 11:44 PM

Title: Re: True Mind is No Mind

Content:

SilenceMonkey said:

How knowledgeable were the Chan patriarchs of Indian Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

If by Indian Buddhism you mean scriptures from India available in Chinese, then normally quite knowledgeable.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2022 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: How does general Mahayana see Vajrayana claims of being X?

Content:

Nalanda said:

I would like to hear the perception of general Mahayana (historically and in the present) to Vajrayana's view of itself as X...

Astus wrote:

The idea of 'general Mahayana' is an abstract one, just as the idea of 'general Hinayana', or even 'general Vajrayana'. Dogen had this to say on the matter:

'Remember, among Buddhists we do not argue about superiority and inferiority of

philosophies, or choose between shallowness and profundity in the Dharma; we need only know whether the practice is genuine or artificial. Some have entered into the stream of the Buddha's truth at the invitation of grass, flowers, mountains, and rivers. Some have received and maintained the stamp of Buddha by grasping soil, stones, sand, and pebbles. Furthermore, the vast and great word is even more abundant than the myriad phenomena. And the turning of the great Dharma wheel is contained in every molecule. This being so, the words "Mind here and now is buddha" are only the moon in water, and the idea "Just to sit is to become buddha" is also a reflection in a mirror. We should not be caught by the skillfulness of the words.

...

Disciples of the Buddha should just learn the Buddha-Dharma. Furthermore, we should remember that from the beginning we have never lacked the supreme state of bodhi, and we will receive it and use it forever. At the same time, because we cannot perceive it directly, we are prone to beget random intellectual ideas, and because we chase after these as if they were real things, we vainly pass by the great state of truth. From these intellectual ideas emerge all sorts of flowers in space: we think about the twelvefold cycle and the twenty-five spheres of existence; and ideas of the three vehicles and the five vehicles or of having buddha[-nature] and not having buddha[-nature] are endless. We should not think that the learning of these intellectual ideas is the right path of Buddhist practice.'

(Bendowa, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 9-10)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2022 at 6:34 AM

Title: Re: How does general Mahayana see Vajrayana claims of being X?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Clearly, Dogen never encountered any Tibetan Buddhists during his sojourn in China. I think the "no true Scotsman" fallacy might apply to this statement.

Astus wrote:

Surely he was aware of the various classifications of the teachings that are found in any Mahayana school, so his response was quite intentionally like that.

'Further, Mahamati, if a man becomes attached to the [literal] meaning or words and holds fast to their agreement in regard to the original state of Nirvana which is unborn and undying, the Triple vehicle, the one vehicle, the five [Dharmas], mentation, the [three] Svabhavas, etc., he will come to cherish views either affirmative or negative. As varieties of objects are seen in Maya and are discriminated [as real], statements are erroneously made, discriminations erroneously go on.'

(Lankavatara Sutra 3.65, tr D.T. Suzuki)

As for a modern take on the matter, here's what Yinshun wrote:

'All the Buddhist scriptures from India transmitted in each period, whether from Early Buddhism, Early and Late Mahayana Buddhism, or from Esoteric Mahayana Buddhism,

declare themselves to be the most profound, complete and the ultimate teaching. For example, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (Lotus Sūtra) proclaims itself to be the king of all sutras; likewise the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra (Golden Radiance Sūtra) makes the same claim. Some Esoteric Mahayana scriptures are titled the Great Tantra King, the Great Ritual King (translated in Chinese as the Great Doctrine King). Some scriptures use the metaphor of the five grades of cow milk products, lauding their doctrines with a comparison to the ghee being the best. The Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra compares itself to the ghee, and in the Mahayana Doctrinal Objectives of Six Paramitas Sūtra, the Dhāraṇī Piṭaka is compared to the ghee. To sum up, the scriptures from each period proclaim themselves to be the most profound, the most perfect. But which of the scriptures is indeed the most profound? That depends on the differences in understanding of each believer.'

(Human-Centered Buddhism, p 13-14)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 12th, 2022 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: How does general Mahayana see Vajrayana claims of being X?

Content:

Nalanda said:

Does Zen have Rinzai 1, Rinzai 2 Rinzai 3, etc.

Astus wrote:

The Lankavatara Sutra (2.37 / T16n671p533a2 / T16n672p602a10) talks of four types of dhyāna (sìzhōng chán 四種禪). Then there are various divisions and schemes that were taught, like the five grades by Zongmi that's based on the view that 'those training in the three vehicles [of the hearer, private buddha, and bodhisattva] who wish to seek the path of the noble ones must practice dhyana. Apart from dhyana there is no gate, in the absence of dhyana no road.' (Zongmi on Chan, p 103 / T48n2015p399b9-10). Both of these two sources refer to dhyana/chan in a general sense, and then the tradition of Bodhidharma is naturally identified with the highest form of dhyana. When it comes to the internal categorisation of various branches of Zen (chánzōng 禪宗) itself, there can be many categories, like wild fox Chan (yěhú chán 野狐禪), literary Chan (wénzì chán 文字禪), Tathagata Chan (rúlái chán 如來禪), and patriarchal/ancestral Chan (zùshī chán 祖師禪).

One simple way the Chan school distinguished itself from other Buddhists was the distinction between doctrine (jiào 教) and chan (禪), that is, others who relied on scriptures and the separate transmission outside scriptures (jiàowài biéchuan 教外別傳). But then of course there were some debates and controversies about what it actually means to be separate from scriptures. Here's one modern take on the question:

'Among the eight Mahāyāna schools in China, the approach of the Consciousness-only school resembles science, and that of the Three Treatise school resembles philosophy. The Huayan and Tiantai schools' approaches resemble literature, and the approaches of the Mantra [Esoteric] and Pure Land schools resemble aesthetics. The Chan school

embodies the core teaching of Buddhism. Master Taixu once said, “The defining characteristic of Chinese Buddhism lies in [its emphasis on] chan [meditation].” The essence of any of the other schools can be reduced to the spirit of Chan.’
(Orthodox Chinese Buddhism by Ven. Sheng-yen, p 128)

And here's a classical one:

Someone asked, “What is that which is transmitted separately from the teachings of the three vehicles?”

The Master said, “If you don’t ask me I won’t answer. But if you do, I go to India in the morning and return to China in the evening!”

The questioner said, “Please, Master, point it out to me!”

The Master replied, “Hopeless case!”

(Record of Yunmen, section 112, tr Urs App)

And to explain that:

‘Followers of the Way, don’t seek within words, for when the mind is stirred you become wearied, and there’s no benefit in gulping icy air. It’s better, by the single thought that causal relations are [fundamentally] birthless, to surpass the bodhisattvas who depend upon the provisional teaching of the Three Vehicles.’

(Record of Linji, p 32, tr Sasaki)

To combine all sides:

‘To use no words to reach the wordless is Seon; to use words to reach the wordless is Doctrine. So then the mind is the Seon dharma (method) and language is the Doctrine dharma. Although the Dharma is of only one taste, the views and interpretations are as far apart as heaven and earth.’

(Seonga Gwigam by Hyujeong, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 59)

Further elaborated:

‘But when the buddhas preach the sutras they first discriminate the dharmas and then preach the ultimate emptiness, whereas when the patriarchal teachers indicate via sentences, if they eliminate the traces from the ground of thought, they reveal the principle in the source of the mind.’

(Seonga Gwigam by Hyujeong, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 67)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 14th, 2022 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Can you conceive of a scenario where it turns out Nagarjuna was wrong (ex: not all things are empty, or otherwise)?

Content:

Dgj said:

Can you conceive of, or agree that someone else could conceive of a hypothetical

scenario where dependent origination, emptiness, etc. are entirely false and disproven?

Astus wrote:

It is false for every ordinary being who assume a self.

Dgj said:

Or, do you feel that Nagarjuna's teaching, and the teaching in general that everything is empty, impermanent, etc. is irrefutable, and incontrovertibly true?

Astus wrote:

It is not grasped as true by noble beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2022 at 4:56 PM

Title: Re: So Many Mahayana Sutras - Do They All Agree - Why So Many?

Content:

Nalanda said:

I learned that there are over 6,000 Mahaya Sutras. Can this be boiled down to 100, 50, 25, 10, 5, 1. For the purpose of managing / prioritizing what to study? I'm guessing Prajnaparamita at the top. But what would be the top 5 or 10 to study in sequence ideally?

Astus wrote:

If it's one sutra, make it the

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutra_of_Perfect_Enlightenment, it's a nice summary. For two, you can add the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrasamadhi-sutra>. To make it five, add the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_Sutra, the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamond_Sutra, and the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vimalakirti_Sutra Sutra.

Also, it's good to keep in mind the following case:

Zhaozhou asked a monk, "How many sutras do you read in one day?"

The monk said, "Sometimes seven or eight. Sometimes ten."

Zhaozhou said, "Oh, then you can't read scriptures."

The monk said, "Master, how many do you read in a day?"

Zhaozhou said, "In one day I read one word."

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 159)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 18th, 2022 at 6:54 PM

Title: Re: So Many Mahayana Sutras - Do They All Agree - Why So Many?

Content:

Nalanda said:

These are Chinese and Korean sutras? 6th and 8th century CE?

Astus wrote:

According to scholars, yes, quite clearly they are. Otherwise, no.

Nalanda said:

Do these have Indian origin?

Astus wrote:

If you mean whether there is a known Sanskrit version, then no. There are many sutras like that.

Nalanda said:

Which translation is best?

Astus wrote:

Pick whichever you like, especially at first reading it's all OK. If you want to get deeper, there are commentaries in English.

http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html

<https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra49.html>

<http://www.buddhism.org/Sutras/2/Sutras31.htm>

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment translated by Peter N. Gregory in

https://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET_ApocryphalScriptures_2005.pdf, p 43ff.

<https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra53a.html>

<http://www.buddhism.org/Sutras/2/Sutras9.htm> (mostly Buswell's translation)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 19th, 2022 at 12:03 AM

Title: Re: So Many Mahayana Sutras - Do They All Agree - Why So Many?

Content:

Nalanda said:

Are these two Sutras universally accepted valid within Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

The Vajrasamadhi Sutra also exists in Tibetan and is quoted sometimes, like in Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation. As for the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, I don't know.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 19th, 2022 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: So Many Mahayana Sutras - Do They All Agree - Why So Many?

Content:

Nalanda said:

Oh ok then. I just like his take on Early Buddhist Schools. That's all

Malcolm said:

There is no reason to criticize early Buddhist schools.

Astus wrote:

'There will be twenty schools that will keep the Dharma in existence for my future disciples. Members of all those twenty schools will attain the four realizations, and their tripitakas will be equal, without being inferior, intermediate, or superior. It is like the water of the ocean that is undifferentiated in taste. It is as if a man had twenty sons. This is truly what the Tathāgata has preached! Mañjuśrī, the two original schools derive from the Mahayana and from the perfection of wisdom. Mañjuśrī, just as earth, water, fire, wind, and space are that upon which all sentient beings reside, so is the perfection of wisdom. The Mahayana is the place from which all the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas derive.'

(The Sutra of Mañjuśrī's Questions, ch 15, BDK ed, p 97)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 21st, 2022 at 8:41 PM

Title: Re: Every school/tradition's most effective method/practice to reach enlightenment...

Content:

Nalanda said:

I wonder what others really has as their tradition's most effective tool to gain enlightenment...

Astus wrote:

It's everywhere the same triple training: morality, meditation, wisdom. The apparent differences are merely a matter of style and branding.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2022 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: Did Buddha really teach the Middle Way?

Content:

Realmwalker said:

Did Buddha really teach the Middle Way?

Astus wrote:

It was among the first things he taught.

'Mendicants, these two extremes should not be cultivated by one who has gone forth. What two? Indulgence in sensual pleasures, which is low, crude, ordinary, ignoble, and pointless. And indulgence in self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and pointless. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One woke up by understanding the middle way of practice, which gives vision and knowledge, and leads to peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and extinguishment. And what is that middle way of practice? It

is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/sujato>)

Realmwalker said:

Celibacy and total detachment seem to be an extreme.

Astus wrote:

The common life story of the Buddha illustrates the extremes of indulgence and self-mortification. One of the basic sources of the Buddha's life
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn26/en/sujato>) is very explicit how lay life is the ignoble way, while renunciate life is the noble one. The distinction between the extreme ways and the middle way is more about what various renunciates do. There is for instance <https://suttacentral.net/an3.156-162/en/sujato> on what the extreme ways are and what the middle way is. In <https://suttacentral.net/mn45/en/sujato> on different paths the Buddha categorises the paths where people indulge in sensual pleasures as the one that is pleasurable now but painful later, while self-mortification as painful both now and in the future. And before it's assumed that these don't apply to Mahayana, see chapter 4 of the Siksasamuccaya for instance, where it's explained in detail how sensual indulgence should be avoided.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2022 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Did Buddha really teach the Middle Way?

Content:

Realmwalker said:

I find it interesting that Buddha's Middle Way, if I understand your explanations correctly, is actually not about bringing a balance between two opposite extremes.

Astus wrote:

How so? The extremes - as identified by the Buddha on various levels - are both faulty, wrong, and harmful. What sort of balance should there be? That's why they should equally be avoided and left behind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 23rd, 2022 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: What exactly is it that leads to Enlightenment? (arhat and buddhahood)

Content:

Nalanda said:

What I meant to say is what is it 'technically' that generates the enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

It is the elimination of clinging by the realisation of emptiness.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 24th, 2022 at 5:43 AM

Title: Re: Sotapannas and killing

Content:

Astus wrote:

It might also be noted that a bodhisattva from the second bhumi does not commit any of the ten bad actions, as stated in <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-31.html#UT22084-036-002-459> chapter.

'The bodhisattva abiding on this ground naturally abstains from engaging in bad actions. Because he deeply delights in good dharmas, he naturally practices the courses of good karmic action.'
(Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds, ch 28, p 490)

'Since they have the abundant qualities of discipline, They refrain from faulty discipline even in their dreams. Because the movements of their body, speech, and mind are pure, They accumulate the actions of the genuine ones' tenfold path.'
(Madhyamakavatara 2.1, in The Karmapa's Middle Way, p 610)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 26th, 2022 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

In the Saccasaṃyutta there are a series of suttas (SN 56.61-131) on the rarity of the <https://www.shambhala.com/precious-human-birth/>, like how few are born as humans (SN 56.61; see also the blind turtle simile: SN 56.47-48), not in a borderland (SN 56.62), and with wisdom (SN 56.63), and among those passing away as humans many are reborn in the lower realms and few in the heavens (SN 56.102-107). On the other hand, attaining insight is supremely difficult (SN 56.45) but without it there is no liberation (SN 56.44). At the same time, speculating about various matters of the world is not beneficial for the path, rather one should get busy with understanding the Dharma (SN 56.41).

The Buddha was asked (AN 10.95): 'when Master Gotama teaches in this way, is the whole world saved, or half, or a third?'

And Ananda explained: 'it's not the Realized One's concern whether the whole world is saved by this, or half, or a third. But the Realized One knows that whoever is saved from the world—whether in the past, the future, or the present—all have given up the five hindrances, corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom. They have firmly established their mind in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation. And they have truly developed the seven awakening factors. That's how they're saved from the world, in the past, future, or present.'

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at 3:41 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Zhen Li said:

The successive rise and fall of the aggregates constitutes suffering itself, so ending them is of prime importance.

Astus wrote:

It's not the aggregates on their own but the aggregates grasped at what constitutes suffering.

Zhen Li said:

Neither Theravāda nor Mahāyāna suggests that nirvāṇa is a "blank," which would be the extreme of annihilationism (which assumes that with the aggregates, there is personhood and self-hood, which there isn't in the first place), but that its description defies attempts to pin it down. The Nirvāṇa sūtra indicates that nirvāṇa is Buddha-nature, which, when manifest in the world appears as a compassionate activity to relieve the suffering of others. So, nirvāṇa, by its nature, helps others—and ultimately impersonal and not-self.

Astus wrote:

Nirvana is not a thing or entity but the final extinction of ignorance and craving, so to say nirvana has any activity is at best metaphorical.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at 5:23 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Imagining that there are sentient beings and buddhas out there somewhere, how is that not delusion? Huineng said it clearly:

"Good friends, the 'sentient beings of our own minds' are the mental states of delusion, confusion, immorality, jealousy, and evil. All these are sentient beings, and we must all [undergo] automatic salvation of the self-nature. This is called true salvation.

What is 'automatic salvation of the self-nature'? It is to use correct views to save the sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of prajñā to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them. When the false occurs, it is saved by the correct. When delusion occurs, it is saved by enlightenment. When stupidity occurs, it is saved by wisdom. When evil occurs, it is saved by good. Salvation such as this is called true salvation."

(Platform Sutra, ch 6, BDK ed, p 48-49)

In summary:

Someone asked, “If one kills one’s father and mother, one can repent in front of the Buddha. Where does one repent if one kills the Buddha and the patriarchs?”

The Master said, “Exposed!”

(Record of Yunmen, no. 48)

To clarify:

“If you say ‘this very mind is buddha,’ you provisionally accept the slave as master and life-and-death (samsara) as nirvana. This is precisely like cutting off one’s head in pursuit of life. Talking about buddhas and founders and their respective intentions is just like snatching away your own eyeballs while looking for soap berries.”

(Record of Yunmen, no. 148)

In more words:

‘It is like the warrior who was deluded regarding the pearl within his forehead and who searched for it elsewhere. He traveled about all the ten directions but was ultimately unable to recover it, whereupon a wise person pointed it out and he [then] saw for himself that the pearl [was on his forehead] as it had always been. Thus it is that students of the Way are deluded as to their own fundamental mind, not recognizing it as Buddha. They search for it outside [of their own minds], generating effortful practices and depending on graduated increases in realization. They pass through eons of diligent seeking but never achieve enlightenment. This is not equal to right now achieving no-mind.’

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, ch 3, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 18-19)

Returning to Huineng:

‘Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one’s sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi.’

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

No more deluded than imagining that there are Buddhas and sentient beings “in here somewhere”

Astus wrote:

Such an assumption was meant to be avoided by the subsequent quotes. Another one on that specifically:

When the snow was gone, the three monks bade farewell and started to depart.

Dizang accompanied them to the gate and asked, "I've heard you say several times that 'the three realms are only mind and the myriad dharmas are only consciousness.'"

Dizang then pointed to a rock lying on the ground by the gate and said, "So do you say that this rock is inside or outside of mind?"

Fayan said, "Inside."

Dizang said, "How can a pilgrim carry such a rock in his mind while on pilgrimage?"

Dumbfounded, Fayan couldn't answer. He put his luggage down at Dizang's feet and asked him to clarify the truth. Each day for the next month or so Fayan spoke about the Way with Dizang and demonstrated his understanding.

Dizang would always say, "The Buddhadharma isn't like that."

Finally, Fayan said, "I've run out of words and ideas."

Dizang said, "If you want to talk about Buddhadharma, everything you see embodies it."

At these words Fayan experienced great enlightenment.

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 342-343)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at 11:33 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Aemilius said:

That gives a wrong idea of the nature of the Buddha. Buddha's nature is active like the nine similes of the Buddha activity in Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastra tell us.

Astus wrote:

The unique qualities of a buddha is a different matter, like the difference between the essence of a buddha (dharmakaya) and the way it manifests to beings (rupakaya).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Astus wrote:

All feelings are suffering because they are impermanent (SN 36.11), if there was no pleasure there would be no craving either (AN 3.105), but because there are both pleasure and pain there are reasons for liberation too (SN 22.60).

To say that the cessation of the aggregates is somehow annihilationism, that's taking them to be a sort of self, in which case there is a reason to assume annihilation.

However, as it's been clarified regarding the death of a liberated being (e.g. SN 22.85-86), it is a misunderstanding to claim either that there is continuation or discontinuation

(see also MMK ch 22).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The condition for buddhahood is the twofold accumulation that must be completed by each being. On the causes to begin accumulating merit and wisdom on the Great Vehicle Gampopa says:

'This family can awaken through freedom from unfavorable contributory causes and through the support of favorable conditions. If the opposites occur, then they cannot awaken.

There are four unfavorable conditions: being born in unfavorable circumstances, having no habitual tendency toward enlightenment, entering into wrong conditions, and being heavily shrouded by the obscurations. There are two favorable conditions: the outer condition of a teacher, and the inner condition of a mind with the proper desire for the precious Dharma and so forth.'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 54)

Since there is no guarantee that all beings necessarily obtain the favourable causes, there is no assurance of all attaining buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 5:24 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

The analogy used in teaching Shravakayana view is that it like a candle going out. Nothing happens next.

Astus wrote:

The candle going out happens in this life (see e.g. AN 9.47), not after or by dying.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 7:36 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Because of the nature of eternity and infinite arrangements, every being will come to have the arrangement of conditions that you speak about, Astus.

Astus wrote:

Samsara has no beginning (SN 15), therefore the infinite arrangements is already covered by that. In other words, just because something could happen does not mean it eventually happens.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 7:46 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Aemilius said:

Amrita/amata is a synonym for nirvana/nibbana in Dhammapada.

Astus wrote:

Amata is one of the many synonyms for nibbana, the unconditioned, as listed in the Asankhatasamyutta (SN 43.12-43), and is defined as 'The ending of greed, hate, and delusion.' It's not a thing outside/beyond the aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

Mahayana adds to the 5 and posits an 8th consciousness that goes from life to life.

Astus wrote:

All eight consciousnesses are included in the consciousness aggregate. See for instance the Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa by Vasubandhu.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

Vasabandhu is a Mahayana author.

Astus wrote:

It is in Mahayana where one can find the doctrine of eight consciousnesses. But the eighth is not something posited on top of the five aggregates.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 10:37 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Zhen Li said:

The idea that all beings will eventually become Buddhas is a Mahāyāna teaching not covered by the Śrāvakayāna texts.

Astus wrote:

But why would all eventually become a buddha? The reasoning that "if it can happen, it will happen" does not stand. That all beings have buddha-nature is not a sufficient condition either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

I don't know what you mean by "on top of".

Astus wrote:

This:

Schrödinger's Yidam said:

Mahayana adds to the 5 and posits an 8th consciousness

No Shrivakayani would accept the idea of an 8th consciousness that goes from one life to another.

Astus wrote:

Nor would any Buddhist accept that (MN 38, SN 12.61). The eighth consciousness is just as momentary as all the other conditioned phenomena. At the same time, Theravada has the concept of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhavanga>, what is not exactly the same as the alayavijnana, but similar in being a basic continuum.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 28th, 2022 at 11:29 PM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Some people conceive of tathagatagarbha as a kind of uncompounded agent that propels one inevitably to buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Even so, it is not in and of itself the cause of liberation, hence cannot guarantee it either.

'The causes of freedom from these two veils are the two jnanas, considered as being the non-conceptual jnana and the ensuing jnana.'

(Uttaratantrasastra 5.174, tr Holmes)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2022 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

The pratisaṃdhivijñāna, specifically in the case of the modern Theravāda sect (which rejects the "in-between" state between births), is compared to lighting an unlit candle with a lit candle. If there is no unlit candle to inherit the flame, then the flame goes out and dies (i.e. it becomes "extinguished"/nirvṛti). I believe that this is what Schrödinger's Yidam was referring to.

Astus wrote:

It might be so, although it could as well be what's taught in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato> as an illustration of the Buddha not being identifiable as anything already in his life, hence the baseless conjecture about birth after death:

“Suppose that fire burning in front of you was extinguished. Would you know: ‘This fire in front of me is extinguished’?”

“Yes, I would, Master Gotama.”

“But Vaccha, suppose they were to ask you: ‘This fire in front of you that is extinguished: in what direction did it go—east, south, west, or north?’ How would you answer?”

“It doesn’t apply, Master Gotama. The fire depended on grass and logs as fuel. When that runs out, and no more fuel is added, the fire is reckoned to have become extinguished due to lack of fuel.”

“In the same way, Vaccha, any form by which a Realized One might be described has been cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future. A Realized One is freed from reckoning in terms of form. They’re deep, immeasurable, and hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘They’re reborn’, ‘they’re not reborn’, ‘they’re both reborn and not reborn’, ‘they’re neither reborn nor not reborn’—none of these apply.”

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2022 at 5:38 AM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Queequeg said:

I think the catalyst you are looking for are the hosts of buddhas and bodhisattvas that actively endeavor to respond to the needs and capacities of all living beings. Its those vows that turn the balance toward buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

Even just hearing about the Dharma depends on each being's karma, not simply on the effort of others. To the same extent one could mention the hosts of maras and the basic inclinations of beings (MN 64). Also, more apparent than the activities of buddhas and bodhisattvas are the divine messengers (MN 130) of birth, old age, sickness,

punishment, and death. But who listens? Therefore 'the sentient beings who die as humans and are reborn as humans are few, while those who die as humans and are reborn in hell are many' (SN 56.102).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2022 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Will all eventually become Buddhas?

Content:

Malcolm said:

I didn't say they were right.

Astus wrote:

That's clear.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 29th, 2022 at 8:31 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Aemilius said:

If the aggregates are conditioned, and nirvana or amata/amrita is unconditioned, then they are outside the conditioned, outside the aggregates.

Astus wrote:

Since the unconditioned is merely the cessation of defilements, it is not a thing or being to be somewhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2022 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Aemilius said:

It exists in a very positive sense, as is taught by the Blessed one himself:

Ud 8:3:

" There is, monks, an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated. If there were not that unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated, no leaving behind of the born, become, made, fabricated would be discerned. But because there is indeed an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated, a leaving behind of the born, become, made, fabricated is discerned."

Similarly, you can't cross the flood of samsaric existence if there is no other shore.

Astus wrote:

Un born (ajāta), un become (abhūta), un made (akata), un fabricated (asaṅkhata).

Which one is positive? They are actually synonyms (cf. AN 3.47), and they are defined,

as quoted above, as 'The ending of greed, hate, and delusion.' (rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo), in other words, the third noble truth, the cessation of suffering. 'And what is the cessation of suffering? When craving ceases, suffering ceases.' (AN 6.63), or in other words: 'When relishing ceases, suffering ceases' (SN 35.64).

'Not abandoned, not acquired, not annihilated, not eternal,
not ceased, not arisen, thus is nirvāṇa said to be.
Nirvāṇa is not, on the one hand, an existent; if it were, its having the characteristics of old age and death
would follow, for there is no existent devoid of old age and death.
And if nirvāṇa were an existent, nirvāṇa would be conditioned,
for never is there found any existent that is not conditioned.
And if nirvāṇa were an existent, how could one say that nirvāṇa is nondependent?
For never is there found any existent that is nondependent.

...

It is not to be asserted that the Buddha exists beyond cessation,
nor "does not exist" nor "both exists and does not exist," nor "neither exists nor does not exist"—none of these is to be asserted.
Indeed it is not to be asserted that "The Buddha exists while remaining [in this world],"
nor "does not exist" nor "both exists and does not exist," nor "neither exists nor does not exist"—none of these is to be asserted'
(MMK 25.3-6 & 17-18, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 30th, 2022 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Thereavada vs Mahayana Buddhist Goal

Content:

Aemilius said:

"There is" is a positive statement, indicating the existence of the unconditioned. "Were there not" says that if the unconditioned didn't exist neither would the path exist.

Astus wrote:

What existence there it refers to is the existence of the escape (nissaraṇa) from the cycle of pleasure and pain. That escape is the removal of craving (SN 22.26, SN 35.13), it is because of that escape that there is liberation (SN 22.28, SN 35.17), that is cessation (Iti 72), the most peaceful deathless element (Iti 73).

Aemilius said:

"Freedom from barrenness and bondage" it has been described and "freedom from debt or imprisonment" . These are powerful metaphors, which indicate freedom to act and freedom to live. I wonder why it doesn't seem like that? If you are free from prison, you don't become "extinct", the very opposite should be the case. The fact that we have to discuss this matter indicates there is something wrong, seriously wrong, in the system.

Astus wrote:

It is not about anyone's extinction, such thinking is solely based on the assumption of a

self. With the removal of ignorance it's just the misconception of self that disappears (SN 22.47), and with it greed and anger (SN 36.6). Then one acts not out of ignorant inclinations but wisdom (SN 36.3).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 1st, 2022 at 6:59 PM

Title: Re: Is first dhyāna necessary for the first bhūmi?

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

The title says it all. Related: Is first dhyāna necessary for any particular significant degree of Bodhi?

Astus wrote:

While in various treatises there are all sorts of minute details to debate about, neither the sutras nor those focused on meditative practices do that. It is agreed that concentration and wisdom go together, even if initially they look separate. The concept of dhyana, when elevated to a high level, seems nearly impossible to reach (e.g. Vism XII.8, p 371), so it is not surprising that the usage of that classification has mostly been abandoned, and instead there's more generic terminology, like samatha, samadhi, and one-pointedness.

As for not developing absorption to any significant degree (whatever that means), that is a possibility, as there are all sorts of cases where somebody gained entrance without much preparation or none at all. Still, at the moment of realisation, how could it be without the absence of mental disturbance?

'The initial concentration of someone practising insight may be 'temporary' (khaṇika-samādhī). But at the point of attaining path and fruit (magga-phala), concentration is firmly established ('attainment concentration' – appanā-samādhī), reaching at least the first jhāna.'

(<https://buddhadhamma.github.io/calm-and-insight.html#introduction>, p 817)

'Light a lamp (dīpa); bright as it is, you cannot use it if you leave it in the full wind; put it in a sheltered place, it will be very useful to you. It is the same for wisdom in a distracted mind (vikṣiptacitta): if the shelter of dhyāna is absent, the wisdom will exist, but its usefulness will be very restricted. It is necessary to have dhyāna so that the true wisdom is produced.

...

Moreover, when one is pursuing worldly business (laukikārtha) but does not apply one's whole mind to it, the business does not succeed; then how [would one reach] very profound (gambhīra) Buddhist wisdom if one neglects meditation?'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225394.html>; second part also quoted by Jinul in 'Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhī and Prajñā Society' in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 138-139)

'Dhyāna is the basis of Prajñāpāramitā; the latter arises spontaneously when the virtue of dhyāna is relied upon. A sūtra says: "The one-pointed (ekacitta) and concentrated (samāhita) bhikṣu is able to contemplate the true nature of dharmas.'" (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225467.html>)

"Good friends, our teaching takes meditation and wisdom as its fundamental. Everyone, do not say in your delusion that meditation and wisdom are different.

Meditation and wisdom are of one essence, not different. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. At times of wisdom, meditation exists in that wisdom; at times of meditation, wisdom exists in that meditation. If you understand this doctrine, this is the equivalent study of meditation and wisdom. All you who study the Way, do not say that they are different, with meditation prior to and generating wisdom or with wisdom prior to and generating meditation. If your view of them is like this, then the Dharma would have two characteristics. This would be to say something good with your mouth but to have that which is not good in your minds. It is to make meditation and wisdom falsely existent to consider them as not equivalent.

"If there is good in both mouth and mind and if internal and external are identical, then meditation and wisdom will be equivalent. One should understand oneself that spiritual cultivation does not exist in argumentation. If you argue about which is prior and which secondary, then you are just like [all the other] deluded people. Not to desist from competition is to increase the illusion of selfhood. One will not transcend the four characteristics [this way]!

"Good friends, how is it that meditation and wisdom are equivalent? It is like the light of a lamp. When the lamp exists, there is light; when there is no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the essence of the light, and the light is the function of the lamp. Although the names are different, in essence they are fundamentally identical. The Dharma of meditation and wisdom is just like this."

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 41-42)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022 at 5:02 AM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Nowadays, deluded and ignorant people wrongly assume that one moment of awakening manifests in turn incalculable sublime functions, as well as magic and miracles. This is the sort of understanding to which I was referring when I said that you did not know the proper sequence of practice and did not distinguish the root from the branches. To seek the path to buddhahood while not knowing the proper sequence [of practice or distinguishing] the root and the branches is like trying to insert a square peg into a round hole. How is this not a grave mistake? Since they do not know of any expedients, they consequently [hesitate], presuming they have reached a sheer precipice, and allow themselves to cower and back away in discouragement. Alas, many are those who have thus broken their ties with the spiritual lineage of the buddhas. Since they neither understand for themselves nor believe that others have had any

experience of the understanding-awakening, when they see someone without superpowers they act insolently, ridiculing the saints and insulting the sages. This is really quite pitiful!

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works on Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 214-215)

'when it is realized that these six — color, sound, odor, taste, touch, and dharmas — are all empty forms, they cannot bind the man of the Way, dependent upon nothing. Constituted though he is of the seepage of the five skandhas, he has the supernatural power of walking upon the earth.'

(Record of Linji, p 20, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 3rd, 2022 at 5:50 PM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

When the meaning of seeing the nature is viewed in its context then there's not much difference between the systems. In Japanese Rinzai it currently stands for an experience that needs to be followed up by continuous practice. In Soto the practice is itself the experience of the nature and has to be continuous. Both fits the standard of obtaining the correct view (darśana, 見) and then habituating (bhāvanā, 修習) it.

The difficulty with matching Chan and Doctrine lies in Chan's focus on the individual point of view where terms like buddhahood change their meaning to something immediately accessible, hence seeing the nature is attaining buddhahood, just as forgetting it is becoming an ordinary being.

'To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharmas without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31; T2008p350c8-9)

'If you presume you attain realization by practicing for three incalculable kalpas, you will have no success even after kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. But if in a single kṣaṇa [instant] you obtain the dharma body and directly see the nature, this is the culminating discourse of the three-vehicle teachings. Why is this so? Seeing the dharma body as something that can be obtained is a view associated with the provisional (neyartha) teachings.'

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, II.39; X1315p22a23-b2)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 4th, 2022 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: the Zen promise is empty

Content:

clay said:

And I believed the Zen promise that Buddhahood was attainable "in this lifetime".

Astus wrote:

Complete awakening "in this lifetime", or "in this body" - that's what Vajrayana goes with, Zen not so much. In Zen it is buddhahood in this moment, right now.

Q: What is Sudden Enlightenment?

A: "Sudden" means instantly stopping false thought. "Enlightenment" means [awareness] that one attains nothing.

(<https://ymba.org/books/entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering-cao-sudden-enlightenment>)

'I am offering you the quick method. Take all of your thoughts – good, bad, indifferent – and drop them. If you can do this, you will be enlightened instantly. If you can reach the state of mind where there is no self, no other, no discrimination, no sentient beings, no Buddha, then you will realize the true reality of things. Take the sword of practice and cut open the mind of discrimination. When enlightenment cuts through the discriminating mind, it leaves nothing behind, because from the beginning there has never been any real self to divide.'

(<http://old.ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/09-04/45.php> by Sheng-yen)

And also note:

'If there are those who say that they see bodhi and have attained it, we should know that they are the ones with exceeding arrogance.'

(<https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra13.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 4th, 2022 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Pablo said:

Just to be clear (I ask because I truly do not know, I'm not really interested in polemics), what Malcolm and Johnny are saying is that the language used in the Zen tradition re Buddhahood (see for instance Astus's messages in this thread) is rhetorical, and that the awakening spoken of in Zen does not correspond with awakening as understood in the general Mahayana tradition. Is this correct?

Astus wrote:

There is such an interpretation, especially when one takes the side of Doctrine (jiao 教 - a Zen term for the rest of Buddhism that's based on scriptures and treatises). On the other hand, it can also be said that it's the 'general Mahayana' that is rhetorical, while Zen is seeing how things are. And there's also a third option, that it's all a matter of skilful means and one works with whatever one can work for the single goal of liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 5th, 2022 at 12:10 AM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

master of puppets said:

Is liberation the last stop. or some where in between?

Astus wrote:

Briefly put: it is the end of greed, hatred, and delusion.

master of puppets said:

i would happy to choose the second.

Astus wrote:

Who gains, who loses?

Once the great Fayen of Qingliang was with some monks in front of his studio. When Fayen pointed to a curtain, two of the monks went to roll it up.

Fayen said, "One gains, one loses."

(Women's Gate, case 26, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 91)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 5th, 2022 at 12:23 AM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Pablo said:

Yes, but here again there would be some disagreement over what "liberation" is, wouldn't it?

Astus wrote:

If there is disagreement then there is discrimination, if there is discrimination there is suffering.

'If one possesses a locus,

One becomes attached or detached;

But the great beings who're devoid of locus,

They have neither attachment nor detachment.'

(Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning, v 58, tr Geshe Thupten Jinpa)

"Nonabiding is to consider in one's fundamental nature that all worldly [things] are empty, with no consideration of retaliation—whether good or evil, pleasant or ugly, and enemy or friend, etc., during times of words, fights, and disputation.

Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.' Thus it is that

nonabiding is taken as the fundamental"
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 5th, 2022 at 5:12 AM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Malcolm said:

So when the Buddha disagreed with someone, he was suffering?

Astus wrote:

If he had disagreed by taking one view and opposing with another, then it would have been so, as shown in the <https://suttacentral.net/snp4.8/en/sujato>. As for instance the <https://suttacentral.net/mn22/en/sujato> explains, the various grounds of views arise from misconceiving a self.

“Sir, my teaching is such that one does not conflict with anyone in this world with its gods, Māras, and Brahmās, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans. And it is such that perceptions do not underlie the brahmin who lives detached from sensual pleasures, without doubting, stripped of worry, and rid of craving for rebirth in this or that state. That’s what I teach, and that’s what I explain.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn18/en/sujato>)

'For a bhikkhu wholly dispassionate
And freed by the destruction of craving,
Searches have been relinquished
And uprooted the standpoint of views.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/iti55/en/ireland>, also
<https://suttacentral.net/an4.38/en/sujato>)

And here's MMK 18.5 and 25.24 expressed the Zen way:

'All are clampering after the worthless contrivances of the men of old. As for myself, I haven't a single dharma to give to people. All I can do is to cure illnesses and untie bonds.'
(Record of Linji, p 22, tr Sasaki)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 5th, 2022 at 6:20 AM

Title: Re: We Are All This Luminous Mind

Content:

Malcolm said:

FFS, Astus, get a sense of humor. We know very well you are an excellent book dancer, ready with your handy kindle library.

Astus wrote:
It seemed like a legit question.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, February 7th, 2022 at 11:56 PM
Title: Re: the Zen promise is empty
Content:
Malcolm said:
There is also no reason to believe there is. Awakening is not a falsifiable phenomena.

Astus wrote:
'There is a method—apart from faith, preference, oral tradition, reasoned contemplation, or acceptance of a view after consideration—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.153/en/sujato>)

'Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures, living at home with your children, using sandalwood imported from Kāsi, wearing garlands, perfumes, and makeup, and accepting gold and money, it's hard for you to know who is perfected or on the path to perfection.
You can get to know a person's ethics by living with them. ... You can get to know a person's purity by dealing with them. ... You can get to know a person's resilience in times of trouble. ... You can get to know a person's wisdom by discussion. But only after a long time, not casually; only when paying attention, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn3.11/en/sujato>; also AN 4.192 & Ud 6.2)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, February 8th, 2022 at 4:38 AM
Title: Re: the Zen promise is empty
Content:
Malcolm said:
It's still subjective, since who knows whether the "mendicant" is deluded. There is no way to book dance your way around it.

Astus wrote:
Yes, subjective, but not necessarily based on faith. The Okkantasaṃyutta (SN 25) distinguishes between the faith follower who is confident because of trust and will attain stream entry, the Dhamma follower who is confident because of discernment and will attain stream entry, and the one who understand and sees is the one who has entered the stream.
However, all that is about knowing the Dharma, just like in the discourse you quoted (and another one with Sariputta should also be mentioned, where he declares his confidence in the unsurpassed awakening of the Buddha:
<https://suttacentral.net/sn47.12/en/sujato>). Related to your quote too are a series of

other discourses (SN 48.12-17) on the five faculties where the level of one's attainment is defined by the strength of those faculties, and while the weakest one is the faith follower, those completely without them are ordinary people (SN 48.18).

Malcolm said:

And hanging out with someone for a long while is also no guarantee, as the case of Sunakshatra shows.

Astus wrote:

Not a guarantee, but that's what may give one the full picture.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 8th, 2022 at 6:25 AM

Title: Re: the Zen promise is empty

Content:

Malcolm said:

Necessarily. You have to have faith in these texts as authorities.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by that? One first needs to have faith in the texts initially, or there is nothing beyond faith? If the former, then why necessarily?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 8th, 2022 at 4:43 PM

Title: Re: the Zen promise is empty

Content:

Malcolm said:

You have to believe the narrative. But there is nothing about the narrative that can be proven to anyone. So, yes, there is in the end nothing but faith, unless someone is claiming direct personal knowledge, and you know how sketchy that is.

Astus wrote:

If by faith you mean cannot be proven to others, then it's all just faith. Personal knowledge of what? That the narrative is historically true, or that the teachings communicated in the texts is true? The latter is meant to be verifiable, for oneself at least (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an10.51/en/sujato>). For instance, can we see for ourselves that the entirety of our experiences can be categorised according to the five aggregates? If so, then can we tell if those aggregates are permanent or impermanent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory, personal or impersonal, substantial or insubstantial, independent or dependent, etc.? Similarly, can we confirm whether by calming the mind there is more peace? Can we decide if there is contentment by not clinging? And so on. It is another step that through the proper application of the teachings how much of the harmful, unskillful inclinations and obsessions are diminished or even eradicated.

Malcolm said:

Anyone want to stand up here and proclaim they are awakened? No? I thought as much.

Astus wrote:

Maybe narrow it down. Awakened to what? For instance the declarations <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=39&t=38956> that there is no doubt about the validity of the Nagarjuna's teachings, how is that not some stage of awakening? In fact, the <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/T/75>.

Here's Jinul's take on the matter of faith:

'If you have sufficient faith and your doubts suddenly vanish, you will display the will of a great man and generate authentic vision and understanding; if you know its taste for yourself, arrive at the stage of selfaffirmation [and thus gain understanding of your true nature], then this is the experience of the understanding-awakening achieved by those who have cultivated the mind. Since no further steps or sequences are involved, it is called "sudden." Therefore it is said, "When in the cause of faith one meshes without the slightest degree of error with all the qualities of the fruition of buddhahood, faith is achieved."'

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 224)

'we should know that there is no need to worry about either the [thirty-two] major or [eighty] minor marks [of sanctity] or the superpowers. We must first trace back the radiance of our own minds to ensure that our faith and understanding are genuine; then, we will not fall into either eternalism (śāsvatadrsti) or annihilationism (ucchedadrsti), and, by relying on the two approaches of samādhi and prajñā, we will be able to remedy the maculations of mind. This is the proper way. On the other hand, if our faith and understanding are not yet genuine, the contemplation practice that we cultivate will be subject to impermanence and will in the end result only in backsliding. This is called the contemplation practice of the foolish; how could it be the practice of the wise?'

(Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 129-130)

'Cultivators nowadays belong to the Buddha's spiritual family. They rely upon the direct-pointing (chikchi 直指) approach of the Sudden school, and, having developed firm faith and understanding, they straightaway comprehend that their own minds are perpetually calm and ever alert. Since they initiate their cultivation on such a foundation, even though they cultivate the manifold practices [of the bodhisattva], they only regard no-thought (munyom 無念) as their core and nonconstruction (mujak 無作, akrtaka) as their basis. Because of this no-thought and nonconstruction, their practice is free from any temporal (sigop 時劫) or soteriological (chiwi 地位) sequences and also devoid of any sign of discrimination between dharmas and their aspects (dharmārtha). Since their cultivation is complete, approaches to dharma as numerous as dust motes and the meritorious qualities developed on all the bhūmis are also complete in the essence of their sublime minds, which is accordingly the same as a wish-fulfilling gem (cintāmani).'

(ibid., p 148-149)

'Sentient beings of great aspiration who rely on the supreme-vehicle approach to dharma have firm faith and understanding that the four great elements (mahābhūta) are like a bubble or a mirage, that the six sense-objects are like flowers in the sky, that their own minds are the buddha-mind, and that their own natures are the dharma-nature. Since time immemorial, they have themselves left behind the nature of the afflictions. Their alertness is instantly alert; their clarity is instantly clear. Although people who cultivate while relying on this understanding may still have beginningless proclivities of habit (vāsanā), if they control them with the unabiding wisdom, they instead become the foundational wisdom and need neither be suppressed nor removed.'

(ibid., p 167-168)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 9th, 2022 at 3:08 AM

Title: Re: Discerning conceptual thought about the body from non conceptual sense experience in Vipassana

Content:

Astus wrote:

It is a central topic in Burmese Vipassana teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 10th, 2022 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Discerning conceptual thought about the body from non conceptual sense experience in Vipassana

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Is that book more of a historical/textual thing, or actual instruction?

Astus wrote:

For practical by Ven. Analayo try these:

<https://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/satipatthana-meditation-practice-guide-paperback/>

<https://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/mindfulness-of-breathing-a-practice-guide-and-translations-paperback/>

And this one by Ajahn Sucitto is quite keen on the body as something felt:

<https://forestsangha.org/teachings/books/meditation-a-way-of-awakening?language=English>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 10th, 2022 at 8:19 PM

Title: Re: Is kensho stream entry?

Content:

clyde said:

I don't recall reading any Zen text that compared or equated kensho and stream entry

Astus wrote:

Stream entry is on the shravaka path, hence it is something to be avoided by Mahayana followers.

clyde said:

It seems to me that kensho is the direct experience of emptiness or impermanence and so does result in stream entry

Astus wrote:

Kensho is defined in different ways according to who says it. If we are to rely on the Platform Sutra for instance, it is realising buddha-nature and attaining buddhahood, thus the saying 'kensho jobutsu' (see nature and become buddha). Stream entry would fall very short of that.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 10th, 2022 at 9:07 PM

Title: Re: Is kensho stream entry?

Content:

Dan74 said:

It would be worth comparing the descriptions of each.

Astus wrote:

Definitions for stream-entry are fairly standard. Here's a modern summary of the <https://buddhadhamma.github.io/awakened-beings.html#active-qualities> and the <https://buddhadhamma.github.io/awakened-beings.html#abandoned-qualities> qualities.

The bigger problem is that there is no generally accepted interpretation for kensho. Here's a definition from the Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism by Youru Wang (p 138):

JIANXING. A Chan term and an important notion in Chan teachings. Literally, it means "seeing (one's authentic) nature." This teaching was a Chinese appropriation of Indian Mahayana tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature) thought. The tathagatagarbha tradition teaches that every human being has Buddha-nature within. This Buddha-nature is the inner cause and condition of enlightenment. Some texts of this tradition also teach that this Buddha-nature is the foundation of the world.

In Chinese Chan tradition, for example, in the Platform Sutra Buddha-nature is equivalent to the self-nature (zixing) in the sense that Buddha-nature cannot be objectified and realized outside each person. Seeing or realizing the Buddha-nature is the existential transformation of personhood, being able to understand and appreciate what constitutes a person - elements of impermanence and non-abiding - and then acting accordingly. Jianxing is therefore another term for enlightenment. The English

translation of xing here as "nature" is somewhat misleading. The Buddha-nature or self-nature in the above-mentioned Chan soteriological context is not a changeless essence deeply rooted in the human mind for one to discover; rather, it refers to the changeability, transformation, and growth of personhood. Jianxing thus requires the accomplishment of action, the practical-behavioral carrying out of non-attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 11th, 2022 at 12:27 AM

Title: Re: Is kensho stream entry?

Content:

Dan74 said:

One of the things I am not clear about is whether according to the Theravada, stream-enterers can regress and lose some of these qualities.

Astus wrote:

They cannot. That's why it's called change of lineage
(<https://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php/Gotrabhu>).

Dan74 said:

The Chan definition you quoted above doesn't appear to distinguish between (insight into the Original Nature) kensho and full awakening (satori), but most contemporary teachers do. Hakuin did too, with many kenshos, didn't he?

Astus wrote:

The definition above is based on the Platform Sutra. As you note, there are other usages of the term. Hence the difficulty with comparing kensho with various attainments, since one first needs to define kensho itself.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 11th, 2022 at 12:39 AM

Title: Re: Is kensho stream entry?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mahāyāna also has stream entry. It's called the path of seeing. Mahāyāna has once-returners, 7th stage bodhisattvas, never-returners, eighth on up, and arhats, aka samyaksambuddhas.

Astus wrote:

Do you know if anyone actually called them so? I have not found such a definition for stream entry (入流, 預流, 須陀洹) in the <https://www2.buddhistdoor.net/dictionary/>.

Malcolm said:

Which are the same fetters abandoned on the Mahayana path of seeing.

Astus wrote:

But, as you noted in another thread, a first stage bodhisattva can still break even basic precepts, unlike a stream enterer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 11th, 2022 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Is kensho stream entry?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The four kinds of āryas are defined on the basis of the fetters they have dropped. To say one is stream entrant in a Mahāyāna context is to claim to be a first stage bodhisattva.

Astus wrote:

In light of the fetters here's a classic story:

"there was a fourteen year old novice called Daoxin (Faith in the Way) who came to pay his respects to the Third Patriarch, saying, 'Would that the Venerable Monk's compassion allow me to beg for the Dharma gate of Liberation.'

The master replied, 'Who binds you?'

'No one,' responded Daoxin.

'Why seek liberation then?' asked Sengcan.

On hearing this [Dao] Xin had a great awakening."

(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 1, 3.40)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 12th, 2022 at 4:22 AM

Title: Re: What is the "Jin'ganding Jing?"

Content:

Caoimhghín said:

What is the Jin'gandingjing? Anyone know?

Astus wrote:

My guess is 金剛頂經, i.e. Vajraśekhara Sūtra, a version of which is translated as <https://bdkamerica.org/product/two-esoteric-sutras/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 13th, 2022 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening 101

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

When the Zen masters use the term “mind” in the sense that “mind is Buddha” they mean mind as it is in itself, that is, our core-subjectivity, or awareness itself. In short, they do not mean thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions, etc. – all of these are objects of mind or contents of awareness. Objects of mind come and go in an endless stream, contents of awareness arise and cease – mind or awareness is the unchanging

realm in which objects come and go, the immutable dimension wherein the contents of awareness arise and cease.

Astus wrote:

If that had been the case they would have been simply mistaking consciousness for a self. For direct insight it is exactly that kind of grasping and identifying that should be immediately put an end to. How? By recognising that all five aggregates are empty, and there is no mind to be found anywhere.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 14th, 2022 at 8:29 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening 101

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

Nevertheless, I don't see how you could confuse my explanation (quoted in your post) as suggesting it might amount to "mistaking consciousness for a self." In fact, my explanation was meant to clarify that consciousness (that is, our fundamental consciousness, or awareness itself) is the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

It is because you specified mind as 'our core-subjectivity, or awareness itself. In short, they do not mean thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions, etc. – all of these are objects of mind or contents of awareness. ... mind or awareness is the unchanging realm in which objects come and go, the immutable dimension wherein the contents of awareness arise and cease.'

The meaning of emptiness is that there is no core, no substance, no self. Mind is a common term for a complex system of processes that arise dependent on various conditions.

'Whenever we see form, it is just seeing the mind. The mind does not exist by itself; its existence is due to form.'

(Sun-Face Buddha, p 62)

To say that only an awareness apart from everything else is the buddha contradicts what you quoted from Mazu, that 'All dharmas are Buddhadharmas and all dharmas are liberation. Liberation is identical with suchness: all dhannas never leave suchness. Whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining, everything is always inconceivable function.'

You also quoted Bodhidharma's answer to the question about mind, and it also illustrates this very well: 'You ask. That's your mind. I answer. That's my mind. If I had no mind, how could I answer? If you had no mind, how could you ask? That which asks is your mind. Through endless kalpas without beginning, whatever you do, wherever you are, that's your real mind, that's your real buddha.'

Asking, answering, those are all mental functions, not some subject/awareness merely watching in the background. An awareness apart from thoughts and feelings is without function and actually does not exist. To say that this mind is the buddha, and not something special, there is no need to exclude anything. The only issue to solve is the matter of attachment.

'If the mind grasps at dharmas, then it gets involved in external causes and conditions, which is the meaning of birth and death. If the mind does not grasp at dharmas, that is suchness.'

(Sun-Face Buddha, p 67)

And as you quoted: 'If you really want to find the Way, don't hold on to anything.'

Huangbo warned (Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 21): 'Ordinary people grasp at [their sensory] realms, while religious persons grasp at the mind. For the mind and the realms to both be forgotten is the True Dharma. To forget the realms is relatively easy, but to forget the mind is extremely difficult. People do not dare to forget the mind, fearing that they will fall into the void (i.e., the emptiness of space) with nowhere to grab hold. They do not understand that the void is without void, that there is only one true Dharma body.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 15th, 2022 at 4:04 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening 101

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

In my op I clearly pointed out what I meant by "mind" in the context of "mind is Buddha." This was to distinguish its usage from the many other possible meanings that "mind" can have depending on the context, for instance as distinct from the meaning you apply above as "a common term for a complex system of processes that arise dependent on various conditions." Not what I meant at all, as a reading of the op makes clear.

Astus wrote:

That's very much my contention here as well. In general mind in Buddhism refers to the six (or eight) types of consciousness and the four mental aggregates. That's a complex system of processes dependent on other factors, especially as presented most commonly that consciousness arises dependent on the sense faculty and the sense object.

The op makes clear that you assume there to be a constant, independent awareness, and you named that the nature of mind to be awakened to. How is that not mistaking consciousness for a self, taking what is impermanent as permanent?

Ted Biringer said:

Further, it is fine to say it "does not exist" as long as you mean "does not exist independently."

Astus wrote:

If the nature of mind is not independent, then how could it be unchanging? But then you state:

To recognize that objects of mind (phenomena, forms, dharmas) arise and cease endlessly, while mind itself neither arises nor ceases is not to deny the reality (Buddha-nature) of such objects – just the opposite in fact. It is, in truth, the very coming and going of all transient forms that allows us to awaken to that which is ever and always free from coming and going.

That looks very much like a duality of a permanent awareness and impermanent objects. Then how is such an awareness not independent?

Ted Biringer said:

see that while things (objects of mind) appear to come and go the essence of mind is intrinsically free from change.

Astus wrote:

An unchanging subject, isn't that what is called a self?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 16th, 2022 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening 101

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

While I, in harmony with the classic Zen records, did and do describe “mind” (in the context of “mind is Buddha”) as synonymous with essential nature, fundamental awareness, etc., and do recognize it as constant, immutable, unchanging, etc.

Astus wrote:

So, according to you, the mind that is Buddha is: 'constant, immutable, unchanging'

Ted Biringer said:

And I never said or implied that it was an “independent” existent. Just the opposite. All the thoughts and things (dharmas) that do appear as coming and going, arising and ceasing, “independently” are in fact not thoughts and things but mind itself, Buddha-nature, etc. To see dharmas as somehow independent of mind is to be caught up in conceptualization – for there is only the one mind, the essential nature of our own mind here and now:

Astus wrote:

At the same time, according to you, the mind that is Buddha is dependent. Although then you go on to say not that the mind is dependent, but that everything else depends on the buddha-mind. Still, going to the next section.

If the nature of mind is not independent, then how could it be unchanging?

Ted Biringer said:

That is the million dollar question! Yes!

In any case, the fact that this awareness or mind is unchanging or immutable and at the same time not independent is asserted by the masters.

Astus wrote:

If something is unchanging and dependent, then it necessarily depends on something unchanging, otherwise it would be changing as well. What other unchanging and dependent things are there?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 19th, 2022 at 9:17 PM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Zen study is basically to reach the fundamental and clarify the essence of mind. If you don't reach the fundamental, you live and die in vain, misunderstanding yourself and others. As for what this fundamental essence is, your features may differ as you die and are born over and over again, but at all times there is an inherent awareness.

Keizan, Transmission of Light, Thomas Cleary, p. 136 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

A https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/CHAPTER_THIRTY_TWO.pdf:

'To inquire into Zen and study the way is, at root, for the purpose of penetrating through to what is fundamental, and greatly clarifying the mind-nature. If you do not reach the fundamental, you will have lived uselessly and will die uselessly, deluding self and deluding others. When we speak of so-called original nature, it means that all of you people - although you change shape through death after death, birth after birth, and face after face - are, from hour to hour and moment to moment, never unendowed with perfectly complete wisdom.'

Ted Biringer said:

Mind is like the void in which there is no confusion or evil, as when the sun wheels through it shining upon the four corners of the world. For, when the sun rises and illuminates the whole earth, the void gains not in brilliance; and, when the sun sets, the void does not darken. The phenomena of light and dark alternate with each other, but the nature of the void remains unchanged. So it is with the Mind of the Buddha and of sentient beings. If you look upon the Buddha as presenting a pure, bright or Enlightened appearance, or upon sentient beings as presenting a foul, dark or mortal-seeming appearance, these conceptions resulting from attachment to form will keep you from supreme knowledge, even after the passing of as many aeons as there are sands in the Ganges. There is only the One Mind and not a particle of anything else on which to lay hold, for this Mind is the Buddha. If you students of the Way do not awake to this Mind substance, you will overlay Mind with conceptual thought, you will seek the Buddha

outside yourselves, and you will remain attached to forms, pious practices and so on, all of which are harmful and not at all the way to supreme knowledge.
The Zen Teaching of Huang-Po, John Blofeld, p.31 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

A newer version (Bird in Flight Leaves no Trace, ch 1):

'Like empty space, that mind is free from admixture or deterioration. It is like the great orb of the sun that shines over all four quarters of the world. When the sun rises, its light shines over the entire world, but empty space has never been illuminated. When the sun sets, darkness pervades the entire world, but empty space has never been darkened. The realms of light and dark alternate, but the nature of empty space is expansive and invariable. The minds of both buddhas and sentient beings are also like this. Say one observes buddhas as having the characteristics of purity, radiance, and liberation or observes sentient beings as having the characteristics of foulness, darkness, and birth and death. One who generates such an understanding will not be able to attain bodhi [enlightenment] even after kalpas [eons] as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, because one is attached to characteristics. There is only this one mind; there is not another dharma, even as small as a mote of dust, to be attained. The mind is the buddha. Those who train in the Way these days do not awaken to the essence of this mind. They then give rise to mental states overlaying this mind, seek the buddha externally, and practice while being attached to characteristics. All these are harmful techniques, not the path to bodhi.'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 20th, 2022 at 4:28 AM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

Ted Biringer said:

All dharmas are like a dream: this is what all the saints have taught. Consequently, deluded thoughts are originally calm and the sense-spheres are originally void. This void and calm mind is numinous, aware, and never dark. This void and calm mind is precisely the pure-mind which was transmitted by our predecessor, Bodhidharma. Whether deluded or awakened, the mind is fundamentally self-aware. It does not come into existence through dependence on conditions; it does not arise because of sense-objects. When deluded it is subject to the defilements, but this awareness is actually not those defilements. When awakened it can manifest magic and miracles, but this awareness is actually not that magic or those miracles.

This one word "awareness" is the source of all wonders." Because of delusion concerning this awareness, the marks of self arise.

Zen Master Tsung-mi (Zongmi), as quoted by Zen Master Chinul in the Collected Works of Chinul, translated by Robert Buswell, p.265 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

Alternative translation:

'All dharmas are like a dream. All the noble ones have said the same thing. Therefore, thought of the unreal from the outset is calmed, and sense objects from the outset are void. The mind of voidness and calm is a spiritual Knowing that never darkens. This calm Knowing of voidness and calm is precisely the mind of voidness and calm that Bodhidharma formerly transmitted. Whether you are deluded or awakened, mind from the outset is spontaneously Knowing. [Knowing] is not produced by conditions, nor does it arise in dependence on sense objects. Even during delusion the depravities are Knowing, but [Knowing] is not the depravities. Even during awakening the divine transformations are Knowing, but Knowing is not the divine transformations. Thus, the one word "Knowing" is the source of all excellence.'

(Zongmi on Chan, p 88; X63, no. 1225, pp. 33c20-34a1)

Ted Biringer said:

Question: According to the explanations of the noumenal nature given in all the Mahayana satras, in the teachings of all the schools of Son both past and present, and even in Ho-tse's school, there is neither arising nor ceasing, creation nor sign, ordinary man nor saint, right nor wrong: truth is inexpressible and unattestable. Why not simply accept this standpoint? What need is there to discuss numinous awareness?

Answer: These are all examples of apophatic discourse;" they are not intended to expose the essence of the mind. If I did not point out that the clear, constant awareness which is present now, never interrupted and never obscured, is your own mind, what could I refer to as being uncreated and signless and so forth? For this reason, you must realize that all the various teachings explain only that it is this awareness which is neither arising nor ceasing and so forth. Consequently, Ho-tse pointed to the knowledge and vision which exist within the void and signless state so that men would recognize it; then they could comprehend that even though their minds pass from one life to another, the mind is eternally uninterrupted until the achievement of Buddhahood. Furthermore, Ho-tse gathered together various terms like uncreated, nonabiding, even inexpressible, and simply referred to them all as being the void and calm awareness which assimilates everything. Voidness means that it is devoid of all signs; it is still an apophatic term. Calm is the immutable, immovable aspect of the real nature; it is not the same as empty nothingness. Awareness refers to the manifestation of this very essence; it is not the same as discrimination. These three components alone comprise the fundamental essence of the true mind. Therefore, from the initial activation of the bodhicitta until the attainment of Buddhahood, there is only calmness and only awareness, unchanging and uninterrupted.

Zen Master Tsung-mi (Zongmi), as quoted by Zen Master Chinul in the Collected Works of Chinul, translated by Robert Buswell, p.274 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

Alternative translation:

'[Pei Xiu] asks: According to the Mahayana sutras and the Chan gates of all the lineages from the past to the present, up to and including what Heze says, the nature of principle

is always the same. [They all] say: "There is neither arising nor disappearing; there is neither the conditioned nor characteristics; there is neither the noble one nor the common person; there is neither right nor wrong; [it is] not to be proven; [it is] not to be spoken of." If in the present we just rely on this, it will be correct. What need is there to speak of spiritual Knowing?

[Zongmi] answers: These are but negative expressions, which have yet openly to show the mind substance. If it is not pointed out that right now the complete and constant Knowing that never darkens is one's own mind, then what are we speaking of as "neither the conditioned nor characteristics," etc.? Thus, we know that the teachings just say that this Knowing neither arises nor disappears, etc. Therefore, the Heze, at the locus of voidness and the absence of characteristics, points out Knowing-seeing. This enables people to attain recognition, that is, awaken to their own mind, passing over the rebirth process and transcending the world, eternally without interruption, up to and including becoming buddhas. Heze also takes care of various expressions such as "unconditioned," "non-abiding," up to and including "inexpressible," etc., just by speaking of "the Knowing of voidness and calm." Everything is subsumed. "Voidness" means to empty out all characteristics; it is still a negative term. Just "calm" is the immutable principle of the real nature; it is not the same as voidness and nonexistence. Knowing is the principle of revealing the thing-in-itself;⁶⁸ it is not the same as discrimination. Just this is the original substance of the true mind. Therefore, from the first time one produces the thought [of awakening] up to and including becoming a buddha [it is] just calm, just Knowing, immutable and uninterrupted.¹ (Zongmi on Chan, p 93-94; X63, no. 1225, pp. 34c13-35a1)

Ted Biringer said:

"Who would have thought," I said to the patriarch, "that the essence of mind is intrinsically pure! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically free from becoming or annihilation! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically self-sufficient! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically free from change! Who would have thought that all things are the manifestation of the essence of mind!"

The Sutra of Hui-Neng, A. F. Price & Wong Mou-lam, p.73 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

Better translations:

"I experienced a great enlightenment, [realizing that] all the myriad dharmas do not transcend their self-natures. I thereupon informed the patriarch of this, saying, 'No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally and naturally pure. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally neither generated nor extinguished. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally and naturally sufficient unto themselves. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally without movement. No matter when, the self-natures are able to generate the myriad dharmas.'"

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 23)

'Hui Neng experienced the great enlightenment and he knew that all the ten thousand dharmas are not separate from the self-nature. He said to the Patriarch:

How unexpected! The self-nature is originally pure in itself.
How unexpected! The self-nature is originally neither produced nor destroyed.
How unexpected! The self-nature is originally complete in itself.
How unexpected! The self-nature is originally without movement.
How unexpected! The self-nature can produce the ten thousand dharmas.'
(<http://www.cttbusa.org/6patriarch/6patriarch3.asp.html>)

Ted Biringer said:

A. The Greatness of the Essence of Suchness

The essence of Suchness knows no increase or decrease in ordinary men, the Hinayanists, the Bodhisattvas, or the Buddhas. It was not brought into existence in the beginning nor will it cease to be at the end of time; it is eternal through and through.

B. The Greatness of the Attributes of Suchness

From the beginning, Suchness in its nature is fully provided with all excellent qualities; namely, it is endowed with the light of great wisdom, the qualities of illuminating the entire universe, of true cognition and mind pure in its self-nature; of eternity, bliss, Self, and purity; of refreshing coolness, immutability, and freedom. It is endowed with these excellent qualities which outnumber the sands of the Ganges, which are not independent of, disjointed from, or different from the essence of Suchness, and which are suprarational attributes of Buddhahood. Since it is endowed completely with all these, and is not lacking anything, it is called the Tathagata-garbha when latent and also the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata.

Question: It was explained before that the essence of Suchness is undifferentiated and devoid of all characteristics. Why is it, then, that you have described its essence as having these various excellent qualities?

Answer: Though it has, in reality, all these excellent qualities, it does not have any characteristics of differentiation; it retains its identity and is of one flavor; Suchness is solely one.

The Awakening of Faith, Yoshito Hakeda, p.64-65 (Emphasis added)

Astus wrote:

A better translation:

"Moreover, suchness' own intrinsic reality and characteristics neither increase nor decrease for any ordinary people, hearers (śrāvaka), solitary realizers (pratyekabuddha), bodhisattvas, or buddhas. It is neither that suchness arose in a former time, nor that it will cease at some future time. It is absolutely constant. It has always been inherently replete with all qualities. It means this because of the idea that [suchness'] own intrinsic reality is imbued with the light of great wisdom; that it pervasively illuminates the dharma realm; that it is the recognition of reality; that it is the intrinsically pristine mind; that it is eternal, blissful, Self, and pure; and that it is cool, unchanging, and sovereign [that is, nirvana]. And it is because [suchness' own intrinsic reality] is replete with inconceivable buddha dharmas more numerous than the sands of the Ganges,

which are not separate, not cut off from, and not different from it, to the extent that it is perfect and lacks nothing. It is called the tathāgatagarbha; it is also called the dharma body of tathāgatas.

Question: Earlier, you stated that the intrinsic reality of suchness is uniform and free from all characteristics. How, then, can you also state that this intrinsic reality has such various kinds of qualities?

Answer: Although suchness truly has these qualities, it has no characteristics of differentiation. It is homogeneous and of one taste: there is only one suchness. Why? Since it is without any discriminating [function], and so free from the characteristics of discrimination, it is therefore non-dual."

(Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith, 1.2.7)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 20th, 2022 at 5:55 AM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

clayde said:

Regardless of name or translation, how can the ineffable be "without movement" (function) and give rise to "the ten thousand dharmas"?

Astus wrote:

Because 'the ineffable' is not a thing. The nature of mind, like the nature of everything, is without movement (see Sengzhao's treatises), and it is the mind that thinks and names everything. But since it's all just ideas and names, including the mind, there's nothing actually arising or ceasing. Furthermore, even this comprehension of there being nothing to grasp needs letting go of (see discussion with Zhichang in chapter 7 of the Platform Sutra), how much more so the idea that there is really an ultimate?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 20th, 2022 at 2:59 PM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

clayde said:

Astus, If I had meant "the mind that thinks and names everything" I would not have used the term "ineffable".

Astus wrote:

How many minds are there?

clayde said:

Nevertheless, I did search for Sengzhao's treatise, but only found a scholarly review of it. (See: <https://philarchive.org/archive/HOTNO-3>.) Based on that review, Sengzhao's reasoning is that nothing moves through time. Additionally, Sengzhao holds that motion and rest are nondual.

Astus wrote:

They are available here: <https://bdkamerica.org/product/three-short-treatises-by-vasubandhu-sengzhao-and-zongmi/>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2022 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

cllyde said:

Then why are you calling it “the mind that thinks and names everything”?

Astus wrote:

That's what the mind does, among other things. To assume that there is a separate, special mind, can only mean there are two minds, and it begs the question: what is that other mind and what does it do? Saying that it cannot be explained, then why call it mind, or anything at all?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2022 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

cllyde said:

Astus, Do you think that Huang Po meant “the mind that thinks and names everything” when he taught about Mind?

Astus wrote:

Could you be more specific what section of Huangbo's teachings you refer to?

'The five aggregates are mind, but the five aggregates have no self and no master.'
(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, ch 4)

'mind means no-mind and attainment means there is nothing to attain.'
(ch 7)

'How can you recognize your own mind? That which right now is speaking is precisely your mind.'
(ch 16)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2022 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

cllyde said:

Malcolm, Regarding capitalization of Mind, I was following the usage of Blofeld, the

translator of Huang Po's teachings used in the OP.

Astus, See the OP.

P.S: I'm not fond of using "Mind" because of the confusion it may cause and prefer other terms such as Dharmakaya, but there are many others. See the quote of Chinul in the OP. I found "stringless lute" to be an amusing term, but he also uses "true mind" (the translator doesn't capitalize the terms).

Astus wrote:

In the OP there's a short quote from the beginning about one mind without much definition. To clarify, see this one for instance:

'It is like the nature of honey: if honey is sweet by nature, then all honey is sweet — you cannot say that a specific honey is sweet while the rest is bitter. Where would such a thing be possible? Therefore, it is said, 'Empty space has neither inside nor outside'; so too is it with the dharma nature. Empty space has no middle; so too is it with the dharma nature. Therefore sentient beings are buddhas and buddhas are sentient beings. Sentient beings and buddhas are intrinsically one in their essence. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, conditioned and unconditioned, are intrinsically one in their essence. Mundane and supramundane, the six rebirth destinies and the four modes of birth, the mountains, streams, and lands, and the nature and its lack are also the same one essence. By calling them the 'same,' we mean that their designations are empty, their existence is empty, and their nonexistence is empty. Worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are inherently this one emptiness.'
(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 2.29)

In other words, what makes 'one' in 'one mind' is the essence, that is emptiness. Another term for it is self-nature (zixing 自性).

clyde said:

Now that we've discussed capitalization, terminology, and my motives for raising a question, let me rephrase my question.

Astus linked this,

Astus wrote:

How unexpected! The self-nature is originally without movement.

How unexpected! The self-nature can produce the ten thousand dharmas.'

(<http://www.cttbusa.org/6patriarch/6patriarch3.asp.html>)

clyde said:

How does the self-nature produce the ten thousand dharmas without movement?

Malcolm said:

What is a "self-nature"?

Astus wrote:

Huangbo:

'The self-nature is empty and pervasive, that's all.'
(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.7)

'This immaculate self-nature is originally neither deluded nor awakened. The realm of empty space that entirely pervades the ten directions is intrinsically our one-mind essence. Even though you engage in dynamic functioning and productive activity, how are these separate from empty space? Empty space is originally neither large nor small, neither contaminated nor conditioned, neither deluded nor awakened. If you look clearly, you'll find not a single thing, no persons and no buddhas. Bringing an end to even a hair's breadth of conceptualization means not relying on or being attached to anything. A clear stream flowing in one direction is the selfnature's acquiescence to the nonproduction of dharmas.'
(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 2.16)

Huineng:

"The ratiocination of the mind is vast, like space, which is boundless. ... The wondrous natures of people of this world are empty, without a single dharma that can be perceived. The emptiness of the self-natures is also like this.

...

The emptiness of the natures of the people of this world is also like this. Good friends, that the self-natures can embody the myriad dharmas is 'great.' The myriad dharmas are within people's natures. If one perceives the goodness and badness of people without ever grasping or rejecting [their goodness and badness], one will not become tainted or attached. For the mind to be like space is called 'great.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 28, 29)

"There is in the self-nature fundamentally not a single dharma that can be perceived. To think that there were any would be a false explanation, a disaster, a false view of enervating defilements. Therefore, this teaching takes nonthought as its central doctrine. ... Good friends, thoughts are activated from the self-nature of suchness. Although the six sensory faculties possess perceptual cognition, they do not defile the myriad realms. And yet the true nature is always autonomous. Therefore, the sutra says, 'When one is able to discriminate well the characteristics of the dharmas, this is to be unmoving within the cardinal meaning.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 44)

SELF-NATURE (Ch. zixing 自性)

"A Chan soteriological term referring to a person's Buddha-nature. It does not denote any self-existence or any changeless essence existent in and by itself. No such metaphysical meaning is involved in the original use of this term. A notable case of the traditional Chan usage of this term is in the Platform Sutra, where Buddha-nature is equicalent to self-nature (zixing) in the sense that Buddha-nature cannot be objectified and realized outside each person. Seeing or realizing the Buddha-nature is the existential transformation of the human mind and entire personhood, being able to understand and appreciate what constitutes a person - elements of impermanence and

non-abiding - and then acting accordingly. The realization of self-nature thus requires the accomplishment of action, the practical-behavioral carrying out of non-attachment, rather than identifying a metaphysical object or discovering subjectivity through knowledge. The usage also indicates the Chan appropriation of positive or kataphatic language in its teachings without abandoning the use of negative or apophatic language: the Chan walk on two roads."

(Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism by Youru Wang)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 21st, 2022 at 6:35 PM

Title: Re: On the Unchanging Nature of the One Mind

Content:

master of puppets said:

The Origin of Heaven and Earth

Has no Name.

The Mother of the Myriad Things

Has a Name.

Astus wrote:

The Taoist idea of a single source/substrate is rejected by Zongmi in the Treatise on the Origin of Humanity found in the same volume as Sengzhao's treatises

<https://bdkamerica.org/product/three-short-treatises-by-vasubandhu-sengzhao-and-zongmi/>.

An exemple from Zongmi to show some problems with imagining a singular source for all things:

'Again, it has been said that the myriad things are produced and transformed by Nature and do not arise due to causes and conditions. If this is the case, then birth and transformation would take place everywhere free from causes and conditions. This means that a stone might give birth to grass, grass might give birth to a man, and men might give birth to animals, etc. Furthermore, it would also mean that all birth would be without the distinction of prior and subsequent, that the time of rising from bed [after sleep] would be no different whether in the morning or evening, that immortality does not depend on alchemy and herbs, that peace does not depend on virtuous talents, and that humaneness and justice are not dependent on education and cultivation. If this is so, how could the doctrines established by Laozi, Zhuangzi, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius have become the norm?'

(Treatise on the Origin of Humanity, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 149-150)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 11th, 2022 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: Some Available Chan Meditation Scriptures in context

Content:

Astus wrote:

Why "chan meditation scriptures"? There are the so called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras, but they're more like a background for what became the Chan school. The major work of Zhiyi should also be mentioned in that context:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Clear_Serenity_Quiet_Insight/ZIGVswEACAAJ?hl=en.

As for sutras more closely associated with Chanzong:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Sutra_of_Perfect_Enlightenment/xROTQH4RQwC?hl=en;

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Cultivating_Original_Enlightenment/LY4BEAAAQBAJ?hl=en;

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Surangama_Sutra/I59_BAAAQBAJ?hl=en.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2022 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Why do Zen teachers write books?

Content:

clde said:

but why do Zen teachers write books?

Astus wrote:

For the same reason they talk: to teach. After all, a teacher who does not teach is not a teacher. What is beyond words and letters cannot be something taught or transmitted.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 16th, 2022 at 6:28 PM

Title: Re: Why do Zen teachers write books?

Content:

clde said:

Yes, I agree that talking and writing books is a method of teaching - but if "What is beyond words and letters cannot be something taught or transmitted," what is it that Zen teachers teach in their books?

Astus wrote:

What is it that Zen teachers teach? Generally it should be the same message that the Buddha and the ancestors repeated over and over throughout the centuries. It shouldn't matter if it's a formal speech, an informal discussion, a blog post, an essay, or a book.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 17th, 2022 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: Why do Zen teachers write books?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Kosho Uchiyama:

'What I want for you, the reader, is that you understand with your own intellect that Zen concerns the true depth of life that is beyond the reach of that intellect. This “life” is not Eastern or Western, it extends through all humanity. I hope that as you read you will look at your own life with a completely fresh mind and apply what I have written to your everyday life. That is the only place where the real world of Zen is.'

(Opening the Hand of Thought, p xxx)

Koun Yamada:

'It is my hope that this book will be a true aid to people around the world who are earnestly seeking a way to spiritual peace, and that it will inspire many to set out on the path of Zen practice. It is my particular wish that the book will provide sound information on matters concerning Zen and Buddhism that heretofore may have been given incomplete treatment in other books.'

(Zen: The Authentic Gate, p xv)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 21st, 2022 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Are these points against a Ishwara creator valid from a buddhist point of view?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Arguments may work within a rational context, but the fear of God is based on irrational ideas. Emotions like anxiety and doubt are easier to overcome by addressing them directly instead of the roundabout way of reasoning. Similarly, whatever one may imagine to be the supreme being, that is nothing more than fantasy that not only cannot be proven to exist in any experiential or logical way, but is rather harmful in hindering one in actually eliminating the causes of suffering. And it being an obstacle to liberation is the main argument in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 29th, 2022 at 10:30 PM

Title: Re: “special transmission”?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The master said: The mind is transmitted with the mind.

[The questioner] said: If the mind is transmitted, how can you say that the mind is also nonexistent?

The master said: To not attain a single dharma is called the transmission of the mind. If you comprehend this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma.

[The questioner] said: If there is no mind and no dharma, why do you call it a transmission?

The master said: You have heard me say “transmission of the mind” and have taken it that there is something that can be attained. It is for this reason that the patriarch said, “When one recognizes the mind-nature, it should be called inconceivable. Clearly and distinctly without anything that is attained, when one attains it one does not speak of it as understanding.” If I taught this to you how would you be able to understand it?

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 36)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 31st, 2022 at 3:36 AM

Title: Re: Sōtō Zen, the Nembutsu & Jōdo Shū?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Pure Land and Chan have been practised together for many centuries in China, Korea, and Vietnam. Here are some readily available works that can introduce you to how it's done (you might start with the third one's (Dialogs with Ancient Masters) first chapter to clarify some doubts):

<https://ymba.org/books/buddhism-wisdom-faith-pure-land-principles-and-practice> (a modern summary)

<https://ymba.org/books/pure-land-patriarchs> (teachings by a Chan master)

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/pureland.pdf (teachings by Tiantai founder Zhiyi and a Chan master)

https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/yin_kuang.pdf (letters by a modern Pure Land master)

<http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN060.pdf> (teachings by Chan masters)

<https://ymba.org/books/taming-monkey-mind-guide-pure-land-practice> (various methods of buddha-remembrance)

<https://ymba.org/books/mind-seal-buddhas> (Amitabha Sutra commentary)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2022 at 10:48 PM

Title: Re: Who?

Content:

clyde said:

What did the Buddha mean when he taught this? Who is sure to become old, ill and die? Who will be separated and parted? Who is the owner and heir? Who is it that does good or evil?

Astus wrote:

The <https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-062-010.html> is a good summary on the matter:

"How is the conditional relation in inner dependent arising to be seen? As due to the coming together of six elements. As due to the coming together of what six elements? Namely, the conditional relation in inner dependent arising is to be seen as due to the coming together of the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.

...

In this process, the earth element does not think, 'I provide the solidity of the body by assembling.' Nor does the water element think, 'I provide cohesion for the body.' Nor does the fire element think, 'I digest whatever the body eats, drinks, chews, or tastes.'

[F.119.b] Nor does the wind element think, 'I perform the function of the body's inhalation and exhalation.' Nor does the space element think, 'I create hollow spaces inside the body.' Nor does the element of consciousness think, 'I produce the name and form of the body.' Nor does the body think, 'I am produced by these conditions.' Yet, when these conditions are present, the body is born.

The earth element is not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not neuter, not me, not mine, and not anybody else's. Similarly, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, and the consciousness element are also not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not neuter, not me, not mine, and not anybody else's."

In Mazu Daoyi's words (Sun-Face Buddha, p 63):

"Since limitless kalpas, all worldly false thinking, [such as] flattery, dishonesty, self-esteem, and arrogance have formed one body. That is why the sutra says, 'It is only through the grouping of many dharmas that this body is formed. When it arises, it is only dharmas arising; when it ceases, it is only dharmas ceasing. When the dharmas arise, they do not say I arise; when they cease, they do not say I cease.'"

The sutra reference is from the

[https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-202:](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-202)

"The body is the issue of the four main elements, and in these elements there is no owner and no agent. There is no self in this body, and, except for arbitrary insistence on self, ultimately no 'I' which can be said to be sick can be apprehended. Therefore, thinking, '“I” should not adhere to any self, and “I” should rest in the knowledge of the root of illness,' he should abandon the conception of himself as a personality and produce the conception of himself as a thing, thinking, 'This body is an aggregate of many things. When it is born, only things are born; when it ceases, only things cease. These things have no awareness or feeling of each other. When they are born, they do not think, “I am born”; when they cease, they do not think, “I cease.”'

Furthermore, he should understand thoroughly the conception of himself as a thing by cultivating the following consideration: 'Just as in the case of the conception of “self,” so the conception of “thing” is also a misunderstanding, and this misunderstanding is also a grave sickness; I should free myself from this sickness and should strive to abandon it.' What is the elimination of this sickness? It is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness. What is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness? It is the freedom from dualism. What is freedom from dualism? It is the absence of involvement with either the external or the internal. What is absence of involvement with either external or internal? It is non-deviation, non-fluctuation, and non-distraction from sameness. What is sameness? It is the sameness of everything from self to liberation. Why? Because both self and liberation are void. How can both be void? As verbal designations, they both are void, and neither is established in reality. Therefore, one who sees such sameness makes no difference between sickness and voidness; his sickness is itself voidness, and that sickness as voidness is itself void."

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 6th, 2022 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Mahamudra same as Shikantaza

Content:

ajhayes said:

Is it fair to state that Mahamudra (TB in general, perhaps) approaches the real world in a mystical way while Zen approaches the mystical side realistically?

Astus wrote:

To be fair would require some definitions of those terms. Otherwise, they look like exaggerated generalisations based on little information about either of the traditions.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2022 at 5:29 AM

Title: Re: Agamas in Mahayana

Content:

Tennyson said:

I received some interesting responses, and I was wondering if I could ask the question of you folks since I'm interested in hearing more about the use and relevance of the Agamas or other early texts in Mahayana Buddhism.

Astus wrote:

There is only a mere handful of agama sutras in the Tibetan canon, while in Chinese there are four almost complete collections and some other individual texts. They have been preserved but were very much irrelevant to virtually everyone until the 20th century.

Tennyson said:

I'm very fascinated by the history and development of different Buddhist schools/sects and how each sect's unique beliefs relate to what one could call the "basics" of Buddhist teaching: Four Noble Truths, Not-Self, etc.

Astus wrote:

Basic Buddhist concepts are not the same as the prevalence of the use of agama scriptures, since those concepts are also found in Mahayana sutras and treatises.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2022 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Agamas in Mahayana

Content:

DNS said:

The Chinese Agamas are very similar to the Pali Nikayas so I believe are relied on heavily within the Chan tradition.

Astus wrote:

Chan is a Mahayana school, and as such its primary scriptural references are Mahayana sutras. As it's famously said by Bodhidharma to Huike:

"I have the Laṅkāvatāra Sutra in four chapters which is also to be transmitted to you; this is the essential gate to the Tathāgata's teachings on the Heart-ground and makes it possible for all beings to enter awakening."

(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 1, 3.35)

And as once Huineng was told:

"Great Master [Hongren] always exhorts both monks and laymen to simply maintain the Diamond Sutra, so that one can see the [self]-nature by oneself and achieve buddhahood directly and completely."

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 18)

Also Huineng himself said:

"Good friends, if you wish to enter into the profound dharmadhātu and the samādhi of prajñā, you must cultivate the practice of prajñā and recite the Diamond Sutra. Thus will you attain seeing the nature. You should realize that the merits of this sutra are immeasurable and unlimited. They are clearly praised within the sutra; I cannot explain them fully here. This teaching is the Supreme Vehicle: it is preached for those of great wisdom, it is preached for those of superior capacities."

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 8th, 2022 at 10:13 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Astus wrote:

Looks like the standard account of the hardships Gautama went through that proved to be completely futile and meaningless: <https://suttacentral.net/mn36/en/sujato>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 9th, 2022 at 10:16 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Aemilius said:

If you eat a vegetarian meal once a day, it is usually called fasting in the modern dietary teachings that you can read in various colorful magazines. There are several different varieties in this.

Astus wrote:

Eating only once or twice a day until noon is the Pratimoksha regulation, and it's also observed on certain days by devout lay people.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 10th, 2022 at 4:49 PM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

Can we then conclude, for example, that a virtuous practitioner of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or Hinduism could in fact achieve Buddhist liberation through their faith? And based on the Ksitigarbha-related Sutra, could we conceive of, say, Shakyamuni Buddha taking on the form of Christ and saving (or at least "helping") a Christian worshipping what he believes to be Christ?

Astus wrote:

It's merely subsuming other religions under a Buddhist umbrella, it doesn't mean other paths on their own lead to liberation, but like shravakayana turns into bodhisattvayana, so good tirthikas eventually become Buddhists.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 10th, 2022 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

However the quotes above don't seem to explicitly deny the possibility of a faster path to liberation.

Astus wrote:

The very meaning of ekayana is that there is a single path, not many, so faster and slower ways do not exist, only people on different stages with various capacities.

FiveSkandhas said:

Worshipping a relevant Kami was said to be an expedient path for Japan's people to reach whichever Buddha or Bodhisattva the kami in question was considered a "projection" of... perhaps even a faster and more suitable way than directly addressing the Buddhist figure in question (although that went on too of course).

Astus wrote:

Neither recalling deities (devatānusmṛti) nor recalling buddhas (buddhānusmṛti) are sufficient methods for liberation on their own, but they can lead to concentration, concentration to wisdom, and wisdom to awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 11th, 2022 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

Well, as I noted above, the old 神仏習合 Shinto-Buddhist Combinatory religion is generally considered heterodox by today's Buddhists inside and outside Japan, and in fact it was outlawed by the government in the Mid-1800s. Interestingly, tiny remnants remain here and there in the country, and there is a recent trend to revive certain aspects of the tradition.

Astus wrote:

In general there's nothing against worshipping all sorts of samsaric deities, as long as one does not expect liberation through such an act and it does not involve committing evil deeds.

It is a proper use of wealth to make offerings to gods:

'Furthermore, with his legitimate wealth he makes five spirit-offerings (pañcabali): to relatives, guests, ancestors, king, and deities (devatābali).'
(AN 4.61 & AN 5.41)

And in return gods should protect their worshippers:

'So pay heed, all you beings,
have love for humankind,
who day and night bring offerings (bali);
please protect them diligently.'
(Snp 2.1)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2022 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

I have tended to believe that all valid Mahayana and Vajrayana paths lead to the same final desirable outcome, whatever term we use for it.

Astus wrote:

Let me highlight the difference that was stated:

Malcolm said:

From the point of view of secret mantra, common Mahāyāna does not teach the path of attaining buddhahood in a single lifetime, soup to nuts.

FiveSkandhas said:

cavalierly and universally dismiss nearly 2000 years of profound East Asian doctrine and practice as somehow universally "inferior" to what goes on in the Himalayas.

Astus wrote:

Neither a teaching's history, nor its popularity is an attribute to qualify its content as this or that, otherwise Gautama should have just accepted the Vedas.

FiveSkandhas said:

It just feels kind of like that sort of thing is more rooted in hustling for prestige and power and not purely a matter of selfless Dharmic exploration.

Astus wrote:

Not necessarily so. Also, every Buddhist tradition subscribes to generally the same basis expressed most succinctly in the four noble truths. When it comes to one method or doctrine being superior to another, one should look at the criteria used and the context applied to. The fundamental outline of the path is the same anyhow: the three trainings, calm and insight, and elimination of attachment. Again, it's not anything debated. One can perhaps argue that visualising oneself as Tara is a quicker way to achieve samadhi than reciting Amitufo, but it's more likely up to the individual's inclinations.

'There are no sudden and gradual in the Dharma,
It is delusion and enlightenment that are slow or fast.
It is only this teaching of seeing the nature
Which stupid people cannot comprehend.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 34)

'To sum up what is essential: the view conceiving the existence of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha as well as the view conceiving the existence of nirvāṇa—views such as these which conceive the existence of something to be gained are just strains of thought rooted in attachment. As for “attachment,” this is what is referred to as “wrong view.” Why? Persons with wrong views are those who circulate about within the three realms remaining eternally separated from the essential means of escape. This person who indulges in attachments is of just this very sort. He remains eternally separated from the essential means of escape and thus, even to the very end, remains unable to realize anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.'
(Vasubandhu's Treatise on the Bodhisattva Vow, ch 10)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2022 at 4:58 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Aemilius said:

Also, fasting etc are not completely without results.

Astus wrote:

It is stated explicitly both in your above quote of EA 31.8:

'During those six years of diligent hardship pursuing awakening, I hadn't won anything.'

and in MN 36:

'But I have not achieved any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones by this severe, grueling work.'

Aemilius said:

As the Bhagavan Shakyamuni himself says, he developed or manifested equanimity/nonhatred towards unpleasant circumstances through these ascetic practices.

Astus wrote:

It's merely stated that his mind was not moved by the pleasant and painful feelings, not that it was by developed because of asceticism.

As the Buddha told Mara:

'I realized that it's pointless; all that mortification in search of immortality is as futile as oars and rudder on dry land. Ethics, immersion, and wisdom: by developing this path to awakening I attained ultimate purity.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn4.1/en/sujato>)

And from <https://suttacentral.net/ea19.2/en/huyenvi-boinwebb-pasadika>

(https://canon.dharmapearls.net/01_agama/ekottarika/19/EA_19_02.html):

'There are two modes of behaviour which a person in quest of the highest truth should avoid. Which are the two? Desiring, craving for objects of sensual pleasure which by its nature is low, vulgar and unprofitable. On the other hand, all sorts of mortification, many acts of harming and endless tormenting thoughts. These are the two modes of behaviour which a person in quest of the highest truth should avoid. Having given up these two modes of behaviour, on my own I gained the highest truth and became fully enlightened.'

More on the subject of self-mortification see e.g.

<https://suttacentral.net/dn25/en/sujato>

As for what the Buddha regularly taught regarding eating, it was moderation (e.g.

<https://suttacentral.net/an3.16/en/sujato>):

'And how does a mendicant eat in moderation? It's when a mendicant reflects properly on the food that they eat: 'Not for fun, indulgence, adornment, or decoration, but only to sustain this body, to avoid harm, and to support spiritual practice. In this way, I shall put an end to old discomfort and not give rise to new discomfort, and I will live blamelessly and at ease.' That's how a mendicant eats in moderation.'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 13th, 2022 at 10:20 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Sādhaka said:

Indeed; there are many benefits of achieving metabolic flexibility through intermittent fasting and occasional prolonged fasting routines.

Astus wrote:

Similar practices are told about some contemporaries of the Buddha that are 'not the legitimate development of physical endurance in the noble one's training'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn36/en/sujato>):

“But Aggivessana, what have you heard about the development of physical endurance?”

“Take, for example, Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca, and Makkhali Gosāla. They go naked, ignoring conventions. They lick their hands, and don't come or wait when called. They don't consent to food brought to them, or food prepared on purpose for them, or an invitation for a meal. They don't receive anything from a pot or bowl; or from someone who keeps sheep, or who has a weapon or a shovel in their home; or where a couple is eating; or where there is a woman who is pregnant, breastfeeding, or who has a man in her home; or where there's a dog waiting or flies buzzing. They accept no fish or meat or liquor or wine, and drink no beer. They go to just one house for alms, taking just one mouthful, or two houses and two mouthfuls, up to seven houses and seven mouthfuls. They feed on one saucer a day, two saucers a day, up to seven saucers a day. They eat once a day, once every second day, up to once a week, and so on, even up to once a fortnight. They live committed to the practice of eating food at set intervals.”

“But Aggivessana, do they get by on so little?”

“No, Master Gotama. Sometimes they eat a variety of luxury foods and drink a variety of luxury beverages. They gather their body's strength, build it up, and get fat.”

“What they earlier gave up, they later got back. That is how there is the increase and decrease of this body. But Aggivessana, what have you heard about development of the mind?” When Saccaka was questioned by the Buddha about development of the mind, he was stumped.

So the Buddha said to Saccaka, “The development of physical endurance that you have described is not the legitimate development of physical endurance in the noble one's training. And since you don't even understand the development of physical endurance, how can you possibly understand the development of the mind?”

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2022 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Sādhaka said:

for the moment we can at least say that Buddhist & Bönpo monks (in all traditions as far as I'm aware) are usually doing intermittent-fasting for about 17-20 hours a day on average, and not usually eating anything after solar noon.

Astus wrote:

It is not called fasting but it is one of the precepts for monastics.

“Mendicants, I eat my food in one sitting per day. Doing so, I find that I'm healthy and well, nimble, strong, and living comfortably. You too should eat your food in one sitting per day. Doing so, you'll find that you're healthy and well, nimble, strong, and living comfortably.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn65/en/sujato>)

It's a precept also observed by lay people during uposatha/sabbath:

‘As long as they live, the perfected ones eat in one part of the day, abstaining from eating at night and from food at the wrong time. I, too, for this day and night will eat in one part of the day, abstaining from eating at night and food at the wrong time. I will observe the sabbath by doing as the perfected ones do in this respect.’

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.70/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/an8.41/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2022 at 2:55 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Malcolm said:

Much prefer the witches sabbath, getting naked in the moonlight, dancing around fires, broomsticks...

Astus wrote:

Uposatha and ganacakra are not exclusive, are they? (reminds me of <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYJQGSapz-A>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 14th, 2022 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Aemilius said:

Because the world knew and had heard about the ascetic Gautama, they expected that he might attain something one day. If he had just left the palace and walked to the Bodhi-tree in his silken garments, wearing his golden ornaments, fresh like a flower from a warm bath, do you think he would have attained anything?

Astus wrote:

The Buddha wasn't famous because he practised for a short period self-mortification and got an emaciated body, and he himself said it was of no use for his subsequent attainment of liberation. Some people also knew him because he was a son of a ruler, but it doesn't mean we should all live a luxurious life.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2022 at 3:58 AM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

Anders said:

For the quickest finish, there's shravakayana.

Astus wrote:

In the triyana version yes, but not if there's only one vehicle. As for the possibility of buddhahood in this life, it depends on whether one accepts buddha-nature as complete with all buddha qualities or not.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 17th, 2022 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: another question about rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

A mind, even one's own, is an inference, a mere linguistic construct. So it is with others' too.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2022 at 2:27 PM

Title: Re: another question about rebirth

Content:

reiun said:

In Zen mind is Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Because the mind is imaginary, essentially empty.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 19th, 2022 at 7:47 PM

Title: Re: another question about rebirth

Content:

reiun said:

And the essence of that emptiness is Buddhanature, which is nondual.

Astus wrote:

Emptiness means lack of essence. Because some might mistake emptiness for a thing, it's also stated that even emptiness is empty of any essence. And as you say, emptiness is non-dual, and can be also called buddha nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 20th, 2022 at 4:29 PM

Title: Re: another question about rebirth

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here are some straightforward words from the great master Jinul on the matters of mind and rebirth.

First one should be able to distinguish body and mind:

'From morning to evening, throughout the twelve periods of the day, during all your actions and activities—whether you are hearing or seeing, laughing or talking, angry or happy, engaging in propriety or impropriety —speak! Ultimately who is it that is able to perform all these actions? If you say that it is the physical body that is acting, then at the moment when a person's life comes to an end, even though the body has not yet decayed, how is it that the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, the nose cannot smell, the tongue cannot talk, the body cannot move, the hands cannot grasp, and the feet cannot run? You should know that what is capable of seeing, hearing, moving, and acting is perforce your original mind; it is not your physical body.'

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 220)

Then see how the mind, when driven by passions, is trapped in the beginningless cycle of rebirth:

'If you are not stabilized in the tranquil thought of dhyāna, your activating consciousness (ōpsik 業識) will drift, with no foundation upon which to ground itself. At the moment of your death, wind and fire will oppress you, the four material elements (mahābhūta) will separate and scatter, and the mind will go mad, feeling stifled and cramped, and become subject to the inversions (viparyāsa) and distorted views. As you have no stratagem for soaring into the heavens above nor any plan through which to enter the earth below, you will cower in fright, bereft of everything on which you used to rely. Your physical body will be left behind as if it were a cicada's cast-off shell.

Confused about the road stretching before you, your lonely spirit will have to go on alone. Although you may have owned precious jewelry and priceless riches, you can take none of it with you. Although you may have relatives from prestigious households, ultimately not one of them can follow along behind to rescue you. This is what is meant by the statement, "What one makes oneself, one receives oneself; there is no one to take one's place."

(Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 141)

And the situation of the awakened ones:

'Now, those who penetrate to the true mind tally with the enlightened nature, which is not subject to arising and ceasing, and give rise to the sublime functioning, which is also not subject to arising and ceasing. Their sublime essence is real, eternal, and originally free of arising and ceasing, but their sublime functioning adapts to the environment and seems to display arising and ceasing. Nevertheless, since the function arises from the essence, function and essence are identical; thus how can there be any arising and ceasing? Because accomplished men have realized that true essence, could arising and ceasing intrude in any way? It is like water: moisture is its essence and waves are its function. Since the moist nature of water is forever unchanging, how can the moist nature within the waves change? But as waves cannot exist apart from that moist nature, they too are unchanging. For this reason the ancients said, "The whole earth is the one proper eye of this śramaṇa. The whole earth is a Saṃgharāma [monastery] - a sanctuary for the man who has awakened to the noumenon."

Once a person has penetrated to the true mind, the four kinds of birth and the six destinies instantly disappear. The mountains, the rivers, and the great earth are all discovered to be the true mind. Hence it is impossible that there could be any other refuge apart from this true mind. Since there are then no more false causes within the triple world, there can be no false results of rebirth in its six destinies. And if there are no false results, what refuge can be spoken of? There is no separate "this" or "that"; and since there is no "this" or "that," how can there be right and wrong? All the worlds in the ten directions are only this one true mind; the whole body is their reward - there is no refuge distinct from it.

In the teaching about the Buddhas' and bodhisattvas' exhibition of special skills and powers, it is explained that we may take rebirth at will without obstacles or hindrances. As it is stated in the Transmission of the Lamp: The presiding minister Wen-ts'ao asked Master Kuei-feng, "After men who have awakened to the noumenon complete this life, where is their refuge?"

Kuei-feng answered, "There are no sentient beings who are not invested with the numinous and bright enlightened nature which is not different from that of all the Buddhas. If you can awaken to the fact that this nature is the dharmakāya and realize that originally you are unborn, then what need is there for a refuge? The numinous brightness is not obscured; it is clear and constantly aware. There is no place from which it came, and no place to which it will go. Only the void calmness can be considered to be your own essence; do not suppose that your essence is your physical body. The numinous awareness is your own mind; do not suppose that your mind is the deluded thoughts. If deluded thoughts arise, never follow them - then, when you are about to die, karma cannot bind you. Although you enter the intermediate state between rebirths, the direction you take is entirely up to you. Whether you go to the realm of gods or the realm of humans, you are free to take any refuge you want." This is the destination of the true mind after the dissolution of the body.'

(Straight Talk on the True Mind, in The Collected Works of Chinul, p 183-184)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 22nd, 2022 at 4:04 AM

Title: Re: Zen question

Content:

master of puppets said:

what is it that simple?

Astus wrote:

'When a mendicant has heard that nothing is worth insisting on, they directly know all things. Directly knowing all things, they completely understand all things.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.80/en/sujato>; also AN 7.61, MN 37)

'The essence of the Way is detachment.'

(Wake-up Sermon, in The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 47; X63, no. 1219, p. 5c9)

'To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30; T48, no. 2008, p. 350b29)

"Sāriputta, I can teach the Dhamma briefly; I can teach the Dhamma in detail; I can teach the Dhamma both briefly and in detail. It is those who can understand that are rare."

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.33/en/bodhi>)

'What is the essence of the Buddha-dharma?' asked Bai.

'To refrain from all evil and do all that is good,' answered the master.

'A three-year-old child already knows these words,' said Bai.

'Although a three-year-old can say them, an old man of eighty can't put them into practice!' countered the master.

(Chan Master Hangzhou Niaoke Daolin, in Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 2, 4.54; T51, no. 2076, p. 230b24-27)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 25th, 2022 at 2:12 PM

Title: Re: another question about rebirth

Content:

clyde said:

I've experienced many of the teachings of the Buddha directly, but I haven't experienced the ālāyavijñāna, so I can't say anything directly about it, even if it exists.

Astus wrote:

It's not to be experienced, because it cannot be experienced.

clyde said:

But if it exists, it's a dharma, and all dharmas are impermanent, arising with causes and conditions and ceasing, and empty of self. It's not the case that processes have a self,

it's that we impute a self to them by seeing them as personal. So, when asked if there is a "separate, personal ālāyavijñāna", if one answers "Yes", then that imputes a self.

Astus wrote:

Compounded things are impermanent, but not all dharmas are compounded. The storehouse consciousness is not a dharma. The body is individual, but it does not become a self because of that.

clyde said:

Of course we see our lives as continuous from day to day, year after year.

Astus wrote:

And that's because of not recognising impermanence on a subtler level. The six consciousnesses do not cease merely at death, but practically every moment. So if it's problematic what connects one life to the next, it's also problematic what connects one conscious moment with another. That is a good topic to investigate experientially.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 27th, 2022 at 5:29 PM

Title: Re: "Radical" Ekayāna and the liberation of non-Buddhists?

Content:

Astus wrote:

For the one vehicle perspective to culminate in buddhahood the two vehicles' attainment has to be temporary, and that is explained by some attachments still remaining for them. Furthermore, in order to exist a path to buddhahood that is shorter than the minimum three incalculable aeons, the innumerable buddha qualities that otherwise would have to be accumulated over time must be present as buddha nature and revealed with the elimination of all clinging. Therefore the entirety of attachments is removed solely by wisdom.

'O Lord, the wisdom of the tathāgatagarbha is the Tathāgata's wisdom of emptiness (śūnyatā). O Lord, the tathāgatagarbha has not been seen nor attained originally by all the arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and powerful bodhisattvas.'

(Sūtra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar, ch 9, BDK ed, p 37)

'There is nothing to be removed from this

And not the slightest to be added.

Actual reality is to be seen as it really is—

Whoever sees actual reality is liberated.

The basic element is empty of what is adventitious,

Which has the characteristic of being separable.

It is not empty of the unsurpassable attributes,

Which have the characteristic of being inseparable.'

(Uttaratantra I.154-155, tr Brunnhölzl; v 154 is from

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/indian-masters/nagarjuna/heart-dependent-origination>)

'Since generosity just leads to wealth,
Discipline [just leads to] heaven, and meditation [just] relinquishes the afflictions,
While prajñā eliminates all afflictive and cognitive [obscurations],
It is supreme, and its cause is to study this [dharma].

...

Conceptions in terms of the three spheres
Are asserted as the cognitive obscurations.
Antagonistic factors such as envy
Are held to be the afflictive obscurations.
Without prajñā, the other [paramitas] do not represent
The causes for relinquishing these [obscurations].
Therefore, prajñā is the highest one, and its root
Is study, so study is supreme [too].'
(Uttaratantra V.6, 14-15 / v 382, 390-391, tr Brunnhölzl)

'In the expository, causal vehicle of the paramitas, the sugatagarbha or buddha-nature is considered to be present in the minds of beings only as a seed. When this is fully developed through circumstantial conditions— in other words, the two accumulations (of merit and wisdom)— buddhahood is attained. And since the cause comes first and its result after, one speaks in this case of a causal vehicle.

By contrast, the Mantrayana, the vehicle of mantra, proclaims that all beings are by nature endowed with the sugatagarbha, wherein all enlightened qualities are spontaneously present. The buddha-nature is the ground or basis of purification. It is compared with the sun; and like the sun concealed by clouds, the sugatagarbha is veiled by compounded or conditioned states of mind, which are adventitious to it.'
(Treasury of Precious Qualities, vol 2, p 86)

'If the meaning of emptiness does not dwell within the mind, we cannot attain liberation by means of the other virtues. ... When one is endowed with the meaning of emptiness, there is not a single thing which is not included in this path.'
(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 251, 252)

'With mind like wood or stone, not explaining anything with the mouth, mind not going anywhere, then the mind ground becomes like space, wherein the sun of wisdom naturally appears. It is as though the clouds had opened and the sun emerged. Just put an end to all fettering connections, and feelings of greed, hatred, craving, defilement and purity all come to an end. Unmoved in the face of the five desires and eight influences, not choked up by seeing, hearing, discerning or knowing, not confused by anything, naturally endowed with all virtues and the inconceivable use of all paranormal powers, this is someone who is free.'
(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 78)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 28th, 2022 at 5:18 AM

Title: Re: "special transmission"?

Content:

oryoki said:

There is an interesting free PDF article on the subject of “transmission” by Zen Teacher Jeff Shore entitled “THE SOURCE OF ZEN: WHO TRANSMITS WHAT?”

It can be found and downloaded here (in English):

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/JeffShore.html>

Astus wrote:

There's more from him on his website: <https://beingwithoutself.org/dharma-talks/transcribed-talks-pdf/>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 11th, 2022 at 4:31 AM

Title: Re: Is there a way to tell if one achieved direct realization?

Content:

bartolomay said:

Is there any unmistakable signs of realization?

Astus wrote:

For a stream enterer there is the mirror of the teaching, see e.g.

<https://suttacentral.net/sn55.8/en/sujato>, and also the other discourses in SN 55.

For an arhat see e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.153/en/sujato>.

For bodhisattvas see e.g. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-31.html>, and commentaries like http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/SZPPS-EO_book_page.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 11th, 2022 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: "Unsystematic Attention" in Tathagatagarba thought

Content:

Astus wrote:

And if they ask: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason why delusion arises, and once arisen it increases and grows?’

You should say: ‘Improper attention. When you attend improperly, delusion arises, and once arisen it increases and grows. This is the cause, this is the reason why delusion arises, and once arisen it increases and grows.’

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.68/en/sujato>)

ignorance < five hindrances < three kinds of misconduct < lack of sense restraint < lack of mindfulness and situational awareness < improper attention (ayonisomanasikāra) < lack of faith < listening to an untrue teaching < associating with bad people
(<https://suttacentral.net/an10.61/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 11th, 2022 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: Is there a way to tell if one achieved direct realization?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Yongming Yanshou wrote ten questions to measure one's comprehension,
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=153592#p153592>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 12th, 2022 at 3:40 PM

Title: Re: Is there a way to tell if one achieved direct realization?

Content:

Tao said:

Very nice.

Thank you a lot for your translation.

Astus wrote:

It's <https://eas.arizona.edu/people/awelter> 's translation from the book
<https://books.google.hu/books?id=2Kc-zsuweBoC>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2022 at 7:02 PM

Title: Re: Bodhisattva's austerities in the Agamas; going naked, letting his grow etc.

Content:

Aemilius said:

Some books on the life of Gautama tell concerning the ascetism of Siddhartha: "For six long years he continued to undergo fasts and penances, until his body was so wasted that no one seeing him would have recognized the noble Prince Siddhatha. But his fame as a saintly man spread abroad like a sound of a great bell hung in the sky, as the old stories tell us."

Found in The Story of the Buddha, Edith Holland, London 1923, reprint Delhi 2003.

Also mentioned in Who is the Buddha?, Sangharakshita, Windhorse 1994.

Astus wrote:

A similar statement is found in the Chinese version of the Buddhacarita, that is a likely source of the above.

From <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe19/sbe1914.htm> published in 1883:

'His spirit free, his body light and refined, his name spreading far and wide, as 'highly gifted,' even as the moon when first produced, or as the Kumuda flower spreading out its sweetness; Everywhere thro' the country his excellent fame extended; the daughters of the lord of the place both coming to see him'

And from Charles Willemen's translation (XII.80, BDK ed, p 89):

'His spirit was empty and his body was shrunken, but his famous virtue became widely renowned. It was like the opening up of a kumuda flower when the moon has just risen.

His excellent fame spread all over the land. Men and women rivaled to come and see him.'

However, there's nothing like that in the Sanskrit version, as translated by E.B. Cowell in 1894. See the same section in chapter 12 from verse 89 <https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Buddhacarita/12-Book-XII.htm>.

And the opposite image is given in the Lalitavistara:

'Those who passed by the Bodhisattva, such as village boys or girls, ox herders, cow herders, grass collectors, wood collectors, and those looking for dung, all thought he was a demon made of dust. They made fun of him and sprinkled him with dust.'
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh95.html#UT22084-046-001-1239>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 13th, 2022 at 8:51 PM

Title: Re: Reference from a quote of W. Rahula

Content:

SaaZ said:

Is this quote present in the Pali canon? What is Paramatthajotika I? Does someone know if the same concept is present in some sutras of the pali canon (or even from Mahayana texts)?

Astus wrote:

It is found in the commentary to <https://suttacentral.net/kp4/en/sujato> (the <https://tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/s0501a.att4.xml>), to the first question, as a saying attributed to the Buddha. But as Rahula himself notes in his book, there is no sign of such a saying in the canon itself. It is also unlikely to be found, since the idea of momentariness is post-canonical.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 14th, 2022 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Reference from a quote of W. Rahula

Content:

SaaZ said:

When you say that the idea of momentariness is post-canonical, you mean that It start to appear consistently only in later text?

Astus wrote:

'The cursory examination of the still-extant Abhidharmapitakas undertaken in this chapter suggests that in them, as in the Nikayas/Agamas, the theory of momentariness is not postulated as a canonical doctrine and is only attested, if at all, as a sectarian stance to be refuted. This implies that the theory developed after the schism of the sects within certain schools and is in that sense a post-canonical development which, judging from the little evidence reviewed here, may date back as far as the first century

A.D. and possibly even beyond.'

(The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness by Alexander von Rospatt, p 28)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 16th, 2022 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Giant vehicle

Content:

yinyangkoi said:

Mahayana means great vehicle. How would you call an even bigger vehicle? A giant vehicle? In Sanskrit

Astus wrote:

The term for the highest/supreme vehicle is agrayāna (最上乘), as found in e.g. the Diamond Sutra, the Gaganaganjapariproccha Sutra, the Mahayanasutralamkara, and the Ratnagotravibhaga, but it's generally synonymous with Mahayana. One example where it becomes something higher than Mahayana is where Chan is called the highest vehicle.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 18th, 2022 at 6:59 PM

Title: One Mind by Huangbo

Content:

Astus wrote:

Below are a number of quotes from Huangbo Xiyun's two texts translated by Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Seong-Uk Kim as found in the book A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace. The quotes are intended to clarify the meaning of the term one mind (yixin 一心) as used by Huangbo.

'[The master himself] just esteemed the stamp of the Supreme Vehicle, which stayed far removed from words and letters. He transmitted only the one mind; there was no other dharma. The essence of mind is also empty, and the myriad conditions are all quiescent. It is like the great orb of the sun that rises in the sky: its radiance shines brightly, and it is clear without the slightest trace of dust.'

That is from Pei Xiu's preface summarising the essentials. It highlights that Huangbo taught exclusively about the one mind that covers both the essence of mind (xinti 心體) and the myriad conditions (wanyuan 萬緣), as both are empty (kong 空) and quiescent (ji 寂).

'All the buddhas and sentient beings are only the one mind; there is no other dharma. Since time immemorial, this mind has never been produced or extinguished. It is neither green nor yellow; it has neither form nor characteristics (lakṣaṇa). It does not belong to the categories of either existence or nonexistence. It cannot be measured in terms of new or old, long or short, large or small. It transcends all limits, measures, names, traces, and comparisons. What is right in front of you — that is it. But if you start to think, you will be far off the mark.

[The one mind] is like empty space. It has no boundaries and cannot be measured. Only this one mind is the buddha. There is utterly no difference between the buddha and sentient beings. Sentient beings are attached to appearances and seek outside [for the buddha]; but in seeking the buddha, they lose the buddha. They make a buddha look for a buddha and use the mind to grasp the mind. Even though they exhaust themselves until the end of the eon, they will never be able to get it.'

That's the beginning of the first text and it contains practically all the basics to know. Both buddhas and beings are included in the one mind, it is without any characteristics (xiang 相) to identify, so it is like space. What separates beings from buddhas is only thinking (nian 念), attachment to appearances (zhuoxiang 著相), seeking outside the mind.

'Dharmas originally are unproduced, and now they are also not extinguished. Do not arouse such dualistic views as revulsion or delight. All dharmas are just this one mind; subsequently, this [insight] becomes the Buddha Vehicle. Ordinary people, generating thoughts about sense objects, pursue delights and revulsions with their minds. To be free from objects, they must forget their minds. If their minds are forgotten, sense objects will become void. If sense objects become void, the mind will be extinguished. If you just want to remove sense objects without forgetting the mind, you will not be able to remove sense objects but will only increase your bewilderment and agitation. Thus the myriad dharmas are just the mind. But as the mind also cannot be ascertained, what more do you seek? Those who train in prajñā see not a single dharma that can be ascertained. They stop conceiving that there are three vehicles. There is only the one genuine reality, which cannot be realized or attained. To claim, "I have had realization and attainment," is the height of conceit.'

First it points to the Mahayana view that dharmas are originally unborn, and by realising that there is no more liking or disliking - that is the correct insight of the one mind. On the other hand those who are ignorant see arising and cessation and have greed and anger. It shows how letting go of mind/thoughts makes the objects empty, and in turn seeing objects to be empty eliminates delusion, thus there is neither something to cling to nor something that clings. That absence of both mind and objects is being without anything attained, without anything to seek.

'There is the phrase "in similar fashion, this one seminal brightness divides into six that combine together." The "one seminal brightness" is the one mind. The "six that combine together" are the six sense organs. These six sense organs combine, respectively, with the six sense objects: the eyes combine with forms, the ears combine with sounds, the nose combines with smells, the tongue combines with tastes, the body combines with touch, and the mind combines with mental objects. Between them, six sense consciousnesses arise. Together, these make up the eighteen elements of cognition. If you understand that the eighteen elements of cognition have no objective reality, then these six will combine together into the one seminal brightness. This one seminal brightness is nothing but the mind. All practitioners of the Way know this. They simply cannot avoid creating conceptual understanding of this one seminal brightness and these six combinations. Eventually, these practitioners are bound by dharmas and do

not conform with the original mind.'

Here it's shown that there is no one mind apart from the six consciousnesses, the only issue is whether one imagines something real to grasp at or not.

'Only if there are no states of mind involving birth and death, defilements, and so forth is there then no need for such dharmas as bodhi. Therefore, it is said,
The Buddha taught all dharmas
to eliminate all states of mind.
Since I retain no states of mind,
what need is there for all dharmas?
From the Buddha to the patriarchs, they speak only of the one mind and the one-vehicle.'

Whatever mind one takes to be the real thing, it is only birth and death. That's why one mind is no mind.

'The master replied, "Whatever characteristics there may be, all of those are spurious. But if you see that all characteristics are free from characteristics, you will see the Tathāgata.' Both buddhas and sentient beings are utterly false views that you have created. Because you do not recognize the original mind, in vain you create such views and understandings. The very moment you create the notion that there is a 'buddha,' you are obstructed by that 'buddha.' The moment you create the notion that there are 'sentient beings,' you are obstructed by those 'sentient beings.' If you create such notions as 'ordinary' and 'saint,' 'pure' and 'impure,' those will all become obstructions. By obstructing your mind, all these [views] lead to the cycle of rebirth, like an ape that throws one thing away and picks up another without ever taking a break. The highest training of all is invariably no-training. There is neither worldling nor saint; neither pure nor impure; neither large nor small. It is uncontaminated and unconditioned. In this way, the one mind is assiduously adorned with skillful means.'

The sole obstacle is in not seeing characteristics to be empty. To think that there is something to be discovered beyond characteristics - that is, a substance - is very much the type of thinking that can only bring misery. The last sentence is from the closing stanzas of the Brahma Net Sutra:

'If you imagine a self and attach to marks,
You cannot have faith in this teaching.
Those who extinguish affliction and seize realization
Are also not of an inferior type.
Wishing to grow sprouts of bodhi,
Your luminosity shines out upon the world.
You should quietly contemplate
The true character of dharmas,
Which neither arise nor cease,
Are neither eternal nor temporary,
Neither the same nor different,

Neither coming nor going.
Within this One Mind
There is the adornment by the application of skillful means.
The works of the bodhisattvas
Should be put into practice in order,
And you should not create thoughts of distinction
Between discipline and being beyond discipline.
This is called the Supreme Way—
It is all called the Mahayana.
All bases of intellectual play
Are fully extinguished from this point.'
(BDK ed, p 75-76)

'If there is not a single dharma that is ascertainable, you will not be obstructed by dharmas. You transcend the three realms of existence and the spheres of both worldlings and saints. Then and only then will you deserve to be called a 'supramundane buddha.' Therefore, it is said, 'I bow my head before that which, like empty space, has no support.' I have left behind non-Buddhist paths. Since the mind is already undifferentiated, dharmas are also undifferentiated; since the mind is already unconditioned, dharmas are also unconditioned. The myriad dharmas all derive from transmutations of the mind. Therefore, [it is said,] 'Since my mind is empty, all dharmas are empty; so too are the thousands of types and the myriad species.' The realm of space that spreads out in all the ten directions is identical to the essence of the one mind. Since the mind is originally undifferentiated, dharmas also are undifferentiated. It is only because your views and understanding are not the same that distinctions appear. 'It is just like all heavenly beings, who eat together from the same bejeweled bowl but, depending on their merit and virtue, the color of their meals is different.' All the buddhas in the ten directions have in fact never attained even a modicum of dharma — this is called anuttara[samyaksaṃ]bodhi. There is only this one mind; there are no differentiated characteristics. It also has no luminosity or colorations, nothing superior or inferior. Since there is no superior, there are no characteristics of a buddha; since there is no inferior, there are no characteristics of a sentient being.'

When there is nothing found to grasp, nothing relied on, nothing obtained, that is the space like one mind without conceptualisation. So Huangbo repeats that in the next three quotes:

'There is only this one mind; there are no differentiated characteristics. It is also has no luminosity or colorations, nothing superior or inferior.'

'There is only the one mind, which involves neither identity nor difference, neither cause nor effect.'

'This immaculate self-nature is originally neither deluded nor awakened. The realm of empty space that entirely pervades the ten directions is intrinsically our one-mind essence.'

'This being the case, all the worlds of the ten directions are not separated from our one mind. Lands as numerous as tiny motes of dust are not separate from our one thought.'

Since this is so, how can we speak of what is inside and outside? It is like the nature of honey: if honey is sweet by nature, then all honey is sweet — you cannot say that a specific honey is sweet while the rest is bitter. Where would such a thing be possible? Therefore, it is said, 'Empty space has neither inside nor outside'; so too is it with the dharma nature. Empty space has no middle; so too is it with the dharma nature. Therefore sentient beings are buddhas and buddhas are sentient beings.'

It is not the case that on the one hand there is one mind, and on the other there are everything else. All are such already. It's only grasping at characteristics, taking things to be real and essential, that one is led into differentiating conceptualisation.

'If you can avoid clinging to a single sign, then it is said,
In this way, the one mind,
is assiduously adorned with skillful means.'

For the last quote again the same stanza from the Brahma Net Sutra as above that brings one mind to not clinging to characteristics, translated here as sign.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2022 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: One Mind by Huangbo

Content:

Tao said:

It sounds a lot Yogachara to me (which is not bad). Maybe Lankavatara was an important sutra for Huangbo? Samdhinirmocana?

Astus wrote:

Neither of those two sutras are quoted directly in Huangbo's records. It's mostly from the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awakening_of_Faith_in_the_Mahayana, as likely the most influential treatise in East Asian Buddhism, and there are <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fazang> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mazu_Daoyi as additional sources. Huangbo's contemporary, Guifeng Zongmi also uses the term one mind.

The term one mind, as used by Huangbo, is unlikely to be of Indian origin. Although for instance Zongmi quotes the Lankavatara Sutra (Zongmi on Chan, p 127): "The calmed is called one mind. One mind is the buddha-in-embryo.", but that passage (T16, no. 671, p. 519a1-2) is better translated otherwise as done by Red Pine: "Tranquility means oneness, and oneness means the tathagata-garbha", because 'one mind' (yixin 一心) here is ekagra, one pointed.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 19th, 2022 at 11:51 PM

Title: Re: One Mind by Huangbo

Content:

master of puppets said:
Isn't this what we call freedom?

Astus wrote:
If you mean freedom from afflictions, then yes.

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, May 21st, 2022 at 12:17 AM
Title: Re: Is there a non-sectarian Mahayana?
Content:

khemindas said:
But maybe there was a certain Mahayana school that was accepting all sutras, doctrines, concepts, ideas, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas equally? I'm asking only about pure Mahayana (non-tantric). And how about modern days if there are masters who have this equal approach nowadays and books of these masters in english?

Astus wrote:
All sutras have been accepted by everyone, the difference is in what sutras have prominence. One modern example is Fo Guang Shan that embraces all eight schools of Chinese Buddhism (八宗兼弘).

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, May 23rd, 2022 at 7:01 PM
Title: Re: The route to nirvana
Content:

Stigg said:
My question is, how do you know whichever school you subscribe to, is the real deal? Especially so when another school opposes your view. What is your yardstick when it comes to discerning these entanglement?

Astus wrote:
There are mainly superficial differences, and a few only a little deeper. The fundamentals are the same all over the schools, like the five aggregates, six sense areas, dependent origination, three root defilements, and the 37 auxiliaries to awakening.

'Mendicants, whoever has missed out on the noble eightfold path has missed out on the noble path to the complete ending of suffering. Whoever has undertaken the noble eightfold path has undertaken the noble path to the complete ending of suffering. '
(SN 45.33, tr Sujato)

'Whether one wants to train on the level of Disciple, or Pratyekabuddha, or Bodhisattva, - one should listen to this perfection of wisdom, take it up, bear it in mind, recite it, study it, spread it among others, and in this very perfection of wisdom should one be trained and exert oneself.'
(PP8K 1.2, tr Conze)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 25th, 2022 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Trouble reconciling Pali/Sanskrit teachings

Content:

Joel327 said:

So are the Pali/Mahayana suttas/sutras compatible, completely different, or a gradual learning process??

Astus wrote:

The sutras are quite compatible, things get complicated when it comes to texts that interpret those scriptures, i.e. mainly commentaries and treatises.

If you want to compare doctrines and practices, it's better to start with an accepted summary treatise that's based on major treatises that are based on the entire canon.

Even easier if one begins with introductory teachings by contemporary teachers who are knowledgeable about their tradition. But if you want to see the whole picture, that takes studying at least those texts that are the primary sources of a specific community.

Naturally, that much studying may take a couple of years or decades.

There are quite a few good introductory works available, just some examples: The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh; Daring Steps by Ringu Tulku; The Core Teachings by Hsing Yun; The Essence of Buddhism by Traleg Kyabgon; The Way to Buddhahood by Yin-shun.

For bringing together some Theravada and Mahayana:

<https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/compassionemptiness.pdf>;

https://www.abhayagiri.org/media/books/amaro_small_boat_great_mountain.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 26th, 2022 at 2:35 PM

Title: Re: Hinayana Buddhism

Content:

MGeorge116 said:

Where can I learn about Hinayana Buddhism, or did it go completely extinct and become lost in time? I'm not referring to Theravada Buddhism by the way. I believe that is a common misconception.

Astus wrote:

There is some literature of Hinayana schools translated to English, plus a number of studies. The main source still in use - mainly in the Tibetan traditions - is the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidharmako%C5%9Ba-bh%C4%81sya>. The book

<https://buddhadharma.co/Sarvastivada-Abhidharma> by Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti is a good summary of the teachings of this most influential school.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 30th, 2022 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: most survivable non-tantric mahayana school in western world in 21 century

Content:

khemindas said:

That leaves only Huayan (Kegon) with its focus on theory.

Astus wrote:

It's not an existing school, and has not been for a very long time. Huayan, like any Buddhist school, was not just theory. Furthermore, Huayan teachings are among the less studied ones, so unless one reads classical Chinese, it's not possible to have a proper theoretical understanding of them.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, June 2nd, 2022 at 4:34 PM

Title: Re: most survivable non-tantric mahayana school in western world in 21 century

Content:

Vert said:

Huayan is very much alive and organized having also come to exist in the West even in the US, thanks to missionary effort.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for bringing that up. There is a study available in English of its development in the last century: <https://books.google.hu/books?id=RBbYDwAAQBAJ> by Erik J. Hammerstrom. The Huayan Lotus Society is a good example that it's not just pure theory, but there are monastics and various ritual ceremonies besides studies. Unfortunately, their activities seem to be limited to Chinese speakers.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 3rd, 2022 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

Astus wrote:

Zen emphasises sudden awakening, unlike 'classical' Mahayana where there are various levels and stages of the bodhisattva path. This is not to say that only emptiness counts, but rather that when all false concepts are eliminated the abilities of a buddha are automatically present.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 4th, 2022 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

Tao said:

Do Zen really aims to one sudden awakening instead of gradual stages?

Why people say so?

Astus wrote:

Because it's the fundamental narrative of Zen, that there is a special lineage of people who are equals of Shakyamuni and transmit his ultimate awakening in a direct form. Without that story there is no Zen to talk about. And this doctrine of no doctrine allows the bearers of the seal of bodhi to teach in whatever way they see fit.

Guishan asked Yangshan, "If no spark from flint can go so fast, nor lightning flash pass by, how did the old-time sages save men?"

"What do you think, Venerable Priest?" asked Yangshan.

Guishan said, "No words have actual significance."

"Not so," disagreed Yangshan.

"Then what do you think?" asked Guishan.

"Officially, a needle is not permitted to enter; privately, carriages can get through."

(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 51)

Dayu then struck the meditation platform again and said, "The three worlds,' all the buddhas,' these phrases are all just a headache. What I say to you all is, can you avoid it? Is there a single person who can avoid it by finding a place where it doesn't exist? Not avoiding it, the ocean-seal radiates brilliantly."

(Zen's Chinese Heritage, p 383)

It is practically a manifestation of the skilful means of a bodhisattva.

'In order to guide and benefit all human beings, they do not rely on words. Sometimes, for the sake of weak-willed people, they show how to attain perfect enlightenment quickly by skipping over the stages [of the bodhisattva]. And sometimes, for the sake of indolent people, they say that human beings may attain enlightenment at the end of numberless eons. Thus they can demonstrate innumerable expedient means and suprarational feats. But in reality all these bodhisattvas are the same in that they are alike in their lineage, their capacity, their aspiration, and their realization [of suchness]; therefore, there is no such thing as skipping over the stages, for all bodhisattvas must pass through the three terms of innumerable eons [before they can fully attain enlightenment]. However, because of the differences in the various worlds of beings, and in the objects of seeing and hearing, as well as in the capacity, desires, and nature of the various beings, there are also different ways of teaching them what to practice.'

(The Awakening of Faith, 3.III.3, BDK ed, p 66-67)

'Foolish thinking deeply rooted is difficult to suddenly dig up, so even skilful means can rob you of the most rudimentary understanding. It is like taking yellow leaves [for gold] to stop the howling [of little children] – what is the point? Or like a man starting a shop to sell all of kinds of goods, as well as precious gold and silver ones. People only compare according to their circumstances – talking of Shitou, his shop deals in goods of pure gold, whilst my shop here is a mixed bag. If people come looking for rat droppings, I pull it out and give it to them. If one comes in search of real gold, I pull that out too and give it to him.'

...

'If I proclaim the Chan School, then there will only be myself for company, no one else. But will this conduce to having an assembly of several hundred? However, if I proclaim both this and that, then they can vie for the best deal for themselves. This is just like deceiving a child with an empty hand, for there is nothing real in it at all. Although speaking clearly now of spiritual things, do not still try to get it out with consciousness. Just go to your own ocean of bhūtatathatā, be sincere and practise. There is no need of the three illuminations or the six penetrations – why? These things are spiritually insignificant; what is really necessary now, is to get to the source in awareness. Just get to that source without worrying about inessentials. Later everything will fall into place. If the source has yet to be attained, even studying it exhaustively will not obtain it.' (Yangshan Huiji, in Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 3, 11.221; also in Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, p 212-213)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 4th, 2022 at 8:09 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

SaaZ said:

I mean this also from a very practical point of view, for instance: when anger arises in me, would be better to go beyond it, or as Dogen would maybe say "drop body and mind and do Zazen", or instead practice some loving kindness?

Astus wrote:

Whatever works. Neither Theravada, nor Zen is limited to a single method.

SaaZ said:

I like to think that zazen might be a distilled form of Buddhism

Astus wrote:

Only if zazen is understood as awakening. Otherwise it's just a temporary posture.

'The true zazen which has been transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors is the Tathagata's jijuyu-zanmai. It is the state in which the body and mind of perfect nirvana always abide peacefully.'

(Jijuyu-Zanmai, in Heart of Zen, p 43)

SaaZ said:

But ultimately all these people have probably decades of practice before something clicked

Astus wrote:

If one needs decades, lives, innumerable lives to prepare before there is awakening, it is pointless to call it sudden, direct, or immediate, isn't it?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2022 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: The Bendowa and Teachers in Zen

Content:

FiveSkandhas said:

And yet “face to face transmission” is repeatedly stressed as essential or all but essential for true Zen education.

Astus wrote:

It is stated to be essential not for education but for certification. As Dumoulin (in Zen Buddhism: Japan, p 70) have noted, Dogen's insistence on direct meeting is a rather direct rejection of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C5%8Dnin> (more on http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/DogenStudies/DarumaShu_Dogen_Soto.html). And the current emphasis on it in Sotoshu began in the late 17th century against other forms of transmission (see a summary https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms20.pdf).

FiveSkandhas said:

Can it serve as a substitute for a master, as suggested by the first quote?

Astus wrote:

No. The teacher, at least a more capable one, can fit the needs of the student, unlike any text.

FiveSkandhas said:

Or is practice useless without a realized master, as later suggested in the same work?

Astus wrote:

No. Proper practice is never useless. Improper practice is. As for what proper practice is, there's already a lot of explanations for that, like on the official Sotoshu homepage <https://www.sotozen.com/zazen/index.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 13th, 2022 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: trophy teachers

Content:

clyde said:

Who do you think are Zen “trophy teachers”?

Astus wrote:

It's those one uses to prove one is better/correct unlike others who have another/no teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 19th, 2022 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Here:

Astus wrote:

That's a mistaken view of zazen that's criticised.

'There are many other ways to practice zazen, but, among them, the properly transmitted, genuine Way is not to be found. This is why Dogen Zenji criticized the Zazenshin or Zazenmei in the Keitoku-Dentoroku and the Katai-Futoroku, etc., saying that none expressed the Way which has been properly transmitted.

...

People in the present day often practice zazen in this manner. This is the attitude of ordinary people, Hinayana practitioners, and bodhisattvas within the provisional Mahayana practice of zazen. They aspire to rid themselves of delusions and to gain enlightenment; to eliminate illusory thoughts and to obtain the truth. This is nothing but creating the karma of acceptance and rejection. Such an attitude is just another form of dualism, in that one escapes from one thing and chases after another. If we think this kind of practice is the same as that transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors, as the Tathagata's zanmai-o-zanmai, or as Bodhidharma's sitting facing the wall for nine years, these also become mere methods to rid oneself of delusions and to obtain enlightenment. What a pitiful view!

(Jijuyu-Zanmai by Menzan Zuiho, in Heart of Zen, p 42-23)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 21st, 2022 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Tao said:

Always found that the Five ranks were very useful, it's strange to me that Soto doesn't use them but Rinzai does, as it was a proposal from a Caodong master...

Astus wrote:

'The use of Dahui's "short cut," or huatou (literally, head word), method of working with koans was also known in Japan at this time. This emphasized concentrating on the principle point or critical phrase of a koan in order to minimize unnecessary distractions or misleading discursive thoughts that might arise from studying the entire exchange. In contrast to these formulized views, Dogen's approach to koans was wide ranging. He addressed key points of each case, as well as minor secondary points. He frequently examined the koans from the perspective of the "Five Ranks of the Universal and Particular" of Dongshan. He also pointed out the questions that should be addressed, challenging the practitioner to examine them and sometimes also providing his responses.'

(Dogen and Koans by John Daido Loori, in Dogen's Extensive Record - A Translation of the Eihei Koroku, p 62-63)

'Dogen's apparent criticism of koans ran parallel to his condemnation of the Five Ranks of Dongshan. And it had a similar purpose. Dogen was not opposed to the principles conveyed by the Five Ranks. He was critical of the very intellectual, stylized, and inconsequential way that they came to be used in his time.'

(p 63)

'One unusual aspect of Dogen's treatment of koans is his use of the Five Ranks and, more than likely, the Fourfold Dharmadhatu teaching of Huayan. He never explicitly talked about either system, except to summarily dismiss the Five Ranks, but he definitely engaged them in a way that reflected a profound understanding and appreciation for their method.'

(p 64)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 21st, 2022 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Tao said:

Can you talk more about: the Fourfold Dharmadhatu teaching of Huayan?

Astus wrote:

The four are the dharmadhatu (fajie 法界) of: things (shi fajie 事法界), principle (li fajie 理法界), unimpeded things and principle (lishi wuai fajie 理事無礙法界), unimpeded things and things (shishi wuai fajie 事事無礙法界).

It's basically the usual set of appearances, emptiness, and unified appearances and emptiness; then the fourth is the most interesting where it's just purely appearances to talk of, or it could be called suchness if you like, where there is no more talk of any principle/emptiness. It's like saying that there is no need to talk of no-self but enough to comprehend the aggregates. After all, any ultimate is purely fictional, and such a conceptual construct eventually has to be let go. It fits well with Dogen's criticism of the common reification of buddha-nature. One just has to see clearly the present experiences ("eyes are horizontal and the nose is vertical"). At the same time, on a linguistic level this gives the freedom and playfulness of saying confusing and contradictory things, like the teaching of insentients.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 21st, 2022 at 9:29 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Anders said:

Talk about covering all bases. No idea how one can soundly arrive at such a conclusion.

Astus wrote:

Maybe he was very familiar with his texts? Nowadays a few keyword searches in all the

known works should do the job.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022 at 4:33 PM

Title: Nuns Receive Full Ordination in Bhutan

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Today, on the 21st June, 2022, corresponding to the 23rd day of the 4th lunar month, His Holiness the Je Khenpo is conferring the Gelongma vows to about 144 nuns as announced by the Bhutan Nuns Foundation at Ramthangkha, Paro. Nuns who are receiving the vows are not only from Bhutan but also from neighboring countries. Auspicious signs such as rainbows encircling the sun could be witnessed today.'
(<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/144-buddhist-nuns-receive-full-ordination-at-landmark-ceremony-in-bhutan/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022 at 5:46 PM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Anders said:

Sounds like kumbaya scholarship to be honest.

Astus wrote:

I doubt it was meant to be any sort of scholarship. The author was not a scholar either.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 24th, 2022 at 8:01 PM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

Malcolm said:

The basis is different, the path is different, the result is different.

Astus wrote:

Is dzogchen outside the framework of the four noble truths? If so, then how is it not just perpetuating samsara?

Malcolm said:

There is no similarity between Dzogchen and Theravada at all.

Astus wrote:

Maybe you know this one: <https://www.abhayagiri.org/books/423-small-boat-great-mountain>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2022 at 4:37 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

Malcolm said:

The four truths are diagnostic, not ontological. There is a problem. There is a cause of that problem. When the cause of a problem is known, it can be remedied. There is a method to remedy the cause of the problem. Thus, the four truths apply to everything from car repair to samsara.

Astus wrote:

The four noble truths have that structure, but it also has a content, so it outlines the entirety of the Buddha's teaching, and at the same time encompasses the essential liberating insights. Dzogchen, like the other vehicles, fit into it, as they all recognise suffering, its cause, its cause's ending, and the three trainings leading to that end.

Malcolm said:

The difference between the nine yānas and the great perfection is that the former take mind as the basis; where as the great perfection takes gnosis as the basis. This has consequences for the path: the nine yānas are paths based on causes and results; path of Dzogchen is not based on causes and results. This also has consequences for the result. In the the nine yānas the three kāyas are a result that arise from the two accumulations; in Dzogchen, the three kāyas are path experiences and do not exist in the result.

Astus wrote:

Dzogchen still has view, meditation, conduct, and result, doesn't it? Its gnosis is not something other than prajnaparamita, is it?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 25th, 2022 at 4:41 AM

Title: Re: Mahayana vs Theravada

Content:

Queequeg said:

I'll refer to some zen teachings here for the sake of convenience and general familiarity.

Astus wrote:

Maybe something like this:

https://kokyohenkel.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/7/4/127410773/view_meditation_and_conduct_in_dzogchen_and_zen.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 26th, 2022 at 4:57 AM

Title: Re: Is Zen simply "sitting"/Zazen?

Content:

Aemilius said:

Entangling Vines (Thomas Yūhō Kirchner, 2013) Case 139 Nanyue Polishes a Tile

Astus wrote:

"To attach to the sitting form is not to have attained the principle of that [sitting]." This "to attach to the sitting form" means to reject the sitting form and to defile the sitting form. The fundamental principle here is that when we are already practicing sitting buddha, it is impossible not to be attached to the sitting form. Because it is impossible not to be attached to the sitting form, although attachment to the sitting form is something brilliant, it may be "not to have attained the principle of that [sitting]." Effort like this is called "the dropping off of body and mind." Those who have never sat do not possess this state of truth. It exists in the moment of sitting, it exists in the person who is sitting, it exists in the buddha that is sitting, and it exists in the buddha that is learning sitting.'

(Zazenshin, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 121)

'Polishing a tile to make a mirror is effort in practice.

How can people plan to take a mirror and make it a tile?

The point of deceiving each other is completed within clarity.

Square and circle mold their forms, using themselves as models.

Even when called the iron man, how can you be a tile or mirror?

Even before killing Buddha is born, the sitting Buddha descends.

Sitting, lying, and walking meditation are all just right.

Clouds arise south of the mountain; rain falls on the western river.'

(Eihei Koroku, vol 9, case 38, p 562)

'When polishing a tile to make a mirror, our body is not the four great elements, but is suchness, imposing and magnificent. When polishing a hammer to make a needle, our mind is not the five skandhas but is the absolute, completely clear and bright. Therefore, no colors obstruct our eyes, no sounds plug our ears, no interactions bind our body, no affairs mislead our mind. Taking away objects is like a donkey looking at a donkey; taking away the person is like the well seeing the well. 169 Ultimately, what is it? A wooden horse neighing in the wind freely settles in the mountains; a clay ox bellowing at the moon is able to enter the ocean.'

(Eihei Koroku, vol 4, Dharma Hall Discourse 345, p 309-310)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 5th, 2022 at 5:12 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening

Content:

Astus wrote:

Dajian Huineng:

If you activate the correct and true and contemplate with prajñā, in a single instant [all your] false thoughts will be completely eradicated. If you recognize the self-nature, with

a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood.
(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 33)

Dazhu Huihai:

Q: What is Sudden Enlightenment?

A: "Sudden" means instantly stopping false thought. "Enlightenment" means [awareness] that one attains nothing.

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Sudden Enlightenment means liberation during this lifetime. Just as a lion-cub, from the moment it is born, is a real lion, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method has, from the moment he begins his practice, already entered the Buddha-Stage. Just as the bamboo-shoots growing in springtime are not different from the parent bamboo-shoots, because they are also empty inside, likewise anyone who practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method to rid himself suddenly of false thought abandons, like the Buddhas, the sense of an ego and a personality forever. Being absolutely deep, still and void, he is, then, without an iota of difference, equal to the Buddhas. Thus, in this sense it can be said that the worldly is holy. If one practices the Sudden-Enlightenment method, he can transcend the three realms during this lifetime.

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment/treatise-entering- tao-sudden-enlightenment>)

Baizhang Huaihai:

Question: What is the essential method for sudden enlightenment in the great vehicle?

The master said,

You all should first put an end to all involvements and lay to rest all concerns; do not remember or recollect anything at all, whether good or bad, mundane or transcendental - do not engage in thoughts. Let go of body and mind, set them free.

...

Once affirmation and negation, like and dislike, approval and disapproval, all various opinions and feelings come to an end and cannot bind you, then you are free wherever you may be; this is called a bodhisattva at the moment of inspiration immediately ascending to the stage of Buddhahood.

(Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang, p 77-78)

Huangbo Xiyun:

If you suddenly realize right here and now that your own mind is originally a buddha, there is no dharma that needs to be attained and no practice that needs to be cultivated. This is the unsurpassed Way. This is the buddha of true suchness.

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.4)

Ordinary people who are about to die should just perceive that the five aggregates are

all empty and the four great elements are not the self. The true mind is signless; it neither goes nor comes. At the moment of birth, the nature does not come, and at the moment of death, the nature does not go; placid, it remains perfectly quiescent. The mind and sense objects are one and the same. If you can simply attain sudden understanding right here and now in this manner, you will not be bound by past, present, or future. You will then be a person who has transcended the world.

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.6)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 8th, 2022 at 2:37 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening

Content:

curtstein said:

I have heard that someone who attains the first bhumi is able to manifest in 100 different places with 100 different bodies at the same time - and in each place one is applying skillful means to help the sentient beings in that place. I heard this from a Lama in the Kagyu tradition (Lama Chodron, based in Richmond VA), and I believe she was relying on Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation, or some Kagyu commentary thereon.

Although my own tradition is different (Korean Soen), that particular teaching has really stuck with me. On the one hand it can be discouraging to realize just how far one is from such a state. On the other hand a little humility on the path goes a long way.

Astus wrote:

It's actually from the Ten Stages chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra.

'Having gone forth, enlightening beings instantly attain a hundred concentrations and see a hundred buddhas and acknowledge their power; they stir a hundred worlds, go to a hundred lands, illumine a hundred worlds, mature a hundred beings, live for a hundred eons, penetrate a hundred eons past and future, contemplate a hundred teachings, and manifest a hundred bodies, each body manifesting a company of a hundred enlightening beings. Then enlightening beings with superior power of commitment, by the quality of excellence of vows, transform their bodies, auras, mystic powers, vision, spheres of operation, voices, conduct, adornments, power, resolutions, and performances in countless ways.'

(Flower Ornament Scripture, p 710-711; <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-31.html#UT22084-036-002-390>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 8th, 2022 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: Sudden Awakening

Content:

Tao said:

So not known person reached first bhumi not even Buddha?

Astus wrote:

From A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace (2.4):

Huangbo: 'Even though [you may attain] bodhi, suchness, the characteristic of reality, liberation, or the dharma body and directly reach the sanctified ranks of the ten stages or the four fruitions, all these involve the [expedient] gate of salvation. They have nothing to do with the buddha mind.'

Commentary: 'All gradual stages are far removed from the Way. Turn one thought around and realize completely the fact that a buddha's nature and your nature are not different.'

Huangbo: 'Only if there are no states of mind involving birth and death, defilements, and so forth is there then no need for such dharmas as bodhi.'

Commentary: 'There is nothing that can be named "mind." It is not that the mind does not exist; rather, it reveals itself as causes and conditions are produced. Whether good or evil, there is no exception to this rule.'

There is neither birth and death nor defilements; they are all shadows created through corresponding causes and conditions. Not knowing this fact, people try to remove all these shadows. If they suddenly turn one thought around and realize that all shadows are originally empty, their minds will be at rest. If this happens, not only birth and death and defilements but also nirvāṇa and bodhi will be at rest. Whether it is this or that is all relative. Therefore, if one is extinguished, the other will naturally be extinguished as well.'

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 9th, 2022 at 4:17 AM

Title: Re: The Karmapa fathered a child - DNA test reveals

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I once asked my Thai monk friend (Ajahn) about the vinaya prohibition about monks touching women (they aren't supposed to). The Theravada monks are pretty strict about this, or at least the ones I know are.

Astus wrote:

That's only a Thai custom. The actual rule is about touching with lust,
<https://www.dhammatalks.org/vinaya/bmc/Section0011.html#Sg2>. See also FAQ. 2
<https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/faqmonks.htm>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 9th, 2022 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: The Karmapa fathered a child - DNA test reveals

Content:

Dhammanando said:

It's from the Pali Vinaya, not Thai custom, though if the contact is intentional but not lustful the offence is far less serious.

Astus wrote:
Thank you for the correction.

Author: Astus
Date: Sunday, July 10th, 2022 at 4:11 AM
Title: Re: Yijing in Zen
Content:

Astus wrote:
<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/OuyiZhixu.html> (1599– 1655), one of the four eminent Buddhist masters of the Ming era, wrote a commentary on the Yijing that was translated by Thomas Cleary and published under the title
<https://www.shambhala.com/the-buddhist-i-ching-319.html>.

Author: Astus
Date: Wednesday, July 13th, 2022 at 3:37 AM
Title: Re: The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi
Content:
clyde said:
“. . . consider the koan called “The Sound of One Hand Scratching.” No Bun once asked Bush Wak, “If a mosquito bites Buddha, will it become enlightened?”
Something to ponder.

Astus wrote:
What's there to ponder about it? There is no salvation in Buddhism by consuming anyone's body.

Author: Astus
Date: Monday, July 18th, 2022 at 4:35 AM
Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras sutras of definitive meaning?
Content:
Malcolm said:
If we consider paratantra, the dependent nature, to be the all-basis consciousness, there is an internal contradiction in asserting that something compounded becomes uncompounded in the transformation of the basis into the perfected nature, parinispanna.

Astus wrote:
Things have never been apart from emptiness in the first place.

"Parinispanna or Ultimate Reality is the complete and perfect 'real nature' of all dharmas which is revealed by the two 'Voids' (sunyas)."
(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 633, tr Wei Tat)

Malcolm said:

There are other problems with Yogacāra view as well, which mainly arise from their reluctance to accept that consciousness is also a dependent designation.

Astus wrote:

Apart from space and various forms of cessation the only uncompounded in Yogacara is suchness (Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 23-25;

http://www.cttbusa.org/100shastra/100dharma_1.asp.html).

Who says consciousness isn't compounded? Sounds more like a buddha-mind type of idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 18th, 2022 at 5:42 AM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Emptiness is yogacāra is clearly an extrinsic emptiness. As asserted in the Madhyantavibhanga, "emptiness exists" as a consciousness devoid of duality.

Astus wrote:

Where does it assert such a consciousness? In I.13 it merely states that it is 'the being of the non-being of duality' (Anacker, p 217) or 'the assertion of the negation of that pair' (Kochumuttom, p 241), and then it goes on to explain emptiness with reference to the relationship between universal characteristics to specific objects.

From Mipham's commentary: 'If it were the case that the emptiness of duality did not exist, the duality of apprehended and apprehender would become existent, as a double negation is an affirmation.' (Middle Beyond Extremes, p 37)

Malcolm said:

Even so, it is pretty clear Asanga's view has an internal contradiction when looking at Mahāyānaśāstra, as above. And there is the fact that Vimuktisena chides the Yogacāra school for possessing a realist view of the objective support in Abhisamayālamkāraṭīkā {Spareham, vol. 1, pg. 88}.

Astus wrote:

Thanks, I'll look into them.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 18th, 2022 at 4:27 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Abhidharmasamuccaya is not a Yogacāra text.

Astus wrote:

How so?

Malcolm said:

Even so, it is pretty clear Asanga's view has an internal contradiction when looking at Mahāyānasamgraha, as above.

Astus wrote:

The problems <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=635791#p635791>: 'Thus, all-basis consciousness here is asserted to transform into the dharmakāya, consequently (1) something compounded is asserted to transform into something uncompounded or (2) the all-basis consciousness is uncompounded, or (3) dharmakāya is compounded. These are three undesirable consequences of the three natures scheme.'

There is no compounded becoming uncompounded, nor an uncompounded consciousness, nor a compounded dharmakaya. At X.3.c it states explicitly:

'[The dharmakāya has] the characteristic of nonduality because (1) by virtue of its having the characteristic of the nonduality of existence and nonexistence, it is the nonbeing of all phenomena and the being of the characteristic of emptiness. (2) [The dharmakāya also has] the characteristic of the nonduality of being conditioned and unconditioned because it is not formed by karma and afflictions and masters the display of what appears as being conditioned.'

Furthermore, as it's in your original quote of X.3.a, the conversion is from the impure to the pure aspect of dependent nature, so as the text says in IX.3:

'When the knowledge of the sameness
Of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa has arisen,
At that point, in them, therefore
Saṃsāra itself becomes nirvāṇa.
For that reason, saṃsāra
Is neither abandoned nor not abandoned.
Consequently, nirvāṇa too
Is neither attained nor not attained.'

Malcolm said:

And there is the fact that Vimuktisena chides the Yogacāra school for possessing a realist view of the objective support in Abhisamayālamkāravṛtti {Spareham, vol. 1, pg. 88}.

Astus wrote:

Is there any known Yogacara author who actually proposed such a view as given by Vimuktisena? Note 64 only tries to track down the sutra quote in the qualm.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 18th, 2022 at 5:35 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

"The imagination of the unreal exists..."

One cannot have an imagination of the unreal in absence of a consciousness imagining the unreal.

Astus wrote:

Imagination exists as unreal, it appears real to the deluded and false to the wise. And when it is seen as actually unreal, there is no observing consciousness either, as the verse after the next stanza states explicitly.

Malcolm said:

That does not address the point, and even Mipham admits in this text that consciousness exists ultimately

Astus wrote:

Is there such an admittance somewhere explicitly, or is it something assumed? Furthermore, Yogacara works are quite explicit that there are eight consciousnesses, none of them ultimately existing.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 18th, 2022 at 11:03 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Think you need to brush up a bit on Yogacara.

Astus wrote:

That's probably so. Still, I cannot recall encountering the idea somewhere in a Yogacara work that there is an ultimate, uncompounded consciousness, despite this being a standard charge against them. On the other hand, the twofold emptiness is regularly affirmed.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2022 at 9:38 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

You can find evidence of this in the Bodhisattvabhumi [Engles, pp. 77-86], where Asanga excoriates mādhyamikas for over-negation, where he describes the negation of a designation as valid, but strongly objects to the negation of the basis of designation, a so-called "bare substance."

Astus wrote:

How is that practically different from saying that things are empty mere appearances? For both Yogacara and Madhyamaka come to a perception that is without conceptualisation but not without phenomena.

Mipham comments on verse 78 of Madhyamakalankara:

'If there is no appearance, there is no emptiness, for emptiness and appearance depend upon each other. The absence of one entails the absence of the other; the presence of one entails the presence of the other. It is not that appearance and emptiness exist separately, like a white and a black thread twisted together. Neither are they alternate in the sense that when one goes, the other comes. Emptiness entails appearance; appearance entails emptiness. The two can never be separate.'

(The Adornment of the Middle Way, p 329)

What Asanga refutes is not necessarily Madhyamaka but a misconception of emptiness as nothingness.

'The validity of emptiness is [defined by] the nonexistence of that [quality] of which [entities] are empty and the existence of that [state] which constitutes emptiness. But if it is [held to be] a [state of] complete nonexistence, what could be [the entity] in relation to which this empty [state] might occur, what could this empty [state] consist of, and what [quality] could [entities] be empty of? It would also not be possible for emptiness [to be a state that] pertains to this [particular entity] or for it to be [a state in which an entity is] empty of this [particular quality]. Therefore, this is how emptiness becomes wrongly grasped.'

(The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment, I.4.6, p 83)

Might as well be read like Mipham's commentary to Janggya Rölpe Dorje's poem:

'also the great lord Tsongkhapa has adopted the very profound essence of the intention of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. A dry understanding of being empty alone is easy, but emptiness appearing as dependent origination is difficult. Therefore, he emphasized everywhere in his teachings [the need for] serious practice and that dependent origination is more important than emptiness. Not understanding this as the actual meaning of his view and to then just practice some sort of hearsay in terms of mere [outward] behavior is the unprecedented approach of some Gedenpas [obsessed] with nonimplicative negations.'

(Straight from the Heart, p 413)

Malcolm said:

Here it is seen that the dependent nature, the cognition that appears as the unreal or appears as real is never itself negated. And, given Asanga's references to a "bare substance" in the BBh above, one can only conclude that this ultimate is an existent cognition devoid of duality, itself ultimately established even if its contents are not, since, it cannot be nonexistent according to the Yogacāra scheme set forth by Asanga.

Astus wrote:

Dependent nature is not negated, so there is no independent, uncompounded consciousness to find anywhere, otherwise it wouldn't be dependent. It's also dependent nature that's like an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection, an optical illusion, an echo, a water-moon, a magical creation (MS II.27).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 19th, 2022 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

What is this suchness he is asserting? It is the dependent nature, of course, which he asserts exists ultimately. So, he does not escape the charge of asserting something compounded becomes uncompounded in the transformation of the basis. Why? Because the purification of the all-basis consciousness is the entire keystone of the yogacāra system. I will leave it here because we are going now in circles.

In Madhyamaka, the ultimate is simply the absence of inherent existence in conventional entities.

Astus wrote:

Conventional entities - that are dependently originated - with an imputed essence is the imagined nature, without an essence it's the perfected nature. If the distinction here is whether entities exist apart from the mind or not, it's not really an issue, as the imagined essence is necessarily mental for both, while the nonconceptual is without inside or outside. This also solves the case of a compounded becoming uncompounded, as emptiness is not compounded for anyone, and conditionality is compounded for both, and apart from those two - since the ultimate, you say, is dependent nature - there is nothing else.

'How do the Two Truths, Samvrtisatyr and Paramarthasatyr, correspond to the three natures?

The meaning is that Samvrtisatyr (mundane truth) is Parikalpita, Paratantra, and Parinispāna, while Paramarthasatyr (ultimate supramundane truth) is exclusively Parinispāna.

(1) Samvrti is of three kinds:

- a. Prajnaptisamvrti, i.e., fictitious or conventional mundane truth ;
 - b. Prattipatisamvrti, i.e., impure, mutable mundane truth;
 - c. Udbhavanasamvrti, i.e., mundane truth that reveals Tathata through the two Voids.
- These three kinds correspond, in the right order, to the three natures, Parikalpitasvabhava etc.

(2) Paramartha is also of three kinds:

- a. Arthaparamartha, which is Tathata, because the latter is the artha of parama, i.e., the object of supreme wisdom ;
- b. Praptiparamartha, which is Nirvana, because the latter is the parama artha, i.e., the supreme thing;

c. Pratipattiparamartha, which is the Noble Path, because the latter has parama as artha (object), i.e., the supreme Dharma, Nirvana.

All these three kinds are included in Parinispanna: the first two, because they are immutable; the third because it is non-erroneous.'

(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 649-651, tr Wei Tat)

Malcolm said:

That's not why the dependent nature is called "dependent." This is a misunderstanding. It is called the "dependent nature" because samsara and nirvana both depend on how it is perceived, not because it itself is "dependent."

Astus wrote:

That certainly changes things. Would you elaborate?

'The other-dependent nature, however,
Is the act of graspable-grasper discrimination;
It depends for its origin on conditions.'
(Trimsatika, v 21, tr Kochumuttom)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2022 at 7:30 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

My definition comes from how it is read from Tibetan.

Astus wrote:

Thank you for looking it up and providing the translations. It's much appreciated.

Malcolm said:

So you see the dependent itself is not "dependent," it produces conceptuality, i.e. samsara, which is different than itself. If it were the same thing as conceptuality, it could not be suchness, in this case, vijñāptimātra, perception-only.

Astus wrote:

The nature of the dependent is conceptuality. This is stated by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati explicitly. Unless you take 'nature' to mean something that is produced by something else, in which case what the dependent is isn't defined at all.

Sthiramati's statement that 'causes and conditions are called "dependent,"' matches the definition given in the Samdhinirmocana Sutra

(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh106.html#UT22084-049-001-345>): 'what is the other-dependent defining characteristic [of phenomena]? It is the dependent arising of phenomena.'

On the matter of how the dependent is the same as conceptuality Xuanzang gives two versions:

'It should be understood that the definition given in the Stanza whereby 'Paratantra consists of discriminations produced by causes and conditions', refers only to the defiled Paratantra, i.e., the Vikalpa. Pure Paratantra is not, in fact, termed Vikalpa; it is as much Parinispāna as Paratantra.

The second opinion is that all minds and their attributes, whether defiled or pure, are designated in the Stanza by the term vikalpa, because they are all capable of apprehending and perceiving objects. Thus, the definition given in the Stanza includes all Paratantras, pure as well as defiled.'

(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 633, tr Wei Tat)

And here's his summary of the three natures (p 637):

"We may conclude that these three 'Natures' (svabhava) are all inseparable from the mind and its attributes (Citta-Caittas). That is to say:

a. The mind and its attributes, together with the manifestations produced by it (darsana and nimittabhaga), are engendered through numerous conditioning factors, and are thus like the phenomena produced by a magician's tricks, which, not really existing though they seem to exist, deceive the ignorant. All this is called the 'nature of dependence on others' (Paratantra).

b. The ignorant thereupon perversely believe in them as Atman and as dharmas, which exist or do not exist, are identical or different, are inclusive or exclusive, etc. But, like 'flowers in the sky', etc., they are non-existent both in inner nature and external aspect. All this is called the 'nature of mere imagination' (Parikalpita).

c. These things, which are thus dependent on others and are wrongly regarded as Atman and as dharmas, are, in reality, all void (sunya). The genuine nature of consciousness thus revealed by this 'voidness' is called the 'nature of ultimate reality' (Parinispāna). Thus, these three natures are all inseparable from mind, etc."

Malcolm said:

Any, my point is simple, the Yogacārin clearly define consciousness as a substance, they are clearly unhappy if one denies the existence of this substance, and given the absence of another other than minds in their scheme of the universe, their presentation of mind-only in the sūtras suffers from a realist bias.

Astus wrote:

On how dependent origination - i.e. the dependent nature - includes a level of reality, we can look at Madhyantavibhāṅgabhāṣya III.18b (tr Anacker, p 241-242):

'A denial regarding causality would be to construct that nothing like causality takes place at all.'

'A denial regarding effect would be to construct that even when ignorance does not exist, ensnaring motivating dispositions would arise.'

'A denial regarding activity would be to construct that even ignorance has no power to make the motivating dispositions arise.'

I don't see how that's much of a problem, it's like correct relative truth. As for the interpretation that 'the Yogacārin clearly define consciousness as a substance', it fits

only when 'substance' stands for causal efficacy, and not for some independent, permanent entity. After all, if the final truth Yogacara had to offer was an ultimately existing mind, then they would be subject to the below objection made against the Sautrantikas:

'If you hold your consciousness-species to be a real thing (dravya), you adopt the opinion of the Tirthikas (Vaisesikas).'
(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 205, tr Wei Tat)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 20th, 2022 at 10:14 PM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

There cannot be causal efficiencies if there are no actual subjects and objects.

Astus wrote:

How does that interpretation reflect on Madhyamaka?

Verse 8abc: 'A mere thing (vastu-mātra), which is not confused with anything that is imagined and arises dependently, is known as correct relative [truth].'

Commentary: 'Mere things are capable of effective action (artha-kriyā-samartha) that corresponds to appearances (yathādarśana). [Mere things] also depend for their arising on causes and conditions, so they are known as correct relative truth. If something appears consistently to be caused in the cognition of [everyone from a scholar] to a child, it is correct relative [truth], because something exists that is consistent with what appears in cognition.'

(Commentary on the Distinction Between the Two Truths, in Jñānagarbha on the Two Truths, p 75)

'The conventional that appears just-as-it-is is established by being produced by causes and conditions. If it were impossible to establish it, by whom would the moon in water and the like be produced?

Therefore all appearances are established as being produced by various causes and conditions. If the continuance of conditions is interrupted, they do not arise even conventionally.'

(Entry to the Two Realities by Atiśa, v 22-23, in Jewels of the Middle Way, p 121)

Malcolm said:

Throughout their analysis, consciousness itself left unnegated, and so on, try as they may to avoid the charge of realism, their own words betray them.

Astus wrote:

If by consciousness you mean conditioned appearances devoid of essence, what's there to negate? If you mean something else, like a real consciousness, how would that not be practically an atman? Therefore, as consciousness is the one that grasps things,

it is very much negated (Sutralamkara VI.7-8 (also quoted in Mahamudra the Moonlight on pp 64, 85, 185); Sangraha III.7-8).

'The Bodhisattva, in the state of Samadhi,
Perceives that images are merely his mind;
The aspects of emptiness and being having already been eliminated,
He realizes that only his thoughts exist.
Abiding thus in his interior mind,
He knows that what is grasped (Grahya) does not exist.
He then realizes that what grasps (Grahaka) does not exist either ;
Later he "touches" the state of "having gained nothing" (anupalambha).'
(Cheng Weishi Lun, p 683, tr Wei Tat)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 21st, 2022 at 4:13 AM

Title: Re: Are all Mahayana sutras sutras of definitive meaning?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Do dualistic appearances exist apart from a consciousness or not?

Astus wrote:

Appearances are whatever appears as an experience, and they become dualistic through conceiving them in terms of apprehended and one who apprehends. How could there be an experience without a consciousness?

Malcolm said:

And if in fact dualistic appearances are utter nonexistents (which the yogacārins claim is the case), how is the consciousness in which they appear conditioned?

Astus wrote:

What is nonexistent - i.e. it never actually appears - is the assumed substantiality of appearances.

Malcolm said:

What are the causes and conditions of this substantial consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is not a single thing, and each instance of consciousness is conditioned by various factors, most importantly the three poisons.

Malcolm said:

This is the whole problem with the yogacārin interpretation of the three nature and why mādhyamikas attack it.

Astus wrote:

Brunnhölzl's summary of the three natures:

'From the Yogācāra School's fundamental point of view — that whatever we encounter is always nothing but an experience in our mind — the three natures can be summarized as follows. The imaginary nature stands for our habitual way of misperceiving the other-dependent nature — dependently-originating mere appearances in our minds. We insist that these are real in just the way they appear, existing as distinct entities of internal consciousness and its external objects. Although such dependent dualistic appearances (the other-dependent nature) lack any self-sufficient existence, they cannot simply be claimed to be nothing, as they keep appearing and being experienced due to our habitual mental tendencies. The perfect nature basically refers to perceiving the unity of dependently-originating mere appearances and emptiness. This means realizing that any imaginary subject-object duality and all superimpositions of personal and phenomenal identities never existed in other-dependent appearances. However, this does not mean to reify either the other-dependent or the perfect nature as some truly existent remainder after duality has been removed.'

(Straight from the Heart, p 45)

Malcolm said:

As far as I can tell, you are misreading Jñānagarbha, conflating his "mere thing" with Asanga's "mere thing":

'A mere thing (vastu-mātra), which is not confused with anything that is imagined and arises dependently, is known as correct relative [truth].'

Asanga's "mere thing" in the BBh is an ineffable ultimate, as indicated above.

Astus wrote:

No conflation, just coincidence (or not) that Jñānagarbha happens to use the same term that is used in Yogācāra. On the other hand, apart from categorising one as conventional and the other as ultimate, what difference is there? In Madhyamaka conventional mere appearances are mistaken for substantial entities, i.e. as ultimate, and that brings about suffering. In Yogacara ultimate mere appearances are mistaken for substantial entities, i.e. as perceiver and perceived, and that brings about suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 24th, 2022 at 6:50 PM

Title: Re: Nirvana in 3 innumerable kalpas, or in a single lifetime?

Content:

yokosukasailorboy said:

As I have heard, enlightenment takes 3 innumerable kalpas to achieve.

Astus wrote:

'The words of the Buddha are true. But the three asankhya kalpas refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call asankhya in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts. And every thought

lasts a kalpa. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three asankhya kalpas. Once your real self becomes obscured by the three poisons, how can you be called liberated until you overcome their countless evil thoughts? People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three releases are said to pass through the three asankhya kalpas. But people of this final age are the densest of fools. They don't understand what the Tathagata really meant by the three asankhya kalpas. They say enlightenment is only achieved after endless kalpas and thereby mislead disciples to retreat on the path to buddhahood.'

(Breakthrough Sermon, in The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 85-87;

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X63n1220_p0009b12)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 25th, 2022 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: A Mahayana version of "In the Buddha's Words"

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

I was wondering, if someone were to make a similar compilation for Mahayana, which Mahayana sutra passages would you say definitely must be included in it?

Astus wrote:

Something like that has been done already.

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/buddha-dharma-the-way-to-enlightenment-2e-paperback/>

<https://buddhistuniversity.net/content/monographs/common-buddhist-text>

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 26th, 2022 at 3:50 AM

Title: Re: A Mahayana version of "In the Buddha's Words"

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

Yes but i was thinking of something that's specifically Mahayanist.

Astus wrote:

There's the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutrasamuccaya>, but its English translation by Bhikkhu Pāsādika seems hard to come by.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 27th, 2022 at 5:52 PM

Title: Re: Questions about various Buddhist schools

Content:

Tukaram said:

From what I have said does one tradition sound more my style than others?

My plan is to keep studying, keep meditating, and see where it goes. Any reading, practice, teachers... any advice would be greatly appreciated.

Astus wrote:

Any and all. There are stereotypes, like Theravada being monastic focused, Zen being simplistic, and Vajrayana being ritualistic, but practically it's about what inclinations one has regardless of the tradition. The decisive factors are mostly what sort of rhetoric you find acceptable and what are your options in terms of accessible teachings. It is also possible to start at one place and then move to another as one's understanding matures about Buddhism.

A generally recommended introductory book is Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations by Paul Williams. The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation by Thich Nhat Hanh is a good and short summary of key concepts. But there are other great books and websites as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 28th, 2022 at 11:05 PM

Title: Re: A Mahayana version of "In the Buddha's Words"

Content:

Malcolm said:

As for the path, readings on ethics, the six perfections, śamatha and vipaśyāna, pure land,

And for the result, clearly, readings on ten stages, the nature of the two or three kāyas such as the lifespan of the Tathāgata chapter in the Lotus, etc.

Astus wrote:

Either for the path (pure land) or the result a short list of the most important/popular buddhas and bodhisattvas should be included. One limiting criteria could be that they're accepted on both the Chinese and the Tibetan sides. So along the lines of Sakyamuni, Amitabha, Bhaisajyaguru, Avalokita, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Ksitigarbha, Maitreya.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 4th, 2022 at 7:42 PM

Title: Re: Garchen Cakrasamvara Transcriptions?

Content:

KonchogUrgyenNyima said:

Anyone know a guy?

Astus wrote:

Maybe <https://dakinitranslations.com/2021/10/01/utter-illumination-of-the-innermost-essence/> can work for you.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 7th, 2022 at 3:45 AM

Title: Re: Christian apologetics vs Buddhism

Content:

Knotty Veneer said:

The problem Buddhism seeks to overcome is desire and that its goal is the extinction of all desire. Nirvana more or less equals non-existence. Basically, it's nihilism.

Astus wrote:

There's nothing wrong with that interpretation in general. What is missing from it is that nirvana is attainable while still alive.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 7th, 2022 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: Christian apologetics vs Buddhism

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

No, "desire" itself, isn't the issue.

Astus wrote:

Right, three types of desire/thirst are the issue: desiring sensual pleasure, desiring to exist, and desiring not to exist. But there are also other definitions.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The issue is desiring conditionally arising phenomena, believing that it brings lasting satisfaction. That mistaken desire is what needs to be abandoned. Buddhism doesn't say that there anything wrong with craving a pizza.

Astus wrote:

There is a problem (i.e. suffering) with such cravings if one can't satisfy it, or if the way taken to satisfy it is painful/harmful in some way. And there is the usual problem with craving that it keeps recurring even if satisfied.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But the misrepresentation of Buddhism claims that the dharma teaches that wanting anything, happiness, security, friends, is somehow a bad thing. It isn't.

Astus wrote:

It's not necessarily bad morally.

'Blinded by desire they do not see
Sensuality's faults, like a leper scratching.
Those free from desire see the infatuated
As suffering like the leper.'

(Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, 3.64)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 7th, 2022 at 8:08 PM

Title: Re: What if Buddhism Doesn't Work?

Content:

wei wu wei said:

We'll often read the following advice: if our practice is "working," the people in our lives will notice it.

Astus wrote:

Sounds like a serious misunderstanding of Buddhist practice. Developing mindfulness is a key element, and as such it shows directly how things are going on in terms of skilful and unskilful qualities. Without such awareness we can at best collect some worldly merit.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 8th, 2022 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Christian apologetics vs Buddhism

Content:

Knotty Veneer said:

From the few of these Christian vs Buddhist apologetics videos that I've seen on Youtube are there to serve two main purposes: To basically denigrate other faiths in way that reassures the Christian listener that their belief is justified.
To discourage the listener from looking outside Christianity for answers.

Astus wrote:

'Apologetics: A theological science which has for its purpose the explanation and defence of the Christian religion.'

(<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01618a.htm>; cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_apologetics)

Knotty Veneer said:

I wonder why the Christian apologists do not seem to mention the Mahayana?

Astus wrote:

Theravada at least leaves some sort of subtle mechanics as the ultimate basis, while Mahayana destroys even that much with refuting any sort of true foundation of reality.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 11th, 2022 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: I have some confusion regarding this tradition, and have questions.

Content:

Mdg137 said:

Is it possible to get to enlightenment (or at least, some level of transcendent realization, not necessarily full Buddhahood) through recitation of Amida's name and through other power, in the here-and-now?

Astus wrote:

Recitation in and of itself can be a form of calming (samatha) practice. A calm state of mind is conducive to wisdom, but for insight one needs to engage in some form of contemplation. Then based on the insight there can be awakening of various levels.

Mdg137 said:

When Pure Land Masters speak of "birth", do they mean birth in the common sense (I.E., your physical body dies, and you are reborn in a lotus in an external Western Pure Land), or do they mean birth in a more absolute sense (I.E., causal birth, from one moment to the next, "birth in one thought-moment" as Ippen said)?

Astus wrote:

Generally it is birth in the Pure Land after one has died. In an absolute sense there is no birth.

Mdg137 said:

Why do the Japanese Masters seem to advocate exclusive recitation, rather than mixing practices?

Astus wrote:

Honen initiated the concept of focusing solely on recitation as the most effective method, so his followers kept up this approach. However, as long as there is no conflict with nenbutsu one may engage in other practices. However, if you prefer a more inclusive approach you might want to look at Chinese Pure Land teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 12th, 2022 at 2:51 PM

Title: Re: Kasina practice or similar

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

are there any cycles of teachings that recommend anything like Kasina practice?

Astus wrote:

Abhidharmakośa 8.34-36 - they discuss the liberations (vimokṣa), the spheres of mastery (abhibhvāyatana), and the spheres of totality (kṛtsnāyatana). The last of those is the equivalent of the Pali kasina, in Tibetan: <https://read.84000.co/glossary/entity-33443.html>. On their meaning and usage see this introduction by Lamotte: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225619.html>, where the summary of the Abhidharma approach is:

'In general, the vimokṣas are the gateway into the abhibus, which in turn are the gateway into the kṛtsnas. The vimokṣas are 'complete emancipation' (vimokṣamātra)

from the object. The abhibhus exert a twofold mastery (abhibhavana) over the object, entailing the view of the object as one wishes it (yatheṣṭam adhimokṣaḥ) and the absence of the negative emotion provoked by the object (kleśānutpatti). The kṛtsnas embrace the object without a gap and in its totality (nirantarakṛtsnaspharaṇa). All are derived from the dhyānas and the samāpattis.'

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 13th, 2022 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Refining a Meditative Practice

Content:

Astus wrote:

Since you're OK with zazen, have you studied any zen teachings, like those of Dogen?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 13th, 2022 at 8:11 PM

Title: Re: Refining a Meditative Practice

Content:

Parsifal said:

So far, I have implemented this way of Zen practice for a long time but I seem to fall in a fatal trap. Should I refrain from any practices other than Zen? I want find any clue to make myself free from any noise or disturbance from outside.

Astus wrote:

An advice to fit one's personal situation needs to be from someone who knows and understands it, and at the same time knows ways to help. Other than that you need to see for yourself to apply the general teachings to your particular case. Zazen, as dropping body and mind, is the ultimate sword of wisdom to cut all entanglements of the misconceptions of self and belonging to a self. However, if it's not a tool one can wield, there are many other approaches to take, one just needs to find and train in the appropriate method. Still, if one can see how from a single attractive thought whole worlds can bloom, it's possible to not perpetuate the first thought. In order to be motivated to let it go it's good to recognise the drawbacks of delighting in that idea.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 14th, 2022 at 7:35 PM

Title: Re: Requesting help understanding Buddhism proof regarding existence of consciousness outside brain

Content:

Astus wrote:

Verification in Buddhism is a subjective process, not objective. Is the thought of a glass of water physical like a glass of water or not? It is fairly easy to see for oneself. As for the ontological idea of there being a completely distinct immaterial consciousness, that's a misconception and is refuted by the doctrine of dependent origination.

"Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are the same thing, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul and the body are different things, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: 'Rebirth is a condition for old age and death.' ...

'Ignorance is a condition for choices.'"

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.35/en/sujato>)

'The living of the holy life (brahmacariyavāsa) is the living of the noble path. One who holds the view "the soul and the body are the same" (taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ) holds that the soul and the body are annihilated together (at death). For one who holds this, the annihilationist view follows, for he holds that "a being is annihilated." Now this noble path arises to stop and eradicate the round of existence. But on the annihilationist view the round ceases even without the development of the path, and thus the development of the path becomes purposeless. In the second case, one holding the view "the soul is one thing, the body another" (aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ) holds that the body alone is annihilated here, while the soul goes about freely like a bird released from a cage. This view is eternalism. But if there were even one formation that is permanent, stable, and eternal, the noble path would not be able to bring the round to an end; thus again the development of the path would be purposeless.'

(The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, p 756, n 107)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 15th, 2022 at 4:29 AM

Title: Re: Refining a Meditative Practice

Content:

Parsifal said:

However, I cannot but be tempted to another meditation scheme to make me mentally more affluent and stabler due to still my feeling like adhering to my ego. To help such myself, I want to try something even only a little bit useful.

Astus wrote:

If zazen is insufficient, then it's good to first be clear about what is missing for you. There are some more extensive classical teachings on zazen that address various difficulties in one's practice, like those of <https://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/> and <https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/leaflet/heartofzen/index.html>. You may also look into traditional meditation manuals that discuss various hindrances and their antidotes, like <https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-meditation/> and the http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 16th, 2022 at 3:05 PM

Title: Re: Pacifying the mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

"But how could one [even] gain the ability to know that it is no-mind [that sees, hears,

feels, and knows]?"

"Just try to find out in every detail: What appearance does mind have? And if it can be apprehended: is [what is apprehended] mind or not? Is [mind] inside or outside, or somewhere in between? As long as one looks for mind in these three locations, one's search will end in failure. Indeed, searching it anywhere will end in failure. That's exactly why it is known as no-mind."

(Treatise on No-Mind 無心論, tr Urs App)

Another question: "Teach me, your disciple, to quiet mind."

Answer: "Bring your mind here and I will quiet it for you."

Also: "Just quiet my mind for me!"

Answer: "This is like asking a craftsman to cut out a garment. When the craftsman obtains your silk, then he can for the first time set his cutting tool to work. At the outset, without having seen the silk, how could he have cut out the pattern from space for you? Since you are unable to present your mind to me, I don't know what mind I shall quiet for you. I certainly am unable to quiet space!"

(The Bodhidharma Anthology, p 42)

'When practitioners have distracted, false thoughts during meditation, their minds cannot be at peace. Many practitioners think that trying to pacify the mind is necessary. Therefore, when they hear about a Zen master, they immediately set out on their way to look for a method. If they study this method or that method to pacify their minds, this is only using hot to treat cold or using bright to erase darkness. All these dualisms are unreal and false symptoms. Bodhidharma did not teach that way. He simply said, "Bring me your mind and I will pacify it." When one looks directly at the anxious mind, it will disappear, leaving no trace. Hui-Ke had to say, "I cannot find it." Bodhidharma only had to reply, "There, I have pacified your mind for you." Hui-ke right away saw the Way. For a long time now, we have believed that the agitated, thinking mind is real. However, if we look inside we will find no trace of the thinking mind and will then know it is empty of ownbeing. When we know it is empty, our thoughts no longer grab our attention and so will not disturb us. When thoughts arise, if we do not follow them, our minds will be calm. Following thoughts, thinking of this or that, never stopping, our minds cannot be at peace. The moment that a thought arises, if we know that it is empty and do not follow it, it will disappear by itself. This is a wonderful way for pacifying the mind. This way does not rely on any method or form.

Also, if we look directly at the false thoughts, they will disperse like clouds or smoke. This is "directly pointing at the mind," not relying on any means. If we all practiced in this manner, no one would be unwise enough to run after their thoughts, trying to destroy illusions. We only need to know that thoughts are false and not follow them. This is the essence of Bodhidharma's pacification of mind.'

(Keys to Buddhism by Thich Thanh Tu, p 51-52)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2022 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: What does "kido" mean? (I'm pretty sure it does not mean "energy way")

Content:

curtstein said:

But I am pretty sure that the actual Hanja for 기도 is 祈禱, which means something like "pray" or even "worship".

Astus wrote:

That seems to be the correct reading. Here are some monasteries providing information on their regular prayers (jeong-gi/sangsi gido 정 기/상시 기도):
<http://www.doseonsa.org/ceremony/pray.asp>,
<http://www.jinkwansa.org/html/?pCode=507&cate=EV01&cate2=AL02>,
http://www.bongeunsa.org:90/common/common.do?jsp_path=user/event/prayerAbove.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 18th, 2022 at 8:38 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

It occurred to me that it is often claimed that the Pure Land is a training ground or school for bodhisattvas. I think this explanation helps people to overcome the misconception that the Pure Land is a paradise or heaven. As a skilful means that is fine, but the Pure Land scriptures do not support that claim.

Astus wrote:

If, as you seem to suggest, birth in Sukhavati would magically turn beings into buddhas, then all the many vows would be meaningless, plus it would defy the basic doctrine that everyone has to attain liberation on their own.

Zhen Li said:

28. sacenme bhagavan bodhiprāptasya tatra buddhakṣetre kasyacitsattvasyoddeśo vā svādhyāyo vā kartavyaḥ syāt, na te sarve pratisaṃvitprāptā bhavyeḥ, mā tāvadahamanuttarāṃ samyaksambodhimabhisambudhyeyam.

If, O Bhagavān, having attained bodhi, instruction or learning should have to be done by any being in that buddha land, and they should not all be possessed of perfect and complete knowledge, then may I not fully awaken to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

Astus wrote:

It is not 'perfect and complete knowledge', as <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe49/sbe4924.htm> translated it. Pratisaṃvid is unhindered/analytical knowledge and it has four types, as given in the <https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Dharma-Sangraha/Dharmas-041-060.htm#toc10> and explained in the <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225795.html>.

Samghavarman: 設我得佛，國中菩薩智慧辯才若可限量者，不取正覺。
(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T12n0360_p0268c05)

In Inagaki's http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_immeasurable_life.html#div-7 (The Three Pure Land Sutras, BDK ed, p 16):
'30. If, when I attain buddhahood, the wisdom and eloquence of bodhisattvas in my land should be limited, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2022 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: What does "kido" mean? (I'm pretty sure it does not mean "energy way")

Content:

curtstein said:

I think it might come as a surprise to many western Buddhists to realize that "chanting" is at least in some sense really "praying"!

Astus wrote:

According to <https://blog.daum.net/511-33/12370671> the word entered Korean Buddhism in the modern times from Christianity.

<http://www.ibulgyo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=206999> explains how Buddhist prayer (bulgyoi gido 불교의 기도) is unlike other religions. And

<http://www.beopbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=203416> about how to pray mentions various occasions, like meal prayer (sigsa gidomun 식사기도문; also calls it an offering gatha: gong yang ge 공양게 供養偈), birthday prayer (saeng-ilchugha gidomun 생일축하 기도문), school exam prayer (siheom gido 시험기도), also mentions dharani prayer (dalani gido 다라니기도) and that reciting a buddha's or bodhisattva's name as an easy form of prayer.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2022 at 9:15 PM

Title: Re: What does "kido" mean? (I'm pretty sure it does not mean "energy way")

Content:

curtstein said:

The article cited by astus claims that Buddhists only started using this term in modern times due to the influences of individualism, Christianity, and capitalism.

Astus wrote:

Prayer

(<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/search/?q=%E7%A5%88%E7%A6%B1&lang=en>)

appears a few times, for instance as praying to gods

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T08n0261_p0867c03) for longevity; to slaughter sheep as prayer (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T16n0682_p0760a19); and prayer in a god's temple (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T21n1299_p0389b03). I assume the post meant the more widespread use of the word for all sorts of religious activities.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 19th, 2022 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

As for the many vows, they actually all speak to this one fact—assurance of nirvāṇa, non-retrogression, attainment of all the powers and 32 marks, etc. There are no limitations or wants of beings upon birth.

Astus wrote:

How so? If upon birth one becomes a buddha, then talk of humans and gods, various abilities given to them, plus the qualities of the land itself are quite irrelevant and rather limited compared to a buddha's attributes.

Zhen Li said:

As for attaining liberation on their own—this is where Pure Land as a Buddha-Nature practice comes into play.

Astus wrote:

What does 'Buddha-Nature practice' mean?

Zhen Li said:

If we are thinking of things dualistically from the perspective of the Saha world, yes, there are stages and levels to birth and there are individual beings and selves—these cease to be of relevance or reality upon the fulfilment of birth.

Astus wrote:

If they were irrelevant, then why talk of them?

Zhen Li said:

Besides, questioning this matter of self-liberation as being a "basic doctrine," actually the Mahāyāna sūtras frequently use the language of liberating other beings—the share of agency involved in fulfilling this is not thereby necessarily 100% one way or the other, and again, this only makes sense from a dualistic perspective.

Astus wrote:

Shakyamuni could not simply wish others to become even believers, much less liberated. On the contrary, he urged people to follow the teachings and put them into practice. Similarly, Lokeshvararaja could not transform Dharmakara into a buddha, so he cultivated the paramitas for innumerable aeons.

Liberating beings means guiding them, providing them with the correct teachings, and it is for that reason that a bodhisattva masters all sorts of skilful means. Otherwise there should be only one method to master: wishing beings into buddhas. And even that one power could be granted by other buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2022 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

It means that the practice is fulfilled by the Buddha's power, which is the innate nature of all beings, rather than the power of a limited being that relates to their illusory attributes like the skandhas.

Astus wrote:

Since all have the Buddha's power as the innate nature, but it makes no difference in everyone's being trapped in birth and death, it is not a power that can liberate anyone.

Zhen Li said:

Skilful means are necessary for limited beings to grasp the path. Otherwise the Dharma dispensation would just start and end with the perfection of wisdom and no one would be any the wiser.

Astus wrote:

Consequently it's not possible to just transform another being into an awakened one. Each has to work on their own liberation.

Zhen Li said:

Ultimately, all attain liberation through "other power."

Astus wrote:

If by ultimately you mean on the level of ultimate truth, then there is neither liberation nor other to talk of. If you mean in the end, then what's the purpose of cultivating the path?

Zhen Li said:

Upon birth they will assuredly realise the Dharma body.

Astus wrote:

There is a big difference between eventually realising through their own efforts, or realising it exclusively through the influence of somebody else.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2022 at 7:12 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

The point in Pure Land is that its power is manifested through Dharmākara's vows and brings people to a point where they can realise it themselves. Buddhānubhāvena (by the Buddha's power) is how many people achieve all sorts of things in the sūtra literature—the realisation, however, is for themselves alone and not forced upon them by the

Buddha.

Astus wrote:

In that case why wouldn't Sukhavati be a so called 'training ground'? It provides an optimal state of existence for beings to attain awakening.

Zhen Li said:

To overcome reliance on self power is to directly see one's true nature.

Astus wrote:

Then no reason to talk of any other power, since, as you stated above: 'everyone is liberated when they realise Buddha Nature'.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 20th, 2022 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: Four transmissions in Kagyu mahamudra

Content:

shagrath said:

If Mahamudra also has both ka dag and lhun grub aspects, how come there is no thod rgal in tradition?

Astus wrote:

Togal is a technique, kadak and lhundrup are qualities of the nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2022 at 3:03 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Because training is a dualistic conception and birth in the fulfilled land is beyond dualities.

Astus wrote:

Why would it be beyond dualities? The sambhogakaya ('fulfilled body' 報身) is within dualities in its functions, so its land (報土) should be as well, otherwise it'd be the dharmakaya and the dharmadhatu of no birth.

Zhen Li said:

For this reason, Buddha Nature appears to us as Other Power until it is directly realised. As the Nirvāṇa Sūtra puts it, bodhisattvas never fully see Buddha Nature until the attainment of Buddhahood itself, even those on the 10th bhūmi see it like birds in the corner of one's eye: one isn't sure whether they might be a crane or some other bird.

Astus wrote:

So it is not how it was phrased above that one realises one's true nature when abandoning self-power, since only buddhas realise that.

Zhen Li said:

In essence, the Primal Vow is made for evil beings like us, who, though aspiring to do good, out of karmic habit have no other destiny than Avici hell. We need only rely on the Nembutsu, and thereby leap crosswise across the six realms and assuredly attain non-retrogression and birth in Sukhāvātī.

Astus wrote:

That's not been the issue here, but rather the assumption that such evil beings transform into buddhas immediately out of no effort on their own just because they are born in Sukhavati.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2022 at 6:11 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

The fulfilled land or true and fulfilled land (眞実報土) is the dharmakāya, the transformed land (方便化土) is that of the saṃbhogakāya.

Astus wrote:

What about the palaces, trees, bodies of water, etc. in the Pure Land? Are they somehow equated with the dharmakaya? Or is it that there is no land at all where one can be born? If the former, then it is a very different view of the dharmakaya than what is found in Mahayana usually. If the latter, then why the need to die first?

Zhen Li said:

But actually, Nirvana is attained upon birth.

This is partially because means and end are ultimately part of the same essence. But since we are ordinary beings, we can only interact with it by an expedient.

Astus wrote:

Same as above, if nirvana is attained immediately upon birth without any cultivation of the paramitas, why the need for birth in the first place?

Zhen Li said:

You say "just because they are born in Sukhavati" as if that is not itself an attainment that takes the coming about of the right causes and conditions.

This is the claim of the sutra, and has been the claim of the Pure Land tradition for over a millenium.

Astus wrote:

The standard claim is that one is born in Sukhavati to then engage in the bodhisattva

activities required for buddhahood.

'It is not that these acts are not effective. It is simply that it is too difficult for mortals in the period of the decline of the Dharma to fulfill the practice of holding and reciting the sutras. Therefore, they should first attain birth in the Pure Land through nembutsu while relying on the essential vow, be blessed to encounter Tathāgata Amida, Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta there, study various holy teachings, and then realize enlightenment.'

(An Outline of Nenbutsu, in The Promise of Amida, p 144)

'Strive to attain birth expeditiously in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, and once there with Amida Buddha and Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as mentors, try to learn and internalize the subtle principle of all holy teachings: the school of the realization of enlightenment through ascertainment of the profound principle of absoluteness and the equality of the ultimate reality taught in the Lotus Sutra, the concept of the ultimate principle of emptiness presented in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, and the theory of realization of buddhahood in your present body in the Shingon school.'

(Dialogue on the Essentials of Nenbutsu, in The Promise of Amida, p 213)

See also this summary on

<https://web.archive.org/web/20060101052628/http://jsri.jp/english/honen/teachings/senchaku/process.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2022 at 7:56 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

On the condition that nirvāṇa is attained upon birth for those with Shinjin, birth is a given in the premises. If you rather attained nirvāṇa here and now, there would be no need for birth in the vows of Dharmākara. But since assured birth is the way by which we easily cut off the six realms, we attain non-retrogression in this life, and full nirvāṇa upon birth.

Astus wrote:

My question is: why the need for birth if a buddha can make beings awakened out of his own volition without the need for a being to do anything, apart maybe for wishing so?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2022 at 9:11 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

A Buddha cannot will a being into awakening, but he can transfer merit to allow us to be born in Sukhāvati if we are willing to accept it.

Astus wrote:

That explains birth through other power. It does not explain awakening immediately at birth, i.e. liberation without cultivation.

Zhen Li said:

The only pure cause is the Buddha's mind. Thus, receiving Shinjin is understood to be partaking in the Buddha's mind. The connection is made in this life, and its full realisation is attained through birth.

Astus wrote:

The cause of birth is explained by faith and the transference of merit, but the cause of realisation is not explained by birth at all.

Zhen Li said:

While in this world we are still in the oil, but upon death we become one with the flame.

Astus wrote:

It's explained in many sutras and treatises how ignorance is eliminated by wisdom. How can birth generate wisdom?

Zhen Li said:

So, there is no ordinary self who can attain awakening, but Buddha Nature is realised with the burning up of the ordinary/saṃsāric self.

Astus wrote:

How would ordinary self be burnt away by birth?

Zhen Li said:

There is no all-powerful Buddha reaching into this reality and shaking us awake out of the slumber of saṃsāra while within saṃsāra, but there is a Buddha who transfers merits for this to occur upon our birth.

Astus wrote:

Do you say that merit transference can generate not only birth but also awakening?

Zhen Li said:

That is just not how saṃsāra and liberation works, and this is why no amount of satoris or kenshos is going to give someone the 32 marks in this life.

Astus wrote:

How samsara and the path to liberation works has been explained many times, but the idea that deluded beings can immediately turn into buddhas upon birth in Sukhavati seems to very much contradict those teachings on the path to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 22nd, 2022 at 10:29 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Mirror said:

Astus what Zhen Li describes is a Jōdo Shinshū perspective. Chinese Pure Land Buddhism doesn't have such concept of being spontaneously liberated just by being born in Sukhavati (as far as I know).

Astus wrote:

Thank you. Apparently not even Honen had such a view.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

It's a hongaku (original awakening) kind of liberation.

Astus wrote:

The assumption of buddha nature makes no difference in the need to purify the mind before its nature becomes manifest.

Zhen Li said:

The non-practice practice means that stages and levels are transcended.

Astus wrote:

There is no problem with going to full 'sudden awakening, sudden practice' (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2008_p0358c28). At the same time, while some direct disciples of Shakyamuni attained realisation very quickly, others did not. Therefore Huineng said, 'The Dharma is without sudden and gradual; it is people that are clever or dull, therefore the names sudden and gradual.' (Platform Sutra, ch 8, BDK ed, p 72)

Zhen Li said:

It is explained thoroughly how bodhisattva conduct is truly beyond the dualities of stages and gradations, and is, in fact, contiguous with the dharmakāya of the buddha.

Astus wrote:

That is the common Mahayana understanding, while at the same time there are stages and gradations.

'Sariputra: If, venerable Subhuti, the Bodhisattva is a non-production and also the dharmas which constitute him, and also the state of all-knowledge, and also the dharmas which constitute it, and also the common people, and also the dharmas which constitute them, -then, surely, the state of all-knowledge is reached by a Bodhisattva without any exertion?

Subhuti: I do not wish for the attainment of an unproduced dharma, nor reunion with one. Further, does one attain an unproduced attainment through unproduced dharma?

Sariputra: Is then an unproduced attainment attained through an unproduced dharma, or through a produced dharma?

Subhuti: Is then an unproduced dharma produced, or is it unproduced?

Sariputra: Is then production a dharma which is a non-production, or is non-production dharma which is production?

Subhuti: To talk of a production as a non-production-dharma is not intelligible.

Sariputra: To talk of non-production is also not intelligible.

Subhuti: Non-production is just talk. Non-production just appears before the mind's eye. Non-production is just a flash in the mind. Absolutely it is nothing more than that.'

(PP8K, 1.6, tr Conze)

'Subhuti: If that is so, how can a Bodhisattva arrive, without an increase in perfect wisdom, at the full attainment of enlightenment, how can he know full enlightenment?

The Lord: In actual fact a Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom neither increases or decreases. Just as perfect wisdom is empty, without increase or decrease, just so also a Bodhisattva is empty, without increase or decrease. It is because of this fact, - i.e. that just as perfect wisdom is empty, without increase or decrease, - that a Bodhisattva arrives at the full attainment of enlightenment, and thus knows full enlightenment.'

(PP8K, 22.4, tr Conze)

Zhen Li said:

This realisation is uncaused because it is original.

Astus wrote:

If it were uncaused, it could never occur. If realisation never occurs, then there is no end to suffering.

Zhen Li said:

There are teachings of instant and gradual awakening. Pure Land is a path of instant, not gradual, awakening.

Astus wrote:

One can talk of instant awakening for an unlimited amount of time, it's the listener that will either comprehend it or not. Furthermore, since even Shakyamuni couldn't make everyone suddenly awakened, it should be clear that there is no such wondrous doctrine or method. Hence it still remains very much unexplained how could all become immediately buddhas at birth.

Zhen Li said:

It is not generating wisdom.

Astus wrote:

If birth gives no wisdom, it sure cannot give liberation.

Zhen Li said:

No, I am not saying that. Vasubandhu and Shandao talk about the merit transference from Dharmākara's vows of birth, and return to this world to aid beings (Oso and Genso Eko).

Astus wrote:

So merit is of no help in immediately transforming ordinary beings to buddhas.

Zhen Li said:

Karmic bonds are severed at the end of one's life.

Astus wrote:

By what? Merit transference does not eliminate karma. Wisdom is not produced to cut off afflictions. What could do it then?

Zhen Li said:

Pure Land practice is easy, instant, and takes one lifetime.

Astus wrote:

That's Pure Land practice in this life, but it does not liberate anyone in this life.

Zhen Li said:

Honen's extant writings do not contradict this idea

Astus wrote:

I have <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639532#p639532> two quotes directly from Honen and one summary from a Jodoshu site that all show Honen did teach engaging the holy path after birth through nenbutsu.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 5:52 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Birth doesn't create the wisdom, it's inherent in liberation which is original.

Astus wrote:

Original awakening is not the same as actualised awakening. The question still is: how can a being be moved from one to the other?

Zhen Li said:

birth brings about liberation

Astus wrote:
How?

Zhen Li said:
The Pure Land has no conditions to bring karmic seeds to fruition.

Astus wrote:
A little calming meditation provides the same conditions. It still does not make one permanently free from craving and clinging.

Zhen Li said:
The Buddha's light of wisdom emerges (see above) and directly eliminates the darkness of delusion.

Astus wrote:
Amitabha's light has no limits, so it should eliminate darkness everywhere, but it does not.

Zhen Li said:
And Shinran and Rennyo also encouraged simply saying the Nembutsu.

Astus wrote:
The point was not the method but the need for cultivation after birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 5:56 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Malcolm said:

It does not even actually transfer (if it did, it would be compounded, impermanent).

Astus wrote:
Since it was not claimed to be the cause of liberation I thought it an irrelevant issue. But it's still nice you mentioned it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Why should anyone have desires in the Pure Land? The conditions that give rise to the

fruition of those seeds are simply not present.

Frankly, you are far overstating what "a little calming meditation" does. If a little bit of calming meditation provided the same conditions as Sukhāvatī, there would be no point for the Mahāyāna vaipulya sutra to be taught.

Astus wrote:

When the mind is calm and focused there is also no condition to give rise to craving, anger, or confusion, that's also why it's optimal for insight and why sometimes various absorptions can also be called liberation of a temporary type. The reason I mentioned it, however, was simply to point out that just because no disturbing emotions are present one does not automatically gain wisdom.

Zhen Li said:

Actually it does. From Sanghavarman's translation: With my divine power I will display great light,
Illuminating the worlds without limit,
And dispel the darkness of the three defilements;
Thus I will deliver all beings from misery.

Astus wrote:

Still beings are lost in delusion, so actually no defilements are eliminated by it. Therefore the cause of liberation cannot be that light. What is the cause then?

Zhen Li said:

You are missing the point about transformed birth. Shinran and Rennyo still hold that cultivation is necessary after birth for those born in the transformed land. Again, different teaching for a different audience.

Astus wrote:

It does not fit what Honen wrote. In both works (An Outline of Nembutsu, Dialogue on the Essentials of Nembutsu) Honen talks of attaining birth through the right cultivation of nembutsu ('attain birth in the Pure Land through nembutsu while relying on the essential vow' & 'It should be known that his essential vow was not made in vain. If sentient beings recite his name, they will, with certainty, attain birth in the Pure Land.' - passages preceding the description of cultivation of the holy path after birth in those two texts). There is no such distinction made by him that you refer to, as if it were possible to become buddha without due causes.

Zhen Li said:

Frankly, Honen many times in the Senchakushu quotes Shandao's passages on birth being birth into the land that is the same as nirvāṇa, and equating sukhāvatī with the unconditioned nirvāṇa.

Astus wrote:

I have found one such quote (BDK ed, p 119-120):

'Because [the Land of] Supreme Bliss is the world of unconditioned nirvana, it is difficult

to be reborn there by means of the Miscellaneous Good Practices that correspond to people's varying capacities. That is why the Tathagata chose the needed Dharma and taught that one should think solely and wholeheartedly on Amida Buddha. One should do this for seven days and seven nights with no break in attention. When undertaking longer periods of practice, one should do this even more. Just as their lives are about to end, a multitude of Holy Beings bearing lotus pedestals with them will appear to such people. With their bodies and minds exulting, they will be seated on these golden lotus pedestals, and when thus seated, they will immediately gain insight into the unproduced [quality of all things]. In an instant, they will be welcomed and be led before the Buddha himself. Then the Dharma's friends will vie with one another to clothe them in Dharma robes. At that time they will realize the Stage of Non-Retrogression and enter into the Stage of the Three Wisdoms.'

Saying that it is the world of the unconditioned nirvana is not the same as being nirvana. The last sentence is the most telling, since besides the 'usual' mention of non-retrogression there is the 'three wisdoms'

(<https://www2.buddhistdoor.net/dictionary/details/%E4%B8%89%E8%B3%A2>, lit. <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/T/172>), and that refers to the forty stages of the bodhisattva path before the ten bhumis. In other words, they are not even arya-bodhisattvas, much less buddhas.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

It is uncaused.

Astus wrote:

To say that there is no cause for liberation means that it can never happen, everyone is eternally without any freedom from suffering.

Zhen Li said:

Amitābha's light is the wisdom that always dispells delusion, in all space and time. That is what it is saying. Why are we deluded then? Amitābha is not the cause of delusion, his light is there and it is always ready to dispell our delusion, but we and our habitual conditions are the originators of our delusion that has no discernable beginning.

Let's put it in different words. The sunlight is always shining on your window, but the curtains are open or closed by your own choosing. Whatever darkness there is, inside or outside your room, is always dispelled by the sunlight without exception. But it won't come into your room unless you open the curtains.

Astus wrote:

Then Amitabha's light is very much ineffective, since delusion is exactly the obscuration. Since the sun cannot move the curtain, the light cannot eliminate the hindrances of

liberation. So, just as the <https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra50.html> teaches, the main requirement to attain buddha nature is removing the afflictions. It is not enough to have the nature of a buddha, that in and of itself does not liberate anyone. Therefore, just as you write, the light will not come into the room unless one opens the curtains. That opening of the curtains is done by oneself, that is removing the afflictions. This purification is what is missing from the explanation regarding immediate buddhahood upon birth.

Zhen Li said:

What Honen doesn't talk about in his extant works is the distinction between birth with immediate attainment of nirvāṇa and birth with gradual attainment of nirvāṇa.

Astus wrote:

Because such a distinction does not exist in Jodoshu, or in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, or in other Buddhist schools. Looks like an exclusively Shinshu idea that lacks an explanation for it.

Zhen Li said:

But he quotes Shandao who writes about this—so he was familiar with and did not contradict the idea.

Astus wrote:

Not really. That was the only quote in the Senchakushu from Shandao that only resembles the idea, but does not actually say so.

Zhen Li said:

Of course it is. That is why you can only be born there through the Buddha's power, and not by self power practice. Hence: "it is difficult to be reborn there by means of the Miscellaneous Good Practices that correspond to people's varying capacities."

Astus wrote:

Being difficult and being impossible are not the same. Also, if it were meant that Sukhavati was literally nirvana, then any statement regarding birth there would have been meaningless.

Zhen Li said:

It is a non-discriminatory birth by realisation of Buddha-Nature that one directly realises unconditioned nirvāṇa.

Astus wrote:

Not discriminated by whom? The ordinary being who is born cannot do it yet. The noble beings are already without any discrimination. So what is a 'non-discriminatory birth'? If it can happen by the realisation of buddha nature, then the cause of such a birth is awakening and not the primary vow, so it is no different from the holy path.

Zhen Li said:

This is referring to the transformed land. Any birth with manifestational appearance is

birth in the transformed land, and it is preceded by a description of self power Nembutsu.

Astus wrote:

That is not supported by the quote itself, since it talks of birth in the Pure Land that is the 'world of unconditioned nirvana', where 'they will be seated on these golden lotus pedestals', and 'enter into the Stage of the Three Wisdoms'. So such a distinction between lands is not found in that quote. What it explicitly says is that those born in Sukhavati cultivate the bodhisattva path.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

You are mixing conventional and ultimate.

Astus wrote:

The ultimate is emptiness where talk of liberation is meaningless. The conventional is where liberation can happen, but to say that there is no cause for liberation is tantamount to denying it ever happening. So either there have to be conventional causes and conditions, or there is no liberation to talk of.

Zhen Li said:

This is simply a question of soteriological realism. In the Pure Land tradition it is admitted that Buddhahood is impossible by the power of the ordinary being, the conventional level. Awakening is always on the side of Buddha Nature.

Astus wrote:

As above, without awakening on the conventional level there is no awakening at all.

Zhen Li said:

Buddhas and bodhisattvas are ultimately inactive. Their appearance of action and cultivation is what happens when their activity comes in contact with our limited minds.

Astus wrote:

Ultimately what activity or inactivity to differentiate for anyone or anything? None. Therefore it is an impossibility that there is contact, since contact means conditionality and conventionality.

Zhen Li said:

So, from the side of awakening, it is realised very much that in fact the curtains are actually opened by the Buddha. The appearance of needing to open is only something manifest to our unawakened cognition.

Astus wrote:

From the side of awakening there is no curtain, so how could there be a moving of it? Therefore no buddha can move it for anyone. That's why it's left to each being to do it on their own.

Zhen Li said:

The Buddha can and does do heavy lifting for ordinary beings, that is entirely within the orbit of Mahāyāna buddhology. This doesn't mean that there is no choice on the part of the practitioner, and it doesn't mean that things won't appear to be done out of their own power prior to awakening.

Astus wrote:

What heavy lifting? Since there are beings in samsara clearly no buddha could ever save them. And if beings have to arrive at awakening to benefit from the activities of the buddhas, then first all the actual purification of the mind has been done already by the being alone, and then there is no further need of any help from any buddha after awakening.

This is illustrated very well by your quote:

Likewise the Aṣṭasāhasika: Whatever, Venerable Sariputra, the Lord's Disciples teach, all that is to be known as the Tathagata's work. For in the dharma demonstrated by the Tathagata they train themselves, they realise its true nature, they hold it in mind.

Thereafter nothing that they teach contradicts the true nature of dharma. It is just an outpouring of the Tathagata's demonstration of dharma.

That is, first 'they train themselves, they realise its true nature, they hold it in mind' and 'Thereafter nothing that they teach contradicts the true nature of dharma.' The being has to do the purification, and only after that there is harmonisation between the being and the buddha.

Zhen Li said:

Understanding and teaching are on the side of the Tathāgata, the sentient being, the prthagjana, is a limited conduit which we imagine to be independently liberating itself, but all such attempts are futile.

Astus wrote:

If realisation were on the side of the tathagata, then it would mean no being ever gains liberation, or all should be already awakened. Furthermore, a tathagata needs no realisation, only ordinary beings do.

Zhen Li said:

But the orthodox Nishi Hongwanji position is of Nirvāṇa upon birth.

Astus wrote:

So it's not even a view shared by all Shinshu adherents, much less others outside the followers of Shinran. Do you know perhaps who established this doctrine of nirvana upon birth at the Honganji-ha?

Zhen Li said:

In truth, they are one with suchness. Once a being is there, they no longer have adverse conditions to overcome, so they immediately attain buddhahood. This is not a question of practice or non-practice, purification or non-purification. It is simply a question of suchness and buddha-nature.

Astus wrote:

Everything is already such, it doesn't make anyone awakened. Absence of adverse conditions is not a sufficient cause of liberation, because that in itself does not remove any underlying tendencies.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2022 at 4:43 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Conventionally, one is born in the Pure Land through the Primal Vow. After that, the innate awakening is realised.

Astus wrote:

The issue is that such a realisation cannot be provided by any vow of another being.

Zhen Li said:

Both birth and gradual awakening are done by the heavy lifting. This is what my quotes illustrated quite clearly.

Astus wrote:

What they illustrate is that beings are originally buddhas, not that buddhas can do the awakening in lieu of deluded beings. If they could there would already be no deluded beings left.

Zhen Li said:

The prior quote shows that when they train, it is through the buddha's power as well.

Astus wrote:

If that were so why don't all beings train? What is it that a buddha's power cannot fix?

Zhen Li said:

It's explicit in Shinran, let alone Vasubandhu, Tanluan, and Shandao. It is also expressed by other of Honen's disciples. So, it is reasonable to assume that Honen held this view too.

Astus wrote:

Since only one branch of Shinshu interpret it like you do it shows that it's not really that explicit.

Zhen Li said:

Underlying tendencies do not come to fruition in Sukhāvatī. This is how karmic obstacles are eliminated—they simply lie dormant until nirvāṇa is attained, so it is as if they are not there.

Astus wrote:

The main question is: how is nirvana attained if not by the standard cultivation of the holy path by each being born in the Pure Land?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2022 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Malcolm said:

The kindest thing is to help them eliminate clinging from the root in this life, then they do not have to wait for some putative liberation later on.

Astus wrote:

“I will move the Western [Paradise] for you in an instant, so you will be able to see it right in front of you. ... the very form-bodies of people in this world are the city walls [of the Pure Land]. Your eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates [of the Pure Land]. Externally, you have five gates, and within is the gate of the sensory mind. The mind is the ground, and the nature is the king. The king resides on the mind-ground, and the nature exists just as a king exists. When the nature goes, the king is absent. When the nature is present, the body and mind continue. When the nature departs, the body disintegrates. ‘Buddha’ acts within the nature—don’t look for it outside your bodies! When one is deluded as to the self-nature, one is a sentient being, but when one realizes the self-nature, one is a buddha. ... By illuminating the self-nature within, the three poisons are eliminated, and all the transgressions [leading to] the hells are dissolved in an instant. Clearly penetrating within and without, it is no different from the Western [Paradise]. If you do not cultivate in this fashion, how could you ever arrive there?”

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 39-40)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 24th, 2022 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

As for why there are still deluded beings left—going back to the analogy before, not all beings choose to open the curtain.

Astus wrote:

Let's stick with that analogy then.

A little review of previous discussions:

You originally mentioned it

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639618#p639618>, to what I

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639625#p639625> that 'the light will not come into the room unless one opens the curtains. That opening of the curtains is done by oneself, that is removing the afflictions. This purification is what is missing from the explanation regarding immediate buddhahood upon birth.'

Then for some reason you

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639632#p639632> that beings don't move the curtain, contrary what you said before: 'So, from the side of awakening, it is realised very much that in fact the curtains are actually opened by the Buddha. The appearance of needing to open is only something manifest to our unawakened cognition.' ... 'To express it in conventional terms, then, the weight of our karmic evil is so heavy that we can never attain buddhahood. But the infinitude of Amitābha is such that his direction of merit can always bring us to birth.'

To that was a little mix up about conventional and ultimate where you

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639649#p639649> that: 'The moving is a conventional perspective. From the conventional perspective the fact that there is no moving will appear to be removal. '

Now back to the point of beings choosing to open the curtain or not. If there is a choice, there is an act of opening on the side of beings, then it is not on the side of any buddha, no buddha does that for the beings, therefore it is not by the power of any buddha.

Otherwise, if it is by a buddha, then all curtains should already be open. If you accept that beings do have a choice and they do need to act, then the possibility of liberation forced on others is excluded and everyone has to actually walk the path until awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2022 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Firstly, one can open the curtains by oneself—this is birth by the 19th and 20th vows.

Astus wrote:

It was not raised regarding the causes of birth but the causes of awakening, although it might be applied to both cases.

Zhen Li said:

As for the case of birth by the 18th vow, they are conceived of as being opened by the Buddha because faith (Shinjin) is the mind of the Buddha that is bestowed on beings. Since faith is the cause for birth, the curtains are opened by the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

If it were bestowed by the Buddha then all should have faith, but that's not the case.

Zhen Li said:

One must be open to receiving faith, however. So the analogy breaks down there.

Astus wrote:

The primary and only problem is with the claim that something (no matter what) is done by a buddha to another being's karma or mind without the active participation of said being is that such an act of one sided influence would need to apply to everyone already. So, if a buddha can make beings be born in Sukhavati, then all should be born there and not in other realms. If a buddha can make beings free from afflictions, then all should already be free from them. And so on.

Zhen Li said:

As for receptiveness, it comes about by 1. karmic conditions, 2. encountering a good teacher, and 3. Amitābha's light (which is always shining). With the conjunction of 1 and 2 alone, if one listens without reflection, or recites the Nembutsu out of self power blindly, no faith will result. One must reflect on the Primal Vow and understand its significance for one's life. In reflection, from the ultimate perspective, one can see 1 and 2 as manifestations of the Buddha's compassionate working—there don't exist coincidences in the Dharma.

Astus wrote:

That explanation defeats itself by saying that actually all three conditions are by 'the Buddha's compassionate working', so everyone should already be receptive. Unless you leave reflection and reciting out of self-power up to the being, in which case there are not three but at least four conditions, out of which three are already universally provided by a buddha, and only reflection and self-power recitation are something a buddha does not influence for some reason. But if those two conditions are not the result of karma, then where do they come from?

Zhen Li said:

beings naturally come to abide in suchness and receive the mind of faith.

Astus wrote:

What do you mean by naturally? Without any cause whatsoever? Or is it again by the Buddha's power? If it's by the Buddha's power then why can that power not take effect outside Sukhavati? After all, Amitabha's light reaches everywhere.

Zhen Li said:

But the consummation of awakening is still only on the side of buddha-nature.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature needs no awakening, so why would it do anything for achieving it? And if it can do something, why not do it already before birth in Sukhavati?

Zhen Li said:

Above all, understanding this working is not necessary for birth or liberation—all this talking when one can be practising Nembutsu is, ultimately, counterproductive. But if I can help elucidate these matters in some way, I am happy to assist.

Astus wrote:

It is not counterproductive if it assists in reciting the name. Your happy assistance is appreciated.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2022 at 4:05 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

You are assuming that the Buddha is an omnipotent god.

Astus wrote:

On the contrary, it seems you attribute all sorts of abilities to buddhas to actively liberate beings, from controlling their samsaric conditions up to making them awakened. For instance <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639741#p639741> that 'one can see 1 and 2 as manifestations of the Buddha's compassionate working', that is, it is the working of a buddha what karmic conditions a being has. That is practically direct control of beings' karma. Or what is it you meant?

Zhen Li said:

The Buddha manifests in accord with beings minds and does not force them to do things that are not appropriate. Acting by the Buddha's power, buddhānubhavana, which occurs frequently in the sūtras, is something that occurs when the conditions are right for teaching, understanding, etc.—again, see the Tathāgataguhya quotes above, Vajrapāṇi explains this clearly.

Astus wrote:

Since buddhas manifests according to beings' minds, it is solely up to each being to purify their own minds, no buddha can do it for them. So the differences between who can perceive what body of a buddha: nirmanakaya for ordinary beings, sambhogakaya for arya-bodhisattvas, dharmakaya for buddhas.

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=639632#p639632> states basic buddha-nature doctrine, it does not say beings are influenced by an external power of a buddha. Rather the opposite actually, beings can understand the explanations of a buddha because they have the same nature as a buddha. But there is no magic power involved, no beings are transformed into buddhas by other buddhas.

Zhen Li said:

It does take effect everywhere. Jinen honi, or natural working, occurs in this world upon the confluence of conditions, a teacher, Amitābha's light, and deep listening/reflection.

Again, the Buddha is not a god or omnipotent saviour who can play with humans like toys. That is just an incorrect premise that doesn't belong in Buddhist thought.

Astus wrote:

Then such natural working makes no difference, since beings still have to come to the required level themselves where any interaction with a buddha is possible.

Zhen Li said:

By saying the consummation of awakening is only on the side of Buddha-nature simply means that the dualistic prthagjana is not a thing that transforms into something else. Awakening = bodhi. It is on the side of buddha-nature because it is innately awakened.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature, since it is innate, is already present in all beings. That is exactly why ordinary beings have to cultivate the way themselves in order to be able to discover buddha-nature.

'Seeing that sentient beings' afflictions
Conceal their Buddha store,
I teach them how to remove their afflictions
And acquire the overall wisdom-knowledge.'
(<https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra50.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 25th, 2022 at 5:49 PM

Title: Re: Contra a Popular Misconception: The Pure Land is not a Bodhisattva "Training Ground"

Content:

Zhen Li said:

So, working like a magnet through his non-intentional manifestation power, beings undergo their own intentional action, but when it orients them towards buddhahood, it is the working of the buddha—even though the intention is only on their side:

Astus wrote:

What exactly is the working of a buddha in a being's liberation from afflictions? In other words: do beings have to gain wisdom and let go of the three poisons, or can a buddha do it for them? If beings have to do it, then a buddha is a guide, a teacher - just as it's said even in your quotes - and not a saviour. If a buddha can do it for them, then it should have been done for all already.

Zhen Li said:

So, to answer your question, yes the Buddha's working is what leads us to liberation in a conventional sense, but the Buddha is not acting intentionally like a god—that is still the intentionality only of the saṃsāric being.

Astus wrote:

Leads in what sense? By providing the proper instructions, or by supernatural manipulation of the beings themselves and their environments?

Zhen Li said:

I am not saying that the Buddha's power is external—if it were then shinjin would be impossible.

Astus wrote:

If it's not external then what's the point of talking of buddhas influencing beings? It's just us, ordinary beings cultivating the path.

Zhen Li said:

Self-power and other-power are actually designations for actions that rely on the calculating self and those that are inaccord with the Buddha's manifesting power. So, this is not a question of either buddhas doing it or beings doing it. It's both.

Astus wrote:

If self-power means the approach of 'me cultivating the path', and other-power means 'in accord with the Buddha's manifesting power', and those two are not exclusive, it just means that 'I cultivate the path taught by the Buddha', because that's when one makes the effort in accord with the Buddha's teachings. Or did you mean something else?

Zhen Li said:

Again, you are thinking dualistically about this. If beings had to cultivate themselves without the Buddha's involvement in the way I described, there would be no awakening and the way you are conceiving of it has no connection to buddha-nature doctrine.

Astus wrote:

It is quite vague and unclear what you actually mean by any involvement of the Buddha. See the paragraphs right above this one with the various questions about it. The quote is from one of the fundamental texts of buddha-nature teachings. How is that not connected?

Zhen Li said:

This discussion is in an eternal loop now, and we are just repeating what we said before, so are we going to take a break?

Astus wrote:

We can do that.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 3rd, 2022 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: How to search CBETA for the uninitiated?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The whole text is here: https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X0424_001

To search by canon references, like X424, 22:606b, that means it's the 22nd volume of Xuzangjing, book 424, page 606 section b.

In the top left corner the three lines give you the text selector, then choose By Book Volume.

To see the page references click on the cogwheel icon at the top.

There's also the CBETA operation manual for the
https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/doc/en/03-01_select1.php, the
https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/doc/en/03-02_select2.php, and the
https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/doc/en/03-03_read_setting.php.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 5th, 2022 at 4:26 PM

Title: Re: An Ode to Not Meditating

Content:

Astus wrote:

“Good friends, one’s enlightenment (one’s Way, dao) must flow freely. How could it be stagnated? When the mind does not reside in the dharmas, one’s enlightenment flows freely. For the mind to reside in the dharmas is called ‘fettering oneself.’ If you say that always sitting without moving is it, then you’re just like Śāriputra meditating in the forest, for which he was scolded by Vimalakīrti!

“Good friends, there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these. These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings are greatly mistaken!”

(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 43)

“There are a bunch of blind shavepates who, having stuffed themselves with food, sit down to meditate and practice contemplation. Arresting the flow of thought they don’t let it rise; they hate noise and seek stillness. This is the method of the heretics. A patriarch said, ‘If you stop the mind to look at stillness, arouse the mind to illumine outside, control the mind to clarify inside, concentrate the mind to enter samādhi — all such [practices] as these are artificial striving.’”

(Record of Linji, tr Sasaki, p 17)

“Although a great many people practice zazen, almost all of them practice in the way of ordinary people, Hinayana practitioners, or bodhisattvas with provisional Mahayana understanding. Those who understand jijuyu--zanmai as the true enlightenment of all buddhas are very few.

That is why some hurry on their way to gain enlightenment by wrestling with koans.

Some struggle within themselves, searching for the subject that sees and hears.

Some try to rid themselves of their delusory thoughts in order to reach a pleasant place

of no-mind, no-thought. Many other methods of practicing zazen were advocated by various teachers in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties in China. But, it appears that fewer than one in a hundred knew the true samadhi transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors."

(Jijuyu-Zanmai, in Heart of Zen, p 41)

"Sitting" meditation means that you maintain a calm and steady mind while entrusting every single thing to Juigong, with the faith that Juigong is the source and destination of all things. Thus "sitting" meditation is possible in any circumstance - it is the mind that sits, not the body. As long as you let go and entrust with belief, your daily life itself can be meditation.

When some people first hear about letting go, it seems too ambiguous or difficult. They feel uncertain about what to do when they hear about letting go, because no method or detailed instruction is given. You may feel that you have to use sitting meditation in order to practice. However, your mind doesn't sit just because your body does.

Meditation is done through mind, not through the body. You have to begin by taking care of problems through mind. You're doing things backward if you're trying to use your body to grasp your mind.

From the very beginning, you have to practice through mind. This mind should be your fundamental mind, not the false self, not "I." If you're trying to rely upon something other than mind, it's like trying to hold a shadow. Your basic direction is already wrong, so you can't avoid going astray. This is why I don't give people the traditional hwadus to practice with.

Calm and steady practice, together with deep and sincere faith, is itself meditation. This can also be called true meditation, where you do not have even the thoughts "I'm doing..." or "I was sitting in meditation." It is also living meditation: you can practice in whatever circumstances you find yourself.

Light the lantern of your mind, and keep it bright every single day. Seon is nothing other than this. In your daily life, if you do not give rise to the illusion of "I," if you entrust everything to Juigong, and if your mind is completely unshakable, regardless of whether you find yourself in heaven or in hell, then this is true meditation.'

(No River to Cross by Zen Master Daehaeng, p 53-54)

"Good sons, when you know illusion, you will immediately be free, without devising expedient means. Freedom from illusion is in itself enlightenment, and there are no stages. All Bodhisattvas and sentient beings of the degenerate age who practice like this will be permanently free from all illusion."

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html#div-2)

'How should the venerable monks understand this? Not accomplishing it by skill-in-means is also without gradual stages. Where was the meaning of that ancient? If this is understood, then all the Buddhas are forever in ones sight. If not understood, do not fall to discussing The Sutra of Full Awakening. Now the Buddhadharma, from of old until today, has never not been in full view. All worthy monks in all times have collectively inherited this powerful light, so it is necessary to have a great root of faith, so that the lotus can begin to rise. Unable to see the Buddhas, astute practioners crossing to the other shore are capable of being useful as vessels of the Dharma. Even if not endowed

with other virtues, those of long practice in purifying karma have to be like a big butcher throwing down his knife and testify to the fruits of arhatship, beginning like this straightaway. Therefore an oldie said that if one joins the ranks of the Buddhists, then straightaway pass it on to ordinary folk.'

(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 6, 25.885)

'The sutra says that when we recognize illusions, we should detach ourselves from them without the use of expedient means. How can we perceive illusions as illusions? What methods can practitioners use to progress through these four levels?

First, we must settle our minds. This method is known as "stilling the mind." In order to see illusion as illusion, we must be mentally calm. Once this is achieved, we can effectively use the second method of practice: contemplating the self and worldly phenomena, or worldly dharmas. It is extremely difficult to detach oneself from the body, mind, and worldly phenomena without practicing these two methods.'

(Complete Enlightenment: Zen Comments on the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment by Ch'an Master Sheng Yen, p 116)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 6th, 2022 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: Supernatural powers

Content:

Jokingfish said:

Are they real or just a metaphor?

Astus wrote:

They are real as far as they happen in stories and occur as meditative or visionary experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2022 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

Astus wrote:

About nirvana from the Theravada tradition:

"Reverend Sāriputta, they speak of this thing called 'extinguishment'. What is extinguishment?"

"Reverend, the ending of greed, hate, and delusion is called extinguishment."
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn38.1/en/sujato>)

"And what is complete understanding? The ending of greed, hate, and delusion. This is called complete understanding."

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.106/en/sujato>)

"The ending of greed, hate, and delusion. This is the culmination of the spiritual path."

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.6/en/sujato>)

“Mendicant, the removal of greed, hate, and delusion is a term for the element of extinguishment. It’s used to speak of the ending of defilements.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.7/en/sujato>)

'A fire that does not get any more fuel cannot continue to burn but simply dies down and becomes extinguished. Likewise, an arahant’s aggregates that have been caused through previous kamma do not arise as a new life or new aggregates but, after having arisen, simply cease and become extinguished. After the cessation of the aggregates the aggregates no longer arise. As a result, the aggregates that constantly arise in an arahant due to the momentum of previous kamma do not continue to arise in a new life but are extinguished in this very life.

Nibbāna without residue remaining is synonymous with the cessation of the aggregates (khandhaparinnibbāna). Once the path has been attained and after having entered parinnibbāna, there is no longer any opportunity for the arising of mental and physical phenomena that would come into existence if the path were not attained. In addition, cessation of the five aggregates is accomplished with the realization of the path knowledge of arahantship.'

(Manual of Insight by Mahāsi Sayādaw, p 459-460)

'Only in the commentaries we find a distinction made in this respect. The parinnibbāna of the living arahant is called kilesaparinnibbāna, the perfect extinguishment of the defilements, while what comes at the last moment of an arahant's life is called khandhaparinnibbāna, the perfect extinguishment of the groups or aggregates. Such a qualification, however, is not found in the discourses.'

(https://seeingthroughthenet.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Mind-Stilled_HTML.htm#Mindstilled19)

'In nibbāna there are no such things as mind or mental concomitants, which can be met with in the sense-sphere or form-sphere. It naturally follows that mind and matter that belong to the thirty-one planes of existence are totally absent in nibbāna. However, some would like to propose that after the parinnibbāna of the Buddha and the Arahants, they acquire a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna. Such an extraordinary way of thinking may appeal to those who cannot do away with self or ego.

With regard to this proposition a learned Sayādaw reasoned that if there is a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna, there must also be a special kind of rebirth which gives rise to a special kind of old age, disease, and death, which in turn bring about a special kind of sorrow, lamentation, suffering, distress, and despair. When the teachings explicitly say cessation, it will be improper to go beyond it and formulate an idea of a special kind of existence. Extinction points to nothing other than Nothingness. Nibbāna, which is not involved in mind and matter, cannot be made to get involved either in this world or in other worlds.'

(<http://www.aimwell.org/On%20the%20Nature%20of%20Nibbana.pdf>, p 64-65)

'The genuine kind of Nibbāna, different from the Nibbāna of other sects, was discovered by the Buddha. Natural Nibbāna can happen simply because the defilements arise and

end naturally, because they are just another kind of concocted nature. Every time the defilements don't appear, Nibbāna becomes apparent to the mind. This temporary Nibbāna nourishes the lives of living things so they survive and don't go crazy. At least, it lets us sleep at night. Nibbāna isn't any kind of special city anywhere. It is realized in the mind that is now void of besieging defilements. For the morality of ordinary people at home, its name is 'nibbuti.' Nibbāna isn't the mind, but it appears to the mind as a certain āyatana. We can experience Nibbāna here and now by breathing in cool and breathing out cool. It is the automatic quenching of heat, of thirst, of dukkha in ordinary life, even without our being conscious of it. It is the eternal nourishment and sustenance of life.'

(<https://www.suanmokkh.org/books/84>, p 11)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 9th, 2022 at 7:48 PM

Title: Re: Enlightenment

Content:

Jokingfish said:

Any truth in this idea?

Astus wrote:

Not really. Check out the <https://suttacentral.net/dn1/en/sujato> about the 62 wrong views (or the shorter summary in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn102/en/sujato>), that's where the various outsider teachers can be categorised with their extremist views.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2022 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: Chan is

Content:

Astus wrote:

Even if that toy plastic stick of Chan was made of the iron of Acala's sword it wouldn't amount to more than flowery words.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 11th, 2022 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Chan is

Content:

LastLegend said:

Show yourself stop hiding in the bush.

Astus wrote:

It's just a bush blown by the wind. Who are you looking for?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 20th, 2022 at 4:40 PM

Title: Re: That story (in "The Hidden Lamp") about Yantou and "Ganji's Family"

Content:

Astus wrote:

Ganzhi (<https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A007166>) has his own entry in the Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 3, 10.203

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T51n2076_p0279b07), but the story with the needle appears almost 200 years later in volume 6 of the Liandeng Huiyao (聯燈會要, https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X79n1557_p0063c01), then elsewhere, like the Xutang Heshang Yulu (虛堂和尚語錄), vol 5

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T47n2000_p1022b07) and the Gaofeng Yuanmiao Chanshi Yulu (高峰原妙禪師語錄), vol 2

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X70n1400_p0694c08).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 21st, 2022 at 3:29 PM

Title: Re: That story (in "The Hidden Lamp") about Yantou and "Ganji's Family"

Content:

curtstein said:

I found one more instance, and this one seems to be the one that Cleary translated and that eventually ended up in "The Hidden Lamp". It's called "Ganzhi's Wife" (甘贄妻), and it is found, as near as I can make out, in a collection of stories about "Excellent Women" (優婆夷志目錄) found in CBETA here:

http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/mobile/index.php?index=X87n1621_001.

Astus wrote:

Great catch, it's the right version. The title of the collection Youpoyi Zhi (優婆夷志) means Record of Upasikas, compiled by Yuanxin

(<https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A001408>) and Guo Ningzhi

(<https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A001771>) around 1644-1647

(according to <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/12215045.pdf>).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2022 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

Does anyone else feel this way about the Twelve Links? Or do you understand it and if you do, what do you understand?

Astus wrote:

It can be summarised

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=601525#p601525>. For a more in depth

explanation I recommend these from Bhuddhadasa Bhikkhu:

<https://www.suanmokkh.org/books/126> and

<https://books.google.com/books?id=EaHRDgAAQBAJ>. And this one is likely the best that's readily available: <https://buddhadhamma.github.io/dependent-origination.html>.

For a short overview from the Mahayana perspective see The Heart of Interdependent Origination and its commentary by Nagarjuna in

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf on pages 58-64. There's also this section of the Mahaprajnaparamitasastra explaining in even less words:

[https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-](https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225106.html)

[sastra/d/doc225106.html](https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225106.html). For more by Nagarjuna, see chapter 26 of the Middle Treatise (Mulamadhyamakakarika). The Compass of Zen by Seung Sahn also has a chapter on the twelve links.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 27th, 2022 at 5:05 PM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

How is ignorance a condition for mental concocting even before there is consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination applies to beings, so it's the five aggregates that are affected at each link. The individual link highlights the most outstanding factor influencing other qualities.

clyde said:

What can ignorance mean in this regard? Or mental concocting? And so on for each link; e.g. - How is attachment a condition of 'becoming' (and what does that mean) and how is becoming a condition of birth?

Astus wrote:

When one is ignorant about how suffering arises and ceases, then one concocts/fabricates physical, verbal, and mental activities to perform, and that results in a mindset/attitude (consciousness) that regulates one's bodily and mental functions, thus colouring one's senses, so when there is an impression (contact) and a related quality (feeling), then necessarily one enjoys and delights in it (craving), therefore wants to hang on to it (clinging), and that turns into an identity (becoming), so it defines one's whole being (birth), but eventually, like everything else, it'll fall apart and thus cause pain.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 28th, 2022 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

While this seems sensible, where is this stated or taught? And that would imply that the five aggregates are already existent and not dependent on these links for their existence - but then that contradicts the Twelve Links teaching.

Astus wrote:

It is taught at each link. As you well noted, to say that there is ignorance without there being one who is ignorant is meaningless. Ignorance is a mental factor, a defilement of the mind, so to say it exists apart from a being is like saying it is not a mental factor at all. The twelve links are not about the original beginning of things, it is not like there was nothing before ignorance somehow arose. The twelve links can be understood both in terms of three lives (past, present, future), and in a momentary process as well. In both cases there is us who go through those links.

clyde said:

As I understand your explanation, "ignorance" is ignorance of the Dharma or at least of the Second Noble Truth and you say this ignorance gives rise to concocting. How does ignorance give rise to concocting? How does ignorance give rise to anything? And are you meaning that if one knows the Dharma and how suffering arises, then concocting doesn't arise and all that follows, including consciousness, birth and death don't arise?

Astus wrote:

Ignorance is often defined as not knowing the four noble truths, but it can also be not knowing dependent origination and dependent cessation, hence ignorance about how suffering arises and ceases. It gives rise to concocting/fabrication because one believes that's the way to satisfy one's desires, to achieve one's goals. Ignorance gives rise to concocting because one sees only the advantages, the allure of something beautiful and pleasant, but not the drawbacks of craving for and grasping at it. That's why it takes mindfulness and wisdom to avoid falling for such impulses. Knowing the Dharma (how suffering arises and ceases) in theory is important but insufficient on its own to overcome one's bad habits, that's why developing all factors of awakening is necessary. In other words, samadhi and prajna are both needed for liberation.

clyde said:

As traditionally given, each link is "a requisite condition" from which comes the following link; i.e., without the precedent link the following link doesn't arise. You present the links as "colouring" or modifying the following link. That seems to be a departure from the traditional understanding.

Astus wrote:

The twelve links are present at each instance of suffering ignorantly. It's not that when there is one link present, like feeling, then the others are missing. Using the three lives format, when one feels something pleasant (note that already that single feeling exists in a compounded way within a network of conditions), then there had to be a contact with something through the six sense gates, and that thing is recognised as a particular form with a particular name, and one has an opinion (mindset) of that thing that is primarily driven by an intention, and that motivation can exist because of not knowing any better. Because of the presence of the preconditions it is inevitable that the feeling

of something pleasant is met with liking it, the need to hold it, and thus defining one's whole experience of the world, what in turn gives rise to a fixed set of particular behaviour and mentality that will necessarily deteriorate and debase.

Let's take an apple juice as an example for a pleasant object. To recognise it as such one needs to come in contact with it (seeing/tasting/imagining), and that contact to be meaningful one needs a couple of preconditions, like knowing what an apple juice is and an opinion of it whether one likes it or not. Since one recognises the apple juice as something desirable, it is a pleasant object. With the recognition of the tasty juice comes the thirst for it, the thirst develops into the need to have it, that grows into the thought of being the one who delightedly experiences drinking it. With those present arises the view and entity of the subject partaking of an object, the subject being the actor and enjoyer, while the object what is seen/tasted/imagined. Then with the changing of the object, for instance finishing a glass of apple juice, the subject loses its reason to exist and experiences some dissatisfaction because of that. All this can go down in a few seconds from seeing the apple juice to having drunk it. And then it happens again and again with the various experiences happening, the previous conditioning the next.

clyde said:

Also, your definition of becoming as identity seems strange. But then all the definitions of becoming seem odd. In the suttas, Buddha is said to explain that there are three types of becoming: sensual, form, and formless. What does that mean? And how is that identity?

Astus wrote:

Identity in the sense of identifying with a certain action plan, a route to take, an attitude towards something, as the strongest form of owning/being preceding the actual manifestation of that conglomeration of physical and mental force. It is the point between the determination to have/keep something and actively being the one who works to get or preserve it.

The three types of becoming categorises the general motivation of one's actions. Sensual means enjoying things, so in case of the apple juice it means appreciating its colour, its smell, its taste. Form refers to perceiving things without the sensuous-emotional tone, like when analysing the physical properties or the chemical components of the juice in a scientific way, or it can also be from an artistic point of view. Formless stands for the abstract, the conceptual, like thinking about why an apple juice is called an apple juice. That's more in modern terms of course, in the usual explanation form and formless are exclusively the domain of religious practitioners and philosophers.

clyde said:

I could go on and I'm not trying to difficult, but I am trying to understand a teaching, the Twelve Links, which doesn't make sense to me, seems convoluted, and seems to confound even Buddhist teachers. The other core teachings of the Buddha, in contrast, are relatively easy to understand and often available to one's experience.

Astus wrote:

'What are the profound dharmas (gambhīradharma)?

The twelve causes and conditions (dvādaśahetupratyaya) are called gambhīradharma. Thus the Buddha said to Ānanda: “The twelve causes and conditions (or pratītyasamutpāda) are profound (gambhīra), difficult to probe (durvigāhya) and difficult to understand (duranubodha).”

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225102.html>; cf <https://suttacentral.net/dn15/en/sujato>)

'When they see a sight with their eyes, if it's pleasant they desire it, but if it's unpleasant they dislike it. They live with mindfulness of the body unestablished and their heart restricted. And they don't truly understand the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom where those arisen bad, unskillful qualities cease without anything left over. Being so full of favoring and opposing, when they experience any kind of feeling—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—they approve, welcome, and keep clinging to it. This gives rise to relishing. Relishing feelings is grasping. Their grasping is a condition for continued existence. Continued existence is a condition for rebirth. Rebirth is a condition for old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress to come to be. That is how this entire mass of suffering originates.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2022 at 4:19 AM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

For example, how is “identifying with” the sensual (“enjoying things”) requisite for birth which leads to old age and death?

Astus wrote:

If one assumes the perspective of one who likes to drink apple juice it turns into a habit that one follows instinctively. But as conditions necessarily change, feeding that habit creates various challenges, starting with the effort required to feed it down to detrimental consequences like preferring exclusively the company of apple juice drinkers and hating those who say anything bad about apple juice. In other words, becoming (bhava) is when a clinging becomes a personally held truth, and birth (jāti) when the motivation/inclination given by that truth turns into a personality trait.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2022 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

How does identifying lead to becoming?

Astus wrote:

Becoming (bhava) is what was called identifying, so identifying does not lead to becoming, unless you mean how the momentary/present life version connect to the many lives version of dependent origination. If the latter, then becoming stands for the type of karma accumulated (habituated) in the current life that defines future birth.

clyde said:

And I don't understand the meaning of "becoming" ("a clinging becomes a personally held truth"?) nor the "becoming process". What is "becoming" that leads to birth, a birth which leads to old age and death (so it must mean a birth of a being capable of aging and death)?

Astus wrote:

Becoming above was used with reference to its momentary, presently observable form, and there birth means the solidification of an identity that then changes, deteriorates, to eventually cease. If you are asking about birth in a future life, then as in the previous paragraph.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 29th, 2022 at 3:59 PM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

But to use your apple juice example, how does identifying as an apple juice drinker give rise to the birth of anything that grows old, sick and dies?

Astus wrote:

It gives birth to a personality trait that serves as one of the factors in making decisions and acting in the world. Its impermanence (decay and cessation) is visible on various levels. Momentarily one is an apple juice drinker when the situation of choosing it as one's beverage for dinner comes up. Once one has made the choice the mind (thoughts, attention, etc.) moves on to other topics/objects, like what to eat, what to talk about, what to listen to. Right there the entity of the apple juice drinker has disappeared, died. As a habit it can manifest again and again, either throughout a certain period of one's life, for instance during one's childhood, or it can persist until the current lifespan is finished. It is also possible that it recurs in future lives, given the right circumstances. No matter the extent of time we look at, the self/entity/being/person (I drink apple juice / I am an apple juice drinker) is temporary, subject to change, and not something that can exist independently of other factors. Because things change, the maintenance of that entity comes with confrontations with the changing circumstances. Since one is the being who drinks apple juice, it is hoped for and expected to be able to act as such, in other words, to always have apple juice to drink. Strong habits also have the tendency to give birth to other habits, like requiring a specific type of glass to drink from, particular brands of apple juice to consume at different times of the day, and so on, up to the level of complexity of a whole set of rituals. There is also the tendency to propagate the activity to others, so that they not only appreciate one's personality but also adopt the same set of behaviours. And the more one builds up the more

confrontations can occur, and the more elements keep changing and ceasing. Apart from its momentary impermanence it might be easier to see the decay and death of personality traits, habits, entities with other examples, like with being a wine/beer drinker, being a smoker, being a meat eater or vegetarian, being a fan of a football team, being a husband/wife, and so on. One would say that between the wedding ceremony and the issuing of a divorce/death certificate one remains a husband. But no person can keep in mind "I am a husband" even for just a couple of minutes. That's momentary decay and death of what was born as an entity. One acts as the husband within limited circumstances during the day, but when at the office, when travelling, when being annoyed by the slow progress of a queue the "husband" is nowhere. Still, it's not impossible to be the husband of the same person even in the next life (e.g. AN 4.55).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 2nd, 2022 at 7:08 PM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clay said:

Perhaps if you used "becoming" in a sentence, not to explain the Twelve Links, but in a typical sentence so that I might see what "becoming" means to you.

Astus wrote:

The series from craving to birth is how beings emerge, from a weak intention to a solid entity. Becoming is the habituation of what one has grasped, and once it has become second nature, then that is birth where one doesn't do it but one is it. The distinction between 'action-becoming' (kammabhava) and 'resultant-becoming' (upapattibhava) reflects how during the phase of becoming there is on the one hand the need to actively habituate something, i.e. keep repeating, and there is also the established habit that one follows.

Let's say one likes the idea of winning a marathon, that is craving. If one immediately dismisses it as unrealistic or simply moves on to another idea, then it's over. If one holds on to the idea of winning a marathon, then that's clinging. Because of clinging to the idea of winning a marathon one reads training plans, orders a pair of running shoes, and goes out for a little jogging. If one decides not to continue with the training, then it's over. If one keeps at it, makes it a regular habit to train, then that's becoming. Because of the continued training one has become ready to run an entire marathon. If one decides that it's better not to risk losing a race, then it's over. If one signs up to a race and wins/loses, then that is the birth of a winner/loser.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2022 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clay said:

Astus, If I understand you correctly, you're understanding "becoming" as the habit

(repetition) of grasping. But how is the habit of grasping a requisite condition for the birth of a being which ages and dies?

And in your example, it's the signing up to run in a race that is the requisite condition for winning or losing, regardless of whether one trains (the habit) or not.

Astus wrote:

Becoming is the habituation of grasping, or in other words identifying with something. It is the requisite condition of the birth of a being that ages and dies because being somebody means taking a habit not as something to pursue but as something one evidently is, as a fact. A being/entity/person means a set of habitual truths, in other words a karmic formation. The ageing and dying means that what are held as truths/facts of oneself are constantly influenced and changed by new choices and actions.

The signing up and participating in the race is the fulfilment of becoming, that it's come to the point of being fixed into the entity of one who's completed one's goal. But the same process applies to practically any other story, like how one becomes a painter, a carpenter, or a Buddhist.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 3rd, 2022 at 3:26 PM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

Astus, It seems to me that by your understanding all the links prior to the birth of a being that ages and dies are beyond the influence of the being birthed. Or you're redefining the plain meaning of birth, aging and dying.

Astus wrote:

Regardless if two minutes ago or two aeons ago, the past is already gone, so how could anyone change it? What can be changed has to happen now.

clyde said:

Sentient beings are born, age and die, and have innumerable labels applied (and self-applied) on them, but it is the sentient beings which are born, age and die, not the labels.

Astus wrote:

A sentient being is a label. Because labels are mere concepts they seem to imply something permanent and continuous. A being (satta) is being attached (satta) to the aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn23.2/en/sujato>, & <https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/52.2e-Radha-Satta-Sutta-s23.2-piya.pdf>). There is a new being every time we find something to occupy ourselves with. This also applies on a larger scale, from childhood to old age, from the previous life to the next one. So, becoming (bhava) means the process of habituation, a stronger form of clinging (hence: identifying), and that leads to both the momentary birth of a being just as it does to the next life. In the latter case it's usually just called karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 4th, 2022 at 4:32 AM

Title: Re: Twelve Links

Content:

clyde said:

My point about the links prior to 'birth' is that, as you noted, they can't be changed.

Since 'ignorance' (and all the links to 'becoming') are prior to 'birth', nothing can be done to prevent birth.

Astus wrote:

I meant that once a being was born what had happened before that had already happened. But it doesn't mean that before birth there was no birth, it's just that that was another life. So when the twelve links are split into three lives, then the first two are in the previous life, the middle eight in the present life, and the last two in the future life. At the same time, the current life is the past of the next one and the future of the previous one.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 4th, 2022 at 9:45 PM

Title: Re: Is Frank Yang an arhat?

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems the correct question is: is Frank Yang a Buddhist teacher? Based on a couple of his writings, he does not uphold any specific or general Buddhist doctrine and discipline, and has his own version of things.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2022 at 5:47 AM

Title: Re: Is Frank Yang an arhat?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Apart from the Theravada view of arhats there's also the Mahayana version, in particular the popular image of arhats in East Asia as a bit mundane, sometimes even vulgar saints like https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji_Gong.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 5th, 2022 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: Is Frank Yang an arhat?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The more we want to see a Buddha, the more likely one will seem to appear, even if it isn't real.

Astus wrote:

'Mendicants, there are these five drawbacks of placing faith in an individual. What five? The individual to whom a person is devoted falls into an offense such that the Saṅgha suspends them. ... the Saṅgha makes them sit at the end of the line. ... Furthermore, the individual to whom a person is devoted departs for another region ... disrobes ... passes away.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an5.250/en/sujato>)

'Not seeing the teaching, they do not see me. ... Seeing the teaching, they see me.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/iti92/en/sujato>; cf. <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.87/en/sujato>)

'Therefore do not rely on individuals,
But rely upon the Dharma.
Freedom comes from the genuine path that is taught,
Not from the one who teaches it.

When the teachings are well presented,
It does not matter what the speaker is like.
Even the bliss-gone buddhas themselves
Appear as butchers and such like to train disciples.

If he contradicts the Mahāyāna and so on,
Then however eloquent a speaker may seem,
He will bring you no real benefit,
Like a demon assuming Buddha's form.'

(<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/sword-of-wisdom>, v 63-65)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2022 at 3:47 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharma Question about Killing

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The noble Cloud of Jewels states clearly that it is permissible to kill someone who is about to commit an action of immediate retribution. And also, in the monastic code of the disciples, a basis for a root downfall that is done out of compassion, such as to set free deer and so on, is said not to be a downfall.'

(The Training Anthology of Śāntideva, p 165-166)

'There are also certain naturally objectionable acts such that, when they are performed by a bodhisattva with a particular kind of skillful means, he or she not only remains free of any offense but also generates a great amount of merit. An example would be a situation in which a bodhisattva sees a thief or a robber who is intent upon killing many hundreds of living beings—great persons [such as] listeners, solitary realizers, or bodhisattvas—for the sake of a small amount of material wealth, [making this person] someone who is preparing to commit many instances of an immediate misdeed. Having

seen this, [a bodhisattva] then forms the following thought with his or her mind: “Even though I shall have to be reborn in the hells for depriving this living being of his or her life, it is better that I should be reborn in a hell than that this sentient should end up in the hells because of having committed an immediate misdeed.” After a bodhisattva who has had such a thought determines that his or her state of mind toward this living being is either virtuous or indeterminate, and after developing a single-minded attitude of sympathy about the future while experiencing [a sense of] abhorrence, he or she then deprives [this living being] of his or her life. [Having done this, a bodhisattva] will not only remain free of any offense but will also generate a great amount of merit.’
(The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment, I.10.2.10.11)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 6th, 2022 at 10:07 PM

Title: Re: Abhidharma Question about Killing

Content:

Seeker12 said:

I don't understand how setting a deer free is a root downfall.

Astus wrote:

Goodman writes in the note for that sentence: 'If deer have been captured by a hunter, setting them free could be considered stealing; but, according to Śāntideva, this would not be a violation of the monastic code.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 7th, 2022 at 10:36 PM

Title: Re: Highest Texts/Sutras/Tantras for Seon Buddhism?

Content:

nomono said:

Which set of texts or techniques are held to be the highest in the tradition?

Astus wrote:

As for texts, Seon (just as Chan) is called a distinct path from those that follow sutras.

'The transmission of the mind by the World Honored One at three sites is the gist of Seon; what was spoken by him over his lifetime is the gate of Doctrine. Therefore it is said, “Seon is the Buddha mind; Doctrine is the Buddha word.”'

(Seonga gwigam, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 58)

In practice that means that there isn't one particular scripture taken as the best or the highest, but rather the whole canon can be used, with a number of texts studied and referenced more regularly.

Regarding the technique, the mainstream method in current Seon is hwadu practice. You can read about that in this online summary:

http://koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020, and there's also this

translation published not too long ago: <https://academic.oup.com/book/41233>.
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-letters-of-cha-master-dahui-pujue-9780190664169?cc=us&lang=en&> and <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-cha-whip-anthology-9780190200725?cc=us&lang=en&> are also recommended. Plus the works on the topic by Jinul and Hyujeong in the http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=5040&sca=The+Collected+Works+of+Korean+Buddhism%2C2012.

nomono said:

Any more deeper teachings, sutras, tantras and commentaries than the already known, for later advanced studies?

Astus wrote:

If you are finished with studying the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and the Platform Sutra, then read the Complete Enlightenment Sutra (圓覺經), the Vajrasamadhi Sutra (金剛三昧經), and the Surangama Sutra (楞嚴經).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 9th, 2022 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: If my eons of negative karma are purified through Mahayana buddhist practice, then why am I still suffering?

Content:

rodolfosancheznusa36 said:

It is a common belief in Mahayana that chanting certain mantras or the names of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, prostrating, etc can purify eons and eons of bad karma. If that is the case, why am I still facing so much adversity and suffering?

Astus wrote:

Purification means changing one's current attitude. Unless one's current behaviour and way of thinking changes there is no change in how events are experienced.

On this matter see: <https://suttacentral.net/mn101/en/sujato> and <https://suttacentral.net/an3.100/en/sujato>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 10th, 2022 at 7:31 PM

Title: Re: Can meditation be bad?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Meditation can be called bad if it does not yield the results expected. Whether it has some difficulties or not is another matter.

'Mendicants, there are four ways of practice. What four? Painful practice with slow insight, painful practice with swift insight, pleasant practice with slow insight, and pleasant practice with swift insight.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.162/en/sujato>, cf. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh317.html#UT22084-072-017-99>)

There is meditation, and there is correct meditation (sammāsamādhi/samyaksamādhi).

'And what is noble right immersion with its vital conditions and its prerequisites? They are: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. Unification of mind with these seven factors as prerequisites is called noble right immersion with its vital conditions and also with its prerequisites.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.28/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/mn117/en/sujato>)

There is meditation, and there is the perfection of meditation (dhyānapāramitā).

'Moreover, the tīrthikas, śrāvakas and bodhisattvas acquire all the dhyānas and samāpattis. There are three kinds of faults in the tīrthika dhyāna: attachment to enjoyment (āsvādanābhīniveśa), wrong view (mithyadr̥ṣṭi) and pride (abhimāna). In the śrāvaka dhyāna, loving-kindness (maitrī) and compassion (karuṇā) are slight; they do not have at their disposal a knowledge in regard to the Dharma sufficiently sharp as to progressively penetrate the true nature of dharmas; being exclusively interested in their own selves, they destroy the lineage of Buddhas [within themselves]. In the bodhisattva dhyāna there are no defects; wishing to unite all the attributes of Buddha, they do not forget beings during the dhyāna and they endlessly extend their kindness even to insects.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225441.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, October 14th, 2022 at 10:28 PM

Title: Chan and the Bodhisattva Way

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://www.facebook.com/jianhu.shifu/> (見護法師), hosted by <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100026068752182> (見銷法師) from the https://miao-fa.de/?page_id=82&language=en, talks about the basic elements of Chan and the fundamentals of the bodhisattva way. Both venerables are disciples of <https://www.ctworld.org.tw/english-96/html/a2FOUNDING%20MASTER1.htm>.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFu7Jdz_3yT94BLgsb3XsNw/
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHreujuXtmCowcz1b7kTkWQ>

"Let's examine the mind a little bit. You see a shifu here, right, you see two shifus or three shifus here. So you see something, 'Oh, that's a Buddhist monk or Buddhist nun.' Right? That simple experience you see with your eyes and you say oh that's a Buddhist monk, speaking. That simple experience consists of two parts: knowing and consciousness. Knowing means you perceive something through your eyes. You perceive there's an object here wearing brown robes, looking like a person. Right? See,

perceiving this through your eyes, that's called knowing. Now at this point you have not formed a concept, but immediately, in less than a second, you say, 'Oh, that's a Buddhist monk.' That's a concept, that's an idea that you learned. Right? If you've never seen a Buddhist monk, you say, 'What is this, what is this person? Right? You don't know. But because you have some knowledge about Buddhism, so you say, 'Oh, that's a Buddhist monk.' That's an idea, that's part of your consciousness, that's the part of your mind we call consciousness. It consists of ideas, concepts, emotions, judgment, decision, discrimination, in a good and bad way. So all of that is consciousness. Most of what we call our mind is actually consciousness. Most of us ignore a more basic function of our mind, and that is knowing, or just simple perception, they just perceive some information."

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNEQvav9qAQ>, 54:16-56:39)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 18th, 2022 at 4:31 AM

Title: Re: The real problem

Content:

Astus wrote:

'In dependence upon the eye and form

Mind arises like an illusion.

It is not reasonable to call

Illusory that which has existence.

When there is nothing on earth

That does not amaze the wise,

Why think cognition by the senses

And suchlike are amazing.

The firebrand's ring and magical creations,

Dreams, illusions, and the moon in water,

Mists, echoes, mirages, clouds

And worldly existence are alike.'

(Aryadeva, in Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, 13.323-325)

'Because you relate everything to yourself, everything looks like a huge problem. Where there is no mind, there are no problems.'

(Kodo Sawaki, in To You, ch 19)

'In short, we must once see into our own nature directly. When we see thoroughly that our nature is intrinsically empty, the problem of life and death will vanish like mist.'

(Koun Yamada, in Zen: The Authentic Gate, ch 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, October 26th, 2022 at 2:37 PM

Title: Re: Two Truths Doctrine

Content:

Ardha said:

there is no reason to feel a certain way about anything because stuff just happens but that conventional reality is the world of meaning that we live in.

Astus wrote:

Quite the opposite, there is always a reason, or rather several conditions, to feel a certain way about things. Conventionally: feeling is an act and experience of a being, a self. Ultimately: a temporary feeling is a product of causes and conditions, there is neither an actor nor an experiencer behind the feeling. That is the emptiness of person, of self. And if one investigates further, the feeling, its arising and disappearing, and its causes are also just mere concepts. That is the emptiness of phenomena.

Ardha said:

I don't understand if there is ultimate reality then how can you just go back to living the day to day as if things matter, aren't you pretending at that point?

Astus wrote:

There is no one to go away or come back, that is the primary delusion of positing a self. So if it feels like pretending, then that is a misconstruction of what emptiness means.

Ardha said:

I also didn't understand loss being false at ultimate reality (in regards to someone dying), heck I don't even understand ultimate reality.

Astus wrote:

Without an owner there is no possession, without a possession there is nothing gained or lost.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 12th, 2022 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: What does Buddhism teach?

Content:

laic said:

As an offshoot from another thread, I have began to reflect upon what Buddhism (aka the Dharma) actually "teaches". Of what parameters should be set - if any - as to what constitutes Buddhist teachings.

Astus wrote:

It's dependent origination and the four noble truths that the Buddha discovered and taught (SN 12.65). All the Buddha's teachings are encompassed by the four noble truths (MN 28), and it's a teaching unlike those of others' (MN 11). A Mahayana definition of what constitutes Buddhism is given as the
https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Four_seals
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh155.html>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, November 17th, 2022 at 11:50 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

SilverFantasy said:

But were there schools that had "Chan" like practices in India, before Chan? Or was Chan really the originators of this idea?

Astus wrote:

The radical version of sudden awakening (see nature and become buddha 見性成佛) that came to be the hallmark of Chan is an approach that developed within the tradition, with various teachers and lineages taking different approaches regarding it.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2022 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Whereas Tao-sheng had spoken of gradual practice as a prerequisite for sudden enlightenment, Tsung-mi (780-841), representing the later Ch'an position, would take enlightenment to be a priori (pen-chüeh) and accordingly deem practice to be its derived function — a gradual cultivation based on sudden enlightenment.'

(Tao-sheng's Theory of Sudden Enlightenment by Whalen Lai, in Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought, p 194)

What probably fits the more popular interpretation of sudden enlightenment:

'The notion of sudden enlightenment stresses the instantaneity or immediacy of enlightenment, the existential-experiential, holistic (not merely intellectual) "sudden opening" and awakening, as one realizes one's own Buddha-nature. This immediacy transcends dualistic distinctions such as means and goal, cultivation and realization, practice and attainment, parts and whole, and so forth. For sudden teaching (dunjiao), there is no order or procedure of a gradual path that can directly lead to the final goal. It is a path of no-path.'

(Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism by Youru Wang, p 211)

Ven. Sheng-yen in Orthodox Chinese Buddhism (p 100-103) measures Chan's sudden awakening with the six identities taught in Tiantai and states that it cannot be anything higher than buddhahood in semblance. Hyujeong (Explanation of Seon and Doctrine, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 3, p 274), just like Jinul (Treatise on the Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 283-284), would disagree, and Huangbo (Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 16) even more so.

How approaches can vary is summed up by Zongmi:

'Of the various sutras and treatises and the various Chan gates, some say that one first relies on the merit accumulated through step-by-step practice and then suddenly all-at-once awakens. Some say that one first relies on all-at-once awakening and then can engage in step-by-step practice. Some say that relying on all-at-once practice, one step-by-step awakens. Some say that awakening and practice are both step-by-step. Some say that they are both all-at-once. Some say that the dharma has neither all-at-once nor step-by-step, that all-at-once and step-by-step are in the dispositions [of trainees].'
(Chan Prolegomenon, in Zongmi on Chan, p 118)

For a more complete picture, Robert E. Buswell Jr. in the introduction of *Numinous Awareness is Never Dark* (p 46-48) has collected the main forms of sudden/gradual cultivation/awakening schemata, based on the works of Chengguan, Zongmi, and Jinul:

1. Gradualist schemata

1.1. Sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (tono chōmsu/dunwu jianxiu 頓悟漸修): This schema is described from the vantage point of the understanding-awakening.

Awakening is like the rays of the morning sun; cultivation is like polishing a mirror so that it gleams ever more brightly. Zongmi's similes in his Preface are even clearer: the sun rises suddenly at dawn (awakening) but only gradually evaporates the morning dew (cultivation); or, an infant is born all at once with all the inherent capacities of a human being (awakening), but only gradually matures into an adult who can put those capacities to use (cultivation).

1.2. Gradual cultivation/sudden awakening (chōmsu tonu/jianxiu dunwu 漸修頓悟): Its vantage point is the realization-awakening. Cultivation is like a gleaming mirror; awakening is the reflectiveness of that mirror. Zongmi's simile in his Preface is that cultivation is like gradually chopping away at a tree, awakening is the moment when the tree finally falls.

1.3. Gradual cultivation/gradual awakening (chōmsu chōmo/jianxiu jianwu 漸修漸悟): This schema is described from the vantage point of the realization-awakening. Cultivating is like climbing a tower; awakening is like seeing more and more the higher you climb.

1.4. Sudden cultivation/gradual awakening (tunsu chōmo/dunxiu jianwu 頓修漸悟): This is an alternative listed only in Zongmi's Preface; it is not included in Chengguan's Zhenyuan Commentary. The vantage point of this schema is also the realization-awakening, as Yanshou clarifies in his discussion. Cultivation here is like going through the singular motion of shooting an arrow over and over; awakening is gradually learning to hit the bull's-eye consistently. This is also like an apprentice model of learning, where one learns the craft as a whole (sudden cultivation) but only gradually masters it (gradual awakening).

2. Radical subitist schemata

2.1. Sudden awakening/sudden cultivation (tono tonsu/dunwu dunxiu 頓悟頓修):

According to Chengguan, this schema is described from the vantage point of the understanding-awakening, though Yanshou in his treatment in *Common End of Myriad Good Deeds* claims it is actually the realization-awakening. This is like a mirror that naturally gleams (awakening) without needing to be wiped or polished (cultivation). Zongmi's simile in his Preface is that a spool of thread sliced by a single strike of the sword (awakening) will cut through the entire spool instantly (cultivation).

2.2. Sudden cultivation/sudden awakening (tonsu tono/dunxiu dunwu 頓修頓悟): This schema is described from the vantage point of the realization-awakening. Cultivation is like taking medicine; awakening is like curing the disease.

2.3. Simultaneity of sudden cultivation and sudden awakening (su'o ilsi/xiuwu yishi 修悟一時): This schema is described from the vantage point of both the understanding- and realization-awakenings. Cultivating is like a gleaming mirror; awakening is that mirror reflecting everything in existence.

2.4. Simultaneous sudden awakening and sudden cultivation, using slightly different terminology: this schema also encompasses both the understanding- and realization-awakenings. To be originally endowed with all the qualities of buddhahood is awakening; to have all the practices mastered along the path to buddhahood inherent in a single thought is cultivation. In this alternative, cultivation is like drinking ocean water; awakening is like knowing the taste of all the rivers that have ever flowed into that ocean.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, November 18th, 2022 at 11:57 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

And the topic is, Chan-like practices in India...all this business about Chan texts is just rehash.

Astus wrote:

I deemed it a necessary point to make, just to see what might qualify as 'sudden enlightenment' as found in Chan. For instance, stories of quick attainments are far from being definitive (already the Nikayas have examples for that, like the <https://suttacentral.net/ud1.10/en/sujato>, but subitism is rejected, e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/mn70/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/ud5.5/en/sujato>), even if the case of the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longn%C3%BC> is often quoted in Chan.

The fundamentally important Treatise on Awakening Mahayana Faith is quite explicit:

'Sometimes, for the sake of weak-willed people, they show how to attain perfect enlightenment quickly by skipping over the stages [of the bodhisattva]. And sometimes, for the sake of indolent people, they say that human beings may attain enlightenment at the end of numberless eons. Thus they can demonstrate innumerable expedient means and suprarational feats. But in reality all these bodhisattvas are the same in that they are alike in their lineage, their capacity, their aspiration, and their realization [of suchness]; therefore, there is no such thing as skipping over the stages, for all bodhisattvas must pass through the three terms of innumerable eons [before they can fully attain enlightenment]. However, because of the differences in the various worlds of beings, and in the objects of seeing and hearing, as well as in the capacity, desires, and nature of the various beings, there are also different ways of teaching them what to practice.'

(The Awakening of Faith, BDK ed, p 66-67)

And the Surangama Sutra states:

'You may suddenly reach an understanding of the principle of the aggregates, and on that basis you may presume the aggregates will all vanish together. But, in fact, they do not all vanish at once; they must be ended in sequence.'

(The Śūraṅgama Sūtra - A New Translation, p 461; referenced by Hyujeung in Seonga gwigam 37 (CWKB, vol 3, p 103-104))

While it's possible to find statements fitting the Chan style, they are not of the systematised path descriptions.

'Furthermore, the bodhisattva acquires the Prajñāpāramitā without practicing any dharma and without acquiring any dharma. Why? All practices (caryā) are erroneous and futile: from near or far, they present faults. In fact, bad dharmas (akuśaladharma) are faulty from close up; as for good dharmas, they are transformed and modified from far away; those who become attached to them will end up by experiencing pain and sorrow; thus they show defects from far off. [Good and bad practices] are like an appetizing food and a disgusting food both of which have been poisoned. As soon as one eats the disgusting food, one feels dissatisfied. When one eats the appetizing food, one feels pleasant satisfaction for the moment, but later it takes one's life. Therefore both kinds of food should be avoided, and it is the same for good and bad practices.

...

For the person who practices the absence of practice thus, nothing exists any longer: errors (viparyāsa), deceptions (vañcana) and the afflictions (kleśa) no longer arise for they are purified like space (ākāśaśuddha). He acquires the true nature of dharmas by holding his non-acquisition (anupalabdhī) as an acquisition.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225469.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 19th, 2022 at 9:22 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Another way to go by is to see the sutras regularly quoted in Chan, like the Diamond Sutra.

'Those who are free from all notions are called buddhas.'

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-15)

Like in the poem of <https://www.globaljiki.org/en/sub.do?menukey=4301&no=45>:

'If it can leave false conditions, it is the true buddha.'

(T51n2076p268a22-23 / Records of the Transmission of the Lamp 9.174 / quoted in Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words, p 121)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, November 23rd, 2022 at 5:48 PM

Title: Re: Karma and Consequences

Content:

Leo Rivers said:

Will I suffer karma for that market with all 3 parts of an action causing act missing? If so, ...

Astus wrote:

The main element of karma is intention, and the main effect is in one's experience. It's less about external events, but more about how events are sensed and interpreted. So the karma one suffers for is in the quality of the experience primarily, not much in the specific happenings.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2022 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: how do mahayana respond to theravada criticism of "Bodhisattva refuse nirvana to liberate all living beings "

Content:

dawn of peace said:

some Theravada Buddhists who criticize Mahayana Buddhism, said that Mahayana Buddhists have no desire for liberation because Bodhisattva vow to not attain nirvana until all living beings are liberated, such as Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva in Chinese Sutras who vow to refuse nirvana until all living beings are liberated.

Astus wrote:

That's about not mistaking a temporary state of peace for liberation.

dawn of peace said:

also, they said that Mahayana Buddhists believe that the samsara is not real, or just illusion, there is no need to liberate. They think that the desire for liberation only make sense when samsara and suffering are all real.

Astus wrote:

Even in Theravada what ordinary beings take to be real are merely conceptual, while those who see things for what they are are neither deluded nor attached.

dawn of peace said:

can Theravada's "desire for liberation" and Mahayana's "liberate all living beings" be reconciled.

Astus wrote:

There's no contradiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, November 26th, 2022 at 8:05 PM

Title: Re: Garchen Rinpoche's empowerments

Content:

Malcolm said:

Meaning empowerments don't use any substances, so they can definitely be given on line.

Astus wrote:

'With regard to receiving the empowerment Lord Jigten Sumgon had said that when you understand the meaning of the empowerment, when the meaning of the empowerment arises in your mind stream, that is when you have received the empowerment. So receiving the empowerment is not only receiving the vase on your crown. The vase is also just a symbol. But what's important is to understand the meaning and to gain some experience. So this is how what actually receives the empowerment.'

(Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche, 11.07.2020, [https://youtu.be/4FtkBvOxuGc?t=1240 - 21:19](https://youtu.be/4FtkBvOxuGc?t=1240-21:19))

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2022 at 8:06 PM

Title: Re: how do mahayana respond to theravada criticism of "Bodhisattva refuse nirvana to liberate all living beings "

Content:

dawn of peace said:

yes, some Theravada Buddhist masters do teach this, which similar to Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

I was referring to the generally accepted distinction that apart from dhammas everything is paññatti.

'According to dhamma theory, only the dhammas are real; all things besides the dhammas are conceptual constructs or logical abstractions with no objective counterparts.'

(from the introduction of The Theravada Abhidhamma by Y. Karunadasa; see more on this online: https://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh412_Karunadasa_Dhamma-Theory--Philosophical-Cornerstone-of-Abhidhamma.pdf)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2022 at 8:23 PM

Title: Re: Garchen Rinpoche's empowerments

Content:

conebeckham said:

By this logic, many who attend live in-person empowerments don't "receive" the

empowerment.

Astus wrote:

I guess that's up to where a line is drawn.

'In my own ignorant opinion, all of these must come together as a foundation. In particular, it is my understanding that the vital point is to receive the blessings and realize the nature of the empowerment that is pointed out, which is based on the strength of the meeting between the master's blessings and the disciple's devotion. It appears to me that once you receive such a blessing, (realization of the nature of the empowerment) does not depend solely upon a material empowerment being or not being conferred.'

(Empowerment by Tsele Natsok Rangdrol, p 37)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, November 27th, 2022 at 8:26 PM

Title: Re: Garchen Rinpoche's empowerments

Content:

Malcolm said:

That's not really what we are talking about here. You ought to stay in your lane. Vajrayana is not your speciality.

Astus wrote:

I claim no such thing. It merely seems to me that there are various interpretations, and some allow even the vase empowerment to happen online.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 5th, 2022 at 4:59 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Agent Smith said:

the concept does exist as akrama mukti (sudden liberation)

Astus wrote:

It's not a common concept but one used by him only, so it's nothing to do with Buddhism in India.

Shaiksha said:

The earliest one can probably be found in the Bahiya Sutta - where Bahiya woke up right there after hearing the Buddha's words.

Aemilius said:

Also the stream-entry (enlightenment) of Shariputra/Upatishya

Astus wrote:

See <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=647370#p647370>: 'stories of quick attainments are far from being definitive (already the Nikayas have examples for that, like the Bāhiyasutta, but subitism is rejected, e.g. Kiṭāgirisutta, Uposathasutta)'

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 7th, 2022 at 8:21 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

The quick awakening of the Dharma-eye has existed, in case of some persons, at the very beginning.

Astus wrote:

Incidental cases of quick insight are not the same as a specific teaching/method/path identified as providing an immediate realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 9th, 2022 at 6:41 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

Quite naturally so, but it is not a method.

Astus wrote:

So it is unlike what is taught in Chan, i.e. the sudden teaching (dunjiao 頓教).

'In a single leap, you directly enter the stage of Tathāgata.

Just grasp the roots, don't worry about the branches;

It is like a pure beryl gem containing the moon.

Having understood this wish-fulfilling gem,

Using it for the benefit of yourself and others, it will never be exhausted.'

(Yongjia's Song of Actualizing the Way, BDK ed, p 14)

'To simply right now suddenly comprehend that one's own mind is fundamentally Buddha, without there being a single dharma one can attain and without there being a single practice one can cultivate—this is the unsurpassable enlightenment, this is the Buddha of suchness.'

(Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, in Zen Texts, BDK ed, p 20)

Aemilius said:

Four Courses of Meditation (pratipad); one of the four courses is quick and easy.

Astus wrote:

It is discussed in the <https://suttacentral.net/an4-patipadavagga?view=normal> in the Anguttara Nikaya (4.161-170). There it becomes clear that 'easy' stands for the four

absorptions, and 'quick' for the five powers being strong. It is still a gradual path.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 11th, 2022 at 8:02 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Aemilius said:

All cases that seem like a "sudden awakening", have been preceded by life, by the informal training that is called "life", for many years and for many lifetimes.

Astus wrote:

The sudden teaching of Chan is not about the idea that people may suddenly awaken, since that is not really a teaching to use, nor is it a novel concept unique to Chan.

The sudden awakening in Chan is about directly cutting off deluded concepts and achieving simultaneously and immediately the state of a buddha.

You may review what sudden enlightenment in Chan may stand for in <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=647356#p647356>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2022 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Which Zen school is closest to Theravada?

Content:

anagarika said:

which Zen school(s) would be closest to the original teachings of the historical Buddha (as preserved in the Pali canon).

Astus wrote:

The view within Zen is that it transmits the original mind of Shakyamuni Buddha, not any scriptural material, although supposedly there can be no contradiction between his words and his mind.

The doctrine of buddha-nature is quite central in Zen, just like several other Mahayana teachings, therefore it could not be derived from the early scriptures.

anagarika said:

There is a very prominent school within Theravada known as "Thai forest tradition" which seems to be a very good example of how the early Buddhist teachings and doctrine can be mixed with elements of Zen practice and the general mindset.

Astus wrote:

There are not that many elements of Zen practice to mix with. Practically there are only two: kanhua (observing the phrase) and mozhao (silent illumination). The latter seems more amenable to be copied, but not so without its proper understanding that is

founded upon Mahayana teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2022 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: Which Zen school is closest to Theravada?

Content:

Virgo said:

Perhaps after the divisions of the 18 schools happened some of those, from the very beginning of their formations, did believe in the emptiness of all phenomena, but probably not until after we see the bodhisattva movement begin to happen (and I am no expert on this).

Astus wrote:

First people had to come up with the specific idea of the dharma as an ultimate unit, then define it as self-existent in order to allow others to say that it's not, thus inventing the concept of emptiness of dharmas. That whole process is found in post-abhidharma literature.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2022 at 9:04 PM

Title: Re: Which Zen school is closest to Theravada?

Content:

anagarika said:

Is mozhao an equivalent to shikantaza?

Astus wrote:

Generally, yes.

anagarika said:

there could be at least some overlap between the practice of shikantaza and certain practices from the Thai forest tradition which seem somewhat similar (such as the "choiceless awareness", "centering oneself in the citta", "focused non-meditation" - I put these in quotation marks as they are non-canonical).

Astus wrote:

The teachers of the Thai Forest tradition (that I know of) teach within the standard framework of the threefold training, where one needs a solid foundation in moral discipline to develop samadhi, and a sufficient level of samadhi to cultivate wisdom. The terms you mention are pointers to what correct mindfulness means. Strictly speaking, Zen is not about cultivating mindfulness (nian 念), and if anything, it's cultivating mindlessness (wunian 無念 - a key Zen term, often translated as no(n)-thought, and is an equivalent of the term hishiryō 非思量).

anagarika said:

Are you suggesting that shikantaza cannot be divorced from the Mahayana philosophy?

Astus wrote:

It is an idea within Mahayana philosophy. So the question is then: how do you define shikantaza?

anagarika said:

I would find that slightly disappointing as I assumed this practice to be completely non-conceptual, which I considered its biggest strength

Astus wrote:

If by non-conceptual you mean thoughtless, absent-minded, then it's not Zen at all, just blank stupidity. The central part of "mindlessness", i.e. non-thought is the direct realisation of emptiness, so wisdom is a key ingredient, that sees things as they really are. It is not about any special state, rather recognising that all states are insubstantial and incomprehensible.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 12th, 2022 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: Which Zen school is closest to Theravada?

Content:

anagarika said:

This sounds quite interesting and maybe something in the direction I´m looking for - could you please point me to some further resources?

Astus wrote:

The Platform Sutra (<https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-platform-sutra-of-the-sixth-patriarch/>) is a key Zen text. It discusses nonthought in chapter 2 (p 33-34) and chapter 4 (p 43-44).

anagarika said:

By non-conceptual I meant training the mind to see whatever there is not through the lens of any concepts.

Astus wrote:

Then the meaning of "concept" should be clarified, because for instance saṃjñā/saññā is very much a basic mental function.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 19th, 2022 at 4:17 PM

Title: Re: Direct perception of interdependent origination

Content:

sun-and-moon said:

What are traditional mahayana meditation instructions for a practitioner to cultivate direct perception of interdependent origination of momentarily arising dharmas in the mind?

Astus wrote:

A short form of contemplation can be found in part four of

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/> (p 78-79).

[https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-](https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-meditation/)

[meditation/](https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-meditation/) (p 16-18, 70-81) has quite an extensive treatment of contemplating

dependent origination as the antidote to ignorance. It is also a topic discussed under

prajnaparamita in <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh70.html#UT22084-043-007-150>.

Observing dependent origination is an integral part of contemplation in Zhiyi's smaller

manual (http://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/ebm_book_page.htm, ch 6), just as it is of

Dushun's instructions (Cessation and Contemplation in the Five Teachings of the Hua-yen, in Entry into the Inconceivable).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 20th, 2022 at 5:45 AM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

akuppa said:

If its not about speed, do you mean it could take place over time? Could it be lost and then gained again? In my reading some medieval Japanese thought so.

Astus wrote:

'A single moment's stupidity and prajñā is eradicated, a single moment's wisdom and

prajñā is generated. ... With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an

ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a

buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is

affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi.'

(Platform Sutra, BDK ed, ch 2, p 30)

'Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental]

realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present

thought, and the later thought, one's thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is

called 'fettered.' If one's thoughts do not abide in the dharmas, this is to be 'unfettered.'

Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.'

(ch 4, p 43)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2022 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

akuppa said:

So sudden awakening doesn't rule out a certain kind of development over time.

Astus wrote:

Where do you see any development?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2022 at 6:27 AM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

akuppa said:

But if you consider the person from our point of view, there is a development as awakening is actualized over time, with more and more moments of bodhi and fewer of delusion.

Astus wrote:

That would be the perspective of an imagined being persisting over time. Such a point of view then would raise some issues, like: What factors change with more frequent moments of awakening? If awakening can be gained and lost, what other conditions have to be met to reach final awakening?

Or there really aren't any new issues, since it would be mostly like the standard gradual path. And that is the understanding of those who subscribe to the view of 'sudden awakening, gradual cultivation'.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, December 21st, 2022 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

akuppa said:

If it can be lost, its not full awakening and if it takes place over time, it's gradual and not sudden. So I'm rather confused if this is what is taught as sudden awakening in Chan.

Astus wrote:

There are different versions of sudden awakening, as

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=647356#p647356>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 23rd, 2022 at 4:08 PM

Title: Re: Early Chan Primary Sources

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

What am I missing?

Astus wrote:

'A Treatise on the Ceasing of Notions' and 'Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition' are the same Jueguanlun (絕觀論). Another famous one by Niutou is the Xinming (心銘).

The 'Wake-up Sermon' (Wuxing lun 悟性論) and the 'Treatise on No-Mind' (Wuxinlun 無心論) are quite different texts.

Everything by Heze Shenhui are also important.

For background the following texts should be also included besides the Vajrasamadhi sutra: Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana, Śūraṅgama Sūtra, Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment.

The Dunwu yaomen (頓悟要門) attributed to Dazhu Huihai is likely to be a treatise preceding the Hongzhou school (see: The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism by Jinhua Jia, p 60-62).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 23rd, 2022 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Early Chan Primary Sources

Content:

Anders said:

The Xin Xin Ming?

Astus wrote:

'According to Japanese scholars Nishitani Keiji and Yanagida Seizan, the Hsin-hsin Ming was composed in the eighth century, two centuries after Seng-ts'an (see Nishitani Keiji and Yanagida Seizan, eds., Zenke Goroku4 vol.2; Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1974, pp. 105-112). Yanagida Seizan also suspects that the Hsin-hsin Ming is the work of the fourth patriarch Tao-hsin (580-651). Chinese scholar Yin-shun shares this opinion in his Chung-kuo Ch'an-tsung Shih5, pp. 52-60.'

(Problem of Authorship. in <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/fm/fm.htm>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 11th, 2023 at 3:50 PM

Title: Re: nirvana mathematically not possible

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Just as the end of a seed is seen

Though it has no beginning,

When the causes are incomplete

Birth, too, will not occur.'

(Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, 8.200)

'Conjecture about [the origin, etc., of] the world is an un conjecturable that is not to be conjectured about, that would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about it.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.77/en/thanissaro>)

'Householder, there are many different views that arise in the world. For example: the cosmos is eternal, or not eternal, or finite, or infinite; the soul and the body are the

same thing, or they are different things; after death, a Realized One exists, or doesn't exist, or both exists and doesn't exist, or neither exists nor doesn't exist. And also the sixty-two misconceptions spoken of in the Prime Net Discourse.

These views come to be when identity view exists. When identity view does not exist they do not come to be.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn41.3/en/sujato>)

'it's not the Realized One's concern whether the whole world is saved by this, or half, or a third. But the Realized One knows that whoever is saved from the world—whether in the past, the future, or the present—all have given up the five hindrances, corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom. They have firmly established their mind in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation. And they have truly developed the seven awakening factors. That's how they're saved from the world, in the past, future, or present.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an10.95/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 13th, 2023 at 6:56 PM

Title: Re: Explain Pure Lands and the differing views on them?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Fourfold Summary of Chan and Pure Land (禪淨四料簡) attributed to Yongming Yanshou is often quoted:

'With Ch'an but no Pure Land, nine out of ten people will go astray.

When death comes suddenly, they must accept it in an instant.

With Pure Land but no Ch'an, ten thousand out of ten thousand people will achieve birth [in the Pure Land].

If one can see Amitabha face to face, why worry about not attaining enlightenment?

With both Ch'an and Pure Land, it is like a tiger who has grown horns.

One will be a teacher for mankind in this life, and a Buddhist patriarch in the next.

With neither Ch'an nor Pure Land, it is like falling on an iron bed with bronze posters [i.e., one of the hells].

For endless kalpas one will find nothing to rely on.'

(translation from Yung-ming's Syncretism of Pure Land and Ch'an by Heng-ching Shih, in JIABS, vol 10, no 1, p 118)

And a modern explanation:

'The Chan School (which became Zen in Japan) focuses on attaining enlightenment in this lifetime. The Pure Land School, on the other hand, teaches cultivators how to be reborn to Amitabha's Western Bliss Pure Land, where they will be able to attain enlightenment in their very next lifetime. In the parallel practice of Chan and Pure Land, we aspire to become enlightened in this life; however, we are also aware that this is an incredibly difficult goal to attain, and thus we use the Pure Land Dharma as a backup plan. In fact, the Pure Land Dharma is like an insurance policy that will enable us to keep making progress in our next lifetime, should we fail to reach enlightenment before

we die.'

(<https://www.chanpureland.org/practices.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 18th, 2023 at 5:36 AM

Title: Re: Buddhist Publication Review Websites

Content:

Svalaksana said:

I'm looking for a website that concentrates and reviews Buddhist publications, whether books or academic papers, course thesis and such other kinds of literary output.

Astus wrote:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-buddhism> is a site like that.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 18th, 2023 at 6:37 AM

Title: Re: Deep-rooted Hindu wants to practice Buddha Dharma esp. Dzogchen

Content:

mahabuddha said:

Choose one and stick with it.

Astus wrote:

Not necessarily. Some examples:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Kennedy_%28Jesuit%29 (born June 20, 1933) is an American Jesuit priest, professor of theology, psychoanalyst and Zen rōshi in the White Plum lineage.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ama_Samy (Arul Maria Arokiasamy), S.J., born in 1936, is an Indian Zen master and Jesuit priest.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Ishmael_Ford (Zeno Myoun, Roshi) is an American Zen Buddhist priest and a retired Unitarian Universalist minister.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 18th, 2023 at 3:39 PM

Title: Re: Deep-rooted Hindu wants to practice Buddha Dharma esp. Dzogchen

Content:

Astus wrote:

This talk (<https://suttacentral.net/dn25/en/sujato>) by the Buddha is also worth mentioning here:

“Nigrodha, you might think, ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks like this because he wants pupils.’ But you should not see it like this. Let your teacher remain your teacher.

You might think, ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks like this because he wants us to give up our recitation.’ But you should not see it like this. Let your recitation remain as it is.

You might think, ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks like this because he wants us to give up our livelihood.’ But you should not see it like this. Let your livelihood remain as it is.

You might think, ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks like this because he wants us to start doing things that are unskillful and considered unskillful in our tradition.’ But you should not see it like this. Let those things that are unskillful and considered unskillful in your tradition remain as they are.

You might think, ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks like this because he wants us to stop doing things that are skillful and considered skillful in our tradition.’ But you should not see it like this. Let those things that are skillful and considered skillful in your tradition remain as they are.

I do not speak for any of these reasons. Nigrodha, there are things that are unskillful, corrupting, leading to future lives, hurtful, resulting in suffering and future rebirth, old age, and death. I teach Dhamma so that those things may be given up. When you practice accordingly, corrupting qualities will be given up in you and cleansing qualities will grow. You’ll enter and remain in the fullness and abundance of wisdom, having realized it with your own insight in this very life.”

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 19th, 2023 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: The Origin of Living Beings & the World in Shurangama sutra chapter VI

Content:

Astus wrote:

「佛言：「阿難！當知妙性圓明離諸名相，本來無有世界眾生，因妄有生因生有滅」
(T19n945p138b7-8)

The Buddha said, “You should know, Ānanda, that the wondrous enlightened nature is endowed with perfect understanding. It is apart from all names and attributes, and in it, at the fundamental level, there are no worlds and no beings. It is because of delusion that there is coming into being, and because there is coming into being, there is ceasing to be.”

(The Śūraṅgama Sūtra - A New Translation, p 314)

「阿難！云何名為眾生顛倒？阿難！由性明心，性明圓故；因明發性，性妄見生。從畢竟無成究竟有，此有所有非因所因，住所住相了無根本，本此無住，建立世界及諸眾生」
(b12-16)

“What is the distorted phenomenon that we call beings, Ānanda? The enlightened nature of the true mind that understands is such that its understanding is perfect and

complete. But, Ānanda, from this understanding, another understanding may be created as another entity, and from that other entity, a deluded awareness will come into being. Thus from within the original state which has no attributes whatever, that which has definite attributes comes into being.

“Neither what comes into being nor what it comes into being from are based on anything, nor are they a basis for anything. Beings and the worlds they dwell in have no foundation, and yet, despite their having no foundation, beings and the worlds come into being.

(p 314-315)

「迷本圓明是生虛妄，妄性無體非有所依。將欲復真，欲真已非真真如性，非真求復宛成非相，非生非住非心非法，展轉發生生力發明，熏以成業同業相感，因有感業相滅相生，由是故有眾生顛倒。」

(b16-20)

“Confusion about the original perfect understanding results in delusion, but this delusion has no essential nature of its own; it is based on nothing. One may wish to return to what is real, but to wish for the real is already a falsification. The true nature of the suchness of reality is not a reality that one can seek to return to. If one were to try to return to it, one would merely experience something that does not have the attributes of reality.

“Through their mutual interaction, there comes into being what does not really come into being, as well as what does not really abide, what is not really the mind, and what are not really phenomena. From the force of their coming into being, an understanding is created, and its influence leads to activity subject to karma. Similar karma mutually attracts, and because of the karma of this mutual attraction, there is a coming into being and then a ceasing to be. This is the reason for the distorted phenomenon of beings.”

(p 315-316)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 22nd, 2023 at 5:06 AM

Title: Re: In Madhyamaka is everything empty, without exception? Or is there something that exists?

Content:

Dgj said:

Is it that there is no such thing as any thing, whatsoever, because all is empty, no exceptions? Or is the Madhyamaka teaching that all things are empty, which points to some transcendent reality?

Astus wrote:

'It is not to be asserted that the Buddha exists beyond cessation, nor “does not exist” nor “both exists and does not exist,” nor “neither exists nor does not exist”—none of these is to be asserted.

Indeed it is not to be asserted that “The Buddha exists while remaining [in this world],” nor “does not exist” nor “both exists and does not exist,” nor “neither exists nor does not

exist”—none of these is to be asserted.

There is no distinction whatsoever between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. There is no distinction whatsoever between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra.'

(Madhyamakasastra, 25.17-19, from Nagarjuna's Middle Way)

'There is not anywhere anything

That ever exists without depending.

Thus never is there anywhere

Anything that is permanent.

There is no functional thing without a cause,

Nor anything permanent which has a cause.

Thus the one who knows suchness said what has

Come about causelessly does not exist.

If the unproduced is permanent

Because impermanent [things] are seen to be products,

Seeing that the produced exists

Would make the permanent non-existent.'

(Catuhsataka, v 202-204, from Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way)

"All phenomena" refers to the eighteen constituents, the six types of contact,

The six feelings that arise from contact,

Physical phenomena, nonphysical phenomena,

And conditioned and unconditioned phenomena.

All of these phenomena are void of their own entity.

This emptiness is the emptiness of all phenomena.'

(Madhyamakavatara 6.200-201ab, from The Karmapa's Middle Way: Feast for the Fortunate)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 22nd, 2023 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: The Humanities

Content:

Astus wrote:

Might be different in the US, but to give a well rounded education was/is the purpose of secondary/high school (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnasium_%28school%29).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 23rd, 2023 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

KeithA said:

If one wants to know what Kwan Um style teaching style is like, this it.

Astus wrote:

The "don't know mind" is something to learn and master in order to know the truth. Thus

one is required/invited to know instead of not knowing. Very tricky.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 23rd, 2023 at 3:03 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

clayde said:

One doesn't learn "Don't Know Mind", one unlearns so that DKM may appear.

Astus wrote:

One first has to learn the term DKM, hear it in the proper context and from a source one trusts, otherwise it's quickly forgotten. Then one has to invest more time and effort to comprehend the meaning of the term, plus gain further knowledge about what to do in order to apply it.

clayde said:

And one certainly doesn't master DKM, DKM has no master.

Astus wrote:

Is simply hearing about DKM, knowing the expression, and perhaps understanding it in the right way enough, or should one make use of it in one's life? If one should, then there is practice and there is proficiency, i.e. mastering it.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 23rd, 2023 at 3:13 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

KeithA said:

Learn and master what, exactly?

Astus wrote:

First the words, then the meaning, and then its application/usage.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 23rd, 2023 at 4:42 PM

Title: Re: Indian history of "Sudden Enlightenment" found in Chan/Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

We have, for example, a text attributed to Vimalamitra on a nongradual approach, the The Meaning of the Sudden Entrants Nonconceptual Cultivation [cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtoḡ pa'i bsgom don], is preserved in the Tenjur. Does this really represent an Indian sutra-based simultaneous entry? Hard to say.

Astus wrote:

On that text:

https://www.academia.edu/23331168/The_Sudden_and_Gradual_S%C5%ABtric_and_Tantric_Approaches_in_the_Rim_gyis_jug_pa_and_Cig_car_jug_pa by Joel Gruber.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2023 at 3:04 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

clayde said:

Learning the term and comprehending the meaning of the term are not necessary and are not DKM. And one doesn't apply DKM; it's not a technique or tool to be applied, nor a skill to be mastered.

Astus wrote:

So the teachings on DKM are pointless, and there is no way to attain it either. Why then even mention it?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2023 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

The conceptual mind can't see past itself.

Astus wrote:

That there is anything past it, sounds like a concept.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2023 at 3:15 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

clayde said:

No, I didn't say that the teachings are pointless; in fact, the teaching of DKM (or Buddha-nature, and Zen teachings in general) are well regarded as pointers.

Astus wrote:

If so, then learning and comprehending are necessary, so is the application of the teachings.

clayde said:

Yes, DKM (or Buddha-nature) is unattainable - because we already are it.

Astus wrote:

There is a distinction between the hidden and the revealed buddha-nature, so there is a

path to purify the mind and attain awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2023 at 2:27 AM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

clyde said:

Dear Astus, My response is found in your signature.

Astus wrote:

That begins with investigating the nature of mind, and then gaining genuine insight. How do you connect it to the DKM?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2023 at 5:48 AM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

I didn't say anything about what is past it.

Astus wrote:

If there is nothing beyond the conceptual mind, why should it see past itself?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2023 at 5:59 AM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

clyde said:

Yes, purify and attain, investigate and gain, but . . .

Astus wrote:

Why "but..."? It's rather "then..." That is, once one has purified the mind and attained awakening, then there is no cultivation and nothing to gain. In other words, although both oneself and all things are already empty and without anything to grasp, that has to become an actual realisation in order to be free from self-centredness and clinging.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 25th, 2023 at 5:34 PM

Title: Re: In Madhyamaka is everything empty, without exception? Or is there something that exists?

Content:

Dgj said:

So, the Shentong position is in clear, undeniable contradiction of Nagarjuna, it sounds

like, no?

Astus wrote:

Seems so, yes.

'The Jonangpas assert that the nature of all phenomena, the ultimate truth, is permanent and stable, and is not empty of its own entity. Their position is well refuted here, using the teaching that the empty nature of all phenomena is empty of its own nature.'

(The Karmapa's Middle Way: Feast for the Fortunate, p 471-472)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 10th, 2023 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Awareness: singular, or composite?

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Hearing the word "buddha-nature," many students have misunderstood it to be like the "self" described by the non-Buddhist Senika. This is because they do not meet people, they do not meet themselves, and they do not meet with a teacher. They vacantly consider mind, will, or consciousness — which is the movement of wind and fire — to be the buddha-nature's enlightened knowing and enlightened understanding.'

(Bussho, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 5)

'Silly man, who on earth have you ever known me to teach in that way? Haven't I said in many ways that consciousness is dependently originated, since consciousness does not arise without a cause?'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

'But an unlearned ordinary person would be better off taking this body made up of the four primary elements to be their self, rather than the mind. Why is that? This body made up of the four primary elements is seen to last for a year, or for two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred years, or even longer. But that which is called 'mind' or 'sentience' or 'consciousness' arises as one thing and ceases as another all day and all night. It's like a monkey moving through the forest. It grabs hold of one branch, lets it go, and grabs another; then it lets that go and grabs yet another.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.61/en/sujato>)

'Great king, no phenomenon whatsoever transmigrates from this world to another world, yet there are the manifestations of death and birth.

Great king, the cessation of the final consciousness is known as death. The arising of the first consciousness is known as birth. Great king, the moment the final consciousness ceases, it does not go anywhere. The moment the first consciousness pertaining to birth arises, it also does not come from anywhere. Why is that? It is because they are devoid of essential nature.'

(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh226.html#UT22084-063-007-73>)

'The view expressed now is absolutely not the Buddha's Dharma; it is the view of the non-Buddhist Senika. According to that non-Buddhist view, there is one spiritual intelligence existing within our body. When this intelligence meets conditions, it can discriminate between pleasant and unpleasant and discriminate between right and wrong, and it can know pain and irritation and know suffering and pleasure—all [these] are abilities of the spiritual intelligence. When this body dies, however, the spirit casts off the skin and is reborn on the other side; so even though it seems to die here it lives on there. Therefore we call it immortal and eternal. The view of that non-Buddhist is like this. But if we learn this view as the Buddha's Dharma, we are even more foolish than the person who grasps a tile or a pebble thinking it to be a golden treasure; the delusion would be too shameful for comparison.'

(Bendowa, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 11th, 2023 at 2:39 PM

Title: Re: Awareness: singular, or composite?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

And if the mind is dependently arisen, how can it be that which is realized upon awakening?

Astus wrote:

It might be good to recall that mind means the six types of experience: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, thought. It's not some abstract thing but immediately observable.

It is its dependent nature that is realised. The mind is believed to be one's self and thus it's the basis of grasping. When seen as merely the product of conditions without essence, then there's nothing left to cling to.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 13th, 2023 at 2:10 PM

Title: Re: Awareness: singular, or composite?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's like saying "the true nature of fire is always that it will be hot. This fact doesn't change. That which does not change is permanent".

Astus wrote:

In brief that's what svabhava and svalaksana mean. Emptiness can be called nihsvabhava.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 15th, 2023 at 8:15 PM

Title: Re: Samyaksamadhi vs Samyaksambodhi

Content:

Abhijñāñānābhibhu said:

In the Eightfold Noble Path, why did the Buddha teach the eighth limb as right samadhi (samyaksamadhi), and not right enlightenment (samyaksambodhi)? Isn't enlightenment the goal and summit of the path? What then is the relationship between samyaksamadhi, or right meditation, and samyaksambodhi? Is samyaksamadhi a kind of synonym of samyaksambodhi?

Astus wrote:

The N8P has its parts working together, not in sequential order. For the result, there are two more: right knowledge and right liberation. Those are possessed by arhats. See: MN 117.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 17th, 2023 at 6:06 PM

Title: Buddhist and non-Buddhist Ethics in MPPS

Content:

Astus wrote:

Furthermore, there are sūtras of the heretics that allow killing (prāṇātipāta), theft (adattādāna), sexual misconduct (kāmaṁithyācāra), lying (mṛṣāvāda) and the use of wine.

They say:

- 1) In sacrifices to the gods (devayajña), killing is not wrong because it is the practice of religion; if one is in difficulties, it is not wrong to kill an ordinary person to save one's life, for in difficulties, it is to follow the right path.
- 2) Except for gold, it is permitted to steal in order to save one's life. Later, the heretics will suppress this residue of fault.
- 3) Except for the consort of one's teacher (guru), the wife of the king, the wife or daughter of a spiritual friend (kalyāṇamitra), it is permitted to violate other women and to have sex with them.
- 4) It is permitted to lie in the interest of one's teacher, one's parents, one's own life, one's cattle, or in the rôle of a middleman.
- 5) When it is cold, it is permitted to drink liquor made from crystallized honey and, in the sacrifices to the gods, it is permitted to take one or two drops of wine.

In the Buddha's Dharma, this is not permitted.

- 1) Out of loving-kindness (maitrīcitta) and equanimity (samacitta) towards all beings, it is forbidden to take the life of even an ant, the more so a man.
- 2) It is forbidden to take a needle (sūci) and thread (tantu), even more so, a valuable object.
- 3) It is forbidden to touch a courtesan (veśya), the more so another man's wife (parakalatra).
- 4) It is forbidden to lie as a jest, the more so to make a (real) lie.
- 5) It is forbidden to drink any wine at any time, the more so when it is cold and during sacrifices to the gods.

The distance between the heretics and the Buddha's Dharma is like the distance between heaven and earth. The law of the heretics is a generating source for passions (kleśamautthāpaka); the Buddha's Dharma is the place of destruction of all the passions: this is the great difference.

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225457.html>; Ven. Dharmamitra's translation http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-15.pdf on p 10-11; https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T25n1509_p0192a08)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 21st, 2023 at 3:42 PM

Title: Re: The Four Stages of Awakening in Vajrayana Buddhism

Content:

dpcalder said:

Does Vajrayana Buddhism have an equivalent concept?

Astus wrote:

The <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidharmakośa> is the primary source in Tibetan Buddhism of all kinds of topics related to the hearer's vehicle, and it covers the four attainments in chapter 6. It is somewhat different from the Theravada interpretation.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 23rd, 2023 at 6:13 AM

Title: Re: Drikung mahamudra books

Content:

ZopaChotso said:

Can anyone recommend a good book on Mahamudra from the Drikung tradition?

Astus wrote:

https://www.drikung.org/storage/2022/02/Mahamudra_Teachings_by_Garchen_Rinpochhe.pdf

<https://pktc.org/books/gampopas-mahamudra/>

<https://www.shambhala.com/garland-of-mahamudra-practices.html>

<https://www.namsebangdzo.com/Introduction-to-Mahamudra-p/5748.htm>

ZopaChotso said:

Has anyone read the Chetsang's book "The Practice of Mahamudra", if so, is it a good book?

Astus wrote:

Yes.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 27th, 2023 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Korean style Medicine Buddha Mantra chanting

Content:

KeithA said:

Sino-Korean version of the Diamond Sutra

Astus wrote:

Like http://www.buljahome.com/amsong_dia/song_file.htm? Or

http://www.buljahome.com/amsong_dia/1_nfile.htm?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 3rd, 2023 at 8:22 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

Yes, it is part of the nature of the mind, in other words, wherever there is mind, there is clarity, just as there is emptiness. Both clarity and emptiness are uncompounded in the sense that they are invariable characteristics of any given mind. You cannot remove the clarity of the mind anymore than you can remove its emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Why single out mind to be anything other than empty? Earth has the nature of solidity, etc. up to all the many dharmas.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 4th, 2023 at 12:01 AM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Do you mean "element" earth or the planet Earth?

Astus wrote:

The element.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 5th, 2023 at 3:55 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

Mind is not only empty. But that is a common sutra attitude.

Astus wrote:

All things have their unique attributes, and categories of things have their shared qualities that make them different from other categories. So why say that only the category of mind is special?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 6th, 2023 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

It's only by knowing the nature of the mind liberation is attained. If one claims the nature of mind is only emptiness, this is insufficient. But we are going off topic.

Astus wrote:

If the unique qualities of an instance of consciousness is held to be uncompounded, the same can be applied to all dharmas. How is that any different from denying the emptiness of dharmas? Or even affirming a sort of ultimate awareness/self.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 at 3:44 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Abhijñāñānābhibhu said:

it is also innately endowed with all the qualities of Buddhahood/Buddha-nature

Astus wrote:

That's standard buddha-nature doctrine to encourage everyone to buddhahood, etc.

Abhijñāñānābhibhu said:

The ultimate bodhicitta or buddha-nature can be uncompounded, but still contain all the infinite marvelous qualities of all the Tathagatas.

Astus wrote:

Uncompounded means it's without arising and ceasing, so it's incapable to perform any function (unlike buddha-nature). Aryadeva says:

'All are produced for their effect,
Thus none are permanent.
There are no Tathagatas other than
Subduers [who cognize] things as they are.
There is not anywhere anything
That ever exists without depending.
Thus never is there anywhere
Anything that is permanent.
There is no functional thing without a cause,

Nor anything permanent which has a cause.
Thus the one who knows suchness said what has
Come about causelessly does not exist.
If the unproduced is permanent
Because impermanent [things] are seen to be products,
Seeing that the produced exists
Would make the permanent non-existent.'
(Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way, 9.201-204)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 at 3:52 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

Things other than minds have no possibility of liberation.

Astus wrote:

Do you imply that it's a practical teaching without much consideration of a bigger (theoretical) picture? Or
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=657768#p657768> to your previous response was missed?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

Minds also are conscious, but that consciousness is not fabricated by someone or something. Minds cannot be reduced in such a way as to exclude consciousness, consciousness is an irreducible fact of minds. Unlike inanimate phenomena, minds possesses two irreducible qualities, consciousness and emptiness.

Astus wrote:

Minds are defined by being cognizant (vijñānaṃ prativijñaptiḥ - Kośa 1.16; MPPS XXX.4.1.5), by knowing an object (ālambanaṃbijñaptiḥ - Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa 112; cf. Kośa 1.34), and they always arise not simply based on conditions but also with concomitants (caitta - Kośa 2.23-24). Hence the issue with saying that somehow the quality of cognizance/consciousness is independent of conditions seems contrary to what's generally taught about the mind. As Śāntideva points out (Bodhicaryāvatāra 9.60), consciousness without an object makes no sense. Also, the MPPS, when discussing the emptiness of all dharmas
(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc226211.html>), covers also the defining characteristic of mind as cognizant.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 10th, 2023 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

Malcolm said:

If there is no object for it, does a consciousness cease and become nonexistent? If this is the case, how does someone arise from a samadhi of cessation?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is when it is conscious of something. Not being conscious of something is simply no consciousness. So to say that consciousness somehow can cease to be conscious of something and then stop existing is not an option, like saying that first the light of a candle ceases to be bright and then ceases to be light.

As for arising from a samadhi of cessation and other similar examples used by some to propose a theory of an unbroken stream of consciousness, even those theories maintain momentariness and the need for an object. So no matter what, consciousness stays no longer than a moment and never without something to be conscious of.

Malcolm said:

More to the point, if consciousness must always have an object, how can one practice prajñāpāramitā?

Astus wrote:

By not perpetuating the attachment to consciousness or any other phenomenon.

Malcolm said:

Candra points out in his MAV autocommentary, "Yogis do not perceive all aspects, when those are not perceived, that which is appropriated by the eye, and so on, and so on does not occur. In this way, yogis do not perceive an intrinsic nature in any entities, and therefore, they are liberated from samsara."

Astus wrote:

That's about ending the misconceptions of self and belonging to a self, as in MMK 18.4 that the autocommentary quotes.

Malcolm said:

If consciousness must always have an object, such a nonperception would be impossible, and therefore, liberation also would be impossible, and one must accept the consequence that liberation involves consciousness becoming a nonexistent, and therefore, one's view is necessarily annihilationist, like that of sautrantikas.

Astus wrote:

It can be said that recognising that the door key is not in one's pocket is an instance of nonperception, but that's actually a deduction, a conceptual inference. In the case of inherent existence, once its mistaken assumption is removed, there is simply no generation of the idea of a self. So there is no need for a consciousness without object.

"'But there couldn't be any seeing of such a nature, could there? So how do they then see?' Though that is true, it is said that, 'It's by not seeing it that they see.'"
(<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1113&mid=1927236>)

'It is said in the very profound sūtras that the state of nonseeing is seeing [ultimate reality]. In that (ultimate reality), there is neither seeing nor seer, but peace without beginning or end.'
(Entry to the Two Realities, v 7, in Jewels of the Middle Way, p 119)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, March 10th, 2023 at 5:25 PM

Title: Re: Skandha question

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

As the Buddha purportedly brings up in the Surangama Sutra, if you cover your eyes so that you can't see anything, how do you know that you can't see anything? You know because the 'eye consciousness' doesn't cease simply because there is no object to see.

Astus wrote:

That's only one half of the reasoning presented in the sutra, but if one takes only that much from it, that would not "differ from the 'truth of the unmanifested nature' as taught by the Brahmin Kapila, or from the 'true self' as taught by the ascetics who smear ashes on themselves, or by others who are not on the right path" (2.9, p 72). So the conclusion drawn is that "Statements that account for its existence cannot be negated, yet one cannot say that they cannot be negated. Such statements cannot be affirmed, yet one cannot say that they cannot be affirmed. What is entirely beyond all defining attributes — that is the entirety of Dharma." (p 74)

From Ven. Sheng-yen's commentary:

'You must try to not cling to either extreme and to let go of the center, as well – this is Madhyamika, the middle way. Could this be the way to find true self?

If you continue to hold on to a concept such as a true self, or an idea of something that pervades through all space and time, then you are holding on to an attachment.

Buddhadharma does not speak of true self; it speaks only of causes and conditions.

You might ask if causes and conditions are the true Dharma, the true way. No, these are only concepts, expedient ways of explaining things.'

(<https://chancenter.org/download/free-books/Until-We-Reach-Buddhahood-Vol-I-Book.pdf>, p 123)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 13th, 2023 at 3:31 PM

Title: Re: Identifying the object of negation in meditation

Content:

Astus wrote:

“What is this grasping at self?” enquired Drom.

“This is something that wants all positive qualities for oneself alone and wants others alone to take on all misfortunes.”

“Then please explain this in such a manner so you can say ‘This is selfgrasping,’” asked Drom.

Atiśa replied: “Where would one find something of which it could be said that ‘This is the reified self-grasping?’”

“In that case, please explain to me how it is that [this self-grasping] wants everything and transfers [all] blames onto others.”

Atiśa replied, “Upāsaka, why even ask me? This is pervasive in sentient beings. You know this, so what need is there to ask? Even so, I have also seen attachment and aversion labeled as self-grasping.”

“Atiśa, there are people who possess such forms of grasping?”

“Where do they exist?” responded Atiśa.

“They are [within] our own mental continuum,” replied [Drom].

“Upāsaka, what is one’s own mental continuum?”

“It is that which wants everything and grasps [at it all] replied Drom.

Atiśa: “I, too, would say the same.”

(The Jewel Garland of Dialogues, ch 6, in The Book of Kadam, p 121-122)

Consider, for example, that someone accuses you of having committed an offense which you did not do. When you are accused of this, you say, “I didn’t do that.” With this accusation, because thinking “I” rises from deep in the center of your heart, this clarifies how we perceive the “I” which is innate self-grasping.

(<http://theguildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Quick-Path-English-Mnyur-Lam-by-Panchen-Blobzang-Yeshes-Quick-Path-Tr.-Lozang-Jamspal-TCTG.pdf>, p 141-142)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, March 28th, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Title: Re: Cessation of sensory experiences as the state of Prajnaparamita

Content:

Astus wrote:

“Master Gotama, it’s when the eye sees no sight and the ear hears no sound. That’s how Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the development of the faculties.”

“In that case, Uttara, a blind person and a deaf person will have developed faculties according to what Pārāsariya says. For a blind person sees no sight with the eye and a deaf person hears no sound with the ear.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn152/en/sujato>)

“Suppose there was a black ox and a white ox yoked by a single harness or yoke. Would it be right to say that the black ox is the yoke of the white ox, or the white ox is the yoke of the black ox?”

“No, reverend. The black ox is not the yoke of the white ox, nor is the white ox the yoke of the black ox. The yoke there is the single harness or yoke that they’re yoked by.”

“In the same way, the eye is not the fetter of sights, nor are sights the fetter of the eye.

The fetter there is the desire and greed that arises from the pair of them. The ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is not the fetter of thoughts, nor are thoughts the fetter of the mind. The fetter there is the desire and greed that arises from the pair of them.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.232/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 3rd, 2023 at 3:00 PM

Title: Re: Which best describes Buddhism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Buddhism is polytheist, since there are many gods and heavens, like the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Heavenly_Kings, the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C4%81yastri%E1%B9%83%C5%9Ba>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tushita>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y%C4%81ma>, etc.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 2023 at 4:30 AM

Title: Re: Does East Asian Buddhism have a concept of Arahant/Arhat

Content:

dpcalder said:

I specifically have in mind Chan and Zen Buddhism. Do they recognize the existence of humans who have totally and irreversibly eradicated all karmic reactivity?

Astus wrote:

Arhats are actually quite popular in East Asian Buddhism. See for instance https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji_Gong, who is believed to be one of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eighteen_Arhats.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 6th, 2023 at 7:49 PM

Title: Re: Does East Asian Buddhism have a concept of Arahant/Arhat

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

The Eighteen Arhats seem to be a closed group (no more to be added) and more like minor deities than advanced disciples. The Theravadins seem to see becoming an Arhat as an achievement open to anyone, any time - theoretically at least.

Astus wrote:

The system of the https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_realms show well that arhats are above all samsaric beings. It is recognised as a significant attainment, but there's more to go.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 10th, 2023 at 8:30 PM

Title: Re: Stressed and discouraged by the suttas

Content:

anagarika said:

I don't dispute the validity of many of the above statements, but they have to be put in a meaningful and broader context. Taken at face value and in isolation, I believe, is a recipe for disaster.

Astus wrote:

Those are all quite basic teachings very much present in Mahayana as well (see e.g. https://books.google.hu/books/about/Four_Illusions.html?id=9pyqUV89ZQcC by Candrakirti, or the teachings on <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/topics/parting-from-four-attachments/>). The issue rather seems to be with wishing for the happy results but seeing oneself inadequate to achieve it. That might be a case of 'renunciate sadness' (<https://suttacentral.net/mn137/en/sujato>) that turned into restlessness (uddhacca), one of the basic hindrances that can come from trying too hard (<https://suttacentral.net/an3.102/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 14th, 2023 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: The body and mind of the Buddha is non-dual

Content:

Malcolm said:

there is disagreement on this point from both the Theravada school as well as Dzogchen teachings.

Astus wrote:

Not in Theravada. See: <https://suttacentral.net/kv8.8/en/aung-rhysdavid>s. The commentary (The Debates Commentary, p 136) identifies those who believed that there was matter in the immaterial realm as the Andhakas, i.e. the <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caitika> s.

Also: 'In the sense planes, twenty-eight material phenomena are found; in the fine-material planes, twenty-three; among the non-perceivers, seventeen; but none in the immaterial plane.' (A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p 258)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, April 21st, 2023 at 4:24 AM

Title: Re: Tiantai and Nichiren Buddhism and their views of the Madhyamaka and Yogachara schools of Buddhism

Content:

Vert said:

In Great Concentration and Insight Zhiyi writes the following:

“Vasubandhu and Nāgārjuna clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they employed the provisional Mahayana teachings, which were

suited to the times.”

Astus wrote:

That's not exactly what Zhiyi wrote.

The original:

天親龍樹內鑒冷然。外適時宜各權所據。

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T46n1911_p0055a21)

Translation by Paul L. Swanson (Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight, vol 2, p 830):

'Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna internally had insight and were enlightened, and externally each responded appropriately to the needs of their times on the basis of tentative means.'

And that is the proper way to explain the Dharma, as it becomes clear in the sentences following the above one:

'However, some [Buddhist] teachers have a one-sided understanding, and some scholars are carelessly attached [to their own limited interpretation], so that they [argue and fight uselessly,] like shooting arrows at a rock. They each maintain one extreme, and thus pervert the noble path. If you obtain this meaning, then you comprehend both the impossibility of verbal expression and the necessity of verbal expression.'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 30th, 2023 at 2:57 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

cookies said:

Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Astus wrote:

Very much a religion, as it has a number of fundamental doctrines given in a set of canonised scriptures, and various ideas about supernatural forces and phenomena are required to be accepted as true.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 12:31 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

1. Please define “true” in this context.
2. Please give examples of ‘required’ phenomena.

Astus wrote:

1. True, as in being of consequence, having an effect.

2. Rebirth, karma, six realms, buddhas, bodhisattvas - just to mention the basics. Things like repentance, transference of merit, magical powers, dharanis, mantras might also be mentioned as common Buddhist things.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 1:32 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

The validity of Rebirth can be deduced using logical inference.

Astus wrote:

It starts with belief in something immaterial, and the existence of anything beyond matter cannot be proven objectively.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddhism doesn't require belief in any Buddhas, merely in the teachings of Gautama Buddha which lead one away from dukkha.

Astus wrote:

If one accepts Mahayana, then the existence of other currently living buddhas is taught by Shakyamuni Buddha.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The "magical stuff" is there but not required.

Astus wrote:

It is taught by the Buddha, and it's even in his standard awakening story as recalling his past lives and seeing the rebirth of all beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Awareness is both immaterial and self-evident. It doesn't require objective validation yet is undeniable.

Astus wrote:

If an immaterial awareness were self-evident, it couldn't be questioned. Anything immaterial is clearly denied by all sorts of materialist views.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Although this forum is Mahayana, the opening question doesn't limit the answer to the Mahayana context.

Astus wrote:

Almost the same amount of supernatural is found in Theravada, so it doesn't really make a difference.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Even though the Buddha spoke of things we cannot observe in this lifetime, he also said not to just hff we lived something you cannot test for yourself merely because someone said it's true.

Astus wrote:

That's a dubious and debatable interpretation. No common human can test if the Buddha was a buddha, but accepting that is a necessary starting point in being a Buddhist.

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's in the believing of things which one cannot verify for oneself that makes one's approach to Buddhism a religious one rather than a philosophical one.

Astus wrote:

There's not much that can be verified for oneself in Buddhism, especially at the beginning, so it is necessarily a religious approach one must have. An even more crucial difference is that while in philosophy one may argue this way and that way, in Buddhism either one's view matches with the teachings or one is wrong.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 1:17 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Well, maybe that's been your experience, and I respect that. But that doesn't mean that the fiid of 'faith' has been everyone's entry into the dharma. If it is, then Buddhism is one's religion, and if not, then Buddhism is one's philosophy.

Astus wrote:

Can one be a Buddhist without accepting that the Buddha was a buddha? If not, then either one believes so without verifying it, or one has some sort of supernatural power to be able to see the mind of someone who has been dead for thousands of years.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But is one a Buddha because he reveals the dharma or does one reveal the dharma because he is a Buddha?

Astus wrote:

A buddha has

https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eighteen_unshared_qualities_of_a_buddha.

PadmaVonSamba said:

And what does 'questioning awareness' even mean? Awareness is an irrefutable fact.

Astus wrote:

If it were self-evident, its existence wouldn't be questioned by anyone. Also, if one argues by merely claiming something to be self-evident, it only means the absence of analysis, reason, and proof, thus no different from unfounded faith.

PadmaVonSamba said:

And awareness is also not material.

Astus wrote:

How can you tell? Is it not aware of material things? If it is, then it cannot be of an entirely separate nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 6:47 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Without awareness, how can you even suppose that?

Astus wrote:

The contended point if it's immaterial, and that is not self-evident.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 9:56 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But following the Dharma path to freedom from samsara doesn't require believing any of that. It doesn't even require that what has been preserved as the Buddha's words were ever spoken by the Buddha.

Astus wrote:

Are you aware of any Buddhist tradition that teaches such a reduced view? Also, to say that there is such a thing as samsara is already a matter of faith and not something verified.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If they didn't work, if the teachings said that liberation is attained by suicide or eating sand or whatever, faith in Buddhism would have died out a long time ago.

Astus wrote:

Such an argument could be made for any religion, custom, superstition, and whatnot.

PadmaVonSamba said:

When people imagine Buddha the way Christians imagine God, then it's a religion.

Astus wrote:

In that case Mahayana is necessarily a religion, as buddhas create buddha-realms.

PadmaVonSamba said:

When people conceive of Buddha as the teacher of the true way, then it's a philosophy.

Astus wrote:

That would still qualify it to be a religion, as in philosophy there is no single teacher giving the true way.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But if awareness were a product of physical matter, that wouldn't mean much. Physical matter is still an object of awareness. A flute is a device for causing air molecules to vibrate against the ear drum. But music is an interpretation in the mind, of the electrical impulses in the brain caused by those vibrations. That interpretation is observed by awareness.

Astus wrote:

That doesn't answer the problem that because physical things are matter, what can interact with them has to be of the same nature, therefore awareness is matter.

PadmaVonSamba said:

How can one question the existence of awareness without the awareness that one is questioning?

Astus wrote:

The problematic point is to say that awareness is immaterial, thus it could serve as a basis for rebirth. See

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=663451#p663451> that originated this topic.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, May 1st, 2023 at 11:48 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

The nature of samsara is suffering. Suffering isn't made up, and everyone experiences it. Therefore, "samsara" is not a matter of faith.

Astus wrote:

Samsara as the rounds of births in the six realms is, without the divine eye.

Malcolm said:

The essence of Mahāyāna is not creating buddhafiels. The essence of Mahāyāna is compassion

Astus wrote:

As great compassion with the final aim to become a buddha includes the creation of a buddha field.

Malcolm said:

Which is also the case in Buddhism as a whole.

Astus wrote:

But no teaching is proven correct just by having followers beyond a few centuries.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Samsara does not necessarily entail rebirth, however. It can just be birth, jati.

Astus wrote:

The word samsara literally means moving on, from one place to another. Still, even by saying that samsara happens on a momentary basis, the many lives version is also a standard one everywhere.

Malcolm said:

Mahāyāna does not need to included this, it is ancillary, especially considering that no one actually attains buddhahood in a created buddhafiels.

Astus wrote:

What makes it the bodhisattvayana if one removes the basic idea that the path is a matter of innumerable lifetimes, just as working on liberating all beings is more than a single life's achievement? Then many of the mahayana sutras (including popular ones like the Amitabha Sutra, Medicine Buddha Sutra, Ksitigarbha Sutra, Lotus Sutra) are not much more than bad fiction.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023 at 5:15 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

And? It is not necessary to believe in rebirth to practice Dharma:

Astus wrote:

Sure, one can practise some elements (the <https://suttacentral.net/mn60/en/sujato> is a nice one on it, while at the same time note how the <https://suttacentral.net/mn76/en/sujato> calls annihilationism an approach that negates spiritual life), but that's not the issue. For Buddhism to be excluded from the category of religion, there would have to be some version of it where the unverifiable elements do not exist.

Malcolm said:

Certainly the Buddha taught rebirth, but he did not expect people to necessarily accept it.

Astus wrote:

It is repeatedly called wrong view, the opposite of right view, that <https://suttacentral.net/mn114/en/sujato?layout=plain&reference=none¬es=none&highlight=false&script=latin#10.1>. So, it is expected, as much as having right view is expected.

Malcolm said:

Without compassion, there are no bodhisattvas at all, which is why Candrakīrti prostrates to compassion, rather than the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or even bodhicitta. So let's begin with that.

Astus wrote:

Compassion is not limited to Mahayana, or to Buddhism. So that would be an insufficient criteria to label one's view/practice/philosophy something specific.

Malcolm said:

The fact is that all Buddhāśāśa can be approached as a religion, as philosophy, or as both.

Astus wrote:

'Indeed, Buddhism can be either a religion or a philosophy, or it can be neither. It may even be called a science, a psychology, a way of life, and so on. To apply any of these terms may be either right or wrong according to what we mean by such terms. In other words, it depends on the usage and implication of the term in question. In any event, it does not matter what we call Buddhism. What really matters is why Buddhism is called so, i.e. what is meant by Buddhism.'

(Some Basic Concepts of Buddhism by Phra Payutto, in

https://www.watnyanaves.net/uploads/File/books/pdf/vision_of_the_dhamma_a_collection_of_buddhist_writings_in_english.pdf, p 148)

Malcolm said:

In any case, there are many people who consider themselves Mahāyānis who nevertheless do not accept rebirth, particularly in your school.

Astus wrote:

I'm not trying to set up or prove some sort of barrier or criteria for who is or is not a real Buddhist. The point is simply that all Buddhist traditions accept a good number of supernatural elements as facts, so Buddhism is rightly called a religion.

'People interested in Chan practice often find it difficult to have religious faith. As faith is intrinsically emotional, and Chan practitioners emphasize personal cultivation to gain physical and mental benefits or the experience of Chan, they find it hard to accept religious faith. This is actually a great mistake.'

(<https://www.shengyen.org/freebook/pdf/E-9.pdf> by Ven. Sheng-yen, p 2)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023 at 5:33 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But by that criteria, only those who have taken a Bodhisattva vow are practicing Buddhists. Is that what you are saying?

Astus wrote:

No. Those who have taken the bodhisattva vows are the followers of the bodhisattva path. Not all Buddhists follow the bodhisattva path.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023 at 5:44 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Then philosophy is also religion, since in them all unverifiable elements exist.

Astus wrote:

The unverifiable elements were mentioned in reference to a <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=663457#p663457> that stated: 'It's in the believing of things which one cannot verify for oneself that makes one's approach to Buddhism a religious one rather than a philosophical one.'

One possible key difference between a religious and a philosophical approach is that in the former the source of and the authority over truth is in a set of doctrines, while in the latter it is systematic thinking (generally speaking).

Malcolm said:

Clearly Buddha understood he was living in a pluralistic society, otherwise, there would be no reason for his teaching the four solaces.

Astus wrote:

And so the distinction between the various levels of engaging in Buddhism has been

maintained in the traditions. The lowest of teachings/vehicles, that of gods and humans (e.g. Treatise on the Origin of Humanity, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 153-155; Gateway to Knowledge, vol 3, ch 15), is the teaching of moral behaviour, for what the fundamental belief in ethical causality is required.

'when an individual has wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal, or mental deeds they undertake in line with that view, their intentions, aims, wishes, and choices all lead to what is unlikable, undesirable, disagreeable, harmful, and suffering.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/an1.314/en/sujato>)

'a mendicant whose view and development of the path is pointing the wrong way cannot break ignorance, produce knowledge, and realize extinguishment.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.9/en/sujato>)

Apart from being a wrong view, it is also called the view of a bad person (<https://suttacentral.net/mn110/en/sujato>), a failure in view (<https://suttacentral.net/an3.117/en/sujato>), and a lost opportunity (<https://suttacentral.net/an8.29/en/sujato>). It is a view that comes from grasping at the aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn24.5/en/sujato>), and as such it is abandoned by those who enter the stream.

'Whoever One may be, especially if striving to perform one's religious duty, one should believe firmly in the law of causality. If one lacks this belief and does whatever one likes, not only will one fail in the performance of religious duty, but also there will be no escape from this law (of causality) even in the three unhappy ways.'
(<https://www.emptycloud.net/articles-2/chan-meditation-%E7%A6%85/the-chan-training/> / <https://www.hrfjw.com/fjrw/hcrw/xyfs/68094.html>)

'the prerequisites of all those who would enter upon the vehicle of [any spiritual] path are the three kinds of faith. When, among these, one is motivated mainly by the faith born of conviction in the results of past actions, [it is clear that] the attainment of virtuous actions by means of the four correct ways of progressing [on the path] will itself be preliminary to engaging in the vehicle of the exalted realms.'
(The Treasury of Knowledge, vol 4, p 422-423)

Malcolm said:

And yet, HHDL famously stated, "my religion is kindness."

Astus wrote:

If kindness alone qualifies as religion, then Buddhism is surely a religion. But most probably there's more to his religion than kindness.

Malcolm said:

As do all philosophies, and thus all philosophies are rightly called religions, and all religions are rightly called philosophies.

Astus wrote:

Not all philosophies accept the existence of something supernatural, as there are the various versions of materialism and physicalism.

Malcolm said:

So what do you think? Bodhisattva or not a Bodhisattva? Nishijima certainly recited the bodhisattva vow daily.

Astus wrote:

There are even atheist Christian ministers (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-14417362>), but that doesn't make Christianity in general not a religion.

Malcolm said:

So, can one take the bodhisattva vow and reject transmigration?

Astus wrote:

It is contradictory to do so, but it's always good to have the attitude of a bodhisattva.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023 at 6:43 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Aren't you are saying that faith in (let's call it) 'the 'unprovable stuff' is essential to practice Mahayana? But then you are saying that one doesn't have to believe in 'unprovable stuff' if one isn't on the Bodhisattva path? So doesn't mean that faith isn't required?

Astus wrote:

Mahayana begins with the intention to attain buddhahood to liberate all beings. At the time of aspiration there is no direct knowledge of what buddhahood is, nor of many other elements of the path needed to get there. Furthermore, unless one reduces the meaning of the terms like 'bodhisattva' and 'all beings', and does not take into account the Jatakas and other accounts of bodhisattvas, there are necessarily rebirth and other things involved.

As for faith in Buddhism in general, if one interprets it as a temporary method to alleviate some stress, then not much is needed apart from trusting in the outcome. But that seems to fall short of being a follower of the Triple Jewel.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Buddhism can be a philosophy, or a science, or a religion. It really depends on who you are and what your expectations are. For example, HHDL said, "Buddhism is more than a

religion. It is a science of the mind."

Astus wrote:

That's playing with labels, which is fine, since they stand for various ideas and feelings depending on the person who uses them. In the end what matters is to get clear on what Buddhism is about, as I quoted Phra Payutto's words on that
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=663589#p663589>.

The general concept of religion, when looked into, can be problematic. An example:

'The Ministry of Education published a new primer for teaching Buddhism in schools [Buddhadharmaya. Mul pota (Education Dept., Colombo, 1965).], intended for study by six-year-olds, no doubt the first book in a projected series. In the first paragraph of the introduction occurs the sentence, 'The Buddhist religion is not a religion' ('Buddhāgamaya āgamayek no vē'). This is immediately amplified: 'In the Buddhist religion there is no religion limited to offerings and devotions. The Buddhist religion is a way of life.' ('Puda pūjā, ādahilivalaṭa sīmā vū āgamayek Buddhāgamayē nāta. Buddhāgamaya jivana kramayeki.') Didactically this may be admirable, but the amplification was not enough to avert attention and wrath from the simple statement that Buddhism is not a religion, a statement which through the very exigencies of the Sinhalese language stands in a self-contradictory form! There was a political storm: the Marxists who were in the coalition government had obviously infiltrated the Ministry of Education; this was part of their campaign to abolish Buddhism. Some of those who started these charges may have been disingenuous, but the Sinhalese villagers who heard them may be forgiven if not only the six-year-olds were unable to grasp the sophisticated claim that their religion was no religion.'
(Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon by Richard F. Gombrich, Routledge, 1995, p 74)

Damien Keown tries to answer the question whether Buddhism is a religion or not by using a https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninian_Smart#Dimensions_of_religion created by Ninian Smart. Here is the conclusion:

'Once we begin to think of a religion as an organism with various dimensions, however, it becomes easier to see how Buddhism -- despite its unusual and distinctive features -- can take its place among the family of world religions. Returning to our original question, we can also see why it would be inadequate to define Buddhism simply as a philosophy, a way of life, or a code of ethics. It includes all of these things and sometimes seems to present itself predominantly in one of these modes. However, this depends largely on the perspective from which it is being viewed, and the extent to which some of its dimensions are being ignored. If someone wishes to see Buddhism as a rational philosophy free of religious superstition, then -- by focusing on the doctrinal and philosophical dimension -- it can be understood in this way. If another wishes to see it essentially as a quest for mystical experience, then -- by making the experiential dimension central -- that too is possible. Finally, someone who wishes to see Buddhism as a set of humanistic moral values will also find justification for that view by making the ethical and legal dimension primary.

I have mentioned these particular interpretations of Buddhism because they are ones which have proved popular with Westerners in the course of the last century. While not altogether illegitimate, they suffer from being incomplete, and typically represent a reaction of some kind to the perceived deficiencies of religion in the West. To focus on just one of the dimensions of Buddhism in this way is to make the same mistake as the blind men did in grasping hold of just one part of the elephant.'

(Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction, p 14-16)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 5:44 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But isn't that only because one is matching it up with what one already categorizes as "religion"?

And what are the components of that? Temples? Statues? Candles? Celestial beings?

Astus wrote:

Yes, Buddhism fits the category of religion because it looks like the other things that are called religions.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Yet is my birthday party a religious activity?

Astus wrote:

It could be a religious activity if the people participating in it viewed it as such and if it was a manifestation of a complex system of beliefs and practices. Think of the difference between Christmas being celebrated at home using mostly identical elements by a Christian and a non-Christian family.

PadmaVonSamba said:

My point is, it's not the activity of the structure itself which makes something a matter of religion.

Religion is faith, faith is believing something to be true without having any other reason to assume it is true.

Astus wrote:

Faith without activity, without structure, without community, etc. is not a religion but simply a personal belief. And if it's only activity without belief, then it's a custom. If it's just a structure without belief, then it's an organisation. If it's a community without the shared principles, then it's a group of friends. If it's just a set of ideas without personal engagement, then it's a thought. And so on.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 4:47 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

Malcolm said:

Speaking strictly for myself, Buddhadharma is not a religion, philosophy, or belief. It's direct knowledge of one's own state.

Astus wrote:

But that 'direct knowledge of one's own state' has a specific meaning to it, doesn't it? It could mean simply knowing when to eat and when to sleep. Like, mindful eating (<https://suttacentral.net/sn3.13/en/sujato>) and mindful sleeping (<https://suttacentral.net/an5.210/en/sujato>) are good and beneficial, but those have temporary results, they're not the goal.

“Reverend, the spiritual life is lived under the Buddha to know, see, attain, realize, and comprehend that which is unknown, unseen, unattained, unrealized, and uncomprehended.”

“But what is the unknown, unseen, unattained, unrealized, and uncomprehended?”

“‘This is suffering.’ ... ‘This is the origin of suffering.’ ... ‘This is the cessation of suffering.’ ... ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.’ ... This is the unknown, unseen, unattained, unrealized, and uncomprehended. The spiritual life is lived under the Buddha to know, see, attain, realize, and comprehend this.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/an9.13/en/sujato>)

That type of direct knowledge of the four noble truths has its purpose.

'Purification of knowledge and vision is only for the sake of extinguishment by not grasping. The spiritual life is lived under the Buddha for the sake of extinguishment by not grasping.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn24/en/sujato>)

Therefore,

'This spiritual life is lived for the sake of restraint, giving up, fading away, and cessation.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.25/en/sujato>; Iti 35)

'I taught the Dhamma to my disciples in order to rightly end suffering in every way.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.245/en/sujato>)

So when it comes to eating and sleeping, there's more to it than being aware of them, or even directly knowing.

'When hungry, eat;

Tired, sleep.

Fools laugh at me,

But the wise know its wisdom.'

(Enjoying the Way by Nanyue Mingzan, tr Jeff Shore)

That's not the same as ordinary people eating and sleeping. Huihai explained:

'While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do.'

(<https://ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

In the suttas:

'When solid food is completely understood, desire for the five kinds of sensual stimulation is completely understood. When desire for the five kinds of sensual stimulation is completely understood, a noble disciple is bound by no fetter that might return them again to this world.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.63/en/sujato>)

'A brahmin who is fully extinguished
always sleeps at ease.
Sensual pleasures slip off them,
they're cooled, free of attachments.
Since they've cut off all clinging,
and removed the stress from the heart,
the peaceful sleep at ease,
having found peace of mind.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.35/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/sn10.8/en/sujato>)

Both the temporary and the permanent peace of mind is beyond the worldly, rightly called transcendental.

'Withdrawn into the forest,
Alone, he wipes out his faults.
In calm and rest, he attains single-mindedness;
His happiness is greater than divine.
People seek wealth, nobility and profit,
Fame, garments and comfortable beds,
But their happiness is not peace:
The search for profit is insatiable.
He who wears the robes and begs his food
Does not know restlessness; his mind is always fixed.
With the eye of wisdom
He contemplates the True [nature] of dharmas.
Into all kinds of sermons
He penetrates with the view of sameness.
Wisdom and peace of mind
Have no equal in the threefold world.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225325.html>; and

http://kalavinka.org/Jewels/book_excerpts/N6P_excerpts/N6P_X-Bk4_X-07.pdf)

So, even if what are commonly seen as supernatural elements and 'all the ancillary stuff' are put aside, there are the absorptions and liberation, each to be recognised as 'a footprint of the Realized One' (<https://suttacentral.net/mn24/en/sujato>), beyond the scope of those occupied by mundane matters and conventional thoughts. These could even be called religious experiences.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 4:51 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, you're saying that Buddhism exists today as a something identified with, and labeled as, a religious structure, and is therefore a religion because two or more people think it is.

Astus wrote:

Of the various words the term religion covers the different aspects that are part of Buddhism. Calling it a philosophy does not account for many ordinary elements like stupas and prayers, nor for the different meditative practices.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 7:58 PM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

And various aspects of its teachings also make it a philosophy. I don't understand your insistence that it can't be both.

Astus wrote:

Philosophy in religion and religion in philosophy are somewhat different. The former means reasoning founded upon religious elements (revealed theology) or aimed at proving religious teachings (natural theology). The latter is thinking about religious ideas without being based on or arriving at a specific doctrine.

What makes something a Buddhist philosophy is that it may accept the Buddha's words as true from the beginning, and/or it is aimed at fulfilling the goal of Buddhism by guiding to teachings that are viewed as liberating. The second type is illustrated by the simile of the arrow (<https://suttacentral.net/mn63/en/sujato>), and that shows well why philosophising may actually seem contrary to Buddhism.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The Buddha offered logical arguments and methods of reasoning in his teachings. That's philosophy.

Astus wrote:

One may also find such arguments in the Bible and other religious texts as well.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But while its religious practices are not held by every follower of the Buddha's teachings, its philosophical components are.

Astus wrote:

How much philosophy is required to recite the name of Amitabha? Honen wrote:

'Reciting the nembutsu does not come from studying and understanding its meaning.'
(<http://www.jodo.org/teachings/teachings02.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 5th, 2023 at 4:40 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I'll grant you that. Shin Buddhism is totally faith based. But why is that? Because practically all other schools of Buddhism are philosophical, and Shin Buddhism is an alternative to that (because in this degenerating era, etc).

Astus wrote:

Maybe one could say that there are some schools that are more philosophical looking, like the Gelugpas and some branches of Theravada with a strong emphasis on Abhidhamma, but otherwise not so much. Pure Land and Chan are the two most common traditions in East Asia, and they're explicitly non-philosophical. The Thai Forest Tradition and other similar Theravada communities elsewhere are not too keen on theorising either. The Nyingmapas and Kagyupas, although they have their shedras, are otherwise quite practice oriented and uphold their meditative traditions as paramount. And then when looking at the majority of Buddhists, most of them lay people, their engagement with the Dharma is primarily about prayers, ceremonies, and donations.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Within the scope of Buddhist traditions in general, Shin and Nichiren can probably be regarded as the exceptions to the rule.

Astus wrote:

I don't really see that. Note: those two also run universities in Japan.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 5th, 2023 at 7:59 PM

Title: Re: Is zazen a form of open monitoring meditation?

Content:

dpcalder said:

As opposed to the focused attention meditation more often associated with Theravada Buddhism?

Astus wrote:

Zazen simply means seated meditation. What type of meditation happens while seated can vary. First of all, to make it a Buddhist meditation (sammāsamādhi - right immersion), other elements of the path have to be present as well.

'And what is noble right immersion with its vital conditions and its prerequisites? They are: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. Unification of mind with these seven factors as prerequisites is called noble right immersion with its vital conditions and also with its prerequisites.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn117/en/sujato>)

In case of the bodhisattva path it is similar
(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225915.html>), for meditation (dhyāna) to be a perfection (pāramitā) it requires the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā).

The Zen view on the connection between meditation (samādhi) and wisdom (prajñā) is that they are inseparable:

'Meditation and wisdom are of one essence, not different. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. At times of wisdom, meditation exists in that wisdom; at times of meditation, wisdom exists in that meditation.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 4, BDK ed, p 41-42)

And in the same chapter it is written:

'Good friends, there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these. These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings are greatly mistaken!'
(p 43)

The way it is put into practice has various names, one common label is nonthought/no-thought/non-thinking (wunian 無念). Again, from the Platform Sutra:

'Good friends, in wisdom's contemplation both interior and exterior are clearly penetrated, and one recognizes one's own fundamental mind. If you recognize your fundamental mind, this is the fundamental emancipation. And if you attain emancipation, this is the samādhi of prajñā, this is nonthought. What is nonthought? If in seeing all the dharmas, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses

to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the “six dusts”), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one’s penetrating function without stagnation. This is the samādhi of prajñā, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of nonthought.

If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view.

Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad dharmas to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood.'

(ch 2, p 33)

This was summarised by Guifeng Zongmi in the following words:

'When you are aware that all characteristics are void, it is true mind, no mindfulness (wunian 無念). If a thought arises, be aware of it; once you are aware of it, it will disappear. The excellent gate of practice lies here alone.'

(Chan Letter, in Zongmi on Chan, p 88;

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2015_p0403a04)

The main instruction is included in The Manual of Zazen Practice by Changlu Zongze:

'One must not delve into thoughts that arise, whether good or bad. As soon as a thought arises, he must become aware of it. He must always be aware of what arises in the sphere of consciousness without losing clear discrimination, and without becoming dull or scattered. A myriad of years is nothing but one moment of thought, which is neither discontinuous nor continuous. This is the essential Way (or method) of Zen practice. Zazen is in itself the doctrinal gateway of “comfort and ease.”'

(The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, BDK ed, p 256;

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2025_p1143a12)

And based on that Dogen wrote his zazen manual that says:

'Sitting in balance in the mountain-still state, think the concrete state of not thinking.

How can the state of not thinking be thought? It is non-thinking (hishiryō 非思量). This is the real secret of zazen. Sitting in zazen is not learning Zen meditation. It is the great peaceful and joyful gate of Dharma. It is untainted practice and experience.'

(Zazengi, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 3, p 226; [https://21dzk.l.u-](https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2018/T2582_.82.0217c08.html)

[tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2018/T2582_.82.0217c08.html](https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2018/T2582_.82.0217c08.html))

Whether it is called the perfection of meditation, no-thought, or non-thinking, the main point is that it is founded upon the insight of emptiness, that no matter what experience occurs, it cannot be grasped, and there is nobody to grasp it. So, 'open monitoring', just letting thoughts come and go, is insufficient without recognising that thoughts come and go anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 7th, 2023 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: Is zazen a form of open monitoring meditation?

Content:

Matylida said:

In fact one cannot find in any teachings such classification. It is Western product. Futile.

Astus wrote:

That Zen is the unification of concentration (定, samadhi) and wisdom (慧, prajna) is explained in the fourth chapter of the Platform Sutra, and by various later masters. As for Dogen, he wrote:

'in the state of clearly realizing the buddha-nature there is practice, which is the equal practice of balance and wisdom (定慧 - samadhi and prajna).'

(Bussho, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 24; https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2018/T2582_.82.0098c27.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 7th, 2023 at 5:54 PM

Title: Re: Is zazen a form of open monitoring meditation?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Since it is relatively common, can you point to a correct translation then?

Astus wrote:

'shikan taza. (C. zhiguan dazuo; K. chigwan t'ajwa 祇/只管打坐). In Japanese, "just sitting"; a style of meditation emblematic of the Japanese SŌTŌSHŪ of ZEN, in which the act of sitting itself is thought to be the manifestation of enlightenment.'
(The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, p 804-805)

The term zhiguan/shikan 只管 comes up a lot in the Blue Cliff Record for instance. The first two examples:

In case 3, tr Cleary:

'People mostly do not see Hsueh Tou's meaning, but only (只管) say that he is ridiculing the state.'

(T48, no. 2003, p. 143a21-22)

In case 4, tr Cleary:

'Look at how the old adept Kuei Shan meets him; he just (只管) sits there and observes the outcome.'

(T48, no. 2003, p. 144a5-6)

Also appears in the Book of Serenity (case 5), tr Cleary:
'Only (只管) concerned with village songs and festival drinking'
(T48, no. 2004, p. 230b14)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 10th, 2023 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Tao said:

how the Soto view can be maintained when post-kensho it's so obvious that meditation has changed so radically? (towards good) and you see your previous meditation as a poor intent.

Astus wrote:

Kensho is to arrive at the realisation of the nature of mind. Shikantaza is a practice with the realisation of the nature of mind. So it is to the level of shikantaza that one should arrive at post-kensho.

Tao said:

In Tibet first is the path of seeing, then the meditational path. Which agrees clearly with Rinzai view (and the experience of many).

Astus wrote:

That is the gradual path. However, the beginning is not the path of seeing but the path of accumulation, at least in the https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Five_paths system used in Tibet. In East Asian Buddhism the <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hant/%E4%BA%94%E5%8D%81%E4%BA%8C%E4%BD%8D> system is used, that begins with the 10 stages of faith, then 30 more stages before one arrives at stage 41 that is the first bhumi, what is equivalent to the path of seeing.

Tao said:

I always found the Soto view to be hard to maintain for persons who have realized the nature of mind. I don't know if I'm missing something... Because it's so obvious that there's a big change after kensho.

Astus wrote:

Maybe it is not the nature of mind that was found, or it is not the Soto view itself that seems off.

Tao said:

BTW how is Ch'an or Thien on this matter?

Astus wrote:

There is no unified or official Chan view (and I assume no central Thien view either). Generally speaking, since kanhua is the usual path, the approach is similar to Rinzai. That is, students most often need the tool of the huatou in order to break through the

discriminating mind and arrive at no-thought to be settled in buddha-nature.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, May 10th, 2023 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Tao said:

The impression I get is that there're two Zen, Dogen Zen and the rest.

Dogen Zen or Soto (but not Caodong) is very different, probably unique in buddhism.

Astus wrote:

I find Dogen's approach generally consistent with Zen before/without the investigation of the phrase (kanhua) method introduced by Dahui, something that Dogen directly opposed, unlike his near contemporary Jinul in Korea who eventually embraced it. But before Jinul championed the new trend, here's how he had explained Zen practice:

'Cultivators nowadays belong to the Buddha's spiritual family. They rely upon the direct-pointing (chikchi 直指) approach of the Sudden school, and, having developed firm faith and understanding, they straightaway comprehend that their own minds are perpetually calm and ever alert. Since they initiate their cultivation on such a foundation, even though they cultivate the manifold practices [of the bodhisattva], they only regard no-thought (munyŏm 無念) as their core and nonconstruction (mujak 無作, akṛtaka) as their basis. Because of this no-thought and nonconstruction, their practice is free from any temporal (sigŏp 時劫) or soteriological (chiwi 地位) sequences and also devoid of any sign of discrimination between dharmas and their aspects (dharmārtha). Since their cultivation is complete, approaches to dharma as numerous as dust motes and the meritorious qualities developed on all the bhūmis are also complete in the essence of their sublime minds, which is accordingly the same as a wish-fulfilling gem (cintāmaṇi).'

(Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 148-149)

Here the terms 'calm and alert' (寂惺) are equivalents of samādhi and prajñā (定慧), and also of 'silent illumination' (默照). Ven. Sheng-yen practically reintroduced the practice of silent illumination that has been out of fashion in Chan for centuries.

'Silent Illumination is another name for shamata-vipashyana, the meditative practice of stilling the mind and developing insight into its true nature. This practice originated in Indian Buddhism as early as the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. Traditionally, shamata-vipashyana was practiced sequentially. A practitioner progressed from shamata (stilling the mind) to vipashyana (insight, or illumination). The first stage was to practice shamata to achieve samadhi and then to practice vipashyana to achieve levels of insight. By contrast, in Chan Buddhism, which emphasizes the sudden approach to realization, shamata and vipashyana are practiced simultaneously.'

(The Method of No-Method, p 3)

'In silence there is illumination; in illumination there is silence—the two cannot be

separated. If separated, they are reduced to the practices of shamata to enter samadhi and vipashyana to gain insight.'

(p 63)

'It is empty of subject or object, devoid of one who engages in Silent Illumination; it is free from dualities and self-reference. Because it is empty, it is spacious; because it is spacious, it is all-encompassing; because it is all-encompassing, it includes myriad forms. Yet it is not a mere void. This function of illumination enlivens everything, bringing to light the myriad forms. Thus in the silence there is illumination; in silence the "empty" and the "luminous" are united. It illumines in self-purity says that there is also illumination in silence. This self-purity is free of coloring or defilement. This is not defilement in the moralistic sense, but means being free of self-attachment and vexation, free from external influences. Since there is no self, there is also no notion of one who illumines. Yet this illumination does exist in the mind of one who encounters it. Sentient beings who come across greatly enlightened practitioners perceive that they are being helped, but for the bodhisattva there is no purity nor is there an illuminated mind. It is just a spontaneous and natural way of being, and sentient beings deliver themselves in response. Beyond the workings of causes and conditions means transcending the cycle of birth and death, the world of dependent origination, of samsara. Apart from subject and object means to be without the obstructions of subject-object dualisms. This is a state of one who has gained liberation; for such a practitioner there are no more hindrances. He or she has consummated the practice of Silent Illumination. This is sudden enlightenment.'

(p 67)

'On the one hand we seize and halt this mind of clinging and vexations, and on the other hand we polish this mirror-mind to restore its luminosity. This is shamata-vipashyana, or stillness and contemplation done together—which is Silent Illumination. However much we can silence the mind and free it from vexation and clinging, to that extent we will be able to illumine it.'

(p 81)

And a short explanation from one of Ven. Sheng-yen's disciples:

"Silence" is the metaphor for the wisdom of emptiness. So are quiescence, formlessness, spaciousness, stillness. These are all Hongzhi's poetic terms for the Mahayana teaching of selflessness. "Illumination" refers to the wondrous activity of this selfless wisdom that, in Buddhism, is none other than compassion. Just as wisdom and compassion are inseparable, so are silence and illumination. They are simply two aspects of our natural awakened buddha-nature within.'

(Silent Illumination: A Chan Buddhist Path to Natural Awakening by Guo Gu, p 5)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 14th, 2023 at 5:05 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

Well, zen should be just one clear stream, as it was originally. The lineage should be secondary issue in fact.

Astus wrote:

Clear stream in what sense? Zen has been without any clearly defined doctrinal tenets or practical methods, and it's been primarily the idea of a special lineage that has kept it apart from the rest of the Buddhist community from the beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 14th, 2023 at 10:15 PM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

reiun said:

This may or may not clear up your challenge about zen doctrinal tenets:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctrinal_background_of_Zen

Astus wrote:

That article is quite a mixture of disorganised ideas without much relevance to Zen's historical development.

reiun said:

But zen emphasizes direct experience of reality through clearly defined practice methods.

Astus wrote:

Could you name some of those clearly defined practice methods? For instance, anything similar found in the works of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dushun>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhiyi>, or in the so called https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhy%C4%81na_sutras?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 14th, 2023 at 10:55 PM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

It is very clear. Satori. Kensho how it was originally taught by Bodhidharma or the 6th patriarch.

Astus wrote:

'To be enlightened (悟) to this Dharma is to be without thought (無念).'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 31; T48, no. 2008, p. 350c6-7)

'To be enlightened (悟) to the Dharma of nonthought (無念) is to see (見) the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the

stage of buddhahood.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 34; T48, no. 2008, p. 351b4-5)

Nonthought (無念) is practically no different from non-thinking (非思量), and non-thinking is the essence of just sitting (只管打坐). That should mean that the teaching of zazen as practice-verification is very clear and authentic. What other satori and kensho could be lacking?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 14th, 2023 at 11:06 PM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

reiun said:

The best explication of clearly defined practice methods that you can trust would be in either of Meido Moore Roshi's two books, or even one of his videos on Youtube. Clearly defining practice methods is one of his core teachings in his books.

Astus wrote:

That's something specific to what he teaches. I meant something more universal in Zen, not limited to modern Rinzai.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2023 at 5:32 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

no-thought etc. is job of a realized teacher to explain/show what this really means. It is not realm of scholars or just people who practice zen. Bodhidharma clearly spoke about kensho, and warned that those without kensho will make big mistakes.

Astus wrote:

If one requires awakening before engaging in zazen, then that's a clear rejection of the basic doctrine emphasised by Dogen, and the Soto tradition in general, that practice and enlightenment are one.

Of the usual texts attributed to Bodhidharma (少室六門; T2009), kensho (見性) is mentioned in the Bloodstream Sermon (血脈論). However, if we look at that text, it is quite the radical type of Zen that dispenses with all forms of practice, seated meditation included.

'To find a Buddha all you have to do is see your nature (見性). Your nature is the Buddha. And the Buddha is the person who's free: free of plans, free of cares. If you don't see your nature and run around all day looking somewhere else, you'll never find a buddha. The truth is there's nothing to find.'

(The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 13; T48, no. 2009, p. 373c17-20)

'To attain enlightenment (成佛) you have to see your nature (見性). Unless you see your nature, all this talk about cause and effect is nonsense (外道法). Buddhas don't practice nonsense. A Buddha free of karma free of cause and effect. To say he attains anything at all is to slander a Buddha. What could he possibly attain? Even focusing on a mind, a power, an understanding, or a view is impossible for a Buddha. A Buddha isn't one sided. The nature of his mind is basically empty, neither pure nor impure. He's free of practice and realization (無修無證).'

(p 17; p. 374a15-20)

'People who don't see their nature (見性) and imagine they can practice thoughtlessness (無作想) all the time are liars and fools. They fall into endless space. They're like drunks. They can't tell good from evil. If you intend to cultivate such a practice (無作法), you have to see your nature (見性) before you can put an end to rational thought (息緣慮). To attain enlightenment without seeing your nature is impossible.'

(p 19; p. 374a24-27)

'Buddha is Sanskrit for what you call aware (覺性), miraculously aware (靈覺). Responding, arching your brows blinking your eyes, moving your hands and feet, its all your miraculously aware nature. And this nature is the mind. And the mind is the Buddha. And the Buddha is the path. And the path is Zen. But the word Zen is one that remains a puzzle to both mortals and sages. Seeing your nature (見本性) is Zen. Unless you see your nature, it's not Zen.'

(p 29; p. 375a5-9)

'Once mortals see their nature (見本性), all attachments end. Awareness (神識) isn't hidden. But you can only find it right now. It's only now. If you really want to find the Way, don't hold on to anything. Once you put an end to karma and nurture your awareness (神), any attachments that remain will come to an end. Understanding comes naturally. You don't have to make any effort. But fanatics (外道) don't understand what the Buddha meant. And the harder they try, the farther they get from the Sage's meaning. All day long they invoke Buddhas and read sutras. But they remain blind to their own divine nature (神性), and they don't escape the Wheel.

A buddha is an idle person. He doesn't run around after fortune and fame. What good are such things in the end? People who don't see their nature (見性) and think reading sutras, invoking Buddhas', studying long and hard, practicing morning and night, never lying down (長坐不臥), or acquiring knowledge is the Dharma, blaspheme the Dharma. Buddhas of the past and future only talk about seeing your nature (見性). All practices are impermanent. Unless they see their nature (見性) people who claim to have attained unexcelled, complete enlightenment are liars.'

(p 35-37; p. 375b22-c3)

'Basically, seeing, hearing, and knowing (見聞覺知) are completely empty (本自圓寂). Your anger, Joy, or pain is like that of puppet. You can search but you won't find a thing.

According to the sutras, evil deeds result in hardships and good deeds result in blessings. Angry people go to hell and happy people go to heaven. But once you know that the nature of anger and joy is empty and you let them go, you free yourself from karma.'

(p 45; p. 376b2-6)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 16th, 2023 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Tao said:

The one that brings 無念 and 非思量 when not sitting.

Astus wrote:

They're not limited to sitting.

'It continues in an unbroken cycle, so that there is not the slightest interval between establishment of the mind, training, bodhi, and nirvana: conduct and observance is a continuing cycle.'

(Gyoji, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 163)

'In zazen both body and mind drop off. Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down.'

(<https://antaiji.org/en/classics/english-zazen-yojinki/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2023 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Pratityasamutpada question

Content:

Rick said:

Nagarjuna said: "Neither from itself nor from another Nor from both, Nor without a cause Does anything anywhere, ever arise." This seems to negate causality. But the ultimate truth is sunyata, which is grounded in pratityasamutpada, which involves causality. I'm confused!

Astus wrote:

Causality is how things seem to operate on a conventional level, but when analysed, there is no reality found in that. It is only without any reality in it that causality can work (because no arising from itself (cause and result are exactly the same) or from other (cause and result are totally separate) is possible), and that's how emptiness and dependent origination go together.

Might also check Madhyamakavatara 6.33-38, it has now quite a few commentaries available in English.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, May 18th, 2023 at 6:03 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

This is not radical, but correct teaching of zen.

Astus wrote:

Why do you object then to the doctrine of zazen being practice-realisation?

'Someone who seeks the Way doesn't look beyond himself. He knows that the mind is the Way. But when he finds the mind, he finds nothing. And when he finds the Way, he finds nothing. If you think you can use the mind to find the Way, you're deluded. When you're deluded, buddhahood exists. When you're aware, it doesn't exist. This is because awareness is buddhahood.'

(Wake-up Sermon, in The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 59; T48, no. 2009, p. 371c10-13)

'To see form but not be corrupted by form or to hear sound but not be corrupted by sound is liberation. Eyes that aren't attached to form are the Gates of Zen. Ears that aren't attached to sound are also the Gates of Zen. In short, those who perceive the existence and nature of phenomena and remain unattached are liberated. Those who perceive the external appearance of phenomena are at their mercy. Not to be subject to affliction is what's meant by liberation. There's no other liberation. When you know how to look at form, form doesn't give rise to mind and mind doesn't give rise to form. Form and mind are both pure.'

(Wake-up Sermon, in The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, p 61; T48, no. 2009, p. 371c17-23)

'Do not think "good" or "bad." Do not judge true or false. Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views. Have no designs on becoming a buddha. How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?'
(<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/zazen/advice/fukanzanzeng.html>)

'We just sit. Still many different kinds of thought come and go naturally. It is very clear that thoughts, emotions, and daydreams are illusions like bubbles rising in water. We let go of them. No clinging to them, chasing after them, or pushing them away. We really do nothing but sit.'

(A Path of Just Sitting, in

<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/leaflet/sotozen/index.html>, p 18)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2023 at 5:17 AM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

Your quotes are very nice but do not reflect the actual situation within soto, which became void of realization. That is the main point and problem.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean like, the majority of the priests are only priests out of family duty or something, not because of the Dharma? If so, isn't that the norm in all the Japanese schools that left behind actual monastic practice? Nevertheless, there can be some who still believe in the words of the Buddha and the ancestors, and therefore follow the precepts, cultivate zazen, etc., don't you think so? Aren't there at least a few training temples with long term residents?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 19th, 2023 at 6:19 PM

Title: Re: Traditional Soto approach clarification

Content:

Matylda said:

This situation has nothing to do with faith in dharma.

The residency is not dependent on place but ones wish to do it. There are very few people who do it for long in fact.

Astus wrote:

So it seems the issue of the presence of attainment in Soto (and Rinzai) is not related to the teachings and practices, but it's rather an organisational matter where the majority of the temples within Soto exist to serve communal needs of the laity. And there are still a relatively few temples and communities where they focus on the bodhisattva path and follow the teachings of the tradition. Therefore there isn't really some sort of error or decline to fix by adopting or inventing something, and those who actually want to engage in zazen have some places to go and some teachers to learn from.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 20th, 2023 at 12:13 AM

Title: Re: Pratityasamutpada question

Content:

Rick said:

Sorry, I still don't get it. It doesn't make logical sense to me and I don't know how else to assess it!

Astus wrote:

If we say that a tree really exists, that means it exists in and of itself, apart from every other things, and so we say of a seed and a chair as well, both being actually existing objects. That makes it impossible for a seed to grow into a tree, and a tree to become a chair, because all three are independent isolates, existing substantially. A seed is not a tree, so to say that from a seed comes a tree is nonsense, just as saying that from a pebble comes a tree. They are totally unrelated. But if a seed is not a thing in itself, nor is a tree, then there is no real separation as they are mere expressions, meaning that we

do not actually find any seed for real, it's simply a made up name not referring to any true entity.

More importantly, all the logic and refutation applied are about removing clinging to ideas, but at the same time not denying the ordinary functionality of things. So it's like: yes, trees grow from seeds and chairs are made of wood, but better not make an issue out of it.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 21st, 2023 at 5:16 AM

Title: Re: 6 Indriyas

Content:

Vajrasambhava said:

But what about thinking? Why we cannot think in this state?

Does this mean the 6th consciousness is governed by brain?

If the answer is "no" then how anesthesia can influence a non-material apparatus?

Astus wrote:

The six types of consciousness are not things that wait around to be used but events of conscious awareness of something. If one closes one's eyes there is no eye-consciousness to talk about, because of the lack of any visual object. If there is a sudden loud noise there is no conscious thinking, nor is there much of it during powerful sensory input (pain/pleasure), although the fact that one is aware of a particular sensory experience means some level of consciousness is there, just not necessarily the speculative kind. Anyhow, this problem of the relationship between body and mind is based on a different view than what is taught by the Buddha, hence he rejected to take part in the debate whether the body and the soul are identical or separate, and even called such views a hindrance to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 23rd, 2023 at 9:50 PM

Title: Re: Am I misunderstanding Soto Zen's zazen?

Content:

dpcalder said:

It was my understanding that zazen is nothing more than open monitoring meditation - you just sit in awareness and monitor your thoughts as they arise and fall away, like clouds passing in the sky, and this is all there is to it.

Astus wrote:

Thoughts come and go anyway, no need to monitor them. If anything, it's the posture/body that one might initially pay attention to.

There is this very simplified explanation of zazen on the <https://www.sotozen.com/zazen/index.html>.

There are three main components of Zazen: Posture, Breathing, Adjusting your mind.

POSTURE

The target of the zazen posture is to sit comfortably and spontaneously. In zazen, you sit in a relaxed manner and releasing the muscles that are usually overused.

Zazen is not painful or difficult if you sit properly.

BREATHING

Breathe slowly through your nose and try to breathe carefully.

If you are not used to this, try to take deep and long breaths, focusing on the exhale.

ADJUSTING YOUR MIND

During zazen, various kinds of thoughts come to mind. It is natural as long as we are alive.

The important thing is not to chase them or hold them.

You do not need to force yourself to think about getting rid of thoughts, becoming nothing, or unifying your mind.

And there was this topic not too long ago:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?t=42330>

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, June 2nd, 2023 at 2:11 PM

Title: Re: Philosophical implications of the emptiness of the teachings themselves

Content:

Astus wrote:

One better not forget conditionality that goes hand in hand with emptiness. Emptiness is not causelessness. Therefore it's not the case that anything can come from anything.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 5th, 2023 at 3:19 AM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

master of puppets said:

What is it that attained, really?

Astus wrote:

That there's nothing to attain.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 5th, 2023 at 2:29 PM

Title: Re: Don't Know Mind

Content:

jimmi said:

Why do I need to know that, given the deep insight of DKM?

Astus wrote:

The deep insight of DKM is that there is nothing to get (to know, to obtain). Otherwise it's just ordinary ignorance.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 7th, 2023 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: How flatworms acquire consciousness?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Sounds like a thousand years old question.

Chan master Yanqing Faduan ... was asked by a government official, 'When an earthworm is chopped in two and both parts are still moving, in which half is the Buddha-nature?'

The master opened both his hands.

(Dongshan also said, 'The one posing the question, which half is that?')

(Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, vol 3, 12.287;

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T51n2076_p0296b24)

Shengguang split an earthworm while hoeing, then asked:

'Someone today split an earthworm with a hoe. Both its ends move. Which one has life?'

The teacher (Zihu) picked up the hoe, hit down on the left end, hit down on the right end, hit down on the empty middle, threw back the hoe and left.

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X68n1315_p0075b15)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023 at 1:14 AM

Title: Re: Teachers with clairvoyance, alive

Content:

Astus wrote:

"And what is the demonstration of revealing? In one case, someone reveals the mind, mentality, thoughts, and reflections of other beings and individuals: 'This is what you're thinking, such is your thought, and thus is your state of mind.'

Then someone with faith and confidence sees that mendicant revealing another person's thoughts. They tell someone else who lacks faith and confidence: 'Oh, how incredible, how amazing! The ascetic has such psychic power and might! I saw him myself, revealing the thoughts of another person!'

But the one lacking faith and confidence would say to them: 'There's a spell named Māṇikā. Using that a mendicant can reveal another person's thoughts.'

What do you think, Kevaḍḍha? Wouldn't someone lacking faith speak like that?"

“They would, sir.”

“Seeing this drawback in revealing, I’m horrified, repelled, and disgusted by demonstrations of revealing.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn11/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023 at 4:11 AM

Title: Re: Non-duality and human limits

Content:

JCA said:

In order to make serious progress on the path to enlightenment it is necessary to achieve states of mind that are non-dual and non-conceptual.

However, it seems to me those states of mind are fundamentally incompatible with human existence.

Astus wrote:

Non-dual and non-conceptual mean not falling into extreme views of being and non-being. They're not about some sort of altered state of mind. So there's nothing incompatible with living a functional life, as you can see from the many stories of awakened beings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023 at 3:43 PM

Title: Re: Non-duality and human limits

Content:

JCA said:

Your definition really describes the “middle way”

Non-duality means - No difference between subject and object.

Non-conceptuality means - transcending a discursive mind characterized by a lack of discreet thoughts and images.

At least those are the meanings as I’m using them in my OP

Astus wrote:

Those definitions describe a type of an absorbed state that is naturally limited to specific circumstances. They are not the non-duality and non-conceptuality that are required for insight and liberation in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023 at 5:42 PM

Title: Refuge: 30 Years of the Dharma Gate in Hungary

Content:

Astus wrote:

A film was made about the Dharma Gate <https://www.tkbh.hu/english/dharma-gate-buddhist-church-2/> and <https://www.tkbh.hu/english/introduction/> on the occasion of its 30 years of operation in Hungary. It is not a documentary but rather a spiritually inspired introduction of the current state of this unique organisation that encompasses different religious and educational institutions.

The film is freely available on YouTube with English subtitles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbYbFvFHBms>

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023 at 8:33 PM

Title: Re: Non-duality and human limits

Content:

JCA said:

Insight and liberation are predicated upon seeing and experiencing the true nature of reality. That nature is non-dual and non-conceptual, according to Buddhists and, more recently, many scientists.

Astus wrote:

The definitions you gave to non-duality (advaya, 不二, gnyis med) and non-conceptuality (nirvikalpa, 無分別, rnam par mi rtog pa) are not how they are understood in Buddhism. Hence the problem with seeing how awakening is possible in this life.

JCA said:

My theory is that we can only become truly enlightened after death, when we are free from the constraints of a physical body, as we know it (I understand the term body is often used for bardo states, as in subtle body).

Astus wrote:

Indeed, your theory, not what is taught in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2023 at 5:26 PM

Title: Re: was thinking today

Content:

master of puppets said:

we know that when the mind is empty the wisdom and the meaning appears. as it reaches everywhere without an obstacle. Then you can become whatever you want. This is called enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

The mind is already empty, like everything else. What unique interpretation do you imply that makes wisdom and 'the meaning' (what meaning?) appear?

If one wants to become something, how is that any different from the basic drive of

rebirth, i.e. thirst for being/becoming (bhavatrṣṇā / 有愛)?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 3rd, 2023 at 7:32 PM

Title: Re: was thinking today

Content:

Aemilius said:

A better and more advanced view, or series of views, is expressed in the Hua Yen, which is based on the Avatamsaka sutra.

Astus wrote:

No matter how complicated a view one can conceive, it still comes down to the same distinction between being driven by afflictions or not.

On the idea that 'afflictions are bodhi' (煩惱即菩提) the Platform Sutra (BDK edition) has this:

'Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are bodhi. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi.'

(ch 2, p 30)

'The afflictions are bodhi. They are nondual and not separate. If one [tries to] use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, this is the interpretation of the two [Hinayana] vehicles [held by] those fit for the sheep and deer [carts]. Those of superior wisdom and Mahayana capabilities are completely different. ... If you want to understand the essentials of the mind, you should simply not think about all the [different types of] good and evil. You will then naturally attain entry into the pure essence of the mind, which is peaceful and always serene, with wondrous functions [as numerous as the] sands of the Ganges River.'

(ch 10, p 80-81)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 4th, 2023 at 4:21 AM

Title: Re: was thinking today

Content:

Aemilius said:

Are these not a form of trishna (thirst or wanting) ?

Astus wrote:

Craving/thirst is a particular form of intention that is classified into three types: thirst for sensual pleasure (kāmatrṣṇā / 欲愛), thirst for becoming (bhavatrṣṇā / 有愛), thirst for not becoming (vibhavatrṣṇā / 無有愛).

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 4th, 2023 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: was thinking today

Content:

Astus wrote:

"And how is a mendicant content? It's when a mendicant is content with robes to look after the body and almsfood to look after the belly. Wherever they go, they set out taking only these things. A Buddhist monk has three robes: a lower robe (sabong or sarong), an upper robe, and an outer cloak. They're like a bird: wherever it flies, wings are its only burden. In the same way, a mendicant is content with robes to look after the body and almsfood to look after the belly. Wherever they go, they set out taking only these things. That's how a mendicant is content."

(<https://suttacentral.net/dn2/en/sujato>)

"And how are they one who knows moderation? It's when a mendicant knows moderation when receiving robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and supplies for the sick. If a mendicant did not know moderation, they would not be called 'one who knows moderation'. But because they do know moderation, they are called 'one who knows moderation'. Such is the one who knows the teachings, the one who knows the meaning, the one who has self-knowledge, and the one who knows moderation."

(<https://suttacentral.net/an7.68/en/sujato>)

"And how does a mendicant eat in moderation? It's when a mendicant reflects rationally on the food that they eat: 'Not for fun, indulgence, adornment, or decoration, but only to sustain this body, to avoid harm, and to support spiritual practice. In this way, I shall put an end to old discomfort and not give rise to new discomfort, and I will live blamelessly and at ease.' That's how a mendicant eats in moderation."

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.16/en/sujato>)

"Eye, ear, nose,
tongue, body, and likewise mind:
a mendicant who makes these
sense doors well guarded—

eating in moderation,
restrained in the sense faculties—
reaps happiness
both physical and mental.

Not burning in body,
not burning in mind,
by day or by night
such a person lives in happiness."

(<https://suttacentral.net/iti29/en/sujato>)

"Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

"What, you're asleep?
Really, you're asleep?
You sleep like a loser—
what's up with that?
You sleep, thinking that the hut is empty.
You sleep when the sun has come up—
what's up with that?"

"For them there is no craving—
the weaver, the clinger—
to track them anywhere.
With the ending of all attachments
the awakened Buddha sleeps.
What's that got to do with you, Māra?"

Then Māra ... vanished right there."
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn4.7/en/sujato>)

Once a Vinaya Master came and asked: "In your practice of the Tao, do you still work hard?"

The Master answered: "Yes, I still work hard."

The Vinaya Master asked: "How hard?"

The Master retorted: "If I'm hungry, I eat. If I'm tired, I sleep. "

The Vinaya Master asked: "Do all other people work hard just as you do?"

The Master answered: "No, not in the same way."

The Vinaya Master asked: "Why not?"

The Master answered: "While they are eating, they are not really eating due to too much thinking. While they are sleeping, they are not really sleeping due to too much mental agitation. Therefore, they do not work in the same way I do."

The Vinaya Master, on hearing this, fell silent.

(<https://www.ymba.org/books/entering-tao-sudden-enlightenment/tsung-ching-record>)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 22nd, 2023 at 10:54 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

Without any definition or measurement of realisation how could the number of realised beings be asserted?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 23rd, 2023 at 4:36 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

reiun said:

The "definition . . . of realization" i.e., seeing into one's true nature, is not hard to find.

Suggest pages 1 - 5, The Rinzai Zen Way, and or pages 9 - 13, Hidden Zen, both by Meido Roshi.

As for "measurement", that would be assuming it can be measured.

Astus wrote:

There, especially in the latter book, realisation - or 'kensho' - is equated with insight into no-self. As such, it should be identical to the path of seeing (darśanamārga), the first stage (bhūmi) of the bodhisattva path, about what there is plenty to find in the sutras and treatises defining the qualities such a noble being possesses. Although the two (kensho and the path of insight) might not actually be the same, since there is no falling back from the level of a noble being.

If it could not be measured, then affirming another's kensho would not be possible.

Here's one that sounds similar to what shikantaza is supposed to be from the very start (i.e. dropping body and mind):

'Eventually we will be able to enter into a truly profound samadhi and experience the "great death" in which body and mind completely drop away. Emerging from this, we may recognize our true self-less nature and for the first time know the experience of kensho for ourselves.'

(The Rinzai Zen Way, p 71)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 24th, 2023 at 2:42 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Sharf has shown that the New Buddhism was distinct from traditional or classical Zen on multiple levels. He disputes the notion of a "pure experience" that can be uncoupled from its institutional and doctrinal constraints, noting that classical Zen is one of the most scholastic and ritualistic forms of Buddhist monasticism and that enlightenment in Zen is "constituted in elaborately choreographed and eminently public ritual performance."⁴² He has also questioned the legitimacy of New Buddhist proponents, pointing out that they were largely laypeople who were not trained in traditional Zen monastic settings. Nonetheless, this modernist vision of Zen was largely embraced by Western scholars and lay practitioners as an historically accurate picture of traditional Zen until recent studies such as Sharf's illuminated its specifically modernist and nationalist contextual origins.⁴³

Gleig, Ann. American Dharma . Yale University Press. Kindle Edition.

Astus wrote:

That strongly suggests the worries regarding and the emphasis on authentic awakening within Zen is a modern phenomenon, while those focusing on rituals and scholarly studies are the followers of the pre-modern tradition.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 25th, 2023 at 3:52 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

rejun said:

Koan collections originated in 8th-12th century China. They were used to cultivate insight and enlightenment.

Astus wrote:

There have been collections of 'old cases' or 'ancient precedents' (guze/kosoku 古則), i.e. stories of ancestral teachers, that were later commented on, thus, with the commentary, came about the 'public cases' (gongan/kouan 公案), and still later emerged the practice of 'observing the phrase' (kanhua/kanna 看話) that has eventually been established as the standard method. So, it's only in the 12th century when such collections came to be actively 'used to cultivate insight and enlightenment' and the old cases themselves were also labelled koans. It's not that the stories themselves were collected and commented on from the beginning with the intent to be a special form of practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 25th, 2023 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

clyde said:

If a realized Zen teacher isn't able to know who is and is not realized, then who is? And how would a Zen student get confirmation?

Astus wrote:

To assess the level of one's initial attainment the Buddha has provided the 'mirror of the teaching' (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn55.8/en/sujato>). The Buddha has also talked about how to test if somebody claims to be liberated (<https://suttacentral.net/mn112/en/sujato>), and also about the need to be close to another in order to be able to measure his/her qualities (<https://suttacentral.net/an4.192/en/sujato>). Another option is telepathy (cetopariyāñāṇa/paracittajñāṇa), although it's not among the recommended methods.

Ven. Sheng-yen taught:

'The most important thing in recognizing masters is to be able to judge whether they have a correct view of Buddhadharma. If their views of the Dharma are correct, then even if their behavior reveals some weaknesses, they should not be considered false masters. On the other hand, if teachers do not have a correct view of the Dharma, they cannot be considered authentic or virtuous masters.

Of course, this presupposes that the person making the judgment has some

understanding of correct Dharma. Without an understanding of the Dharma, there is no way a practitioner can tell if a teacher is genuine or false.'
(<http://old.ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/show.py?s=09-06p0027>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 25th, 2023 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Anyone can deluded themselves into such as idea.

Astus wrote:

If one can delude oneself into trusting the Three Jewels and living ethically, that sounds like a beneficial delusion.

Malcolm said:

If one is a follower of śravakayāna. But that is only applicable to those on the path of renunciation.

Astus wrote:

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=153592#p153592> then, although points 5 and 6 are still about total renunciation.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 25th, 2023 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

it is absolutely false argument, since the term kensho was not used in the XIII century.. if Dogen did not like it, then nobody like the term kensho.. you cannot find it in texts of rinzai masters like Rankei Doryu, or Shoichi and others. It is sheer imputation that Dogen did not like the term kensho since he did not use it. It is wrong logic.

Astus wrote:

He did use it.

"Seeing the mind and seeing the nature (見性) is the animated activity of non-Buddhists."

(Sansuigyo, SBGZ, vol 1, p 219, BDK Edition; https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2582_.82.0063b27:0063b28.cit)

"Some fellow has said, "Old Man Śākyamuni, besides expounding the teaching and the sutras throughout his life, also authentically transmitted to Mahākāśyapa the Dharma of the one mind which is the supreme vehicle, and this transmission has passed from rightful successor to rightful successor. So the teaching is opportunistic idle discussion,

but the mind is the essential true reality. This authentically transmitted one mind is called 'the separate transmission outside the teachings.' It is not to be likened to discussion of the three vehicles and the twelve divisions of the teaching. Because the one mind is the supreme vehicle, we speak of 'direct pointing into the human heart' and 'seeing the nature (見性) and becoming buddha.'" This expression is never about the everyday conduct of the Buddha-Dharma: it lacks the vigorous road of getting the body free, and it has no dignified behavior throughout the body. Fellows like this, even hundreds or thousands of years ago, were proclaiming themselves to be leading authorities; but we should know that, if they had such talk as this, they neither clarified nor penetrated the Buddha's Dharma and the Buddha's truth."

(Bukkyo, SBGZ, vol 2, p 70, BDK Edition; http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2582_.82.0107a13:0107a26.cit)

"The essence of the Buddha-Dharma is never seeing the nature (見性). Where has any of the Seven Buddhas or the twenty-eight patriarchs of India said that the Buddha-Dharma is only "seeing the nature" (見性)? The Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra contains the words "seeing the nature," (見性) but that text is a fake text; it is not the writing of one to whom the Dharma treasury was transmitted, and it is not the words of Sōkei. It is a text upon which descendants of the Buddhist Patriarch absolutely never rely."

(Shizen-biku, SBGZ, vol 4, p 269, BDK Edition; https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2582_.82.0298b23:0298b29.cit)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 27th, 2023 at 6:14 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

It is interesting to learn that Dogen rejected the Platform Sutra.

Astus wrote:

Maybe in some sense, or in certain contexts, but he does quote from it (or parts that he might have found in other collections) a couple of times.

Malcolm said:

So, really, the root of the dispute is that not the Dogen rejected awakening, (obviously), he rejected a subitist term from a text he considered forged, one of the seminal texts of the entire Chan/Zen tradition. And in reading the rest of Faure's article, Dogen was critical of the Chinese founder of Rinzai as well.

Astus wrote:

The main objection Dogen (SBGZ, vol 1, p 14 & p 65; vol 2, p 5) had was against what he called the Senika/Śreṇika (先尼) heresy (based on the Nirvana Sutra account (chapter 45, scroll 39, https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T0374_.12.0594a14:0594a15.cit)) of taking buddha-nature as a soul and kensho as its realisation.

In the Record of Linji we can find expressions that may lead one to such a soul view. E.g.

'In the eye it is called seeing, in the ear, hearing, in the nose, sense of smell. In the mouth it talks and argues, in the hands it holds and grasps, in the feet it moves and runs.' (tr JC Cleary, in Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 17)

If it is accepted that Dogen's take on zazen means 'dropping body and mind', there is indeed no point in proposing separately a method and a goal. The possible objection to it can be that most people are simply incapable of putting it into practice and a gradual path is required. If so, Mahayana has plenty of methods and stages to offer, no need for any special transmission.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 27th, 2023 at 10:59 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Queequeg said:

He seems to be objecting to something more fundamental - Reading those passages in context he's criticizing "realization" that still flows from a subject-object dynamic.

Astus wrote:

I guess there's no issue with calling it 'subject-object dynamic', as it's still the same old self-view situation. Still, it's not that abstract or sophisticated.

'It is the view of the non-Buddhist Senika. According to that non-Buddhist view, there is one spiritual intelligence existing within our body. When this intelligence meets conditions, it can discriminate between pleasant and unpleasant and discriminate between right and wrong, and it can know pain and irritation and know suffering and pleasure—all [these] are abilities of the spiritual intelligence. When this body dies, however, the spirit casts off the skin and is reborn on the other side; so even though it seems to die here it lives on there. Therefore we call it immortal and eternal. The view of that non-Buddhist is like this. But if we learn this view as the Buddha's Dharma, we are even more foolish than the person who grasps a tile or a pebble thinking it to be a golden treasure; the delusion would be too shameful for comparison.'

(SBGZ, vol 1, p 14)

'Many students, however, misunderstand that "mind here and now is buddha" did not exist in India but was first heard in China. As a result, they do not recognize their mistake as a mistake. Because they do not recognize the mistake as a mistake, many fall down into non-Buddhism. When stupid people hear talk of "mind here and now is buddha," they interpret that ordinary beings' intellect and sense perception, which have never established the bodhi-mind, are just buddha.' ... 'they are no different from the non-Buddhist Senika. He said, 'In our body there is a single spiritual essence. This essence can recognize pain and irritation. When the body decays the spirit departs; just as when a house is burning the master of the house departs. The house is inconstant; the master of the house is constant.' When I examine people like this, they do not know the false from the true. How can they decide what is right?'

(SBGZ, vol 1, p 65, 67)

Compare it to this passage quoted by Chinul:

'In the womb it is called a fetus. On being born it is called a person. In the eyes it is called seeing and in the ears it is called hearing. In the nose it smells, in the tongue it talks, in the hands it grasps, and in the feet it runs. When it is expanded, it contains worlds as numerous as grains of sand. When it is compressed, it exists within one minute particle of dust. Those who have recognized it know that it is the buddha-nature; those who have not call it the spirit.'

(Moguja's Secrets on Cultivating the Mind, in Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol 2, p 209-210)

Queequeg said:

I don't know absolutely about "special transmissions," whether they are necessary or not, but I surmise, transmission from living teachers helps, assuming the transmission is the real deal - there are some things that just aren't transmitted in books.

Astus wrote:

'Special transmission outside the teachings' (教外別傳) is a slogan used to distinguish the Zen school from everyone else.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, July 27th, 2023 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

Um, Astus, he straight up calls it a forgery, along with the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment, and another text. I checked the BDK translation against the Shambhala edition.

Astus wrote:

Nevertheless he quotes from the Platform Sutra and presents those as authentic teachings of Huineng.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 28th, 2023 at 3:17 PM

Title: Re: It's no small thing

Content:

KeithA said:

There is story that I don't remember the details of, that has a master lamenting the fact the even though he is very famous, even he has to take piss for himself. No one can do it for him.

Astus wrote:

Maybe case 315 in the Record of Zhaozhou

(<https://www.anhsiangchan1983.tw/%E5%B0%8E%E5%B8%AB%E8%AC%9B%E8%A9>

%9E/%E8%B6%99%E5%B7%9E%E7%A6%AA%E5%B8%AB%E8%AA%9E%E9%8C%84.
htm; https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X68n1315_p0085a05);

A monk asked, "I ask you to say something about that which is immediately at hand."
The master said, "Pissing is an easy matter, I can do it by myself."
(The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu, p 103, tr James Green)

Someone asked, "Being on the verge, that point of absolute immediacy - what is that like?"
Joshu said, "Pissing is a small thing to do, but I have to do it myself."
(Radical Zen: The Sayings of Joshu, case 280, tr Yoel Hoffmann)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 28th, 2023 at 8:32 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Astus wrote:

It seems the one essential question is: is shikantaza a valid teaching?

'Remember, among Buddhists we do not argue about superiority and inferiority of philosophies, or choose between shallowness and profundity in the Dharma; we need only know whether the practice is genuine or artificial.'
(SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 1, p 9)

Is it true that shikantaza is the realisation of suchness, is dropping off body and mind, is being buddha?

Rujing said, "Sanzen is dropping off body and mind. We don't use incense burning, making prostrations, nembutsu, the practice of repentance, or reading sutras. We only engage in just sitting."

Dōgen asked, "What is dropping off body and mind?"

Rujing said, "Dropping off body and mind is zazen. When we just practice zazen, we part from the five desires and remove the five coverings."

(quoted from Hōkyōki in Realizing Genjokoan, p 81-82)

'Zen Master Dogen says that the zazen of the Buddha-ancestors is Buddha's practice. It is a very simple and plain practice of just continuing to sit, letting go of our views. Such zazen embodies the "situation of Buddha's house" in which the essence (foundation/enlightenment), expounding (explaining the Dharma) and practice are one and the same. Therefore, there is no need to seek the Buddha outside zazen. Zazen is not a practice that produces a Buddha-ancestor but an action causing the Buddha-ancestors to live as Buddha-ancestors.'

(https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms01.pdf)

'The thing itself is emptiness, but because you add something to it, you spoil the actual reality. So if we don't spoil things, that is to empty things. When you sit in shikantaza,

don't be disturbed by sounds, don't operate your thinking mind. This means not to rely on any sense organ or the thinking mind and just receive the letter from the world of emptiness. That is shikantaza.'

(<https://www.lionsroar.com/letters-from-emptiness/>, from Not Always So, p 37-38)

'When we sit in zazen, we are immediately buddha. We go directly into buddhahood.'
(Master Dōgen's Zazen Meditation Handbook, p 168)

If shikantaza is not what they claim it to be, then of course it is not a genuine practice, and by Dogen's own standard one should avoid it. But if it is as they say, where is the fault?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 29th, 2023 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

But Japanese Shumicho the administrative body over all Soto schools on all continents, is supervising the activity of its priests, whether Japanese or non-Japanese. They even give some financial support to those outside of Japan. So there is somehow institutional continuity in the sense of administration and regulations.

Astus wrote:

Only a mere fraction of overseas communities are affiliates of the Japanese church. Most of them operate completely independently, hence the many differences.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 30th, 2023 at 2:24 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Clyde said:

If you are correct about Soto Zen, then lineage is no guarantee of realization and if Malcolm is correct that "ordinary people" (like me) cannot infer or sense if someone is realized - then we are all lost.

Astus wrote:

Lineage is no guarantee, after all, every single Buddhist is theoretically a descendent of the Buddha. From the beginning the idea of a special lineage has been used in Zen to separate one group from another and claim authenticity for one's own.

What one can do is to rely on the scriptures and see if a teacher is in agreement with them. That is taking the Dharma and the Vinaya as the guide. And there is the other aspect of using the four establishments of mindfulness for experiential verification. Those two sides have been the advice of the Buddha for the future. They can be applied to Soto as well, for instance by studying the works of Dogen and practising zazen.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 30th, 2023 at 6:29 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

There is no guarantee that will find proper person.

Astus wrote:

The question is if one who is accepted as a realised teacher can confirm a disciple who is not realised? If yes, then lineage is meaningless. If no, then all within a lineage must be accepted in the same way as the original teacher.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 3:48 AM

Title: Re: Attaining rigpa and which bhumi

Content:

Astus wrote:

According to Shechen Gyaltsap it matches the path of joining.

'Now, when the nature of awareness is unmistakably recognized through the paths of Mahāmudrā and the Great Perfection, many holy beings of the Mahāmudrā tradition and others believe that since awareness is experienced directly, this constitutes authentic ultimate luminosity. On the other hand, the omniscient Longchenpa and others say that in the true actualization of ultimate luminosity, twelve sets of one hundred excellent qualities, among other things, must be present. Consequently, even though the awareness just referred to is experienced directly, Longchenpa and others identify it as the example luminosity.

...

'For practitioners on the path of accumulation, there is understanding; for those on the path of joining, there is experience; and for those on the path of seeing, there is realization. This has been affirmed by the great and noble beings who have well perceived the truth of the dharmatā, and it should be understood as a profound key point. Beginners, who are on the path of accumulation, rely on their teachers and listen to their instructions. Through an understanding that derives from study and reflection, they rid themselves of misconceptions regarding the fundamental nature of things—namely, the union [of appearance and emptiness]. When, on this basis, they recognize that the mind is unborn and have a decisive experience of this, the example luminosity arises in their mind stream. And since, thanks to the example luminosity, they will be directly joined to the ultimate luminosity, this stage is called the “path of joining.” The occurrence or otherwise of the example luminosity is the criterion that determines whether one is on the path of joining or not. The moment when the example luminosity develops and transforms into ultimate luminosity is the point when the truth of ultimate reality, the dharmatā, is realized, and this is the path of seeing. From that moment onward, to grow used to what has been realized constitutes the path of meditation. And

when this has been completed, the path of no more learning is attained.'
(Practicing the Great Perfection: Instructions on the Crucial Points by Shechen Gyaltsap Gyurme Pema Namgyal, p 22-23)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

This is first of all a question of affinity. Actually disciple should meet the requirements of particular teacher/lineage/school. Soto school does not make requirements concerning realization, as far as I know.

Astus wrote:

The idea of dharma transmission in Zen, Soto included, is the recognition of the disciple's awakening being the same as that of Shakyamuni Buddha, as exemplified by the so called Flower Sermon.

'In the Zen tradition, the transmission of the formless, ineffable buddha mind (busshin 佛心) down through the lineage of ancestral teachers (soshi 祖師) is referred to metaphorically as "transmission of the flame" (dentō 傳燈).'

(definition of 'dharma lamp (hōtō 法燈)' in the

<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/glossary/index.html#!section-d>)

Matylda said:

For example SZBA as I see requires for the membership just how many years one has to practice , how many sesshins etc.

Astus wrote:

The first requirement is: 'Ordination and dharma transmission in a recognized Soto Zen lineage'.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 4:14 AM

Title: Re: Attaining rigpa and which bhumi

Content:

Malcolm said:

In trekcho, there is no corresponding map to the paths and stages of lower yānas.

Astus wrote:

Is it problematic to connect trekcho to Mahamudra where such correspondence is well known? Although there the example wisdom is the third empowerment, while the fourth is the actual (e.g. Treasury of Knowledge, vol 6, p 231). Are there different views on that too?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 4:47 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Malcolm said:

And if this is the case, then what to we do with so-called Buddhas who get permanently kicked out of the SZBA? Or other teachers, who have received inka, and are consistently involved in scandals decade after decade?

Astus wrote:

It is one of those systemic contradictions mostly left untouched.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

But his does not exist for long time already. Today the meaning is that one becomes a priest and is allowed to preform certain rituals. Nothing else.

Astus wrote:

How could it not exist today when the definition is still very much in use? Here's another one:

Buddha-mind (busshin 佛心) is the awakening (bodai 菩提, S. bodhi) that turns ordinary beings into buddhas. The Zen lineage is said to transmit Shakamuni's buddha-mind from master to disciple "without relying on scriptures" (furyū monji 不立文字). That wordless "mind to mind transmission" (ishin denshin 以心傳心) is likened to the kind of non-verbal communication that takes place when a carved seal (in 印), used in East Asia as a legally binding signature, is inked and pressed on a piece of paper. The awakened mind of the master presses directly, as it were, on the mind of the disciple, thereby replicating itself. A disciple whose understanding of the dharma is formally approved and documented by a master is also said to have received a "seal of approval" (inka 印可).

(seal of the buddha-mind (busshin in 佛心印) in

https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=seal_of_the_buddha_mind)

This is said to be in Sotoshu Regulations, Article 21:

“Dharma transmission” is defined as experiencing face-to-face transmission between master and disciple, receiving the Three Things, and realizing preservation of the Dharma Lamp.'

(https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms20.pdf in
https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/index.html)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 2:07 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

The definition does not mean anything. ... It is not inka, which is meant to be a confirmation of thorough realization. ...

The whole discussion would have never taken place if dharma transmission had been as you suggested.

Astus wrote:

On paper, by definition, dharma transmission means the transmission of buddha-mind, the awakening of Shakyamuni and all the ancestors. That in practice it is not so, shows that it is a misconception to look at lineage as a sufficient source of verification of someone as a Zen teacher. The same applies even if it is called inka, because, on paper, there is no difference. However, without lineage there is no Zen either.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 31st, 2023 at 7:18 PM

Title: Re: American Soto Zen

Content:

Matylda said:

Inka is completely different issue.

Astus wrote:

It is also based on the idea that the buddha-mind is transmitted from one generation to another, is it not?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 1st, 2023 at 7:16 PM

Title: Re: Doctrinal Perspective on Prayer

Content:

Astus wrote:

Prayers and wishes are of no help in liberation:

"Suppose there was a chicken with eight or ten or twelve eggs. But she had not properly sat on them to keep them warm and incubated. That chicken might wish: 'If only my chicks could break out of the eggshell with their claws and beak and hatch safely!' But they can't break out and hatch safely. Why is that? Because that chicken with eight or ten or twelve eggs has not properly sat on them to keep them warm and incubated. In the same way, when a mendicant is not committed to development, they might wish:

‘If only my mind was freed from the defilements by not grasping!’ Even so, their mind is not freed from defilements by not grasping. Why is that? You should say: ‘It’s because they’re undeveloped.’ Undeveloped in what? Undeveloped in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven awakening factors, and the noble eightfold path.”
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.101/en/sujato>)

Just as they are useless for worldly gains:

"Long life, beauty, happiness, fame, and heaven. These are the five things that are likable, desirable, and agreeable, but hard to get in the world. And I say that these five things are not got by praying or wishing for them. If they were, who would lack them?"
(<https://suttacentral.net/an5.43/en/sujato>)

Or for helping the deceased:

“Chief, suppose a person were to throw a broad rock into a deep lake. And a large crowd was to come together to offer up prayers and praise, circumambulating it with joined palms, and saying: ‘Rise, good rock! Float, good rock! Float to shore, good rock!’ What do you think, chief? Would that broad rock rise up or float because of their prayers?”

“No, sir.”

“In the same way, take a person who kills living creatures, steals, and commits sexual misconduct. They use speech that’s false, divisive, harsh, or nonsensical. And they’re covetous, malicious, and have wrong view. Even though a large crowd comes together to offer up prayers and praise ... when their body breaks up, after death, they’re reborn in a place of loss, a bad place, the underworld, hell.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn42.6/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 2nd, 2023 at 3:34 AM

Title: Re: schools besides Jonang which hold the Emptiness-of-other view

Content:

npr said:

There is no Zen sect that hold this position?

Astus wrote:

Zen does not proclaim a particular doctrinal position. It's in its 'credo' not to: special transmission outside the teachings, not relying on words and letters (jiaowai biechuan, buli wenzi 教外別傳、不立文字).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 2nd, 2023 at 9:26 PM

Title: Re: Doctrinal Perspective on Prayer

Content:

ThreeVows said:

Generally speaking, what you shared here relates to simply wishing for something without being willing to basically change or do anything at all, just a sort of passive prayer. That is not necessarily all that 'prayer' is, though it might be semantic.

Astus wrote:

If prayer on its own does not help, but one still has to make it happen, then what's the efficacy of praying? One can have dinner as long as one prepares it, no point in praying for it. That's what the simile of the hen and the eggs explain.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 2nd, 2023 at 11:08 PM

Title: Re: Doctrinal Perspective on Prayer

Content:

ThreeVows said:

Do you think that requesting a realized guru for teachings helps?

Astus wrote:

Only if the guru hears you, answers the request, you can then comprehend the answer, and make good use of it.

ThreeVows said:

How is it any different to pray to, say, Avalokiteshvara that Avalokiteshvara helps you to develop along the path? Do you think that Avalokiteshvara has the capacity to subtly have an impact in your life?

Astus wrote:

Chapter 24 of the Lotus Sutra lists a couple of miracles he can make if one calls on him. Some of those are easy to test. Let me know if they actually worked.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 2nd, 2023 at 11:58 PM

Title: Re: Doctrinal Perspective on Prayer

Content:

ThreeVows said:

Moggallana, however, works sort of peripherally, using various siddhis to mature the seeker.

Astus wrote:

Buddhas and bodhisattvas are innumerable with boundless powers, so what more peripheral influence can there be? Still, we all are where we are.

Devotion as a method is not the same as the idea that prayers are effective.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 3rd, 2023 at 7:06 PM

Title: Re: Doctrinal Perspective on Prayer

Content:

muni said:

Devotion frees us from our experience of ego, what keeps us in samsara.

Astus wrote:

If one is devoted, one follows the instructions. If devotion only consisted of a feeling of love but not followed by actual practice, then how could it make any difference? It would be like saying that one loves one's child but not caring for that child. At the same time, as long as one cultivates correctly, then the results occur. So devotion can be used as motivation, but it's not real devotion/motivation without actively being devoted/motivated. Similarly, one can pray as much as one likes, but it does not spare one from actually doing the work oneself.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 5th, 2023 at 2:31 PM

Title: Re: Have I attained Sotapatti?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What to do with verification, what desire or anxiety does that serve?

“Subhūti, what do you think? Does a practitioner who has attained the level of srota-āpanna think: ‘I have attained the realization of the srota-āpanna?’”

Subhūti said, “No, World-honored One. And why not? Because the name srota-āpanna means ‘stream-enterer,’ and there is in fact no stream to be entered. One does not enter form, sound, odor, taste, touch, or concepts. Therefore one is called a srota-āpanna.”

(http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html#div-10)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 5th, 2023 at 9:21 PM

Title: Re: How Do You Know?

Content:

Astus wrote:

“There is a method—apart from faith, preference, oral tradition, reasoned contemplation, or acceptance of a view after consideration—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment. That is: ‘I understand: “Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is no return to any state of existence.”’

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.153/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 13th, 2023 at 1:57 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Tolya M said:

What do they say nibbana is? It is total extinction of consciousness!

Astus wrote:

Nibbana is the extinction of greed, hate, and delusion. This is so in both Theravada and Mahayana. Consciousness is momentary in both, so it ceases every moment anyway.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 13th, 2023 at 4:06 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Tolya M said:

I have a version of why they twisted the question so much.

Astus wrote:

Who are they? Could you specify whose view is that nibbana is cessation of consciousness, preferably with direct quotes?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 14th, 2023 at 12:29 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

DNS said:

Many Theravada teachers advocate that it is complete cessation, even of consciousness, but argue that it is not annihilation since there was no being, no soul to begin with.

Astus wrote:

Nibbana is attained while alive. Neither the body, nor the mind suddenly disappears with nibbana, otherwise there would have been no living arahants and buddhas. It is the consequence of the end of craving that there is no more birth.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 14th, 2023 at 2:10 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

DNS said:

It is the latter that they refer to as complete cessation.

Astus wrote:

So it is, as there is no more birth. How is the end of the cycle of birth and death a problematic view in Buddhism?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 14th, 2023 at 3:44 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

DNS said:

See the OP, apparently it is for some or perhaps many Buddhists.

Astus wrote:

That is based on an incorrect assumption, that nibbana means the cessation of consciousness. If that were so, then non-percipient gods (asaññasattā) and the attainment of cessation (nirodhasamāpatti) would both equal extinction.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 14th, 2023 at 2:43 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Any assumption of complete cessation of consciousness can be nothing other than pure speculation

Astus wrote:

Consciousness ceases completely every moment. How is that a speculation?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 15th, 2023 at 2:55 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

It doesn't start and stop like separate frames in movie film.

Each instant of awareness creates the conditions for a subsequent instance to arise.

But it's like a river flowing, each wave propelling the next.

You can't isolate any point in a river and say "this is where it starts and this is where it stops".

Astus wrote:

Not every instance of consciousness is caused by a previous instance. One may dwell on a train of thought for a little while, in which case it is acceptable to say that from one thought came another. But then if either a different thought, or a different sense impression catches one's attention, then it is not the continuation of the previous train of thought. When one series of thoughts have ceased, it does not continue to exist in the next moment, nor does it cause it. Even more obvious if one sees various sights or hears various sounds, then consciousness of one sight or one sound is not the cause of the next instance of consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 15th, 2023 at 3:10 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Tolya M said:

How does it arise in this case from complete nothing? Nothing comes from nothing. It is impossible.

Astus wrote:

The six types of consciousness arises dependent on the six types of sense areas. Just as the sense areas, so is consciousness impermanent. One smells the smell of tea, thus there is olfactory consciousness, and that instance of consciousness is gone just as one either engages in some thoughts about tea or focuses on another sense impression.

'consciousness is dependently originated, since without a cause, consciousness does not come to be ... Consciousness is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it arises. ... It's like fire, which is reckoned according to the specific conditions dependent upon which it burns.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

"'The six classes of consciousness should be understood.' That's what I said, but why did I say it? Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. Ear consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sounds. Nose consciousness arises dependent on the nose and smells. Tongue consciousness arises dependent on the tongue and tastes. Body consciousness arises dependent on the body and touches. Mind consciousness arises dependent on the mind and thoughts. 'The six classes of consciousness should be understood.' That's what I said, and this is why I said it."

<https://suttacentral.net/mn148/en/sujato>

'And what, mendicants, is the origin of suffering? Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. The meeting of the three is contact. Contact is a condition for feeling. Feeling is a condition for craving. This is the origin of suffering. ... And what is the ending of suffering? Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. The meeting of the three is contact. Contact is a condition for feeling. Feeling is a condition for craving. When that craving fades away and ceases with nothing left over, grasping ceases. When grasping ceases, continued existence ceases. When continued existence ceases, rebirth ceases. When rebirth ceases, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress cease. That is how this entire mass of suffering ceases. This is the ending of suffering.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.43/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 15th, 2023 at 5:56 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

That's merely a shift in the object of awareness.

That isn't the same at all as consciousness (awareness) stopping and starting again.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness/awareness is defined by and dependent on its object. If the object changes, it is necessarily a different instance of consciousness.

PadmaVonSamba said:

then how do you know you can't see?

Astus wrote:

That is mental consciousness, not visual consciousness.

PadmaVonSamba said:

This requires the establishing of indivisible starting and ending points for each separate instance

Astus wrote:

It does not, unless one is aiming for establishing an ultimately existing substance. But there is no trouble in defining how within a certain period of time one has been thinking of one thing, and then later of another, or that one saw someone walking by at 11:54.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 16th, 2023 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

cdpatton said:

So, yeah, early Buddhists ended up sounding nihilistic because they were all about ceasing rebirth. But when they were being specific about what they meant by Nirvāṇa, they refused to take the view that it was a kind of existence or non-existence. It is strange and sounds disingenuous, but I think it was actually a kind of mysticism. Other religions had heavens and such that they described in concrete ways, but Buddhists refused to describe where liberated people "go." And this refusal to define Nirvāṇa eventually led to Madhyamaka philosophy (IMO), which refuted the reality of dualistic categories altogether.

Astus wrote:

The matter of an arahant's (the Tathagata's) existence after death is discussed quite extensively. As I take it, it is not mystical.

'Any form ... feeling ... perception ... choices ... consciousness by which a Realized One might be described has been cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future. A Realized One is freed from reckoning in terms of

consciousness. They're deep, immeasurable, and hard to fathom, like the ocean. To say that after death, a Realized One still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists: none of these apply.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn44.1/en/sujato>; same explanation in SN 22.85-86)

'Those who crudely think:
"The Tathagata does exist,"
Will think, regarding his nirvana,
"He does not exist."
(MMK 22.13, tr Padmakara)

'Mendicant, it's due to the cessation of views that a learned noble disciple has no doubts regarding the undeclared points. 'A Realized One still exists after death': this is a misconception. 'A Realized One no longer exists after death': this is a misconception. 'A Realized One both still exists and no longer exists after death': this is a misconception. 'A Realized One neither still exists nor no longer exists after death': this is a misconception. An unlearned ordinary person doesn't understand views, their origin, their cessation, or the practice that leads to their cessation. And so their views grow. They're not freed from rebirth, old age, and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress. They're not freed from suffering, I say.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/an7.54/en/sujato>, same point made in MN 72)

It is a matter of understanding the four noble truths, dependent origination, and eliminating identity view (see MN 2). In other words, as long as one grasps at the six senses, there is the concept of a being, and one thinks in terms of continuity or discontinuity, in terms of existence or non-existence (SN 44.7, AN 4.173-174).

"I am not, I will not be.
I have not, I will not have,"
That frightens all the childish
And extinguishes fear in the wise.
...
Having seen thus the aggregates as untrue,
The conception of I is abandoned,
And due to abandoning the conception of I
The aggregates arise no more.'
(Ratnavali v 26, 30; tr Hopkins)

Author: Astus
Date: Tuesday, August 22nd, 2023 at 3:47 AM
Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias
Content:
PadmaVonSamba said:
I just asked my Thai monk friend today.
He said that after nibbana,
there is still awareness,

but no memory.

Astus wrote:

Awareness of what? It should be kept in mind that all forms of consciousness is compounded, it can exist only with name and form

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.67/en/sujato>), with the other aggregates

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.53/en/sujato>), as a result of a sense organ and a sense object (Dutiyadvayasutta).

Here are two answers from renowned Theravada teachers:

"In nibbāna there are no such things as mind or mental concomitants, which can be met with in the sense-sphere or form-sphere. It naturally follows that mind and matter that belong to the thirty-one planes of existence are totally absent in nibbāna. However, some would like to propose that after the parinibbāna of the Buddha and the Arahants, they acquire a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna. Such an extraordinary way of thinking may appeal to those who cannot do away with self or ego.

With regard to this proposition a learned Sayādaw reasoned that if there is a special kind of mind and matter in nibbāna, there must also be a special kind of rebirth which gives rise to a special kind of old age, disease, and death, which in turn bring about a special kind of sorrow, lamentation, suffering, distress, and despair. When the teachings explicitly say cessation, it will be improper to go beyond it and formulate an idea of a special kind of existence. Extinction points to nothing other than Nothingness. Nibbāna, which is not involved in mind and matter, cannot be made to get involved either in this world or in other worlds."

(Absence of Mind and Matter in Nibbāna, in <http://aimwell.org/natureofnibbana.html> by Mahāsi Sayādaw)

"An inevitable question that arises in the discussion of Nibbāna is: 'What happens to an arahant after death?' or: 'Does a person who has realized Nibbāna exist after death or not?' In truth, this question is centred around self-view: the devotion to self is acting as a catalyst in posing the question. This attachment to self or to the label of self (attavādupādāna) – a doctrine of self – is firmly embedded in the hearts of unenlightened people, supported by the thirst for being (bhava-taṇhā) and based on ignorance (avijjā). The Buddha did not encourage debating this question if one has not eliminated ignorance and craving. He encouraged knowledge through application rather than conjecture.

No matter how one responds to these inquiries, the latent root attachment to self will inevitably lead to a biased understanding. The questioner will incline towards a wrong view of Nibbāna as either an enduring self or an eradication of self. It is easy for annihilationists to view Nibbāna as extinction, because Buddhism emphasizes disentangling from the widespread belief in eternalism. As for eternalists, when their idea of self is invalidated, they search for a substitute to compensate for the sense of void or to restore the idea of a stable self. When they encounter a teaching that advocates uprooting the fixed belief in self, it can seem to them that the self vanishes. They may then seize Nibbāna as a haven for the self or equate Nibbāna as eternal life or the Promised Land.

Many esteemed and wise individuals who are free from almost all forms of attachment get caught up in these views. The escape from this net leads to complete liberation." (<https://buddhadhamma.github.io/nibbana-supreme-peace.html#what-happens-after-an-arahants-death> in <https://buddhadhamma.github.io/> by Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 22nd, 2023 at 4:55 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Just luminous awareness.

awareness of whatever might fly by.

It's like we a mirror is just always reflecting.

Astus wrote:

If you meant after nibbana while still alive, then the five aggregates are still operational, and indeed it consciousness can then be called luminous in the sense of being free from defilements. If you meant after death, then it is problematic.

PadmaVonSamba said:

that refers to consciousness arising in samsara

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is still conditioned regardless of attaining nibbana.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 4:25 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

When ignorance has been overcome, the luminous awareness which has always been there remains.

Astus wrote:

An eternal awareness, is it same or different from the aggregates? If it's the same, it is necessarily conditioned and impermanent. If it's different, then it lacks the attributes of the aggregates, such as feeling and perception, so it cannot actually be called an awareness as it's not aware of anything.

Then the Buddha, picking up a little bit of dirt under his fingernail, addressed that mendicant: ...

"There's not even this much of any consciousness that's permanent, everlasting, eternal, imperishable, and will last forever and ever. If there were, this living of the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering would not be found. But since there isn't, this living of the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering is found."

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.97/en/sujato>)

“Mendicants, it would make sense to be possessive about something that’s permanent, everlasting, eternal, imperishable, and will last forever and ever. But do you see any such possession?”

“No, sir.”

“Good, mendicants! I also can’t see any such possession.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn22/en/sujato>)

'There is not anywhere anything
That ever exists without depending.
Thus never is there anywhere
Anything that is permanent.
There is no functional thing without a cause,
Nor anything permanent which has a cause.
Thus the one who knows suchness said what has
Come about causelessly does not exist.'
(Catuhsataka 9.202-203, tr Ruth Sonam)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

ThreeVows said:

Just one thought, that time arises within the nature of mind, not the other way around.
As such, the discussion about 'eternal' is somewhat tricky.

Astus wrote:

Rather, time arises as a concept, an idea, and as such it is a mental phenomenon, so it is "within" the mind, so to speak, although it is a somewhat misleading metaphor, as there is no mind apart from mental factors, nor is it a box to contain things. Then, when it comes to the nature of mind, that means what mind is like, what its nature is, but it's quite a strange idea that there can be something inside what the mind is like. That would be like saying that the toy is inside the cubicity of a box.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 5:21 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

A Buddha’s awareness is beyond the duality of permanent/impermanent.
Referring to the aggregates is about what creates the experience of a “me” happening.
They arise within awareness. They aren’t the cause of awareness.
Awareness isn’t a “thing”. It’s what “things” happen in. It’s like 3D space.

Simply put, it's impossible to assert the cessation of awareness, even for a Buddha, because there would still be awareness of that cessation.

Astus wrote:

If the Buddha had been unaware of the ideas of permanent and impermanent, he could not have been able to conceive and teach about them.

The aggregates mean the physical and mental experiences. To say that they create the misconception of a self is to say that even a buddha - who clearly has a body and a mind - is mistaken and believes in a self.

Awareness is the act of being aware of something, and as such it arises dependent on its object. It is what the aggregate of consciousness is.

Space is simply a conceptual fabrication, and so is an eternal awareness, i.e. a self.

Since an unconditioned awareness is a mere expression, there is nothing to cease but the mistake of believing it to be real.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 5:28 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

ThreeVows said:

In a dream, hypothetically one might be able to experience a billion years within the span of a single second, 'from the outside'. The experience of time - not just as a concept, but as a phenomenon - arises 'within' the dream.

Astus wrote:

What is the phenomenal quality, its defining attribute, that you call the experience of time? Is it something seen or heard? Or is it rather a mental fabrication that conceives whether something has lasted for long or short, and what can be further complicated by specific measurements, like hours and years? If it's the latter, then it is very much conceptual.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Awareness with imputed duality is samsara.

Awareness without duality is bodhi.

Astus wrote:

That does not render awareness unconditioned in either case, rather it shows its conditioned nature. It arises and ceases with its conditions, like anything else.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

ThreeVows said:

I mean, I have no problem with that as long as you then acknowledge that literally everything is conceptual. Including the experience for instance of being punched in the nose and breaking your nose, bleeding all over the floor, etc. For instance.

Astus wrote:

The point is that there can be no separate 'nature of mind' identified apart from phenomena.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 3:22 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

...in samsara.

Astus wrote:

Mind is a phenomenon. To say that one can find the nature of mind outside mind is like saying one can identify redness apart from colours.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 5:11 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If mind is a phenomenon...

...how are you not saying that nirvana is complete annihilation of awareness?

Astus wrote:

Nirvana means the ending of defilements, not the ending of the aggregates. Without defilements, there is no cause for birth, hence the Buddha's exclamation: 'My freedom is unshakable; this is my last rebirth; now there are no more future lives.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn26/en/sujato>, etc.)

PadmaVonSamba said:

...how is your view essentially any different from the materialist view that awareness is a product of matter?

Astus wrote:

The six types of consciousness arise based on the six sense bases and sense objects, as <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673850#p673850>. It is not how

materialists imagine it.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Mind is aware of phenomena.

Phenomena are all objects of awareness.

Astus wrote:

Even if you want to categorise like that, mind arises dependent on phenomena, and ceases dependent on the cessation of its object. So the Buddha has stated: 'For in many ways I have told you that consciousness is dependently originated, since without a cause, consciousness does not come to be.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 3:00 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Again, the context: the buddha is talking about skandhas, which refers to beings in samsara.

Astus wrote:

Skandhas mean simply body and mind. Whether one assumes them to be a self/being, or a self as their owner, or a self inside them, or outside of them (i.e. the 20 types of self-view), that's what binds one and generates suffering.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Anyway, the monk said that after 'nibbana' there is awareness. If there's no disagreement about that, then that's that.

Astus wrote:

There is no unconditioned awareness, awareness is simply a function of the skandhas.

Since there is no birth once one has attained complete liberation, it is baseless to assume any form of awareness to remain. See also the explanations

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673850#p673850> by authoritative

Theravada teachers https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahasi_Sayadaw and

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._A._Payutto.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 3:24 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

The realization of buddhahood (nibbana) is a cessation of the world; it reveals the unborn awareness shining underneath, free of any separation.

Astus wrote:

Unborn awareness is a Mahayana expression that means that awareness is empty. It is no different from the basic teaching that the aggregates are no-self. It does not mean a hidden soul to be discovered, as that would be just common self-view and mistaking the aggregate of consciousness to be something permanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Awareness is empty of any independent causation or origination; this is seen because the aggregates have no self (they go away completely in the realization and thus have never been truly established)..

Astus wrote:

Awareness, like anything else, is empty of an independent self/essence/substance/nature (i.e. svabhāva), and it is causally and dependently produced by conditions.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 8:18 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, you are saying total annihilation then?

Astus wrote:

There is annihilation (uccheda) and there is cessation (nirodha). Annihilation usually means the extreme view of the ending of a being/self at the time of death. Cessation usually stands for the cessation of suffering, as in the third noble truth.

“There is, brahmin, a sense in which you could rightly say that I’m a teacher of annihilationism. For I teach the annihilation of greed, hate, and delusion, and the many kinds of unskillful things. In this sense you could rightly say that I’m a teacher of annihilationism. But that’s not what you’re talking about.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/an8.11/en/sujato>)

As for the matter of what happens to the Buddha after death, whether he exists or does not, that is a question based on the incorrect view of self, as noted before

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673470#p673470> and

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673850#p673850>.

PadmaVonSamba said:

No pure realms, none of that?

Astus wrote:

There are heavens, among them those that are called the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Abodes as the highest places in the realm of form, where non-returners are born.

PadmaVonSamba said:

My understanding is that the skandhas are the basis of self-grasping, not of awareness itself.

Astus wrote:

Indeed, the aggregates are all that can be grasped as self, but grasping and the aggregates are not the same, 'the desire and greed for them is the grasping there.' (<https://suttacentral.net/mn109/en/sujato>), and the whole point is not to grasp, because 'When you grasp, mendicant, you're bound by Māra. Not grasping, you're free from the Wicked One.' (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.63/en/sujato>). So there is the distinction between the five aggregates and the five grasping aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.48/en/sujato>).

PadmaVonSamba said:

How can there be skandhas without their first being awareness?

Astus wrote:

Awareness is the aggregate of consciousness.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Without a stream of awareness as a foundation, it is also baseless to assume any cause for rebirth. As the materials say, you die, and that's it. Poof.

Astus wrote:

Birth is not caused by a stream of awareness but by craving. The view that awareness is a constant has been most clearly and strongly rejected by the Buddha, e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.61/en/sujato>.

PadmaVonSamba said:

So then, no such thing as tathagatagarbha.

Astus wrote:

Tathagatagarbha is the potential for attaining buddhahood. Like by having legs there is a potential for running a marathon. But 'potential' is not concrete thing, simply an imagined future event.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Zen is wrong about 'unborn mind'.

Astus wrote:

The mind is unborn, just like all appearances are unborn. It is another way to say that mind is dependently arisen, therefore empty.

PadmaVonSamba said:

There is no Pure Land of Amitabha.

Astus wrote:

It is still a temporary place where one can work on attaining buddhahood.

PadmaVonSamba said:

What is aware of this conditionally dependent production?

Astus wrote:

Comprehending dependent production is a complex mental process, similarly to how comprehending a series of lines and dots as words and sentences is a complex mental process. Not taking into account that complexity and simply assuming a constant subject behind objects is a superficial approach that generates the false impression of there being a self.

PadmaVonSamba said:

What comes into contact with these conditions?

Astus wrote:

Conditions interact with conditions. Awareness of conditions is itself a conditional product and factor.

“What is the cause, Master Gotama, what is the reason why these various misconceptions arise in the world? That is: the cosmos is eternal, or not eternal, or finite, or infinite; the soul and the body are the same thing, or they are different things; after death, a Realized One still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists.”

“Vaccha, it is because of not knowing consciousness, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that leads to its cessation that these various misconceptions arise in the world. This is the cause, this is the reason.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn33.5/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 24th, 2023 at 9:39 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If Buddhas have no awareness, how can they establish pure abodes?

Astus wrote:

A living buddha has awareness, just as he also has a body, no different in that regard from any other human being. As for buddha lands, those are established through the

vows made and merits accumulated over innumerable lifetimes as a bodhisattva.

PadmaVonSamba said:

I still say that you are confusing the arising of conceptual subject-object interaction with awareness.

What I'm saying is that awareness interacts with objects of awareness and this is what results in the experience we call consciousness (which involves the skandhas, etc).

Astus wrote:

As <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673437#p673437>, the six types of consciousness arises from the six types of sense organs and sense objects, that is: 'Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. Ear consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sounds.' to 'Mind consciousness arises dependent on the mind and thoughts.'. Seeing how consciousness arises dependently is what can lead to liberation (<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.234/en/sujato>).

It should also be clear that the six types of consciousness are what the consciousness aggregate is.

'And what is consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind consciousness. This is called consciousness.

Consciousness originates from name and form. When name and form cease, consciousness ceases. The practice that leads to the cessation of consciousness is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.56/en/sujato>)

PadmaVonSamba said:

It's because of ignorance that awareness experiences objects of awareness as intrinsically existing (and not merely temporary composites) and this ignorance results in grasping > samsara.

Astus wrote:

Taking awareness to be something intrinsically existing and not merely a temporary composite is similarly a form of grasping resulting in suffering.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But awareness itself is not a "thing". It's like space. It's where "things" happen.

Astus wrote:

Awareness is likened to space because it has no essence, not because it is some sort of infinite container.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Your view is basically the same as the materialist view that consciousness emerges from matter.

Astus wrote:

What makes you believe so? I have repeatedly stated here that consciousness arises based on the sense organ and sense object, just as it is taught by the Buddha. That is not the same as identifying the mind with the body as materialists do.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2023 at 3:54 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Awareness is empty of any independent causation or origination; this is because it is uncaused and unborn; it is outside of causation of any form.

Astus wrote:

An independent, unconditioned awareness, that is an impossibility, and is basically no different from the view of atman.

SvatahSiddha said:

I'm interested in any source in the buddhadharma you might quote from that holds awareness itself as dependent on conditions.

Astus wrote:

There is no unconditioned awareness in the buddhadharma, just as there is no ultimate self.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2023 at 3:36 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

If that's true, then ultimately there is no liberation from samsara. Follow the logic.

Astus wrote:

Liberation means change. What cannot change cannot have liberation. So the Buddha has stated that if there were something permanent, liberation would be impossible and the path would be meaningless (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.97/en/sujato>). Same applies to the views that body and soul are the same or different

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.35/en/sujato>). What should be recognised is that it's neither the sense organs, nor the sense objects that are the problem, but the craving and clinging to them (<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.232/en/sujato>).

Therefore the view of an unconditioned awareness apart from the aggregates is rejected, as it is a hindrance to liberation, it is an unnecessary assumption, and keeps one trapped in rebirth.

PadmaVonSamba said:

‘Self’ and ‘awareness’ are not the same thing.

Astus wrote:

If one believes something to be the unconditioned essence of existence, that qualifies as one of the common philosophical views of self, just like one finds so in Sankhya and Vedanta where an ultimate, independent witness is taken as the final reality. Such a view has been rejected and refuted in Buddhism from the beginning.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The problem with asserting that the true nature of awareness is conditional or dependent on aggregates is like saying that because removing dirt from a glass window reveals its clarity, that therefore the original clarity of the glass only exists in the first place because the dirt has been removed.

Astus wrote:

Awareness is the aggregate of consciousness, as it is consciousness that is aware of its six types of objects (as <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=674037#p674037>). The nature of awareness/consciousness is that it's empty, insubstantial, without essence. It is because awareness is conditioned that it is empty. An unconditioned, independent awareness very much qualifies as not empty, as a substance, an essence, a soul, a self. And since it's unconditioned, no change can affect it, no liberation is possible. That awareness, i.e. consciousness, just like the other aggregates, in other words: the entirety of body and mind is empty means that it's originally pure. The empty nature of mind is what cannot be grasped, and without grasping there is no defilement.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The Skandhas don't describe the mind's true nature. They describe the basis for obscuring the mind (self grasping) through attachment to form, feeling, and so on. They describe the “mud on the window” that creates the dichotomy of subject-object.

Astus wrote:

The skandhas are all there is, both body and mind. In fact, the skandhas are used to highlight that mind is a composite (the the six senses highlight the body being a composite). The nature of the skandhas is the nature of mind. That's why insight into the nature of the skandhas is a key to liberation. But not like it's done in Vedanta, where one has to peel away the sheaths (pañcakoṣa) to find inside the self. Rather in the Buddha's teaching one eventually does not find anything, no essence, no substance, no soul, no self whatsoever. There are merely conventional, conditioned phenomena without a core or ultimate source.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2023 at 4:22 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

It isn't 'independent'; it is the root of your own (and every other) awareness. It is buddha nature before it encounters conditions.

Astus wrote:

If it isn't independent then it is conditioned, so there is no time when it is not involved with conditions.

SvatahSiddha said:

It's not an ultimate self; it is awareness experienced before self (manas) begins.

Astus wrote:

There is no self, merely the misconception of a self. If by awareness you mean the wisdom of not conceiving a self, then that is not before the misconception arises, but rather after one has realised the emptiness of the aggregates.

SvatahSiddha said:

That is the realization of a Buddha; it is found when the repository consciousness empties and the perfected mode of reality shines forth.

Astus wrote:

That Yogacara type of description is fine, it says the same: the wisdom after realising the twofold emptiness.

SvatahSiddha said:

I'm still interested in any source in the buddhadharma you might quote from that holds awareness itself as dependent on conditions.

Astus wrote:

As you stated above, awareness is not independent. As for consciousness (what is conscious/aware of things), with the other aggregates being dependent and conditioned, statements of that have been quoted directly from the Buddha in this thread already, like <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=674037#p674037>.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2023 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, what do you think about the idea of RigPa?

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigpa>

Astus wrote:

In dzogchen it means knowing the nature of mind. It's not an unconditioned awareness, not even a synonym for consciousness, but rather a specific type of wisdom.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 25th, 2023 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What I'm referring to is this statement and others like it:

“Great Perfection texts can define the liberation of sentient beings as timeless, meaning that the state of liberation is their unconditioned essential state. “

Astus wrote:

The 'state of liberation' is not an awareness or consciousness, it is simply the original purity of emptiness, that things are already such(ness). Just as it can be said that all conditioned appearances are impermanent, that is their universal characteristic, however, as long as that is not known clearly, beings remain attracted to and enchanted by them. But the fault is not in the impermanent things, they themselves cause no problems, it's the deluded, ignorant mind that causes suffering. So in that sense everything is already pure.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 26th, 2023 at 10:58 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I understand that for an instance of consciousness to arise, there is the meeting of subject and object (usually through the sense faculties) and that what the experience of consciousness is, is this interaction.

Would you say that this is correct?

Astus wrote:

Not really. Consciousness arises because of the meeting of sense organ and sense object, like eye and form. Then the three together produces contact, when the very basic impression happens, and then necessarily come other factors, like feeling, attention, and intention. That can be followed either by craving/hating/confusion if ignorance is present, or no defilement if there is wisdom. That is the crucial part where one can gain suffering or liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 26th, 2023 at 11:04 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Do you think that, during any given moment, one can be aware of anything that they are not thinking about, that they are not actively cognizing?

Astus wrote:

That depends on what you define as being aware, thinking, and cognising.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Since there is no point of contact between my awareness and things which are not happening, then if I experience them not happening, how am I aware that they are not happening?

Astus wrote:

What doesn't happen is not experienced. One can merely imagine or recognise conceptually the absence of something, based on one's memory or imagination.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 27th, 2023 at 3:13 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

In the Surangama Sutra, the Buddha asks, if you cover your eyes so that you can't see, then how do you know you can't see?

(There's no contact between sense organ and sense object).

Astus wrote:

Just as one can know that there is not a whale in the bathroom. It does not take any special, constant, independent awareness, rather it requires standard mental functioning.

By the way, the point of the Surangama Sutra is not that consciousness is somehow unconditioned, as assumed by the Sankhya and Vedanta (see ch II.9, p 72-74 in BTTS new translation), but rather that the nature of consciousness - like the nature of everything else - is beyond the extremes of being and nonbeing, in other words, it is empty. See also <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=658121#p658121>.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Actually, we are constantly aware of millions of bits of sensory data that we don't pay attention to.

Astus wrote:

That might be so on some level, however, it makes no difference. Buddhism is about how suffering arises and how it ceases. Religious, philosophical, and scientific theories and systems about the body, the mind, the earth, or outer space are quite irrelevant.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 27th, 2023 at 4:28 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But answer the question: if you can't see, how do you know you can't see?

Astus wrote:

Just as one knows there is no whale in the room. One has the concept of a whale/seeing, and recognises its absence.

PadmaVonSamba said:

In one of the talks given by Bankei, he mentions to those in attendance that there are birds singing just outside of where they are gathered, and that our already illuminated "unborn Buddha mind" is aware of that even though we are not consciously listening to them.

Astus wrote:

If there is no attention paid, one is not consciously aware, hence forms neither thought nor intention to it, then it's like being unaware of its presence. Thus no relationship is established, no action/karma occurs, and has no part in the chain of suffering/liberation.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Again, it's like how a the true nature of a mirror is always that of reflectivity regardless of whether an object is placed before it or not.

Astus wrote:

If the function of awareness/reflection is lacking, it cannot be considered aware/reflective. That's why consciousness without object is impossible.

PadmaVonSamba said:

And this includes being obstructed by that duality which forms the basis for samsaric attachment: the skandhas.

Astus wrote:

Skandhas are not hindrances themselves, nor is there a separate awareness or consciousness.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 27th, 2023 at 5:58 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, what are you saying comes into contact with a concept of not seeing?
Consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Of course, the sixth type of consciousness is mental consciousness, as <https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=673446#p673446>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 27th, 2023 at 6:31 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What are its components?

Astus wrote:

Awareness of mental phenomena is what's called mental consciousness, it arises with the standard universal mental factors (mainly the other three mental aggregates), and the mental factors specific to the situation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 28th, 2023 at 3:55 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

There is still awareness of that awareness of mental phenomena.

Astus wrote:

There is not and cannot be. That type of self-awareness requires the presence of multiple minds, so it's regularly rejected. It is also quite impractical as it merely ends up in an infinite series of awareness of awareness.

'The Guardian of the World himself has said

That mind cannot be seen by mind.

In just the same way, he has said,

The sword's edge cannot cut the sword.

"But," you say, "it's like the flame

That perfectly illuminates itself."

The flame, in fact, can never light itself.

And why? Because the darkness never dims it!

(Bodhicaryavatara 9.17-19, tr Padmakara)

PadmaVonSamba said:

The advaitaists may be wrong about an ultimate self or atman, but I think they are correct that anything one may point to as awareness is still an object of awareness.

Astus wrote:

That is upholding an insurmountable gap between sense organ and sense object, imagining them to be substantially distinct. If that were so, then they couldn't actually meet, and the whole relationship of subject-object would be meaningless.

'One thing cannot meet itself

And other does not meet with other.

Neither meeting nor the met with

Nor the thing that meets exist at all.'
(Mulamadhyamakakarika, 14.8, tr Padmakara)

Here is a useful explanation of what mind is:

'The Pali word citta is derived from the verbal root citi, to cognize, to know. The commentators define citta in three ways: as agent, as instrument, and as activity. As the agent, citta is that which cognizes an object ((ārammaṇaṃ cintetī ti cittaṃ). As the instrument, citta is that by means of which the accompanying mental factors cognize the object (etena cintetī ti cittaṃ). As an activity, citta is itself nothing other than the process of cognizing the object (cintanamattaṃ cittaṃ).

The third definition, in terms of sheer activity, is regarded as the most adequate of the three: that is, citta is fundamentally an activity or process of cognizing or knowing an object. It is not an agent or instrument possessing actual being in itself apart from the activity of cognizing. The definitions in terms of agent and instrument are proposed to refute the wrong view of those who hold that a permanent self or ego is the agent and instrument of cognition. The Buddhist thinkers point out, by means of these definitions, that it is not a self that performs the act of cognition, but citta or consciousness. This citta is nothing other than the act of cognizing, and that act is necessarily impermanent, marked by rise and fall.'

(https://www.bps.lk/olib/bp/bp304s_Bfodhi_Comprehensive_Manual_of_Abhidhamma.pdf by Bhikkhu Bodhi, p 27-29; see also The Theravada Abhidhamma by Y. Karunadasa, ch 5)

And this one might also help:

'In the Buddhist discussion of mind, then, we are not talking about some sort of "thing" or organ that is in our head, like the brain. Nor are we talking about a space, as is implied by the Western expression, "Imagine in your mind this or that" – as if mind were a stage or room in our head through which thoughts parade or in which memories are stored. Rather, we are talking about some sort of occurrence that is happening on the basis of the brain and nervous system.

What is happening when we see, hear or think something? Although we may be able to describe the occurrence biochemically or electrochemically, we can also describe it subjectively. This latter is what we mean by "mind" in Buddhism. When we see, hear, think or emotionally feel something, there is an experience from moment to moment. This is what is happening. Furthermore, experience always has contents. An equivalent way of saying that is: "Mind always has an object." In fact, "mind" in Sanskrit and Tibetan is also called "that which has an object."

...

Experience always has contents. We cannot have an experience without experiencing something. A thought does not exist without a thinking of the thought, and no one can think without thinking a thought. Nondual, then, means that in any moment, these two things – mind and its object, or experience and its contents – always come together as one entity. Putting this in simple, everyday language, we can say they always come together in the same package. There cannot be one without the other. Therefore, in Buddhism "mind" always refers to experience with contents.

...

What occurs when we experience something? There is the giving rise to something. For ease of expression, we need to say, "mind gives rise to something." This is preferable to saying, "something arises." "Something arises" puts too much emphasis on what is happening from the side of the object, whereas the accent needs to be more on the subjective side. The phrase, "mind gives rise to something," however, also has its shortcomings. It is just a convenient manner of expression. Mind is not an entity or "thing," so there is nothing that is actually an agent giving rise to anything. The word, "mind," is simply a term mentally labeled onto the occurrence of the subjective event of the giving rise to something.

...

In summary, mind in Buddhism refers to experience, namely the mere arising and cognitive engaging with the contents of experience. The continuity of experience is known as the mind-stream, or "mental-continuum." It is always individual, with each moment of experience following from previous moments of experience according to the karmic laws of behavioral cause and effect. There is order in the universe, and "my" experience is never "your" experience. If I experience eating a meal, I and not you will next experience the physical sensation of being full. Buddhism does not posit a universal or collective mind.

The never-ceasing, moment-to-moment event of arising and engaging that constitutes experience, then, refers to the arising of a sight and merely seeing it, the arising of a sound and merely hearing it, the arising of a thought and merely thinking it, the arising of an emotion and merely feeling it, and so on. This is the conventional nature of mind – it gives rise to things and apprehends them. Its deepest nature is its voidness, namely that it is devoid of existing in any impossible manner, from being a physical entity itself up to involving a solid, concrete subject, content or experience. Such a mind, then, with these two true natures – or "two truths" – is the topic of mahamudra meditation.'

(<https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/vajrayana/mahamudra-advanced/the-practical-application-of-mahamudra/the-initial-level-of-mahamudra-meditation>)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 28th, 2023 at 2:44 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

You can observe it for yourself.

You can observe yourself observing it.

You are aware that you are aware.

And everything you observe is still an object of awareness.

The fact of observation,

simply because there are objects of awareness,
proves that there is awareness.

You can quote as many sutras as you like.

It doesn't change that fact.

Astus wrote:

Awareness of awareness is not observed. First of all, it does not happen simultaneously but one thinks of thinking, recognises recognition, conceives conception, perceives perception, etc. as a second thought/.../perception following the first instance.

Secondly, if you stipulate that everything can only be an object of awareness and not awareness itself, that already rules out the possibility of ever becoming aware of awareness. So, in both cases awareness is nothing more than another idea.

Furthermore, such an approach of putting thought upon thought, mind upon mind, head upon head (the parable of Yajñadatta in Surangama Sutra IV.4, p 159), merely maintains the confused chain of thoughts.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 28th, 2023 at 8:47 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

How do you know that you know this?

Astus wrote:

In the same way one can know other things: experience, logic, tradition (oral/textual).

Practically, if one is engaged in some activity, it takes extra effort to monitor how one is engaged, and that can even disturb one's original activity. This is easier to discern when an activity requires a high level of attention.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, August 28th, 2023 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

This debate about awareness can be summed up quite nicely by Duckworth in terms of a distinction from phenomenology (favored by Yogacara and Vedanta) vs. ontology (favored by Madhyamaka)

Astus wrote:

It can remain a phenomenological observation that no matter what state of mind, no matter what experience it is, it necessarily arises and passes away. So, even if one feels like being the observer behind whatever happens, that is itself a temporary feeling that is not always there.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2023 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

The argument is that awareness isn't some temporary state, and that as the result of studying, contemplating, and practicing (shravana, manana, nididhyasana), you actually can maintain awareness continuously: not only throughout your waking life, but also as the waking world collapses into the dream world and into deep sleep, such that you never drift off but maintain lucidity throughout; that you can maintain awareness continuously during the void before a thought arises, noticing its arising, and seeing its passing away into void; etc.

Astus wrote:

If such a continuous awareness is a result of cultivation, then it is itself a temporary creation.

stong gzugs said:

In no sense is awareness itself contingent upon whatever thought or state of existence (waking, dreaming, deep sleep) the mind is entering.

Astus wrote:

An awareness that exists without being aware is not awareness.

stong gzugs said:

Moreover, the key argument is that awareness is not really the "witness" on the subject side of a subject-object mental duality, but a basic self-illuminating space in which all dualistic mental activity occurs.

Astus wrote:

If it were self-illuminating, it would not need discovery, nor cultivation to maintain it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2023 at 2:50 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

Is enlightenment the result of cultivation? If so, shouldn't it be impermanent by definition? If it's impermanent, then buddhas can become sentient beings again, so why bother?

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is the result of cultivation, as it's stated by one of the most fundamental doctrines: the four noble truths. It is not impermanent, as it is the ending of the causes of suffering, and without causes there is no reason for it to reemerge.

stong gzugs said:

Namely, the explanations are those like: awareness doesn't have to be created, but realized (which some people can do instantly (i.e., cig car bas) but others need to paradoxically work at), that such realization is about overcoming ignorance rather than

creating something new, and ignorance is basically a fundamental misidentification that treats the contents of our experience as real and external to us which reifies us into limited subjects, where all of this occurs analogously to how the presence of clouds doesn't mean the sun doesn't exist and so a practice that scatters the clouds doesn't create the sun but simply reveals it, etc.

Astus wrote:

If awareness can be ignorant, then it is not a good idea to merely arrive at identifying with such an unreliable thing. If awareness cannot be ignorant, then it cannot mistakenly identify with the contents.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2023 at 2:57 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

That's like saying that if the original nature of the mind is bodhi (awakened) there would be no cause for samsara to occur.

Astus wrote:

Even a toenail's original nature is bodhi, as it is not inherently defiled. Defilement is the identification with and grasping at a toenail. Similarly, to mistake the mind/awareness as something that can be rightly called one's essence, one's true identity, is ignorance that keeps one from being free from suffering.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 29th, 2023 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

Yes, yes, but this just gets us right back to the start of the thread. If enlightenment is sheer negation/extinction/extinguishment, as it is described in some Theravada sources, then the extinction of grasping, etc. as the causes for becoming will lead to a lack of becoming (which is thus defined as enlightenment). To use the Buddha's example, there's a fire burning because of grasping, and enlightenment is the extinguishing of the fire.

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment is the end of defilements even in Mahayana.

'Some who objectify it think that nirvana is something existent, but it is not like that. ... If nirvana were something existent, then it would have to be something compound. If it were something compound, then eventually it would perish. ... It is the complete exhaustion of all thoughts which grasp existence and nonexistence. Nirvana is beyond conceptualization and is inexpressible. ... Therefore, nirvana is merely pacification of

engagement in conceptual thought. It does not exist as any phenomena whatsoever — rising, cessation, abandonment, attainment, and so forth.'
(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 245-246)

stong gzugs said:

But if enlightenment has positive characteristics, like the continuity of some type of first-person experience, so you aren't a zombie while living and don't just disappear after dying, then you end up with a lot of special pleading for how such an experience can be cultivated but permanent and what the basis is for such experience, and this is what leads those like Thanissaro Bhikkhu to posit an unconditioned mind, and so on. The Buddha treated all of this as a question he refused to answer as I'm sure you know.

Astus wrote:

Enlightenment has numerous positive characteristics, in fact, it's the most positive thing there is. But to wonder about the continuity or discontinuity of a liberated being is still grasping at an entity.

“Vaccha, the wanderers of other religions regard the eye like this: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’ They regard the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind like this: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’

That’s why, when asked, they declare one of those answers to be true.

The Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha regards the eye like this: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’ He regards the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind like this: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’

That’s why, when asked, he does not declare one of those answers to be true.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn44.7/en/sujato>)

stong gzugs said:

Nobody in the Vedantic traditions I know of claims that awareness can be ignorant, it's rather the same argument made in Mahayana texts about adventitious defilements, where it's not that the sun has stopped shining, just that some clouds have arisen.

Astus wrote:

Just as the sun isn't bothered by clouds, an unaffected awareness needs no liberation. Then it remains to be answered who then is the one who misidentifies himself. Do clouds mistake themselves to be clouds? But that's not a mistake, as they are actually clouds.

stong gzugs said:

So the white screen itself doesn't liberate us, but when there's a pause in the movie (as through meditation, for instance), and we see the white screen for what it is, then the ignorance is overcome by this newfound vidya or knowledge of the white screen (awareness), and we no longer fool ourselves into thinking that the screen changes colors. This is also why the argument claiming that an awareness that isn't changing can't be a cause for liberation doesn't hold much weight IMO.

Astus wrote:

Whose ignorance is overcome? Isn't the white screen the symbol of our very essence, the ultimate knower? Also, as long as there are all the colours of a movie on the screen, it is not a white screen. In other words, if there is a substance independent of the attributes, then the substance is not related to the attributes, nor does it have any qualities to account for, so it is not different from not existing at all.

stong gzugs said:

Interesting. What sources are you relying on that claim insentient objects have bodhi as their nature?

Astus wrote:

Bodhi is freedom from defilements, and since the nature of all insentient objects is emptiness, they are in that sense bodhi. Otherwise, just in case you are interested in it, there are studies and books about the topic of the buddha-nature of insentients.

'In sum, "that without constancy" of grass, trees, and forests is just the buddha-nature. And "that without constancy" of the body-and-mind of a human being is the buddha-nature itself. National lands and mountains and rivers are "that without constancy" because they are the buddha-nature. The truth of anuttara samyaksambodhi, because it is the buddha-nature, is "that without constancy." The great state of parinirvāṇa, because it is "that without constancy," is the buddha-nature.'

(The Buddha-nature by Dogen, in Shobogenzo, BDK ed, vol 2, p 14)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 1:35 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

at the same time, all composite phenomena are unsatisfactory. If the awakened awareness of a Buddha was a composite, then enlightenment would be unsatisfactory. Then what would be the point of practice?

Astus wrote:

The awakened body of a buddha is also composite. The point of practice is to be free from attachment and identification.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Oh I think there's more to it than just that.
Lots of paths can do that much.

Astus wrote:

Not really.

'There are some other ascetics and brahmins who claim to propound the complete understanding of all kinds of grasping, but they don't really. They describe the complete understanding of grasping at sensual pleasures, views, and precepts and observances, but not theories of a self. Why is that? Because those gentlemen don't truly understand this one thing. That's why they claim to propound the complete understanding of all kinds of grasping, but they don't really.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn11/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 4:55 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

This is an interesting argument. Every thoughtful person and all cultures across the history we know of have wondered about what happens to us after we die. It's one thing to say that we don't want to get lost in a thicket of views, etc. because the answer itself isn't necessary for enlightenment. But it's quite another to say to even think about these questions is to be grasping and un-enlightened. Is there such a danger of wrong-think?

Astus wrote:

It's not about afterlife in general, but the fate of a liberated being in particular. That topic is counted among the undeclared points on which there is a collection of discourses in the *Abyākatasamyutta* (<https://suttacentral.net/sn44>), but is also discussed elsewhere, like the <https://suttacentral.net/mn63/en/sujato> and the <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato>. The topic is also addressed in chapter 22 of the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* by Nagarjuna.

stong gzugs said:

without the screen there couldn't be any of those attributes, without the mirror there couldn't be any reflections, and so on. So, I disagree with your logic there, the underlying and unchanging substance is absolutely needed, and is not the same thing as not existing at all.

Astus wrote:

That shows the interactive and dependent nature of the screen. After all, it would not be called a screen if no movies could be watched on it. That's why it is not an unchanging substance, but rather a dependent factor.

stong gzugs said:

Any studies/books you'd personally recommend?

Astus wrote:

There's a collection on https://buddhanature.tsadra.org/index.php/Topics/Buddha-nature_of_insentient_things you may check.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 5:45 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Freedom from attachment and identification? Buddhism doesn't have a monopoly on that.

Astus wrote:

Certainly no monopoly. But is there any other system/teaching where all four types of grasping mentioned in the quote are eliminated?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 10:23 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Shaiksha said:

So, I don't think that "free from attachments (I prefer to use clinging/grasping as the sutta uses - no word of attachment in that sutta you quoted, by the way) and identification" is the point of the practice.

Astus wrote:

The ultimate goal is ending all grasping.

'The purpose of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is extinguishment by not grasping.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.48/en/sujato>)

'It's good that you understand that I've taught the Dhamma for the purpose of complete extinguishment by not grasping. For that is indeed the purpose.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.75/en/sujato>)

That's what knowledge is for.

'Purification of knowledge and vision is only for the sake of extinguishment by not grasping.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn24/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 10:42 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

My monk friend said that after nibbana, there is just awareness.
You stated that even a Buddha's awareness arises from skandhas.

Astus wrote:

Awareness is part of the skandhas, not arising from them.

PadmaVonSamba said:

I'm bringing up the fact that according to the Buddha, all impermanent things are unsatisfactory, and as stated (in the four seals) all compounded things are impermanent.

But if that's the case, and Buddha's awareness arises from compounded things (skandhas) then nirvana would be unsatisfactory.

Astus wrote:

Because all compounded are unsatisfactory, a buddha does not identify with any of them. Nirvana is not awareness, it is the ending of all afflictions, of greed, hate, and delusion.

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, how do you reconcile this with your assertion that a buddy's awareness still involves the Skandhas process?

What I'm saying is that the Skandhas apply to becoming within the cycle of samsara, and not to a Buddha's awareness.

Astus wrote:

Awareness is the aggregate of consciousness, there is no other type of awareness but what falls within the aggregate of consciousness, and the aggregate of consciousness functions with the other mental aggregates. Just as a buddha has a physical body like other humans, so he has a mind as well. The distinction between a buddha and ordinary beings is that the former does not misconstrue the aggregates as 'mine, me, my self', as explained in detail in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn1/en/sujato>, and in brief for instance in the <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.7/en/sujato>. It's the aggregates that should be completely understood and it's the ending of greed, hate, and delusion that is complete understanding (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.106/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, August 30th, 2023 at 10:56 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

Person 1, Buddhist, some time later: So, if we turn to the next chapter in the Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra, we'll see that after you realize the dharmakaya upon death and become a Buddha, you will emanate countless forms to guide sentient being towards maturity...

Astus wrote:

The trikaya concept has its own twists and turns, but to say that 'you will emanate' is

somewhat problematic.

stong gzugs said:

Nothing substantive changes about the cloth whether images are projected upon it or not.

Astus wrote:

The cloth changes its look, otherwise there would be no images. To claim that hidden behind that it remains white is claiming that something can be white without looking white, in which case even black is white.

stong gzugs said:

The claim "we're the only ones who encourage letting go of attachment and identity" unfortunately, and ironically, for some people becomes an identity that they get attached to.

Astus wrote:

“Ānanda, take a mendicant who practices like this: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be, and it will not be mine. I am giving up what exists, what has come to be.’ In this way they gain equanimity. They approve, welcome, and keep clinging to that equanimity. Their consciousness relies on that and grasps it. A mendicant with grasping does not become extinguished.”

“But sir, what is that mendicant grasping?”

“The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.”

“Sir, it seems that mendicant is grasping the best thing to grasp!”

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn106/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 4:21 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

When you say a buddha doesn't identify with compounded phenomena, who exactly is it that isn't identifying with compounded phenomena?

Astus wrote:

Identification - conceptions of 'this is mine, I am this, this is my self' - or in other words, grasping at the aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.151/en/sujato>) is not by a distinct person/being/knower/agent, but it is an activity, a factor of mind, thus included in the formations aggregate.

“But sir, who grasps?”

“That’s not a fitting question,” said the Buddha.

“I don’t speak of one who grasps. If I were to speak of one who grasps, then it would be fitting to ask who grasps. But I don’t speak like that. Hence it would be fitting to ask:

‘What is a condition for grasping?’ And a fitting answer to this would be: ‘Craving is a

condition for grasping. Grasping is a condition for continued existence.' ... That is how this entire mass of suffering originates."

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.12/en/sujato>)

stong gzugs said:

If that experiencer/awareness is reducible to compounded phenomena (i.e., skandhas), it cannot last and be satisfactory and therefore the notion of a buddha is undermined.

Astus wrote:

It is an incorrect notion of a buddha if it is taken to be the aggregates, or something other than the aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.85/en/sujato>, also MMK 22), just as it is incorrect to assume a person/being/knower/agent as identical with or different from the aggregates.

stong gzugs said:

If you're saying that buddhahood is the cessation of all consciousness (which are compounded), then you have to explain how buddhas can act to benefit all beings without any thought (a reliance on habits of mind learned previously won't work, because habits alone cannot shape how to interact in novel situations, which all require ongoing selection and updating of prior learning in memory, which require the consciousnesses) and on an ongoing basis (one could say it's based on the vows one takes, but those vows like all volitional actions are also impermanent and will not last infinitely).

Astus wrote:

In the three bodies interpretation of buddhahood, dharmakaya is the essence that is suchness, emptiness, etc. For the rupakaya, that's the product of vows and merits manifesting according to the needs of beings. The former is uncompounded but not awareness, the latter is awareness but compounded. As for existing infinitely, that is no different from ordinary beings that are also without any uncompounded essence but still have been wandering in samsara without beginning.

stong gzugs said:

And with all of these, it becomes very hard to understand how any such buddha could survive the death of the physical body, such that buddhas will only be of benefit for sentient beings for a limited time that they can interact with us physically.

Astus wrote:

Naturally, and such worries are based on conceiving a buddha as a person/being/knower/agent. This type of worry is addressed in the <https://suttacentral.net/an7.54/en/sujato>.

stong gzugs said:

Because the cloth remains white even after the movie ends.

Astus wrote:

The cloth changes colour according to conditions, so it is not an example of an

unconditioned substance/substrate. A ball rolls if pushed, and then stops. Is the true nature of a ball to be stationary because it was so previously too? The cloth looks white if the appropriate light is present, looks different if the light changes, and has no colour at all if there is no light. And if the cloth is coloured not by light but by paint, or just gets dirty, it will be more difficult to make it white again.

stong gzugs said:

Substances can be in asymmetric dependence relations

Astus wrote:

If it is in any relation, it is not independent. A drop of rain or a crystal is not a prism unless it functions as such, and that function depends on temporary conditions. Similarly, it is not awareness unless it is aware of something, hence the distinction between eye-consciousness and ear-consciousness.

stong gzugs said:

this sutta is about people getting attached to blissful jhanic states

Astus wrote:

It was meant as an example where people can grasp at all sorts of views.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 4:50 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, now you are saying awareness is not a composite?

Astus wrote:

The aggregates are composite, so awareness - being the aggregate of consciousness - is composite.

PadmaVonSamba said:

No experience of the end of afflictions, etc.

Astus wrote:

How couldn't there be? Not conceiving an experience as me and mine is not the same as not having any. Ordinary beings are also capable of recognising if their hatred has disappeared, even if it's merely temporary for them.

PadmaVonSamba said:

So, how is that different from nihilism or the materialist view that when you die, the lights just go out and that's it?

Astus wrote:

The common materialist view, in other words annihilationism, is based on grasping at

the aggregates, on having the misconception of there being a real person/being/knower/agent, that at one point (death) ceases to exist. If there is no grasping at the body, or the mind, or both, then there is no worry of ceasing to exist either. If the consciousness is seen for what and how it is, then it is clear that it does not last even for a minute and ceases to be uncountable times during a single day (<https://suttacentral.net/sn12.61/en/sujato>).

PadmaVonSamba said:

Are you saying that awareness cannot occur by itself, but only as a component of subject-object consciousness?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness is generally counted as six types according to the six types of objects it can be conscious of. Whether someone conceives there to be a subject/me and an object/mine is another matter. But regardless if one still has or doesn't have a self-view, consciousness arises based on conditions.

PadmaVonSamba said:

his consciousness is conditional and thus by his own definition, unsatisfactory

Astus wrote:

Even in the case of a buddha consciousness is conditioned and unsatisfactory, just like the body. The distinctive part is that a buddha does not conceive them to be his or himself.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 5:14 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Shaiksha said:

So, if I can modify the translation, it will be something along the line: attaining the final nibbana without taking up any more fuel. It is a huge difference (for me at least) to the term: extinguishment by not grasping.

Astus wrote:

Either case, the goal of the whole path remains being free from grasping.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 9:36 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I think many will disagree with you here.

Astus wrote:

'The Buddha has a body
with which he senses touch.
But he has no desire and greed,
for his mind is well freed.
The Buddha has a mind
with which he knows thought.
But he has no desire and greed,
for his mind is well freed.'
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.232/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 11:14 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

stong gzugs said:

This sort of metacognitive awareness is necessary for all sorts of everyday activities, particularly those related to self-knowledge.

Astus wrote:

That is very much within the functions and capabilities of the mental aggregates. No need to posit any independent, unchanging awareness on top of them.

stong gzugs said:

If vows that give rise to the form bodies are conditioned and impermanent, and Buddhas don't generate new karma, then eventually they should disappear into emptiness/dharmakaya?

Astus wrote:

Shakyamuni died, didn't he? But according to the three bodies theory, he was merely an emanation, not a real entity anyway. Can unreal entities appear and disappear? As for the other side of the issue, since bodhisattvas accumulate immeasurable merits, how could those ever be exhausted?

stong gzugs said:

Are you saying that when the rope looks like a snake, it is a snake?

Astus wrote:

Nobody gets scared by a rope that looks like a snake, only by what looks like a snake. Then if it's analysed, a snake turns out to be a rope, then a rope to be threads, and the threads to be ultimately nothing at all.

stong gzugs said:

the screen doesn't depend on the projections: its main quality is its whiteness that allows it to become a useful substance for projection.

Astus wrote:

It is called a screen - and not a handkerchief or a tablecloth - because it is used to project movies on it. If whiteness were its main quality, then it would cease to be a screen the moment it no longer looked white, in which case it couldn't function as a screen. Thus assuming an unchanging substance contradicts functionality.

stong gzugs said:

Likewise, awareness doesn't depend on its contents, but the contents depend on awareness.

Astus wrote:

If awareness did not depend on the fact that it is aware of something, that means unawareness is also awareness, as insentient things are not aware of anything either.

stong gzugs said:

In this view, it's the unchanging nature of the screen that makes it useful.

Astus wrote:

Quite the opposite, because the white screen can appear as all sorts of colours when projected on it, it means that its changeability is what makes it useful. If it were to just stay white, no movies would be visible on it.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, August 31st, 2023 at 11:17 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Yeah. The Buddha has a mind.

That's what I've been saying.

duuuuhhh!!!

Astus wrote:

A mind like all sentient beings, conditioned and impermanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 1st, 2023 at 12:25 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Then there's no point in practice or attaining.

Astus wrote:

It's because mind is conditional that there is a way to remove defilements and thus end suffering. How is that not meaningful and worthwhile?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 1st, 2023 at 4:05 AM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

According to you, I wouldn't even be aware that it had ended.

Astus wrote:

Defilements are specific mental factors (i.e. the three root unskillful qualities of greed, hate, and delusion, and their derivatives) affecting how one acts in body, words, and mind. It is not the entirety of body and mind (i.e. the five aggregates). Their presence, just as their absence, can be well discerned by

<https://suttacentral.net/mn10/en/sujato?lang=en&layout=plain&reference=main¬es=asterisk&highlight=false&script=latin#34.1>, just as it is recommended in the <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.153/en/sujato>. So why wouldn't you be aware of their end?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 1st, 2023 at 10:27 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Shaiksha said:

Actually, the goal of the whole path is the ending of suffering (dukkha).

Astus wrote:

How is there a difference between being free from suffering and being free from grasping?

Here's a series of six discourses giving six different goals:

<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.42-47/en/sujato>.

There are also variations on the four noble truths (e.g.

<https://suttacentral.net/an6.63/en/sujato>), one commonly mentioned being where suffering is changed to defilements (āśava), e.g. DN 2, DN 10, MN 100, MN 101, MN 112.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 1st, 2023 at 10:50 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Also, any time one wasn't grasping or thinking "me" one would be experiencing nibbana.

Astus wrote:

That is actually the case, to a certain extent. It is expressed by the various uses of vimutti and vimokkha in the suttas.

It is more clearly stated in the Platform Sutra, e.g. 'A single moment's stupidity and

prajñā is eradicated, a single moment's wisdom and prajñā is generated.' and 'When one is enlightened for [even] a single moment, then sentient beings are buddhas.'

And from a Theravada side, see this essay: <https://www.suanmokkh.org/books/84>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 3rd, 2023 at 2:35 PM

Title: Re: is Dharmakirti's epistemology congruent with Dzogchen?

Content:

Baz0 said:

simpler summaries that are well explained are preferred at this point.

Astus wrote:

You might look into

https://buddhanature.tsadra.org/index.php/Books/Mipham%27s_Sword_of_Wisdom

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 4th, 2023 at 3:06 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

Ophidian Rainbow said:

What are the differences between Zazen and Shamatha as practised by Vajrayana buddhists? Is there a difference?

Astus wrote:

Zazen in general simply means seated meditation, so that can be practically anything done while sitting. So to tell the difference it should be something more specific, like http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=3020&wr_id=53 or https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/key_terms/pdf/key_terms01.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 4th, 2023 at 10:40 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

Ophidian Rainbow said:

What exactly are the differences between shikantaza and shamatha as practiced by Vajrayana Buddhists?

Astus wrote:

A lot. Shamatha is a method used to tame the mind in order to be fit for vipashyana, to make it pliant and workable. Shikantaza in Soto Zen is the entirety of Buddhism, it is buddhahood embodied in the present, the essence and the goal of the whole of Buddhadharma.

In shamatha one learns to keep the mind in a particular state, to make it calm and

focused. In shikantaza it is about letting body and mind drop, in other words, to recognise and realise immediately that there is nothing that could be held on, that all phenomena are pure suchness as they are, so there is nothing to improve and nothing to remove.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 5th, 2023 at 4:16 PM

Title: Re: The Modern Western Theravada bias

Content:

Astus wrote:

Abhidharmakosa 3.18 and commentary by Wangchuk Dorje (Jewels from the Treasury, p 337-338):

'There is no self—mere aggregates.

Continuums of between states

Assembled by afflictions and karma

Enter the womb. It's like a lamp.

According to outsiders, it follows that there is a self because sentient beings transmigrate to different worlds, you say. This does not pervade, because there is no self that accepts or rejects in the internal aggregates that make up the being. Well then, what provides continuity between the state of death and rebirthlinking? you ask. There is merely the continuum of the aggregates themselves. Labeling that continuum as the "self" is not refuted, because it is suitable to call it by any name. The aggregates alone have no power to transmigrate to new aggregates without stopping, because continuums of the between states that are fully ripened results and personally made results assembled by afflictions and karma enter the womb. It is like a lamp that is momentary but burns in a continuum of moments.'

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh226.html#UT22084-063-007-73-14>, also quoted in Madhyamakavatahabhasya 6.40:

'Great king, no phenomenon whatsoever transmigrates from this world to another world, yet there are the manifestations of death and birth.

Great king, the cessation of the final consciousness is known as death. The arising of the first consciousness is known as birth. Great king, the moment the final consciousness ceases, it does not go anywhere. The moment the first consciousness pertaining to birth arises, it also does not come from anywhere. Why is that? It is because they are devoid of essential nature.

Great king, the final consciousness is empty of final consciousness, transmigration after death is empty of transmigration after death, action is empty of action, the first consciousness is empty of the first consciousness, and birth is empty of birth, yet actions manifest without being lost.'

But Candrakirti

(<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1113&mid=1927253>)

writes how various provisional teachings are acceptable:

'The kinds of students who have previously had prolonged exposure to misguided (tirthika) views will struggle to assimilate the profound nature of things (dharmatā), and become frightened when hearing statements such as, 'I am not, nor will I be ...' When from the very outset they relate to the instructions of the Teacher like they would the edge of a precipice, backing away from it, they will not accomplish the supreme goal. By initially presenting them with such topics as the substrate consciousness, their misguided beliefs are counteracted as they are steered towards the greater purpose of these instructions. Since they will later, when gaining an unmistakable understanding of the teachings, naturally abandon these, it is definitely a beneficial approach and in no way mistaken.'

So, if some are frightened by the concept of nirvana as if it were annihilation, it is acceptable to talk of some special form of mind, like buddha-nature and such, in order to keep them on the path, like in the case of Nanda and the heavenly maidens (<https://suttacentral.net/ud3.2/en/sujato>), or in the parable of the three carts (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html#UT22084-051-001-711>).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 14th, 2023 at 5:34 AM

Title: Re: only Dzogchen & Mahamudra realize nature of the mind?

Content:

Astus wrote:

What the nature of mind is and how that is discovered is debatable and debated within Buddhism itself. What is not argued over - as far as I've seen - is that the point is to eliminate the three poisons. So the beneficial and practical question should be whether a particular method can achieve that. That is the measurement taught in the <https://suttacentral.net/an3.78/en/sujato>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 14th, 2023 at 1:10 PM

Title: Re: only Dzogchen & Mahamudra realize nature of the mind?

Content:

Baz0 said:

The nature of the three poisons upon investigation is also unobtainable so how will Buddhists remove them?

Astus wrote:

Be realising them to be unobtainable.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 14th, 2023 at 3:41 PM

Title: Re: It's Madhyamaka's methodology not its content...

Content:

wei wu wei said:

If all Madhyamikas agree that the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth, or that the ultimate truth is not ultimately true, or that ultimate reality is non-conceptual, then why all the fuss and bickering over the conventional points of the teachings?

Astus wrote:

Which one is agreed upon? No ultimate truth, or the ultimate is not really ultimate, or that the ultimate is non-conceptual? That's already three versions of what is claimed to be unanimously accepted.

wei wu wei said:

It's the methodology of Madhyamaka that has liberative power--at least over conceptual grasping--not so much the content of the conventional teachings themselves.

Astus wrote:

Is there any school/tradition that actually uses madhyamaka for that purpose? Apparently so called sutrayana is mainly to read and debate about, while it's vajrayana that is the practice (with little reading or debating about).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 15th, 2023 at 5:04 AM

Title: Re: It's Madhyamaka's methodology not its content...

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

I think what you are observing is people who jump straight to Vajrayana due to the peculiarities of our time, i.e. being able to access empowerment very easily without any study of common Mahayana teaching. Spend time with nearly any Tibetan teacher I'm aware of and it will be a teaching topic.

Astus wrote:

Such analysis can serve as part of the preparation for vajrayana, just like contemplating the four thoughts. But is it used for its "liberative power", similarly to vajrayana?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 2:43 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

bowsamic said:

Shikantaza is about resting in the pure luminous nature of your own mind and can only really be done after your teacher points out your mind to you.

Astus wrote:

On what interpretation of shikantaza do you base that? Do you have any sources for it perhaps?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 3:49 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

bowsamic said:

It's what I was taught by my Soto Zen teacher.

Astus wrote:

It sounds like a novel take on it, maybe influenced by Vajrayana a bit. Compare it to

<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/zazen/howto/index.html>.

And from a https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/leaflet/sotozen/pdf/soto_zen.pdf:

'In zazen, our body and mind is like the vast sky, receptive to all change. We just keep an upright posture and let go of any kind of thoughts. We don't identify any of the clouds as "myself." We understand that no cloud stays forever. And we trust that above the clouds, there is always a blue sky and bright sun. But we need to live beneath the clouds. We need to experience different kinds of weather. We try to live without being overwhelmed by any condition. This is what we learn from zazen.'

That is in agreement with what was taught by Huineng and Dogen about impermanence ('without constancy') being buddha-nature:

'In sum, "that without constancy" of grass, trees, and forests is just the buddha-nature. And "that without constancy" of the body-and-mind of a human being is the buddha-nature itself. National lands and mountains and rivers are "that without constancy" because they are the buddhanature. The truth of anuttara samyaksambodhi, because it is the buddha-nature, is "that without constancy."'

(The Buddha-nature, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 2, p 14; http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2582_.82.0095a25:0095a25.cit)

bowsamic said:

Huineng says

Astus wrote:

Rather:

'Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;

The bright mirror is also not a stand.

Fundamentally there is not a single thing—

Where could any dust be attracted?'

(Platform Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 22; http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2008_.48.0349a07:0349a07.cit)

bowsamic said:

Dogen says

Astus wrote:

<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/zazen/advice/fukanzanzeng.html> on the Soto homepage is less interpretative and closer to http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2580_.82.0001a03:0001a03.cit.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 4:37 PM

Title: Re: Origin of Mushotoku

Content:

Tao said:

Is in the Shobogenzo ?

Astus wrote:

It's not there. The closest are chapters 18 and 19: Mind Cannot Be Grasped (心不可得).

Comes up once in Koun Ejo's <https://wwzc.org/dharma-text/komyozo-zanmai-practice-treasury-luminosity>: 'Practice the nothing gained (http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2590_.82.0458a12:0458a13.cit) of luminosity.'

The (<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/sutra/pdf/01/04.pdf>) has it though:

'With nothing to attain (http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T0251_.08.0848c13:0848c13.cit), a bodhisattva relies on prajnaparamita'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

bowsamic said:

How could it be novel when I gave three quotes from Zen masters that say the same thing?

Astus wrote:

It is novel in the idea that it 'can only really be done after your teacher points out your mind to you'. That is not a requirement stated in the quotes.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 8:54 PM

Title: Re: Origin of Mushotoku

Content:

Tao said:

do you know when the concept won its importance in Soto? as a central idea... it was

later?

Rinzai shares that importance?

Astus wrote:

I do not know.

Tao said:

BTW, is it "nothing to attain" or "non profit for oneself"? I see both ways to explain it here in Spain, but mostly they use the "non profit", and for me it's not the same...they're close, but not the same, literally is "nothig to attain", isnt it?

Astus wrote:

It is 'nothing to attain'.

'to transcend the characteristics of the various dharmas, without anything that is attained (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2008_p0356c22): this is called the Supreme Vehicle'

(Platform Sutra, ch 7, BDK ed, p 63)

Pei Xiu asked, "How do we arouse the bodhi mind?"

The master replied, "Bodhi is not something to be attained

(<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T48n2012Bp0385c24>). Right now you need only arouse this mind that is unascertainable (無所得), which is certain that there is not a single dharma that can be attained (不得). That is the bodhi mind."

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 2.10)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 19th, 2023 at 8:57 PM

Title: Re: What is the difference between Zazen & Shamatha as practised in Vajrayana?

Content:

bowsamic said:

Anyway, that's just what "mind-to-mind transmission" means. Dogen talks about it in Bendowa and in a few other places. That's why you need a teacher in Zen. I didn't expect that would be the controversial part of what I said! It is usually well known that Zen cannot be practised without a teacher. In Rinzai, they even do shikantaza as the last practise, because they think it's impossible to do shikantaza without awakening!

Astus wrote:

Shikantaza in Soto is not separated from awakening, so it cannot be that one first needs realisation before practice.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 21st, 2023 at 4:10 AM

Title: Re: Middle Way

Content:

Rick said:

The Middle Way is a path between (a transcending of) the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. Does that betweenness/transcendence also apply to the extremes: duality and non-duality, atman and anatman, conventional and ultimate? Does it apply to ALL extremes, all conceptual opposites?

Astus wrote:

In Buddhism it applies to dependent origination in theory, and the noble eightfold path in practice. Otherwise one can conceptualise all sorts of middle ways, like between genocide and harmlessness.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 22nd, 2023 at 10:45 PM

Title: Re: Middle Way

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

distrust and avoid all kinds of extremes. Both asceticism and indulgence are bad for us when taken too far. Ditto doctrinaire fundamentalism and wishy-washy new-age-ism, loony-right politics and loony-left politics, and every other pair of extremes I can think of.

Astus wrote:

That can easily take to a false middle ground, where anything can be an extreme one simply dislikes. Apparently the Buddha made clear distinction between what is skilful/beneficial and what is unskilful/harmful (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an3.6/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/mn114/en/sujato>) and that's what he used as a measure even in the case of asceticism (see: <https://suttacentral.net/an10.94/en/sujato>). So just as in his first teaching (<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/sujato>), and in others (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/mn139/en/sujato>) the middle way of practice is identified as the noble eightfold path, in other words, what and how should things be done to gain liberation. As for the first of the eightfold path, right view can be defined along the lines of knowing skilful and unskilful and in other ways too (<https://suttacentral.net/mn9/en/sujato>). But it's not the case that it's left to one's common sense of what could/should be between two arbitrary positions.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 27th, 2023 at 3:51 AM

Title: Re: Is there really a need for a pointing out instruction frpm

Content:

Lasse said:

Look for the looker. If you find nothing, that's the finding. You don't need a master in a room to realise that.

Astus wrote:

That may or may not be all right. The practical question is: then what? How does that

help in eliminating all the ingrained unskilful and harmful habits? How does that help in developing all the skilful and beneficial qualities?

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023 at 11:00 PM

Title: Re: New to zen, Question on Tao

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The main thrust of the non-Buddhist teachings, however, is to establish the conduct for humanity, not to inquire into its ultimate origin. The myriad things discussed in the two teachings are limited to the phenomenal world. Although they point to the great Dao as the root, they do not completely explain agreeability and adversity, arising and ceasing, purity and defilement, or causes and conditions. Consequently, those who practice these teachings are not aware that the doctrines are provisional and cling to them as perfect teachings.'

(Treatise on the Origin of Humanity by Guifeng Zongmi, in Three Short Treatises, BDK ed, p 149)

'People today of the great kingdom of Song mostly uphold the principle of agreement between Kongzi and Laozi and the Buddha's truth. It is the gravest of wrong views, as later I shall expand.'

(Shizen-biku by Dogen, in SBGZ, BDK ed, vol 4, p 268)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, October 8th, 2023 at 3:33 PM

Title: Re: Before Becoming

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Before becoming (taking birth) where does the craving which leads to becoming reside?

Astus wrote:

Craving, like the other elements of the twelve links, applies to the five aggregates, i.e. the being.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, October 9th, 2023 at 3:56 AM

Title: Re: Before Becoming

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Thank you. How does that answer the question?

Astus wrote:

The question - it seems to me - assumed that craving somehow exists on its own, in a vacuum. But that is not the case, that's how the question is answered.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, October 12th, 2023 at 3:46 PM

Title: Re: Modern, advanced books on Zen

Content:

Desafinado said:

Which advanced books would you recommend from the past four or five decades?

Astus wrote:

I recommend advancing beyond the "Zen" title and investigate the source material that has been studied and applied by all the outstanding bodhisattvas. Normally that means studying the sutras and treatises, but likely it's easier to begin with textbook summaries.

Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition by Paul Williams,
Anthony Tribe, Alexander Wynne

Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History by Chün-fang Yü

A History of Japanese Buddhism by Kenji Matsuo

Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction by Mark Siderits

The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy by Jan Westerhoff

The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Modern Chinese Master by Yin-shun

The Core Teachings: Essays in Basic Buddhism by Venerable Master Hsing Yun

Orthodox Chinese Buddhism: A Contemporary Chan Master's Answers to Common
Questions by Chan Master Sheng Yen

Common Questions in the Practice of Buddhism by Chan Master Sheng Yen

Then one might start going through more ancient texts, like those found

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/tripitaka-list/>,

https://www.kalavinka.org/kp_main_pages/books.htm,

<https://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html>, and <https://read.84000.co/section/all-translated.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 21st, 2023 at 7:15 PM

Title: Re: Dealing with a world of self-centeredness and malice

Content:

Desafinado said:

Has Buddhism said anything related to this? Have you personally dealt with this problem? What do you think?

Astus wrote:

Is it the world's problem or yours? If it's the world's, what does it matter to you? If yours, then you have a problem to solve for yourself, not the world.

'According to the purity of his mind is his buddha land pure!'
(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 1, BDK ed, p 78; also quoted in Platform Sutra, ch 3, BDK ed, p 38)

"Good friends, the 'sentient beings of our own minds' are the mental states of delusion, confusion, immorality, jealousy, and evil. All these are sentient beings, and we must all [undergo] automatic salvation of the self-nature. This is called true salvation. What is 'automatic salvation of the self-nature'? It is to use correct views to save the sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of prajñā to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them. When the false occurs, it is saved by the correct. When delusion occurs, it is saved by enlightenment. When stupidity occurs, it is saved by wisdom. When evil occurs, it is saved by good. Salvation such as this is called true salvation."
(Platform Sutra, ch 6, BDK ed, p 48-49)

'If your minds are steep and crooked, then the buddha is [hidden] within the sentient being. If a single moment of thought is level and direct, then the sentient being becomes a buddha.'
(Platform Sutra, ch 10, BDK ed, p 90)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, November 21st, 2023 at 7:51 PM

Title: Re: is there any relationship between secular law, the precepts and karma?

Content:

dawn of peace said:

could secular law or local customs directly or indirectly have influence on the working of the karma? could breaking the secular law by itself cause bad karma?

Astus wrote:

If one has done something bad there is naturally a fear of being found out (AN 6.45), and recollecting one's virtues, living free of fear brings about calm.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, December 12th, 2023 at 5:03 AM

Title: Re: "My mind isn't like that"

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

My assumption when people who don't practice meditation say things like this is that they are likely wrong, and really haven't looked at their minds well enough to know what's going on well, because the skills to do so are not common.

Is that fair, or just unfounded arrogance? If so, how would you reply to someone saying a practice does not make sense to them because they "don't have that problem" when the problem being addressed is assumed to be universal by Buddhism, or even by mental-health based mindfulness practices?

Astus wrote:

It seems like the common problem that needs to be tackled by all sorts of psychological tests and questionnaires. In order to circumvent the mere idea of what one imagines and similar verbal habits the question shouldn't be a direct one, but rather something like presenting a simple situation where the answer shows clearly one's actual view.

In the <https://suttacentral.net/sn42.11/en/sujato> the Buddha points out the nature of suffering and its cause very well with reference to the pain caused by losing a loved one and the absence of pain when strangers die. There are other great discourses like that of a similar type, for instance the <https://suttacentral.net/an3.55/en/sujato> about nirvana.

At the same time, people can be and sometimes actually are quite well developed in various forms of mental powers and insight, so such a possibility should not be dismissed.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 17th, 2023 at 5:40 AM

Title: Re: Enlightenment as soon as possible

Content:

chonyid bardo said:

how can one achieves enlightenment in this life, as soon as possible, right now?

Astus wrote:

'With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one's sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is bodhi. ... To use wisdom to contemplate all the dharms without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.'

(Platform Sutra, ch 2, BDK ed, p 30, 31)

'If you suddenly realize right here and now that your own mind is originally a buddha, there is no dharma that needs to be attained and no practice that needs to be cultivated. This is the unsurpassed Way. This is the buddha of true suchness.'

(A Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.4)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 21st, 2023 at 7:29 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Those are objects of awareness, Even your reaction to the taste. Buddhism says that like/dislike is changing awareness but AV argues that the change happens within the scope of awareness.

Astus wrote:

Awareness/consciousness/perception/knower/etc. is bound to, dependent on, defined by its object. An awareness that is not aware of something is simply unawareness/unconsciousness/etc. no different from inanimate matter.

'Consciousness is reckoned according to the very same condition dependent upon which it arises. Consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and sights is reckoned as eye consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the ear and sounds is reckoned as ear consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the nose and smells is reckoned as nose consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the tongue and tastes is reckoned as tongue consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the body and touches is reckoned as body consciousness. Consciousness that arises dependent on the mind and ideas is reckoned as mind consciousness.

It's like fire, which is reckoned according to the very same condition dependent upon which it burns. A fire that burns dependent on logs is reckoned as a log fire. A fire that burns dependent on twigs is reckoned as a twig fire. A fire that burns dependent on grass is reckoned as a grass fire. A fire that burns dependent on cow-dung is reckoned as a cow-dung fire. A fire that burns dependent on husks is reckoned as a husk fire. A fire that burns dependent on rubbish is reckoned as a rubbish fire.

In the same way, consciousness is reckoned according to the very same condition dependent upon which it arises.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>)

'The flesh and skin are not the "I,"
And neither are the body's warmth and breath.
The cavities within the frame are not the "I,"
And "I" is not accounted for in sixfold consciousness.
If the hearing consciousness is permanent,
It follows that it's hearing all the time.
And if there is no object, what does it cognize?
On what grounds do you call it consciousness?
If something that's unconscious knows,
It follows that a stick has knowledge also.
Therefore in the absence of a thing to know,
It's clear that consciousness will not arise.
If the selfsame consciousness detects a form,
At that time, why does it not hear?
Perhaps you say the sound's no longer there.
Then neither is there consciousness of sound.'
(Bodhicaryavatara 9.59-62. tr Padmakara group)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, December 21st, 2023 at 10:26 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

So by this understanding, awareness itself isn't a "thing" but is an interactive event between subject and object, each of which lacks inherent reality.

Astus wrote:

Consciousness occurs as a result of the meeting of sense organ and sense object.

'Mendicants, consciousness exists dependent on a duality.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.93/en/sujato>)

'Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. Ear consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sounds. Nose consciousness arises dependent on the nose and smells. Tongue consciousness arises dependent on the tongue and tastes. Body consciousness arises dependent on the body and touches. Mind consciousness arises dependent on the mind and ideas.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/mn148/en/sujato>)

PadmaVonSamba said:

AV asserts that there is something aware that such contact is taking place, otherwise how would it be known? Who would hear it?

Astus wrote:

The hearer cannot precede the sound when there is nothing yet to hear, so the assumption of a constant awareness is unfounded.

PadmaVonSamba said:

While I support the Buddhist model, I still think the AV model makes some logical sense (re: OP question regarding logical refutations of a permanent self).

Astus wrote:

What is the logic here that makes sense?

PadmaVonSamba said:

AV asserts that something witnesses that stream of consciousness occurring. "I am witness to the fact that there is awareness and objects of awareness". Does Buddhism reply that there is no witness, that no further witness to the interaction of subject and object is even necessary?

Astus wrote:

At the time of being aware of a sound there is no awareness of awareness, and when there is awareness of awareness, that is an after thought. There is no witness of a stream either, since neither the past nor the future thought is there, hence calling it a stream is simply an abstract idea.

The Buddhist description is quite straightforward. In order for some experience to occur, it takes three things: sense organ, sense object, sense consciousness. That's given as

the eighteen elements. The experience then is called contact, and from contact comes feeling, etc. The triad of organ, object, and consciousness are very ordinary: one needs a functioning eye, one needs a visible object, and one needs to pay some attention. Remove any of the three and it is registered as an experience. But when it is registered, that's when it is perceived, that's when one can have a thought and intention related to that. And that's where the whole business of dependent origination, conditioning, karma, and suffering come into the picture.

On the other hand, to assume a witness behind all things, that simply clouds one's perception of what's going on and is a false escape, because having the experience of being the witness of whatever is happening is just another temporary state of mind misconstrued as self.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 22nd, 2023 at 6:41 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Buddha nature is the unconditioned awareness that knows conditions.

Astus wrote:

Such an unconditioned awareness is an impossibility, as no functional thing can be unconditioned, because function itself requires relating to other things.

'There is not anywhere anything
That ever exists without depending.
Thus never is there anywhere
Anything that is permanent.
There is no functional thing without a cause,
Nor anything permanent which has a cause.
Thus the one who knows suchness said what has
Come about causelessly does not exist.
If the unproduced is permanent
Because impermanent [things] are seen to be products,
Seeing that the produced exists
Would make the permanent non-existent.'
(Catuhsataka, 9.202-204, tr Ruth Sonam)

SvatahSiddha said:

Regardless of the unfolding conditions elaborated upon, the manas, the consciousness of a self, is always first condition to arrive and last to disappear.

Astus wrote:

Manas in Yogacara has the function of misapprehending the storehouse consciousness as self, but that's a delusion, the cause of samsara, not that somehow there actually is a self. Also, Yogacara maintains the momentary and conditioned nature of all eight consciousnesses.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 22nd, 2023 at 4:01 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Buddha nature not a functional thing; it is uncaused; it is realized as the unconditioned when the repository consciousness is emptied.

Astus wrote:

If buddha nature has no function it is practically no different from being non-existent, since it does nothing and is good for nothing. So what's the point of even supposing it?

SvatahSiddha said:

As we see in the quote from the Nibbāna Sutta, the Buddha is clear that there is the unconditioned and that it is the reason why the buddhadharma is available.

Astus wrote:

It says there is an unconditioned, it does not say it is an awareness. Rather, as the Asaṅkhatasutta (<https://suttacentral.net/sn43.12/en/sujato>) and other discourses state: 'The ending of greed, hate, and delusion. This is called the unconditioned.'

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, December 22nd, 2023 at 4:24 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But that's only if unconditioned awareness itself were a "thing" isn't it? Space isn't conditioned but things fill it. So why can't things fill awareness without awareness being conditioned?

Astus wrote:

Space, as a "non-thing" is simply a non-existent, a conceptual abstraction even on a conventional level. Similarly, an unconditioned awareness is the abstract idea of self of non-Buddhists that is invalid even on the conventional level.

'That space and so forth are permanent
Is a conception of common beings.
For the wise they are not objects perceived
Even by conventional [valid cognition].'
(Catuhsataka 9.205, tr Ruth Sonam)

'Indeed! This self, if permanent,
Is certainly inert like space itself.
And should it meet with other factors,

How could they affect it, since it is unchanging?'
(Bodhicaryavatara 6.29, tr Padmakara group)

If there were a permanent self/consciousness, it'd have nothing to do with liberation. In fact, liberation itself would be impossible.

'How can what is permanent be harmed,
Or the unharmed be liberated?
Liberation is irrelevant
For one whose self is permanent. '
(Catuhsataka 10.244)

'Then the Buddha, picking up a little bit of dirt under his fingernail, addressed that mendicant: "There's not even this much of any consciousness that's permanent, everlasting, eternal, imperishable, and will last forever and ever. If there were, this living of the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering would not be found. But since there isn't, this living of the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering is found."
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.97/en/sujato>)

"Mendicants, it would make sense to be possessive about something that's permanent, everlasting, eternal, imperishable, and will last forever and ever. But do you see any such possession?" "No, sir." "Good, mendicants! I also can't see any such possession. It would make sense to grasp at a doctrine of self that didn't give rise to sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress. But do you see any such doctrine of self?" "No, sir." "Good, mendicants! I also can't see any such doctrine of self."
(<https://suttacentral.net/mn22/en/sujato>)

Author: Astus
Date: Saturday, December 23rd, 2023 at 2:08 AM
Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self
Content:
PadmaVonSamba said:
Space is not dependently arising.

Astus wrote:
If so, then it cannot interact with anything, nothing could be in it, or 'take up space'.

PadmaVonSamba said:
Aggregation and dependent arising are the criteria buddhist theory uses to refute the true existence of things. Space has neither, yet everything is obviously occupying space. So, you can't say that there's no space.

Astus wrote:
Space exists as a mere concept, and not something that is 'obviously occupied'.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Aryadeva may not have been able to perceive space, but I'm perceiving it right now. At least let's say that I have awareness of it. It's very 3D, btw.

Astus wrote:

If you perceive it, is it something you can see or hear? If none of the five senses can perceive it, then what's left is thought, therefore space is a concept.

PadmaVonSamba said:

The AV's would argue that a permanent self is what is already liberated, just as Buddhists assert that the mind's true nature is already Buddha, but that all this samsaric attachment is just standing in the way of realizing it.

Astus wrote:

If it's already liberated, then it has no need for any teaching, thus the spiritual path is useless. If it has attachment though, then since it's permanent, it's never going to be liberated. If attachment and liberation has nothing to do with a permanent self, then no reason to even theorise it.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If that's the case, then why wouldn't that contradict the Mahayana assertion of "buddhahood" which says that Buddhas continue to exercise functional awareness?

Astus wrote:

Buddhas do not continue to exist, that's one of the wrong views. See e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn22.85/en/sujato>, MMK ch. 22.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Per the question posed by the OP (are there logical refutations of a permanent self), I think the problem with talking about the "self" is that "self" is an abstract concept like "god" or "art".

You can say such and such thing is (a work of) art but you can't say that "art" is absolutely definable as this or that.

Astus wrote:

Self is always something related to the aggregates (<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.47/en/sujato>), and as such is the root of all the wrong views (<https://suttacentral.net/sn41.3/en/sujato>).

PadmaVonSamba said:

Buddhism thus asserts that No thing can be found which can be called a self.

Astus wrote:

The 20 possibilities of asserting a self (sakkāya-diṭṭhi) is refuted, thus there is no room left to assume some special case of a self.

PadmaVonSamba said:

1. awareness has no characteristics.

2. Individual streams of consciousness are not parts of some great consciousness (god).

Astus wrote:

Consciousness has characteristics. Not all hindu philosophies assume a universal consciousness.

PadmaVonSamba said:

I think the best refutation of the 'self' argument, using the very logic of those who assert it, is that any notion of a 'self' is already (by virtue of being a concept) an object of awareness and therefore cannot be awareness. In other words, you can't say that awareness is self, or is god, or some combination of the two, because then it becomes an object of awareness instead of awareness.

Astus wrote:

That might work for Vedanta, so they can maintain an ultimate subject, but not so from a Buddhist perspective.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 23rd, 2023 at 2:17 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

Anders said:

Most of the ontological refutations run into trouble the moment you point the same razor to Nirvana. Which is basically the same as Atman except it's not self and therefore not something that can ultimately be apprehended as real either.

Astus wrote:

Atman has some defining qualities, like consciousness, permanence, and existence. Nirvana is basically the end of defilements and not a special thing.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 23rd, 2023 at 6:29 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

yes, I am perceiving the relative distance between objects. I am perceiving there is a hole in the middle of a donut. I have two functioning eyes and therefore depth perception.

Astus wrote:

What you describe - and what I presume you call the obvious space - is the conditioned space, the space element. See for instance: Abhidharmakosa 1.28.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Just because your senses cannot perceive something doesn't mean it's only a concept.

Astus wrote:

If something is not perceived by the physical senses, then it is by definition experienced as a concept, a thought, a mental phenomenon.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If the true nature of mind is not already enlightened, then no amount of teachings can liberate it.

Astus wrote:

Liberation is the ending of the defilements. That can happen only if the mind is changeable. A permanent mind is stuck forever in whatever state it is in.

PadmaVonSamba said:

In other words, the true nature of mind is already full luminous and infinite, i.e., bodhi but attachment obscures that, like clouds block the Sun which is always shining.

Astus wrote:

That is a fine parable, but it does not mean a hidden unchanging awareness. A piece of chocolate is emptiness, is suchness in its true nature, but perceiving it as a substantial entity with a desirable quality turns it into an object of sensual lust and thus a source of many suffering. That's how the chocolate's luminous, undefiled state is obscured by the clouds of ignorance. Similarly, the mind is without any permanent essence, but misconstruing it as one's true self, there is much conceit and craving.

PadmaVonSamba said:

That's a difference in view between Mahayana and Theravada. So if you are quoting Pali scriptures then yes, that's valid. But not valid in Mahayana.

Astus wrote:

There is no disagreement here.

“In that case, Anurādha, since you don't actually find the Realized One in the present life, is it appropriate to declare: ‘Reverends, when a Realized One is describing a Realized One—a supreme person, highest of people, who has reached the highest point—they describe them other than these four ways: After death, a Realized One still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists’?”

“No, sir.”

“Good, good, Anurādha! In the past, as today, what I describe is suffering and the cessation of suffering.”

(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.86/en/sujato>, see also:

<https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/an7.54/en/sujato>)

'Now that the Lord has passed into nirvana,

We cannot say that he exists.

Likewise “he does not exist” we cannot say.

And neither both nor neither can we say of him.
And when the Lord was still alive,
We cannot say that he existed.
Likewise “he did not exist” we cannot say.
And neither both nor neither can we say of him.'
(MMK 25.17-18, tr Padmakara group; see also MMK 22)

'In nirvana there are no aggregates
And there cannot be a person.
What nirvana is there for one
Who is not seen in nirvana?'
(Catuhsataka 9.221, tr Ruth Sonam)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 23rd, 2023 at 4:20 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

3D depth is a concept and you are also directly experiencing it. And if you have depth perception, then you are perceiving it with the senses.

Astus wrote:

That is not even perceiving space but the spatial dimensions of visual objects, i.e. their form.

PadmaVonSamba said:

But what is it which is aware of and experiences the ending of the defilements? The point is, anything that you can say is changeable isn't awareness. It's an object of awareness.

Astus wrote:

There is no experience without awareness. To say that experience consists of an object and a subject is a conceptual explanation. Awareness does not exist on its own, only as awareness of something. Trying to carve out a distinct subject apart from the object renders awareness meaningless, as there's never an awareness unaware of something. What experiences, that is consciousness with its various mental factors, in other words: the four mental aggregates. So the five aggregates is the teaching used to refute all forms of self concepts and show the conditioned and compounded nature of mind.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 24th, 2023 at 1:10 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Depth of space is definitely perceived visually. So are holes in donuts.

Astus wrote:

Depth, distance, those are not seeing space but the dimensions of visual objects. Holes, etc. are called the space element, and it is conditioned.

PadmaVonSamba said:

What you are saying is that neither awareness nor objects to of awareness exist or even occur until they meet. how is that logical?

Astus wrote:

What I'm saying is that dividing experience to subject and object is an after thought. There is no awareness on its own, outside experience, nor is there something that one is aware of apart from its presence in experience. So to say that awareness meets its object is a secondary division that's possible after experience happened.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Neither consciousness nor objects of consciousness are experienced. It's the interaction of the two which is our experience.

Astus wrote:

Going back to the standard description: sense organ + sense object > consciousness. The three (organ, object, consciousness) together is contact, and with contact comes feeling, perception, and intention. They all give what is experienced and how it is experienced. When it is consciousness (as the sense organ) meeting its object, that too goes with the many conditions and factors.

PadmaVonSamba said:

Awareness can't be experienced, because it is what is experiencing. Objects of awareness lack intrinsic existence.

Astus wrote:

There is no distinct subject, no distinct consciousness to do the experiencing. If there was, it would mean awareness can exist without being aware of anything.

PadmaVonSamba said:

are you saying that aggregates are consciousness? The aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formation) are all objects of awareness. They are what is experienced. So how can they be what is doing the experiencing?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness does not occur without feeling, perception, formation. To feel something is to experience it, there is no meaning in or a place for a second experiencer. In other words, experience is a complex, conditioned process without any agent doing it.

Here's a summary of how consciousness is defined in where assuming an entity is avoided.

'In the Abhidhamma psychology, bare consciousness, that which constitutes the knowing or awareness of an object, is called citta. It can never arise in its true separate condition. It always arises in immediate conjunction with mental factors, the factors that perform more specialized tasks in the act of cognition. In the books of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the individual nature of consciousness is often sought to be described by positioning it in relation to other basic factors (dhamma) into which individual existence is analyzed. This perhaps explains why we do not find in them a formal definition of consciousness.

In the Abhidhamma exegesis we find consciousness being defined in three different ways. The first is by way of agent (kattu-sādhana): "Consciousness is that which cognizes an object" (ārammaṇaṃ cinteti ti cittaṃ). It is of course true that apart from the object (ārammaṇa), there are other conditions, such as immediate contiguity (samanantara) and support (nissaya) necessary for the genesis of consciousness. However, if they are not mentioned here it is because even if they are present, consciousness cannot arise without the object condition. The importance given to the object is also shown by the fact that consciousness is also defined as "that which grasps the object" (ārammaṇika). This definition is intended to refute the wrong notion that consciousness can arise without an object (nirālambaṇavāda).

The second definition is by way of instrument (karaṇasādhana): "Consciousness is that through which the concomitant mental factors cognize the object" (etena cinteti ti cittaṃ). In this definition, while consciousness becomes the instrument, the concomitant mental factors become the agent. The third definition is by way of activity or mode of operation (bhāva-sādhana): "Consciousness is the mere act of cognizing the object" (cintanamattam'eva cittaṃ).

It is only the third definition that is valid from an ultimate point of view (nippariyāyato), because, strictly speaking, consciousness is neither that which cognizes (agent) nor that through which cognition takes place (instrument), but is only the process of cognizing an object. As a basic factor of actuality (dhamma), consciousness is the mere occurrence due to conditions.

It is not an entity but an activity, an activity without an actor behind it. The point being emphasized is that there is no conscious subject behind consciousness. Therefore the two definitions by way of agent and instrument are to be understood as provisional defining devices. Their purpose is to facilitate our understanding (sukha-gahaṇattham) of the nature of consciousness and, more important, to refute the wrong belief that a permanent self-entity is the agent or instrument of cognition.

If there is an agent or an instrument of cognition, it is not beneath or behind the mental phenomena into which the mental continuum is analyzed.'

(Theravada Abhidhamma by Y. Karunadasa, ch 5)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 24th, 2023 at 1:36 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

The unconditioned is found via the undoing of conditions; the first and last delusion is the manas; it is the manas that allows greed and hate to arise via the activity of the

conceptual consciousness.

If the ending of the ending of greed, hate, and delusion left anything behind, what is left wouldn't be unconditioned.

Likewise, if the unconditioned was just the ending of a subset of conditions then how would it allow the path to be discerned?

Astus wrote:

With an unconditioned mind no path, no liberation is possible, and it's no different from the view of self professed by non-Buddhists.

'Your position is untenable. Those scriptural quotations explain the way of realizing selflessness. They reference the Buddha's actualization of selflessness with the terms such as "actualizing the self." When the genuine beings fully comprehend the freedom from elaborations, the freedom from elaborations is sometimes labeled with the term "self." You, however, simply did not understand this point.

If an ultimate self existed, sentient beings would either have no chance whatever of gaining liberation from saṃsāra or would gain liberation without any effort at all. One of those two situations would absurdly follow. For, firstly, due to the ultimate existence of the self, some beings would be bound in saṃsāra while others would be liberated in nirvāṇa — desire to change this would be impossible. And, secondly, the ultimate self is perceived, according to you, by the perception of a correct consciousness, unlike the self of the relative. Your assertion resembles that of Īshvara! If a self existed ultimately, this existence would contradict all of the Transcendent Conqueror's teachings about the selflessness of all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.'

(The Karmapa's Middle Way: Feast for the Fortunate, p 402-403)

As for what buddha-nature means:

'By what reasoning can it be shown that sentient beings have Buddha-nature? Because all sentient beings are pervaded by the emptiness of Dharmakaya, because there are no differentiations in the nature of suchness, and because all beings have a "family " For these three reasons, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature. ...

To explain the first reason "all sentient beings are pervaded by the emptiness of Dharmakaya" means that the ultimate Buddhahood is Dharmakaya, Dharmakaya is all-pervading emptiness, and emptiness pervades all sentient beings Therefore, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature.

Saying "there are no differentiations in the nature of suchness" means that the suchness of the Buddha is identical to the suchness of sentient beings None is better or worse, none is bigger or smaller, none is higher or lower So, because of that, all sentient beings are of the Buddha-nature.'

(The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 49-50)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 24th, 2023 at 5:02 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

No one is talking about an unconditioned mind though, not even the quote you're providing, it talks about an ultimate self not unconditioned mind.

Astus wrote:

Such an unconditioned mind/awareness is what your interpretation seems to be, as you have stated before:

SvatahSiddha said:

Buddha nature is the unconditioned awareness that knows conditions.

Astus wrote:

Thus such an assertion is no different from the view of a permanent self. If you say it's not that, what is the difference?

SvatahSiddha said:

The dharmakaya is uncaused and all conditions arise from it; this is how and why there is a complete lack of any independent causation or origination to be found. claim to be.

Astus wrote:

If the dharmakaya were the source of all phenomena, how is that unlike a creator god?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, December 24th, 2023 at 5:15 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

How is the view that awareness arises when senses & sense consciousness meet objects of consciousness really any different from the materialist view that awareness arises from physical matter (the brain)?

The sense organs and brain are physical matter.

Astus wrote:

It's the meeting of sense organ (e.g. eye) and sense object (e.g. form) when consciousness becomes. In other words, when one sees a tree there arises the thought of a tree. That's how it simply works for us all. It's nothing to do with materialism, but with ordinary perception. See the explanation posted before
<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=682029#p682029>.

PadmaVonSamba said:

If we make the distinction between senses and sense consciousness (which materialists don't do) then from where does sense consciousness arise?

If we say that without objects of consciousness that consciousness doesn't arise, then

how is that different than saying consciousness arises from objects?

If we say that there is something that already exists which is not an object of awareness that arises to meet objects (and subsequently result in consciousness) then why is that not a permanent self?

Astus wrote:

None of that applies.

Consciousness arises from the meeting of organ and object.

There is no separate existence of object and consciousness stated.

We don't say that.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2023 at 5:24 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Mind, the conceptual consciousness, is both a result and a cause, it rests firmly within conditions; there is no unconditioned mind.

Unconditioned awareness is simply, as longchenpa said, the "original purity" of "timeless awareness" that the realization of is a breakthrough into "buddhahood without meditation."

Astus wrote:

What is the difference between mind and awareness? Isn't awareness what is aware of appearances? If it is, then it performs the same function as mind/consciousness, and so it is conditioned. If it is not aware of things, what does it do then and why call it awareness?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2023 at 8:10 AM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Mind, the conceptual consciousness, is the process of generating the understandings that relate phenomena to the sense of self, i.e., the manas.

It is the products of the conceptual consciousness that populate the repository consciousness and, from there, form the basis for the conditions of future experience.

Awareness, buddha nature, is what is aware of appearances, yes, but it performs no function.

Astus wrote:

Conceptual understanding and other mental phenomena are the products of the four mental aggregates together.

Awareness of appearances is the very function of the fifth aggregate, consciousness, and it is a conditioned process dependent on various factors.

So, to assume that there is an unconditioned awareness is mistaking the changing and impermanent consciousness aggregate as something continuous and permanent.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2023 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

SvatahSiddha said:

Again, are you saying these to longchenpa and the buddha?

Obviously, they knew what they were talking about and this objection wasn't applicable.

Why don't you address their words?

Astus wrote:

I'm questioning your interpretation and presentation of their words. If Longchenpa and the Lankavatara Sutra advocated atmavada, then they should not be considered in harmony with the established Buddhist view. So why don't you explain the reason you believe there to be an unconditioned awareness that is in direct contradiction with the doctrine of no self?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 25th, 2023 at 7:13 PM

Title: Re: Logical refutations of a permanent self

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

But there is a difference between a permanent consciousness and a never ending stream of consciousness, just like the difference between water trapped in a water globe and a river that is constantly changing.

Astus wrote:

A stream is like a row of ants, only nominal. Nothing goes from one state of consciousness to the next. Similarly, causal continuity applies not only to mind but to cups and snowmen as well.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 8th, 2024 at 4:59 AM

Title: Re: Question about "unshakeable causes" from Gampopa Jewel Ornament of Liberation

Content:

truthb said:

In the section on Impermanence, Gampopa concludes with a discussion of faith.

Concerning Trusting Faith one sentence reads:

"Trust that the happiness of the two higher realms is the result of unshakeable causes."

Anyone know what he is discussing here?

Astus wrote:

Gampopa explains it later on p 118-120.

'[There are three actions:] (1) meritorious actions, (2) demeritorious actions and (3) immovable [aniñja] actions. [Moreover,] there are three actions of which the action conducive to pleasant experience is the first. Meritorious action is good action in the realm of desire; immovable action is good action above [the realm of desire].'

(Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, 4.45cd-46ab, vol 2 p 1374)

See also: <https://suttacentral.net/mn106/en/sujato>

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, January 17th, 2024 at 7:09 PM

Title: Re: The Dharmakaya in Mahayana

Content:

Astus wrote:

'When all the brittle twigs of what is known
Are burned, peace comes – the Victor's dharma form.
And then there is no birth and no decay,
The mind will cease, the kāya manifest.'

(<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1113&mid=1927492>)

'Dharmakaya is all-pervading emptiness'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 50)

'Dharmakaya is merely labeled as the exhaustion of all errors through realization of the meaning of the all-pervading emptiness of all phenomena, or as the mere reverse of the nature of confused projection. In reality, it does not possess in any way whatsoever the identification, characteristics, or the designation of "Dharmakaya." This is just as Milarepa said.

If expressed from another angle, Dharmakaya has eight characteristics:

1. Sameness. There is no difference between the Dharmakaya of all the Buddhas.
2. Profundity. Because it is free from all elaboration, it is difficult to realize.
3. Permanence. It is not compound; it has no beginning, middle, or end; and it is free from birth and cessation.
4. Oneness. It is indivisible because the Dharmadhatu and primordial wisdom cannot be differentiated.

5. Perfection. It is unmistakable because it is beyond exaggeration and underestimation.
6. Purity. It is free from the three obscurations.
7. Radiance. There are no discursive thoughts; only nonconceptual thoughts are projected in the nonconceptual state.
8. Relationship to Enjoyment. Embodying the nature of vast good qualities, it is the foundation of the complete enjoyment (Sambhogakaya).'
(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 288-289)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 18th, 2024 at 7:10 PM

Title: Re: Relationship Between Mahayana Sutras And Abhidharma

Content:

vgh238 said:

i have been sort of wondering, whats the relationship between the mahayana sutras such as prajnaparamita series or Suramgamasamadhisutra and commentaries such as abhidharmakosabhasya by vasubhandu is the abhidharma the essence of those mahayana sutras or is the relationship between them more complicated and how should i approach them together.
thank you for any answers

Astus wrote:

Mahayana sutras can mention/use/refer to various concepts found in different abhidharma literature (see e.g.

https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_ADB8A4E3744C.P001/REF.pdf).

Most of the extant abhidharma works represent different non-Mahayana Buddhist schools.

The main Mahayana abhidharma works are the

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidharma-samuccaya> and the

http://www.cttbusa.org/100shastra/100dharma_1.asp.html

(<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T31n1614>), although other works might also be categorised as such.

One can approach non-Mahayana abhidharma material as representatives of specific interpretations of Indian Buddhism, and many of those ideas live on in Mahayana, either accepted as they are, or in a reinterpreted form, or as something rejected.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, January 18th, 2024 at 9:31 PM

Title: Re: Relationship Between Mahayana Sutras And Abhidharma

Content:

Aemilius said:

In Entering the Middle Way (Madhyamaka-avatara), Chapter 6, Chandrakirti says:

" The Buddha unqualifiedly rejected the ultimate reality of both mind and material forms in the Perfection of Wisdom Texts, while in the Abhidharma he affirmed the

conventional reality of both of them. [93]"

in Indian Madhyamaka Buddhist Philosophy After Nagarjuna, Volume 2, translated with notes and commentaries by Richard H. Jones, Jackson Square Books, New York, 2012.

Astus wrote:

It's in the

<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1113&mid=1927303>

(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/B09n0045_p0735b24), but it actually says something different.

In general, mental and material dharmas in Abhidharma are ultimate realities, not conventional.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, January 19th, 2024 at 6:05 AM

Title: Re: The Dharmakaya in Mahayana

Content:

Shinjin said:

What's the difference with Nirguna Brahman besides Dharmakaya being non self?

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is the term for a buddha's realisation/wisdom of emptiness. Nirguna

Brahman is eternal, ultimately existing consciousness. Quite different.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 20th, 2024 at 12:11 AM

Title: Re: Relationship Between Mahayana Sutras And Abhidharma

Content:

Sādhaka said:

Could you explain your statement a bit more and/or provide some quotes?

Astus wrote:

Ultimate has a somewhat different meaning in Abhidharma. It means that something is actually a thing (i.e. dharma), an effective force. It does not mean it is necessarily eternal.

An example:

'The cognition [buddhi] of a pitcher ends when the pitcher is broken; the cognition of water ends when, in the mind [dhi], one analyzes [anyāpoha] water. The pitcher and the water, and all that resembles them, exist relatively or conventionally. The rest exists absolutely.'

(ABK 6.4; vol 3, p 1891)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, January 20th, 2024 at 7:32 AM

Title: Re: Relationship Between Mahayana Sutras And Abhidharma

Content:

Sādhaka said:

Although what does “The rest exists absolutely.” mean here?

Astus wrote:

The term is 'paramārthasat'. From the auto-commentary (p 1892):

'Therein, even when a thing is being broken - or [likewise, even when its (constituent) factors] are mentally removed - and the cognition of this thing continues, this thing exists absolutely (paramārthasat). For example, visible form (rūpa): for, therein, when a visible [thing (vastu)] is broken into atoms or infinitesimal particles [paramāṇu] and when taste [rasa] and the other factors have been mentally removed, the cognition of the intrinsic nature [svabhāva] of visible form persists. Sensation [vedanā], etc., is also to be seen in the same way. As this exists absolutely (paramārthasat), this is absolute truth (paramārthasatya).'

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 21st, 2024 at 6:44 PM

Title: Re: New book on Ch'an

Content:

Astus wrote:

I see no good reason to obtain a book that's based on anti-Buddhist ideas and propagates a view that's opposed to Chan itself.

If it's the translations of Chan texts, there are others available. If it's scholarship, there are proper studies to read. If it's Chan and Daoism, try Linguistic Strategies in Daoist Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism by Youru Wang.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 22nd, 2024 at 4:35 PM

Title: Re: Which of the following activities do you consider sexual misconduct?

(continued)

Content:

Charles Jones said:

The lay precept is deliberately vague: just don't commit sexual misconduct. But then, what constitutes sexual misconduct?

Astus wrote:

It is not that vague. Sexual misconduct (kāmesumicchācāra/kāmamithyācāra) has a standard definition (e.g. MN 41, MN 114; <https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-068-021.html#UT22084-068-021-4413>) of avoiding women who have a guardian or are protected in other ways. Another way to put it is contentment with one's wife (AN 5.179, Snp 1.6; <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-31.html#UT22084-036-002-462>). For

other references on the extended rules

<https://www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?p=480779#p480779>.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 22nd, 2024 at 11:45 PM

Title: Re: Which of the following activities do you consider sexual misconduct?
(continued)

Content:

Zhen Li said:

This is true, but not everyone is a textual absolutist. How the third precept is discussed/interpreted in contemporary circles seems to incorporate some culturally/temporally specific attitudes and views.

Astus wrote:

I might be missing something here - like the contemporary interpretations - but the basic formulation is supposed to be simple enough, 'easy for householders to abstain from it' (AKB 4.33, vol 2, p 1352). Might be reformatted as not to cheat or be the one who is cheated with.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024 at 7:52 PM

Title: Re: New book on Ch'an

Content:

tingdzin said:

what specifically is anti-Buddhist in it?

Astus wrote:

The basic concept of claiming that Chan is Taoism with different words. As the introduction (p 3) states:

'This is a revisionary history of Ch'an in a number of ways, a project of recovery. It traces the development of Ch'an's deepest philosophical levels, the conceptual assumptions that make awakening possible and are largely lost in modern Zen practice and literature (as China Root demonstrates). This history reveals Ch'an to be essentially a refinement and extension of Taoism - again, as China Root demonstrates.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024 at 10:39 PM

Title: Re: Which of the following activities do you consider sexual misconduct?
(continued)

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Yeah, well, that reformatting is an example of the kind of contemporary interpretation you hear. We do this because, if you read the scriptural formulations, it is often worded in ways that sound inapplicable today. Not only don't we talk in terms of being bound to

another, but our common sense understanding of the most serious kinds of sexual misconduct (see the poll in the previous thread) is not encompassed by them.

Astus wrote:

Old texts may sound inapplicable today, but for that the solution is the old approach of looking for the meaning instead of just the words. People were attached to their loved ones millennia ago just as they are today. The fear of having an unfaithful partner, the fear of being found out, and the pain of being cheated on is recognised in ancient texts just as it is well known today. Furthermore, if it is accepted that sexual misconduct can have long term consequences because it is one of the ten unwholesome actions, what it means cannot be something specific to time and place but quite universal, a basic law of how things work. Like this: 'If someone were to have sexual relations with my wives, I wouldn't like it. But if I were to have sexual relations with someone else's wives, he wouldn't like that either.' (<https://suttacentral.net/sn55.7/en/sujato>) Similarly, in some discourses (like DN 4, DN 26, AN 3.65-66, AN 5.174, Dhp 18.246) approaching another's wife (paradāraṃ gacchati - i.e. adultery) is used instead of sexual misconduct. And, in line with that, not being unfaithful (anaticariyā) is applied to both husband and wife (DN 31).

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 28th, 2024 at 4:49 AM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

Per Nagarjuna and Madhyamaka, are the two truths (conventional, ultimate) actually

Astus wrote:

Conventional are dependently arisen conceptual fabrications commonly accepted as real. That there is no essence in/beyond conventions is called the ultimate. Therefore mistaking the conventional as ultimate is the conventional, and seeing the conventional as just conventional is the ultimate. So the two truths are not things to be identical or different but simply conventional methods.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, January 28th, 2024 at 9:52 PM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

But there are Buddhists that posit a third truth, right? Not the middle truth of Tiantai, rather a kind of 'ultimate ultimate truth' — ineffable nondual tathata dharmakaya kind of non-thing?

Astus wrote:

It is the ultimate truth of emptiness that is also called suchness, and is ineffable and inconceivable.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 29th, 2024 at 1:48 AM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

Why include the unfathomable tathata with the fathomable sunyata/pratityasamutpada? Avoiding that seems like a good reason for having a level of the unfathomable above (alongside) the fathomable ultimate.

Astus wrote:

Suchness is another term for emptiness. It is ineffable and inconceivable because there is nothing to name or cognise, as emptiness means the absence of an essence, a substance, a self. It is not that there is a special experience that is so otherworldly one cannot put it into words.

Sugar is sweet, salt is salty - that's how they are. To make an issue out of taste is not seeing its suchness, its empty, meaningless, insubstantial quality, but grasping at an idea and giving free rein to like and dislike. That's when one mistakes the conventional as ultimate.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 29th, 2024 at 2:58 AM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

From what I read online the Madhyamaka interpretation you present here isn't universally accepted by Buddhists. Some schools, Vajrayana Yogacara Zen for example, differentiate nontrivially between sunyata and tathata (with the latter leaning a bit towards woo-woo-ishness). True?

Astus wrote:

I don't see it with those schools either. But it's natural that individuals imagine so before they are more familiar with the teachings.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, January 29th, 2024 at 9:51 PM

Title: Re: No-Self Concept

Content:

Astus wrote:

Huangbo Xiyun put it this way (Bird in Flight Leaves No Trace, 1.4):

'Practitioners of the Way, have no doubt that the four great elements constitute the body, that these four great elements have no self, and that the self has no master.

Know that this body has no self and no master. The five aggregates are mind, but the five

aggregates have no self and no master.

Know therefore that this mind has no self and no master. The six sense bases, six sense objects, and six sense consciousnesses come into contact with each other and become subject to production and cessation, so this is also the case with them as well. Since these eighteen elements of cognition are empty, everything is empty. There is only the original mind, which is serene and pure.'

This sums up the standard analysis according to the four great elements (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mah%C4%81bh%C5%ABta#Buddhism>), five aggregates (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha>), and the eighteen elements (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80yatana>). How does it apply to everyday activities? Hunagbo continues:

'There is the nutriment of consciousness and the nutriment of wisdom. The body consisting of the four great elements is tormented by hunger and disease. Nurturing this body with only what it needs, without generating greed and craving, is called the nutriment of wisdom. Self-indulgently clinging to what is tasty, mistakenly giving rise to discrimination, seeking out only what pleases your taste buds, and without generating any sense of loathing — this is called the nutriment of consciousness.'

Just as Sengcan wrote (Three Chan Classics, BDK ed, p 123):

'The perfect Way is not difficult;
It only avoids discrimination.
If only there is no love or hate,
Completely clean and clear is it.'

The teaching of no-self is to develop the wisdom that cuts the root of greed, hatred, and delusion. In other words, one is concerned or anxious when something is perceived as impacting oneself or things/beings belonging to oneself. But when the mind is peaceful, not upset by self-centred emotions, there is openness with understanding and compassion.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 30th, 2024 at 5:08 AM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

I am drawn to the Buddhist teachers/teachings that see ultimate truth as having an effable and ineffable aspect.

Astus wrote:

Most of them are like that, even some in Madhyamaka, like Bhavaviveka and Jnanagarbha.

'Ultimate truth is free of all conceptual projection. It is of two types: the ultimate truth

that can be expressed, and the ultimate truth that cannot be expressed. The former is of two kinds: the ultimate truth expressed in terms of argument, and the ultimate truth expressed in terms of arising.

The “ultimate truth expressed in terms of argument” is concerned with the reasons refuting the four options concerning arising. (That is, the argument that something arises from itself, from something else, from both itself and something, and from neither itself or something else.) The “ultimate truth expressed in terms of arising” negates the true arising of every apparent entity.

What is empty of all conceptual projection, clear and subtle, is known as the “ultimate truth that cannot be expressed in words.” The ultimate truth is approximately this: totally empty of the two extremes of “being” and “nonbeing” (i.e., neither eternal nor totally nonexistent).'

(Summary on the Meaning of the Middle Way by Bhavaviveka, v 4-8; tr Richard H. Jones)

Others, like Atisa, disagree.

'The ultimate is one only. Others maintain that it is twofold. How can the nature of reality (chos nyid), which cannot be established as anything, be two, three, and so on? [The ultimate] is defined as nonarising, noncessation, and so forth according to the formula [given] by treatises. Because of the way in which different ultimates do not exist, there is neither a subject (chos can) nor its property (chos nyid) [for inferential reasoning]. There is not any differentiation in emptiness. When cognized in a nonconceptual manner, it is conventionally designated that “emptiness is seen.”'

(Entry to the Two Realities by Atisa, v 4-6; tr James B. Apple)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, January 30th, 2024 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Two truths question

Content:

Rick said:

Should you be comfortable sharing, do *you* think it's useful/illuminating to ascribe aspects to ultimate truth?

Astus wrote:

Ultimate truth is a term with various meanings in Buddhism. What matters is whether the definition one has a liking of is something helpful in reducing troublesome qualities and increasing beneficial ones. For instance, in the various abhidharma systems all the dharmas are considered ultimate. But they are not aspects of a single ultimate.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 1st, 2024 at 10:53 PM

Title: Re: Which of the following activities do you consider sexual misconduct?

(continued)

Content:

tingdzin said:

I also disagree with the notion that there must be some universal at work in determining what is and is not ethical.

Astus wrote:

Karma is quite the universal ethical principle that applies even to non-human beings. Also, in what situation is this not valid: 'If someone were to have sexual relations with my wives, I wouldn't like it. But if I were to have sexual relations with someone else's wives, he wouldn't like that either.' (<https://suttacentral.net/sn55.7/en/sujato>)?

tingdzin said:

Such things as polygamy and polyandry, for example, would not necessarily cause such unwholesome emotions as jealousy if they had long been acceptable to the society a person grew up in, because they would not be necessarily be regarded as a betrayal.

Astus wrote:

Sexual misconduct is not about monogamy. Having multiple wives was fairly normal in the Buddha's time.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 2nd, 2024 at 4:48 PM

Title: Re: Which of the following activities do you consider sexual misconduct?

(continued)

Content:

tingdzin said:

If one were brought up in a strict Christian environment, one might become extremely jealous if someone else slept with his wife. If one were living in a society in which it was good etiquette to offer your spouse to a guest (and there used to be such societies), he might not be upset. If a person brought up in the latter society visited a Christian society, he would quickly find that his frame of reference was not acceptable. How can there be a one-size fits all foundation for ethics?

Astus wrote:

That's two different scenarios, just as there is the difference between stealing another's book and borrowing it with the other's consent. But just because one may borrow a book, it does not make stealing a harmless act.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, February 3rd, 2024 at 5:31 AM

Title: Re: I'm looking for a good introductory book for a friend...

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://plumvillage.org/books/the-heart-of-the-buddhas-teaching> by Thich Nhat Hanh is a great introductory book.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 6th, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Title: Re: Yogachara: Ontological or Epistemological Idealism?

Content:

Astus wrote:

This practical clarification by Karl Brunnhölzl might help (<https://dharmaebooks.org/an-overview-of-the-five-texts-of-maitreya/>, p 19-21):

'Cittamātra is not a metaphysical assertion of a transcendental reality consisting of "mind-only" but a description of our delusion — the dreams of this sleep from which the Buddha has awakened. If the dream-world saṃsāra is "merely mind," freedom and the Buddhist path are possible because we can change our minds through creating a counter-dream within the dream of our delusion. Most important, we can wake up from this dream.

That cittamātra is constantly referred to in Yogācāra texts as the delusional perception of what does not exist (these texts moreover abound with dreams, illusions, and so on as examples for it) hardly suggests that it exists in a real or ultimate way. Thus, the notion of "mere mind" refers only to the mistaken minds and mental factors of saṃsāra (the realities of suffering and its origin) but not to the realities of the path or cessation. Many Yogācāra works make it clear explicitly and repeatedly that not only external objects but also "mere mind" does not exist and is to be relinquished in order to attain the realization of the path of seeing and eventually buddhahood.

In this context, the four "yogic practices" (Skt. prayoga) in Yogācāra works are the following four steps of realization:

1. Outer objects are observed to be nothing but mind
2. Thus, outer objects are not observed as such
3. With outer objects being unobservable, a mind cognizing them is not observed either
4. Not observing both, nonduality is observed

This means that stages (1)–(3) — and thus the notion of cittamātra — are progressively dealt with only up through the end of the path of preparation. Stage (4) marks the path of seeing (the first bhūmi), on which bodhisattvas have to let go of the notion of cittamātra as well. In other words, like so many other Buddhist notions, cittamātra is no exception to simply being an expedient pedagogic tool to realize a certain level on the path. However, it is neither the final realization, nor to be reified in any way (thus becoming an obstacle to this very realization), but to be discarded once its intended function has been accomplished.'

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 6th, 2024 at 11:49 PM

Title: Re: Yogachara: Ontological or Epistemological Idealism?

Content:

anagarika said:

Thanks for the recommendation, I will try to look for the book on Scribd.

Astus wrote:

No need, <https://dharmaebooks.org/an-overview-of-the-five-texts-of-maitreya/>, it's freely available.

anagarika said:

Does this lack of metaphysical assertion of a transcendental mind apply to the whole of Yogachara, or were there really some subschools which reified the mind and elevated it to some sort of ground of being? If not, where does this misinterpretation come from?

Astus wrote:

It's a good way to mischaracterise one's opponent. And possibly some had such misinterpretation anyway.

anagarika said:

However, as I understand, for Yogacharin there ultimately is "something", right?

Astus wrote:

They uphold the twofold emptiness. Again from Brunnhölzl (p 26):

'The perfect nature is emptiness in the sense that what appears as dependent false imagination is primordially never established as the imaginary nature. As the ultimate object and the true nature of the dependent nature, this emptiness is the sphere of nonconceptual wisdom, which is nothing other than phenomenal identitylessness.'

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, February 19th, 2024 at 9:44 PM

Title: Re: Finding Common Ground

Content:

Astus wrote:

If you're drawn to Kagyu, then you might want to get familiar with their teachings, starting with the Jewel Ornament of Liberation by Gampopa and its modern commentaries.

The website <https://studybuddhism.com/> is also a good place to start, for instance it has a page about <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/lam-rim/shamatha/concentration-terminology> and <https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/abhidharma-tenet-systems/comparison-of-buddhist-traditions/the-four-close-placements-of-mindfulness-in-mahayana>.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 21st, 2024 at 5:25 AM

Title: Re: Was Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka an implicative negation?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Other translations might help in a better understanding:

'Such things spoken of as the "great elements",
These are fully absorbed into consciousness;
Since they are dissolved by understanding them,
Are they not falsely imputed?'
(Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning, v 34, tr Thupten Jinpa)

"The great elements, etc. that they have spoken about are gathered in [i.e., are projected by] consciousness. Since you become free [from them] by understanding that, certainly they are falsely imagined."
(Sixty Verses of Reasoning, v 34, tr Gareth Sparham)

"The primary elements etc. are included in consciousness. If freedom arises through this understanding, why are they not erroneously imagined?"
(Reasoning: The Sixty Stanzas, v 34. tr Peter Della Santina)

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 22nd, 2024 at 6:07 AM

Title: Re: Does the doctrine of karma blame victims for their own suffering?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The teaching of karma is meant to show how skilful and unskilful intention resulting in action influences one's state of mind, and that in turn defines one's experience. Although it is generally viewed as things happening out there, the main point is still what is happening in here. As far as the external manifestation of karma is relevant is ethical behaviour, the first part of the threefold training. Grasping that teaching wrongly can easily lead to long series of conjectures that are quite unfounded, like the idea that it blames victims. Grasping it correctly shows that virtuous and unvirtuous actions readily produce happy and unhappy experiences, and that there is a way to make an end to karma.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, February 22nd, 2024 at 8:07 PM

Title: Re: English translation collection of basic sutras that has had its language adapted for modern readers

Content:

Astus wrote:

You might want to start with this booklet: https://www.bdk.or.jp/pdf/buddhist-scriptures/02_english/TheTeachingofBuddha.pdf.

Perhaps

https://books.google.hu/books/about/The_Threefold_Lotus_Sutra.html?id=dKxKyQEAC

AAJ is also OK.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, February 23rd, 2024 at 5:09 PM

Title: Re: How to respond to theistic/deistic arguments from a Madhyamaka point of view?

Content:

Astus wrote:

There are two situations where one is occupied by such questions:

- as a mere mental exercise for amusement, in which case it's simply meaningless and futile, a type of wrong speech (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/essay/the-buddhist-path-to-enlightenment-study/d/doc1187810.html>)
- as a way to establish a specific set of rules and regulations, precepts and practices, in other words a doctrine to be followed

The first case needs no answer. The latter case, like the view of eternalism and the assumption of a creator, are refuted in various ways. For instance, positing a creator, believing in determinism, or denying causality are all doctrines that reject the possibility of personal development and a way to be free from suffering (<https://suttacentral.net/an3.61/en/sujato>)

- 1) Issues with Madhyamaka's usage of an 'infinite chain of casualty' as a concept
- 2) Issues with infinite past, and with samsara having no beginning
- 3) The fine-tuning argument
- 4) The issue of how Madhyamaka doesn't explain why existence actually exists

Those show a misunderstanding and misapplication of the teachings. Views about the eternal/temporary and finite/infinite nature of the world are meaningless (<https://suttacentral.net/mn63/en/sujato>) and based on the mistaken views of substantial existence (<https://suttacentral.net/sn41.3/en/sujato>). So Nagarjuna wrote:

"Other than as the imputation of a convention

What world is there in fact

Which would exist or not?

For this reason the Buddha,

Except for keeping silent, said nothing

About the fourfold format: having or

Not having a limit, both, or neither."

(<https://media.dalailama.com/English/texts/Nagarjuna-Precious-Garland-ENG.pdf>, v 114-115)

- 5) Karma's apparent perfection without an intelligent mind behind it

Although that is very much like the cosmological views of the previous four, it is an opportunity to redirect one's attention of imaginary entities and worlds out there somewhere back to the very process of conceiving beings and universes. Karma is

about what goes on in one's heart, the craving to find and remain in a pleasant experience, the hatred of encountering and being in unpleasant situations, and the confusion regarding the uncertainty of all the changes happening. Views give the illusion of a fixed existence, of knowing one's place, of being somebody. And those very same views cause one to suffer, because our actual physical and mental world of experiences (the five aggregates) keeps changing. So, the entirety of the Buddhist teachings are aimed at liberating one's heart from the endless cycle of pain and trouble.

'If one has the thesis of real entities,
Awful and vicious views arise,
Which give birth to attachment and aversion;
From this contentions ensue.
This is the cause of all dogmatic views;
Without it no afflictions will arise;
So if this is understood thoroughly,
All views and afflictions will cease.
"Who understands this?" one might wonder;
It's those who see dependent origination.
The supreme knower of reality has taught
That dependent arising is unborn.
For those who are suppressed by false knowledge
And grasp the untrue to be true,
In them arises from attachment
A series of grasping and contentions.
Those who are great beings,
They have neither thesis nor contention;
For those who have no thesis,
How can there be opposing thesis?'

(<https://ibc-elibrary.thanhxiang.org/files/public/Nagarjuna-Sixty-Stanzas-of-reasoning-Buddhism.pdf>, v 46-50)

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 27th, 2024 at 11:59 PM

Title: Re: Was Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka an implicative negation?

Content:

Vajrasvapna said:

However, even the ones you quoted don't entirely eliminate the Yogacara elements.

Astus wrote:

It eliminates the suggestion that there is somehow a special consciousness not empty. After all, the need to establish mind as ultimately real is simply a form of clinging to self. So it doesn't agree with even the fundamental and universally accepted Buddhist doctrines.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 28th, 2024 at 6:12 AM

Title: Re: Was Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka an implicative negation?

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

Well, this is kind of unfair. It begs the question for the Madhyamaka position. This statement is basically saying, either you agree with this specific Madhyamaka position, or you are clinging to self.

Astus wrote:

Denying ultimate reality to consciousness is not specifically a Madhyamaka concept, especially when the definition of ultimate reality is to exist independently and on its own. In Abhidharma terms it'd be calling the mind uncompounded.

Javierfv1212 said:

Philosophically speaking, anti-foundationalism (which is the common reading of Madhyamaka as a metaphysics) is also quite rare in modern philosophy, most metaphysicians would probably go for some kind of foundationalism.

Astus wrote:

Yogacara accepts the emptiness of both self and dharmas, and it denies ultimate reality to both mind and its objects. What foundation is left?

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, February 28th, 2024 at 9:33 PM

Title: Re: Was Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka an implicative negation?

Content:

Javierfv1212 said:

However, Yogacara does say that there is something which is real, an ultimate reality, which is not a sheer negation, the thing-in-itself (vastumatra). Why? Because for them, it is only when there is something to be empty that we can speak of emptiness (e.g., a cup is empty because it exists as a cup and so it is empty of liquid)

Astus wrote:

Mere things (vastumātra) and mere appearances (snang ba tsam) are not that different. One is labelled ultimate, the other conventional, but in both cases they represent the level that is mistaken for something else. More importantly, both stand for a view where grasping no longer has an object and ignorance no longer has a foundation. Coming back to the basics, clinging to the aggregates is the problem, not the aggregates themselves. It doesn't matter at all whether one labels the aggregates as the ultimate or the conventional in their system, as long as they are not mistaken as a self or as belonging to a self.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 14th, 2024 at 6:01 AM

Title: Re: AUTHETNIC Buddhist Quotes

Content:

Astus wrote:

If they are meant to be authentic, it should give the sources properly, including the actual source, like the title of the book, date of publication, and the name of the translator.

For instance, at 0:51 is a quote from "The Sutra of Hui Neng":

"By amending our mistakes, we get wisdom.

By defending our faults, we betray an unsound mind."

It is found in "The Diamond Sutra and The Sutra of Hui-neng" on page 92 of the Shambhala Publications edition of 2005, translated by A. F. Price and Wong Mou-Lam.

In The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra by the Buddhist Text Translation Society (2001, p 198):

"Correcting failings gives birth to wisdom.

Guarded errors expose a petty mind."

And in McRae's translation (which is generally the best one available):

"By reforming transgressions one will necessarily generate wisdom.

To defend shortcomings within one's mind is not wise."

(<https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-platform-sutra-of-the-sixth-patriarch/>, ch 3, BDK ed, p 41)

Reliable sources online:

<https://suttacentral.net/>

<https://84000.co/>

<https://www.bdkamerica.org/tripitaka-list/>

<https://kalavinka.org/>

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2024 at 4:48 AM

Title: Re: Is Buddhism compatible with the modern world and modern thinking?

Content:

Difeed said:

Is it still practical to practice buddhism (traditional buddhism) today?

Astus wrote:

A regular description of the Dharma taught by the Buddha is that it is "apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves" (<https://suttacentral.net/an3.53/en/sujato>; <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.70/en/sujato>). Humans were humans thousands of years ago just as they are today. It is a teaching that is verifiable directly in one's own experience.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, March 25th, 2024 at 4:55 AM

Title: Re: Form and emptiness

Content:

Rick said:

"Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

Does Mahayana/Madhyamaka say all phenomena are empty *and* have form? Or are there exceptions, non-empty or form-less phenomena?

Astus wrote:

Form is the first of the five aggregates. That often quoted line from the <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh21.html#UT22084-034-009-75> is followed by the other four aggregates: "In the same way, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness are empty."

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 30th, 2024 at 5:22 AM

Title: Re: East Asian Buddhism - any what-is-what (each school) overview?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The series <https://www.buddhistdoor.com/OldWeb/bdoor/archive/nutshell/index.htm> can give you a fair summary from a Chinese Buddhist perspective. See chapters 21-24 and 53-97. And if you'd like a basic introduction to East Asian Buddhism, I recommend the treatise <https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-awakening-of-faith/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, March 31st, 2024 at 11:32 PM

Title: Re: Authentic Dzogchen teachers Europe

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://simplybeing.co.uk/about-james-low-2/>

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erik_Pema_Kunsang

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, April 23rd, 2024 at 5:37 AM

Title: Re: Can Alayavijñāna be seen/discerned in meditation?

Content:

Alex123 said:

Can a person discern Alayavijñāna, or only 6 consciousnesses?

Astus wrote:

The ālayavijñāna and the manas are convenient theories to explain the continuity of the stream of consciousness within samsara, hence they are not perceptible.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, April 25th, 2024 at 3:51 PM

Title: Re: Do you get rid of suffering for good with Dzogchen ?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Minus Zen (IMO) many of the vehicles that hold those teachings as definitive tend to still see enlightenment as a result of the two accumulations.

Astus wrote:

That is common tathagatagarbha doctrine, that the buddha qualities are already present and practice is about removing the two veils

([https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1125&mid=1944022 / 5.170](https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&vid=1125&mid=1944022/5.170)). Since in dzogchen it's assumed that the eight other vehicles know practically nothing about it, it is more about how the nine vehicles are conceived and not about what other traditions actually teach.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, April 27th, 2024 at 5:13 AM

Title: Re: How is Buddha-nature different from atman?

Content:

It'sYa1UPBoy said:

This is a genuine question because of the ways that Dharmakaya and Buddha-nature are often described--- eternal, pure, true self, true being ---and how Vairocana Buddha is described as the Dharmakaya of Shakyamuni Buddha, eternal and pure and the true form and so on.

Astus wrote:

Buddha-nature means that a being has the nature of a buddha. A buddha means a perfectly enlightened one endowed with many special qualities. That a being has the nature of a buddha refers to the availability of the special qualities of a buddha. What others believe the atman to be is necessarily mistaking one of the five aggregates for something permanent, like believing that there exists a mind, an awareness that is eternal. Such misconceptions are clearly refuted in Buddhism.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, April 28th, 2024 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: How is Buddha-nature different from atman?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

What is the difference between the dharmakaya and Brahman?

Astus wrote:

Dharmakaya is the term used for the complete realisation of emptiness, therefore it is something only buddhas have. Brahman is a being, an entity, not a realisation.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, April 29th, 2024 at 3:06 AM

Title: Re: How is Buddha-nature different from atman?

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

Brahman is the ultimate reality of the universe,

And 'ultimate reality of the universe' can also describe dharmakaya.

Astus wrote:

Brahman is the one and only real being, everything else are illusory, according to Vedanta. The dharmakaya is in a sense identical to emptiness, and emptiness is the ultimate reality of all phenomena, but the term for that is dharmadhatu. Furthermore, while Brahman is alone, not mixed with anything else, in Buddhism emptiness is never apart from appearances, and the dharmakaya is not separate from the other buddha bodies.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2024 at 1:50 AM

Title: Re: Taisho Canon Catalogue No. Shingon works

Content:

Astus wrote:

<https://terebess.hu/zen/szoto/Map-of-the-Taisho.pdf>.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, May 11th, 2024 at 4:06 AM

Title: Re: Invitation to Comment/Critique

Content:

Astus wrote:

"But this entity existing prior

To sight and hearing and the other senses,

Feeling and the rest—

By what means can it be affirmed?

And if it could be there,

When sight and all the rest are absent,

There's no doubt that these in turn

Could, in its absence, also come to be.

Someone is revealed by something;

Something is revealed by someone.

How can there be someone without something?

How can there be something without someone?

...

If that which sees is also that which hears
As well as that which feels,
These senses it must needs precede.
But this does not make sense.
If the seer is different from the one who hears
And different also from the one who feels,
Then, when there is the seer, there would also be the hearer
And thus there would be many selves.
Neither does this self exist
In what gives rise
To seeing, hearing, and so forth,
Feeling and the rest."
(MMK 9.3-5, 8-10, tr Padmakara; see also Bodhicaryavatara 9.60-68)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 12th, 2024 at 1:58 AM

Title: Re: Invitation to Comment/Critique

Content:

haha said:

However, Vedanta would say this universal fire is inside the stick; intended meaning is that it is always there.

Astus wrote:

Just as there is no fire in a stick, a consciousness that is not conscious cannot exist.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 12th, 2024 at 2:58 PM

Title: Re: Invitation to Comment/Critique

Content:

haha said:

While rubbing two sticks, it springs out, fire should be always there. It is different than Buddhist argument.

Astus wrote:

It is different in that it's faulty, as it mistakes the potential with the actual. Just as the potential of fire does not function as or has the attributes of fire, so it's wrong to call it fire, a consciousness that isn't conscious of anything is without the functions or attributes of consciousness.

haha said:

In deep sleep, one is not conscious. After one wakes up, one knows that s/he was in deep sleep. Is there no consciousness in deep sleep as it is not conscious?

Astus wrote:

Since it is agreed one is not conscious during deep sleep, there is no consciousness present. That one has been sleeping before is known by inference.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 12th, 2024 at 7:04 PM

Title: Re: Invitation to Comment/Critique

Content:

haha said:

Those types to metaphor or simile are used to describe some intended meaning. Their cosmology is dissimilar to Buddhist.

Astus wrote:

Do you mean it's not possible to match Buddhist with Vedanta reasoning? In that case they are all boxed in their own ideas, and arguments are rather mere statements of faith. That view defeats the point of making a reasoned argument. Thus Vedanta would amount to nothing more than blind faith in their textual tradition. The <https://suttacentral.net/mn95> addresses that type of belief quite well.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, May 12th, 2024 at 8:34 PM

Title: Re: Invitation to Comment/Critique

Content:

haha said:

My point is that such thing should be understood in their respective context.

Astus wrote:

The point of this topic is, however, reviewing the presented interpretation from a Buddhist perspective.

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, May 17th, 2024 at 6:45 PM

Title: Re: Buddhist Ethics Paradox

Content:

Kim O'Hara said:

But the Precepts are guidelines or aspirations rather than commandments, and killing oneself (even through deliberate malnutrition) is also frowned upon, and Buddhists throughout Asia have always included meat in their diets (vegetarianism is the exception rather than the rule).

With all that in mind, I'm going to call meat-eating, for survival, mixed karma rather than a paradox.

Astus wrote:

The precepts are training rules, but they reflect the laws of cause and effect.

'And what are the dark deeds with dark results? It's when someone kills living creatures, steals, commits sexual misconduct, lies, and uses alcoholic drinks that cause negligence. These are called dark deeds with dark results.'

(<https://suttacentral.net/an4.235/en/sujato>)

'Classification of Taking Life. There are three types: taking life through the door of desire, taking life through the door of hatred, and taking life through the door of ignorance. The first one means to take life for meat, pelts and so forth, for sport, for one's own wealth, and to maintain oneself and loved ones. The second one means to take life through the arising of hatred, out of resentment, or in competition. The third one refers to making sacrifices and so forth.

Three Results of Taking Life. There are three results of taking life: the result of the maturation of the act, the result similar to the cause, and the general result of the force.

"Result of maturation of the act" means that the actor will be born in the hell realms.

Experiencing a "result similar to the cause" means that even if the actor is born in the human realm, his life will be short or he will experience much sickness. "General result of the force" means that the actor will be born in an inauspicious place where there is little dignity.'

(Jewel Ornament of Liberation, p 112-113)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, June 12th, 2024 at 3:12 PM

Title: Re: English resource on Prajñaparamita-saṅcayagatha

Content:

Astus wrote:

It's also available as <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh10.html#UT22084-029-001-chapter-84>, translated by <https://khyentsefoundation.org/story/dr-gareth-sparham/>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, June 18th, 2024 at 3:48 PM

Title: Re: Why Zen? A Pure Land and Zen comparison...

Content:

Astus wrote:

There is no opposition, so there is no reason to choose one over the other. Both are collections of teachings and methods for the cultivation of the six perfections and the attainment of complete awakening. In fact, buddha-remembrance has been a common method within zen practically from its beginning.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, June 29th, 2024 at 4:53 AM

Title: Re: Big Mind vs small mind (and real-life application)

Content:

a Zen Rōnin said:

Dogen Zenji in his writings differentiate the Big Mind and small mind.

Astus wrote:

Where exactly does he write about those two?

In the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenzo_Ky%C5%8Dkun of the Eihei Shingi he writes about the three minds where the third is "magnanimous mind" or "great mind" and he defines it the following way:

"As for what is called magnanimous mind, this mind is like the great mountains or like the great ocean; it is not biased or contentious mind. Carrying half a pound, do not take it lightly; lifting forty pounds should not seem heavy. Although drawn by the voices of spring, do not wander over spring meadows; viewing the fall colors, do not allow your heart to fall. The four seasons cooperate in a single scene; regard light and heavy with a single eye."

(Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community, p 49)

a Zen Rōnin said:

He also said that the Big Mind means "accepting everything we encounter in our life as the True Self".

Astus wrote:

Where did Dogen say that?

a Zen Rōnin said:

But does this mean that we turn a blind eye to people who mistreat us?

Is being "indifferent to them" the way out of such situation?

Or do we need to literally "love" them in spite of what they are doing to us?

Astus wrote:

It is the perfection of forbearance (kṣāntipāramitā) that is the practice of facing all sorts of difficulties. You can learn more about it for instance

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc82346.html>.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, June 30th, 2024 at 6:20 PM

Title: Re: Honen's conception of the Pure Land

Content:

Astus wrote:

'The fourth and the last stage is perhaps best thought of as the stage after death, when one has succeeded in being born in the Pure Land in the West. At this fourth stage, all of the practices of the Holy Path aimed towards gaining final enlightenment that were rejected as being too difficult for people living in the age of the final Dharma are readmitted on their own terms. Since they now dwell amid the wonders of the Pure Land, people are continuously in the presence of the Buddha and hear his teachings without

the distortions caused by the many disturbing passions of the present world. Now they can indeed obtain the bodhicitta, reach the stage of non-retrogression, and be assured of eventual enlightenment. Therefore, the practices of the Holy Path which were rejected as too difficult are now all reinstated and practiced in their full essence. This stage is indicated in a number of Honen's works, for example, in the Nembutsu tai-i, he states, "Sentient beings in the age of the final Dharma, being incapable of attaining any goal through manifold practices, should first rely on the power of Amida's vow and attain birth in the Pure Land through the recitation of the nembutsu. After achieving birth in the Pure Land and seeing Amida Buddha and bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta, they should learn the holy teachings and attain enlightenment" (JZ. 9:512a). Because he saw the nembutsu alone as able to encompass ordinary and deluded persons, Honen taught the way of salvation in the Pure Land through calling upon Amida's name. Once that goal is achieved, then all of the practices of the bodhisattva are reinstated with their original intent of leading to complete enlightenment. This fourth stage, often lost sight of, nonetheless informs Honen's thought, since it had been a part of the thought of all his Pure Land predecessors.' (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150711131503/http://www.jsri.jp/English/Honen/TEACHINGS/senchaku/process.html>)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 3rd, 2024 at 4:45 AM

Title: Re: Shōbōgenzō / Uji in Japanese?

Content:

Cittapalo said:

For reference: I'm looking for this poem specifically:

Zen master Guixing of She Prefecture is the heir of Shoushan, a dharma descendant of Linji. One day he taught the assembly:

For the time being mind arrives, but words do not.

For the time being words arrive, but mind does not.

For the time being both mind and words arrive.

For the time being neither mind nor words arrive.

I don't think either version has those.

Astus wrote:

葉縣ノ歸省禪師ハ。臨濟ノ法孫＊ナリ。首山ノ嫡嗣ナリ。アルトキ大衆ニシメシテ
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(http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2015/T2582_.82.0047a22:0047a22.cit)

Zen Master Kishō of the Shōken region is a Dharma descendant of Rinzai, and the

rightful successor of Shuzan. On one occasion he preaches to the assembly:
Sometimes the will is present but the words are absent,
Sometimes the words are present but the will is absent,
Sometimes the will and the words are both present,
Sometimes the will and the words are both absent.
(SBGZ BDK ed, vol 1, p 148)

Chan Master Guixing of Shexian was a descendant of Linji, the direct heir of Shoushan.
On one occasion, addressing the great assembly, he said,
Sometimes, the intention reaches it, and the words don't reach it.
Sometimes, the words reach it, and the intention doesn't reach it.
Sometimes, both the intention and the words reach it.
Sometimes, neither the intention nor the words reach it.
(SBGZ SZTP ed, vol 2, p 210)

It is found in Dahui's Zhengfayanzang:

有時句到意不到。妄緣前塵分別影事。
有時意到句不到。如盲摸象各說異端。
有時意句俱到。打破乾坤界。光明照十方。
有時意句俱不到。無目之人縱橫走。忽然不覺落深坑。
(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/X67n1309_p0594b05)

Sometimes expression reaches but mind does not — you mistakenly focus on phenomena that are reflections of thought about present sense data.
Sometimes mind reaches but expression does not — you are like blind people touching an elephant, each describing it differently.
Sometimes mind and expression both reach — breaking through heaven and earth, light illumines the ten directions.
Sometimes neither mind nor expression reach — people with no eyes run hither and thither, and suddenly fall unawares into a deep pit.
(Treasury of the Eye of the True Teaching, vol 1, §316)

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 3rd, 2024 at 11:02 PM

Title: Re: English resource on Prajñaparamita-saṅcayagatha

Content:

Zhen Li said:

Do you know if it is possible to pull up the chapters on stand-alone pages? The longer sutras on 84000 usually crash my browser.

Astus wrote:

If you open the link it opens only that chapter while the others remain hidden. I've also made the chapter into an attachment to this post.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, July 7th, 2024 at 6:44 AM

Title: Re: Directly Pointing to the Mind

Content:

Matt J said:

A special transmission outside the scriptures.

No dependency on words and letters.

Pointing directly to the human mind.

Seeing into one's nature and attaining Buddhahood.

Astus wrote:

It seems to me to be immediately embodied and accomplished in zazen.

Zazen is transmitted face to face.

Zazen is not depending on concepts.

Zazen is directly encountering the mind.

Zazen is seeing one's nature and attaining buddhahood.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 8th, 2024 at 2:43 PM

Title: Re: The self is not existentially privileged

Content:

Rick said:

The self is not existentially privileged, it is exactly as real/unreal as everything else.

Would any Buddhist school agree with this?

Astus wrote:

The ordinary self is a conventionally valid conceptual construct, like trees and rocks.

The self of various beliefs, a soul, is even conventionally false.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2024 at 12:12 AM

Title: Re: The self is not existentially privileged

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

In buddhist teaching, "self" is really nothing more than a reoccurring experience. It is what happens when consciousness is mistaken for an object of consciousness.

Astus wrote:

That's more like a Vedanta view. Buddhism defines self view in terms of 20 possible relations to the aggregates, see: <https://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php/Sakkaya-ditthi>.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2024 at 3:34 PM

Title: Re: The self is not existentially privileged

Content:

Karma Dorje said:

Trees and rocks are percepts. The ordinary self is never perceived, it is merely a unexamined concept we believe in fiercely. As such, any beliefs about self are equally false whether they have any functional value within deluded experience or not.

Astus wrote:

In ordinary usage it's not simply a self on its own but something that is regarded as a self or related to a self. That is, whenever we say "I am ..." and "My ...", that's the conventional self.

It is a valid, understandable, and common manner of speaking to say "Look at me." and "Give me that." also "I hear him." and "I envy her." Those personal pronouns point to a specific being, an entity, a self. Just as you can do the same with other conventional things, like rocks and trees (and chariots, as it goes in the <https://suttacentral.net/sn5.10/en/sujato>).

An important role of the conventional self is in ethics. Murder is killing another being. Theft is taking something that belongs to another. To deny the conventional reality of a self is to deny the reality of morality.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 9th, 2024 at 3:41 PM

Title: Re: The self is not existentially privileged

Content:

PadmaVonSamba said:

I don't see how you arrive at that. Vedanta doesn't regard self as a reoccurring experience but rather as a constant observer.

Astus wrote:

What Vedanta posits as the source of illusion is mistaking the objects of the observer for the self, that is, as you wrote: "when consciousness is mistaken for an object of consciousness".

PadmaVonSamba said:

Aggregates by definition are not a self, because a self would have to be unitary.

Astus wrote:

While they are not actually a self, they are what get mistaken for a self, that's why self is defined in Buddhism in relation to them.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, July 10th, 2024 at 7:27 PM

Title: Re: The self is not existentially privileged

Content:

Rick said:

Assuming this is right, does it mean ultimately the self is no more important-meaningful than a rusty ball bearing?

Astus wrote:

"Like oneself, all sentient beings hold themselves most dear."

(<https://suttacentral.net/an7.64/en/sujato>) This shows well that the self is the most important there is for everyone (see also: <https://suttacentral.net/ud5.1/en/sujato>). In other words, it is what we call "I" and "my" that we cling to the most. That is, the self is the label for maximum attachment.

Rick said:

Assuming this is right, what good does knowing it conceptually do, nudge you towards ekarasa?

Astus wrote:

Clinging hurts when we lose what we don't want to let go. And we always lose it. That's the suffering one can escape from by recognising the futile and painful nature of attachment.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 13th, 2024 at 4:20 AM

Title: Re: Four Yogas sources Beyond Lankavantara

Content:

Vajrasvapna said:

I was talking with a India friend and he point that this was similar to this Four Yoga set from Theravada sources:

Astus wrote:

That's from the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga (verse 35), not Theravada.

"Application with a focal point,
Application without a focal point,
Application without focusing on a focal point,
And the application of focusing on the absence of a focal point."

"In the first application one observes that all phenomena are nothing more than mind. Based on that, one's application is such that the apprehended is not observed. This then leads to an application in which neither apprehended nor apprehender are observed.

Based upon that, one's subsequent application involves the observation of suchness, without observing any apprehended or apprehender at all. This approach enables one

to generate nonconceptual wakefulness."
(Distinguishing Phenomena from Their Intrinsic Nature, p 43-44)

See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogachara#Four_prayogas.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 15th, 2024 at 3:53 AM

Title: Re: I need some help.I don't know What's the point of following the path if I will die?

Content:

Artziebetter1 said:

so a permanent soul or vijnana cannot exist,I get that,and I welcome it.

Astus wrote:

It does not exist even now, there is no self existing from one moment to the next in this life either. It is not that there is a mind/self that ceases to exist at death, that's the annihilationist view.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 15th, 2024 at 8:58 PM

Title: Re: What to read after the Dhammapada?

Content:

usagibryan87 said:

What is a good next text to read, for a beginner, in the official Buddhist canon, which I understand is vast, and what would a good translated version with commentary of that be?

Astus wrote:

A short anthology by Thanissaro Bhikkhu:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html>

A collection of essential teachings: <https://ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Dhammatthavinicchaya/index.htm> based on a text found in the Chinese and Tibetan tradition: <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh317.html>

An anthology from Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan sources:

https://buddhistuniversity.net/exclusive_01/Common%20Buddhist%20Text%20%282015-12-29%29.pdf

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, July 19th, 2024 at 3:59 AM

Title: Re: Free Will?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The Buddha has rejected both determinism and indeterminism

(<https://suttacentral.net/an3.61/en/sujato>), and he practically ridiculed those who denied autonomy in their actions (<https://suttacentral.net/an6.38/en/sujato>). Naturally, what's been done is done, but currently one chooses how to act (<https://suttacentral.net/sn35.146/en/sujato>), therefore bad habits can be rectified (<https://suttacentral.net/sn42.8/en/sujato>), and even the consequences of past actions can be mitigated (<https://suttacentral.net/an3.100/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, July 20th, 2024 at 4:42 AM

Title: Re: Free Will?

Content:

Queequeg said:

Implicitly, he's saying, such positions are irrelevant to liberation, his standard position on these questions.

Astus wrote:

If they were true, or believed to be true, the path to liberation would not be possible, therefore they are not accepted, in other words: rejected.

Queequeg said:

His reasoning here was, volition is self evident.

Astus wrote:

There is also a list of factors (initiative, persistence, exertion, etc.) that exemplify the validity of individual effort.

Queequeg said:

Here, too, he doesn't really address the question and assumes we have the capacity to make causes.

Astus wrote:

The significance of the discourse is in the recognition and distinction of old and new action, the assertion of the ability to choose and act.

Queequeg said:

Again, he does not actually address the question of whether there is determinism or not, but rather expands on the possibilities of following the path. Implicitly he is acknowledging the ability of beings to set their own course but that is it.

Astus wrote:

The possibility of following the path is contrary to determinism that would deny such an option. See also Gosāla's determinism in the <https://suttacentral.net/dn2/en/sujato>. That is a fruitless view (<https://suttacentral.net/mn76/en/sujato>), and, like other wrong views (<https://suttacentral.net/sn41.3/en/sujato>), it is based on the various forms of self view (<https://suttacentral.net/sn24.8/en/sujato>).

Queequeg said:

The Buddha distinguishes between the spiritual capacities and how karma plays out for one who is undeveloped versus one who is developed.

Astus wrote:

Consequences would be identical if effects were determined. Exactly because there can be development there is no determined result.

Queequeg said:

This response fails to address whether there is free will from the Buddhist perspective.

Astus wrote:

Beings are the makers and heirs of their own actions. If they were not the makers, that would be determinism. If they were not the heirs, that would be indeterminism. Such denial of cause and effect is called wrong view (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an3.119/en/sujato>), and is based on the mistaken belief in a self (<https://suttacentral.net/sn24.5/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2024 at 10:32 PM

Title: Re: Analysing breath

Content:

Jokingfish said:

Therefore I ask - should you analyse breathing or just observe it passively or..?

Astus wrote:

That Buddha taught mindfulness of breath (*ānāpānasmṛti*) in sixteen aspects, as in the <https://suttacentral.net/mn118/en/sujato>, the <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh317.html#UT22084-072-017-165>, and elsewhere. Then it was extended and regrouped into six phases, as one can see in <https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-sutra-on-the-concentration-of-sitting-meditation/> and Zhiyi's https://kalavinka.org/kp_book_pages/sgs_book_page.htm, or even to eight phases, as in Buddhaghosa's <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/visuddhimagga-the-path-of-purification/d/doc1085076.html>. The point is, mindfulness of breath is a complete training, and analysis has its place in it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024 at 5:57 PM

Title: Re: Getting assaulted as a monk

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Bodhisattvas who reside in the inconceivable emancipation possess the power of awesome virtue and therefore manifest the practice of pressuring, showing sentient beings difficulties such as these. Ordinary people are inferior and lack energy, and they

are unable to pressure bodhisattvas in this way.'

(Vimalakirti Sutra, ch 6, BDK ed, p 122 /

<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-237>)

'When a person of little worth looks you up and down and treats you fearfully, you are tempted to not endure him. However, the sin of impatience is more serious than the insult. Why? Because the impatient person is scorned by the saints and by honest people, whereas the patient person is scorned only by common people. Of the two despisals, better to be despised by the ignorant than by the saints. Why? The ignorant scorns what is not despicable, [namely, patience], whereas the saint despises that which is despicable, [namely, impatience]. This is why one should practice patience.'

(<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225351.html>)

'What is the practice of accepting adversity? When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: "For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither the heavens nor other people can impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection." The sutra says, "Face hardships without distress." How? With thorough insight. With this understanding in mind, you are in accord with the Principle, advancing on the Way through the experience of adversity. This is called the practice of accepting adversity.'

(<https://buddhagate.org/the-essence-of-mahayana-practice/>)

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 2nd, 2024 at 4:13 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Let's simplify this:

If a practitioner does not believe in multiple lifetimes caught in the cycle of rebirth, then what is liberation exactly? What differentiates the psychological well-being coming from practicing Buddhism in this life vs. what comes from practicing therapy or Stoicism, for example?

Astus wrote:

Liberation is from the three poisons and suffering. If any other doctrine or system can give the same, they should rightly be called equivalent to the Buddhadharma. But is the threefold training and the noble eightfold path found anywhere else?

SilaSamadhiPanna2004 said:

Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture

during the Buddha's era?

I am genuinely curious and am not trying to disrespect the Dhamma or the Buddha, thank you to anyone who responds.

You can actually answer this question very easily by simply reading some Buddhist Suttas, such as the many, many places where the Buddha talks about endless lives through endless universes of contraction and expansion, the notion that nibbana means the end of rebirth, etc.

Astus wrote:

Both the Dhamma and nibbana is taught as verifiable in this life (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an3.53/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/an3.55/en/sujato>). Regardless of the status of afterlife this practice is beneficial (<https://suttacentral.net/mn60/en/sujato>).

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 3rd, 2024 at 5:37 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Astus wrote:

The idea that it is consciousness that is reborn is somewhat troublesome (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/mn38/en/sujato>), even if it is sometimes taught that way for the sake of easier communication. One might as well say that it is the body that is reborn (see e.g. Gongchig 2.4). It is often emphasised that nothing goes from one life to the next (e.g. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html#UT22084-062-010-99>, <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh226.html#UT22084-063-007-73>). There is also the undeclared matter whether body and mind are identical or different, thus the argument that while the body remains the mind can go on falls into an extreme view. Where does rebirth fit then?

'For whom there is emptiness there are all natural and supernatural things. Why? For whom there is emptiness there is dependent origination. ... For whom there is all this, the law of the fortunate and unfortunate states of rebirth, the attainment of the fortunate and unfortunate states of rebirth, the way of going toward the fortunate and unfortunate states of rebirth, the passing beyond the fortunate and unfortunate states of rebirth, the means for passing beyond the fortunate and unfortunate states of rebirth as well as all worldly conventions are established.'

(Vigrahavyāvartanī v 70 commentary, in The Dispeller of Disputes, p 130)

'Since dependent origination lies beyond the scope of those [who assert] things and nonthings, therefore one should liberate oneself from the erroneous views of eternalism and nihilism. Hence, one becomes convinced and maintains that things are dependent imputations, and thus, the presentations of the agent, karma, effect, experiencer, afflicted being, and the body are tenable; yet the errors of eternalism and nihilism do not ensue, and samsara is established.'

(Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti v 17.33, in Buddhapālita's Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Middle Way, p 229)

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 4th, 2024 at 2:16 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

I'm saying that a claim that "rebirth is unnecessary to Buddhist practice" needs to be based on something other than personal preference if it's being universally applied - as it's advocates usually want it to be.

Astus wrote:

What is it in the six paramitas, the eightfold path, or the three trainings that requires rebirth?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 4th, 2024 at 4:03 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

From a Sravakayana viewpoint liberation means liberation from rebirth, and the - complete- extinction of the defilements, this is not the view employed by secular practitioners, and no rhetorical device, however clever will make that the case.

Astus wrote:

Liberation means the extinction of defilements in all vehicles. Since neither the path nor the result requires rebirth, at what point does it become necessary?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 4th, 2024 at 6:22 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

If someone's idea of liberation is simply feeling better in this life and being ethical, then it's not.

Astus wrote:

Is being free from defilements 'simply feeling better'? Might be so. After all, it is called the highest bliss (Dhp 204).

Johnny Dangerous said:

Again though, it is disingenuous to pretend that someone who thinks that death will extinguish their defilements -no matter their actions- is engaging in practice with the same motivation as someone who assumes their defilements propel endless rebirth and dissatisfaction.

Astus wrote:

If that were so, anyone who accepts rebirth - Buddhist or not - or even just the existence of afterlife, should all be quite pious and devout people, not much interested in earthly matters. Apparently that is not so, nor is it taught like that in Buddhism. It is rather a whole theme of contemplation to inculcate the loathsome and painful nature of all forms of existence. Thus there is meditation on rebirth being without a known beginning (SN 15.1-10), on the rarity of human and heavenly birth (SN 56.102-131), but there are also other topics (e.g. AN 10.56) that serve a similar purpose, among them the topic of one's own mortality.

Johnny Dangerous said:

Such a persons view of what constitutes liberation from samsara is not defined or distinguishable from the goals of therapy, secular philosophy, etc.

Astus wrote:

Is there any non-Buddhist system that teaches complete liberation from afflictive emotions? If not, then there is indeed a defined distinction between the Buddhist path and others. The Cūḷasīhanādasutta (MN 11) addresses the difference between the teaching of others and of the Buddha in terms of four kinds of grasping, and while three of those (grasping at sensual pleasures, views, and precepts and observances) are known by others, grasping at theories of a self is not. And it is this fourth kind that causes one to be troubled by thoughts regarding one's past, future, and present existence.

Since the teachings about an afterlife and the doctrine of rebirth is neither unique to Buddhism, nor does it necessarily have a role on the Buddhist path, what makes it indispensable to cultivating the three trainings and attaining correct liberation?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 9th, 2024 at 3:05 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

1. For everyone other than arhats and chigcharwas, rebirth is a necessary part of the path. You cannot accumulate merit and wisdom in one lifetime alone.

Astus wrote:

That does not make it part of one's current practice though.

natusake said:

2. Without rebirth, the entire idea of a tathagata and bodhisattva is defunct. Bodhisattvas no longer pass through many eons of lives to become completely awakened, and tathagatas simply die and do not emanate countless emanations to benefit sentient beings.

Astus wrote:

Those are ideas, not the practices.

natusake said:

3. Speaking of, if tathagatas merely die, and if people merely die not to be reborn, then this carries with it the fault of annihilationism. The whole system of Buddhist doctrine regarding eternalism and annihilationism, necessary to understand what buddhadharma is getting at, no longer makes any sense.

Astus wrote:

To the same extent, if they survive then it's eternalism. But more importantly, this is again a matter of theory and not the application of the practices.

natusake said:

4. Without rebirth, dependent arising makes no sense, because rebirth and death form part of its elements, and it is meant to explain the cycle of rebirth and death.
5. Without dependent arising, neither emptiness nor selflessness can be explained.
6. Without emptiness or selflessness, buddhadharma is defunct.

Astus wrote:

It's not about whether there is rebirth in Buddhism but if it's needed for its actual cultivation. The six points listed does not concern any of the three trainings or the six paramitas. So even if one does not accept rebirth, what is it that such a person could not practice?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 6:08 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

Right view, essentially. Or more accurately, their view and any aspirations derived from it are limited in scope.

Astus wrote:

The goal of the path is to end suffering by eliminating all defilements. If one does not intend to do that in this life, then when? And how is that actually helpful in achieving liberation?

Johnny Dangerous said:

I think Bodhisattva aspirations are most definitely a practice.

Astus wrote:

Are those aspirations not to be fulfilled in this life? What is the benefit of believing that one is incapable of achieving one's goal in one's entire lifetime? And if that is indeed how it should be approached, are teachings that advocate complete awakening in a single lifetime wrong?

Johnny Dangerous said:

People can practice these things with whatever beliefs they like, but some ways of seeing things create limitations. I don't really understand why one would want to insist that this kind of practice shouldn't be distinguished.

Astus wrote:

Having correct view, even on a purely intellectual level, is already a challenging achievement. How does one get there if not with an incorrect, or partially incorrect view? If correct view is necessary to cultivate the path, then what is the path to correct view?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 6:24 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Aemilius said:

And you practice the right view.

Astus wrote:

What is it you call the practice of right view? Making vows and dedication of merit?

Aemilius said:

The noble Eight fold path begins with the right view. The Noble eight fold path does not exist without the right view. You know well what the right view is, I assume.

Astus wrote:

The standard definition of right view in the noble eightfold path is the four noble truths (<https://suttacentral.net/sn45.8/en/sujato>, <https://suttacentral.net/mn141/en/sujato>), and although there are various ways to put it (<https://suttacentral.net/mn9/en/sujato>), they are quite alike.

Aemilius said:

One formulation of the right view is that the five aggregates do not exist in the past, present or future and neither do they not exist in the past, present or future.

Astus wrote:

If there are many formulations of right view, which one is the definitive?

Aemilius said:

If you do not accept the right view, you are holding onto and practicing the wrong view.

Astus wrote:

With what method can one with a wrong view accept the right view?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 6:48 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

No one has said that people shouldn't or can't practice Buddhist meditation or ethics because they are unsure about rebirth. It was never stated in the thread, and I and others explicitly said that indeed, people can practice this way within the limitations of their view.

Astus wrote:

If rebirth is a necessary element of the view to practise the path, what else would it mean than those without such a view cannot cultivate it? So it is completely logical to say that "If there is no rebirth according to Karma then there is nothing to awaken from anyway". But isn't the actual goal the removal of defilements, while freedom from birth is rather a consequence of that?

Johnny Dangerous said:

The question is "necessity" of rebirth to Buddhist practice in general, and certainly to end the cycle of rebirth, one first has to be convinced it's a thing.

Astus wrote:

If it is not denied that one can cultivate the path without belief in rebirth, then through such cultivation one can remove the defilements, and with that end all future births, even if never wished for it (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/an7.71/en/sujato>).

Johnny Dangerous said:

As I've said a bunch of times now, that's a laudable goal by itself, and what I'm objecting to is an attempt to conflate two obviously very different approaches to practicing Buddhism, the second of which is purely therapeutic by definition.

Astus wrote:

There are no two paths in Buddhism, are there? Not killing is not killing. Mindfulness of the body is mindfulness of the body. Not grasping at pleasant and painful feelings is not grasping at pleasant and painful feelings. If the actual method used by those who accept and those who do not the teaching of rebirth, then the result should be the same anyway. But if the results are different, then the path to them are different. And if the paths are different, it means unbelievers cannot cultivate what believers can.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 7:04 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

Understanding the four noble truths is understanding death and rebirth, and vice versa. So there is no need to assert one as provisional and another as definitive, because they do not directly contradict each other, but all are various ways to explain the same dharma.

Astus wrote:

They are not contradictory, but that doesn't make them the same. The Mahācattārīsakasutta (<https://suttacentral.net/mn117/en/sujato>) makes a distinction between the two types of right view: one "is accompanied by defilements, partakes of good deeds, and ripens in attachments" and the other "is noble, undefiled, transcendent, a factor of the path". What ripens in attachments is not a factor of the path, that is, does not lead to liberation.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 4:31 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Johnny Dangerous said:

It can't be the same practice.

The main reason it cannot (purely my point of view) is that if someone takes the materialist view of mind as a given they don't believe they can experience the ultimate reality of their own mind, because a purely physicalist point of view precludes that possibility.

Astus wrote:

Why would it preclude that? The mind arises momentarily dependent on a specific sense faculty and sense object. How is seeing that such a mind is conditioned and without essence dependent on belief in rebirth?

Johnny Dangerous said:

I believe that people raised in our society that tend towards a secular point of view implicitly accept that the scientific worldview is "correct" in this sort of static sense and that it has determined the mind to be an epi-phenomena of matter, therefore mind ends entirely at death. This being the case, adoption of this point of view precludes any Buddhist idea of liberating the mind, it can only be improved before it ceases to be.

Astus wrote:

Among non-Buddhists at one point (<https://suttacentral.net/an10.29/en/sujato>) the Buddha called the annihilationist view the best, because "When someone has such a view, you can expect that they will not be attracted to continued existence, and they will not be repulsed by the cessation of continued existence."

As for the Buddhist view of mind, it is a very temporary product of causes and conditions, and it ends practically every moment. So the fault of the annihilationist view is also the same mistaken view of misconceiving the mind as something enduring, as a self.

Johnny Dangerous said:

What exactly constitutes liberation for someone practicing in a one-lifetime context with no Karma and rebirth? How does it differ from therapy of self-help

Astus wrote:

Liberation is the end of craving. Where is the issue of rebirth relevant to that?

Johnny Dangerous said:

You guys seem to have this mythical practitioner in mind that is seeking and acknowledges a transcendental state not reachable through means other than Dharma, but would have no explanation for its importance or validity beyond feeling good in this life.

Astus wrote:

The benefits of freedom from craving is apparent in this life (e.g. <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.70/en/sujato>), and there is no need to consider past or future (<https://suttacentral.net/sn42.11/en/sujato>). Then it is through actual insight into the nature of one's existence that right view is attained.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 7:34 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

Either way, wrong view is univocally explained as a denial of karma and rebirth.

Astus wrote:

Yes. The question though is whether faith in rebirth is necessary or not in order to engage in Buddhist practice. In other words, obtaining right view is a prerequisite or a result of the path? If one needs right view - including the view of rebirth - before one can cultivate the way, what is it that leads to right view if not the path?

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, August 10th, 2024 at 10:49 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

Are you asserting that an untaught, ignoble, ordinary person can obtain supramundane right view that is stainless before any prior entrance to the dharma? I would say that's true in only one lineage.

Astus wrote:

If the path cannot be engaged in without right view, one first has to obtain right view, but there is no path to right view. What to do then?

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2024 at 2:01 AM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

Simple, you begin with mundane right view, as the suttas advise. Just like conventional truth is used to lead one to ultimate truth in Madhyamika.

Astus wrote:

The main hindrance is that it's not what is commonly accepted as conventional truth, therefore in order to arrive at such a perspective - what happens to include belief in the efficacy of sacrifices - there needs to be a way, unless you think a "leap of faith" is a valid expectation.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, August 11th, 2024 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

natusake said:

Perhaps, but if this is your move, you must recognize you've already ceded the main point - which is whether rebirth is a necessary part of the dharma.

Astus wrote:

Quite the opposite. Right view, just like right concentration, is something learnt and not a prerequisite. Therefore belief in rebirth is not a condition to engage fruitfully in the path. Otherwise one would need to already possess all the factors of the path before cultivating it.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, August 13th, 2024 at 9:49 PM

Title: Re: Is rebirth a fundamental aspect of the Dhamma, or is it a reflection of Indian culture during the Buddha's era?

Content:

Aemilius said:

How can you read, recite and maintain the four, five or ten bodhisattva vows, without belief in reincarnation?

How could you contemplate the Four thoughts that turn the mind without belief in reincarnation?

Astus wrote:

The particular issue was whether belief in rebirth is a requirement for practice, e.g. the six perfections. Can one practise generosity without the bodhisattva vows and the four thoughts? Can one practise the perfection of generosity without them?

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, August 30th, 2024 at 7:22 PM

Title: Re: merit transfer

Content:

Astus wrote:

Merit (punya) - or in other words: goodness, virtue - is not a thing to be given or taken, but refers to the positive quality of an action (karma) that has a positive outcome (vipāka). Dedicating merit is a practice of generosity, cultivating the relinquishment of desiring good for oneself and the wishing for the good of others, that's why it is a virtuous act to do so and gives one even more positive results. For the goodness, the merit of an action to be shared means that one agrees with and rejoices in the positive action of another. At the same time, agreeing with and rejoicing in another's negative action is a cultivation of an evil mind that generates painful consequences.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2024 at 3:09 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

seeker_of_dharma said:

1. If EBTs are not the words of Buddha, then nothing can be shown to be words of the Buddha and he might've not even existed then

Astus wrote:

The agamas/nikayas are accepted as authentic words of the Buddha. I'm unaware of any Buddhist school ever questioning that.

seeker_of_dharma said:

2. If we understand EBTs, their definition AND VERY GOAL is to achieve nibbana which is defined completely differently to Mahayana's nibbana

Astus wrote:

Not really. Nirvana is defined everywhere as the ending of defilements.

seeker_of_dharma said:

3. If we insist on following Mahayana, we are then willingly not following Buddha's teachings and truth despite calling ourselves Buddhist

Astus wrote:

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is what makes a Buddhist. That is accepted by everyone.

Furthermore, in terms of doctrine and practice, Mahayana accepts such basic concepts as the aggregates, elements, and sense fields; the three characteristics and dependent origination; the four noble truths and the thirty-seven factors of awakening.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2024 at 4:45 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

Aemilius said:

It is perfectly logical and possible that Buddha Shakyamuni taught the Three turnings of the wheel of Dharma. But certain sections of the Sangha didn't accept the later turnings of the Wheel of Dharma that include Mahayana, Perfection of Wisdom and Chittamatra/Tathagatagarbha. And they have edited their version of the Tripitaka accordingly.

Astus wrote:

Unless you claim that the various abhidharma works and commentaries are by the Buddha, since Mahayana sutras rely on and refer to them, the above view is unsustainable.

Author: Astus

Date: Wednesday, September 4th, 2024 at 10:47 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

Aemilius said:

But his view, that all the teachings of Abhidharma can be found in the sutras, is to be found also elsewhere.

Astus wrote:

There are several terms and ideas not found in the nikayas/agamas, only in abhidharma or commentarial works.

Some examples: 37

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhipakkhiy%C4%81dhamm%C4%81>, 18

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225801.html>, 22 <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225733.html>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dipankara>, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780190681159.001.0001/acref-9780190681159-e-2260>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_precepts.
See also: https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_ADB8A4E3744C.P001/REF.pdf.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2024 at 1:46 AM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

natusake said:

All of those appear in the nikayas. You can find them all in the Samyutta Nikaya, except the āveṇikadharmas, but I doubt that you couldn't find those elsewhere.

Astus wrote:

Not all of them, and only what they refer to, but not the terms themselves.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2024 at 5:27 AM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

natusake said:

I can tell you that the indriya's are literally named in a vagga of the Samyutta Nikaya

Astus wrote:

They are found in SN 48, the Indriyasamyutta, but there is no grouping and naming them as the 22 faculties (bāvisatindriyāni).

Same applies to the 37 factors of awakening (sattatimsa bodhipakkhiyā dhammā), although its seven groups are found all over the discourses, they are not called as such in a single group. The term bodhipakkhiyā dhammā is found (SN 48.55, SN 48.67-70), but it's identified as the five faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, immersion, and wisdom.

natusake said:

and Dīpaṃkāra is named in the Buddhavamsa and elsewhere. It's possible, but am really skeptical of that the other terms couldn't be found.

Astus wrote:

The Buddhavamsa is hardly a discourse (sutta).

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2024 at 1:19 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

natusake said:

In context, the question is whether these teachings can be found in the sutras. These terms already exist in some form in the nikayas. If a specialized term used for convenience or for summary is in commentarial literature, I hardly see this as evidence of something genuinely new.

Astus wrote:

The point is that if certain terms are found only in texts that are accepted to have been composed after the Buddha, then other works using them are also after him. We can also apply this to ideas, like dharma (as an ultimate unit), two truths, and universal momentariness.

This is not to say that such concepts are in harmony or not with the Buddha's teachings, only that they have emerged later.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2024 at 3:00 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

natusake said:

Only if you regard the appearance of the material body of Shakyamuni as the Buddha. This would be a grave error.

Astus wrote:

It matters not, as it's Shakyamuni who first taught the Dharma in this era.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 5th, 2024 at 5:43 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

Aemilius said:

There is no reason to hold the view that those ideas and concepts that are found in Mahayana sutras, do not belong to the original teachings of Shakyamuni.

Astus wrote:

The reason is that Mahayana sutras use terms and refer to concepts that are known to have been developed within the abhidharma and later treatises, like the self-nature of dharmas, two truths, and momentariness. Or for instance the concept of cessation without deliberation (apratisaṃkhyānirodha), it appears in the Jñānaprasthāna (e.g.

https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T26n1544_p0923b06), and is eventually established as one of the three unconditioned dharma in Sarvastivada, but it's not an idea from the sutras. Still it appears in texts like the Lankavatara Sutra (3.73 (T16n672p613a19-20), 3.78 (T16n672p616b9)), and the Nirvana Sutra (8.40; T12n374p567c9, c26).

Author: Astus

Date: Friday, September 6th, 2024 at 4:39 PM

Title: Re: Why do we keep practicing Mahayana and Vajrayana if they contain forgeries and conflict with Early Buddhist Texts (E

Content:

Aemilius said:

My point is that we do not know the contents of the oral traditions. The written sutras (and commentaries) are based on oral traditions. Therefore you cannot draw the conclusion that the word "moment" or "momentariness" was not used by Shakyamuni, if it is found only in Abhidharma and Mahayana sutras.

Astus wrote:

Ideas like momentariness verifiably developed after the Buddha's time, so there is no need to guess about a lost oral tradition.

Aemilius said:

Actually "the two truths" appears atleast once in the Pali Canon, -if that sutta hasn't disappeared. (It is in Anguttara Nikaya I:60, according to Jayatilleke: 361).

Astus wrote:

That is <https://suttacentral.net/an2.24/en/sujato> mentioning the distinction between explicit teachings and those requiring explanation. It is not about the distinction between conventional and ultimate truths.

Aemilius said:

"the Heart sutra was not spoken by Avalokiteshvara..", which is just a silly thing to say.

Astus wrote:

Just out of curiosity, which version of the Heart Sutra is by Avalokiteshvara?

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2024 at 4:02 AM

Title: Re: Parinirvana

Content:

SkyFox said:

Hey guys. I was reading quite a bit and pondering death and parinirvana and started getting anxious, which never happened before. The idea that you no longer exist in this form is scary.

Astus wrote:

In the Discourse to Seniya (<https://suttacentral.net/sa105/en/analayo>) there is a straightforward distinction between three types of views:

Annihilationism: there is a self now but not after death.

Eternalism: there is a self now and after death.

Buddhism: there is no self now nor after death.

SkyFox said:

I know the Buddha refused to answer what happens after but why?

Astus wrote:

There was a mendicant called Yamaka who had this view
(<https://suttacentral.net/sn22.85/en/sujato>):

'a mendicant who has ended the defilements is annihilated and destroyed when their body breaks up, and doesn't exist after death'

Eventually Sāriputta pointed out to him that a fully liberated being cannot be found in this life, because there is no more identification with any of the aggregates, therefore it is not sensible to claim that there is anything destroyed at the time of death. The reason the Buddha has not declared a position regarding certain matters is because all such ideas are based on the view of a self (see: <https://suttacentral.net/sn41.3/en/sujato>). Once one has recognised the actual nature of bodily and mental phenomena, views like the continuity or cessation of a liberated being (e.g. SN 24.15-16) are abandoned.

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, September 9th, 2024 at 1:14 PM

Title: Re: Parinirvana

Content:

tingdzin said:

Slightly off-topic, but I would like to know what word is being translated as "soul" here.

Astus wrote:

https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/pali_query.py?qs=j%C4%ABva&searchhws=yes&matchtype=exact.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, September 10th, 2024 at 5:19 PM

Title: Re: Using signs or random events to make decision(?)

Content:

Astus wrote:

Following omens is not the recommended way, rather one should understand the causes and effects of one's actions (AN 5.175, Snp 2.13).

See also these stories: <https://suttacentral.net/ja453/en/rouse>,
<https://suttacentral.net/ja87/en/chalmers>.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 12th, 2024 at 5:50 AM

Title: Re: Conventional truth (sammuti-sacca) and absolute truth (paramattha-sacca) in Pali Canon

Content:

Astus wrote:

As the quote says, the two truths as a concept is not found in the canonical scriptures but come up only in the commentaries.

Author: Astus

Date: Thursday, September 19th, 2024 at 4:09 AM

Title: Re: Conventional truth (sammuti-sacca) and absolute truth (paramattha-sacca) in Pali Canon

Content:

Aemilius said:

footnote says: " According to Japanese editor, Ekottara Agama (TD 2, p.740a-741b)."

Agamas are canonical scriptures, Kathavatthu is a canonical scripture (Abhidhamma pitaka). Mahayana sutras are also canonical scriptures.

Astus wrote:

The agama referred to (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T02n0125_p0740a25/ / <https://suttacentral.net/ea40.6>) makes no mention of the two truths but is a version of the <https://suttacentral.net/mn2>. The Kathāvatthu is in the Pali Canon, but it is clearly written centuries after the Buddha, and is traditionally attributed to Moggaliputtatissa.

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, September 28th, 2024 at 4:12 PM

Title: Re: Forbidden question?

Content:

Wheat said:

How are we distinct? How do these minds intersect in this space fabricated completely by one mind?

Astus wrote:

The idea expressed in the first stanzas of the Dhammapada is that one acts how one intends. That is actually quite easily understood: out of anger comes violence, out of love comes care. Therefore one should learn to tame one's mind. This is a very practical and useful teaching.

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, September 29th, 2024 at 4:01 AM

Title: Re: What Carries On? (Rebirth)

Content:

Astus wrote:

'Here, there is nothing whatsoever that transmigrates from this existence to the next. And yet, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the result of karma nonetheless manifests.'

(<https://84000.co/translation/toh210#UT22084-062-010-93>)

'Great king, no phenomenon whatsoever transmigrates from this world to another world, yet there are the manifestations of death and birth.'

(<https://84000.co/translation/toh226#UT22084-063-007-73>)

'There are aggregates of form, feeling, perception, volitions and consciousness. Their re-emergence means that from an extinguished cause another effect originates, (but) from this world to the next, not so much as an atom transmigrates.'

(Nagarjuna's Commentary to The Heart of Interdependent Origination in https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nagarjuna.pdf, p 63)

Author: Astus

Date: Monday, December 9th, 2024 at 4:39 am

Title: Re: Unconditioned and unchanging qualities of dharmas and Madhyamika

Content:

Kalyāṇamitra said:

According to Madhyamika and the idea of emptiness, are the properties of dharmas unconditioned inherent in them or are dharmas endowed with properties depending on changing causes and conditions?

Astus wrote:

See chapter 1 of Mulamadhyamakakarika where the reality of conditions is refuted.

'Therefore neither a product consisting of conditions nor one consisting of nonconditions exists'

(MMK 1.14, tr Siderits)

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, December 14th, 2024 at 5:10 am

Title: Re: The Zen of Seeing

Content:

clyde said:

But searching the Shobogenzo in some different ways I eventually found this from 51 On the Buddha's Way, So, you need to keep in mind that the Buddha's Way, which was Transmitted and received from a previous Buddha, was not called 'contemplative meditation', much less was it ever called, or discussed as, 'the Zen sect'! Clearly, you need to realize that calling It 'the Zen sect' is a mistake of enormous proportions. By thinking that religious practice must be part of either a concrete sect or an abstract sect, the inexperienced defame the Way, as if It were something not worth exploring if It were

not called 'a sect'. The Buddha's Way cannot be like that, so be certain that It has never been called 'the Zen sect'.

Astus wrote:

That's a misleading translation, since the point of that work is to emphasise that there is just Buddhism and no Zen school apart from that.

From The Way of the Buddhas (Butsudō 佛道) (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, tr SZTP. vol 3, p 330):

'If there were [a dharma] other than the way of the buddhas and ancestors, it would be a dharma of an other path." As descendants of the buddhas and ancestors, we should study the bones and marrow, face and eyes of the buddhas and ancestors.'" We have cast ourselves on the way of the buddhas and ancestors and should not skulk off from here to study an other path.'

Just as it's mentioned briefly in the Bendōwa (vol 7, p 199-200):

'We should realize that this name, "Zen school," occurred in Cinasthana to the east and was never heard of in India. ... We should recognize the fact that this is the entire way of the buddha dharma that has been transmitted.'

So, the translation by the Soto Zen Text Project (vol 3, p 333):

'Thus, we should know that the way of the buddhas transmitted and received by prior buddhas is not even called Zen meditation, much less described as the "Zen school." We should clearly understand that calling it the "Zen school" is an error in the extreme. Crude types, thinking that it must be like the school of being or school of emptiness, lament that, without a school name, there would seem to be nothing to study. The way of the buddhas cannot be like this. We should be firmly convinced that it was never called the "Zen school."

Author: Astus

Date: Sunday, February 16th, 2025 at 4:45 am

Title: Re: What is consciousness?

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

What is consciousness (sentience) and why does it arise? Is there some larger consciousness that individual consciousness derives from? Why are there sentient beings? What is the relationship between consciousness and matter?

Astus wrote:

Consciousness (vijñāna) is the act/event of knowing/cognising/being conscious of (vijñānāti) something, or what makes something known (vijñapti), thus the six types of consciousness that arise dependent on the six types of sense faculties and sense objects.

'[The aggregate of] consciousness is that which makes known [vijñapti], [i.e., the apperception,] relative to each [object-field].'
(Abhidharmakośa 1.16a, tr Sangpo, p 231)

'What is the characteristic of consciousness? Knowing is the characteristic of consciousness. It is consciousness by means of which one knows (visible) form, sound, odor, taste, the tangible, mental objects and various realms.'
(Abhidharmasamuccaya, p 4, tr Boin-Webb)

Queequeg said:

In some systems, mind is posited as a primary element, Namely space. That might be a helpful way to understand consciousness as co arisen with the dharmadhatu.

Astus wrote:

The teaching of the six elements includes the consciousness element (vijñānadhātu) as the sixth.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 18th, 2025 at 4:14 am

Title: Re: What is consciousness?

Content:

Lazy_eye said:

Thanks, Astus. Could you explain the relationship between vijñāna and saṃskāra? The latter are said to condition the former (i.e. saṃskāra precedes vijñāna). But since there is no consciousness yet, where are the saṃskāra occurring?

Astus wrote:

Dependent origination applies to the five aggregates, so it's not that its elements exist in a vacuum but rather point out specific factors of how suffering arises. That formations condition consciousness means one's predispositions influence one's state of mind, one's way of thinking; or in terms of multiple lives it's about how past lives' karma conditions a new being.

Author: Astus

Date: Tuesday, February 25th, 2025 at 5:20 am

Title: Re: Does no-self mean no free will?

Content:

Astus wrote:

Here's a speech by Ajahn Brahmali on the matter of free will that gives a well rounded Buddhist explanation: <https://bswa.org/teaching/dhamma-talk-10-january-2025/>

Author: Astus

Date: Saturday, March 29th, 2025 at 3:14 am

Title: Re: I get the zen mind

Content:

Astus wrote:

Whatever can be found can also be lost. Grasping at passing experiences is a source of suffering.